

# PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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## LOS ANGELES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ICON MARVA SMITH BATTLE-BEY PASSES

She was a visionary leader and leading national advocate  
for community-based economic development.

April 12, 2016; Los Angeles, CA —Marva Smith Battle-Bey, President and CEO of the Vermont Slauson Economic Development Corporation (VSEDC), one of the city of Los Angeles' leading community-based nonprofit economic development corporations, passed early morning Thursday, April 7, 2016 after a valiant four-month struggle.

Marva Smith Battle-Bey was many things: a nationally recognized expert in the field of economic development; a faculty member at USC, UCLA, and Loyola-Marymount University; a National President of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women; a Founding member and President of Black Women's Network in Los Angeles; one of *Los Angeles Business Journal's* "25 Most Powerful Women in Real Estate" and one of the "Most Powerful African American Women in Los Angeles" according to the *Los Angeles Times* and *LA Focus* newspapers.

Ms. Battle-Bey was a visionary leader and committed individual who made economic development and access to capital for the most underserved her life's work. To say that she loved her community and that she empowered and inspired women across the country is a gross understatement. *"I am grateful to have been able to support and share her vision with all those whom she touched in the communities she loved,"* states Dr. Stephon F Battle-Bey.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Marva attended Michigan State University, earning her B.S. in Urban Planning before her journey brought her west to the University of Southern California (USC). There, Ms. Battle-Bey earned her M.S in Urban and Regional Planning, her M.P.A. in Public Administration and her Ph.D. (ABD) in Urban Studies. While at USC, Marva established herself as a formidable leader and inspirational mentor to USC students of color, many of whom have gone onto impressive careers and cite her mentorship as a key component of their success. She was an early adopter of diversity, creating "An Evening of Soul" program designed to share the best of African American culture to foster strong relationships among all USC students, staff, and faculty. She also served on the precursor to the USC Black Alumni Association, using her leadership and planning skills to raise scholarship dollars for students of color and, in particular, African American students. She became an icon of leadership, commitment, caring and collaboration across the university campus.

In 1979, Marva founded VSEDC along with a citizen advisory committee established by Mayor Tom Bradley in response to the South LA community's concern regarding the closing of a Sears department store. The organization began operations in 1981. Through her leadership of three Vermont Slauson corporations,

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her accomplishments have been numerous. VSEDC is the owner of two shopping centers, has developed/financed six super markets, and rehabilitated hundreds of housing units for low and moderate income residents. VSEDC has built affordable housing complexes, created over 3,000 jobs for local residents, and operates a Business Enterprise Center and an industrial complex.

*“No words can adequately express what Marva has meant in our lives. We are forever grateful for the opportunity to work with her,”* states William A. Holland, Vice President of the VSEDC Board of Directors. *“Marva left a company that only she could have built, and her spirit will forever be the foundation of VSEDC. We will honor her memory by dedicating ourselves to continuing the work she loved so much.”*

A pioneer and innovator, she was instrumental in founding and/or leading several organizations dedicated to promoting economic development. Two organizations close to her heart were the Black Women’s Network, a consortium of 500 strong women dedicated to economic development, resource sharing, networking, and wellness; and the Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. a national organization dedicated to promote leadership development and gender equity in the areas of health, education and economic empowerment for Black women and girls across the nation.

Ms. Battle-Bey knew the value of both tangible and intangible assets, of looking at life as an investment, and maintaining a stable community that is viable, self-supporting and fiscally sound. As such, she used every bit of her education, training, intuition, and personal gravitas to assist civic and community organizations such as the NAACP (both local and national), the NAACP Image Awards, SCLC, Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, USC Sol School of Public Policy and Planning, Los Angeles Black Business Association, Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, University of Southern California Community Advisory Board, Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Small Business, Southern California Committee for Responsible Philanthropy and the USC Small Business Development Office Advisory Board.

Ms. Battle-Bey was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Economic Justice Award from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Leadership Award from Leadership California, the Paul Davidoff National Award for Social Advocacy from the American Planning Association, and an NAACP Image Award.

Marva benefited from a loving family and is survived by her companion of 30 years, Dr. Stephon F. Battle-Bey, sister Gloria Gilmore, brothers Doward Smith and Troy Rials of Detroit, Michigan and a host of friends and relatives. *“Our family is deeply saddened by the sudden death of our loved one. She gave so much of herself, of her time and her resources to her family and community,”* states sister Gloria Gilmore. *“She had a zest for life, enjoyed the work that she did to enrich the lives of the residents of Los Angeles, and she especially loved her Los Angeles Lakers. We thank Los Angeles for embracing her. We truly will miss her warm smile, her intellect and her unselfish acts of kindness. Please continue to pray for our family.”*

Services have been planned as follows: Public Viewing at Angelus Funeral Home 3875 Crenshaw Blvd., LA, CA 90008, Friday, April 15, 2016 from 3pm to 7pm; Memorial Service Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 11am in the Los Angeles City Council Chambers, 200 N. Spring Street, LA, CA 90012. Parking in City Hall East. Condolences and contributions in lieu of flowers may be sent to Gloria Gilmore c/o Vermont Slauson Economic Development Corporation 1130 West Slauson Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90044 attn: Sarah Moore.

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