

# Festival for All Skid Row Artists



**THE SOUNDS COMING OUT OF GLADYS PARK** on Saturday and Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> were anything but a cacophony. Rudy Pacheco, a Skid Row artist and resident, can attest, “The last two days have been beautiful, I wish we could do this every weekend.” For the fourth year in a row, Skid Row’s Gladys Park has been the site of the Festival for All Skid Row Artists, a weekend of music, art, and community, in the heart of Los Angeles’ Skid Row. The Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) produces the festival each year; it is a place where artists can network, perform and play for the community.

Two hours before the festival, at 10 o’clock A.M. on Saturday morning, the crew began setting up. The LA Poverty Department got to work. Sound crew and volunteers set up the P.A. system and did sound checks, organizers and artists from Lamp’s Fine Art Program and Brad Reyes, an artist and volunteer, helped the artists display their artworks. LAPD members and volunteers from the Amity Foundation set up the creativity stations and artist sign-up table. Eventually, everything was set up and ready for the weekend of festivities. At noon on Saturday, the park opened and the fourth annual Festival for All Skid Row Artists was underway.

The festival saw the likes of many different types of artists: musicians, singers, dancers, visual artists, performance artists and... performance *sports* artists? That’s right. On Saturday, the **3-on-3 Skid Row Basketball League** had a game during the festival! The athleticism on the court was definitely a work of art and an interesting compliment to the sounds and visual arts that adorned the park. **Myka Moon**, an artist from Lamp’s Fine Art Program, set up both days and worked on his latest paintings. **Flo Hawkins** sketched portraits for people free of charge and **Michael Blaze** of Veterans in Photography took pictures and printed them for people, right there on the spot. The park was packed and a seat was a hot commodity.

Hundreds of people came and went. Some came to perform, some came to produce, but many simply came to enjoy the talents. Many new artists signed up to LAPD’s artist registry. Over the two-day event, LAPD welcomed over 50 new local artists to the festival and more than 30 returning artists performed for their second, third or fourth time. **Tightgrip**, a guitarist and singer, played for the second year in a row; he gracefully performed an original song about his mother. **Presidential Smoke** returned once again, energizing the crowd as he performed his unreleased single, “You Want Me.” **George Porter**, a singer and songwriter from Jacksonville, Florida, moved to Los Angeles in July. It was his first time at the festival; he said jokingly “I came down because I wanted to play...let everybody know that there’s a new sheriff in town.” Porter did what he does best and he played the Blues.

There were many individual artists, but also many bands and groups that performed. Once again, the trio **Black Onyx** took the stage and blessed us with their harmonies. **The Wicked Saints**, a band from outside the Skid Row community, returned for the third year in a row and the **LA Playmakers**, a group made up of Skid Row artists, brought the house down with their Sunday afternoon performance.

The annual festival would not have been a reality without the hard work and dedication of everyone who contributed; it was a team effort. Thanks to UCEPP who generously gave us their space for 2 days, organizers from Lamp’s Fine Art Program, the volunteers from Amity, LAPD members, and especially the artists, the festival was once again a success!

# LAPD



# Meet the Artists



**Myka Moon**



**Patti Berman**



**Silkie**



**Flo Hawkins**



**Having fun at the creativity station**



**Denetria Theodore**

I'm currently being housed at the Rotary House. As soon as I saw the fliers for the festival, I was interested. I called the number and came on down. I'm a member of the New Life Christian Center, which is located on La Brea and Adams, and my church has inspired me. I've only been in California for about three months and I've been in that church since then, but I'm a former USO show performer, singer, lead singer. I've just been singing all my life, but I have a love for people and I knew that this was in support of people and that's why I'm here.

I'm also the proud owner and founder of New Orleans Flavor to Savor Catering Services, so maybe next year I might supply some food here as a donation. Praise god, I just started my own business. I'm at the end of my program at the Rotary House and I'll be moving into housing in approximately two weeks.



**George Porter**

I play and sing the blues. I play guitar. I just got here July 7<sup>th</sup> from Jacksonville, Florida. I came down here to watch basketball and they said they were having a festival. But I came down because I wanted to play, let everybody know that there's a new sheriff in town. Everyday I've been to the festival it's been fantastic. I feel honored that you all would allow me to play. I played b-flat clarinet when I was eight. Then I changed to cello. I started playing guitar when I was thirteen. I've been a little bit of everywhere. I'm trying to get a recording contract. I've got some songs I wrote.



