

PEOPLE'S STATE OF THE CITY 2020 SCRIPT

ACT 1: CLIMATE, LAND, AND LEGACIES

MAYRA

Among some of the community's darkest points in the past year, I was struggling with my family to find hope. After living in fear of retaliation from our landlord and living in an unsafe home cited with \$22,000 dollars in code violations but no real accountability on our landlord to pay those fines, I felt like nothing could change. What gave me hope was people like my mother, who despite being a single mother never stopped fighting. People like my brother who despite his disabilities never stopped inspiring us. People like Maria with Housing Long Beach who worked with us to stand up for our rights and dignity.

In moments like these, it was the community that reminded me what I was fighting for: for all people to live happy and successful lives, for all families to have what they need to thrive, and for all communities to feel included and seen as valued members of our society. It's a welcomed vision away from the harsh realities of racism, gentrification, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and exclusion that we've been bombarded with in the past few years.

With the dawn of a new decade, the obstacles in our path towards collective survival, unity, and freedom are clear. But there's one thing I am confident about: If we have built any kind of movement in the past few years, then we are ready and able to overcome our challenges and build the world we know is possible.

Those challenges are not easy to overcome, but working people from across the city are proving that the ones who will save us are ourselves. That means we must fight for what we believe in. So let's talk about those obstacles.

AMBER

First, we are in a fight to reclaim our climate, our land, and our people's legacies. Our relationship to land is sacred. Land is connected to all the people who walk across it. The soil bears our food, the land defines our lives, and the earth holds our future. It is our sacred and collective responsibility to care for the land we inhabit and preserve it for generations to come.

We do this by learning from our ancestors, including defending sacred lands like Puvungna from development in the name of scarcity and profit. We as a community must stand in solidarity and move into action with the Tongva people in protecting the sacred site of Puvungna from the non-native interests that continue to speculate the land.

We must care for the earth by teaching each other about the environment and how we can relate to one another. Fighting for our environment is what got me into activism, and this is what the Just Environment Long Beach collaborative has started to build with community-led solutions to environmental pollution and healthy, equitable land use. Together, they have

popularized environmental education and made it accessible for people through bus tours and leadership trainings to build community knowledge about how pollution sources, land use, and transportation shape our neighborhoods and impact our health.

Understanding how we as people are connected to the land we walk on and the air we breathe helps us understand how we are connected to one another despite our differences. If we want to achieve a better future where all people have their needs met and can live fulfilling lives, we must see value in each other because of the color of our skin, the language we speak, and the places we come from.

At the end of the day, wealthy interests who control our environments try to divide us with imaginary borders and constructed differences so they can continue to exploit our land, exploit our communities, exploit our labor, and keep people fighting each other. To that, we say abolish these borders, abolish these divisive tactics, and abolish racism!

MAYRA

In 1926, Long Beach hosted one of the largest white supremacists marches in the LA area at Bixby Park.¹ So when modern day white supremacists announced their plans to rally in Bluff Park and spread their hateful ideology in 2019, the Long Beach community organized and marched against racism and facism. Even more people came together a few months later to push ICE out of Long Beach and march for the dignity and humanity of the caravan migrants reaching the U.S. border. How's that for reclaiming our legacy?

If we truly see ourselves reflected in each other, then we will reject the ideas that political and physical walls can separate us. When we start to look at people who look completely different from us or have completely different experiences from us and we see our fate intertwined with theirs, our individual freedom and liberation from oppression becomes inseparable, regardless of how dark the situations may be.

Three years ago to this month after some of the darkest days, the city's immigrant community and allies came together to begin an amazing journey that would change the course of Long Beach history. After facing a lack of political support and intimidation from the Long Beach Police Department, the Sanctuary Long Beach coalition not only won the Long Beach Values Act to limit police collaboration with ICE, but also established the Long Beach Justice Fund to provide free legal representation to immigrant residents facing deportation.

On top of that, the Justice Fund was established to provide universal representation so any immigrant could get legal help regardless of their background. With the Justice Fund created, the City of Long Beach allocated \$250,000 to jump start the fund and was able to get an

¹ Pulido, L., Barraclough, L., & Cheng, W. (2012). A Peoples Guide to Los Angeles. University of California Press. pg. 170.

additional \$100,000 from the Vera Institute for Justice, bringing the total legal aid to \$350,000. How's that for representation?!

