



For Immediate Release

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**200 Black Workers to Join Labor Leaders at Sept. 6 & 7
Black Worker Congress and Rally to Help Transform L.A.'s Job Crisis**

*Two-Day Event Unites Black Workers with Labor Community to Share Stories of Struggle,
Rally Support and Inspire a Civil Rights Movement for Job Equity in L.A.*

LOS ANGELES, CA—August 14, 2013—About 200 Black workers will meet with prominent labor and community leaders at a Black Worker Congress and rally on September 6 and 7 to inspire a civil rights movement that will help transform the job crisis in Los Angeles. The Black Worker Congress' "Uplifting L.A.: Black Workers Rising for Justice, Jobs and Dignity" is being organized by the Los Angeles Black Worker Center, a grassroots center focused on increasing access to quality jobs, addressing employment discrimination and improving industries that employ Black workers through action and unionization. The center uses worker leadership development, labor-community alliances and research to develop campaigns that aim to improve the conditions of the city's Black workers.

The two-day event will kick-off with the Black Worker Congress, where Black workers will work side-by-side with labor and community leaders to strategize ways to reverse the job crisis in the African-American community in Los Angeles. A rally of Black workers calling for quality jobs and a diverse workforce will be held the following day along with an employment and health resource fair. The Black Worker Congress will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 6 at Holman United Methodist Church in South Los Angeles. The "Ready to Work" rally and resource fair will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at Leimert Park Village in the Crenshaw District.

The first-time ever Black Worker Congress is being organized at a time when the job crisis in the African-American community is at its height. In Los Angeles County, Black unemployment hovers at nearly 20 percent, and unemployment is estimated to be three times as high for Black men ages 16 to 25. Of those who are employed, 30 percent of Black workers in Los Angeles are in low-wage industries, earning \$12 per hour or less.

"The Black Worker Congress is a day of strategy and action among labor leaders and Black workers in our community—from the unemployed and underemployed to unionized workers," says Black Worker Center Director Lola Smallwood Cuevas. "The Black job crisis is one of the greatest worker rights travesties in America. Through this event, workers will define steps for labor leaders to take that will make a real difference in the lives of Black workers and their families."

Leading labor activists are slated to participate as Black Worker Congress panelists, including AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Executive Secretary-Treasurer Maria Elena Durazo, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

Panel discussions will include the state and human toll of Black unemployment and underemployment, how to organize a social movement for change, and critical ways to improve anti-discrimination protections in the workplace. A key panel discussion will focus on the best practices of forging labor and community partnerships to create job opportunities for Black workers, particularly through public sector construction projects. This panel topic comes on the heels of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) recent landmark approval of a project labor agreement requiring a hiring program for more than \$30 billion in transit projects, ultimately creating an estimated 270,000 wage-paying union jobs. One of the first MTA projects to implement this agreement is the Crenshaw/LAX rail line that will be developed in the heart of South Los Angeles.

The "Ready to Work" resource fair will offer employment and health services in one place to help address the needs of unemployed and underemployed Black workers. The Black Worker Center calls on all Black construction workers and their families to attend the resource fair to visit the Black Construction Worker Registry booth. This registry is a list of local construction workers that is shared with city agencies, job programs and major contractors doing business regionally. The resource fair will also feature booths represented by such local employers as the MTA and leading construction unions. Since maintaining good health is an important component of job readiness, the resource fair has partnered with St. John's Well Child and Family Center to provide free health assessments and enroll eligible workers in Obamacare or local and state funded medical programs.

"Our two-day event will showcase the resilience, contribution and power of Black workers who fight against structural unemployment and underemployment in hopes of real opportunity," says Smallwood Cuevas. "We want commitment from leadership in the room to support our center's campaigns, particularly our efforts to create a citywide model for an equitable and representative workforce. We intend on using the Congress' blueprint to develop an action plan that seeks to improve L.A.'s economy for Black workers while expanding organizing, know-your-rights training and political education to benefit Black workers."

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The Los Angeles Black Worker Center develops organized power and grassroots leaders who strengthen all of Los Angeles by advancing economic and racial justice for Black workers and the families who rely on them. The Black Worker Center works to increase access to quality jobs, reduce employment discrimination and improve industries that employ Black workers through coalitional campaigns focused on action and unionization. The Los Angeles Black Worker Center is a project of the UCLA Labor Center. The Black Worker Congress is funded by the Open Society Foundation, Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Veatch Foundation, AFL-CIO, and The California Endowment.