



December 1, 2014

Dear LAPD Enthusiasts:

Welcome to our year-end letter, a chance to report on all the projects we've done this year and of course to request that you consider making a year end donation. If we were public radio, it would be our year-end pledge drive---and the accounts of our work this year would be interrupted every five minutes for another plea for cash.

The Skid Row community is a place where recovery happens—and as such it's a resource for all of Southern California. Many LAPD projects chronicle the emergence of this community of compassion and make its process visible. In 2015 we're opening a pop-up Skid Row History Museum and Archive, in order to continue to tell the story of Skid Row.

2015 will mark LAPD's 30th year. Early on we asked, "Do you want the cosmetic version or the real deal?" With the Museum and Archive we'll continue our work to make community on Skid Row and to get the real deal out to normalville.

You can read more about this and all our 2014 projects below in accounts written by LAPD members.

And, one more time: please consider making a donation to LAPD. Your contributions to LAPD are tax-exempt to the fullest extent of the law.

May you raise lots of questions and cause your share of trouble in 2015, THANK YOU!
John Malpede for LAPD

LAPD AT THE QUEENS MUSEUM --- by John Malpede

Do You Want the Cosmetic Version or the Real Deal?: Los Angeles Poverty Department 1985–2014

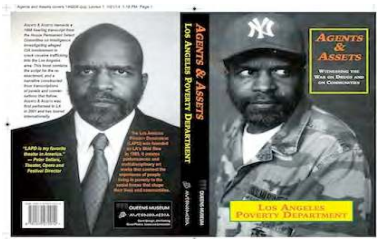
January 2014 through June, New York's Queens Museum presented a gallery show on the work and history of Los Angeles Poverty Department. The exhibition was titled, "***Do you want the Cosmetic Version or Do You Want the Real Deal?***" The title was a line from one our 1988 work, "*LAPD Inspects America: San Francisco*", which then became something of our motto for many years. The show, curated by Larissa Harris, occupied two galleries in the museum, with LAPD in residence for the months of January and February.



One gallery was an installation of our 30 prison bunk-beds, the beds function both as an installation and as the all enveloping performance and audience space for our performance *“State of Incarceration”*. The LAPD cast of 12 flew out from Los Angeles for a week and three performances of *State of Incarceration* the opening weekend. WNYC’s art critic Deborah Solomon said the piece represents *“the height of activist art.”* Solomon went on to praise The Queens Museum for presenting the LAPD caustically commenting that *“Museums are supposed to do two things: One is preserve objects, and the other is engage the community. A museum like MOMA is no longer engaging the community; it’s just engaging construction companies, to put up more space.”*



During the residency LAPD’s Henriëtte Brouwers directed 4 workshops for NYC artists and teachers and community members. They were packed and additional sessions were added to accommodate everybody.



Six LAPD’ers spent a month in Queens, working with 8 members of the recovery program Drogadictos Anónimos, and the combined cast performed the North American premiere of *“Agentes y Activos,”* the Spanish language version of *“Agents & Assets,”* which had previously only been presented in our 2009 tour of Bolivia. The book, *“Agents & Assets; Witnessing the War on Drugs and Communities”* was published by The Queens Museum and Autonomedia in conjunction with the exhibition.

The second museum gallery was installed with numerous monitors and screens devoted to covering a number of LAPD productions. Clunky old monitors appropriately screened a number of our early works from the formative wild and crazy years, flat screens and projected images covered selected later works including *“Agents & Assets”* and *“Walk the Talk”*. Additional wall space and a vitrine were devoted to original fliers and directors and performers notes from the LAPD archives. Half the wall space in this gallery was devoted to LAPD projects that excavate the history of Skid Row and celebrate transformative initiatives created by people who’ve lived and worked on Skid Row. 36 portraits of Skid Row visionaries created for our biennial *“Walk the Talk”* parade by Mr. Brainwash were hung on one long wall of the gallery. Our Skid Row history timeline that we’d previously installed at L.A.’s The Box Gallery in 2008 was updated to cover recent neighborhood developments including the federal court decision forbidding the city from seizing the property of people living on the street.