The Long Beach Justice Fund has put Long Beach on the frontlines of protecting immigrant communities, as we now join four other California cities with similar funds and are now part of a network of eighteen other cities across the United States doing similar efforts.² As of February 2020, eighteen Long Beach residents have been given a fighting chance to challenge their deportation case and now have legal representation in court because of the Long Beach Justice Fund. This includes eight young children who now have a fighting chance to continue growing up in Long Beach. Because the community came together and organized, we are helping to keep families together and changing people's lives, like we have for Marco.

Marco is a long-time resident of Long Beach who migrated with his family to the United States as a child. Growing up, he struggled with poverty and trauma, and he got caught up in the criminal justice system. Despite this, he made great efforts to improve his life and completed both anger management and substance abuse programs. Although Marco was detained for six months and not initially eligible for a bond hearing, his attorney provided to him through the Long Beach Justice Fund fought for him and succeeded in getting him released on bond. Let me hear you make some noise if you believe everyone like Marco should have a fighting chance at freedom!

We are going to have more stories like Marco's so long as we continue to have racist immigration laws. Unfortunately not all of our community members can afford to buy their freedom under our racist, classist, and monetized criminal justice system. Tonight, I'm proud to announce that after months of discussions, planning, negotiating, and even taking trips to San Diego to learn from our allies fighting for freedom in the borderlands, the Sanctuary Long Beach coalition is launching the Long Beach Liberation Fund to bail out and free our immigrant neighbors from immigrant detention and bring them home!

AMBER

People like you and I are making history. With these new efforts, this means that: ONE, Long Beach police are limited from working with ICE agents; TWO, the Long Beach Community Defense Network will activate community members to help prevent deportation pick-ups; THREE, detainees will be eligible for free legal representation regardless of their background; and FOUR, they will now have the chance to be bailed out of detention while they fight their deportation cases. This is what true sanctuary looks like!

We've come a long way from the white supremacy marches in the streets, but this is about more than just belonging and justice, and we have a lot of work ahead of us. First, the City of Long Beach's \$250,000 investment in the Long Beach Justice Fund expires this Summer and will be

² Safety and Fairness for Everyone (SAFE) Network. 2019. Vera Institute
<<https://www.vera.org/projects/safe-network/>>

up for a vote in the next budget cycle. We need to show the Mayor and City Council that legal representation matters because people matter, and families matter.

Because immigrants facing deportation do not have the guarantee of an attorney to represent them, 70 percent of detained immigrants face deportation alone.³ Providing legal representation promotes due process and dignity, and results in better outcomes—in fact, represented immigrants are up to ten times more likely to establish a right to remain in the United States.⁴ If you support the City of Long Beach continuing to contribute to the Long Beach Justice Fund, let me hear you make some noise!

Second, we now have a Liberation Fund that needs money for people's freedom! Thanks to the support from our allies at the Orange County Justice Fund, we now have the ability to liberate our people and fight back against the the federal administration's greed and exploitation over the immigrant community.

In the coming months, the Sanctuary Long Beach coalition will be calling on our community to step up and help contribute to the Liberation Fund through fundraisers, house parties, and much more. Unlike the Justice Fund, the Liberation Fund will be completely community-funded and powered by people who believe in freedom like you all do. Help join the effort and stay in the loop by following the coalition on Facebook and Twitter @SanctuaryLB. Every dollar into the Liberation Fund means one dollar closer to someone's freedom!

ACT 2: COMMUNITIES FIRST

AUDRENA

Good evening! My name is Audrena Redmond, I am an unapologetic organizer with the California Faculty Association and Black Lives Matter Long Beach, and I am honored to help carry you through the next part of our journey.

Our fight to reclaim our land and people is not the only obstacle facing us in the years to come. Over the past couple years and months, working people young and old have challenged the status quo ideas of what it means to have a safe community where everyone is valued and has worth.

