

What a janitor in L.A. does in a workday

Welcome to The Work Day, a series that charts a single day in women's working lives

Perspective by Jenny Mejia
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(Courtesy of Jenny Mejia/Washington Post illustration)

February 2, 2022

Welcome to The Work Day, a series that charts a single day in various women's working lives — from gallery owners to stay-at-home parents to chief executives. In this installment, we hear from Jenny Mejia, a janitor who recorded a workday in January. Interested in contributing to a future installment of The Work Day?

Name: Jenny Mejia

Age: 38

Location: Los Angeles

Job title: Janitor

Previous jobs: I have been a janitor for 16 years. I have held both day and night porter positions in several Los Angeles commercial business buildings.

What led me to my current role: I started in the janitorial industry after I immigrated to the United States from Honduras in 2005. It is a job that helps me to support my family — I am a single mother with two young sons who are both in elementary school.

Property service workers, like myself, are front-line workers who play a critical role in protecting the health of occupants in workplaces across the nation. This has come to light since the beginning of the pandemic. I am proud of the work I do and how I provide for my family.

How I spend the majority of my day: A janitor is in charge of keeping the workplace clean, organized and disinfected. Throughout the week, I am responsible for: cleaning the interior of buildings, including floors, carpet, rugs, windows and walls; disinfecting commonly used items like desks, door handles, office tools and phones; maintaining cleaning inventory, placing orders for new products when needed; cleaning bathroom stalls and sinks; and emptying trash and recycling bins.

Right now, the need for more training opportunities in the janitorial and other low-wage industries is especially important. We have been shouldering the burden of preventing the spread of the [coronavirus](#). Right now, I'm part of a nonprofit organization called Building Skills Partnership, which offers me free training opportunities on Infectious Disease Certification. I learn information on diseases janitors could be exposed to through viruses, bacteria, fungus and parasites, as well as how to best protect myself and the office building communities I serve. These classes help me a lot, because I do not want to get sick and I do not want to get my children sick from the germs I encounter by keeping buildings clean.

My workday

4:30 p.m.: I catch the public bus to my work location.

6 p.m.: My janitorial shift begins, and I clean my assigned offices and bathrooms on numerous floors.

10 p.m.: I eat a quick dinner at work. Some evenings, I take a Building Skills Partnership class on Infectious Disease Training or free "[Parent University](#)" classes on how to get more involved in my child's education (remote class on my phone or laptop given to me by the organization). This is helpful, because I want to make a better life for my sons. I also take English as a Second Language classes, too. All of the classes were in-person before the pandemic, but I'm glad I can continue the free courses virtually.

11 p.m.: Start my janitorial duties once again.



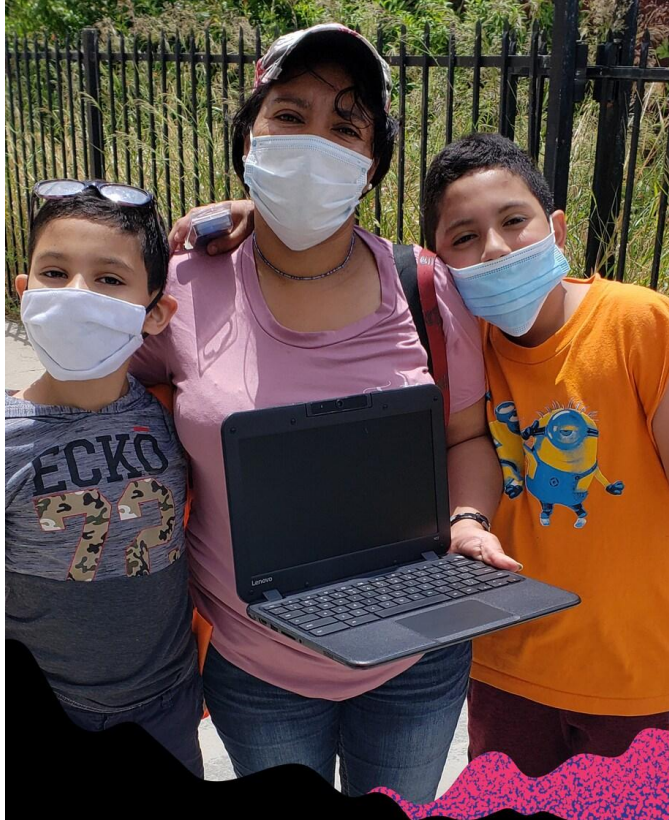
Jenny Mejia on her work shift. (Courtesy of Jenny Mejia/Washington Post illustration)

2 a.m.: Clock out at work and take the public bus home.

3:30 a.m.: Go to bed.

6:30 a.m.: I wake up and also wake up my children. I make them breakfast to eat before school.

7:45 a.m.: Drop off my sons at school.



Picking sons up from school. (Courtesy of Jenny Mejia/Washington Post illustration)

10 a.m.: On some mornings, I go to the Service Employees International Union office to meet with other parent workers in low-wage industries to receive information on free educational activities for our children. One example is health and wellness courses, where I learn how to choose healthy and nutritional food while staying within my budget and also [Financial Capabilities](#) workshops, where I learn about budgeting and saving. All this information is not readily available to people who did not grow up with it, so I am learning and I'm thankful.

12 p.m.: Go grocery shopping, clean my home and take care of other errands for my family.

3 p.m.: Pick up my children from school, then make my sons dinner and help them with their homework.

4 p.m.: Catch the public bus to my work location to start my evening shift again.