

Amazon workers speak out

Amazon forced pregnant woman off the job due to physical, emotional stress

Our reporters
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Amazon workers from across the world have expressed hostility with the way Amazon dishonestly portrays what it is like to work in its plants. The following job listing from a warehouse in the US paints a rosy picture of life as an Amazon worker:

“Our fulfillment centers, aka warehouses, are where Amazon orders come to life and where we focus on delighting our customers by delivering smiling boxes filled with everything under the sun,” the listing begins. Work is described as “a new adventure” aimed at “bringing smiles to our customers.”

Amazon promises prospective employees that “we’re committed to providing one of the safest work environments.” This does not match with the reality workers face.

“I was there for almost two years but I quit because I was pregnant and I would throw up in the heat,” a former worker from Southern California told the *International Amazon Workers Voice (IAWV)*. “This would not help my rate and I would get a write-up. But I was in my final trimester and it made me furious that when I got written up, my manager didn’t even mention that I was in my final trimester.”

The former worker explained: “Then, I got a second write-up and I asked if I could appeal. My manager said I could, but that there is no use because they’re going to see it his way. I felt like he was saying, ‘Why bother trying because you’re wrong.’ I got very stressed out over this, and I went into a stage of depression. I had to quit Amazon since it was a cause of part of my stress from pregnancy and I didn’t want that to harm my baby.”

Amazon also explains that it will help workers pay for college. “We’ll support your educational and career

goals with our Career Choice program,” the job listing says. But workers know that this only applies if they work more than a year at Amazon. Due to high turnover rates and the company’s use of temporary and contract labor, the program is almost entirely for public relations purposes.

One worker from the state of Washington wrote, “Amazon is the most miserable place I have ever worked. The company doesn’t help with anything. They told me to sign up for school and they said they would help pay tuition, but once I was all signed up they decided to tell me they weren’t going to help. Many times this company has abused my physical abilities, leaving me drained and miserable every day.”

Amazon also claims it is “an Equal Opportunity” employer. But workers told the *IAWV* they are targeted because of their age.

One worker in California said, “I was let go in 2016 after being told I was too old to work for Amazon. I worked nights for 3 years and transferred to days. They put me in an area I had never worked in before and knew nothing about. I was given approximately an hour and a half of training. I was fired three months later. I had filed a complaint regarding age discrimination prior to being transferred. This was the end result.”

The corporation also boasts that workers get “paid time off.” This also clashes with the reality workers face.

A worker from Northern California said he had physical work restrictions that the company was obligated to follow because of recommendations from the workers’ doctor:

“Over a year after hurting myself, they told me I was not allowed back with a doctor’s release. I had

restrictions from my surgeon that I had to get every 30 days. Finally in June of 2016 they fired me because they couldn't accommodate me. Three years of fighting them to let me work there just for them to fire me. Three years of bending over backwards for them so I could get pennies to help live on with long term disability, with no intention on their part to ever let me back. The work environment is horrible. Morale is next to none. They know they can get people to stay because they never have time to look for work or energy on their days off."

These are the conditions workers face at all Amazon all over the world. Amazon's profits come from the exploitation of its workforce, and the corporation will do everything possible to limit meeting workers' concerns over health, safety, and the speed of work because to do so would reduce their profit margin. In other words, the interests of the corporation and of its workforce are irreconcilably hostile.

While Amazon possesses a tremendous amount of wealth and is able to use workers' individual economic weakness to coerce them, Amazon workers occupy a key position in the world economy, shipping goods all over the world. If they act in international unity to assert their interests against those of the company, they will possess a tremendous strength.

Workers who are abused by the company are not alone. They confront the same problems as their co-workers in every country where Amazon has plants and offices. The primary challenge for Amazon workers is to break the isolation imposed upon them by the corporation by building their own democratic organizations—factory committees—to link with workers at other warehouses and in other countries in a common, international fight against the corporate dictatorship.

If you are interested in learning more about building or joining a committee in your warehouse, please sign-up for our newsletter below, like us on Facebook, and share the *IWV* with your friends and co-workers.



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