# OCTOBER 17 & 18, 2015 GTH FEGTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTIGTS



*By Austin Hines* --- We rocked the park! On the mornings of October 17th and 18th, if you were near the corner of 6th and Gladys, you heard the drums and maybe you saw the tables and chairs that we were setting up in Gladys Park and you thought, what's that? Hopefully, you stopped in and checked it out. The "it" is the **Festival for All Skid Row Artists,** a yearly music and art festival that takes place right here in Skid Row!

This is the 6th year in a row that the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) has produced the event, and it just keeps getting better every year. If you don't know about LAPD, we're a theater group, but in addition to creating art, we are interested in creating community in Skid Row and the festival is one way we work to accomplish that goal. This year there were more bands, more visual artists and more people who wanted to be involved, whether it was volunteering, performing, running a workshop, doing a presentation or just simply being a part of the festivities. The community came out in numbers to show support for this two-day event that celebrates the many talented artists who call Skid Row home.

The festival started at 1pm on Saturday, October 17th with a drum performance by the **Skidroplayaz**, a group of about 10 Skid Row residents who perform with a variety of African percussion instruments. Walter Fears, a veteran and Skid Row activist, formed the group. Walter is a longtime performer with LAPD and has acted in a variety of LAPD shows, both here in the States and abroad. His band, Skidroplayaz, has been the festival house band for all 6 years and once again, they rocked the house. Walter and other artists have come back year after year to perform at the festival, proving that this is a community where people live and make art; LAPD knows this. As a matter of fact, LAPD keeps a registry of artists who live and work in Skid Row,



and after this year's festivities, the list numbers over 600, and those are just the artists that LAPD has been able to contact. There are hundreds, if not thousands, more artists living in Skid Row and every year new artists come through the gates of Gladys Park to perform or display their works. One of those artists was **Kaniah Chapman**, a 15-year-old student enrolled in the theater academy at Ramón C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts who heard about the festival through her mother. Kaniah loves art; it's what she has always been passionate about. Her first love is theater, however Kaniah brought some of her many

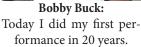
paintings and drawings to display at the festival. We asked her, what do you think about Skid Row? She said, "Skid Row is like a really huge family...a beautiful place. I grew up here...and I love it." Kaniah sees the need for more cultural spaces in Skid Row and thinks that there should be more events like the festival, which she feels, "helps the artist to get their work out there."

The festival serves as a good medium for the artists to do just that: get exposure.

But the festival is really about Skid Row and the fact that this is a community rich with artistic talent. It was truly beautiful to see everyone in the park dancing, singing, making art and just being a part of the vibrancy of Skid Row. Saturday ended with a 30+ min. set by **Passion**, a band put together especially for the festival by Randy Bellfield (lead vocals/guitar) with the lyrical voices of Dante Chambers and Laquita Davis: they had the people up on their feet and dancing. Sunday concluded with **Franc's Melting Pot**, a rock band created by formerly homeless musician and Skid Row resident, Franc Foster. Having first performed at the festival in 2011, Franc has returned every year, bringing with him his Melting Pot of talented Skid Row artists. Franc has now formed his own organization, *Music and Arts Recovery*, and is working to get instruments into the hands of disenfranchised musicians. With Dimitra D. D. Wilson and Lorina Hawkins powerful singing, it was a great way to end the festival and the community loved it!

The Festival for All Skid Row Artists was produced by the Los Angeles Poverty Department with the help of Lamp Arts Program & United Coalition East Prevention Project and was sponsored by Alex Market, Fabric Planet, Love Nail Tree and the L.A. department of Recreation and Parks.







**Dimitra:** I like that the community is coming together. They're really keeping the drugs and alcohol out of the parks.



**Tommy Newman:** I sang my song, *In Jesus Hand.* I wrote and produced that. A lot of Gospel is happening right now.

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**Bobby May:** Inside of everybody is a work of art.



