Best Market/Lidl Workers’ Rights Board Hearing

September 24, 2019 – Wyandanch, NY
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Introduction

For nearly three years, workers at Best Market stores have been coming together to voice their concerns and improve conditions in their workplace. In November 2018, workers learned that Best Market sold their stores to a multinational corporation from Germany named Lidl. After the prior two years of fighting Best Market for better wages, stable hours and affordable benefits, workers were hopeful that their new employer Lidl, the fourth largest retailer in the industry, would do better. One year since Lidl’s acquisition, workers report little to no improvement.

Lidl is in the process of converting and re-banning these Best Market stores to the predominant Lidl store operating model, which is no-frills shopping experience that presumably will require less staffing.

Despite Lidl telling workers that they will have an opportunity to keep their jobs, Lidl has not been clear about what this opportunity will look like long-term in terms of hours and work responsibilities. Lidl just opened its first re-bannered store of December 11th, 2019.

Long Island Jobs with Justice recognized the need for a platform on which workers could stand and share publicly the concerns they have about the conditions under which they have to work. On Tuesday, September 24th, a Workers’ Rights Board was held at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Roman Catholic Church in Wyandanch, a longstanding ally of Best Market workers, where nearly a dozen current Best Market workers and a former worker of a Lidl bannered store shared their concerns before a panel about the future of their jobs at Lidl.

Participants

Serving on the panel were six leaders of the Long Island community, including government officials, people of faith, academics and community advocates:

**Assemblywoman Michaele Solages**, 22nd Assembly
**John Skinner**, Commissioner of Labor, Nassau County, New York
**Linda Hassberg**, Senior Staff Attorney, Empire Justice Center
**Nathalia Alejandra Varela**, Associate Counsel, LatinJustice PRLDEF
**Dr. Mary Anne A. Trasciatti**, Director, Labor Studies Program at Hofstra University
**Mo. Marie Tatro**, Vicar for Community Justice, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

Testimony was provided by ten current Best Market/Lidl workers and one former Lidl worker.

**Current Best Market/Lidl Workers:**

- Diomedes Mosquea
- Dave Ness
- Marian Meszaros
- Lorena Sales
- Sandra Moore
- Jill Cooley
- Angel Padro
- Angie Russo
- Stephen Fitzgerald
- Karen Morgan

**Former Lidl Worker:**

Johanna Perez
Background

In November of 2018, Best Market, a Long Island supermarket chain, announced that they sold all but one of their 28 stores to the Lidl Corporation, a financially successful multinational grocery chain from Germany with over 10,000 stores in 26 countries. Lidl is ranked the fourth leading food retailer in the world and is seen as a threat to big box retailers like Walmart, Kroger and Albertsons. Often referred to as a "discounter," Lidl competes in price with other food retailers in the industry by offering a limited number of products, mostly under a private Lidl label, allowing them to sell products at a deep discount, undercutting prices and disrupting local markets. On Long Island, grocers like Stop & Shop and ShopRite are at risk of feeling the effects of Lidl’s arrival. Lidl depends on their low prices and streamlined store model to get customers in the door. But since entering the local market in 2018, Lidl’s workplace standards have been lower than the predominant standards of area grocers, many of whom are unionized.

Supermarkets are not only prominent contributors to the Long Island economy but they also play a significant role in the lives of Long Islanders, whether it is through the relationships customers have built with workers, who are often neighbors and members of their community, or the longstanding place local grocers have held in securing sustainable middle-class union jobs for Long Island families. Supermarket jobs on Long Island have historically provided a high standard of employment with good wages and benefits, affordable health insurance, robust pensions and opportunities for promotion. When grocers arrive determined to make the most profit with the least investment, they not only disrupt the local economy by driving down current industry workplace standards, they also disrupt workers’ families and communities.

