

Dear Belinda,

Everyone at Bet Tzedek wishes you a Happy New Year and hopes that your **2026 is off to a positive start**. This past year brought no small number of challenges to the people of Los Angeles, one layered on top of another. Through it all, we witnessed what makes our city truly remarkable: we rose together, standing strong so that all individuals — especially those most vulnerable and underserved — were heard, seen, and helped.

At Bet Tzedek, we are expanding access to legal services for all. [Last year](#), along with serving over 72,000 people, we helped with major legislative wins that strengthen protections for individuals and families across the entire state of California. This includes AB 1362 (Human Trafficking Prevention and Protection Act), SB 59 (Transgender Privacy Act), and AB 561 (expanded protections for seniors and dependent adults).



We believe that justice is a human right for everyone. That belief drives our work to provide free legal services to low-income Angelenos — seniors, tenants, workers, small business owners, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and more — and to empower people to advocate for themselves.

The scale and urgency of the hardships this past year only strengthened our resolve for 2026. Our commitment remains clear: we will stand with the most vulnerable and continue fighting for a more just Los Angeles.

New year. Same mission.

One Year Since the L.A. Wildfires: Resources for Homeowners & Small Business Owners

January 7th marked one year since the L.A. wildfires began, and the need for guidance and support for disaster survivors remains urgent.

Bet Tzedek, Public Counsel, Housing and Economic Rights Advocates, and other local legal services organizations collaborated on a video series: **“Recovery After the Fires: Guidance for Consumers and Homeowners.”**

The videos cover important topics such as Home Improvement Contractors, Disaster Recovery for HOA Homeowners, Risks and Alternatives to Bankruptcy for Disaster Survivors, and much more.

[WATCH VIDEOS](#)

Too many **small businesses** were left unprepared by the massive destruction caused by the 2025 wildfires. To help, Bet Tzedek’s Small Business Development Project, in partnership with **Ropes & Gray**, created a short video highlighting the top considerations every small business owner should keep in mind to prepare for natural disasters — from continuity planning and data backup to insurance readiness and employee safety.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

**Follow our social media accounts, found at the bottom of this news digest, for more resources that we’ll be sharing throughout this month and beyond.*

Success Story: Unbound Dance Studio Bounces Back After Wildfires



A year after the devastating California wildfires, many small business owners have worked hard to rebuild — creating spaces for the community to heal and come together once again.

Bet Tzedek’s Small Business Program had the privilege of supporting local entrepreneurs through this demanding transition. We highlight one such inspiring business: **Unbound Dance Studio**, owned by Elizabeth (Betsy) Colombo.

Betsy, a passionate dance instructor, first opened her studio in Altadena, offering classes in ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, and contemporary dance to young children. Her studio was devastated by the Eaton Wildfire but, through our program, she was connected with pro bono attorneys at **Goodwin Procter LLP**. With their help, Betsy reviewed a purchase agreement and completed a transaction to secure a new studio in Pasadena!

Thank You to Fenwick & West for Participating in Entity Selection Clinic

We thank **Fenwick & West** for participating in last month’s Entity Selection Clinic for Small Businesses via **Bet Tzedek’s Small Business Development pro bono program**. As described by Directing Attorney **Nadia Segura**, “Selecting the correct entity assists entrepreneurs in building the proper infrastructure to protect them as individuals while being a business owner, having a strong foundation to reach their small business goals, and assists in following through with a structured taxing schedule.” With 16 attorneys — 14 on consultation teams and 2 Bet Tzedek attorneys — we assisted 7 clients with a range of entity selection issues.

Some of the businesses served included:

🎵 A performer who offers music curation and performance for a wide range of social events including weddings, corporate events, and social gatherings.

🛥️ A sailing business that offers sunset watching and Pacific Ocean sailing trips which allow its guests to learn a variety of skills such as basics of sailing, trimming sails, and reading the wind.

👩‍👧 A doula who offers support to women and families during pregnancy and aftercare, offers birthing ceremonies, and has been an active member of a Birthworkers of Color Collective since 2019.

🌺 A Latina female immigrant who offers holistic dance movement therapy.

And more!

Success Story: Keeping a Senior Safe from a Harmful Neighbor

We are proud to share another success story from our Senior Center Outreach team.

