



Don't Blame Poor People: A Conference Addressing The Structural Causes of Poverty on Long Island and in New York State...

A Call for Understanding and Action

**December 15, 2023
8:00AM-3:30PM
Suffolk Y JCC, Commack
74 Hauppauge Road, Commack**

Sponsors: Abraham's Table and the Poor People's Campaign – LI Region

Registration and Light Breakfast 8:00-8:30

Opening Plenary: *Poverty Amidst Plenty* 8:30-9:30

- ❖ Welcome by Suffolk Y Jewish Community Center
- ❖ Welcome by Abraham's Table – Richard Koubek, Abraham's Table of Long Island
- ❖ Opening Reflection - Vicar Jean Dougherty, Abraham's Table of Long Island
- ❖ An Overview of the Structural Causes of Poverty on Long Island - Welfare to Work Commission poverty report PowerPoint
- ❖ Welcome by Poor People's Campaign – Michael Zweig, Co-Chair, Poor People's Campaign Long Island Region
- ❖ "Face of the State" NYS Poor People's Campaign video

[Breakouts: Each breakout has a specialist and impacted person as co-presenters followed by two specialist reactors and then audience participation. Spanish translation will be provided as requested for the opening and closing plenary and breakout sessions #1, #4 and #10 as requested]

Breakout Session A

9:45-11:00

Breakout # 1: *Racism in Housing and Educational Segregation* (Spanish translation will be provided)

Long Island is among the ten most-segregated suburbs in the United States. This session will explore the negative impacts of segregation on where people of color live and how their children are educated, tracking too many of them into lives of poverty.

Co-Presenters: Laura Harding, Erase Racism and TJ Shivers, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Ian Wilder, LI Housing Services
Frederick K. Brewington, Civil Rights attorney

Breakout # 2: *Stereotyping the Poor in Public Policies: Welfare Work Rules*

Since Colonial times, Americans have viewed poor people as morally deficient. This session will examine how stereotypes that poor people are lazy have been imbedded in public policies such as welfare work rules.

Co-Presenters: Richard Koubek, Chair, Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature and Impacted Person TBA

Reactors:

Cheryl Keshner, Empire Justice Center
Vincent Rothaar, Division Administrator for Client Benefits, Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Breakout # 3: *Environmental Devastation and Poverty*

American business and governmental policies that devastate the environment have particularly damaging effects on poor communities, This session will examine one example of this devastation around the Brookhaven Landfill and others.

Co-Presenters: Monique Fitzgerald, Brookhaven Landfill Action and Remediation Group and Jennifer Cuffee-Wilson, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Ryan Madden, Long Island Progressive Coalition
Robyn Silvestri, Save the Great South Bay invited

Breakout Session B

11:10-12:25

Breakout # 4: *The Lack of Affordable Quality Child Care* (Spanish translation will be provided)

Poor and moderate-income working families with young children are particularly stressed by the lack of affordable, quality child care, which will be explored in this session.

Co-Presenters: Jennifer Rojas, Child Care Council of Suffolk and Karina Rodriguez, Impacted Parent

Reactors:

Alicia Marks, Marks of Excellence Child Care Center
Anne Marie LaVoie, Assistant Bureau Director for Child Care, Suffolk County
Department of Social Services

Session # 5: *Broken Criminal Justice System and Poverty*

The United States has the largest prison population in the world. This session will examine how our broken criminal-justice system disproportionately imprisons people of color and contributes to poverty on Long Island

Co-Presenters: Serena Liguori, New Hour for Women and Children and Pam Neely, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Elmer Flores, Releasing Aging People in Prison (RAPP)
Liz Justesen, Legal Aid Society

Breakout # 6: *Disparities in Health Care*

The fact that infants die at a significantly higher rate in Uniondale than next door in East Meadow highlights racial and class disparities in health-care services that will be analyzed in this session.

Co-Presenters: Lori Andrade, Health and Welfare Council of LI and Carly Paris, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Colleen Merlo, Association for Mental Health and Wellness
Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Family and Children's Association

Breakout # 7: *Military Spending and Poverty*

Since World War II, United States foreign relations have been predicated on a huge military presence around the world. How the military budget drains funding from programs to assist poor Americans will be explored in this session.

Co-Presenters: Michael Zweig, Poor People's Campaign- LI Region and Veteran Mac Bica, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Sr. Mary Beth Moore, SCH, former coordinator, Pax Christi Long Island, Director Emeritus, Centro Corazon de Maria

Robert Lepley, former Executive Director, Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives

Lunch

12:25-1:10

(Note: Muslim prayer time will be set aside during lunch)

Breakout Session C

1:10-2:25

Breakout # 8: *Low Wages, Stolen Wages, Union Busting and Poverty*

Since the 1980s, anti-union government policies have contributed to plummeting union membership in the United States, creating an economy that allows for the exploitation of workers through low wages, poor benefits and even stolen wages, all of which will be discussed in this session.

Co-Presenters: Ani Halasz, Long Island Jobs with Justice and Starbucks worker, Impacted Person TBA

Reactors:

Juana Torres, Esq. SEPA Mujer

Monica Diaz, 32BJ

Breakout # 9: *The Critical Shortage of Affordable Housing*

Because of Long Island's severe affordable housing shortage, almost half of homeowners and renters are burdened by having to spend between 30 and 50 percent of their incomes on housing costs. This session will explore how our lack of affordable housing contributes to Long Island poverty.

Co-Presenters: Roger Weaving, Huntington Township Housing Coalition and Carney Broadwater, Impacted Person

Reactors:

Peter Florey, The DFG Group (LI developers of affordable housing)
Bob Eilbott, Poor People's Campaign, LI Region

Breakout # 10: Broken Immigration Laws and Poverty (Spanish translation will be provided)

For over 25 years, Congress has been unable to repair America's broken immigration laws. This session will examine how this broken legal system impacts Long Island immigrants – particularly undocumented workers and their families – and contributes to poverty in our region.

Co-Presenters: Patrick Young, New York Immigration Coalition and Impacted Person
TBA

Reactors:

Daniela Robles, SEPA Mujer
Nadia Marin Molina, National Day Laborer Organizing Network

Closing Plenary: Action Steps

2:30-3:30

Addressing Poverty: A Call for Both Charity and Justice, Rabbi Lina Zerbarini, Kehilath Shalom Synagogue, Cold Spring Haror and member of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission

Panel of Reactors:

Moderator: Richard Koubek, Long Island Jobs with Justice
Ani Halasz, Long Island Jobs with Justice
Nadia Marin Molina, National Day Laborer Organizing Network
Onika Shepherd, 1199 SEIU
Michael Zweig, Poor People's Campaign - LI Region

Closing Reflection: Rabbi Lina Zerbarini, Kehilath Shalom Synagogue