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Contact:

Contact: Media: Gladys Limon, Staff Attorney, 323-826-9771 x 117 Members: Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Southern California Program Director, 323-826-9771 x 105 Donors and Funders: Melissa White, Development Director, 323-826-9771 x121

Environmental Justice Group Perseveres Despite Multiple Break-ins and Theft

Main office broken into overnight, individual staff offices and community spaces were ransacked

Huntington Park, California – Staff at Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) arrived to work on Wednesday, June 7, 2017 to find the main office in the City of Huntington Park ransacked. The intruders forcefully entered the revered community based organization, searched through individual staff offices and community space, scattered documents and other items on the floor, and stole organizational property including laptops, external hard drives, and over \$1,000 in cash. The office is located on the top floor of a three-story building on Pacific Boulevard, a mecca for independent clothing and specialty stores for special occasions, shopping, culture and restaurants.

Only five days later, a second intrusion to the office occurred on June 12, 2017, between Sunday evening and Monday morning. Once again, staff arrived to work and found the office ransacked, with documents scattered on the floors, organizational property damaged and laptops and equipment stolen, and forcible entry into locked offices.

Safety of staff and members are the organization's first priority. To this end, Police are investigating the incidents. Our organization appears to have been targeted for attack. Other offices in the building were not broken into. Police investigating the intrusion commented that there have been no other reported burglaries in the area.

CBE's history of resiliency in the face of mounting opposition from industrial polluters provides staff and members with a sense of security as they clean up the mess left by the intruders and move forward in securing a safe work environment.

“The uncanny timing of these break-ins--in the midst of a pitched battle against some the world's most powerful interests--cannot be ignored. There is no doubt in my mind that the intruders intended to intimidate us,” said Suma Peesapati, CBE Board President.

“What those intruders fail to understand is that we are not defined by our fear alone. Everyday, we put aside our fears to engage in peaceful protest, to testify in public hearings and to dare to confront the rich and the powerful, under the bright light of day. Yet, the intruders came to us as

cowards, under the cover of night. We use the rule of law to fight for a better, and more just, future. They flouted the rule of law, along with any sense of decency. These are the tactics of the weak, and of those who know that the future is ours, not theirs,” Peesapati added.

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Founded in 1978, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) is one of the preeminent environmental justice organizations in the nation. The mission of CBE is to build people’s power in California’s communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy and sustainable communities and environments. CBE provides residents in blighted and heavily polluted urban communities in California with organizing skills, leadership training and legal, scientific and technical assistance so that they can successfully confront threats to their health and wellbeing.