When the foundation of our society is built around making money and the idea that something or someone is only valuable when there is money attached, then we are left with the problems we see today: crime, violence, displacement, exclusion, and apathy. What would happen if communities were actually first?

³ Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) "Details on Deportation Proceedings in Immigration Court," accessed September 19, 2019, <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/>

⁴ Ingrid V. Eagly and Steven Shafer, "A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 164, no. 1 (2015), 1-91, <https://perma.cc/82F5-WE2D>.

Too often, working people and people of color are left out of the decision-making that impacts our lives—whether through laws purposefully excluding us or people in positions of power imposing their will. In my lifetime, I have known for my people and myself too many occasions where the color of our skin has led to the denial of our dignity and humanity. It can be hard, but trust me, we still rise!

I have the power to change things, just like you all do, even if it's just sharing knowledge and raising our consciousness. So here we go: In Long Beach, we are situated in one of the wealthiest parts of the world and home to some of the wealthiest industries (such as the Port of Long Beach), yet people continue to be left behind. Our struggle for value and worth is both personal and financial, which is why 2019 was the start of working people taking the fight to the budgeting process!

If communities were first, our schools would be safe spaces where every student can be supported to reach their full potential—and this is what people want! That's what hundreds of people have demonstrated over four Saturdays by attending day long forums on how the Long Beach Unified School District can use funding meant for high-needs students to close the achievement and discipline gaps that exist. These forums helped parents and students better understand the school district's budgeting process and give their direct input into how students of color, low-income students, foster youth, special education students, and english language learners could be better supported to graduate.

These forums were just one part of a historical settlement reached between community groups and the school district over the district's misallocation of at least twenty-four million dollars meant for high-needs students through the state's Local Control Funding Formula, or LCFF for short.⁵ When parents, students, and community come together, we can reimagine our schools and engage the community in decisions that matter! Let's make some noise for the parents and advocates involved in making all this happen! We make LCFF work!

But engaging parents and students does not stop with the budget. Late last year, Superintendent Christopher Steinhauser announced his retirement at the end of this school year after eighteen years in the position. Now, the third largest school district in California in one of the country's most diverse cities is looking for a new superintendent and it's a process that everyone has a stake in. The district has 71,800 students in 85 schools throughout Long Beach, Lakewood, Signal Hill, and Avalon on Catalina Island.⁶ More than two-thirds of the students live in lower-income households and over eighty-seven percent of the student population are Black, Indigenous, or students of color.⁷

⁵ Rivera, S. (2019, July 4). Settlement Reached After LBUSD Accused of Misallocating Funds Meant For Disadvantaged Students • Long Beach Post News.

⁶ Long Beach Unified School District: <http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/District/>

⁷ Data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Cumulative enrollment counts can be found in the chronic

Yet, somehow, the outgoing superintendent and Board of Education have decided to dismiss doing a national search for this important position and have reluctantly settled to search for a new superintendent only in California and with limited public engagement to a select few stakeholders.⁸ What?! That ain't right, our students deserve the best. This new Superintendent will guide our schools into the next decade and our community deserves to be heard and engaged in the process to find the best that there is. Make some noise if you agree!

If communities were first, prioritizing education and young people would mean focusing on the youngest among us--I'm talking about babies and children! Those first five years of a child's development are critical steps for someone's future and every child should be nurtured for success.

This is why I'm inspired by the parents, caregivers, and community organizations that are all part of the Best Start Central Long Beach partnership. Together, they are creating the best possible community for families and young children from ages 0 to 5. Now, they are calling on the community to transform the lives of children and their families by engaging in a participatory budgeting process to decide how \$450,000 dollars should be spent on community-identified priorities.

This participatory budgeting process is not only a way to support community projects that build parenting skills or improve access to childcare and housing, it's a way to empower people to get involved in budget decisions that will impact their lives. Since the Long Beach Coalition launched participatory budgeting in 2014, people from across the community have learned the value and worth that comes from democracy and getting involved in the decisions that have a direct impact on people's lives.

If you want to help turn community ideas into funded projects that you can vote on, get involved with Best Start Central Long Beach! If we value democracy and building power, we hope that others in the community and government will build off these efforts and include more participatory budgeting, especially in the city's budget process!