The show was extensively and favorably covered in the press.

ARTFORUM’s Colby Chamberlin invoked Michel Foucault’s concept of the “specific intellectual” as useful in understanding LAPD’s work. *“Foucault’s ‘specific intellectual’ is embedded in real, material, everyday struggles against ‘the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators, etc.’—precisely those forces that have sought to criminalize Skid Row’s population and clear the way for redevelopment. ‘Do you want the cosmetic version’ makes clear that a full account of LAPD’s ‘community art’ needs to chart not only its actors and audiences but also its adversaries.”*

ArtSlant’s Ryan Wong wrote: *“The methods, settings, and goals of LAPD’s work fuse arts and activism, while so much ‘politically-engaged’ art maintains the professionalized, middle-class stances and practices of the art world under the rhetoric of activism.”*

STATE OF INCARCERATION --- by KevinMichael Key

In February 2014, California's overcrowded, inhumane and unconstitutional prison system was brought to New York City by LAPD. Conditions in California's prisons have been so unhealthy and so resistant to remedies that, after 20 years of litigation, The United States Supreme Court held that the entire system violated the 8th Amendment's Right to be free from, "*Cruel and unusual punishment.*" As part of a LAPD 30 year Retrospective at The Queens Museum, 12 cast members and 30 prison bunk beds trekked cross country to present *State of Incarceration.*

How does a performance project capture the brutality of a system that cages men and women like beasts, while also portraying each person's struggle to preserve and maintain personhood and humanity in that setting? At LAPD, we pride ourselves on being the real deal, nothing gets watered down in our world. John decided we would give each audience member a bunk, we would make them feel the everyday tension of imprisonment. Some of our cast have been incarcerated, this project is thoroughly soaked with these experiences, audience members climbing up to their bunks quickly learned not to step on my bed.



No one present escapes the heat, the smell, the stress and stigma of prison. We see the CO's (prison guards) performing robotic maneuvers to mask feelings and fear. Key jangling, trouser grabbing, back slapping bravado serve as releases from their reality, they too are prisoners in this cage. One CO wears his menacing and cool shades, so "these shitheads can't see the fear in my eyes." Of course the inmates know, "you can't fool me, that's fear in your eyes."

State of Incarceration opens and closes with songs. "*Cell Life*" is an opening statement lamenting the worldwide history of incarceration, from North Kern

State Prison (California) to Robben Island (S. Africa). Pushing the envelope, both cast and audience share the crowded bunks. Once they have learned the rules at My Fucking House, we close our performance by sharing The Spread (a tasty concoction of boiled Ramen noodles, hot and mild Doritos chips, mayo meat and cheese, all whipped together on stage in a large garbage bag) and inviting everyone to eat and dance to the beat of, "Bad Boy."

AGENTES Y ACTIVOS, a Spanish-language version of LAPD's best known work, *Agents & Assets*, is in two parts. First, members of LAPD and members of Drogadictos Anónimos (DA), a Queens-based recovery group, reenact a 1998 House of Representatives hearing on allegations that the CIA was complicit in crack cocaine trafficking into the Los Angeles area. This means that cast members – most of whom have been directly impacted by drugs – speak the words of the people who made drug policy. Second, people with knowledge of the subject connect the performance to concerns here and now, and open up a conversation with everyone in the room. The issues addressed range from local and international drug policy, to organizing for humane and sustainable alternatives to the "drug war", to harm reduction and public health.

Agents & Assets was first performed in Los Angeles in 2001 and has toured internationally.