The benefits of belonging to a union cannot be overstated. Union grocery store workers are more likely to earn a living wage, work full-time hours, access paid sick days, and obtain affordable healthcare. Workers who belong to a union are often earning wages above the poverty line and are able to sustain a middle-class life. The Lidl workers who testified describe a very different workplace.

The testifying workers expressed a fearful uncertainty about the future of their jobs because their new employer will soon operate under a drastically different operating model with presumably less employees and less work to do. At a standard Lidl-bannered store, shelves require stocking, but the products are not individually stocked and instead remain inside larger packaging, which requires less shelving time and thus likely fewer workers. At Lidl-bannered stores, workers are cross-trained and expected to fulfill all roles and responsibilities; they can be working the register and checking out customers one moment and then unloading pallets and stocking shelves the next. Unlike full-scale supermarkets on Long Island, Lidl-bannered stores do not operate fresh food departments like deli, meat, and seafood and instead prepackage food items as a cost savings strategy. Presumably, because of this a Lidl-bannered store can operate with a smaller workforce.

Lidl made public announcements that all Best Market employees will have an opportunity to work at Lidl once their store is converted. Important facts were however left out of that announcement. Workers questioned if they will keep all their hours once their store is converted. Lidl has not told workers that they will keep their current level of hours. Workers testified that having their hours cut would make it so they could not afford to live on Long Island anymore. Others testified that they have so little savings that they would not be able to afford to commute to a further store for the time that their home store is being renovated. Separately, some department leads and assistant department leads have been told by Lidl that they need to work at stores in another state and live in that state, hours away from home for ten weeks if they want to keep their same pay rate.

When Lidl closed their first stores for renovations, workers were left with an uncertain and difficult road ahead of them. Lidl then offered severance packages to all workers and told them that they needed to make a quick and irrevocable decision of whether they will stay with Lidl or take their severance. Many workers, fearing the worst took the severance package.
Worker Testimony

Diomedes Mosquea

Diomedes has worked at Best Market stores for 6 years. He has almost no savings and takes an Uber to work each day. He could not afford Lidl’s healthcare plan and couldn’t get insulin for his type 1 diabetes. As a result, he had seizures at work and was rushed to the hospital. He is currently working additional hours so he can pay for the company’s healthcare but is worried about his future after his store converts.

“I am scared this situation might happen again when my store officially becomes a Lidl store because they are known for only giving people part-time hours. Asking for a job that lets me earn enough to afford insulin and reliable transportation shouldn’t be too much.”

Dave Ness

Dave Ness currently works at Lidl’s Best Market store in Selden. He has been with the company for six years. Dave works for 37.5 hours per week. This provides him with just enough money to find residence at a group home for $500 per month, but he is still unable to afford a home of his own, buy a car, save up money for the future or purchase good health care. With Lidl and its wages, he currently can only afford to purchase Lidl’s cheapest health care plan. His out of pocket costs under that plan can still prevent him from going to the doctor.

“Lidl is one of the largest and most successful companies in the world. If they would only recognize the hard work and dedication of myself and my fellow coworkers, then they could easily afford to create the best jobs on Long Island.”

Marian Meszaros

Marian Meszaros is a 63-year-old breast cancer survivor who has worked at Lidl’s Best Market store in Franklin Square for over 12 years. In order to survive on Long Island, Marian lives with her 85-year-old mother. Despite being a loyal and dependable employee for more than a decade, Marian still only earns $1 more than Lidl’s current starting wage on Long Island and works fewer hours than her other colleagues in the store’s Meat Department. “It’s not right, especially given my experience, that I’m not being given the same opportunity as others to work more and advance my career.”

“I want Lidl to know that this is about more than just wages and hours to us, it’s about feeling valued and safe at work.” She feels that Lidl needs to fix safety hazards at her store. Marian shared that her store currently has broken floors and leaky ceilings that resulted in trays of meat dropping on her shoulder. She filed an accident report in July 2019. As of the release of this report, the floors have still not been fixed.
**Lorena Sales**

Lorena Sales works at Lidl’s Best Market in Lake Grove in the Produce and Salad Departments. Like many of her coworkers, Lorena lives paycheck-to-paycheck, struggling to pay her bills and worrying that at any moment she can become homeless. Her current wages only allow for her to live in a bedroom in house that has a bug infestation.

