

# THE COVENANT HOUSE OF CALIFORNIA GALA

PHOTOGRAPHY: BOIVIN PHOTOGRAPHE

This spring, the Covenant House of California's annual gala brought Hollywood philanthropists together for a night at The Globe Theater at Universal Studios Hollywood. Honoring Delta Air Lines, the event helped raise funds and awareness for the thousands of homeless and trafficked youth that Covenant House of California aids each year. Emcees, Graham Patrick Martin, from TNT's Major Crimes, and Diana Perkovic, led the program for the night. The evening's speakers included Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles City Councilmember of the 13th district, Mitch O'Farrell, and Anthony E. Zuiker the creator of CSI.

President and CEO of Covenant House California, Bill Bedrossian spoke about the future of the organization, as it plans to greatly expand facilities and services to increase the opportunities their youth have to succeed in their futures. The evening progressed while the celebrities including TNT's Major Crimes and Into The Badlands watched as awards were presented to deserving individuals who have made a difference for Covenant House's homeless youth.

Covenant House of California is a non-profit organization with locations in Hollywood, CA, Oakland, CA and Berkeley, CA whose mission is to help homeless and trafficked youth by providing shelter and sanctuary for those who have nowhere to go.

## ABOUT COVENANT HOUSE:

Covenant House California (CHC) is a non-profit youth shelter with locations in Hollywood, Oakland and Berkeley that provides sanctuary and support for homeless and trafficked youth, ages 18-24. CHC believes that no young person deserves to be homeless; that every young person in California deserves shelter, food, clothing, education ... and most importantly, to be loved. Now serving over 1,800 youth a year, CHC has served nearly 190,000 homeless youth since we've opened our doors. CHC provides a full continuum of services to meet the physical, emotional, educational, vocational, and spiritual well-being of young people, in order to provide them with the best chance for success in independence. ■



GALA COVERAGE:

## LOVE IS OPULENCE

WORDS AND IMAGES: JEREMY BAMIDELE

Los Angeles is the home of the largest number of homeless youth in the United States. The Covenant House is the largest privately-funded institution that provides services to homeless youth. Every year the Covenant House of California throws what is one of the county's most attended Galas to raise funds and grant a voice to those whose cries often go unanswered.

This year, the Mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, attended and spoke about the current attack on sanctuary cities and how best to rehabilitate the homeless. Addressing the issue of homeless youth in Los Angeles is of particular importance, not only in reducing the amount of long-term homeless people but also because one-fourth of homeless youth became so as the result of coming of age in the foster system. These foster youth turned homeless "adults," start off at a severe disadvantage in life that when not addressed early, has a trickle down effect that puts a disproportionate amount of stress on social services.

The mayor was joined by many within the community including the cast of Major Crimes and the Creator of the CSI television franchise. The gala precipitated with success stories as those who are served by the covenant house mixed with celebrities and other attendees in a way that spoke to my heart delivering the message that homelessness is a human condition that can be put to an end through human kindness.

As the night continued, both activists of addressing youth homelessness as well as those who were once homeless told the stories of their life and how they came to rise and break through the

cement of poverty and stigmas to produce lives that left no outer scar of where they came from.

Yet, these children turned adults did not hide in shame of their past circumstances but instead spoke about how the gift of kindness had overcome their past pains to satiate their minds and hearts such that it could be shared with others.

The Covenant House has become a place not only to be served but to serve, as men and woman of look back to open the doors for those who are often unequipped to do so themselves. Many of the speakers did not come from a world of money and had no funds to spare, but what they did share in abundance was their expertise.

An orthodontist spoke of how she offered dental services to the youth by taking on one new child a month to give braces to. As she spoke her lips curled as she resisted the urge to smile her cheekbones quaked as her mind thought only of those with whom she'd helped to smile with fearless indignation at those who thought them worthless.

The gala coincided with same date and times as the Museum of Contemporary Art's annual gala, perhaps LA's most illustrious and exclusive gala. Rather than attend, supporters of the Covenant House of California's Gala chose to focus on giving rather than status and sharing rather than overindulgence.

I have attended my fair share of galas, but never one where such a large proportion were directly involved with the nonprofit's mission. The beautiful dining hall was populated by those who saw the world, not from a position of life being a zero sum game, but instead screamed out that more is more and that as we grow, we create more to be had. ■



Top: Mayor of Los Angeles Eric Garcetti; Circles, from top: Leonard Roberts and Armond Belt; Covenant House staff, volunteers, and alumni; Philip Keene and Kairan Giovanni