



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 21, 2020

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Community Coalition “Steps Up” at the 35th Annual Kingdom Day Parade

For 30 years, Community Coalition (CoCo) has stepped up for South Los Angeles by helping build a thriving community and demanding economic equity while creating a unified voice led by community members. Founded by Congressmember Karen Bass in 1990, CoCo works to transform the social and economic conditions in South Los Angeles to empower everyday residents to influence and change public policy through community organizing. Using its 30th Anniversary theme, "30 Years of Stepping Up For South LA," the social justice organization participated in the 35th Annual Kingdom Day Parade, which honors the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Now one of the largest and oldest King Day celebrations in the nation, the event was enjoyed by thousands of residents and showcased more than 150 marching bands, equestrian units, drill teams, and floats. CoCo's float entry featured LED panels that displayed video images of past and present members leading social justice campaigns. These efforts have brought about changes in racial equity, educational funding, economic development, law enforcement reform, and inclusive land-use policies throughout Los Angeles.

Riding on Community Coalition's float was Congressmember Karen Bass, who represents the 37th District, Los Angeles District 8 Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, who was the President of Community Coalition from 2004-2015 and Alberto Retana, CoCo's current CEO & President.

"Just like Community Coalition's 30th Anniversary, the Kingdom Day Parade is a time to reflect on Dr. King's work. We can all follow his example by 'stepping up' to do impactful and transformative work in South LA," Retana stated. "For our anniversary, we've created an entire hashtag campaign to help residents 'step up.' Dr. King's legacy should inspire us to vote in the Presidential election; our hashtag is #stepupandvote. We need to count in the Census, #stepupandbecounted. We want South LA residents to actively participate in the next chapter of change for South LA. Anytime people are volunteering and organizing in our community, we want them to use the #stepupforsouthla hashtag."

In recognition of Community Coalition's 30 years of commitment to the residents of South LA, Verizon presented the organization with a \$100,000 investment to help address the digital divide through increased technological capacity. The global communications and technology leader is dedicated to supporting neighborhoods and building community capacity. "At Verizon, we're on a mission to move the world forward together for good. Thank you

Community Coalition for your continuous leadership and for being a true beacon in the community to inspire hope, change and unity.," stated Sophia Garcia, Executive Director, Community Affairs and Government Relations for Verizon during the check presentation.

Joining Community Coalition's past and present leaders on its float were CNN political commentator Angela Rye, Grammy-nominated artist Aloe Blacc and 40 of CoCo's youth and adult members, who marched the three-mile parade route. Starting at Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Western Avenue, the parade concluded with its annual festival at historic Leimert Park. For the festival, CoCo created and hosted the "Back to the Dream Museum." Using interactive activities that focused on CoCo's current community organizing strategies, the canopied space transformed into a museum setting that reimagined the legacy of Dr. King's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech.

"The message of Dr. King is one of peace, but it is also one of struggle," said Congressmember Karen Bass. "To be here on the 30th Anniversary of Community Coalition is heartfelt to me. It shows that our struggle continues."

Upon entering the Dream Museum, festival-goers received a "passport" which helped them navigate through the exhibits to reflect on the social and economic conditions in their neighborhoods. While the passport educated participants on CoCo's current organizing issues such as the underfunding of South LA schools and jail reform, it also allowed them to share their concerns and reflections regarding the impact of incarceration, access to quality food and produce and building black and brown solidarity.

"My best friend was incarcerated in 2016. ... This shame led him to take his life after only a few months of leaving jail. The grief and sadness I have experienced from his death is irreparable," wrote one community member.

"The grocery stores in [South LA] don't always offer quality produce. The bigger issue is access and proximity to stores. Other neighborhoods have many more options than our community e.g., Whole Foods, Sprouts, Trader Joes, Vons, Jons, and Ralphs," wrote Charli Wilson @vegetalsoul/IG.

"By working together, instead of tearing each other apart and creating division through gangs," black and brown unity can be achieved wrote another Dream Museum participant.

CoCo welcomes all community residents to "step up" for South Los Angeles at its People First Assembly on Saturday, February 8th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., or by visiting www.CoCoSouthLA.org. For more information on Community Coalition's 30th Anniversary calendar of events, go to <https://action.cocosouthla.org/events>.