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October 9th, 2023

Scott White
Executive Director
Visit Greater Palm Springs
70100 Highway 111
Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

Dear Mr. White

Re: Promoting heritage tourism in Palm Springs

I am the lead attorney for the Section 14 Survivors and Descendants. As you know, my clients suffered tremendous losses as a result of the destruction and burning out of the Section 14 community. The violations of their rights and resulting harm are well documented in the 1968 California Attorney General's and the 2021 Palm Springs Human Rights Commission reports. Both of which I assume you have reviewed.

An economist working with my team estimates the losses at \$2 billion. However, in an effort to resolve this matter with the city without protracted litigation, we have been engaged in settlement discussions. Those discussions have included an opportunity that directly impacts tourism in the city. Though the negotiations are at an impasse, my clients are continuing to move forward with activities to highlight their cherished Section 14 community.

As such, I am excited to share with you a new campaign to promote heritage tourism in the region and invite you to partner with us in these efforts.

The Know Before You Go Palm Springs campaign is designed to increase awareness of Palm Springs true history and build appreciation for the cultural, civic and historic contributions of the Black, brown and Native Americans who made up the vibrant community of Section 14 before its destruction in the 1960s.

Creating Economic Drivers

The Survivors and Descendants of Section 14 care deeply about Palm Springs and want their efforts for reparative justice to have a positive impact on the region. In our settlement discussions with the city, we have proposed creating economic drivers that would cement Palm Springs as a heritage destination for the huge numbers of travelers who spend their tourism dollars on cultural and heritage activities:

Each year, millions of travelers visit America's historic places. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as 'traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.' A high percentage of domestic and international travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling, and those that do stay longer, spend more, and travel more often. Heritage tourism creates jobs and business opportunities, helps protect resources, and often improves the quality of life for local residents.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

We have identified and proposed to the city a myriad of income-generating collaborative opportunities including the establishment of a Section 14 cultural center, creation of a racial healing center, and development of music and arts festivals that will attract a more diverse and multi-generational demographic to Palm Springs. We envision Palm Springs becoming an even more popular vacation destination, particularly during the winter months in the vein of a Martha's Vineyard in the summer months.

Witnessing the Potential Impact

We had a glimpse into the appeal of such an initiative with our October 7 Remembering Section 14 Justice Rally and musical festival. Planned to coincide with the launch of our Know Before You Go Palm Springs Campaign and Indigenous Peoples Day, the event attracted a multi-racial and generational crowd of hundreds of people for an afternoon of education and entertainment.

We hosted bands, dance troupes and other performers. Local vendors were on hand to sell food and other items. With minimal advertising and budget, the event attracted more than 500 people of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, many of whom were visiting Palm Springs for the first time. These first timers rented hotel rooms, dined at local restaurants, made purchases at local businesses, and returned to their home communities enthusiastic about their experience of participating in our multicultural event.

I have not seen an event of this magnitude focused on and hosted in downtown Palm Springs by a multiracial and multigenerational coalition designed to honor the residents of Section 14 and the men and women who played such a key role in the building of the city in its nascent stages. I also have not seen the level of excitement about an event of this nature that combined education about a historical occurrence with high-quality entertainment. The enthusiasm of participants at the event was palpable and many repeatedly asked us if we would do something similar on a regular basis, and on a much larger scale.

Partnering with the City—and with You

Saturday's event showcased just what a powerful opportunity the city is overlooking in considering resolving the Section 14 claim and partnering with its key leaders. As passionate advocates for attracting visitors to Palm Springs, you can bring important perspectives and ideas to these discussions.

There are unlimited possibilities for creating experiences that honor the history of Section 14, while creating economic opportunities that will benefit the entire city and region. State officials, universities, and philanthropic organizations have all expressed great interest in being a part of, and financing, many of the concepts that we have put forth in our settlement demand to the city. I would appreciate an opportunity to speak with you in greater detail about the role that tourist advocates like yourself can play in moving this matter forward.

Very truly yours,

Areva Martin Esq.

Areva Martin, Esq.

CC: Jeffrey Ballinger, Palm Springs City Attorney
Pearl Devers, Section 14 Survivors Founder and President