Recently, Lorena’s assistant store manager told her and her coworkers that they were not allowed to speak Spanish. After reaching out to community advocates, the Lidl apologized and told the worker’s they can continue to speak Spanish.

Lorena is a mother of two and a grandmother of four. “I dream about being able to spend quality time with all of them, but given my low wage and unpredictable schedule, finding any opportunity to be together is challenging.” She immigrated to the United States from El Salvador almost 30 years ago and always knew that coming here would be hard work but never anticipated that it would such a struggle.

**Sandra Moore**

Sandra Moore works as a cashier at Lidl’s Best Market store in Shirley; she has worked at Best Market stores for almost three years and makes slightly more than minimum wage, which on Long Island in 2019 is $12 per hour. She currently lives two hours away from her store and commutes four hours each day on public transportation. Her salary cannot afford more than a basic room and she is unable to afford furniture; she currently sleeps on an air mattress. Sandra had asked Lidl management several times for a transfer to a store closer to her home. Management said that they could transfer her to another store, but they would give her less hours there, so she never went.

Sandra said she was concerned about respect and opportunity for women Lidl workers. While working for Lidl, Sandra reported that she witnessed men occupying many more managerial jobs than women. She says that Lidl has not offered her opportunities to advance her career. “I really wonder if women like me who work hard can have an opportunity to have a career job at Lidl.”

**Jill Cooley**

Jill Cooley has been working in the supermarket industry since the age of 15. She is currently the Assistant Bakery Team Lead at Lidl’s Best Market store in Astoria, Queens and has worked at the store for three years. Prior to working at Best Market, Jill worked at Pathmark for over 20 years where her union secured her a living wage, predictable schedule and affordable healthcare. “Working at Lidl has been the polar opposite of my 20+ years at Pathmark.” She reported that the inconsistency of her hours affects her ability to spend time with her husband and put stress on her family because she can never predict when she’ll be working or if she’ll have enough hours to pay the bills.

At Pathmark, Jill was able to benefit from a union pension that provided security for her future, but at Best Market she can’t afford to contribute a penny into the company’s 401(k) plan. Jill stated that she did not always have to struggle like this, and even though now she does, she still considers herself one of the lucky ones because her husband’s job makes up for where Lidl fails. “Lidl has the resources to address all these issues tomorrow and make every job at their store better. Just look at their shops in the Netherlands where employees earn double time on Sunday - why is it different here in America?”
Angel Padro

Angel Padro has worked as a deli clerk at Best Market stores for over 3 years and was one of the first workers to join the movement to improve the lives of his coworkers. He worked at another grocer before and recognized early on that the workplace conditions at Best Market stores and the treatment he and his coworkers were receiving were below industry standards, especially in safety trainings.

When Angel heard that a successful company like Lidl was going to run his store, he was hopeful that it would become a better place to work. Unfortunately, that did not happen for him. In the short time Lidl has operated his store, Angel shared that Lidl announced that it would terminate employee discounts, that Sunday premium pay will not be paid like it is in other area grocery stores and that full-time workers may have reduced hours once their stores are remodeled to the Lidl banner. Additionally, Angel shared that understaffing has become normal at his store, which in deli departments like his could pose a safety concern when they have to operate slicers quickly to serve customers.

“I’m shocked that we all have to be here today. It’s both unbelievable and sad that Lidl is coming into our neighborhoods and creating worse jobs.”