**Guanavaro Mexican:** I like to express myself and to collaborate with Skid Row."

#### LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT

#### www.lapovertydept.org

213-413-1077

# gth festival for all skid row artists

#### the Artists:

GARY BROWN PEPPER SUZETTE SHAW LINDA HARRIS LEE MAUPIN MARYLIN DERIZARI I. GABRIEL COUSING ELK RING / ERIN PICEL MELLO NEW BLUE NICK PRUL STEPHANIE BELL FRANC FOSTER **REY RODRIGUEZ** KENNETH ADAMS ALANA MARVIN SAGE SELAH RANDY VVONNE MICHELLE AUTR tight grip PRUL MCCARTHY BIG ROB WALTER FEARS hugo gonzals PATTI BERMAN NORMAN CURL jo clark tyrone dallag - ALIAS CAP-C don garza KHALIF ANDERGON CHELLA COLEMAN TOMMY NEWMAN Cynthia Williams MANUEL COMPITO · AKA OG MAN ANGELA HARPER KANIAH TAYLOR ANTHONY TAYLOR AKA TONE TONE TAYLO Robert Chambers SILVIA HERNANDEZ NO NAME BOBBY BUCK de de Wilson JUAN R. NAVARRO LARONDA HARTFIELD FLOYD LOFTON LAVONNE MELZINA SMITH Donnell Steen WILLIE MAYS KATE RICHARDS ROBIN HOODLOOM Gabriella Roga Miller REV. LEONARD FARR edgar umberto alvar RANDY BELLFIELD DANTE CHAMBERS LAQUITA DAVIDS CEDRIC THOMPSON LANDY SHORES LARRY PAXTON HARRY RICHARDS RENE NAVA elvig mathews OBERT PHILLIPS RAY LEWIS MICHAEL CLARK NDIKO WILLIAMB Donald Reese WILLIAM MAYO Dariug Dobgon LEERV SOFER CHRIS MACK HENRY Johanna J. Joegph DIMITRI TAYLOR BRAIN PALMER OLUSHEYI BANJO GUANAVARO MEXICAN TONY ANTHONY JEN HOFER Jessic Ceballos VALERIE HAYDEN MATT MIYAHARA



H. Gabriel Cousins: I performed "Prayer for Peace". This is not a performance, this is me. I wanted to share with the audience the peace bomb. Spin your own energy, spin your own chi and release it in the world as peace. I'm an inner galactic traveler in many dimensions. I've been in and out of Skid Row for 36 years. As people get wiser, or just older they get in touch with their higher power. Skid Row is coming together, just look."

Hugo Gonzalez: I'm an artist in the class with Hayk at LAMP for 14 months, and my life really changed since they sent me to that class. Now my brain is really busy with a lot of projects and hanging around with the right people. Before I was in abandoned buildings, down by the river, with the wrong people. Now I got everything back, my bicycle, my computer, my place. Man, when my therapist sent me to that class, everything changed around.

Rosa Miller: We just performed 'Woman with the Unborn Again,' dedicated to Shannon Burton; he died. He was a member of the Skid Row Gospel Choir, so I wanted to dedicate that song to him. Before Shannon died, he was the president of the Skid Row Gospel Choir and he wanted me to sing that song. So there it was, we sung it and I hope we made Shannon proud.

Linda Harris: I sang "I hope you dance." I've been singing all my life. I love to sing. I love to perform, I love people, I love life. I've lived on Skid Row for 13 years. I was in the movie The Soloist. I love skid Row, because its' my home. I love the people. There are a lot of resources down here, but some work for some people and some work for others. You got to go find what works for you. That's why I love to sing that song, because if a door shuts down for you, you've got to just persevere and something else will open up for you.

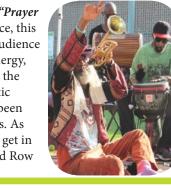
Tyrone Dallas: I go by the alias Cap-C. I'm just an artist trying to portray my means, trying to get motivated by the life and the life of the lord, the good graces of God and represent hip-hop to the fullest. 'New *Revelations of the Game*' was the name of my performance. This is my first year here. I heard about it through the streets, word of mouth through a friend. I love performing here. I wish I could do more. If I could do more I would.

