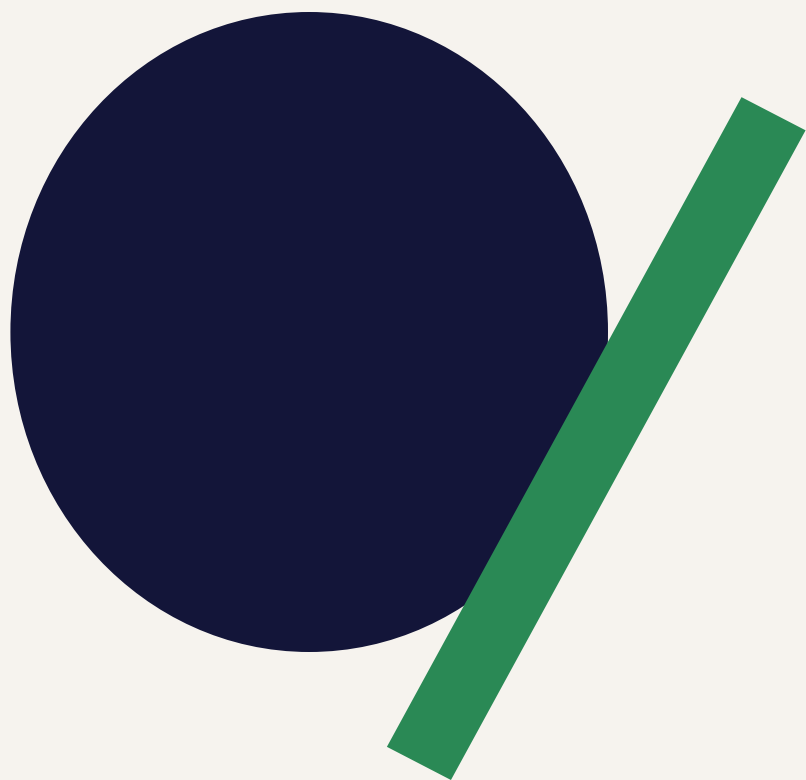


# RESPECT US AT THE EMILY



**THE STORY OF WORKERS AT CHICAGO'S EMILY HOTEL**



The 159-room Emily Hotel made its debut in January 2022 following its acquisition by Vancouver-based real estate investment firm Onni Group. Originally branded the Ace Hotel, the boutique Fulton Market property offers an all-day restaurant named Fora, a rooftop bar named Selva, a coffee bar, and seasonal outdoor movie showings hosted by the Rooftop Cinema Club.

In May 2024, workers from the hotel's front desk and food and beverage departments voted to join UNITE HERE Local 1, Chicago's hospitality union.

Since then, Emily Hotel cooks, hosts, servers, server assistants, bartenders, baristas, and front desk agents have been negotiating for fair wages, high quality and affordable health insurance, good retirement and pension plans.

But Emily Hotel workers are also fighting for an end to disrespectful treatment by management. What follows are Emily workers telling their stories.



My name is **Alicia Gomez**, and I've worked as a host at the Emily Hotel for 2 years. I went to my manager to talk about being sexually harassed by a co-worker in the workplace. My manager, who is a man, shrugged and said, "Men are weird". No one followed up with me about that complaint. I felt uncomfortable. I felt like I had to figure out on my own how to protect myself.

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**I felt like I had to figure out on my own how to protect myself.**

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My name is **Tim Lepore**, and I've worked as a bartender at the Emily Hotel for 1 year. One time I felt disrespected was when I raised a concern I had about how the tip pool for an event was distributed. I didn't know whether I was paid correctly, but I never got an explanation when I asked my managers about it. Another incident that made me feel disrespected and uncomfortable was when a front of the house manager questioned my sexuality in front of other employees. On more than one occasion the manager has said to me something like, "What? I thought you were gay!". After these incidents this particular manager has refused to give me the keys to the liquor room when I request them—which means I can't stock my bar properly.







**“ I really don’t like this language. I can’t walk away because I have to be at the desk for my job. ”**

My name is **Edson Rebolledo**, and I’ve worked as a front desk agent at the Emily Hotel for 7 years. The use of offensive language by management at the Front Desk makes me feel uncomfortable and disrespected. In response to getting a parking ticket, my manager called the situation “retarded”. In response to the Lakers losing a game he bet on he called LeBron James a “faggot” because he didn’t get as many assists as he thought he should have. I have heard him say that word a lot in response to sports betting. One day, while standing in the Front Desk office which is right next to the front desk, another manager--the security manager--said as one of the valet attendants walked into the office, “hablando de jotos” which translates to “speaking of faggots”. The valet attendant also speaks Spanish. I really don’t like this language. I can’t walk away because I have to be at the desk for my job. It makes my workday so uncomfortable.





