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Press Release

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## **Community Celebrates New School and Park Opening on the Site of a Former Toxic Concrete Mountain**

*Linda Esperanza Marquez High School named after local leader who helped rid the community of "La Montana"*

**Huntington Park, CA** – On Friday, March 8, International Women’s Day, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), the City of Huntington Park, the Los Angeles Unified School District, elected officials and the community will celebrate the ribbon cutting of Linda Esperanza Marquez High School. It has been nearly 20 years since the 1994 Northridge earthquake resulted in a mountain of concrete debris from the collapse of LA’s Santa Monica Freeway being dumped in this low-income, immigrant community southeast of Downtown LA, just feet away from people’s homes.

The neighbors in Huntington Park took action when the toxic dust from “La Montana” made them sick. Linda Marquez, who lives on Cottage Street directly across from la Montana, was one of the most vocal and tireless community leaders who worked with CBE staff and community members throughout this lengthy struggle. This mountain of concrete rubble was responsible for creating terrifying amounts of air pollution as --toxics-emitting diesel trucks hauled concrete in and out 24 hours a day, while machines crushing the concrete created huge amounts of harmful dust. The site was a nuisance and an eye sore for many years for the residents of Cottage Street. Community members and leaders including Linda Esperanza Marquez worked with Communities for a Better Environment to lead a winning campaign; in 1996, La Montana was deemed a public nuisance and the mess ultimately cleared away. Today the site of this former environmental justice battle ground is home to the **Linda Esperanza Marquez High School**.

Today, Cottage Street between Gage and Randolph is a nice street with a beautiful modern new school, where an unsuspecting visitor would not know that this was one of the epicenters of struggle for environmental justice in Los Angeles. This was the site of a campaign that served over the years to educate local politicians and Board members of the State's Integrated Waste Management Program, which finally ordered the site cleaned up. This campaign served to expose regulatory flaws and educate South Coast Air Quality Management District Board Members, the Chairman of Air Resources Board, and the heads of Cal/EPA and their staff, who witnessed and heard the story of La Montana and the suffering it inflicted on this neighborhood. CBE continues to work with community members, US EPA, and the City of Huntington Park to create viable plans for revitalizing dilapidated areas surrounding this beautiful new school to create a more livable, sustainable Huntington Park.

Tomorrow’s celebration marks a victory for the community, and proves that mountains can be moved.

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