Angie Russo

Angie Russo works at Lidl’s Best Market store in East Meadow. She is a mother of a two-year-old and they live in a homeless shelter. She used to get 20 hours of work per week. She asked multiple times to work more hours. Lidl kept refusing. After she appeared in a public video about what it was like to work for Lidl, she was finally given more hours. In order to give her more hours, management had her work in two departments. A male coworker who also worked in two departments received a raise and she did not.

“I have two dreams in life. My first dream is to live in my own apartment with my son. My biggest dream is to send my son to college one day. I work for a multimillion-dollar company. I work hard and care about my job. I hope that Lidl will care about us.”

Stephen Fitzgerald

Stephen Fitzgerald has worked as a Porter in Lidl’s Best Market store in Oakdale for over year. Despite working 40 hours or more per week he is barely scraping by on a minimum wage salary. “I don’t think it’s right that I can be working more than full time and still worrying about whether I can afford to eat dinner some nights […] Lidl is one of the largest corporations in the entire world. They should be ashamed of themselves for putting the people who work full-time for them through so much hardship.”

Stephen shared that he feels disrespected at work and is frequently talked down to and feels belittled by store management. He wants to do more than just push carts but feels the Lidl’s store management won’t give him a chance. Like many others, Stephen shared concerns about him and his coworkers not receiving Sunday premium pay or being able to afford the Lidl’s healthcare. He is afraid that Lidl could bring down working standards for other grocery stores in the area. “Benefits like Sunday premium pay, and affordable
health care are the standard at other grocery stores in New York. I don’t want to let Lidl change that.”

Karen Morgan

Karen Morgan works as a bakery clerk at Lidl’s Best Market store in Commack. She has been working at Best Market stores for almost 4 years but has worked in the grocery industry for 40 years. “Working at a grocery store is tough work and you don’t get rich doing it but for the most part of my 40 years it was a pretty good job. But with Best Market and now Lidl, it’s become a struggle just to survive.”

Having to decide between putting food on the table and going to the doctor is not uncommon for many workers at Lidl. Karen shared that at her previous job she was offered a strong union healthcare package. Now that she is at Lidl, she can no longer afford to go to the doctor out of fear that she won’t be able to pay her medical bills. She also expressed fear about her full-time hours getting cut because she hears that Lidl has a reputation for only offering part-time or reduced hours to workers.

“To put it simply, Lidl looks at the jobs my coworkers and I perform as a cost. And unless we stand up together as a community, they will never stop trying to keep that cost as low as possible.”

Johanna Perez

Johanna Perez worked at a Lidl-bannered store in Staten Island that was not a Best Market store, but newly built as a Lidl store. She began with Lidl in September of 2018 when she was trained in Virginia to help open the Staten Island store, where she worked as a supervisor until March of 2019.

“I’ve worked in retail since I was in high school and I can say without hesitation that working at Lidl was the most traumatic experience I’ve ever had at a job.” Johanna shared that their hours were inconsistent and unstable, schedules would change at the last minute, the work pace was unbearable, and workers often had to miss their breaks to finish all of their work. She described working hours from 1pm-2am and shared that some of her coworkers had worked 24 hours consecutively. In her experience, the conditions she witnessed at her store were similar to other Lidl stores that she visited. When she went to help at a New Jersey store she learned that a group of workers were working an 18-hour shift. One of Johanna’s coworkers in management shared that they once had to work a 36-hour shift. Conversely, she said that when such workers were no longer needed, Lidl drastically cut their hours, some only being given one shift per week.

“Our safety didn’t seem to be a priority for Lidl.” Johanna shared an incident she witnessed where a coworker fell and injured her wrist. Management never encouraged the worker to report the injury to workers’ compensation. Another time she saw a coworker faint and fall after working 24 hours straight. No one called 911 and the worker was taken to urgent care instead. Johanna herself had a medical incident induced by work stress and it was at this moment she decided working for Lidl was not worth risking her health or her life. “It’s not right that a multibillion-dollar, multinational company can come here and make even more profits by treating workers terribly.”
Workers’ Rights Board Recommendations

After listening to the worker testimonies and asking clarifying questions, each Workers’ Rights Board member addressed the room by reflecting on what they heard and providing preliminary recommendations on how the company can improve their conditions and be more responsive to the concerns of workers. Each board member expressed outrage and disgust at the magnitude of corporate greed and workplace injustice that the workers reported on at Lidl’s Best Market stores.

