

South America

Reyna, Peru

Reyna, 17, is from the Lomas de Carabayllo region of the Lima district in Peru. She is the fourth of 4 sisters and 2 brothers.

From ages eight to fourteen she both attended school and did *domestic work*. Reyna explained that she worked because her father was sick and her mother needed to stay at home. When she was in elementary school, Reyna studied in the morning and cleaned from 3-5:00 p.m. When she was fourteen years old, Reyna worked for a well-to-do couple during the summer vacation, taking care of their baby, cleaning and washing clothes from 7:00 a.m. until midnight, six days a week. She lived with this couple two hours away from home. Each Sunday afternoon, she went home. She returned on Monday. Reyna did not like the couple. "The lady used to scream at me and made me sleep on the sofa," she said.

Now Reyna's father is better and works as a baker at a bakery owned by Reyna's uncle. Even so, he gets paid little.

The non-governmental organization Centro de Estudios Sociales y Publicaciones (CESIP) arrived in Reyna's district when she was twelve-years-old. CESIP had a meeting with all the working children - about two hundred. These children had been doing different kinds of work: working in brick factories, recycling trash, selling juice and candies on the street, and doing domestic work. CESIP informed the children of their rights and helped them with scholarships to study.

After two years of computer classes, four female students, aged 17 to 20 years, *created their own computer business* – a **Cyber Café** – in a little room in a local building. Reyna, the youngest of the four students, is now the Administrator of this business, as well as a Computer Science Teacher. The girls started with three computers. Now they have six. They teach children how to use the computers. Reyna works in the morning, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. She goes to school in the afternoon from 1:00-6:00 p.m. when the other girls take over.

Reyna would like to study law at the Universidad Major de San Marco and, eventually, be a politician – the President – of Peru and end child labor. She thinks that it is most important for a child to feel free to play, have space, and study. "Children should not have to worry about anything else," she said. She added, "Children die every minute because adults are not helping. *Adults need to remember that they were once children. If*



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they do not understand the problem of child labor then they should go watch children work."