



2007 NEWSLETTER

Greetings: Here's LAPD report on this year's activities and on our upcoming projects. Both 2007 activities and the coming year's activities include extensive work in Los Angeles and large European projects (in 2007 in Belgium and this coming year in France).

2 big projects this past year one in Belgium and one in Los Angeles, though geographically removed, were united by themes of the rule of law and fundamental human rights. The Belgian project **Legal*Illegal** looked at the international context, and the US on the world stage, while the LA project, **UTOPIA / dystopia**, looked at the human rights situation of people living in poverty in Los Angeles.

In this newsletter, Henriette Brouwers will report on our Belgian project and Kevin Michael Key will report on **UTOPIA / dystopia** our just completed project on the collateral damage of downtown LA development on the long term, low income residents of Skid Row. On the last page of the newsletter, I'll describe our up-coming projects in Los Angeles, New York, Washington D. C. and Paris.

Very Best, John Malpede ---- AND your support of LAPD is vastly appreciated. We continue to be a premier lowest cost theater carrier. We can stretch all dollars farther than most anyone. READ ON PLEASE.

Two front page articles from the LA TIMES on September 20, 2006 :

LAPD cannot arrest people for sitting, lying or sleeping on public sidewalks in skid row. Such enforcement would amount to "cruel and unusual punishment", in violation of the 8th Amendment to the US Constitution because there are not enough shelter beds.

Common Article 3, of The Geneva convention which sets international standards for the treatment of wartime prisoners bans "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."



UTOPIA / dystopia April - December 2007 in Downtown Los Angeles..."Skid Row"

UTOPIA / dystopia seeks to find out how flesh and blood people living and working downtown envision the area's future and what kind of urban community they would like to create. Recent local government policy, fueled by real estate interests, has created mass "dystopia", resulting in wholesale displacement and criminalization of many longtime residents.

Events began in April at the central branch of The Los Angeles Public Library as part of it's "Aloud!" series with **Is it a Crime to be Poor?:** a panel discussion about gentrification, "broken windows" policing and community perceptions concerning discriminatory enforcement of existing laws. Panelists: Commander Andy Smith, head man at LA Police Department's Central Division, located in Skid Row; Kevin Michael Key, community resident and LA Poverty Department member, John Malpede founder of LAPD; Madeleine Stoner, geographer at USC who has done significant research on homelessness and mental health policy and Tom Jones producer of **The Real Deal:** an award winning documentary about John, LAPD and Skid Row. Mr. Jones' documentary was shown and much animated discussion was the order of the day, since both sides of the divide were in attendance.



LAPD convened five 'Glimpses of Utopia': five evenings of performances and presentations giving a diverse 37 people living and working in the neighborhood an opportunity to talk about what they are doing, why it's important, and how they view the future of the neighborhood. SURPRISE presenters were asked to identify and invite someone "who you think is doing something that is contributing to creating the kind of neighborhood you would like to live in". Each evening 8 inviters and 8 presenters came together to create a kaleidoscopic picture of utopian possibilities downtown. "Come Together" is a randomizing concept for structuring events, conceived by 2006 Alpert Award winning artist Harrell Fletcher, a collaborating artist on **UTOPIA / dystopia**.



Presentations included: talks, films, slide shows, music, tai-chi. **Presenters** included store owners, street vendors, developers, street musicians, a city attorney, a formerly homeless addiction counselor, a formerly homeless visual artist who's now a loft dweller, etc. Often times a participant in one event would invite a presenter for the next event. Dr Dennis Bleakley, who doctors in the JWCH Medical Clinic read from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* and spoke passionately of the healthcare needs of the community. For the next 'Glimpses' event Dr Bleakley invited Mr. Lee, who runs a convenience store across the street from the clinic at 6th and Crocker, in the very heart of Skid Row. Mr. Lee is also a master of the Korean bamboo flute, having taught it for many years in the ethnomusicology department of UCLA. Mr. Lee spoke affectionately of his neighborhood customers and played the flute at our event segwaying from traditional Korean melodies to a blues - gospel medley. He received a standing ovation from the 150 people at the event. These events mushroomed in popularity and became a valued place for exchange and reflection, and for the validation of numerous community efforts such as preserving the affordable housing. The tabloid newspapers we produced with picture and bios of all involved, became eagerly awaited items in the neighborhood. Alliances were struck among artists and others (a city attorney became involved in assisting a street vendor to improve and legalize his operation, and she also became involved with a local group effort to provide activities at a neighborhood park for children and seniors). Local artists attending these events became active in other parts of our project: including two musicians and a visual artist who's work was projected during our resulting performances at REDCAT Theater.



