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Tony Parker plays Rep. Julian Dixon (D-Calif.) in "Agents & Assets."
Photo by John Tracy

Local ex-addicts key assets in play about war on drugs

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DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

A LOS ANGELES-based theater group is bringing its acclaimed play about the war on drugs to Brooklyn — and using local recovering dope addicts in key roles.

"Agents & Assets," which is based on 1998 congressional hearings involving the CIA's role in trafficking cocaine to fund Contras in Nicaragua, will be staged tonight at the Pitkin Ave. Housing Works in East New York, organizers said.

Since the play debuted in 2000, theater company Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) has taken the show on the road, hitting Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland and Detroit — and finally, East New York.

"We decided we wanted to do the show in communities that have been severely impacted not only by drugs but by punitive U.S. drug policies," said LAPD director John Malpede, whose play debuted on L.A.'s infamous Skid Row.

With a cast of 13 — six LAPD regulars and seven recovering drug addicts from Housing

Works — the play centers around actual transcripts from the 1998 congressional hearing into CIA drug trafficking.

The characters in the play include Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), as well as CIA Inspector General Fred Hitz, who discuss allegations that the CIA had allowed drugs to be imported into the U.S. to fund the Contras during their fight against the Nicaraguan government.

Kevin Key, a former Brownsville resident and criminal defense attorney who was disbarred in 2002 because of a serious heroin addiction, plays Rep. Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), a member of the House Intelligence Committee.

"My character is very disturbed by the lack of an investigation and all of the allegations about the CIA," said Key, 58, who has been drug-free since

2003. "He suspects there's something to it," added Key, who now lives in Los Angeles. "The [CIA] report was a whitewash, basically, is what he thinks."

East New York resident and AIDS survivor Cesar Figueroa said he spent two weeks rehearsing for the play — his first — in a role he said is small but challenging.

"I love this thing, bro," said Figueroa, 48, who plays Rep. John Lewis, a Georgia Democrat. "I've been memorizing for two weeks. My role isn't too big, but you still have to remember when to come in, when to speak — that sort of thing."

"Agents & Assets," which premiered Wednesday at the Housing Works bookstore in SoHo, heads to East New York today, where the cast will perform the free play at the Housing Works health center at 2640 Pitkin Ave. at 6 p.m.

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