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Media Advisory for Saturday, April 13, 2019

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ON THE HEELS OF LATEST UNIVERSITY SCANDAL, COMMUNITY LEADERS, RESIDENTS, USC STUDENTS AND FACULTY TO ERECT TENT CITY AT ENTRANCE OF 'FESTIVAL OF BOOKS,' DEMAND IMMEDIATE ACCOUNTABILITY FROM USC ADMINISTRATION FOR BEING 'BAD NEIGHBOR, BAD EMPLOYER AND BAD LEADER' IN LOS ANGELES

String of Recent Scandals Rocking Higher Education Demonstrates Yet Again How USC Has Lost Its Way; Tent City to Focus on Ground-Level Effects of Destructive Policies Perpetuated at USC and the Urgent Need for a New Direction from Incoming President

LOS ANGELES—A broad coalition of students, academia, and various Los Angeles community groups will erect a Tent City near the University of Southern California (USC) campus' Trousdale Parkway entrance at this weekend's "Los Angeles Times-USC Festival of Books." The coalition will demand immediate accountability from USC leadership for their fundamental role in perpetuating gentrification, displacement, and income inequality in Los Angeles. The Tent City is expected to remain at USC until the coalition's demands are met.

WHO: USC Forward, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), the LA Tenants Union, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), SEIU 721, USC students and other concerned faculty

WHAT: Tent City on the edge of the "Los Angeles Times-USC Festival of Books"

WHEN: Sat., Apr. 13, 2019 at starting at Noon

WHERE: USC Entrance
(At West Jefferson Blvd. and Trousdale Pkwy.)
Los Angeles, CA 90037

BACKGROUND: USC has lost its way. Instead of being an institution of higher learning focused on values that serve to strengthen their student body and ultimately benefit communities in Southern California, USC is now a source of non-stop scandals ranging from high-level staff allegedly accepting admission bribes and on-campus drug use by the medical school dean to the cover up of decades of alleged sexual assault on students by a USC gynecologist.

Aside from the recent admissions scandals currently making headlines, USC has become a source of greedy policies that are hurting everyone—including students, faculty, local business and residents in the surrounding community. USC continues to drive the widening gap of income inequality in Los Angeles through skyrocketing tuition, bloated administrative salaries, and unnecessary and costly infrastructure projects that are driving long-time residents out of their homes.

With an endowment of \$5.5 billion and assets totaling over \$9 billion, the University has the resources and capacity to be a good neighbor in South LA, and to pay their fair share to support the vital public services that residents rely on.

Indeed, instead of real investment in the graduate workers and faculty responsible for student learning or in the neighborhoods nearby, the university has continued to dump money into lavish infrastructure projects and administrative salaries. USC faculty and graduate workers struggle with contingent, part-time work for low pay along with rampant workplace issues – including alleged sexual harassment and intimidation and retaliation toward those involved in organizing efforts. Moreover, USC's continued development push in South Los Angeles has disrupted the neighborhood around the university, pushing lifelong residents in the surrounding area out of their homes and placing an immense strain on both city and county resources.

USC is one of the nation's premier private research universities and the largest private employer in Los Angeles County. The institution has the resources and capacity to make drastic improvements to the quality of life for its employees while simultaneously behaving as a responsible neighbor in South Los Angeles. Yet under the leadership of former USC President C.L. Max Nikias, the university consistently failed to do so.

"USC is a global leader in academic achievement but it is also a citadel of profit in higher education," said Bob Schoonover, President of SEIU Local 721, a key part of the coalition creating the Tent City this week. "As a great power in this town, USC has a great responsibility to its students, to its employees and to the surrounding community. That means paying attention when USC's neighbors are mercilessly kicked out of their homes to make way for more luxury housing that nobody in South L.A. can afford, but which USC's civic leaders insist we keep building. That means taking immediate, effective action to ensure that the USC campus is free from sexual harassment and assault. That means paying living wages to USC's employees – something that is certainly within reach for a university sitting on a \$5.5 billion endowment and over \$9 billion in assets. And that means respecting the rights of USC graduate workers and faculty to collectively organize. It's long past time for USC to begin ridding itself of its reputation as a bad neighbor, bad employer, and bad leader. We demand a real investment in student learning. We demand a real investment in the surrounding community. We demand accountability now – and we will fight until we get it."

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