If communities were first, the traditional ways we think people are kept safe would be transformed--and that's happening. Five years ago, people in Long Beach and voters in California passed Proposition 47 to give people second chances and transform our justice system into one that heals people instead of harming people.

Because of Proposition 47, California has reinvested hundreds of millions of dollars from prisons and jails into community-based crime prevention programs proven to keep our neighborhoods safer. Hundreds of thousands of Californians have sought to reduce old felony convictions,

absenteeism data files provided by the CDE Data Reporting Office at:
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesabd.asp>

⁸ Munguia, H. (2020, January 23). Long Beach Unified lays out process to choose next superintendent.

which has opened up access to opportunities like jobs, housing, and family reunification. California now has an infrastructure to connect crime survivors with trauma recovery services that our community needs for healing.

Five years later, Proposition 47 has paved the way for new people to continue reimagining and rebuilding our society into a safer and more inclusive community. This is how working people successfully got the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to outright reject building a new women's jail and mental health jail and instead build a mental health treatment facility.⁹ Special shoutout to Los Angeles-based Dignity and Power Now and the Black Lives Matter regional network for all their work to make this a reality!

This is how immigrant communities banded together to successfully ban private prisons and immigrant detention facilities from operating in California¹⁰. Now, corporations like the GEO Group will no longer profit off immigrants because of this state wide work!

This is how community members and city employees came together to successfully prevent the Long Beach Police Department from taking over the Long Beach Airport after years of anti-labor tactics from city management prioritizing profit over people's safety. This is how people have started to stand up for real accountability and transformation of our police department.

Imagine what would happen if we used our resources to give everyone a home instead of a ticket. Imagine if we had trained mental health professionals respond to mental health emergencies instead of police officers with guns. Imagine if we each knew a neighbor on our block who we could call in a domestic dispute instead of having to rely on officers trained to shoot.

Reducing our reliance on police is more tangible than we think, and the newly formed Long Beach Coalition for Abolition and Transformation wants you to be part of this movement. On February 24th, you are all invited to join the coalition for a community dialogue to re-imagine public safety beginning at 6:30pm at Revive 7th Street Church.

It is up to us to resist the profit-driven interests and politicians who maintain the status quo and tell us that public safety comes at the cost of our own harm. We as the people can transform our society for the better! Make some noise if you are ready to continue building on this momentum in the next decade!

If communities were first, the most marginalized within our society would be prioritized and included. This is what equity means: just and fair inclusion into a society where everyone can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Some strides have been made in Long Beach, like the city's commitment to fund the Office of Aging with an equity lens and offer a new

⁹ Lau, M. (2019, February 13). In landmark move, L.A. County will replace Men's Central Jail with mental health hospital for inmates

¹⁰ Koseff, A. (2019, October 12). California bans private prisons and immigration detention centers.

leadership program for older adults, or the city's continued implementation for the Language Access Policy, which requires city documents and services to be available in Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog.

In reality, we still have a long way to go until we achieve our commitment to equity. Equity acknowledges that there are deliberate, powerful, and alienating barriers to marginalized communities that won't just go away after a year or two. And the longer these issues go unfunded and not cared for, the more the inaction makes the most vulnerable people suffer. For example, the city passed a Language Access Policy in 2014, but it still continues to be underfunded seven years later. So what does that cost us?

The City of Long Beach opened a new \$533 million dollar Civic Center last year¹¹ that while fancy, offered a majority of services and directions in WHAT: English only! Thanks to the advocacy of parents and community members speaking at city council about how difficult navigating these public services were, members of the Language Access Coalition were able to give input to city staff about how today's city hall could be improved for all residents of Long Beach. We call on the city to further this commitment and fully fund the Language Access Policy for the first time in the city's history!

But our people are persistent and resilient! Because of people like Amber who have pushed the Long Beach Unified School District to create more gender neutral restrooms in schools, transgender students will have spaces free from bullying. Because of the hundreds of people who rolled out to Cambodia Town to march in last year's May Day march, Long Beach stood up in solidarity with workers across the world. This is how we build movements and bridge our communities in connection to one another! I hope to also see you out in the street on Friday, May 1st for the May Day Long Beach march in support of International Workers Day.

