

Fastest growing segment of homeless population is women and children.



Linda Blaisedale in LAPD's "la Llorona: Weeping Women on Skid Row"

Dear LAPD Friends,

In the frightening national atmosphere of uncaring and media manipulation, (where 70% of the populous believes Saddam Hussein was directly linked to the 9 / 11 attacks, despite the lack of evidence) face to face, community initiatives are more important than ever. They provide genuine space for the formation of ideas.

LAPD continues to produce theater works with people living on skid row that link their lived experience to the social forces and policies that effect their lives.

LAPD's most recent project "La Llorona; Weeping women on Skid Row." addresses the crisis of an exploding population of women and children on skid row, and the lack of housing and other services for them in the skid row neighborhood. Skid row is a socially contrived neighborhood where social services for single men have traditionally been concentrated. No services for women have been in place on skid row, out of the feeling that it was so nasty a place that women should not be encouraged, through the availability of services, to stay there. However, in the last two years the population of women and children in the area has exploded. This explosion coincides with the arrival of the 5 year lifetime limit for Aid for Dependent Children --- cynically known as 'welfare reform'. As the area has been flooded with women and children the few services available to women and children have been overwhelmed. The Downtown Women's Action Coalition was formed in 2002, to advocate for the creation of services for women and children in the area.

### **2003 Activities:**

\* **The Women of Skid Row.** Henriette Brouwers and 14 LAPD company members developed "La Llorona; Weeping Women on Skid Row", a show with and by the women of skid row, to address these issues. The show was developed in conjunction in dialogue with and with facilities support from skid row women's advocacy (Downtown Women's Action Coalition) and service providers: Central City Outreach, Church of the Nazarene and SRC Housing Corporation. SRC Housing Corporation, which has done so much to generate a stock of affordable, decent housing on skid row, hosted our rehearsals at the new Jim Woods Community Center. Central City Outreach / Church of the Nazarene is known for its spirited sense of providing for the spirit of people living in skid row; it runs a wonderful after school play and study program and packs the house on Wednesday evening for community karaoke night. "La Llorona; Weeping Women on Skid Row" was performed 3 times at the Church of the Nazarene (a former sewing factory loft). Pre-event articles in the LA Times and the LA Weekly generated large enthusiastic audiences of neighborhood residents and people from other parts of Los Angeles. A fourth performance took place at Scripps College, in Claremont, as part of a national conference on women and poverty.

**La Llorona, Weeping Women on Skid Row** is based on the Mexican legend of La Llorona (the weeping woman), who wanders the earth in search of her lost / abandoned children. The legend becomes the through line for relating the personal journeys of the 14 men and women in the cast. The performance is composed of original movement, text and song. This collective creation, La Llorona, offers deeply felt, multiple perspectives and insights into the causes, as well as the personal struggles, of the most rapidly growing segment of the homeless population: women and children.

#### **Directed by Henriette Brouwers.**

Dutch director Henriette Brouwers, trained in corporeal mime, has performed and directed theatre and movement in Europe and the US.

### **2004-5 Upcoming Activities:**

In 2003, Tom Jones and the Halo Group produced "Malpede / LAPD" a live performance (co-produced by Highways Performance Space), and written and performed by LAPD founder and director John Malpede. The show included numerous video clips of past LAPD productions

and chronicled, not only the history of LAPD , but the triumphs and frustrations of homeless advocacy over the last 20 years, locally and on a national level. Halo Group is now editing a full length documentary feature "Malpede / LAPD" , which incorporates the live show with other documentary footage of the company, shot by Tom Jones, during his 10 years of involvement with the company.

"Agents & Assets", a national residency project investigating the devastating impact of drugs and drug policy on urban communities. "Agents and Assets" was produced in Los Angeles in 2001 and Detroit in 2002. The Detroit "Agents & Assets" residency project was in large part funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. The Cummings Foundation has recently committed to continued funding of this project. And with Cummings Foundation support Agents & Assets will be produced with the Cleveland Public Theater in 2004, do further work in Detroit and plan further 'Agents & Assets' residency work in Los Angeles.

An LAPD collaboration with Dutch hip-hop theater group, "Made in da Shade" is being planned for 2005.

"Founded 17 years ago in LA, The Los Angeles Poverty Department has become one of the country's most outspoken and profound Theater troupes."

REAL DETROIT, Natalie Haddad, October 16, 2002

#### **ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT:**

LAPD was founded in 1985 by John Malpede and continues its work under his direction. LAPD is a performance ensemble of emerging and established artists, most of whom live or have lived in the downtown skid row area of Los Angeles. LAPD was the first performance group in the nation made up principally of homeless and formerly homeless people. It was a ground breaking experiment in social change and community-based art. The artistic purpose of the group is to create cutting edge performance work that connects lived experience to the social forces that shape our lives and communities.

In its skid row workshops, LAPD creates productions that are performed at hotels, shelter, parks, rehabilitation centers and theaters across Skid Row. LAPD's works have won artistic awards in Los Angeles [LA WEEKLY Theater Award], San Francisco [S.F. Art Institute's Adeline Kent Award], and New York City , [Dance Theater Workshop's Bessie Creation Award]. The company has appeared in theater festivals here and in Europe. LAPD has travelled extensively in California, and throughout the United States. Residencies have also spawned theater and arts groups in Philadelphia, Chicago, Montreal and Minneapolis. LAPD has collaborated with numerous community groups and theater companies, including Goat Island (Chicago) and Contraband (San Francisco). In addition to founder, John Malpede, LAPD works have been directed by company members and guest directors including: Pascal Rembert, David Halenda, Sonya Mims, Elia Arce, Kevin Williams, Brian Brophy, Otis Rogers, Emmanuel Deleage, Lin Hixon, Henriette Brouwers and Sara Shelton-Mann.

Current projects include:

"La Llorona, (directed by Henriette Brouwers), about the dramatic increase of women and children living on skid row. Summer and fall 2003.

"Agents & Assets", a national residency project investigating the devastating impact of drugs and drug policy on urban communities. "Agents and Assets" was produced in Los Angeles in 2001 and Detroit in 2002. The Detroit "Agents & Assets" residency project was in large part funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. The Cummings Foundation has recently committed to continued funding of this project. And with Cummings Foundation support Agents & Assets will be produced with the Cleveland Public Theater in 2004.

Halo Group's full length documentary feature "Malpede / LAPD" for 2004.

An LAPD collaboration with Dutch theater group, "Made in da Shade" is being planned for 2005.

Your donation to support our activities on in Skid Row LA and in other communities of poor people, is super appreciated.

Sincerely,

John Malpede  
for LAPD

LAPD in its humble way, has continue to be an outspoken thorn in the side of a mostly somnambulent public. **"Agents & Assets"** questioned the pursuance of a military rather than a public health solution to the drug problem. **"Is there History on Skid Row?"** investigated the displacement of very poor people due to gentrification in Skid Row Los Angeles.