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Human Rights Violations in Los Angeles

For Immediate Release: **December 11, 2018**

Contact: Pete White, Los Angeles Community Action Network

(213) 228-0024 | petew@cangress.org

Human Rights in Los Angeles: Still a Long Way to Go

Groups fighting for human rights in Los Angeles celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on Monday (12/10) by standing up for justice wherever violations occur. Now, the City of Los Angeles needs to do the same.

A coalition of organizations — including Los Angeles Community Action Network, Los Angeles Catholic Worker, Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, Democratic Socialists of America, Black Lives Matter Long Beach, NOlympics LA and Ground Game Los Angeles — interrupted Mayor Eric Garcetti's speech at USC's Bovard Auditorium marking the 70th anniversary of the UDHR "to engage the mayor and the human rights community in recognizing that so much more needs to happen in Los Angeles," according to Pete White, executive director of Los Angeles Community Action Network.

"Human rights are not secured by holding highly curated events in fancy venues," said White. "It is our duty to lift the promise of human rights and the glaring contradictions that prevent Los Angeles from realizing promises deferred." While noting that the 30 articles in the declaration are "inextricable," White said homelessness and unjust policing (covered in articles 25 and 7, respectively) are top priorities for LA CAN.

In a rebuke to LA's insular, dysfunctional homeless policy establishment, the Skid Row-based nonprofit cited a lack of accountability for the botched Proposition HHH rollout in calling for a rigorous audit of HHH finances as required by the \$1.2 billion bond measure approved by voters in November 2016. The group also is demanding a halt to the LAPD's criminalization of unhoused residents.

Just as Los Angeles has been a leading voice in the need to address global challenges such as climate change, LA CAN and its advocacy partners want to see more action and less rhetoric from city hall on ending homelessness.

As L.A. marks the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' 70th birthday, it is important to recall what United National Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, said about his fact-finding mission to Los Angeles last December. In noting the extreme inequality he witnessed across the country, Alston said: "In some ways, it was captured very nicely in Los Angeles by the contrast between the central business district and skid row. From skid row, you see the wealth, the opulence which is so close by, but in skid row itself, you've got this really large community of completely deprived people, where not even toilets were provided. The streets stank of urine and despair because the government is not prepared to devote serious resources to addressing the problem."

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