

Stand For Security Coalition

Clergy and Community United in Support of L.A. Security Officers



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Religious, Community Leaders Demand Civil Rights For Security Officers

“Walls of Jericho” Rally Targets Building Owners Over Poverty Wages, Lack of Respect For Largely African-American Workforce

Top African-American leaders staged an impassioned protest today over the treatment of thousands of security officers in Los Angeles. They were joined by a number of Latino lawmakers and dozens of activists from across the city, all of whom converged on the Wells Fargo Tower in downtown.

Clergy, community leaders and elected officials demanded that building owners improve training, wages, benefits and working conditions for the largely African-American workforce, which has been seeking the right to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation’s largest security officers union. They described the security officers battle as a critical civil rights issue in the tradition of Martin Luther King’s Poor Peoples Campaign, which united the themes of racial and economic justice.

“The deplorable conditions endured by security officers in Los Angeles highlight the vital connections between the struggle for civil rights, freedom, economic justice and equality,” said Bishop H.H. Brookings, a colleague of King’s who spoke at today’s rally.

Since September 11, 2001, private security officers’ duties and responsibilities have increased dramatically, but industry standards remain low. Though officers protect multimillion-dollar buildings, the median wage for security officers in L.A. County is only \$8.44 an hour. Security officers’ average hourly wage (adjusted for inflation) has increased by only 9¢ over the last 6 years.

Job turnover rivals that in the fast food industry, and the majority of security officers receive substandard or inconsistent training. Security officers are the first responders in buildings in the event of an emergency, but coordination between private security and police and fire personnel remains limited.

“We simply cannot support our families on the wages we receive, nor can we adequately protect the public without proper training,” said security officer John Wilson. “It is time for building owners in Los Angeles to treat us with respect and dignity.”

Today’s protest was organized by a broad citywide coalition of religious and community leaders formed to support the security officers and draw public attention to the violation of these workers’ civil rights and freedom to form a union of their choice. While building owners have acceded to union representation for their primarily Latino janitorial workforce and their largely Anglo engineering workforce, they are opposing union representation for security officers.

Among the leaders scheduled to attend today's rally were Rev. Norman Johnson, Rev. Joe Oliver, Rev. Albury Thornton, NAACP of Los Angeles President Geraldine Washington, SCLC of Los Angeles President Jim Franklin, L.A. County Federation of Labor Executive Secretary-Treasurer Martin Ludlow, Assemblymember Jerome Horton, Assemblymember Mark Ridley Thomas, Assemblymember Karen Bass, Assemblymember Cindy Montanez, State Senator Gil Cedillo, City Councilmember Jan Perry, City Councilmember Ed Reyes and dozens of others.

To dramatize the conditions of security officers, religious leaders erected eight-foot "Walls of Jericho," which were knocked down as a symbol of the community's determination to overcome injustice despite the resistance of building owners.

"The Bible teaches us that David can beat Goliath," said Rev. William Smart, who also spoke at the rally. "Despite the vast resources of building owners, we stand steadfast in our commitment to helping security officers achieve a better life for themselves, their families and their communities."