



Dear Friends,

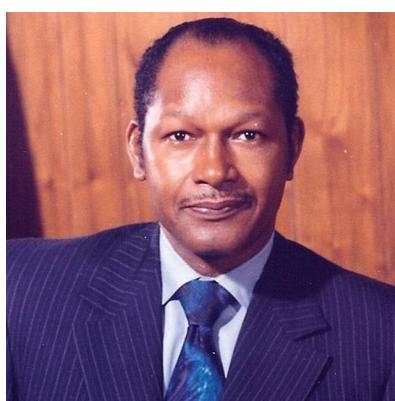
Happy February and Black History Month! Two years after Bet Tzedek's founding 50 years ago in 1974, President Gerald Ford became the first president to officially recognize Black History Month. Decades later, we dedicate this month each year to celebrating the rich cultural heritage and foundational contributions of African Americans upon which our country is indebted. (We, at Bet Tzedek, honor Black history every month!)

As legal advocates, we shine a light on the history of American law and jurisprudence, and the African Americans who shaped both. Awareness of that history is paramount, as our constant vigilance of the law in the effort to promote justice cannot succeed without an understanding of how the law was constructed, oftentimes creating the very structural injustices which we are currently working to dismantle.

For instance, we acknowledge Los Angeles' dark history of redlining, segregation, and racially motivated zoning laws. The entrenched impact of redlining is one of the reasons Bet Tzedek is partnering with the County of L.A. to roll out a major new program promoting estate planning in communities of color. Our "[Leaving a Legacy](#)" program will help ensure that low-income Angelenos are able to pass down their homes or other assets to their kids and grandkids so that these families can build intergenerational wealth. And this is just one of our [many services](#) to help individuals who have faced systemic oppression.

As we share our origin story in celebration of our 50th anniversary, we'll spend this month continuing to set the scene in the 1970s and amplifying influential Black figures, landmark events, and positive social change from that era. Follow along on our social media accounts, found at the bottom of this news digest, and join the conversation! **#50YearsOfJusticeForAll** **#BlackHistoryMonth**

Three 1970s BHM Figures Everyone Should Know

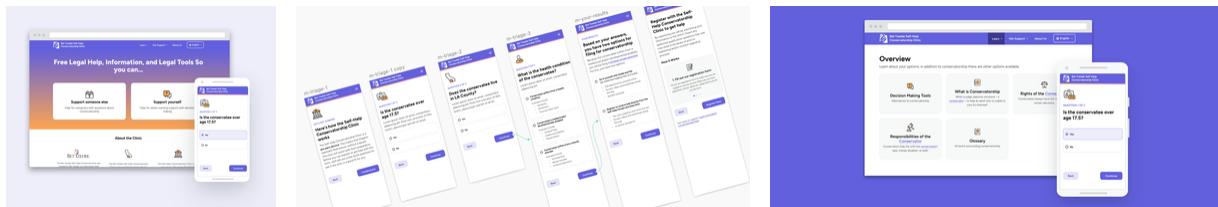


[**Tom Bradley**](#) was elected the Mayor of Los Angeles in 1973, making him not only the first Black mayor of Los Angeles, but also the first Black mayor of a major U.S. city with a white majority. The Bradley coalition transformed L.A. from a regressive “old boy” network to a more progressive multiracial one. A driving force to diversify the city’s workforce, Bradley appointed more women and people of color to political positions than all his predecessors combined.

[**Yvonne Brathwaite Burke**](#), a lawyer from California, was the first Black woman to represent the West Coast in the U.S. Congress, serving from 1973 to 1979. In 1972, Burke served as vice-chairperson of the Democratic National Convention, making her the first woman of color to hold that position. Burke focused her political efforts on bettering the lives of children, encouraging economic development, and improving transportation in L.A.

[**Rolland "Speedy" Curtis**](#) was appointed Field Deputy to City Councilmember Tom Bradley (before he was mayor) and, later, to Billy G. Mills. In 1973, Mayor Sam Yorty made him director of the Model Cities program, a comprehensive five-year plan to address the social, economic, and physical problems of poor and underserved neighborhoods. While serving as Field Deputy, Curtis took impactful photographs that documented Black political life in L.A. during the 60s and 70s.