We are among the longest-serving employees in the hotel. We have been working here since before Onni took over managing the hotel. We also work banquets in other hotels around Chicago. We have combined 60 years of experience in Chicago hospitality. On Thursday, January 16th the Emily Hotel hosted a fundraiser for Mayor Brandon Johson. We were all scheduled to work the function.

After setting up the function, we checked in with our direct manager Julio about taking our meal break. He gave us the ok and we headed down to the cafeteria. While we were sitting down to eat, another manager, Josh, who had only been working at the hotel for a little over a month, came up to us and started saying, in front of everyone else in the cafeteria, “What are you guys doing down here?! Why aren’t you upstairs?! You need to ask your manager to take a break!” We were shocked, upset and felt incredibly disrespected.

After we finished eating we tried to talk to Josh to tell him how unprofessional and disrespectful his behavior was. We are adults and don’t deserve to be treated like that. We tried several times to talk with him. He refused and even worse said that he felt “unsafe” around us.

We felt we deserved an apology, but instead we got a written disciplinary document from the hotel for “physically threatening behavior”.





**Ricardo Nieto:** “This whole incident made me so upset. I felt so disrespected. I am a father and have more than 20 years working in hotels around the city. I have never had anyone talk to me like this. When we tried to talk to him about this issue he was dismissive, refusing to talk to us and just kept saying ‘you can either stay and work, or go home. What are you gonna do?’ He then told us that he felt unsafe around us. Tim asked him if it was because we are Mexican and Black? I never had an experience like that at work in my life.”

**Ricardo Ramirez:** “We were trying to talk to him and he took it to the next level. He was acting very unprofessional and made us feel very uncomfortable to work in the hotel. He told HR and everyone that we threatened him. He is white and we, the four workers involved, are all Latino or Black.”





**Tim Moore:** “As I was eating, Josh the manager—not my direct manager—asked us why we were eating, that we need to go back to work. That ruined my meal because I felt like I did the right thing by asking my direct manager if it was ok to take a break and he said yes. Afterwards we asked to talk to him because I felt disrespected. Never in my years of work has this ever happened to me. He said he felt unsafe by us and that he didn’t want to speak to us. I asked him, ‘Did it have anything to do with us being a team of 3 Mexicans and myself an African American?’ and he just looked at us. I felt very disrespected. He is our manager. How are you in a position of management but are scared of your employees?”



**Danny Nieto:** “When we approached Josh he refused to discuss what had happened. He said he felt intimidated and that we were on the clock. He kept saying ‘Go back to work or go home.’ We decided as a team to return to work but he kept insisting that we go home. I felt intimidated and embarrassed by the situation because I never had a manager say that to me, especially when all I do is be a good worker.”





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**I told her I felt uncomfortable coming to work and seeing someone who threatened my life.**

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My name is **Ramon Lee** and I am a cook at the Emily Hotel. I've worked in the food industry for 12 years. I want to move forward in my career, but it doesn't feel like there is any way for me to move forward at the Emily. After we won the union election, I was told by the executive chef Maurice that I was on track to be a sous chef and that I would start to have weekly check-ins with him. I was put on—what I was told—was a development plan. I asked how long this was for and I was told by Maurice, “From now until”.

I was given a check list by the chef with a list of jobs that were more than, and outside of my regular duties. For three months I did my job and all of the jobs on the list, thinking it would lead to a promotion. At that point the weekly meetings weren't happening, I kept asking the GM what the plan was and getting the same answer that “it is supposed to be happening”. I felt frustrated, like I had been used to do extra work. So I stopped doing the extra check list and expressed my frustration to both the GM and HR about what had happened. After this Maurice came to me one day and said I was lucky he was saving me because I had 14 attendance infractions.

That was the first time I had ever heard that. I have never been given a write up for attendance infractions. Then another day Maurice came up to me on the line and said to me, in front of my co-workers and another manager, “come to the office with me if you want to live”. I reported what he said to me to the General Manager Zoltan, but never heard back. Later Joclyn from HR came to me and said that he was probably just joking. I told her I felt uncomfortable coming to work and seeing someone who threatened my life. After I went to HR and the GM about that comment, my schedule was changed. Maurice is still my direct supervisor.







My name is **Albert Mutombo**, and I work as a steward at the Emily Hotel. I work so hard, but the money just isn't enough. I once was in the position of having to ask for money to make ends meet, and I don't want to have to do that.