AGENTES Y ACTIVOS PERFORMANCES 2014:

Friday, February 28 // 7:30pm

Queens Museum, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens, NY 11368

Panel Heather J. Haase, **New York City Bar Association Committee on Drugs & the Law**
Gabriel Sayegh, **Drug Policy Alliance**, Sanho Tree, **Drug Policy Project, Institute for Policy Studies**

Saturday, March 1 // 2:30pm

Langston Hughes Library & Cultural Center, 10001 Northern Blvd. Corona, Queens, NY 11368

Panel Sanho Tree, **Drug Policy Project, Institute for Policy Studies** & Cassandra Frederique, **Drug Policy Alliance**

Sunday, March 2 // 2:30pm

Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural Center, Flamboyán Theater, 107 Suffolk St., Manhattan, NY 10002

Panel Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, **Open Society Global Drug Policy Program** & Allan Clear, **Harm Reduction Coalition**



**Settlement
@ the BOX
by
SOIT & LAPD**

**Performances:
April 4 & 5
April 6,
followed by
conversation**

This three-week workshop, which resulted in a weekend-long performance of **Settlement**, was our third presentation at The Box gallery on Traction Avenue. This time LAPD collaborated with SOIT dance company of Brussels, to create 'Settlement', a generative performance project that produced a fictitious community. The cast of 21 people included: LAPDers and our two Dutch interns, members of SOIT, members of UCEPP's youth program, dancers from the larger Los Angeles dance community. **Settlement** was directed by SOIT's Hans van der Broeck and Anuschka von Oppen.

In *Settlement*, performers generate a village whose inhabitants occupy an alternative universe separate from the modern world.



SOIT created 'Settlement' projects in Sydney (Australia), Wellington (New Zealand), Harare (Zimbabwe), Vienna (Austria), and Bastia (Corsica). The L.A. 'Settlement' project took on a new direction: we created a 'virtual space' by making a see-through plastic wall that separated us from the audience. The actors/dancers chose to re-enact a person: it could be someone who was still alive today or who had died long ago. We acted as agents that travel through time, exploring unconscious archives of souls from the past. We resurrected the spirits of the disappeared, inhabiting their visions, thoughts and beliefs. We had much fun doing it. The BOX staff provided amazing support, they became ideal stage managers and danced with us during the warm-ups and together we created a powerful visual, moving performance.



Silvia Hernandez --- My name is Silvia, and as part of the SOIT / LAPD experience I found out that I still have a lot of abilities that can help me to succeed, not only as a performer but also as an individual coexisting with other individuals. Especially knowing that I had also opportunities to work with my daughter Sara. A reconnection with her, realizing that she carries on the artistic spirit, that helped us to learn about each other. And for Sara herself to learn that she can do anything that she puts in her mind. Thank you SOIT, LAPD and Skid Row communities for that revelation and, thanks God, mainly for giving me the opportunity to share my life and love with all of you.

WALK THE TALK --- by Austin Hines

Over Memorial Day weekend, LAPD paraded through the streets of downtown, LA for the second installment of *“Walk the Talk”* – our biennial parade/performance that takes to the streets to honor Skid Row visionaries and their initiatives. We activated the neighborhood with a booming celebration and inducted eight new honorees into the Walk the Talk hall of fame! We assembled at Gladys Park in Skid Row. The sounds of the Mudbug Brass band filled the park and beautiful handcrafted quilted-portraits of the honorees, created by artist Brian Dick, were held high for everyone to see. There, we danced to the tunes, waiting for the highly anticipated addition to the parade, Mike Kelley’s “Mobile Homestead” – a recreation of Mike Kelley’s childhood home, on wheels, towed by a semi truck! Inside the “Mobile Homestead,” we had pictures, videos and historical information about previous Walk the Talk honorees, a Skid Row History Timeline and on the backside of the trailer we hung a banner with portraits of the 36 previous honorees, created by LA artist Mr. Brainwash. The “Mobile Homestead” pulled up and we were ready to roll, literally.

WALK THE TALK is a peoples' history of the community. LAPD tells the rest of the story, what you don't hear elsewhere: the story of the community as told by the community.

May 14: Come Together Conversation Event at The Los Angeles Mission.

Community visionaries talked about their work. Presenters included downtown business owner **Fernando Fernando**, pastor/community activist **Stephen “Cue” Jn-Marie**, visual artist **Rory White**, and current and former staffers from some of Skid Row’s innovative social service programs chosen for their wisdom and compassion: **Sarah Espinosa** of the Downtown Women Center, **Denise Cornelius**, **Fred Walker** and **Dora Valenciano** of The Weingart Center.