**Don Garza:** I think that your process also lends a platform for people to have the courage to get up and be able to speak. When you're here and you see those tall buildings and it's always that perception that you are not worthy of speaking for yourself because maybe you have that bad past, maybe you've been in prison, maybe you've been in jail, maybe you failed in the military, maybe you became an alcoholic and a drug addict, but now you're trying to prove yourself... that's the whole therapeutic process of art. That's the whole therapeutic process of acting – is to use that as a form of catharsis, not only for the audience, but for yourself.

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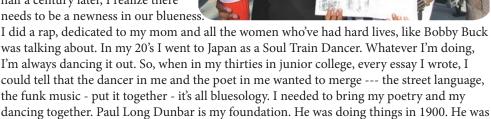
JOYCE LIGHTBODY





I'm Nick Paul and I just recited an award-winning poem I wrote for the Fried Poetry festival at the Skid Row History Museum & Archive. I won it last April. Here, reciting the poem -with the drummers playing along with me- it was very exciting. The name of the poem is "Skid Row *comes to Broadway*". I was in a writing workshop at the museum and they were talking about how they were going to research what was going on in the neighborhood developmentwise by bringing the museum to Broadway, and I thought that sounds like a musical. I kinda ran with it and had a good time, and I won an award. It was very exciting. I'm am actor and I like making art, I draw, I paint and I do my paper mache. I make masks. This is from a series I'm doing I've made six and a gigantic one that's over my bed. It's lightweight so earthquake safe. HA!

Mello New Blue: My name is Mello The persona I was performing is Nu Blu, the Bluesologist. And what really mean is that there's a newness in my blueness. When I listen to rock n roll or old school like Muddy Waters, and I realize all the rock'n roll that came after him: Jimmy Hendricks, Kieth Richards, all of that that came out of the 60's. Now half a century later, I realize there needs to be a newness in our bluene



called a negro dialog poet. I come out of the funk. Right, I'm a bluesologist. I'm encouraged by all the people here loving sharing, all the poets, musicians. I know that arts can save your life. It saved mine. There were people all around me falling apart from drugs etc., I was in dance class, I was in the library. It saved my life. For me; we need on every corner some kind of cultural activity happening and free access, free dance classes, yoga.

Kate Richards: I just performed a vocal improvisation based on a poem that Jen and Jessica just wrote. I asked them about an hour ago to write a poem on the heartbeat that brings us all together.

And they wrote this beautiful poem. I brought it up to the stage and I asked the drummers to give us a heartbeat and then I performed it.

The poem is called 'Keeping Up'. Keeping up Keeping with Keeping through We are less We are less, ...



I went onto the downtown LA facebook page and they had a whole section about this. I live a few blocks away from here—east of Alameda, and I wanted to find my way in to get to know this community. So here I am. It feels great to be here. There's a huge amount of love at this event in this community. I appreciate it being a clean and sober event. And the way the people are supporting each other is really touching my heart. People who don't live here can have an impression of what it's like and then someone like No Name gets up and he sings his heart out and you think, "Wow, there's so much that I don't know."



Angela Harper: They call me big Mama. I performed Chaka Kahn, You remind me of a friend of mine. I've been a member of UCEPP since 2006. I've done events here in Glays Park and San Julian Park. I run a committee called "Love is the Key", and I'm like a one-woman social service agency. I've been doing it for 16 years. Once I hit the neighborhood it's on --- I walk around the neighborhood and I find people to help. It works that way. I can connect the dots. I'm like the puzzle piece that got lost. It's like "Hey OK I got it." I can figure out their needs and make the connections to the services and programs that they need.

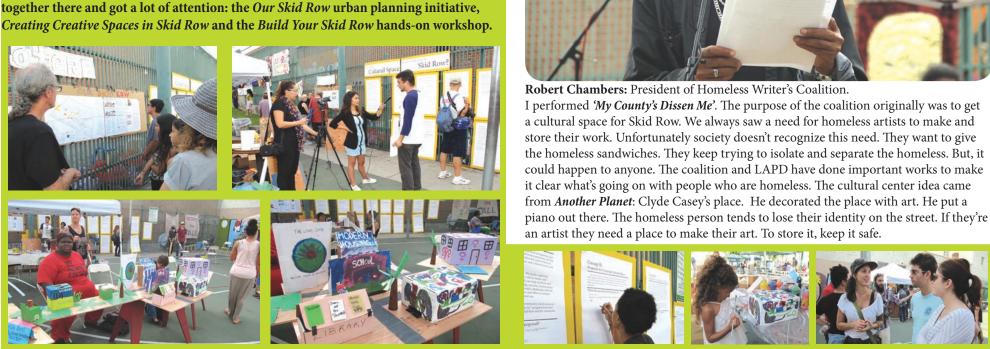
Arts and culture down here, for some of them, it's the way to elevate themselves to something else. For my daughter, who's 16, art is her gateway. She says: "I go to a performing arts school. I know I want to be a great artist, so I got to go to school."



to the community.