The board members thanked the workers for sharing their testimonies and for showing such courageous dedication to the struggle for basic dignity on the job. They thanked the workers for not only taking this step to improve their own lives but also the lives of their coworkers who may not feel safe in going public.

Board members condemned these actions and recommended Lidl management take the following steps immediately as it pertains to the fair treatment of their employees.

1. Treat all workers with dignity and respect by:

Paying all workers a living wage and providing benefits that are equal to local supermarket standards, including equivalent Sunday and holiday premium pay. Testimonies indicated a pattern of Lidl workers struggling to make ends meet, whether it is an inability to pay bills, purchase medication or afford a home with dignity. By not meeting area industry standards, Lidl is acting as a source of downward pressure on grocery workplace standards across Long Island. Low wages and benefits also puts increased financial stress on local governments and taxpayers who pay for the social services that workers end up relying on.

Providing stable and predictable schedules. Testimonies revealed the harmful repercussions of unpredictable schedules felt not just by the workers but also their families. Precarious schedules leave workers more likely to have difficulty paying their bills and to experience material hardships like not having enough to eat or losing their car and/or home. When a worker cannot predict their schedule in advance, spending quality time with loved ones and finding affordable and flexible care for children and dependents becomes almost impossible.

Offering affordable healthcare. Having access to healthcare with low premiums and deductibles is imperative for low-wage workers. At Lidl, workers report turning down company health insurance and avoiding doctors’ visits because they cannot afford to pay. To safeguard the health and wellbeing of all their employees, Lidl should immediately secure an affordable health insurance plan for all Lidl Best Market workers that is in line with local supermarket standards.

Fairly treat all workers. Workers testified that they feel that they do not have fair opportunities for advancement. Lidl needs to ensure that all workers are given such opportunities. They should improve opportunities for women workers to advance in the company.

2. Be truthful and transparent with workers by:

Providing greater transparency to workers about the future of their jobs and opportunities for promotion and growth in the company. Multiple workers shared how frightening and destabilizing it has been not knowing if they will have a job after their store converts from the Best Market banner to that of Lidl. Despite Lidl telling these workers everyone will have an opportunity to keep their job, workers report that Lidl has not been clear about what this opportunity will look like in terms of hours and work responsibilities. Workplace transparency helps create and sustain long-term success among employees. It creates trust between employers and employees, helps improve morale, and boosts workplace performance. It would be in Lidl’s best interest to be transparent about how the workplace will change in this transitional period.
Providing greater transparency to all workers about opportunities available for store transfers, promotion and growth in the company. We also heard workers share their concerns with being denied promotions and transfers to stores closer to their homes.

3. Offer a safe workplace for all workers by providing ongoing maintenance, repair and trainings.

Workers testified that workplace health and safety is an ongoing concern for many employees at Lidl. A safe workplace is inclusive of, but not limited to, properly renovated buildings/workplace, maintenance of these facilities (including making proper repairs to equipment that is to be handled by employees), standard (OSHA) safety practices and proper safety gear at all times, and in all cases. Lidl must adhere to the proper policies and procedures whenever employees are injured on the job. Accident reports must be taken for every incident and must always be given to the employee to fill out themselves; not just by their supervisor. Multiple workers shared how they are not always offered the proper training with certain jobs like operating deli slicers. When there is no or insufficient training, employees do not understand how to do their jobs and it makes them more susceptible to low morale and workplace injuries.
About the Workers’ Rights Board Members

Linda Hassberg – Senior Staff Attorney, Empire Justice Center

Linda Hassberg is a senior staff attorney in Empire Justice Center’s Long Island office. Linda’s primary responsibility is impact litigation to bring about systemic change, primarily in the areas of public benefits, civil rights, health and family law.

