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CONTACT:

Josh Kamensky, Ocean & Mountain • 323 326 7438 • josh@oceanmo.com

RABBIS, PASTORS CELEBRATE SUKKOT BY TALKING TO NEIGHBORS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS, MEASURE ULA

Interfaith gathering honors Jewish festival with rituals, then canvasses the streets of South LA to support keeping seniors housed, stopping homelessness

PHOTOS AND B-ROLL AVAILABLE

LOS ANGELES—Rabbis, pastors, lay volunteers and community organizers gathered in the temporary shelter known as a *sukkah* (soo-KAH) at Hebrew Union College Sunday celebrate the Jewish holiday of *Sukkot*, connect their faith to housing justice, and knock on doors across South Los Angeles in support of Measure ULA on the November 8th ballot, which would create affordable housing and prevent seniors from falling into homelessness with rent relief and eviction defense.

“The sage Maimonides said, ‘When one eats and drinks, one must also feed the stranger,’” said **Rabbi Robin Podolsky** of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California. “That’s a mitzvah, and a mitzvah is not a voluntary good deed, it’s a commandment. With ULA, we are reaching for permanent solutions, not just band aids—supportive services, legal counseling to keep people in their homes and to prevent evictions in the first place.”

The festival of Sukkot is rich in symbolic meaning. Jews traditionally gather in a temporary shelter called a *sukkah* (soo-KAH) — that recalls the holiday’s origins rooted in both the nomadic wanderings of the ancient Jewish tribes as well as the celebration’s roots as an agricultural harvest festival.

“In ancient times, the high holy days were preparation for the most important holiday of the year, Sukkot,” said **Rabbi Ruth Sohn** of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of

Religion. “The openness of the Sukkah reminds of how exposed we are to the elements and how important Measure ULA is for our neighbors who live without permanent shelter.”

“This holiday reminds us of what we might take for granted to have a home,” said **Rabbi Mari Chernow** of Temple Israel of Hollywood. “Without a home, I don’t have defined space around me and my people. I can let my hair down and be myself and not have to worry. I can put up pictures and cook the food I want to eat and share. Let’s work for ULA not only so people can eat and live but so they can live their best lives.”

In modern times, the sukkah can be a sign of connection and solidarity with people who are unhoused and are likewise forced to live in temporary shelter. The festival symbolizes the fight for a society where all can share in life’s bounty, and where those concerns of those who lack permanent, secure shelter are shared by all.

“Our folks in Skid Row never get a harvest,” said **Pastor Cue Jn-Marie**, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) & Black Jewish Justice Alliance (BJJA). “Every day is winter.” Quoting scripture, Pastor Jn-Marie exhorted the gathering to “hear the cries of fieldworkers you have cheated out of their pay... that reached the ears of God.”

Inside the sukkah, clergy and lay volunteers participated in the ritual of shaking the palm frond known as a *lulav* and the *etrog*, a citrus fruit. Afterwards, they split into small groups and canvassed South Los Angeles neighborhoods, asking neighbors to vote for Measure ULA on the November 8th Los Angeles city ballot. Measure ULA is estimated to raise approximately \$900 million per year through a real estate transfer tax on sales of properties over \$5 million, funds that could be used for direct rental assistance to low-income seniors, purchase of hotels for housing, and legal assistance for tenants threatened with eviction.

The interfaith celebration on the campus of Hebrew Union College brought together a members of the diverse coalition that is fighting for Measure ULA, drawing upon the traditions of justice, humanity, and shared responsibility that are common not only to Judaism but many of the faith traditions and cultures that live in Los Angeles.

“Let’s make the tent of the sukkah a little bigger so that everyone can come in,” said **Pastor Eddie Anderson** of McCarty Memorial Christian Church, LA Voice, who spoke about his own experience of homelessness.

Measure ULA would:

- Invest in innovative solutions that will create housing faster and at a lower cost than what has been tried before
- Provide income assistance to low-income seniors and people with disabilities who are at risk of homelessness, and provide legal aid and outreach services to renters at risk of losing their homes — assisting 475,000 Angelenos each year

- Immediately buy existing and build new affordable housing for 69,000 people (in the first ten years) experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- Leverage real estate transactions of \$5 million or more so that only millionaires and billionaires pay

It also includes the most robust citizens oversight and transparency in LA City history; the fund would be overseen by a Citizens Committee with specific expertise and lived experience on housing and homelessness & supported by paid staff led by an Inspector General.

The event at Hebrew Union College was sponsored by the Yes on ULA Faith Caucus and South Los Angeles Caucus; Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California; Black Jewish Justice Alliance (BJJA); Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice; Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion; IKAR; McCarty Memorial Christian Church; Nefesh; and Temple Israel of Hollywood.

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About the United to House LA Coalition

Not-for-profit neighborhood organizations, labor unions, and community members who live in Los Angeles have come together, with the assistance of homeless service providers — not politicians — to support a ballot initiative that will ask millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share to dramatically reduce homelessness and help those at risk of homelessness with tenant protections, assistance for people facing evictions, emergency income assistance to seniors, and housing for veterans and families in need. Our growing coalition ([full list here](#)) includes:

- *ACLU of Southern California*
- *Dolores Huerta Foundation*
- *Downtown Women's Center*
- *LA CAN*
- *LA County Democratic Party*
- *LA Family Housing*
- *LA/OC Building and Construction Trades Council*
- *Los Angeles County AFL-CIO*
- *PATH*
- *SEIU 2015*
- *Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing*
- *Sunrise Movement Los Angeles*
- *UNITE HERE Local 11*