



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Empowerment Congress Summit**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Empowerment Congress Summit will take place Saturday, January 18 at the University of Southern California. The summit's plenary session, which begins at 9 a.m. in Bovard Auditorium, will feature a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Nelson Mandela, and will have participation from an array of elected officials and community leaders. Participating will be: Compton Mayor Aja Brown; Lynwood Mayor Aide Castro, USC President C. L. Max Nikias, attorney and social justice advocate Sandra Fluke, surgeon, medical researcher, businessman and philanthropist Patrick Soon-Shiong, Dr. Robert K. Ross, CEO of the California Endowment, Irma Muñoz, founder of the environmental non-profit environmental justice group Mujeres de la Tierra and Laphonza Butler, president of Service Employees International Union--the United Long Term Care Workers' Union.

Widely regarded as the forerunner to the neighborhood council movement the Empowerment Congress was founded by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas when he was a Los Angeles City Councilman. Each year, the various committees of the organization come together to re-dedicate themselves to activism and advocacy. This year's summit will honor the civil and human rights legacies of Martin

Luther King, Jr. and former South African President Nelson Mandela, who died last month. Both King and Mandela were enormously influential in the struggle to establish equal rights for all human beings and inspired generations of activists here in Los Angeles and around the world.

Following the plenary session, there will be a press availability with Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and other keynote speakers. Workshops led by distinguished experts in their fields will begin at 11 a.m. These panel discussions will focus on a variety of issues such as the sex trafficking of minors, the Affordable Care Act and its impact, the future of the LAX-Metro airport connector, challenges facing men and boys of color and a discussion led by a youth summit group on sex, drugs and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases.

Leading up to the summit, for the third consecutive year, elected officials and community leaders both from the area and from other states, including Birmingham, Ala. Compton, Ca., Doña Ana, New Mexico, East Los Angeles, Ca., Louisville, Ky. Houston, Texas and Stockton, Ca. will participate in the Empowerment Congress Leadership Institute (ECLI) funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in the County of Los Angeles.

“This year’s summit will bring together people with a variety of backgrounds and interests,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “But what everyone has in common is the desire to make their communities better. Whether it is environmental justice, ending violence against girls and women, helping men and young boys of color get ahead in life or helping the homeless and mentally ill, everyone at the Empowerment Congress Summit recognizes that we are all in this together. That is why we honor –and seek to build on — the legacies of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela.”

The event is free, but registration for attendees is required:

<http://empowermentcongress.org/>

**What: 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Empowerment Congress Summit**

**When: 9 a.m. Saturday, January 18**

**Where: Bovard Auditorium, University of Southern California**

**Who:** **Mark Ridley-Thomas**, Los Angeles County supervisor, second district  
**Aja Brown**, mayor of Compton  
**Laphonza Butler**, president Service Employees International Union  
**Aide Castro**, mayor of Lynwood  
**Sandra Fluke**, attorney and social justice advocate  
**Irma Munoz**, founder, Mujeres de la Tierra Founder  
**Max Nikias**, president of University of Southern California  
**Robert Ross**, CEO the California Endowment  
**Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong**, chairman of the Chan Soon-Shiong Family Foundation, medical researcher and businessman