



OUR WORKING LIVES

short stories  
of people and work

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## Expression of Our People

**Daniel Chacón**

This huge white guy walked into the cafeteria, followed by a cloud of dust and feathers. This guy was enormous, fat and tall, shoulders as wide as a VW Bug. He walked fast, as if he was going to a fight that he knew he would win. Then he just stopped and looked around. It was seven, lunchtime for the swing shift, so the place was full and everybody seemed to be watching him, probably hoping he wouldn't sit next to them. He had long dirty blonde hair in a ponytail, and his plump face, scrunched up, scrutinizing, made it seem as if he were looking for an enemy. He caught me looking at him and walked over to my table, where I sat alone. He sat right across from me, bringing this nasty stench with him. From a brown paper bag he pulled out three sandwiches wrapped in waxed paper, a fat chunk of homemade cake with yellow frosting, and two cans of soda.

I was eating one of those frozen burritos you buy from the machines, "green burrito" it said on the wrapping, but it wasn't green and the tortilla tasted like typing paper.

He looked like one of those big white guys who rides a Harley Davidson, and he had a tattoo on his neck, "ESF," and I had no idea what it meant. He had other tattoos, little green crosses, between his thumbs and fingers. We didn't say anything, we just ate, and when the buzzer went off, we got up and went our separate ways.

After that day, every time this big fuck slammed into the building, he looked around for me and sat by me. I wasn't hard to spot, because everyone at the plant was either Mexican or Sikh, real Indians, with turbans and the whole bit, and they spoke in their own languages. My hair was long, almost to my butt, which during lunch I took out of the hair net and let fall free. So he sat by me and started eating. After a while, I got used to the smell. One day, as he was chewing a fat homemade burrito—and for this guy one bite was half the burrito—he looked at me, his brows furled, like he was suspicious of me. "You an Indian"—he said.

"Apache," I said.

"Peacock," he said.

"What the fuck is that?" I said.

"My name, asshole," he said.

A few days later, I was eating one of those egg salad sandwiches from the machine, the kind that are cut in two triangles and taste too sweet, like they