My name is **Jared Clavell**, I work as a barista at the Emily Hotel. It's been hard for me to access my schedule online and see my PTO on the new system. Nothing has been fixed in weeks.



My name is **Naila Rangwala**, and I work as a barista at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt disrespected was when I was asked by a manager "how do you speak such good English?" I've been an English speaker my whole life and speak 7 languages. Just because I'm brown doesn't mean I'm not American.



My name is **Martin Reinoso** and I've been a cook at the Emily Hotel for 6 years, one of the longest serving employees at the hotel. When I have gone to human resources with questions, I have not been able to find anyone who can help me. The company introduced a new human resources app, Workday, but each time I've tried to use it, it hasn't worked.



My name is **Miguel Guillen Sanchez** and I've worked as a line cook at the Emily Hotel for almost two years. One time I felt disrespected at work was when the chef took days off my schedule and gave them to a new cook.

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**I've been an English speaker my whole life and speak 7 languages. Just because I'm brown doesn't mean I'm not American.**

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My name is **Bohdan Solovey**. I am a bartender at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt uncomfortable and disrespected at work was when a manager joked about my nationality in times of uncertainty, calling me French or Russian. I am from Ukraine, and jokes about me being from Russia are beyond rudeness.



My name is **Messanh Adantor**. I work as a steward at the Emily Hotel. I thought it was disrespectful to make us wash dishes that were brought in from another restaurant. I felt abused and disrespected.



My name is **Merritt Garthwaite** and I work at the Emily Hotel as a server. One time I felt unsafe and disrespected at work was when I was assigned to clean up after an electrical fire by myself, without any supervision or assistance, for an entire shift. Not only did I not receive hazard pay, but I was provided no protective gear from the hotel. I had to bring my own respirator, coveralls, and cleaning gloves from home in order to work safely.

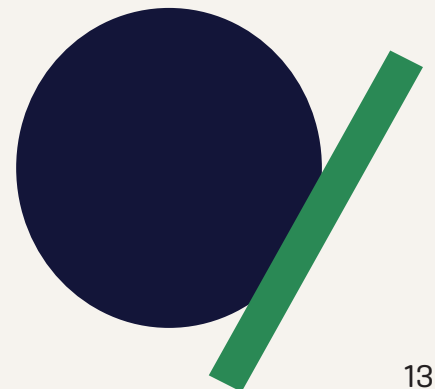


My name is **Ivan Terrazas**, and I am a pastry cook at the Emily Hotel. I don't like witnessing my coworkers getting reprimanded for all sorts of "infractions" while they leave me alone, even though I do the same things. I'm just tired of seeing my coworkers with less experience who speak less English getting treated differently.

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**I had to bring my own respirator, coveralls, and cleaning gloves from home in order to work safely.**

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...a manager told me I should wear a ‘Hooter’s uniform’ to work at the Emily Hotel because it would make more guests want to come in.

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My name is **Shayla Spezzano**, and I work as a server at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt uncomfortable and disrespected while at work was when a manager told me I should wear a “Hooter’s uniform” to work at the Emily Hotel because it would make more guests want to come in. When I responded to him by expressing that that isn’t really my style, he said “there’s always room for improvement.”

My name is **Pablo Lagunas** and I work as a host at the Emily Hotel. I am also attending college studying architecture. An incident that made me very uncomfortable and unsafe at work was when a guest said to me, in front of my co-workers, “I want to lick wine off your body”. I didn’t know how to respond. The guest is still a regular guest most weekends and I have to interact with him whenever I work.





My name is **Jordan Caldwell-Davidson**, and I work as a hostess at the Emily Hotel. One day I was at the host stand and was called down to HR. When the manager brought me downstairs there was a write-up waiting for me. They said they had received a guest complaint. I remembered the guest, but I didn't recognize any of what they had put in their complaint. The complaint challenged my character, how I talk to guests and was just completely out of my character. I have a second job as a host in another restaurant as well. I am good at my job and a hard worker. The managers—who weren't there when I greeted the guest—told me that they believed what was in the complaint without ever asking me what occurred that day. Management asked me to sign the discipline. I felt so disrespected that they would believe a complete stranger said over their own employee.



My name is **Cole Sheridan**, I've worked as a server at the Emily Hotel for a year and half. One time I felt uncomfortable while at work was when a manager called me "dirty" after I confronted her about something disrespectful, she had said about another manager and told her I was Jewish. She said that our other manager, whose last name is Swanson, definitely had a Jew name, I replied, what do you mean, that isn't a very Jewish name, to which she replied, I didn't call him a Jew, I said he had a Jew name, I don't know, I'm not a professional Jew. Are you Jewish? I said, yes and she replied "Ugh, dirty".