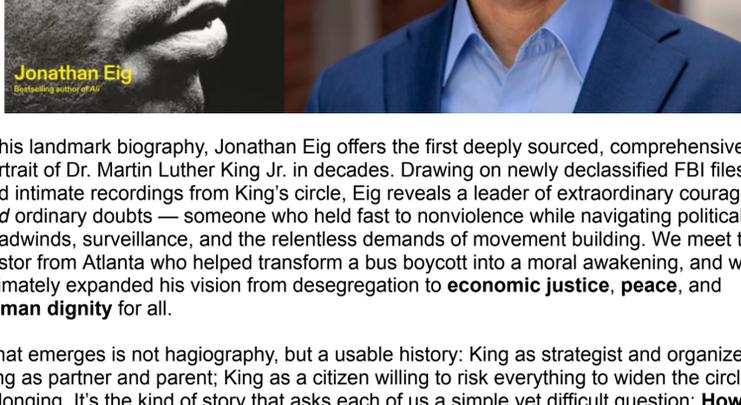
Back in early 2023, a very emotional “Mrs. Anderson” called Bet Tzedek Senior Paralegal & Hearing Representative **Nora L. Ghamari** begging for help with a “situation” with her neighbor.

Mrs. Anderson’s neighbor has a long history of involvement with law enforcement due to “running a drug house.” In an effort to protect his “business interests,” he had cut through the chain link fence meant to separate their properties to install a gate so that people could enter his property by “shortcutting” through Mrs. Anderson’s yard. In addition, he planted bamboo stalks on Mrs. Anderson’s property, which became overgrown and made it impossible for her to access her backyard shed. Although the police were often helpful with handling the trespassers, Mrs. Anderson remained afraid and rarely left her home.

Mrs. Anderson asked us to “require the neighbor to remove the gate and bamboo and prevent him and all other individuals associated with him from accessing her property.” Thankfully, we were able to secure pro bono counsel with the help of **Joshua Mandell at Akerman LLP**.

After two years of effort, Mrs. Anderson **won her case in mediation**. She is overjoyed with the outcome. While this is a unique case for our organization, we are proud of this victory, which comes from the Senior Center Outreach team sticking by our clients and leveraging resources through our pro bono network!

Bending the Arc Toward Justice: What King: A Life Calls Us to Do — Now



In his landmark biography, Jonathan Eig offers the first deeply sourced, comprehensive portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in decades. Drawing on newly declassified FBI files and intimate recordings from King’s circle, Eig reveals a leader of extraordinary courage and ordinary doubts — someone who held fast to nonviolence amid navigating political headwinds, surveillance, and the relentless demands of movement building. We meet the pastor from Atlanta who helped transform a bus boycott into a moral awakening, and who ultimately expanded his vision from desegregation to **economic justice, peace, and human dignity** for all.

What emerges is not hagiography, but a usable history: King as strategist and organizer; King as partner and parent; King as a citizen willing to risk everything to widen the circle of belonging. It’s the kind of story that asks each of us a simple yet difficult question: **How will we bend the arc?**

At Bet Tzedek, “Justice for All” is more than a motto — it is our operating discipline. The work described below is our way of carrying forward King’s unfinished agenda in Los Angeles County: From emergency unlawful detainer defense to collaboration with fellow legal aid partners on tenant protections, we fight to keep families housed and safeguard the conditions for community flourishing. King’s insistence on dignity is reflected in our long-term care counseling and benefits advocacy. As state policy proposals reshape IHSS and Medi-Cal, our teams are equipping clients and caregivers to navigate changes and protect the essential supports that allow elders and disabled community members to live safely at home.

Guided by King’s vision of a beloved community, we stand alongside immigrant families — providing screening, defense, and know-your-rights education, and joining coalition comments when federal rules threaten to chill access to life-sustaining benefits. In partnership with community organizations and pro bono counsel, we support workers’ rights, small business owners, and pathways to homeownership — recognizing that wealth-building is a civil rights imperative, not just a market outcome. Finally, King built power through coalitions. We do the same — engaging law firms, volunteers, and sister agencies to extend our reach and multiply impact.

Last year, our staff and volunteers served **more than 72,000 people** through October — proof that when the community shows up, the arc bends. As we approach **MLK Day** and look ahead, we invite you to stand with us. Read the book; talk about it with **your neighbors and colleagues**; and then take the next step — **volunteer, advocate, partner, give**. Together, we can continue the work of bending the arc toward justice in Los Angeles.

Join the Bet Tzedek Team!

Have a passion for helping underserved residents in the community? Please apply for a chance to take a leadership position with dedicated staff and volunteers who help over 70,000 people per year.

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