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NEWS RELEASE

UD SPEAKER TO ADDRESS SWEATSHOP CONDITIONS IN GARMENT FACTORIES THAT SUPPLY U.S. RETAILERS

DAYTON, Ohio — Carmencita Abad, a Filipino native who spent six years working in what she describes as sweatshop conditions on the Pacific island of Saipan, will talk about her experiences at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 21, in O’Leary Auditorium in Miriam Hall at the University of Dayton.

Admission is free and open to the public.

Abad worked for the Sako Corp., a South Korean-owned firm that produces clothes for the Gap and other U.S. retailers. Because of her attempts to organize employees at the factory, management sought to fire her. That action was one reason the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed two lawsuits against the firm in July 1999. The lawsuits also charge that Sako discriminated against several pregnant workers by refusing them mandatory pregnancy benefits.

Saipan is in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and is home to a host of apparel factories. The islands are exempt from federal immigration, customs and wage-and-hours law.

Abad worked for Sako until January 1999 when she came to the U.S. to campaign for reform in Saipan. According to Abad, she endured 14-hour shifts in sweatshop conditions to meet arbitrary production quotas. Foreign workers pay recruitment fees of up to \$7,000 to work in Saipan, and once there, they often must sign contracts that waive basic rights, including the freedom to join unions, attend religious services, quit or marry. Because payment for food and lodging is taken directly from their paychecks, many workers do not earn enough to repay their recruitment fees by the time their yearlong contract has expired.

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For media interviews with Carmencita Abad, contact Jason Mark at (415) 255-7296, ext. 230.