My name is **Sonia Perez**, and I have worked as a cook at the Emily Hotel for 5 years, but I have been a cook for longer than that. Our chef made me cry at work. He came to me, while I was working on the line, and said that I didn't even know how to cut an onion. Then he stood there, over me and watched me as I chopped the onion. I felt so foolish and disrespected. But then another time, when he needed my help to complete extra work, he came and told me I was the best cook.

My name is **Rocio Salgado** and I've been a cook at the Emily Hotel for 2 years and 8 months. I have felt disrespected and uncomfortable at work because the meetings that chefs hold are always held only in English. I have told my chef that I don't speak English very well, and despite the fact that he speaks Spanish, he still only does the meetings in English. I feel left out not understanding the language.





My name is **Sean O'Hara**, and I work as a bartender at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt uncomfortable at work was when I had been sober for 2 years, and the beverage director told me that I needed to "sip that shit". After I politely declined, he insisted for two more times before I had to tell him I was sober. Staying sober is hard, and I wish my manager would back me up instead of pushing me to drink.



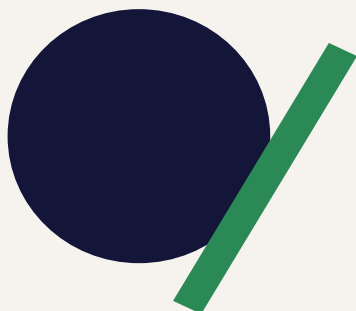
My name is **Ian McGrath**, and I work as a host at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt afraid, uncomfortable, and disrespected at work was when management required me to assist a random guest with tasks that are not part of my host job. There was an event at the restaurant coordinated by this person, who is not employed by the hotel. This person had me wrap decorations, move furniture, and generally act as a personal assistant for the night. My managers were watching all of this happen. I felt disrespected that no one from management intervened on my behalf and told this guest that I was not their employee.





My name is **Ben Lewandowski**. I work as a server at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt unsafe and disrespected was when I had a glass break across my knuckle one morning and could see my knuckle bone. After alerting my manager, I had to sit in the security office bleeding for over a half hour without any medical attention, before finally being put in an Uber to urgent care. After getting 6 stitches in my hand, I was told to return to work the next day, and given no assistance or accommodations for my freshly stitched hand.

My name is **Felix Gonzalez**, and I work as a kitchen steward at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt uncomfortable and disrespected while at work was when I was called into the office by manager and sous chef and told I was slacking. I told them "how?" The manager told me he didn't see me in the dishpit. I told him I was by myself and had to go up to Selva, get food from cafeteria, and also deal with banquets that were going on. I told them I need help in the dishpit, and that it's too much work for one person. Nothing ever happened.







My name is **Caity Gallagher**, I work as a server at the Emily Hotel. I am also a graduate student at DePaul University. Last December I suffered from a kidney infection and because of this had to miss a few days of work. I didn't know I had an infection until I ended up in the ER. I was scared to miss another shift because I have bills to pay and because our new Food and Beverage manager Josh had warned us about calling off. I checked out of the ER and went to work. When I arrived I started to explain to my boss that I had been in the ER for a kidney infection. He didn't respond and then started a conversation with another manager sitting next to him. I just walked away and went to work. I felt so disrespected and honestly just defeated.





My name is **Tanner Doxsey**, and I work as a front desk agent at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt afraid, uncomfortable, unsafe, and disrespected while at work was when during a slow shift, my white manager turned to me and said “isn’t it fun to say the n-word sometimes?” I was horrified. The person who controls my schedule was talking about saying slurs and because he holds so much power over me, I didn’t feel like I could confront him about it like I would any other person. He then said “come on, say it.” At this point I was furious, but couldn’t let it show. I had to deflect to another subject because I knew that if I told my manager off for being racist I’d be put on the worst shifts club and ostracized by management. I felt like I was being told I had to be racist to join the club.

My name is **Sergio Galicia** and I work as a cook at the Emily Hotel. One day, a front of house manager told me “You are a nobody at this company” after I told him that I wasn’t allowed to cook him a personal meal. This made me feel very disrespected. Another incident that made me feel disrespected and unsafe was also while I was working in the kitchen. I was trying to get my chef’s, Chef Maurice, attention while I was working on the line. He shouted at me across the kitchen, “hey, do you want to settle this outside?” I told the head of HR and the General Manager about this. Chef Maurice is still my direct boss.







