

Press Release

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Restaurant Worker Sues Knife-Wielding Boss for Wage Theft and Emotional Abuse

***Press Conference & Rally
5:00 pm today at 170 Ferry Blvd, Stratford, CT***

STRATFORD, CT—Former prep cook Marvin Mendoza filed a federal lawsuit today against Off the Hook Bar and Grill, a seafood restaurant with locations in Stratford and Westbrook. For nearly a year, the restaurants' owner Andrew Testo stole Mr. Mendoza's wages, shouted insults and profanities at him, and threatened him with knives. This evening at 5:00 p.m., Mr. Mendoza and members of the workers' rights organization Unidad Latina en Acción (Latinos United in Action - ULA) will hold a protest at Off the Hook in Stratford and hand-deliver the lawsuit to Mr. Testo. Afterwards, ULA, Mr. Mendoza, and his legal representatives with the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization will speak at a press conference outside of Off the Hook, 170 Ferry Boulevard, Stratford, CT.

Mr. Testo promised Mr. Mendoza \$12 an hour in a well-staffed kitchen, but the conditions quickly deteriorated. Mr. Testo fired four other kitchen employees and forced Mr. Mendoza to perform the work of five people, all while paying him approximately \$3.00 per hour. Many weeks, Mr. Mendoza was paid nothing at all. On various occasions, Mr. Testo burst into the kitchen to smash dishes, hurl profanities, and threaten the staff with knives.

"I was scared for my life," said Mr. Mendoza. "I still have trouble sleeping and feel panicked whenever I see him."

Ultimately, Mr. Testo fired Mr. Mendoza for requesting the wages he was owed. When Mr. Mendoza and ULA went back to demand that he be paid, Mr. Testo told them to get out of the restaurant and threatened to call the police. Today they return to Off the Hook, but this time with a federal lawsuit in hand.

"Off the Hook is on the hook for all the wages they stole," said Julia Solórzano, a law student representing Mr. Mendoza. "Andrew Testo flagrantly violated Mr. Mendoza rights as a worker and a human being."

"We want employers to know that we won't rest until there is justice," said Luis Luna, a member of ULA. "Workers, know your rights and we will work together to defend them."

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