

National Women's Law Center & labor Council for Latin American Advancement Fact Sheet/October 2016, *Equal Pay for Latinas*

Latinas Stories

Aracelis has worked at a hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey for seven years as a guest room attendant. A single mother with three children, she came to the United States from the Dominican Republic in search of a better life for her family. Despite the fact that Aracelis did her job well and did not have any problems at work, she continued to be passed up for promotions and better job opportunities, and consequently higher wages. When she complained to her supervisor, she was told that she was not qualified because she did not speak English -- although she does speak English and communicates with her supervisors exclusively in English. Aracelis joined Unite Here Local 54, a union that represents workers in the hotel, gaming, food service, airport, textile, manufacturing, distribution, laundry, and transportation industries. She eventually became a shop steward and leader in her local union. Aracelis has made it her mission to educate the other room attendants, most of whom are women, about their rights, including the right to be paid equally for their work and to be free from other forms of gender discrimination. Aracelis, along with about 1,000 bartenders, housekeepers, servers, cooks, and casino workers, has been engaged in a strike against their employer for healthcare and pension benefits since July 2016.

Laura worked on the line sorting lemons in a produce packinghouse in Oxnard, California. Laura and the other women learned that male workers, often with less seniority and less experience, were given the opportunity to work more hours and, consequently, to earn more money than the women. When the company failed to fix the problem, Laura and about sixty other women organized and received help from the local Teamsters Union and a local legal services organization. Ultimately, eight women, including Laura, participated in a discrimination complaint against the company, and the case was settled. Laura eventually took on a different position at the company where she earned \$10.30 an hour. After working in this new position for five years, she learned that male workers who were doing the same job were being paid ten to twelve cents more than she was being paid. She was denied raises given to other workers for the same work. After raising the issue with her supervisors several times, she decided to retire from the company after 40 years of employment.

Elizabeth, a newly arrived immigrant from Mexico and mother of four small children, worked while she went to nursing school in order to provide for her family. Elizabeth took a job at a grocery store in Oxnard, California, where she worked in the butcher department packing meat, arranging the display case, weighing the meat and working as a cashier. While she worked there, she found out that men were being paid more than her and her female co-workers, even though they had the same seniority and same job function. Since she was new to the United States, she did not know her rights and did not know who to go to for help. She ultimately quit this job and never recovered any of the money that she was owed by the company.