My name is **Antonio Tello**, and I have worked as a server assistant at the Emily for 3 years. My job is to bring food from the kitchen to the guests and to clean up the guest tables when they are done with their meal. One time I felt disrespected at work was when my manager ordered me to leave my work and come move all of the very heavy tables in the restaurant. No one helped me, and I when I finished I couldn't stop the pain in my back and arms. Later I had to move everything back on my own. I felt like I was doing the work of two people.



My name is **Sam Bolduc**, and I work as a barista at the Emily Hotel. When I started working here, I was never informed that I was not allowed to take my lunch break outside of the mess hall. One day, I was sitting in the lobby, clocked out for break (in accordance with our policy) reading my book, when the hotel's General Manager walked by with a group and said to me "Oh, is this the new break room?" and nothing else. I felt disrespected and embarrassed, as well as uncomfortable with the tone he took with me.

My name is **Kayla Stadler**, and I work as a server at the Emily Hotel. One time I felt disrespected at work was when I was coming down sick pretty bad while on shift and I let my management know early on. Despite the other server insisting they would be okay to finish the shift if I went home, I was made to stay until 30 minutes before close and only was cut when I asked again. I'd never felt so disrespected by management.





# Who are the Emily Hotel workers? <sup>1</sup>

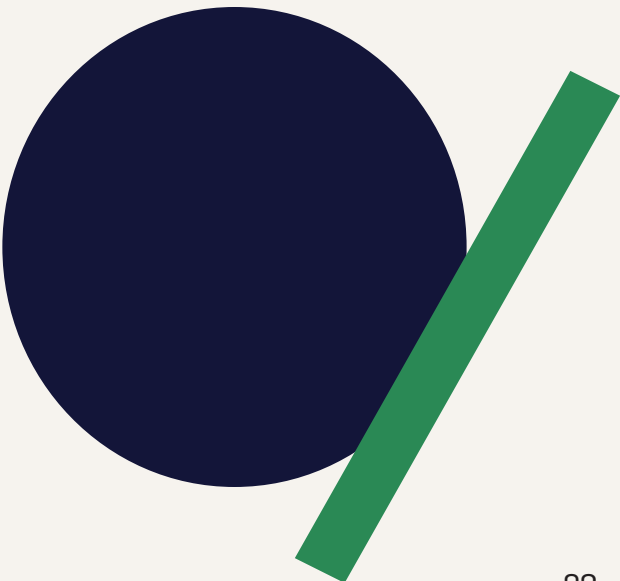
79% live in the City of Chicago  
34% Hispanic of Latino  
29% Black or African American  
29% White  
5% Not Specified  
2% Asian

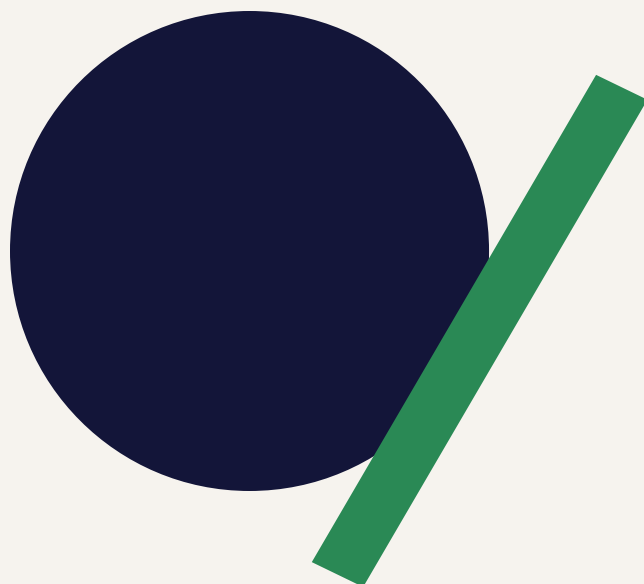
## Hourly Wage Rates – Emily Hotel vs. Canopy by Hilton Central Loop

	Emily Hotel	Canopy by Hilton Central Loop
Cook 1	\$23.30	\$27.66
Culinary Steward	\$19.75	\$25.90
Front Desk Agent	\$21.25	\$26.00

### Endnotes

1 Demographic and wage information for Emily Hotel workers presented in this report is based on information provided by the company to UNITE HERE Local 1 in June 2024 in response to an information request. The Union has requested more recent information, and as of the time of this report has not received it.





**UNITE HERE Local 1**