Nov. 16: outdoor site specific performance '220 Glimpses of Utopia'

LAPD, community members, students and dancers created a 15 minute Utopian Movement Chain that extended the 10 blocks from the heart of Skid Row to City Hall. In a series of workshops LAPD asked 220+ people from in- and outside Skid Row what Utopia looks like to them. Each group translated these visions into slow motion movement and together they created a line of movement on the sidewalks. Every person in the chain contributed something of their own vision and movement; and because the chain of caring, profound, loving movement extended throughout the community, it made clear that any true Utopian vision is one that includes and cares for everyone. 'Channel 4' reported about the event on the evening news.

220 Glimpses of Utopia had significant effects on the community and the field.

We held writing and movement workshops at a variety of shelters, drug recovery programs and day centers on Skid Row. We invited dancers and theater artists to participate with their own groups / students and to also lead the workshops with us in Skid Row. As a result a number of theater workshops were held throughout Skid Row during a month period. The artist / teachers were deeply moved by their work on Skid Row and many expressed a desire to do more with us and with service providers in the neighborhood. This is something we intend to build upon in the future, ie, generate more projects that invite other artists to work in Skid Row.

Excerpt from UTOPIA / dystopia:

Reading from article LA Times article: *"Ambush on Path to Recovery",
It was late in the evening when Michael Key..."*

Hey, that's me! Me and Joe Lieberman made the front page of the LA Times.

reading: *"...landed on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. He had just been booted from a S. Los Angeles drug program for getting high and was on his way to a detox center on Crocker Street."*

What started out as the worst day of my life was really the beginning of my best times. After 42 years of drinking and using illegal drugs, and trying to get clean for over 17 years, on July 12, 2002, I joined REDD as a member of the largest recovery community in LA...in California, probably in the whole world. Where? Right here on Skid Row. In my community you see recovering folk everywhere being productive, living regular lives, working in hotels... managing hotels, as addiction counselors, case managers, medical workers. In my community even the security are working a recovery program. There are meetings going on here all the time everyday, AA..CA..NA. there's a meeting going on right now...guaranteed! I began interacting with people everyday, listening closely to them in meetings, and more importantly, watching them living in the recovery process. I began drawing strength from these people who are fighting my demons...and guess what! They are winning the fight. It was from them that I learned the difference between treatment and recovery. Treatment takes place in funded facilities, but real recovery happens on these streets.

So 4 years later I agreed to show this writer my community....

reading: *"Key, who now lives in a 1 room apartmentpointed along 5th street to a area notorious for marijuana sales...its within shouting distance from Central Division Station....."*

I ended up being angry with what she wrote. I wrote a letter to the editor. It was never published. What the writer and I witnessed were people openly hawking drugs while patrol cars rolled by ignoring them, that's what was left out of the article. I also pointed out the Lorraine Hotel, which is directly across 5th street from Central Division, it's open and notorious. Word on the street has it that the drugs sold there belong to the police. This article more about my individual strength and ignored the community resources that are helping so many people. The negative stuff gets portrayed as personal shortcomings and gets all the ink, while institutional failures are ignored.

reading: *"With all of the narcotics sales in skid row, it strikes me as nearly impossible to get clean. The expression I hear is that the wolves are not at the door, they're in the living room, said Capt. Andy Smith."*

Well Captain, Skid Row didn't just happen by chance, all these services were put here by somebody.... all these services, for the homeless, the elderly, disabled vets, a safe haven, the women's center were put here by somebody. And I see all kinds of people doing recovery here everyday. If I hadn't met REDD I probably would have believed all that crap, Captain Smith. REDD was my VOA counselor while I was in treatment and he's been in clean for 10 years. Before he got clean, REDD lived in a box on 5th and Crocker for DECADES. He would point out his little spot to us. See REDD lives recovery, he freely gives back what was freely given to him because his very life depends on it! Song: Lorraine Hotel instrumental starts Anybody living in a box, if they know REDD, they have hope. Truth be told, REDD has helped more folk get sober, for free, than all them Safer Cities cops.