Anthony Taylor, a.k.a. Tone Tone Taylor. I was born I love to write, I love to perform. and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, that's 3000 miles I love to be of service in the away from here. It's part of the south, it's on the coas community. I've been living in and we have the biggest naval base in the world. the Ellis for 3 years. I've been an Some people say, "You sound like you're from the advocate from the time I was a deep south." I always tell them, "All the south is the child in Harlem. Since the 60's deep south." I'm a member of Los Angeles Poverty when the troops were coming Department and we're in production. I'm also in back from Viet Nam, strung out another production called E.D. Blues, it's a comedy on heroin and they were tricking out their wives, their sisters, I was there. Then I bemusical and it's going to be great. It's due to be came a homeless advocate and I'm a drug and alcohol counselor. released in February or March. I'm a student at LA I think we need to have programs that support the individual art. We also need to find City College, attended the LA Theater Academy. I was them homes. Because it's very, very difficult to be an artist if you don't have a home. You a full-time student, right now though I'm a part-time student. Things have changed dramatican't really flourish like the ones that we saw today. There were so many talented people cally for me. I'm in recovery, there are resources available for everything: for housing, shelter, and yet they don't have homes. Once they have homes they have a solid foundation. all types of immediate shelter, long-term housing, food. If you need to get back to a state, The festival was magnificent. People were coming here and giving their heart and soul they have those resources also and job skill centers are available. So all these things I've taken It's not about anything other than loving and giving. Sharing your gift, being here to advantage of and I put in the effort to apply what I've learned to my life and its allowed me, not support each other by whatever means possible. only to sustain myself in recovery, but just living as a responsible, productive member of society. I love Skid Row. I live here and right now I'm actually thriving. I've been homeless. As a matter of fact, I didn't even have a tent; I wasn't that good at being homeless. There was a time when I didn't even want to live. So, if you can come from a state of mind of wanting to die and giving up on life, to a place of hope, joy and freedom, not just in society, but in my spirit. You understand? I'm living proof. I'm a witness. There's no doubt about it, there's hope for everyone in the whole world and people right down here.

# Both days of the festival we had another kind of creativity going on in the back of the basketball court: thinking and building. Three projects that re-imagine Skid Row came



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The finished Our Skid Row urban design plan, which Over the summer John Malpede, director of LAPD, and Jeff Cain, artist and desiger on the faculty at USC Roski School of Art Drawing from the ideas of the 2 planning projects, These work-stations were very s an ongoing initiative to incorporate this commu- and Design, sent out an invitation that started like this: "Lee Maupin, Skid Row theater artist said: I got myself together when Faith Purvey and Chella Coleman talked with everyone popular. Our 2010, Making The Case nity's voice into the local government planning pro- somebody gave me some lines to memorize for a performance. Everyone needs a reason to get up in the morning and the best rea- who came by, explaining how the Fantasy Skid Row was For Skid Row Culture paper spoke to sess, was taped along the fence and Skid Row resident sons are those that honor an individal's intelligence, creativity and humanity." The invitation went out to members of the Skid Row being built. The end result was a small 'city' built on several this aspect of our work, "Inclusion Tom Grode stood by to answer any questions. Sever- community, government officials, and arts organizers to come together for a brainstorming session at the Armory Center for different tables to visually reflect the various kinds of of arts and culture in the interprepeople engaged Tom in half-hour long conversa- the Arts on How to Create Cultural & Social Space in Skid Row. The response was phenomenal, and over 35 participants from cultural spaces Skid Row residents and arts funders are tation of community conditions ions about it. People had all kinds of questions and many different backgrounds came and collaboratively brainstormed five different solutions for creating cultural space. The ideas interested in developing. Participants built resources such and the formulation of commuveryone was excited about it, though one gentleman included establishing a community run neighborhood council that would be able to broker deals for artists to have access to as art studios, musical instrument storage areas, a public nity improvement strategies may nad major doubts whether it will go forward when under-used spaces, creating a free wi-fi network and an app to help organize local events, renovating Gladys Park, and making shower, a laundromat, a pool with a diving board, small catalyze new, better, and expandt comes to funding. What caught folks attention the an "art truck" that would provide a local rehearsal space and allow performers and artists to travel to other communities to show garden plots, a school, a multipurpose building including a spa ed ways of thinking about neighmost was creating Safety Zones and Tom's basic answer their work. We presented all the ideas on yellow boards on the fence and Jeff Cain and Katherine McNenny asked for feedback. and a rooftop for dance parties, and a women and children's borhood transformation processto those questions was "I don't know" and he tried They had many excellent discussions and excellent feedback. Our next step will be to refine these ideas and return them to the center. The project had a welcoming, hands-on, open-ended es and desired outcomes by both to say "I don't know" in a way that inspired people. Skid Row community and to the funders and advocates to see what actionable steps can be made to bring the best ideas to reality. nature meant to invite conversation and find common ground. Skid Row insiders and outsiders".





