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Clergy, LA City Workers Sponsor “Kids Swim Free” at Exposition Park to Protest New Pool Admission Fee for Children & Seniors

The Coalition of LA City Unions and Fix LA make splash in last week of summer, dramatize how Wall Street drains City budget of hundreds of millions of vital service dollars

South LA: As part of a string of summer actions to demonstrate that taxpayer dollars belong in our communities instead of banks’ pockets, the Coalition of LA City Unions and their partners in the Fix LA coalition sponsored a “Kids Swim Free” event at Exposition Park—kids arriving between 1 pm and 2 pm got free access to the pool paid for by donations from City workers and clergy. A “villain banker” made an appearance and an attempt to steal the money, but participants thwarted the pinstriped profiteer’s attempts.

Fix LA’s message to Mayor Garcetti and the City Council: Children shouldn’t pay the price for Wall Street greed.

In 2014, the City of Los Angeles began charging a \$1 entrance fee to kids and seniors at public pools as part of austerity measures stemming from the Great Recession—while at the same time paying nearly \$300 million a year in taxpayer money to Wall Street banks, according to [No Small Fees](#), a groundbreaking research study published by Fix LA. The coalition has also discovered that City taxpayers also pick up the tab for an additional [\\$200 million annually](#) to service bank-owned foreclosed properties.

“It pains me that children are suffering as a result of budget cuts while the City pours hundreds of millions of dollars a year into Wall Street coffers,” said Reverend William Smart of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as he handed out dollar bills to each child in line to swim. “What does it say about LA’s priorities when we are more willing to pay banks than we are to pay for programs to help our kids?”



Through collective bargaining and City Council motions, the Fix LA coalition is advocating for the City to recoup much of the money it shells out to Wall Street as a means of restoring vital neighborhood and street services to pre-recession levels.

Community leaders described the impact of budget cuts that not only have limited the number of days parents can afford to bring kids to the pool but have also led to slashed aquatics and recreation and parks programs—cutting off access to safe and positive alternatives to the City’s disadvantaged and at-risk youth during the hottest days of summer. [Studies show](#) such programs in LA help reduce violence and improve health.

“The neighborhood public pool meant so much to me and my siblings and our friends,” said a teenage activist David Gutierrez, 18, with the community empowerment group Inner City Struggle. “It meant we were staying out of trouble and having fun doing something safe. I want to see Mayor Garcetti and the City Council stand up to the big banks so we can keep money in South LA neighborhoods like mine.”

“We love serving our communities and keeping children safe—and we hate anything that gets in the way of kids using our public pools,” said LA City Aquatics division employee Pat Robinson. “We want the City to invest in our communities so none of the City’s children have to pay to enjoy a swim on a hot day.”

A motion backed by Fix LA to renegotiate or terminate a toxic deal with NY Mellon Bank that costs taxpayers \$5 million a year goes before City Council next Wednesday, August 13. Joint contract negotiations, which include a proposal for the City to double its per capita spending on park maintenance and recreational services within five years and triple it within ten, are scheduled to resume the same day.

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