

THE LAST WORD

Confessions of a West Virginia Starbucks wage slave

Like 60 percent of Americans, I live paycheck to paycheck

By Anonymous

I'm a single mom and one of the majority of Americans with zero net wealth.

I live in West Virginia and work at a nearby Starbucks.

I work at Starbucks not because I want to, not because I love it, but because I need the paycheck.

In fact, I hate working at Starbucks. But unlike my middle class friends, I don't have savings to rely on. If I don't get my paycheck, I won't be able to pay my rent.

You've heard about the majority of Americans living paycheck to paycheck?

That's me.

I'm a slave to my wage.

(And that's why I'm not giving my name for this article. If Starbucks finds out it's me who wrote this, I'm done.)

Why do I hate working at Starbucks?

It's not so much the working conditions, which I could write another article about.

It's more the fact that every day I'm at work, I'm pumping junk into my fellow Americans' bodies, making them sick. And it makes me sick that I have to do it.

I was at a party recently, expressing this to a friend.

Listening to us was a nine year old girl visiting West Virginia with her family from one of the wealthier suburbs of Washington, D.C.

I was telling my friend that Starbucks' strategy for addict-



ing the next generation was to pump sugar and caffeine into young children – and their parents don't even know it.

My friend, who is also a bit of a health nut and boycotts Starbucks because of the way they treat workers, said he didn't believe it.

"No, it's true," I said.

Starbucks products are loaded with caffeine and sugar. It's the perfect combination to create an addiction. It includes drinks that are given to children. They are called fruity drink refreshers like the Pineapple Passion or the Strawberry Acai or the Mango Dragon Fruit. Many people don't question whether there is caffeine in it. And they order it for their children.

And the nine year old, who was listening to our conversation pipes up and says – "I love Strawberry Refreshers."

My friend didn't believe it, but the little girl confirmed it.

They are working on the next generation of Starbucks addicts. People order sugary caffeinated drinks for their children.

Why are they doing that?

I never would have done that. If I ever ordered anything for my children, I always asked – what's in that? Is there caffeine? How much sugar is there? Is there anything artificial in that?

I would make a judgment as to whether or not they could have it. But I see nobody asking those questions. And pregnant women come in and they are ordering caffeinated drinks. Or they have a toddler in the cart and they are planning on sharing their drinks with the toddler. Or they are ordering a drink for their little one. And I want to say – you do realize this has caffeine in it right? But I can't say it.

Most of my clients are adults who are overweight. And I feel guilty about fueling their obesity.

A venti – or a large – Peppermint Mocha has ten tablespoons of syrup in it. Just under half of the cup – about a heavy one-third – is filled with syrup. Then there are espresso shots and steamed milk. And then sweetened whipping cream. It's a huge sugar and caloric load. It's the equivalent of sixteen teaspoons of sugar in each cup.

On the board they list the

calories in a grande, which is smaller, but not for the venti, which is larger.

There is a reason they don't list the venti calories. And that reason is they don't want people to know. It's more than 500 calories per cup. Sixteen cubes or teaspoons of sugar in each cup – 68 grams of sugar per cup. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 25 grams of sugar for women per day and 36 grams of sugar for men per day.

People can ask for less syrup. But they seem ashamed. They will ask – "Is it okay if I ask that you put in less syrup?" It's as if – maybe it isn't allowed to say or ask for that?

But most people ask for more syrup. And they boost the sweetness with artificial sweeteners.

Why are people doing this?

They need to get through their work days. They want

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a reward for the horrendous stress that they are living under – with work and family and the condition of the world. You name it. They need it to keep going. People say that – I need that – I need to keep going. And there are a lot of women coming into the store. They are coming into the store and they have more of their day to get through yet.

I get it.

And I have empathy for them.

The other thing that upsets me is that Starbucks has a huge negative impact on the environment. The cold cups and the hot lids are all made out of plastic. And it's all dumped in the garbage. That bothers me too.

And the amount of food that is wasted is shocking. The case has to be set up with fresh food every single day. At the end of the day, all the leftover food is thrown out.

Expensive sandwiches. Nice breads. Sandwiches made from quality free range eggs and free range meats. Really good quality gourmet foods. Well prepared, beautiful, delicious food and it's thrown out and thrown out and thrown out.

In the morning, you have to pull out enough frozen food, the idea being that if somebody asks for it they get it. The result is that about 20 percent of the food gets thrown out.

It all makes me sick.

But what am I to do?

I need a paycheck.

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