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Statement of Angelina Rosa

Initially, when I thought about stepping forward with my case I held myself back out of fear and shame for shedding a negative light on something I once believed so strongly in! However, the more I sat and thought about the ordeals I have dealt with as a Houston Texans cheerleader, I realized my silence would only encourage the same treatment to be done to the next girl caught up in the whirlwind of achieving her dreams, only to be devastated at the reality of being over worked, under compensated, bullied, torn down, and ultimately used to profit a multi-billion dollar organization that she actually supports. Isn't that insane? How could that be one's reality?

As a child I grew up a tom boy loving and playing every sport, yet I also loved to dance. I felt alive playing baseball, basketball, flag football, tennis, you name it! However, I can still remember my father taking me to various sporting events and me immediately falling in love with the game, but even more so with the beautiful ladies on the field/court dancing, interacting, and entertaining the fans. What could be better than dancing court-side cheering for my favorite sports teams? Like many girls in my position I fell in love with the dream of one day becoming a professional cheerleader. As a cheerleader I hoped to become an integral part of not just the game, but the community. I loved to create memorable moments for fans to brighten up their day and create moments they could always reflect happily upon. In my eyes the job was about spreading happiness and smiles and being a part of something bigger than myself. I wanted to be a leader and role model to the younger girls, like I once was, and show with hard work, focus, and dedication dreams do come true. After dancing professionally for the Chicago Bulls, and later joining the Houston Astros Shooting Stars in that moment it truly felt like I was living out my dreams. Unfortunately once joining the Houston Texans I was faced with the harsh reality of a working in a hostile work environment.

On numerous occasions I was belittled and body shamed. I was often described and called out with the term "skinny fat". The Coach explained I looked "skinny fat" and I needed to work on this if I wanted to continue dancing in games.

My weight has been pretty consistent my entire life, thus I developed very unhealthy eating habits just to maintain the “image” demanded for me.

On one game, as the other girls were leaving the locker room to perform, the Coach told me to remain behind. She then stated, “Angelina, you are about to be cut for a lifetime!” I had no clue what she was referring to as I had worked very hard on my appearance. She then walked me over to a corner of the locker room with herself and several other alumni helpers. Before I knew it Texans logo duct tape was found, I heard “this will hurt a bit”, as I watched my skin being pulled, stretched, and taped tightly on myself. I believe that was the worst part. Watching myself being taped as other alumni watched. I felt humiliated and ashamed of my own body. I knew my team would be performing any minute and all I could think about was how I didn’t want to let them down. Although I wanted to hide and cry, I waited to receive The Coach’s final approval and ran down the tunnel and proceeded with my team on the field and kept dancing with all I could fighting the pain through a smile.

I stand here today to try and make sure no other girl/woman has to endure this same humiliation. What other profession has thousands of people competing for a handful of spots only to body shame them, bully them, dictate what other jobs they can have, all the while paying them \$7.25 per hour.

I think an entire reform on how professional cheerleaders are treated is long overdue.

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