Linda joined the Empire Justice Center in 2007 to help open the Long Island Office. Prior to that time, she served as litigation counsel of the not-for-profit Western New York Law Center in Buffalo, New York, where she conducted individual and class action impact litigation on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged in the areas of public benefits, health care, education, housing discrimination, and civil rights. Her other legal experiences include association with a private law firm in a practice devoted to the rights of people with disabilities and special education law. She also maintained a practice in union-side labor and employment law.

Linda graduated magna cum laude from the University of Buffalo Law School in 1992 and clerked for the Hon. John T. Curtin, USDI for the Western District of New York from 1992-95. Prior to law school, Linda was a union activist, educator, and organizer for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees “AFSCME” and holds a Masters degree in U.S. Social and Labor History.

John Skinner – Commissioner of Labor, Nassau County, New York

Nassau County Commissioner of Labor, John J. Skinner, Jr., was appointed by Nassau County Executive, Laura Curran, Friday, February 14, 2018.

Mr. Skinner started his career in Metallic Lathers Reinforcing Ironworkers Union Local 46 in 1981. After serving a three-year apprenticeship, he took his place as a Journeyman, Foreman, and Shop Steward. Mr. Skinner knew the value of being an active member from a very young age; attending union meetings, union rallies, and other union functions.

In 2008, John Skinner was elected to the Office of Trustee in which he had to pay close attention to detail while also addressing the fiduciary responsibilities set before him. After the completion of his term in 2011, Mr. Skinner was elected to the Office of President (2011); and re-elected in 2014; serving two terms. In April of 2012, he took on the role of Political Legislative Director as well.

For the years following, his efforts have been tireless in assuring that labor-friendly legislation is upheld, and that our elected officials understand the needs and problems of the Middle Class; inclusive of all workers in union, and non-union jobs.

In 2014, Mr. Skinner was also elected to the Executive Committee of the New York Branch of the NAACP, and continues to serve.

Assemblywoman Michaele Solages – 22nd Assembly

Michaele C. Solages, a third- term legislator, is a lifelong resident of Elmont. She was elected to represent the 22nd Assembly in November of 2012. Michaele was the first person of Haitian descent to be elected into the New York State Legislature. Solages represents the communities of Elmont, North Valley Stream, Valley Stream, South Valley Stream, South Floral Park, Floral Park, the Village of Bellerose, Bellerose Terrace, North Woodmere, Stewart Manor, and sections of Franklin Square.
She is more than honored to represent the diverse communities of the 22nd Assembly District in the New York State Legislature.

Today, Michaelle is strong advocate and a dominant force within her community. From her close ties to immigrant communities, she has used her voice to champion issues facing new Americans. Due to her advocacy, she was recently appointed the Chair for the Task Force on New Americans. Michaelle also currently serves as First-Vice Chair to The New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus. Through her work she strives toward racial equality throughout New York State.

A leading activist in childcare, Michaelle is the former Chair of the Assembly Subcommittee on Child Product Safety. Also a leading advocate of early learning education, Michaelle was chosen to serve as one of three New York State fellows at the 2014 National Conference of State Legislatures. Her appointment came as a direct result of her powerful stance on integrating Mathematics, Science, and Music into the Kindergarten to 3rd grade curriculum.

A woman truly dedicated to the cause, she has allocated thousands of dollars in grants to the local school districts within the 22nd District. She also provided grants to organizations providing educational programs, such as local libraries. Michaelle has continued to advocate for Nassau County's middle class and small businesses by fighting to lower property taxes, raise minimum wage, and increase public transportation services on Long Island.

