

September 3, 2019

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***LEGAL AID, MAIN STREET LEGAL SERVICES AND
ARNOLD & PORTER DELIVER OVER \$285,000 PAYOUT
FOR 23 CLIENTS ROBBED OF WAGES, FORCED TO TOIL
IN DEPLORABLE WORK CONDITIONS***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, with Main Street Legal Services of CUNY Law School and the firm of Arnold & Porter acting as pro bono co-counsel, have secured a combined \$285,000 payout from bankruptcy court settlements for 23 clients - former employees of a Long Island gas station network - who for years were cheated out their wages, forced to work extremely long hours, and suffered other unlawful work conditions. The workers came to Legal Aid through the Nepali worker center Adhikaar, which collaborated with the lawyers to ensure that the workers received some justice. Legal Aid recently distributed checks for most of the payout to its clients at a meeting at Adhikaar.

The bankruptcy claims, originally filed in early 2015 in the Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of New York, sought damages from gas station businesses owned and run by Steven Keshtgar for violating the Fair Labor Standards Act and New York Labor Law.

Some of the businesses' misconduct included:

- Failing to pay employees a full minimum wage or overtime pay in a timely fashion, if at all;
- Making employees work 12-hour shifts, sometimes up to 36 hours in a row, without making required "spread of hour" payments for long shifts; and
- Taking illegal deductions from employees' wages for supposedly missing or damages items in violation of the New York Labor Law.

Justice in Every Borough.

This bankruptcy payout comes as a result of corporate bankruptcy court adjudications against Keshtgar's businesses. The Legal Aid Society and Arnold & Porter are still pursuing a 2017 judgment of over \$1.5 million against Keshtgar in his individual capacity.

“Keshtgar represents the epitome of scofflaw employers who prioritize their own financial gain over the workers who enrich them. In this case, the misconduct was truly unconscionable. Moreover, it has taken years of effort to obtain even as much as we have through the bankruptcy process, and Keshtgar is continuing to live an expensive lifestyle without paying the judgment he owes,” said **Richard Blum, Staff Attorney with the Employment Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “We hope that this payout delivers some measure of justice for these workers who were forced to toil in unlawful and inhuman conditions, and we will still pursue the other outstanding judgement that they are rightfully owed.”

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>