



"Agents & Assets" LAPD and Cleveland cast. Nov. 2004. produced by LAPD, Cleveland Public Theater and Y-Haven Recovery and Transitional Housing Program.

Dear LAPD Friends,

LAPD's national project, **"Agents & Assets"**, focuses on communities most severely impacted by drugs and drug policy, and questions the pursuance of a military rather than a public health solution to the drug problem. LAPD's approach brings together community members, including people in recovery, to share their lived experience and on the ground expertise with policy specialists, journalists, academics and public officials.



LAPD's Alexander Anderson and Rickey Mantley (w/hats) lead a discussion at Y-Haven

**Participants' Comments:**

" This goes back to the root of growing, selling and manufacturing narcotics. We make more money on narcotics and the tentacles of it than anything else this country is involved in. Illegal drugs and legal drugs, jails, hospitals, treatment centers and all. See, this is the biggest business center in the world!"

"This about conquering people, taking over Nations. The United States wants to be the sheriff of all of it, and we are! We are the businessmen for this enterprise: the world business. So, we are the victims."

"Ohio has the second largest penal system in the US. Now, does that make sense to you?"

"The strongest asset that the African American community has, is a black man who is not addicted, who is educated and who is spiritually connected: that is our responsibility. I mean that is the antidote. "

"The smoke screen of the Iran / Contra is still happening in this past election. Where they took nobody looking at the homelessness, the poverty level, the war, and all that other stuff that is going on here. They took it and said: "same sex marriages" and "a woman's right to say no". And they've got all these people to come out to vote for this one candidate that stood on the platform of "God" , this, and "I believe in". And it had nothing to do with the real issues and struggle and the cancer in this country. They stood on that platform and had up a smoke screen."

We initiated "**Agents & Assets**" in the fall of 2000, with first performances just after Prop 36, offering treatment alternatives to incarceration for some nonviolent drug offenders, was approved by the voters of California. After the Los Angeles performances, we decided to work toward presenting "**Agents & Assets**" in other communities at moments when there was significant public discussion of drug reform. In October 2002, LAPD produced "**Agents & Assets**" in Detroit with a combined cast of Lapd'ers and Detroit residents, most of whom were participants and graduates of the Mariners' Inn drug recovery program. As in the original Los Angeles production, the performance was presented in conjunction with in depth public discussions on drug policy and recovery. This was done at a time when drug reform advocates were attempting to put a treatment initiative on the Michigan ballot. Ultimately, that initiative and the one in Florida, that same year, were not allowed on the ballot. In Ohio, the initiative made the ballot, but was defeated due to a huge effort and the expenditure of government dollars, made by Governor Taft and his wife, Hope.

Much has changed since LAPD initiated this project in the fall of 2000:

- \*George W. Bush became president.
- \*War on terror, war on Afghanistan, war on Iraq
- \*George Bush was elected President.
- \*2004:treatment vs jail initiatives were absent from the ballot.

LAPD's just returned from remounting "**Agents & Assets**" in Cleveland with a combined cast of LAPD'ers and Cleveland residents, including seven from the Y-Haven drug recovery program. The production was co-produced by the Cleveland Public Theater. We chose to mount the show in Cleveland because it now claims the dubious title of "poorest city in America" and because we wanted to find out what happened to the reform efforts in Ohio. Agents & Assets' public forums participants included, ED Orlett, former state representative and the campaign manager of 2002's failed reform initiative and Dan Forbes the free lance NYC journalist who had broken the story of the Governor's zealous efforts to defeat the reform initiative.

## 2005 Upcoming Activities:

\* **"AGENTS & ASSETS"**, will again be presented in Los Angeles, in May and June of this year, with performances, public conversations and screenings of documentaries on related issues. These activities will occur in different parts of Los Angeles, including downtown LA, South Central and Venice. LAPD will again bring together people in recovery, arts presenters, social service providers, advocates, scholars and public officials in producing these events.

\* **"Fried poetry"** Ron Allen, African American playwright, arts and recovery specialist, and buddhist monk, who we worked closely with in our 2002 production of "Agents & Assets" in Detroit), will be in residence in skid row Los Angeles, during fall 2005, to develop a performance, "Fried Poetry" which will explore spirituality and recovery.

While directing RFK in EKY (a community recreation of Robert F. Kennedy's inquiry into Appalachian poverty in 1968), which was produced by Appalshop, in eastern Kentucky last fall (September 8-11) myself and Henriette Brouwers developed a strong working relationship with a 4 county wide Head Start Program (in Letcher, Knott, Perry and Leslie Counties). The extraordinary women who run the program, Aleece Jones, and Jill Hatch, are eager to work with us to address the huge drug problem that effects families and communities in their area. In January we will begin a series of workshops for their staff and their Headstart families, (as a combined RFK in EKY and LAPD project) to educate the community, de-stigmatize recovery, and encourage humane and enlightenehd policy.

We are also working with two theater groups in the Netherlands and the Trans National Institute, (an international drug policy research group). With the Groningen based Peer Group, we're planning a NL production of Agents & Assets with a combined cast of LAPD'ers and "honor farm" inmates in the Dutch penal system. With Amsterdam based hip-hop theater group, Made in da Shade, we intend to make a new, collaborative drug policy based show. This show will be developed by a combined LAPD and Made in da Shade cast during a two month residency. Made in da Shade is a professional theater comprised of Dutch people of South and North African ancestry. The directors of Made in da Shade, will visit us in Los Angeles during this spring's production of "Agents & Assets".

Your support of our activities in Skid Row LA and in other communities of poor people, is greatly appreciated (and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law).

Sincerely,

John Malpede  
for LAPD