Being manager is rather boring, or at least we all thought so. In most restaurant chains, people would kill to get that promotion, but at BChix—what we all call Beef and Chicken Palace—it was widely known that working as a minimum wage fry cook or cashier or server or busboy was where the fun was at. When I was promoted, a part of me felt sad; I was losing the joy and sense of community that BChix offers its lower-level employees. The shift from a wage to a salary was definitely not a con, though!

My first week as manager of the Long Island branch was as expected: boring, mundane, sad, etc. But during the second week, I had a visitor in my office.

Leona, one of the newer cashiers we hired, knocked ever so lightly on my office door to basically tell me what I already knew, that the working conditions for the lower-level employees were simply unethical. Dirty bathrooms, a cramped environment, and irregular scheduling—what I found to be a source of community bonding—was, in fact, a violation of workers’ rights. After reminding me of these issues, she quickly exited my office.

Her words stuck with me that night, and the next day, I called Dileesa and Ramone and all the other corporate heads down in Atlanta and demanded a higher standard of working conditions. After hours of negotiations and explanations, I was able to effectively regulate employee schedules and secure a cleaning service for the employee bathrooms.

It felt amazing to share with my team what I had done for them, and I realized that my position of power wasn’t respectable or boring or fun based on its title. It gains its qualities from the actions I take to improve the lives of BChix employees and the experience of BChix customers.