Finally, if communities were first, we would change the entire way we fund our schools and neighborhoods. That's why young people are leading the way to gather signatures and ensure the Schools and Communities First ballot measure qualifies for the November 2020 ballot.

If we as a community pass the Schools and Communities First measure, \$12 billion dollars every year will be given to schools and local communities across California by closing corporate property tax loopholes and ensuring corporations pay their fair share.¹² Take Google for example, which has a giant corporate building in West Los Angeles. This means that instead of Google paying as low as six dollars per square foot because of corporate loopholes, they would pay three-hundred to four-hundred dollars per square foot just like the other properties in the same neighborhood.¹³

¹¹ Munguia, H. (2019, July 1). Long Beach opens new \$533 million City Hall, Port Headquarters on July 29.

¹² [Analysis: The California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act](#), Southern California Grantmakers

¹³ IBID

Los Angeles County alone is expected to receive \$3.6 billion dollars. Even more, Long Beach would see nearly \$25 million dollars come into our city's general fund.¹⁴ This means a wealth of new resources for our city to do the right thing and invest in the programs and services that actually keep communities safe, such as parks, libraries, housing, language access, the Justice Fund, mental health services, and our health department.

We could begin to reverse the historic trend of our health department getting less than 1% of our general fund while the police department gets 44% of those resources, and they're still asking for more.¹⁵ We can begin to truly invest in the support our communities need and create a city budget that works for the people, not private interests.

ACT 3: HOUSING FOR ALL

LEANNA

Hello, Long Beach! Wow, what a night this has been so far. Right? My name is Leanna Noble and I have lived and organized in many cities and towns, but Long Beach time and time again has been my true home. Take it from this former union organizer, the fight for justice and peace lives strong to this day!

The People's State of the City would not be BY the people without tackling the biggest obstacle of our time: the housing crisis. Raise your hand if you or someone you know has faced a massive rent increase, been displaced from a community, seen gentrification in a neighborhood, or has had to live on the street. That's exactly what I thought. Unfortunately this is our reality.

I gotta tell you, this is not new. When some neighbors and I were fed up with the rent hikes and displacement happening to seniors and low-income families in the 70's, yes the 1970's, we thought we would end everything by creating the Long Beach Housing Action Association. It was the perfect time to engage people in Long Beach who were getting agitated by the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan AGAIN, so we kicked off our campaign for rent control by plastering the Downtown area with flyers and posters on the first day of a new "little" event in town called the Long Beach Grand Prix.

People in Long Beach waged a good fight and brought together anti-racist organizers with housing justice organizers, but little did we know we would have such a long and windy road ahead of us. But here we are now.

2019 was the year that reiterated that our vision of providing safe, healthy, and affordable housing for everyone is one of the most controversial and dangerous ideas ever in a society dominated by the need for profit and wealth. So long as slumlords and developers continue to prioritize profits without any accountability, oversight, and regulation, we will be in a housing

¹⁴ IBID

¹⁵ City of Long Beach Financial Management - Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

crisis. The fact is that in our country, there has always been government regulation in the housing market, whether that was public housing, renter protections, or rent control. Today should be no different, and our elected officials should not get away with scapegoating people over private interests!

This past year was a huge year for housing justice. In a big step for the movement in Long Beach, the Housing Justice Coalition formed as a group of organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives and circumstances of low-income, working class tenants in the City of Long Beach. The housing crisis has reached a point where collective action is the only recourse to push back against a City that has prioritized the interests of developers in the name of economic development over us: the people.

So what progress has come out of this momentum? Unfortunately, the only real positive action came by way of our state government, but it's no small deal. We're talking about the Tenant Protection Act, which became the law of the land this January! What does it do you ask? A few big things.

ONE, it caps annual rent increases to five percent plus the consumer price index, or ten percent, whichever is lower. TWO, rent cannot be raised more than once a year. THREE, people cannot be evicted without just-cause after living in a unit for twelve months. And if you are being evicted by no-fault of your own, you may be entitled to relocation assistance.¹⁶ Make some noise for this huge victory across California!

