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## **Hundreds of Housekeepers Lead March in Solidarity with Boston 100 Hyatt Workers; Raise Awareness of Workplace Abuses**

*Sixty Foot "Hope Quilt" on its 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg on 7-City National Tour*

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) – Over 500 hotel housekeepers joined clergy and community leaders at a march and rally in Downtown Santa Clara and San Francisco today to raise public awareness of the high risk of injuries for room attendants in Bay Area's booming hospitality industry. The events marked the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of the "Hope for Housekeepers" 7-city national campaign tour, a new effort founded by Hyatt housekeepers to stop the abuse of women in the hotel industry and bring a message of hope to fellow Hyatt housekeepers and the thousands of women working as housekeepers across the globe.

"After 34 years as a housekeeper, I suffer severe neck and shoulder pain, says Antonia Cortez of the Grand Hyatt. "Thanks to our union, we clean 14 rooms a day; yet many of us work with chronic pain and must take medication to get through the day. At many non-union Hyatt hotels all across the country, housekeepers clean up to 30 rooms a day! Just imagine the pain they must go through."

Many non-union Hyatt workers forgo health insurance for their families because of the high cost. On August 31 in Boston, three non-union Hyatt hotels fired 100 long-term housekeepers and replaced them with minimum wage workers from a subcontractor. A number of the fired housekeepers claim they were told they were training the subcontracted workers as "vacation" replacements.

"I'm outraged!" exclaimed Lorna Villanueva, a 37-year employee of the Grand Hyatt in San Francisco. "If we didn't have a strong union, then they could fire us tomorrow. Thanks to the union, we have our jobs and healthcare for our families. Otherwise, we'd have to rely on your tax dollars for our well-being."

From the period between 2004 and 2008, Hyatt made \$1.3 billion in profit. In early August 2009, Hyatt Corporation had \$1.2 billion in cash. In contrast, other major hotel corporations such as Marriott International and Starwood Hotels and Resorts had \$125 million and \$79 million in June 2009, respectively. According to the Wall Street Journal, the Hyatt Corporation's impending IPO is likely to generate an additional \$1.15 billion.

The Hope Quilt comes to San Francisco in the midst of ongoing contract negotiations with Hyatt, Starwood and Blackstone. The contract affects 9,000 workers in 62 San Francisco hotels. Proposals from hotel corporations thus far state major healthcare takeaways, wage cuts and the elimination of jobs. On average, San Francisco hotel workers make \$30,000 per year. Although the Hyatt Corporation has been making billions, their proposals set the stage for San Francisco to become a city of low-wage, part-time workers.

"Because I clean so many rooms, I never take my ten minute breaks," said Eleazar Dumuk, a room attendant at the Hyatt Santa Clara. "At the end of the day, my whole body hurts. I often wake up in the middle of the night, because of the cramps in my legs."

Hyatt housekeepers are organizing a seven-city tour, starting in Long Beach and ending in Chicago, featuring the symbol of their movement -- the Hope Quilt. This quilt stitches together the stories of Hyatt housekeepers and the pain they endure everyday just to provide for their families. Each patch symbolizes a story of pain, injury, and even death or miscarriage brought upon by the heavy burden of their workloads. From the Bay Area, the Hope Quilt will continue its national tour in San Antonio, Texas where actions will commence during the week of October 12, 2009.