My name is Kevinmichael, I am an addict, thank you for participating in my recovery.



Sleeping on the sidewalk in style
outside REDCAT Theater

December 6-9 UTOPIA / dystopia performance at REDCAT Theater.

As a LAPD member you never know what to expect from the mind of John Malpede. I do what I do cause I care deeply about this community, and because John has found a unique and powerful way to give voice to our collective and individual aspirations. He and Henriette have emboldened us with their truth that "Experience equals expertise". Since many of the scenes, such as *Joe from Vignes* and *woman accused of stealing water* are based on LAPD members observations, creating this piece has helped us grow and mature as performers and reinforced my resolve to document and confront the institutional violence that is so pervasive. Creating **UTOPIA/dystopia** was very important for me because too often I have witnessed others trashing this community without looking at it's accomplishments. We provide housing of last resort for people in need, we are the largest recovery community in the world and have created a Safe Haven for folk with mental health issues. If there was a Statute of Liberty for the west coast it should be placed in Skid Row. Being a part of the creation of this work allows us, the people who live here to SHOUT BACK AT THE WORLD!!!

CONCLUSION

This was a project that resulted in bringing many different views to the table and allowed folks who ordinarily don't talk to begin to experience each other's reality. For many community residents it gave them a sense of inclusion regarding the future of Skid Row.

Many of the new residents were able to encounter the positive elements in the community for the first time, and will be less apt to accept mainstream media portrayals of their fellow residents. The performance at the REDCAT theater was a wonderful culmination of our project as many residents were able to visit The Disney Center for the first time and feel comfortable and knowledgeable about the subject matters being presented, as a result of their having experienced and participated in the "Glimpses of Utopia".

Kevin Michael Key





January through March 2007, Tony Parker, Rickey Mantley, Henriette Brouwers and John Malpede from LAPD worked with Nieuwpoort Theater in Gent and Unie der Zorgelozen in Kortrijk, Belgium to develop and present **LEGAL * ILLEGAL**, which specifically looks at the ways in which US policy impinges on Belgian sovereignty, including secret CIA flights and immigration policy.

John Malpede: "The project is about what is happening in the margins of our well regulated legal system. We like to think that we live secure under the warm blanket of the rule of law. But, law and justice do not manage to cover the whole map and the margins are manipulated to achieve desired political effects."

Before we started the rehearsals we organized three meetings with community residents and experts to invite them to get involved in the project and to share experiences regarding legal – illegal. **First** we met with 35 people from the neighborhood of Nieuwpoort Theater and Unie der Zorgelozen who had first hand experience: Roma (gypsies), anarchists, legal and illegal immigrants, squatters, artists. In the **second** meeting the same people met with experts: lawyers, activists, social workers and teachers. For the **last meeting** we invited this growing group to meet with lawyer Geertrui Daem; Progress Lawyers Network, and Hazim Kamaledin; Iraqi refugee and theatre maker.

Out of these discussions and presentations we generated a core group of 16 actors and about 15 more people who stayed involved and advised us during the building of the performance.

During the rehearsal-period, we continued our conversation with the city of Gent by hosting four public discussions with intellectuals and artists from Belgium and the UK.

1. A consideration of "Safety" by cultural philosopher **Jan De Pauw**.
2. "WITNESSES": theater makers **John Malpede** (LAPD) and **Tim Etchells** (Forced Entertainment) meet.
3. **Panel: Rudi Vranckx, Lieven De Cauter and Patrick De Boosere**: 'Looking at the face of the 'war on terror' and what is really going on in Iraq.'. Historian Rudi Vranckx has reported for many years about the Middle East for the VRT on Belgian Television. Lieven De Cauter and Patrick De Boosere are active in the *BRussels Tribunal*, a hearing committee consisting of academics, intellectuals and artists in the tradition of the *Russell-tribunal* that was founded in 1967 to investigate war-crimes during the Vietnam war. The *Brussels Tribunal* focuses on the war in Iraq and the imperial war-policy of the Bush government.
4. Lecture by **Tony Bunyan**: 'An account of the state of affairs in democratic Europe after 9/11.' Bunyan is the driving force behind *Statewatch*, a group of lawyers, academics, journalists, investigators and activists who follow the developments of the European political-legal network very closely.