Before we did though, we performed a scene about the day’s first inductee, grassroots activist, General Jeff and his efforts in the community, which resulted in the city’s investment in the revitalization of Gladys Park. After the performance General Jeff expressed his gratitude for being honored. The horns blew from the trumpets, as well as the semi truck, and everyone knew it was time to go to the next location.

<---- **General Jeff** at the mic.

Adrian Turnage (Who performed with his son Adrian, left and right of General Jeff) --- *The walk the talk event was special to me for several reasons. One being the fact that I was able to learn so much about Skid Row and about the people that fought to make sure that Skid Row residents had a voice.*

We made the short march to United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP), a drug and alcohol prevention program in Skid Row, where we honored longtime employee, Charles Porter and founder, Zelenne Cardenas. Our scene focused on their work in the community, meeting people where they are and working to reduce the number of alcohol outlets in the neighborhood. From there, we marched down 6th street. People joined in as they saw what was happening, others stared in awe as the parade passed them. At the site of the Midnight Mission we celebrated Clancy Imislund. Famous in the halls of recovery, Clancy got kicked out of the mission because he was drunk, only to come back years later, sober as the CEO of the organization. His work was instrumental in integrating recovery into the framework of the organization. Now retired, he still shows up everyday to fundraise for the mission.

Then we headed down to 7th and San Julian and honored Captain Duffy and Fire station 9. One of the busiest stations in the nation, Fire Station 9 rarely fights fires, but rather, mostly deals with health emergencies. After 30 years on the job, Captain Duffy will retire next year.

Next, we headed up San Julian to the Simone Hotel, where we performed a scene about Michael Blaze, the founder of *Skid Row Photography Club*, *Veterans in Photography* and *Unified Fathers for Life*. The scene focused on how Blaze reunited with his estranged daughter, which resulted from his work, helping to reunite other fathers with their children. Blaze was right there amongst the festivities, taking pictures and filming, as he has done for years.



From San Julian Street, we zig-zagged to Winston Street, where we honored the work of Joan Sotiros, the longtime director of the St. Vincent De Paul Cardinal Manning Center. After 19 years of service to the Skid Row community, Joan retired in October of 2012. At St. Vincent's, Joan was determined to create a warm understanding environment.

The final performance of the day took place on Main Street, just north of 5th. LA CAN used to have a space there and Dr. Mongo,

a poet, author and former teacher, hosted poetry readings there. He was LA CAN's poet laureate and for years has organized poetry events in and around the downtown area. We honored the doctor with a scene that included one of his most revered poems.



Dr. Mongo was not able to attend that day, but he came to see our performance about him when we performed it for the opening of the "**Mobile Homestead**" at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. LAPD's exhibition inside the "Mobile Homestead" was on view from May 29th – June 16th.

THE FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS is getting bigger and better every year. The community really came together for this two-day art and music festival at Gladys Park that celebrates the artistry of Skid Row residents. Almost two weeks before the festival, the lineup was fully booked!

On Saturday, Oct. 18th at 1:00pm, festival veteran Gary Brown, a talented artist and musician with Lamp Arts Program, which partners with LAPD each year to organize the event, welcomed the crowd with a serenade from his saxophone. Gary also performed with *Skidroplayaz*, a group of Skid Row based percussionists that has acted as the festival's house band for 5 years in a row. Gary was the first of over 90 performers who took the stage that weekend, many who have performed year after year. The lineup included many different performance styles: poetry, gospel, hip-hop, rock, rap, reggae and folk to name a few. At times, the park even became a hotbed for drama.

Dramastage Qumran, a Skid Row based theater company, performed their work *"Nailheads,"* a play about homelessness in LA. The playwright, Melvin Ishmael Johnson, also helped to compile stories for another play that was being featured at the festival; *"If The SHU Fits: Voices from Solitary Confinement,"* a reading of stories from survivors of solitary confinement. Kevin Michael was excited to introduce fellow 12-stepper Abbey Williams an employee for the Weingart Center's re-entry program. Abbey came to the festival to perform her rap, *Recovery Twitch*. "I write drug-free raps," she said in an interview after her performance, "I write music about oppression, and recidivism."