With the Tenant Protection Act passing in September 2019 but going into effect this past January, a huge gap emerged causing vulnerable tenants to be taken advantage of by greedy landlords. The Housing Justice Coalition mobilized, and worked with Council allies to develop a moratorium on no-fault evictions in Long Beach. Ultimately the voices of the people were heard, the City passed the moratorium ensuring vulnerable tenants were not being taken advantage of.

This wasn't the only gap from the state law that was addressed with local action. Just last night, the community rallied together once more to win an emergency ordinance that will soon close the substantial remodel loophole in the Tenant Protection Act. Now, landlords must prove they have permits to remodel units instead of threatening to displace tenants.¹⁷ Best of all, this ordinance is retroactive to January 1 so tenants currently facing wrongful displacement will be safe for now! Let's give a round of applause to all the tenants, families, seniors, youth, and allies who put in the work to help pass the Tenant Protection Act, eviction moratorium, and remodel ordinance!

The new state law didn't bring all good things however. Before the state even passed the law, community members in Long Beach pushed for and won a citywide tenant relocation ordinance

¹⁶ Chandler, J. (2020, January 6). Here's how California's new rent control law works.

¹⁷ Munguia, H. (2020, February 12). Long Beach closes 'substantial remodel' loophole in Tenant Protection Act.

that provided relocation payment equal to two months rent.¹⁸ Yes, that's right, TWO months worth! The new state law only provides relocation payments of one month's rent. As usual, the Long Beach City Council saw the state law as a minimum that they were okay with, just like the landlords wanted.

Ultimately, the city council repealed the Long Beach Relocation Ordinance. Now the City Council has argued that tenants are still protected--but we know that from real experiences in the community, there's a big difference between one month and two month's rent, especially if moving means having to put up first and last month's rent on top of a security deposit.

It gets worse. After a lengthy process, the City Council created a new law that expands the use of short term rentals in Long Beach, like AirBnB.¹⁹ Now, property owners can list up to three properties without limitations, opening the door for corporations to steal housing off the market and build ad-hoc hotels in neighborhoods. Let me emphasize this: If I own three properties in Long Beach, I can have all three on home sharing websites like AirBnB.

Why does this matter? Long Beach is a renter's city. Renters makeup sixty percent of the city, and we are the majority.²⁰ But with this new law allowing multiple listings for multiple days a year, the front door is wide open for landlords, developers, and corporations to continue stealing valuable housing off the market while our neighbors are pushed out onto the street.

We can stand here today and say that our city leaders have NOT been standing up for the rights of working class tenants here in our city. People's homes and livelihoods are on the line, and it is our collective action that will end homelessness. That's why people across the city are continuing to learn their rights and organize their buildings as tenant unions and seize the power that we have as a collective. When we stand together, we win!

Look around. This is our community, and we will need each other as we look towards our future obstacles. Eight years ago, former Mayor Bob Foster and the City Council unanimously passed the Downtown Plan, which paved the way for the luxury development you see around us today.

²¹

So what was missing from that plan? Real community benefits. Benefits like job requirements for Long Beach workers, actual permanent jobs, investment into long-neglected neighborhoods, and most importantly, affordable housing in any new developments. Yes, despite the largest housing mobilizations ever seen in the City to that date, Mayor Foster and the City

¹⁸ Munguia, H. (2019, December 4). Long Beach repeals tenant relocation ordinance, but ensures renters will still have protections.

¹⁹ Ruiz, J. (2020, January 22). Council caps un-hosted short-term rentals at 1,000 with new law • Long Beach Post News.

²⁰ Chandler, J. (2020, January 6). Here's how California's new rent control law works.

²¹ Staff Reports. (2012, January 11). Council Adopts Downtown Plan • Long Beach Post News.

Council--which included Mayor Robert Garcia when he was a city councilmember--REFUSED to include ANY affordable housing in the Downtown Plan.

And here we are in a housing crisis. With the Angel's no longer coming to Long Beach, Mayor Robert Garcia called on the City Council and staff to start drafting a new Downtown Plan 2.0 later this year which would include the elephant lot and potential redevelopment.²² If we have what's around us as a testament to what unchecked and inequitable development looks like, we cannot allow this to happen again. We need affordable housing now!

