



## 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL HOUSING RIGHTS SUMMIT

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# RIGHTING WRONGS, CREATING HOPE

APRIL 21, 2022  
9 AM - 12 PM  
VIRTUAL

[#HousingRightsSummit](#)



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WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN HOUSING

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- Danny Thomas

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- Robert and Marilyn Johnson



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**HOUSING RIGHTS SUMMIT**  
**RIGHTING WRONGS, CREATING HOPE**

## Summit Agenda

**9:00**

### **Opening Remarks**

**Dennis Perez**, Housing Rights Center Board of Directors  
**Chancela Al-Mansour**, Executive Director, Housing Rights Center

**9:35**

**Adam Schiff**, U.S. Congressman (CA-28)  
**Holly J. Mitchell**, Los Angeles County Supervisor (D-2)

**9:45**

### **Movements for Land Return and Reparations**

**Lori Gay**, CEO, Neighborhood Housing Services of Los Angeles County  
**Kavon Ward**, Founder and CEO, Where Is My Land  
**Jonathan Burgess**, Co-Author, *Gold Rush Burgess Descendants*

**10:25**

### **Special Performance: LA CAN Freedom Singers**

**10:30**

### **Award Ceremony**

**Rich Elbaum**, Member, Care First South Pasadena  
**Will Hoadley-Brill**, Member, Anti-Racism Committee of South Pasadena  
**Tamara Binns**, Assistant City Manager, City of South Pasadena  
**Kavon Ward**, Founder and CEO, Where Is My Land

**10:45**

### **Strategies to Protect Section 8 Voucher Holders**

**Leona Rollins**, Director of Investigations, Housing Rights Center  
**Rodney Leggett**, Staff Attorney, Housing Rights Center

**11:05**

### **Eviction Crisis Policy Updates**

**Lorraine López**, Senior Attorney, Western Center on Law and Poverty  
**Alexander (Sasha) Harnden**, Public Policy Advocate, Inner City Law Center  
**Nisha Vyas**, Senior Attorney, Western Center on Law and Poverty  
**Javier Beltran**, Deputy Director, Housing Rights Center

**11:45**

### **Closing Remarks**

**Chancela Al-Mansour**, Executive Director, Housing Rights Center

**11:55**

### **Raffle**





# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL HOUSING RIGHTS SUMMIT:

## Executive Director's Welcome



**W**elcome friends, colleagues, and community partners to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Housing Rights Summit. Every April, the Housing Rights Center joins fair housing councils and advocates across the nation in celebrating Fair Housing Month and the passage of the federal Fair Housing Act. Days after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April 1968, a divided federal government, including President Lyndon B. Johnson, made it illegal to discriminate in the sale, rental, financing, and advertising of housing on the basis of race, religion, or ethnicity. Often called the last great piece of civil rights legislation, it passed quickly — partly to honor Dr. King's dream, but also to extinguish the flames of outrage and despair illuminating our cities over his murder and Black Americans' ongoing struggle to survive as poverty and racism surged.

Over the last two years, we have continued to witness racial reckonings, hostilities, and realizations. We have seen COVID-19 decimate the health, finances, and overall wellbeing of our most vulnerable communities, alongside a continuing increase in hate crimes and intolerance. The racial wealth gap and black homeownership rates are lower than before the Fair Housing Act passed, with the most dramatic decline happening in the last 20 years due to predatory lending, the foreclosure crisis, low economic gains, skyrocketing housing prices and ever-present housing discrimination. Finally, in the next several months, the fight to save people from homelessness will have to escalate as emergency eviction protections come to an end or are ignored, leaving some tenants owing thousands of dollars in back rent despite successful emergency rental assistance and new eviction defense programs. Please read on, however, as there is some good news to elevate!

At this year's summit, HRC will explore our theme **Righting Wrongs, Creating Hope** by analyzing past instances of racial violence and housing discrimination, and identifying solutions that attempt to right those wrongs as much as possible. We will acknowledge and honor the courageous work of **Where is My Land** and its founder **Kavon Ward** in redressing past acts of racial violence that stripped the Bruce family of generational wealth with its groundbreaking advocacy for the return of Bruce Beach, and the Burgess family's similar fight in Coloma, CA. We will provide information, tools, and resources on the eviction protections and rental assistance programs throughout Los Angeles and Ventura Counties and under state law and programs. HRC's housing advocates will discuss the findings of our recent source of income testing study and highlight our work to protect the rights of Section 8 tenants from discrimination and exclusion from rental housing. Finally, we will present the Housing Rights Center's **Fair Housing Advocacy Award** to the **Anti-Racist Committee of South Pasadena, Care First of South Pasadena**, and the city staff who led the South Pasadena City Council to acknowledge its history of racial exclusion by approving a resolution condemning the City's history as a "sundown town," along with its past practices of institutionalized racism against Mexican, Asian and Black Americans.

We are grateful and excited to have experts and leaders in all of these fields join us today to put a spotlight on fair housing, and to share their wisdom and insight into paths toward equity and reparation.

