

BET TZEDEK NOW

Dear Friends,

Bet Tzedek wishes you a happy September and Jewish New Year, with **Rosh Hashanah** having started last Friday and **Yom Kippur** approaching. We hope you've been celebrating with family, friends, and loved ones. Amid the Jewish high holidays, **National Hispanic Heritage Month** also began last Friday, September 15th, and runs through October 15th! "Hispanic" is an umbrella term for the diverse people and cultures originating from Spanish-speaking countries including Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and parts of South America, and Spain*. The Hispanic population of the United States is the largest minority or ethnic group, constituting roughly one out of five or 19.1 percent of the nation's total population, according to the 2022 U.S. census.



Happy Hispanic Heritage Month!

We're thrilled to celebrate the heritage, culture, and contributions of Hispanic Americans and Hispanic immigrants, and are highlighting notable Hispanic figures, facts, and statistics about the community; resources for economic growth for Spanish speakers; and resources for immigrant populations on our social media accounts. You can find the accounts at the bottom of this newsletter. We'd love for you to follow us and join the conversation!

**Distinction between Hispanic and Latino communities: Hispanics include individuals from Spanish-speaking countries including Spain while Latinos include individuals from Latin American countries, including non-Spanish speakers, and does not include Spain.*

The Trifecta of Unaffordable Housing, Unlivable Wages & Wage Theft

At Bet Tzedek, we work to ensure underserved populations, including Hispanic Americans, Latinos, and immigrants, can succeed economically. As of 2021, Hispanic [homeownership in California](#) was at 45.6 percent (compared to white homeownership, which was at 64.5 percent), making the majority of the population renters.

The Los Angeles Workers Center (LAWCN) recently published a [concept paper](#) about the trifecta of unaffordable housing, unlivable wages, and wage theft. In their findings, they highlighted the fact that Los Angeles is the wage theft capital of the country, with 88 percent of low-wage workers experiencing a violation. They further postulated that wage theft is the primary reason for the rise of homelessness in the city, so it's not surprising that L.A. is also the homelessness capital of the U.S.; the City has more than 46,000 people living on the streets and L.A. County has nearly 76,000.

The concept paper goes on to note that 65 percent of Latinos were one paycheck away from losing housing prior to COVID. Between 2021 and 2022, homelessness among Latinos spiked 26 percent in the County and 30 percent in the City. With loss of income at the top of the list of causes (three times the prevalence of other causes like substance abuse), wage theft acutely affects immigrant Angelenos, who are more than twice as likely as their U.S.-born counterparts to earn below minimum wage.

According to LAWCN, "Los Angeles can lead the way in reducing wage theft AND homelessness by establishing a one-stop shop for wage theft claims; engaging in effective, strategic enforcement of wage labor standards, including a Workplace Justice Fund to support workers reporting violations; and building a pipeline to quality jobs in labor standards enforcement."

Bet Tzedek is fighting to ensure economic stability for marginalized groups like Hispanic, Latino, and immigrant communities. In addition to efforts supporting our low-wage workers combating wage theft, Bet Tzedek's [L.A. Regional Small Business Legal Aid Program](#) connects the L.A. region's small business owners with legal experts who provide them with help ranging from basic legal information to representation by an attorney, thereby boosting the economic power of local small business owners and their communities. We also offer a range of services that assist tenants, homeowners, and unhoused individuals. [Learn more here.](#)



Kenny and BT Foster Youth Immigration Attorney, Joanna Fluckey

Kenny's Story and Our Essential Work with the Hispanic Community

At Bet Tzedek, we have made fighting for the protection of and equitable access to justice for immigrant children one of our agency's missions. One success story from this work involves an undocumented foster child from Honduras, who was referred to Bet Tzedek in 2019 after suffering neglect and an unstable living situation. When Bet Tzedek received Kenny's case, USCIS had issued a Notice of Intent to Deny her Special Immigrant Juvenile application. The immigration team filed multiple responses with USCIS. Eventually, her visa was approved, and BT moved on to file for lawful permanent resident status. After four years of hard work, Kenny received her green card!

Kenny currently works with children with disabilities. She is set to complete her associate degree in Sociology next spring and plans to become a social worker. She is also looking forward to a vacation in Baja now that she can leave the country.

"What my lawful permanent resident status means to me is that dreams do come true, and hard work pays off always when your heart is in the right place," Kenny says. "My residence status is going to open a lot of doors for my future success, and I truly can't wait for the big things that I will accomplish."

If you are an advocate seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) findings or are representing a client seeking a specific form of guardianship following parental deportation, [click here](#). And if you know of a child in similar circumstances here in Los Angeles, please let us know at intake@bettzedek.org.

Two Legal Experts Join Bet Tzedek's Directing Team



Mary Tanagho Ross
Directing Attorney of Economic Justice



Henrissa Bassey
Directing Attorney of the
Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project (PEHP)

We are so pleased to have **Mary Tanagho Ross** as Bet Tzedek's new **Directing Attorney of Economic Justice**.

[Read about Mary HERE](#)

We are also thrilled to have **Henrissa Bassey** as our new **Directing Attorney of the Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project (PEHP)**.

[Read about Henrissa HERE](#)

Help a Disabled Senior with Her Estate Planning

Case Description: Ms. D is 77 years old and has various medical conditions. She is on Medi-Cal and received limited income from Social Security. Ms. D's only asset is a house she purchased in Yucca Valley. Ms. D eventually paid off the mortgage and currently is renting out the home to a tenant. She lives in Los Angeles in order to be close to her doctors. Ms. D has four children and would like the house to go to one son.

Work Required & Deadlines: Assist Ms. D with her estate planning needs.

Notes: Ms. D speaks Spanish so this case is best suited for an attorney who speaks Spanish or is able to secure an interpreter.

Staffing: This case is best suited for an attorney with estate planning experience.

If interested, contact Director of Pro Bono Programs, Sara Levine, at slevine@bettzedek.org.

Join the Bet Tzedek Team!

Have a passion for helping underserved residents in the community? Want to work alongside dedicated staff and volunteers who help upwards of 100,000 people per year?

Here are some critical positions we need to fill, plus more (see button below):

[DIRECTING ATTORNEY: INTEGRATED COMMUNITY & HOLOCAUST SERVICES](#)

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