It was a lot of fun working with all these people and we had great support from the staff of Nieuwpoort Theater. The former tax building 'de POEL' where we rehearsed and performed, added to the excitement. We ended up making a 1:30 hour-long performance, in three languages, that traveled through the building with live music by the squatters band D'ONDERHOND that was sold out every night for two weeks.



The performance started with a funeral march in which a coffin in the shape of an airplane was wheeled-in. The coffin opened and Bush stepped out, beat boxing the National Anthem and unrolling a banner "Mission Accomplished". The audience sat in orange school desks and when Bush exits they were treated to a class in coercive and non-coercive interrogation methods by the CIA and the Jay Bybee memo.

Then the audience was directed to go upstairs and split up in small groups to witness 'special cases' in 7 little rooms where they saw 3, 7-minute-performances. Amongst others; two Roma children reading their eviction notice from 'the POEL' which they had squatted a month earlier, a young Iraqi and a Turkish man sharing their stories about Islam and Belgium culture, the interrogation of an Algerian man seeking asylum in Belgium, the testimony of a child soldier from Angola about the future of children and a movement piece about 'breaking the cycle of violence'

The first 7 minute performances ended abruptly when other cast members burst into the little rooms with (an image of Bush hanging around their neck) while proclaiming parts of Bush's "The U.S. does not torture." speech. In the hall, while the groups changed rooms, a Polish coffee lady handed out coffee and flyers for a vacation to the secret U.S. torture prisons near Stare Kiejkuty airport in Poland, and a woman in a Medieval dress proclaimed the 'Habeas Corpus Act' in old Flemish.

While singing the Spanish freedom fighters song 'a las barricadas' everyone came downstairs again for the last part of the performance. A social worker, who worked with the Gent police told his experience of the eviction of the Roma from Gent and the Algerian man responded to the movie 'The Battle of Algiers'. Followed by a duet between LAPD'er Rickey Mantley and Henk Bourgeois from Unie der Zorgelozen about their experience with solitary confinement in psychiatric wards of jail and hospital: "Habeas Corpus; where is the body?!" Chaos and madness when the whole cast gets up and joins D'ONDERHOND's version of Pink Floyd's 'Brick in the Wall'. And then, at the very end, the coffee lady's sister shows up; Mariola Przewlocka. She points to the coffin / airplane and describes the secrecy that was demanded from her, director of Szymany airport, while the special planes were landing. "...I think they wanted as few witnesses as possible....."

UPCOMING PROJECTS - 2008

In January we'll resume our national residency project on drug policy, **Agents & Assets**, with a residency in New York, working with Housing Works a visionary provider of housing for homeless people with HIV/ AIDS. We'll be there for a month building the show with 8 cast members from Housing Works and 6 from LA. Plan is to perform in 3 boroughs of New York and then travel the production to Washington D.C. Tom Jones who directed award-winning documentary on LAPD: **The REAL DEAL** will film the residency process for a documentary.

February through April LAPD will be in residence in the Paris suburb of Gennevilliers at THEATRE de GENNEVILLIERS, Centre Dramatique National de Creation Contemporaine. The production will involve 35 residents of Gennevilliers and 5 LAPD'ers. Together we will create a production of **RED BEARD, RED BEARD** a duet for Kurosawa film and live performers. The production seeks to answer the question: how to reverse the cycle of hurt and victimization? The story is set in a public hospital serving the indigent in rural, feudal Japan. We chose to work with this movie because its harsh depiction of the dynamics of extreme poverty resonates today in urban America as it does in the Paris suburbs. The production, directed by John Malpede, will have four casts of 10 performers, each performing simultaneously for intimate audiences, with three casts performing in French and one in English.



Projects for later in the year include: a public art project, **The Skid Row History Museum**, that continues our work tracking the historic and future socio-economic contours of downtown. Other projects continue our work on themes of women living in poverty and the dynamics of addiction and recovery. Henriette Brouwers will direct **La Llorona: Weeping Women of Echo Park**, with recent immigrants living on the fringes of downtown, and produced in conjunction with the Echo Park United Methodist Church, a church long active in issues of asylum and immigrant rights. In the fall we will again produce a recovery themed project with poet and playwright Ron Allen, **My Eyes are the Cage in My Head**.

Your support of LAPD is enormously appreciated.

LAPD is a 501(c)3 non profit and your donation is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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