

# PRIVATE SECTOR SHOPS

## NEW PRIVATE SECTOR STAFF REP TOMAS LASTER

Tomas Laster joined CWA Local 1180 in February 2023 as a Staff Representative for the private sector organizations.

He has demonstrated a commitment to social justice and labor throughout his life, volunteering with farmworkers' rights organizations in his college years and helping to implement a restorative strategies curriculum for public schools in the Sarasota County public school system.

As a Human Rights Investigator and Director of Complaint Investigation in Florida, Tomas investigated and resolved hundreds of workplace grievances affecting low-wage migrant

farmworkers. Through this work, he was able to negotiate systemic changes affecting thousands of workers in industrial agriculture. In the meantime, he volunteered with his local Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) chapter and helped restore lost wages for restaurant workers.

While working as a bartender in Brooklyn, Tomas and his coworkers organized their workplace, achieving a unanimous filing with Workers United and negotiating their first collective bargaining agreement.

Outside of his work with CWA, you can find Tomas cheering on the Argentina soccer team, hanging out with his two large cats, or playing music with his friends and his wife Leah. ■



## AUDUBON UNION IS NOW THE BIRD UNION Changes Name to Sever Ties to Enslaver

Local 1180 unionized members at the National Audubon Society have changed their name to distance themselves from the man the Audubon Society is named after.

The Audubon Society is named after John James Audubon, an artist known for his detail illustrations of birds, and less well known for his opposition to abolition of slavery, his owning and trafficking of slaves. He supported "race science" that claimed white superiority over other races.

As a part of recognizing that history and aligning itself with the values of the membership and the work, the unionized staff have elected to change their name to "The Bird Union" while they work on formulating a more final title.

Unionized members hope the name change will encourage the Audubon Board to vote to also change the name of the organization.

"We will not elevate and celebrate a person who would reject and oppress our union members today," the union wrote on its social media. "We invite @audubonsociety to join us."

Union members said the name change is a small step in demonstrating their commitment to antiracism.

"We are fighting for a contract that helps ensure inclusion is the norm and not an afterthought, that provides underrepresented groups with support and protection, and that guarantees working conditions that are beneficial and accommodating for all our members," they wrote in unison.

Christopher Thomas, Local 1180's Private Sector Staff Representative said, "We are elated that E&E News and



PoliticoPro have picked up this name change and that supporters are demonstrating their solidarity by re-tweeting them."

Thomas spoke about the name change at the March General Membership Meeting, and called for all public sector members to support Local 1180 brothers and sisters at The Bird Union.

Please follow @birdunion on Twitter and Instagram for updates and to show support for Local 1180 members in the private sector. ■

## BARGAINING UPDATES

**Type Media Center** — We have finished negotiating a tentative contract with the Type Media Center and will be in talks with members to ratify the agreement. In the draft contract, Local 1180 fleshed out discipline language, solidified language on staff providing feedback to managers, secured a commitment from the organization to regular fiscal presentations to the members, recognized duration-limited staff as a part of the union, expanded anti-discrimination language, and won an ongoing remote work option for the members. This is the first contract with Type Media since their transformation from the Nation Institute.

"There is still a lot of work to do on normalizing wages and benefits," Local 1180 Private Sector Staff Rep Christopher Thomas said. "We will be reopening negotiations in 2024 to discuss these topics."

### Local 1180 continues to bargain at:

- Open Society Foundations
- Human Rights Watch
- Physicians for Human Rights
- Books and Rattles, Inc.
- Audubon Society
- StoryCorps
- Javits Center



## JAVITS CENTER EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

Two Local 1180 members working at the Jacob Javits Center received Employee Appreciation Awards for their years of service — Arnold Lynn, Jose Martinez, and Ruth Castillo. ■

Have an **UPDATE** or **NEWS** from your Private Sector Shop? Send information and photos to Staff Rep Chris Thomas at [cthomas@cwa1180.org](mailto:cthomas@cwa1180.org)