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# gth festival for al skid row artists

Khalif Anderson: Mr. Anderson, caught up in the Matrix of Skid Row. I'm a Skid Row artist, been doing it for a few years, but I been doin' it for 20 some years overall. I wrote a song when I was 12 years old which became a song my cousin recorded. I'm here to serve the people, reciprocate, give, receive, all that. I've been downtown since 2007 and have made culture with LA Poverty Department, Skid Row Artists Collective, Rainbow art school, some Lamp stuff, etc. I got two singles coming out called Love Hurts and Oliver Stone. It's a psychedelic song, but its natural, organic. I love that guy, Oliver Stone. He's a great truth hound. No matter what they say. You can disagree with him. He creates debate, but debate can bring people together. I'd like to see more bathrooms or showers. More trees and plants. But definitely, I would like to see a Skid Row studio for media. For adults and children -- I love children -- but it needs to include adults who want to fulfill their aspirations — even though they maybe aren't that educated. It should be for training behind the camera as well as in front of the camera. A place where people can tell their stories, gain skills, maybe make some money and contribute



Suzette Shaw: I am a Skid Row resident and today I performed a poem called "Can't Kill Africa." Yeah, I had my puppet...it's a life-size puppet of brother Africa, whose real name is Charly Leundeu Keunang. He was a brother who was part of the concrete community here in Skid Row who was actually murdered by LAPD on March 1st of this past year. So the poem actually talks about Africa, but then also it's a metaphor in regards to Africa is all of us. Can't Kill Africa is a metaphor in regards to - by killing and shooting one of us, it's like you're trying to kill and shoot all of us, but you can't kill all of us. As a member of the Skid Row community, I've also taken part with a lot of initiatives, part of the positive movement as we call it here in Skid Row. Skid Row is a community and we would like to see it grow in a way that is sustainable and also that is supportive to this community of recovery.

Marylin Derizari: I performed *"Victims No More: Stop the* Violence break the silence". I've been writing for 42 years.





# gth festival for all skid row artists



Los Angeles Poverty Department's crew and staff: Austin Hines, Henriëtte Brouwers, Sean Gregory, KevinMichael Key, Walter Fears, John Malpede, Stephanie Bell, Suzette Shaw, Sherri Walker, Celestine Williams, Chas Jackson, Anthony Taylor, Jen Wilson, Chella Coleman, Kahlif Anderson.



**Stephanie Bell:** I'm a cook. I also belong to the theater group LAPD – for 18 years. I've been in the community over 20 years. I love to come down here every year to help out. I would love to see all communities get together and do something like this every year around the world because it's a beautiful thing and we could visit other peoples country and do the same thing that we're doing here and just get along and have a good time. I've been giving out T-shirts,

helping with sandwiches and water and greeting the people, which I love to do anyway. Just meeting all different faces and seeing the faces from last year. And I'm going to do it again next year if the Lord says the same, I'll be here next year. I love to sing. I've been singing since I was 7 all the way up till now, and I'm 52.



