

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHICAGO, IL. Thursday, November 4, 2010. Six Reform cantors, members of Reform Cantors of Chicago, led over 70 interfaith clergy in song and music in protest against the exploitation of hotel workers. During rush hour in downtown Chicago, outside the Hyatt Regency, hundreds of hotel workers, clergy and citizens stood in solidarity against the hotels management's policies and practice.

The Hyatt hotel workers' contract expired in 2009. Despite good faith efforts of the workers to negotiate, management continues to demand that the workers give up their health benefits, and their right to full time employment. Workers have been intimidated, threatened and their work quotas have grown.

In response, Jewish and Christian clergy have spoken out, in the hopes of drawing the public's attention to the plight of the working poor in our city's hotels. This campaign is national and is directed at several hotel chains. Similar clergy and public efforts are underway in cities across the United States.

As a result of the workers' boycott, Hyatt has already forfeited \$17m in potential contracts. Reform Cantors of Chicago was the first clergy association in Chicago to explicitly endorse the hotel workers' call to boycott Hyatt.

At the event on Thursday, cantors played guitar and led the singing of spirituals, hymns and protest songs along with ministers and nuns, rabbis and priests. Cantor Michael Davis, speaking for Reform Cantors of Chicago, addressed the workers at the rally:

“We - the clergy - have listened to your experiences: your stories of intimidation, of unfair practices, of disrespect, of injustice!

At a time when business at this and other hotels is booming - you are told to give up your right to a living wage!

At a time when corporation across the nation have amassed record financial holdings - You are told to give up full-time employment

You are all leaders - And we, the clergy, are here today to follow you!”



*Pictured L to R: Cantor Michael Davis, Cantor Scott Simon, Cantor Lynda Casden, Cantor David Goldstein, Cantor Jan Mahler, Rabbi Brant Rosen, and Cantor Arik Luck.*

Reform Cantors of Chicago, along with rabbis and other Chicago clergy, will continue to expose the mistreatment of hotel workers. Our goal: a fair contract that upholds the workers' dignity and fulfills their right to earn a living wage for their labor.

Reform Cantors of Chicago calls on our colleagues across the United States to join in raising our voices for worker justice.

*"lo ta'ashok sacheer* - thou shall not exploit your workers" (Deuteronomy 24:14)

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