New User-Friendly BT Self-Help Conservatorship Site Creates Online Space for Justice



With the January 2024 launch of [Bet Tzedek's Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic website](#), L.A. residents who seek information on decision-making tools, advance planning, and conservatorship now have **24-hour access to a new platform offering information-rich resources, self-help tools, and a pathway to connect with clinic services**.

The new platform aims to take the lessons learned from the State Bar of California’s 2019 Justice Gap Study by increasing and improving access to legal information and adding a new pathway for individuals to connect with services. “We want to use technology to empower people,” says Bertha Sanchez Hayden, Directing Attorney, Seniors, Dependent Adults & Caregiver Direct Services at Bet Tzedek. “This site showcases the importance of investing in infrastructure to combat the Justice Gap. This platform creates a new space for us to connect with individuals and community partners.”

In a legal landscape that may feel difficult for some to traverse, Bet Tzedek continues to be a champion for access to justice by providing an abundance of resources and personalized support for those who need it most.

[Visit the website here.](#)

Greenline Home Program Offers \$35K Grants to First-Time Homebuyers in Need

From L.A. County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs: Homeownership has historically been one of the most effective means for wealth building and financial wellbeing. However, due to longstanding challenges like the discriminatory practice of redlining, this dream has been out of reach for many, especially in BIPOC communities.

To combat the historical injustices of redlining, DCBA, in partnership with Neighborhood Housing Services of Los Angeles County (NHS), launched the [Greenline Home Program](#).

Discover whether you're eligible and learn how to apply at dcba.lacounty.gov/greenline

BT Creating Justice: Helping a 93-Year-Old Get Accountability and Payment from Landlord

Through the Small Business Program, Bet Tzedek assisted Roger* with a demand letter and mediation services against his commercial landlord. Roger was referred to the Small Business Development team by the Elder Justice team. He is a 93-year-old senior currently residing in an assisted living facility. He used to own an antique shop and, while he was in the hospital for three months, his landlord sold all his merchandise at less than half of the value.

Our team, including paralegal Karla Estrada Sanchez and volunteer attorney Pamela Weisberg, have worked with Roger since February 2023. The team prepared all the documentation and evidence for mediation. They visited Roger at the facility where he currently lives, prepared him for mediation, and were finally able to recover money due to the client. They not only worked extremely hard on this case but also showed empathy for the difficult physical and emotional state of the client. **In December of 2023, Roger received a check from his landlord!**

Roger shared, *“The delivery of the services was great! I am grateful for being referred to the services of Bet Tzedek. I felt seen, respected, and taken care of by everyone involved in my case against the landlord. I’ve never been treated so kindly — hardly anyone has the patience for old folk like me, but I was treated well and even got more money than expected!”*

*not client's real name

Pro Bono Call: Help A Senior with Cancer Stay in Her Home

Case Description: Ms. S is a senior who currently has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy treatment. She has been living in her apartment since 2004 and pays \$987.11 a month for rent. Ms. S is facing eviction due to falling behind on her rent payments. She recently received a call from the ULA rental assistance that stated she was approved on 1/22/2024. She has already answered the lawsuit and filed a Demand for Jury Trial. The first court date is set for February 16th, but we expect the case will be continued.

Work Required & Deadlines: Settlement Negotiations and Full Scope Representation of Unlawful Detainer Case. The attorney will be required to attend and file any pre-trial motions, propound discovery, prepare jury and trial documents, and represent client in jury trial. There will be at least a 1st trial date hearing, a final status conference hearing, and a jury trial. There may be other hearing dates depending on the motions that are filed in this case.

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 up to 100,000 people per year?

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

[**DIRECTING ATTORNEY: GENERALIST SERVICES FOR SPECIALTY POPULATIONS**](#)

[**DIRECTING ATTORNEY: SELF-HELP CLINICS**](#)

[**DIRECTING ATTORNEY: EVICTION DEFENSE PROJECT**](#)

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