# about Los Angeles Poverty Department

**LAPD's MISSION:** Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) creates performances and multidisciplinary artworks that connect the experience of people living in poverty to the social forces that shape their lives and communities. LAPD's works express the realities, hopes, dreams and rights of people who live and work in L.A.'s Skid Row.

**LAPD's VISION:** LAPD makes artistic work to change the narraive about Skid Row and people living in poverty. in doing so, LAPD aims to create a community of compassion, change individual lives and inspire the next generation of artists.

**LAPD's HISTORY:** The Los Angeles Poverty Department has been working in LA's Skid Row since 1985, hosting free performance workshops and creating art. LAPD was the first theater company run for and by homeless people in the nation, as well as the first arts program of any kind for homeless people in Los Angeles. Our original goals remain the same: to create community on Skid Row and to amplify the voices of the people who live on Skid Row, in order to share the lived experience of our company and community members with the larger city of Los Angeles and the nation.



### **Enormous THANKS TO..**

... our community partners: Lamp Arts Project and UCEPP. Alex Market payed for our lunches, Council District 14 provided tables and chairs, Love Nail Tree printed our tshirts, which were provided at cost by Jacob at the Fabric Planet and our neighbors who gave us books. Our 'park band' the Skidroplayaz. Michael Hubman alias Waterman celebrated his 9 year anniversary with us. ... our volunteers: Anjelica Lopez, Colin Rich, Eitan Kleinman, Chioma Uba, Matthew Horns, Yeymi Moya, Margarita Olmos, Vabino Aralos, Julia Taylor, Veronica Barahona, Darius Dabson, Ndiko Williams, Tay Lor, Chate Murrey, Manuel Vigil, Glenn Gilbert, Darius Dobson, William Mayo, Marilyn Irizarry, Tommie Bolden, Clancy Cornell, Elizabeth Gordon, Faatuai Kelekdio, Faith Purvey, Hugo Gonzalez, Manuel Perez, Princess Danfanolnaol, Antonia Lopez. ... and the artists who facilitated the creativity stations: Matt Miyahara and Valerie Hayden managing the paper maché stations, Jen Hofer and Jessica Ceballos writing personal letters and poems for anyone who needed one, Joyce Lightbody chalking messages around peoples feet, Guanavaro Mexican making peoples portaits in clay, The Big Draw LA and the people who invited us to re-imagine our neighborhood: Tom Grode with Our Skid Row, Faith Purvey with Build Your Skid Row and Jeff Cain and Katherine McNenny with Creating Creative Space in Skid Row, Helki Frantzen and the filmcrew and the LAPD crew and staff.

Get Ready for Los Angeles Poverty Department's

## 7TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS Coming up Saturday & Sunday October 22 & 23, 2016

The Festival is 2 afternoons of non-stop performances created and performed by Skid Row talents. We're talking about performance of all kinds: music, dance, more music, spoken word, theater and yes even more music. Skid Row visual artists will display their work and we'll have arts workshops going on, so anyone can make some work on the spot. If you want to perform or exhibit your work, contact us anytime between now and October and get a spot at the festival.



**Call or write us!** Los Angeles Poverty Department PO Box 26190 Los Angeles, CA 90026 office: 213.413.1077 **Find LAPD online:** www.lapovertydept.org info@lapovertydept.org youtube.com/lapovertydepartment facebook.com/lapovertydepartment twitter.com/lapovertydept





Festival for All Skid Row Artists is produced by Los Angeles Poverty Department with help from community partners Lamp Community's Arts Program and United Coalition East Prevention Project, Love Nail Tree, Alex Market and Fabric Planet. This year's festival is made possible with the support of California Arts Council's Local Impact program ~ CAC's Local Impact program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Department of Cultural Affairs of the city of Los Angeles, L.A. County Arts Commission, Department of Rec and Parks.

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Newspaper designed and edited by Henriëtte Brouwers. Photos by: Austin Hines, Henriëtte Brouwers, Pasadena College students, Jeff Albertini and Temple University students.

LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT

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