Thank you,

**Chancela Al-Mansour**  
Executive Director



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[www.housingrightscenter.org](http://www.housingrightscenter.org)

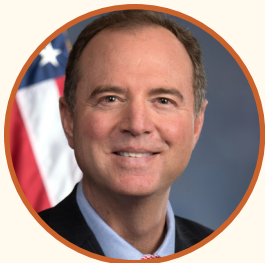


## Opening Remarks



On November 3, 2020, Supervisor **Holly J. Mitchell** was elected to serve the Second District of Los Angeles County. During her tenure in the California State Legislature, Supervisor Mitchell represented the 54th District for three years as an Assemblymember and later served seven years as State Senator for the 30th District. As State Senator, she also held the distinction of being the first African American to serve as Chair of the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. In this capacity, she led the passage of state budgets each totaling over \$200 billion for the fifth largest economy in the world. She was recently honored as a 2020 Visionary by Oprah Winfrey's O Magazine for making California the first state in the nation to ban natural hair discrimination with The CROWN Act.

Prior to serving in elected office, Supervisor Mitchell was CEO of Crystal Stairs, California's largest nonprofit dedicated to child and family development. Before leading Crystal Stairs, she worked as a legislative advocate at the Western Center for Law and Poverty.



Congressman **Adam Schiff** represents California's 28th Congressional District. In his 11<sup>th</sup> term in the House of Representatives, Schiff currently serves as the Chair of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which oversees the nation's intelligence agencies.

Schiff went to Stanford University and Harvard Law School. He then moved to Los Angeles to serve as a law clerk for Judge William Matthew Byrne, Jr. Schiff then joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles as a federal prosecutor. In 1996, Schiff was elected to the California State Senate. In 2000, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he has served ever since. He currently chairs the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and is on leave from the House Appropriations Committee.



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## Movements for Land Return and Reparations



**Lori Speese Gay** attended UC Davis (UCD) where she earned her BS degree in Development, Resource and Consumer Economics and then earned her MBA degree at Pepperdine University. She embarked on her career with Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of Los Angeles County, worked her way up through the ranks and is currently the President and CEO.



**Kavon Ward** is an award-winning spoken word artist and activist. In the past decade, Kavon has won 1<sup>st</sup> place at the historic Apollo Theater and shared the stage with gospel artists Hezekiah Walker, Patti LaBelle, and Fantasia and activists Joe Madison and Dick Gregory to perform her piece, “I Am Trayvon Martin.”

Kavon is the founder of Justice for Bruce’s Beach. She started her advocacy around Bruce’s Beach on Juneteenth, 2020 when she and other co-founders of a group in the South Bay put together a picnic at Bruce’s Beach to shed light on Black history in Manhattan Beach, specifically the land stolen from Black landowners Willa and Charles Bruce. Kavon is a reparative justice consultant and CEO/Founder of Where Is My Land, an organization focused on getting Black land back nationally. She is a former Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) fellow and public policy lobbyist. Kavon holds a BA in Communications and a Masters of Public Administration.



During a time of unprecedented interest in genealogy, reparations, and social justice, **Where Is My Land** is determined to help Black Americans reclaim stolen land and secure restitution. Where Is My Land helps Black Americans discover connections to stolen land through research, data, and technology; helps families and descendants reclaim stolen land and secure restitution through traditional advocacy and digital amplification; and educates the public about the hidden history of Black land theft by whites through partnerships, content, and programming.



**Jonathan Burgess**, a Battalion Chief with the Sacramento Fire Service, is co-founder with his twin brother, Matthew, of Burgess Brothers Food. Jonathan is co-author of the children’s book Gold Rush Burgess Descendants and founder of the California African American Gold Rush Association, a 501c(3). Jonathan speaks publicly on entrepreneurship, California Gold Rush history, and genealogy. The Burgess Brothers are well on their way toward rebuilding a legacy started by their great-great-grandfather, who was brought to Coloma,

California in 1850 as a slave, was freed, struck gold, bought land, and became a blacksmith and community leader.



# Strategies to Protect Section 8 Voucher Holders



**Rodney Leggett** is a staff attorney on the Litigation team at Housing Rights Center. He graduated from the University of California, Irvine School of Law and received his B.A. in political science from Howard University. During law school, he worked as a Summer Associate at Relman, Dane & Colfax and a Legal Intern for the ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties. After graduating from law school, Rodney clerked for Chief Judge Miranda Du of the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.



**Leona Rollins** obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a concentration in Ethnic and Racial Disparities and Social Injustices and graduated Summa Cum Laude from California State University, Dominguez Hills. Ms. Rollins has been with the Housing Rights Center since August 2010. Initially hired as a Case Analyst and Investigator, she investigated more than 3,000 illegal housing discrimination complaints and successfully conciliated more than 1,200 cases.

In May 2015, Ms. Rollins was promoted to the Director of Counseling. She supervised a team of Housing Counselors, interns and volunteers and oversaw the database and intake process of more than 20,000 individuals and families on an annual basis seeking counseling and information on their fair housing and landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities.

In October 2019, Ms. Rollins was promoted to the Director of Investigations. She now supervises a team of Case Analysts and Investigators and oversees the fair housing counseling and investigation of more than 2,500 illegal housing discrimination complaints on an annual basis.



