Executive Director: Raun J. Rasmussen

Mr. Rasmussen was named Executive Director of Legal Services NYC in June 2011. He has been a member of the LSNYC family for over 30 years, serving as LSNYC's Chief of Litigation and Advocacy since 2003. He began his career as a housing attorney at South Brooklyn Legal Services and later became SBLS's Director of Litigation, supporting the development of affirmative litigation, helping to create one of the first foreclosure prevention projects in the country, and developing the Child Care Network Support Project, which provides legal services and training to home-based child care providers.

Mr. Rasmussen has written numerous articles on residential displacement, foreclosure, ethics, affirmative litigation and child care work, and has received several awards for his public service. He is a member of the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice and the Board of Directors of the New Economy Project. He holds a B.A. from Amherst College and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Andrea Zigman

Andrea Zigman is the Deputy Director of Legal Services NYC. She is a national leader in the field of legal services who has fought for justice for low-income people for more than thirty years.

Immediately before joining LSNYC, Ms. Zigman operated a consulting firm that served legal services, legal aid and public interest law programs all over the United States. Previously, Ms. Zigman worked with the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati for fifteen years as the Managing Attorney of the economic justice and health practice group and as the Managing Attorney of Legal Aidâ€™s first post-merger branch office. Ms. Zigman started her career as an attorney with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, California, where she served as a staff and supervising attorney for nine years. She received her B.A. in Economics from Antioch College and her J.D. from the University of California.

Wayne A. Francis

Wayne A. Francis joined Legal Services NYC in April 2017 as the Chief Operating Officer in the NYC headquarters. In that capacity he is responsible for overseeing Compliance, Information Technology (IT), Contracts & Grants Management and Facilities across all offices citywide.

Prior to LSNYC, Mr. Francis worked for a champion in the Criminal Justice Reform and Social Justice movement at the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), the nationâ€™s largest Reentry Services provider with offices in 20 cities nationally. He was responsible for overseeing the citywide operations for their flagship in New York City, a multi-million dollar complex Social Enterprise and national model which provides transitional work experience for hundreds of people each day, who have recently returned home from incarceration. With over 20 years of supervisory, project management, Operations, program and community outreach/development experience, Wayne has held various senior roles throughout his career. Mr. Francis also worked at Teach For America, where he served as their Managing Director for Strategy and Operations on the national Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships (SIP) team. His role helped him to build excellent operational systems and to serve as a great relationship builder for external and internal partners while liaising with senior leadership across TFAâ€™s 50 Regions. Before joining Teach For America, Wayne was the Executive Director and Chief Professional
Officer at the Boys and Girls Club of Harlem and the Director of Community Employment Programs in Columbia University’s Human Resources department. He earned his Master of Science in Education from Brooklyn College where he graduated summa cum laude and his Bachelor of Arts in History from Hunter College. Mr. Francis is a well-traveled adventurer who has been to over 20 countries around the world and is an active member of various community/charitable organizations, an international fraternity and Masonic lodge where he advances various humanitarian/Social Justice causes and service projects both domestically and abroad.

John J. Lever

Jack Lever joined Legal Services NYC as Chief Financial Officer in June 2017. As CFO he is responsible for LSNYC’s financial operations,reporting and financial internal controls. Mr. Lever comes to LSNYC with over 40 years experience in auditing and financial management.

Mr. Lever’s experience spans across both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Prior to joining LSNYC, he held financial management positions at Estee Lauder (Executive Director - Finance), Institute of International Education (Controller), Breaking Ground (Assistant Controller), and Motorola / Symbol (Director of Internal Audit). Mr. Lever is a Certified Public Accountant, with a Master’s Degree in Taxation, and has attained certifications as an Information Systems Auditor, Fraud Examiner, and in Financial Services. He has also authored articles on taxation and basic programming in a professional newsletter, and has extensive international experience in the development and roll-out of global financial systems.