**Rudy Pacheco**

I've been here for two years. I live in that building, right next to the park here and I believe that god has me here to remind me where I was going. I'm an addict, an alcoholic, I'm very involved with the 12-step program and go to many meetings, but the lord said, "I'm going to make sure you never get lazy enough that you can't go to the [meeting] right next door, right at Gladys Park, in Skid Row, so I'm putting you in this building right here at the Ellis Hotel."

**LAPD:** Have you been performing here for a while?

**Rudi:** No, actually, just me and Jesus in my room once in a while might do something like this, but not that often, too shy. I'm stepping out in faith now.



**Marvin Anderson**

My medium is art on canvas and this is a picture of my daughter when she was 9 and she is now 31. I've been promising her this painting for years and I'm finally getting around to doing it...I don't really have any formal training. I learn through trial and error, by doing it, reading a lot and just for the love of art. This is my medicine. That's how I've gotten to where I'm at now.

As a kid I was drawing stick men. That led on to comic strips, Captain America – I know I'm telling my age now cause of that comic strip – but, that's what I did and that's how I made a few dollars in school, drawing comic

strips for other kids, basically nickels and dimes, it wasn't in dollars.

I live in the Weingart. Through them I have a job now. Because of that, I've been more involved with my art, having exhibits and just being part of the community to give back and be of service. I volunteer over at the Midnight Mission, during lunchtime when I'm not working. I'm giving back what the community has given to me.



**Michael Blaze**

Michael Blaze took pictures, printed them out on the spot, put them in a frame and gave them away as presents.

My affiliation with the Skid Row community is that I do various programs. I built a computer lab at the Chrysalis, taught there for several years. Then I have Unified Fathers for Life, a program for fathers and non-custodial mothers. Something that is missing in Skid Row – they act like people aren't married, like people don't have children. We began Skid Row Photography Club. We picked photography just for the hell of it, but it's an alternative to drugs and alcohol. It provides a social network and people can go out and have fun. You would be hard pressed to find someone in this park who hasn't received a camera. We give the gift of a camera to people and as soon as we give it to them we tell them that they never need to come back unless they feel like it. I do most of my programs is because so many people are institutionalized, in jails, in recovery homes, in the army, whatever. They have people always making the decisions for them, washing their cloths, preparing their food. So, we wanted to make it a place where people can make their own decisions, no matter how simple. The last six months, I've been inspired to do Veterans in Photography, which is very rewarding; we give the gift of a camera to veterans, to express themselves. They have so many challenges from what they experienced in war.



**LA Playmakers**

**Joseph Warren:** I'm the music minister of the church on the corner and part of a band called the LA Playmakers. It's a new group, made up of members from our church, past and present. You can see the talent that we have in the group. On drums we've got JD, Stan Watson on bass, myself on keys, Edwin Fontaine on guitar – fabulous guitar player. On percussion we have Marlene, and Kenny the trumpet player also sings. Of course the singers: Dimitria and Tommy, so that's eight of us. This is the first time we participated as the LA Playmakers or actually the Central City Praise Team. We were trying to get in the last couple years but we couldn't get here in time to set up. So it was just good to come down and support Kevin Michael cause I love that brotha' and he's been trying to get us to come down and do something for two or three years now. I love to see the effort that goes into putting on this event and all the participation. It's a good thing and it needs to continue to happen because the community needs it. I'm looking forward to being here next year. It was off the chain.

**Tommy Newman:** I performed Saturday and Sunday. It was beautiful. I really enjoyed myself and I want to thank the LA Poverty Department for inviting me. We had been preparing for about a week. You know, I just thank god that he led me here to do this work for the community.



**Andrea Ross**

I am here today to celebrate all the beautiful artistry that's being made here on Skid Row. I've been performing since 2010. I actually got up on the stage as a dare from someone to do an open-mic. This is my third year in a row being here at this festival because I know the positive energy that is being created here and I know the great people and great talent that you find right here in Gladys Park.

