

## LADY GAGA: "BAD ROMANCE" SINGER... A BAD BOSS?



Working for a diva may have its perks. But a personal assistant to a celebrity is at that person's beck and call, and sometimes all that work and time might not seem worth it. Especially when you aren't being paid for it. Jennifer O'Neill had such a job, employed for 13 months as a personal assistant to pop sensation and fame monster Lady Gaga, who was born this way: as Stefani Germanotta in New York. She claims that she was required to handle every task the Grammy Award-winning singer demanded, however menial it seemed. She oversaw Lady Gaga's scheduling, finances and meals, ensuring that the celebrity was on time and that she had a towel as soon as she finished showering. O'Neill was by Lady Gaga's side during her 2010 Monster Ball world tour, and the assistant alleges that she was hardly awarded time for breaks or meals or even sleep, so that she would be available at all times of the day and night. And for the singer who popularized the "meat dress," certifying that individual outfits are accessible seems like a job all its own. O'Neill's job boasted annual earnings of 75,000 dollars, but here is the problem: she claims that she was never paid overtime. She filed suit in a Manhattan federal court last week, claiming nearly 380,000 dollars in back pay. The lawsuit was filed against Lady Gaga's company, Mermaid Touring, Inc. The former assistant to the star stated that she was owed for approximately 7,168 hours of overtime. The suit also states that she is seeking unspecified damages. A



spokeswoman for the celebrity saw no merit in O'Neill's lawsuit.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) states that an employer requiring or allowing a person to work overtime is typically required to pay "overtime premium pay" for all overtime hours. According to the Department of Labor, "employees covered by the FLSA must receive overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek of at least one and one-half times their regular rate of pay." Overtime pay for work performed on the weekends, holidays, or days that are usually days of rest are required only if the 40-hour limit has been exceeded. Working on a weekend or at night within the 40 hours would denote "extra pay," which would entail an agreement between the employer and employee. The FLSA does not require pay for those instances or for double-time pay. Another woman can attest to Lady Gaga's high demands – though she evidently had no problems with overtime pay. A former personal assistant, Angela Ciemny, whose husband, David, previously worked as the singer's tour manager, detailed some of her responsibilities in Maureen Callahan's 2010 book, *Poker Face: The Rise and Rise of Lady Gaga*. Ciemny stated that she would often sleep in the same bed as the celebrity, who did not want to be alone. They also made up their faces together and would step into the shower simultaneously.