Kirsten Soberanis

Kirsten Soberanis is the Chief Human Resources and Diversity Officer at Legal Services NYC. She is a Human Resources professional with more than thirty years of experience in the field. Prior to joining Legal Services NYC, she worked as the Managing Director of Human Resources at Changing Our World, a subsidiary of The Omnicom Group. Ms. Soberanis also worked with Greenwich House, Boys and Girls Harbor and Thypin Steel Co, as a Human Resources professional responsible for the managing and direct of all functions of Human Resources.

Ms. Soberanis received her B.A in Business Management from Bernard Baruch College, City University of New York and her MPA in Personnel Administration and Labor Relations at New York University.

Hon. Betty E. Staton

After an initial career as staff attorney and deputy director of Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services, Betty E. Staton became a founding partner in the first African American female law firm in the State of New York, Boyd, Staton and Cave. She then served for almost 20 years on the Kings County Family Court bench. In 2011, she returned to the Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services Corporation as acting Project Director, and in 2012 was appointed President of the newly consolidated programs that became Brooklyn Legal Services.

Ms. Staton received her undergraduate degree from Brooklyn College and graduated from New York University School of Law where she was a founding member of the Black Latino Asian Pacific American Law Alumni Association. She has taught at several colleges, including New York City College of Technology where she taught Business Law for more than 15 years. She is a member of several community organizations and has received numerous awards for her community service.

Peggy Earisman

Peggy Earisman is a poverty lawyer with thirty-five years experience advocating for low-income people. After graduation from Columbia Law School, Ms. Earisman started her career in the housing unit in Passaic County Legal Aid in New Jersey, where she litigated significant housing cases, including the first federal circuit court decision on the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and Haddock v. City of Passaic, establishing the right to relocation assistance for NJ tenants displaced by code enforcement activities. Committed to community lawyering, Ms. Earisman helped organize community-based organizations working to empower low income residents of Passaic County, including Paterson Coalition for Housing and Right to Housing.

Ms. Earisman became a managing attorney at MFY Legal Services in 1992, leading efforts and partnering with community groups to preserve affordable housing in Clinton and on the Lower East Side. Since 2003, she has run Manhattan Legal Services, where she has led the effort to deliver the highest quality legal services in Manhattan.

Tanya Wong

Tanya Wong is the Project Director at Brooklyn Services. She is an accomplished Public Interest attorney with over 20 years of direct client representation and managerial experience at LSNYC. She is a leading expert and policy advocate in New
York State in the area of Government Benefits, specializing in welfare rights and other anti-poverty/anti-hunger programs, such as SNAP and WIC. Ms. Wong is a graduate of Harvard University and Northeastern University School of Law.

Michelle Burrell

Michelle Burrell began her career as a Staff Attorney at the Brooklyn Family Defense Practice, then an office of Legal Services NYC. She then became a staff attorney in the Matrimonial & Family Law Unit at New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) where she represented litigants in matrimonial, custody, visitation and family offense cases. She comes back to Legal Services NYC from the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) where she was the Managing Attorney of the Family Defense Practice. In that role, she managed a staff of attorneys, social workers, parent advocates and paralegals that provide legal representation to indigent parents and family caregivers who have been accused of abuse and neglect in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. She is a graduate of CUNY Law School where she was a member of the Black Law Students Association and a member of the Law Review. She received her BA at the University of Ottawa, where she concentrated her studies in Communications and Philosophy. She was born and raised in Toronto, Canada.

Nadia Hernandez

Nadia Hernandez is the Acting Project Director for Staten Island Legal Services. Ms. Hernandez has nearly 10 years of experience as a public interest lawyer. She joined Staten Island Legal Services in March 2017 as the Director of the Family Law and Domestic Violence Unit. She continues to supervise the interdisciplinary practice team responsible for providing comprehensive legal assistance to domestic violence survivors in matrimonial and family law proceedings. Prior to Staten Island Legal Services, Ms. Hernandez worked at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) providing direct representation to domestic violence survivors in a wide range of family law matters, including contested divorces, and immigration related matters. At The Door's Legal Services Center represented unaccompanied minors in expedited removal proceedings. Ms. Hernandez graduated from Saint Peter's College and New York Law School. She is an attorney mentor for Legal Outreach.