In her time in the legislature, Michaelle has been honored with numerous awards including: LIPC’s Long Islander Who Has Made a Difference Award, Recognition of Outstanding Public Service to the Dedication of Elmont and Surrounding Communities Award, The New York Library Association Senator Hugh Farley Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award and The New York City Breastfeeding Council’s 2017 Breastfeeding Champion Award.

Before serving in the New York State Assembly, Michaelle earned her Bachelor’s Degree from Hofstra University’s Education, Health, and Human Services. Dedicated to giving back to her community, she remained at Hofstra University serving as supervisor of access services in the Axinn Library. In her endeavor to empower students through printed and electronic material, she has played a major role in the modernization of the library’s resources.

She completed the Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy in which her motivational, communication, and crisis handling skills were enhanced to better serve the community.

**The Rev. Marie A. Tatro, Vicar for Community Justice, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island**

The Rev. Marie A. Tatro serves on the Bishop’s staff of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island as the Vicar for Community Justice Ministry, coordinating and supporting social and racial justice ministries throughout the diocese (which includes Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties).

Mother Tatro received her M. Div. from The General Theological Seminary and was awarded the J. Wilson Sutton Prize for the top senior thesis. She has a juris doctorate from C.U.N.Y. Law School, and a bachelor of arts cum laude from Amherst College.

Before seminary, Mother Tatro worked for 19 years as an attorney in non-profit organizations representing low-income New Yorkers in the civil court system. Since entering the priesthood, she has served in various parishes in Brooklyn and works closely with interfaith social justice organizations such as Faith in New York, The New Sanctuary Coalition of NYC, and Long Island Jobs with Justice.
Mary Anne Trasciatti – Director, Labor Studies Program at Hofstra University

Mary Anne Trasciatti is Associate Professor in the Department of Rhetoric and Director of Labor Studies. She is drawn to the discipline of rhetoric for its power to generate knowledge and create community as well as its usefulness as a resource for social advocacy. She teaches a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses, including history of rhetoric, persuasion, public address, women’s studies, and labor studies. Her current scholarly, creative, and activist work comprises three ventures: 1) A book about the free speech work of labor organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn that illuminates how early twentieth-century radicals created and used public space to advocate for economic justice; 2) An oral history project to record, preserve, and represent stories about Superstorm Sandy as narrated by residents of the barrier island coastal community of Long Beach, NY; and 3) A campaign to remember the 146 victims (mostly young Italian and Jewish immigrant women and girls) of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York City and the resulting movement for workers’ rights and safety with a permanent public art memorial.

Nathalia Alejandra Varela – Associate Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Nathalia focuses on employment issues faced by low-wage Latinx workers in Nassau County, NY. She has filed charges of: discrimination based upon race, gender and pregnancy; retaliation; failure to pay wages; and unfair labor practices with the EEOC, the NYSDHR, the NLRB and the NYSDOL. She also has a special interest in government transparency and challenging the use and effects of gang policing against Latinx youth.

Previously, Nathalia worked as a staff attorney at Bronx Legal Services focusing on eviction defense and affirmative litigation that advanced tenants’ rights. Nathalia graduated from CUNY School of Law in 2015. As a third-year law student she interned with LJP where her research and writing greatly contributed to a precedential decision holding that DACA recipients are eligible for admission to the New York State Bar.
Workers' Rights Board

The Workers’ Rights Board is a project of Jobs with Justice to unite communities, faith leaders and elected officials who are concerned with issues impacting working people, their families and the larger community.

Long Island Jobs with Justice

Long Island Jobs with Justice is coalition of labor unions, community organizations, congregations and faith-based organizations committed to protecting the rights of working people and supporting community struggles to build a more just society locally and globally. We are committed to creating living wage jobs, supporting organizing, and demanding corporate accountability in our communities. We envision a world where all workers are treated with dignity and respect. We believe that all workers should have the right to collectively bargain and transform the conditions of their workplaces. We believe in building worker power and creating more accountable and transparent economies.

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