The fact of the matter is, Long Beach is and has continued to be severely behind in building affordable housing. Out of the 7,048 affordable units needed to be built in Long Beach between 2013 and 2021 only 1,650 building permits have been issued as of December 2017.²³ That means 77% of the affordable housing the City said we would have to build by 2021 hasn't even had a permit issued.²⁴ No more gentrification plans! We need a community plan!

In the months ahead, we will have significant housing policy battles, including the fight for Inclusionary Zoning so we can require developers in all parts of the city to provide affordable housing units in new projects. We don't know what will happen, but we know that the people, united, will never be defeated.

ACT 4: CALL TO ACTION

AUDRENA

Something I've learned in my life is that egos come and go. But movements--movements last beyond lifetimes. It's easy to get mad, and it's easy to get worked up. The question then becomes: "so what are you going to do about it?"

If we want to know what the next decade looks like, we must look to the past and learn from our triumphs and failures. The power and the energy in this room is electric, and just as it has done over the last eight years, it will propel us into the next year of building the world we know is possible. Let us remember the words of Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

In 2019, fifty community leaders graduated from the Long Beach Rising leadership training to become future organizers for racial, social, and economic justice in their communities.

Concession stand workers at the Long Beach Convention Center fought and won a union to

²² Pimentel, J. (2020, January 15). After Angels 'Bummer,' Long Beach Looks To Elephant Lot For New Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.bisnow.com/los-angeles/news/commercial-real-estate/after-angels-spurn-long-beach-city-pre pares-plan-for-waterfront-elephant-lot-102538>

²³ Addison, B. (2019, July 11). What the City's inclusionary ordinance-essential for easing affordability in housing-could look like • Longbeachize. Retrieved from <https://lbpost.com/longbeachize/addison-inclusionary-ordinance-affordable-housing-dtlb>

²⁴ IBID

have a voice on the job. We don't need to look far to be inspired into action, but it's up to us to rise up to the challenges ahead of us.

MAYRA

Tonight, we've recounted the obstacles that lie in the path of our collective vision, and the community wins driven by people power. Now, we ask that you all commit to three important tasks that will move us closer to a more just society.

First: let's get counted in the 2020 Census! The census gives us a picture of who lives in our country. It's a process that takes place every 10 years in which we literally count everyone living in the nation of ALL ages, races, immigration statuses, and ethnic groups. No matter who you are, we ALL count and we are all important in the eyes of the census.

The information collected in the census is used to make important decisions like how much money our schools should receive and how much goes to support health care for our loved ones. The count will also determine our political representation, everything from U.S. Congress, to State Representatives, and even City Council districts. Once the census count is completed, Long Beach will undergo a community redistricting process to redraw the city council districts that will define us for the next decade.

Long Beach has much to gain if we are all counted, and much to lose if we aren't. In fact, during the last census count, Los Angeles County lost more than \$650 million dollars because too many people didn't participate and were not counted.²⁵ Too many people from our neighborhoods in Central, West, and North Long Beach have historically not been counted in the census. We cannot let that happen this time around. It's time to change that. And because census information is used to make important decisions for the next 10 years, so much is at stake for Long Beach and our families.

Those who work hard to silence the voices and deny votes of our communities are also working hard to keep us from participating in the census. There's also real barriers like distrust in the government, language access, and access to the internet. But don't be intimidated: your information is protected by law and cannot be shared with anyone, including other government agencies or the courts. And our community leaders are making sure that laws are followed and that your information is kept safe.

By joining the We Count Long Beach campaign, we can all ensure our households and neighbors get counted in the 2020 Census. We'll need all of you to help spread the word and get everyone informed and counted! Participating in the census is standing up and saying we are here and we matter. Stand up for your children, for your friends, and for yourself by making

²⁵ USC Center for Social Innovation. (2020). Every Angeleno Counts: The 2020 Census in Los Angeles. Retrieved from <https://usc.data.socrata.com/stories/s/Every-Angeleno-Counts-The-2020-Census-in-Los-Angel/anyu-vh6b/>

sure you are counted. All of us in Long Beach have a duty to participate in the census. Stand up! Stand up and make some noise if you are committed to getting counted!