## What did you think of the festival?



"If I can, I'm going to come and do this every year. It's going to get bigger, I'm sure. It's going to grow into something big and I want to be a part of it."  
**Tightgrip**



"If I see an organization putting something together like this then I'm open ears. I try to come out, you know, I reach out to the community. I try to give back as much as possible."  
**Presidential Smoke**



"Since I've been down here on Skid Row, music, poetry, and writing have really given me an outlet to express myself and to communicate what I'm going through while living a life here."  
**Suzette Shaw**



"I don't care whether it's singing, dancing, film, theater; as long as you're out there doing something. You know, the more you do it, you build up your confidence and get a bit more focused."  
**Dante Chambers**

# Performers

RCB, Silkiie, Lexington Long, Presidential Smoke, Pam Walls, Denetria Theodore, Andrea Ross, Suzette Shaw, Michelle Yvonne Autry, Jennifer Campbell, Coach Ron, Kenneth Adams, Stephanie Bell, Toney Demille, Dante Chambers, Carmen Vega, Glen Hamilton, Rico B, Kahlif, Linda Harris, Mone't Win-Cowl, Gary Brown, Rosa Miller, Monnet, Twin, Truth and Purity Productions, Lorenzo Sirround Sound Sweet Potato Pie, G-Nut, Soulful Suzette, Ndiko Williams, Sandra Reaves, John Kaye, Missionaries for Christ, Ana Murillo, Jeffery Jackson, Great I Am, Unkal Bean, Sage Fandern, Patti Berman, Kenneth Towler, Tightgrip, Charles Porter & UCEPP Youth Group, D.C., Skid Row Playaz, Ray Lewis, Big Rob, Walter Fears, Donald Reece, Michael Clark, William Mayo, Naiko Williams, Alicia Murray, Monique, Rhythm Spirit Rhythm, Black Onyx, LA Playmakers, Edwin Fontaine (LA Playmakers), Joe Warren (LA Playmakers), Tommy Newman (LA Playmakers), Marlene Anderson (LA Playmakers), Danny (LA Playmakers), Stan Watson (LA Playmakers), Kenny (LA Playmakers), Dimitria (LA Playmakers), Elizabeth Balon, Dominique Lesane, Sandra Peaks, Sally Long, Telea Mosely, Brandon Rose, Lisa Bassett, Crushrow the Last Dragon, 3 an 3 Basket Ball League, Olusheyi Banjo, Angela Cesare, Franc's Melting Pot, Mo Swag, Young, No Name, George Porter, Daneal D.C., Paul McCarty & the Wicked Saints, Rudy Pacheco...and more

## Visual Artists

Myka Moon, Flo Hawkins, Manuel Compito, Lonnie Callahan, Marvin Anderson, Crushrow the Last Dragon, John Hulsey, Mykael Wolf, LaRonda Hartfield, Chella Coleman, Faith Purvey, Gary Brown, Vera R., Glen I. Ford, Ambur, Pepper, Skid Row Love, Ray Lewis, Michael Blaze and Veterans in Photography...and others



Skid Row Playaz

# Making a Case for Skid Row Culture

Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, released **"Making a Case for Skid Row Culture: Findings from a Collaborative Inquiry by the Los Angeles Poverty Department and the Urban Institute."** This study by John Malpede (LAPD) and Mario Rosario Jackson (Urban Institute) documents the role of arts and culture in Skid Row. It found that culture comes from the ground up in Skid Row, often initiated by residents and resident-driven initiatives. This festival is undertaken to recognize these people and initiatives and to stimulate a new way of envisioning and talking about this neighborhood. The festival moves the case for Skid Row culture forward in practice. Read the paper at: [artsusa.org/animatingdemocracy/pdf/reading\\_room/LAPD.pdf](http://artsusa.org/animatingdemocracy/pdf/reading_room/LAPD.pdf)

# Thank you!

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# About LAPD

Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), founded in 1985, is made up of people who make art and live on Skid Row, Los Angeles. **LAPD's mission:** LAPD creates performances and multidisciplinary artworks that connect the experience of people living in poverty to the social forces that shape their lives and communities. LAPD's works express the realities, hopes, dreams and rights of people who live and work in L.A.'s Skid Row.

The Festival for All Skid Row artists is produced by LAPD with support from the California Arts Council's Creating Places of Vitality program, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. CAC's CPV program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.



## GET READY for THE NEXT FESTIVAL!

The 5th Festival for All Skid Row Artists is already planned: the 3rd weekend in October (Sat. & Sun.) 18 & 19, 2014

GET YOUR OWN PAIR OF MENACING COOL SHADES  
**Register as a Skid Row artist.**

Fill out the coupon and send to:  
Los Angeles Poverty Department  
PO Box 26190  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

**OR**  
Put the coupon in the Skid Row Artists Box  
at UCEPP: 800 East 6th street

tel: 213.413.1077  
email: [info@lapovertydept.org](mailto:info@lapovertydept.org)  
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