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## Eviction Crisis Policy Updates



**Lorraine Lopez** is a Chicago native and has been working on tenants' rights issues since 2005. A former public housing resident, she has lived experience with housing instability and the challenges of participating in low-income housing programs. Lorraine began her legal career in 2005 as an Equal Justice Works fellow at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (now LAF). In 2007, she moved to Los Angeles to work for Eviction Defense Network (EDN) before taking a position at Inner City Law Center in 2009. Lorraine was part of the first Los Angeles Shriver Housing Pilot Project team and eventually became a Supervising Attorney for the Homelessness Prevention Project. From 2017-2019, Lorraine was a Supervising Attorney at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County ("NLSLA"). In 2019 she joined Public Counsel as a Supervising Staff Attorney for the Homelessness Prevention Law Project, working on the Shriver eviction defense program, Stay Housed LA, and Right to Counsel. Lorraine joined Western Center on Law and Poverty as a Senior Attorney in 2021 with a focus on impact litigation and housing policy.



**Nisha Vyas** is currently a Senior Attorney at Western Center on Law & Poverty where her work includes providing support to legal services providers on housing matters, litigation to protect against displacement, and advising on housing policies of statewide concern. She also serves as Lecturer in Law at UCLA School of Law. With a nearly 20-year background in community law and fair housing, Nisha's advocacy is rooted in the belief that all persons should have access to safe and affordable housing. Prior to joining Western Center, Nisha was the Directing Attorney of Public Counsel's Homelessness Prevention Law Project. She also worked with Public Counsel's Community Development Project. Nisha started her career as a staff attorney, and later, deputy litigation director, with Southern California Housing Rights Center.



**Sasha Harnden** joined Inner City Law Center as a Public Policy Advocate on issues related to housing and homelessness. Prior to ICLC, Sasha was a Housing Policy Advocate with the Western Center on Law & Poverty, drafting and lobbying for the passage of legislation related to housing supply and tenant protections, including AB 1482 and SB 329. Sasha began his legal career at LAFLA, providing direct services to tenants, technical assistance to community organizations and coalitions, and participating in impact litigation on housing, land use and environmental justice issues. Sasha was born and raised in Los Angeles and attended UC Santa Cruz as an undergrad and UC Davis for law school.



**Javier Beltran** joined Housing Rights Center as Deputy Director in July 2020. Javier previously worked at Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) as Managing Attorney for the Santa Monica office and later with the Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project from 2016 to 2020. He previously worked at Inner City Law Center (ICLC) starting in 2008 as a Staff Attorney litigating habitability lawsuits and unlawful detainer cases. He was later promoted to Directing Attorney for the Homelessness Prevention Department, supervising eviction defense programs such as the Homeless Prevention Project and the Shriver Housing Project. Before ICLC, he practiced civil litigation for an Orange County law firm and immigration law for a Sherman Oaks law firm. Before becoming an attorney, Javier worked as a school teacher in Los Angeles. He was formerly a board member and President of the Pico-Union Neighborhood Council. Javier received a BA in History from California State University Los Angeles and a JD from Southwestern University School of Law.



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## 2022 Fair Housing Advocacy Awards



**Care First South Pasadena** is a coalition of residents working to re-imagine public safety and reallocate city dollars to reflect our community's priorities. It came together in the summer of 2020 after George Floyd's murder and amid a global pandemic with a desire for a more just and inclusive community. Care First works to enhance social services, rethink public safety by developing effective alternatives to policing, and increase transparency and accountability of the South Pasadena Police Department.



**Rich Elbaum** has been a resident of South Pasadena since 2005, and is a member of both Care First and the Anti-Racist Committee (ARC) of South Pasadena. Rich has 40-year career as a communications executive in the public and private sectors.



The **Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) of South Pasadena** is a grassroots organization committed to addressing the deep wounds of systemic racism in our city as well as working towards racial justice in government policy, public safety, education, housing, art, and community services, among others. ARC works in partnership with all community stakeholders in order to help foster accountability, equity, restorative justice, and empathic exchange.



**Will Hoadley-Brill** (he, him, él, lo) was born and raised in South Pasadena, California. After graduating from South Pasadena High School in 2018, Will spent four years at George Washington University in Washington, DC earning his Bachelor of Arts in Peace Studies and Spanish Language, Literature, and Cultures and Masters of Education in Secondary Education with a concentration in Spanish. In the summer of 2020, Will and several other South Pasadena community members cultivated a community in which conversations about anti-racism could produce tangible change. This group would call itself the Anti-Racism Committee of South Pasadena (ARC) and direct their efforts toward education, redefining the narrative around racism and history in South Pasadena, policy advocacy, and community building.

**Tamara Binns** currently serves as Assistant to the City Manager for the City of South Pasadena.



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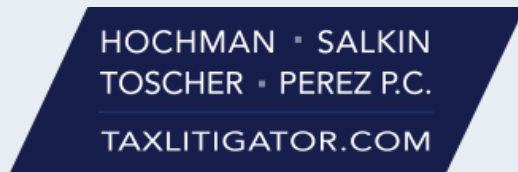


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