AUDRENA

Second: let's get out the vote! Whether you are able to vote in our democracy or not, we all have a role to play in lifting our communities up. In addition to this March being our statewide presidential primary, voters in Long Beach city council districts two, six, and eight will be voting on who will be their city council members. These are all pivotal seats that represent some of the most working class neighborhoods in the city, including Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Wrigley, Cambodia Town, the Carmelitos, and the 10th street corridor.

In addition, two school board seats are up for grabs at the Long Beach Unified School District Board of Education, with one representing Central and Westside Long Beach and the other representing East Long Beach. Since school board members never face term limits²⁶, the fact that these are open seats are a big deal with the winners potentially impacting our schools for many years to come.

Now figuring out who to vote for and where people are at on the issues can sometimes be a challenge, especially in local elections. That's why the Long Beach Rising coalition and VoiceWaves Youth Media have compiled a candidate survey in English, Spanish, and Khmer that is accessible online to all. Are you wondering where the city council candidates stand on youth investment, renters rights, the 710 freeway expansion, workers rights, and more? Help us share the candidate guide far and wide so voters in the second, sixth, and eighth districts can be informed voters! Tonight we have printed a sample of some of these questions, which we will be handing out on your way out of the sanctuary. Remember to pick it up!

Beyond candidates, we have key ballot measures that will help us move our unifying vision forward. On the March ballot, Measure R will bring much-needed justice reform to Los Angeles County. If we can pass Measure R, we will invest in rehabilitation and mental health treatment, reduce the jail population, and root out corruption to prevent abuses by the Jails and Sheriff's Department. In November 2020, Schools and Communities First will close those corporate loopholes and make corporations pay their fair share. Make some noise if you're ready to vote to reform LA jails and transform the way we fund schools and communities!

Pretty big stuff, right? My grandmother used to tell me: "keep living, it gets more interesting." These are all of course big opportunities, but biggest of all: the way we vote in California is changing. Instead of traditional polls on election day, Long Beach voters can vote at any Vote Center across the city and county. Raise your hand if you got one of those county voter guides in the mail?

²⁶ ARTICLE XXII. - EDUCATION. (2020). Long Beach Municipal Code. Retrieved from https://library.municode.com/ca/long_beach/codes/city_charter?nodeId=CH_ARTXXIIED

These Vote Centers will be open 11 days prior to the election, giving voters 11 days to vote from February 22nd to March 3rd. Here you can cast your ballot, drop off your vote by mail ballot, or even register to vote the same day that you cast your ballot. That's right, we now have same day voter registration in California! Voting is changing in California, and in a progressive way, but we must ensure that everyone in our community is aware and informed. Make some noise if you're ready to help us get the word out and get out the vote!

AMBER

Third, and finally: we want you to become a member of Long Beach Rising! The calls to action don't end here and we hope tonight has fired you up to commit to this movement for a more equitable Long Beach. If you're ready, we want you to text your name and zip code to 562-414-4404 to become a member of our Long Beach Rising coalition.

As a member, you'll receive the latest news, information, and actions related to what we discussed here tonight. We have a world to win, so be sure to text your name and zip code to 562-414-4404 right now! You can also find the number on the program. Be sure to join, and invite others to text their name and zip code to 562-414-4404 to stay informed.

AUDRENA

Before we part ways tonight, we want to leave you with some closing thoughts. Change is coming, whether the powers that be like it or not. The question becomes, what do we need to imagine as we prepare for it? How will we articulate our vision? How we will care for one another? How will we experience our collective beauty and humanity in every moment?

The People's State of the City is not the solution, people. YOU are the solution. I hope that before you leave, you can take in all that you have heard tonight in this historic sanctuary and say hello to someone you may not know. You're all here because you care. This is our community, and it will take all of us. It's a long road, but I am reminded of these words:

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now. Love mercy now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

Change is coming, and our futures are intertwined together. We must care for each other and be here for one another. And that will take time, commitment, and a willingness to step outside of the comfort and lean into the unknown, together. Thank you for being here tonight.