In addition to the performances the park was filled with visual artists who were displaying their works. Myka Moon and Marvin Anderson, also with Lamp Arts Program, displayed their artworks and did live easel painting. Myka talked about his work onstage (a new aspect of the event that highlights the visual artists). "I used to be miserable," he said, "painting makes me happy and that's why I do it." He displayed a collage with paintings, drawings, and sketches made at the previous year's festival.

Flo Hawkins also took the stage to speak about her work. Formerly addicted to drugs, homeless and living on the

streets of Skid Row, Flo painted part of the mural that still exists on 5th and Crocker Streets. Flo presented her pastel work, a stunningly precise portrait of Al Pacino, aptly named, *Al Pacino*. She was introduced by Officer Rich who is famous in the community for his kindness and canny ability to calm disturbances during the 30 years he worked at the County Welfare Office. Officer Rich has known Flo for almost just as long and held Al Pacino high up in his arms. After her presentation Flo proclaimed, "I was able to get off of these streets and you can, too!" She spent the rest of the day drawing portraits of people for free and Officer Rich volunteered, picking up whatever tasks needed to be done.



Flo Hawkins and Officer Rich have been honorees in *Walk the Talk*. An entire section of Gladys Park was dedicated to displaying Walk the Talk artwork. Portraits of the 44 honorees, including eight quilted works by artist Brian Dick and a banner with portraits of the original 36 honorees created by LA artist Mr. Brainwash, hung on the back wall of the park, accompanied by short bios, and festival attendees were able to learn about the history of the area and the people who have made positive change on Skid Row.

It was truly a community event, a hub for the artists and residents to reconnect and appreciate each other's talents. Artists who performed were given a t-shirt with the words "Skid Row Artists," on a group photo from last year's event, printed by Skid Row based company Love Nail Tree.

The LA Playmakers concluded the festival with a spectacular performance. A group of eleven rhythm and blues musicians formed by lead singer Tommy Newman and keyboardist Joseph Warren with members from Skid Row's Church of the Nazarene. The LA Playmakers rocked a 30-minute set, getting everyone on their feet, dancing to Pharell's, "Because I'm Happy," an apropos way to celebrate the vibrancy of Skid Row artistry and to conclude the 5th annual Festival for All Skid Row Artists.

2015 COMING UP:

The first LAPD (well at that moment nameless) workshop happened in October 1985. I was working at Inner City Law on San Pedro St. and the law center partnered with the California Arts Council's "artist in communities" program to sponsor performance workshops. At nights and on the weekends we'd push the desks out of the way and get to work messing around. 30 years later here's what's in the works.

On the 30th anniversary of the founding of theatre troupe the **Los Angeles Poverty Department** and the 50th anniversary of the release of Akira Kurosawa's stunning film *Red Beard*, LAPD will perform **Red Beard, Red Beard**, a duet for Kurosawa's film and live performers.



The performance was celebrated when given a beautiful production with a 40 person cast in Paris in 2008 and was nominated for the *Prix du Souffleur* for best ensemble theater, but it was seen by only a few Angelinos when presented in 2000 by 10 performers in a small hotel space in Skid Row. **Red Beard, Red Beard** 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.

The 2-hour production with a 21-person cast, will be performed at Highways Performance Space, in honor of Highways' 25th anniversary, on January 23 and 24 at 8:30 PM.

The address: 1651 18th St., Santa Monica, CA 90404 ~ 1/2 block north of Olympic Blvd.

In keeping with our interest in making the accomplishments of the neighborhood known, with the support of the California Arts Council's Creative California Communities program, we plan to open the **Skid Row History Museum and Archive**, an exhibition, archive and performance space. The first gallery show on the neighborhood's history will be up in March. The space will also host music and other performances, films and meetings.

Phoenix In The Sky With Diamonds, LAPD's next new devised theater piece on the subject of mental health will be presented in the space about a year from now at the end of 2015.

OUR FUNDERS IN 2014:

