



Year End Letter 2017

Dear Friends of Los Angeles Poverty Department,

Yikes! 2017 is headed out the door. How did that happen? Time to ask for generous donations before tax code does who-knows-what to you and everybody who isn't a corporation or as rich as one. One account I just read – on fake news site: NY Times, is that tax "reform" will favor investors over those who work for a living. Yikes!

As you probably know by now, the year at LAPD was clouded by the loss of our passionate, compassionate, dearly loved by many, many, many, collaborator KevinMichael Key. KMK was a self-proclaimed "artist" who since 2003 gave his mind, body and spirit to inform, shape and realize LAPD's work. He was the human connector of many in Skid Row and beyond, in the social justice, recovery and artistic communities of LA, and we are collectively stepping up our game to build on his work. Everybody's got to get on the phone and talk to someone – remember that: talking not just texting – daily. Synchronous communication alive and well.

In 2017 LAPD's energies have continued to focus on the preservation of the Skid Row neighborhood and its residents and building an understanding of community generated public safety.



We began the year by being displaced from our **Skid Row History Museum & Archive** location at 440 S. Broadway as all mezzanine level tenants were sent away to facilitate the selling of the building. Several months later, we landed at 250 S. Broadway, in a space twice as big and much nicer to look at and inhabit. There, in collaboration with Rosten Woo,

who designed the installation, we began to research and realize "**The Back 9**": public conversations, a performance and an installation all looking into the re-zoning of LA and the concomitant new "2040 community plan" for downtown and their potentially deleterious to disastrous outcomes for Skid Row. Operating on non-profit time, (get idea, fund idea, realize idea), a process that requires anticipation, the project's interventions turned out to be right on time.



During the project's research period, last spring, we were able to initiate a relationship with the staff of the Department of City Planning, who presented and answered community questions on the in development plan's potential effect on Skid Row. This dialog has continued throughout the year, with DCP staff most recently soliciting community input at LAPD's 8th annual

Festival for All Skid Row Artists. Once the installation was realized DCP staff had a golf outing on our Zoning themed playable-miniature golf course and some attended the eponymous performance, in which LAPD'ers represented developer-, politician- and Skid Row resident perspectives while golfing. The installation / performance project was widely covered in the press, including arts press and also those reporting on land use issues in the city.

With a now formed coalition of community service providers, and advocates, we'll be continuing to engage with this issue and press for Skid Row community friendly outcomes. We recently presented our work on shifting the plan's outcome to acknowledge the wants and needs of current and future Skid Row residents at the Common Field convening of alternative arts spaces and organizers. In a few weeks at the invite of Vancouver Moving Theater and the Vancouver Renter's Union, we will present at a conference of tenant organizers and artists.



In February we'll present our performance "**What Fuels Development?**", that chronicles a Skid Row community victory that we were instrumental in achieving at Pangea World Theater in Minneapolis. *What Fuels Development?* chronicles and extrapolates from a true life fight in which Skid Row residents mobilized and convinced

Zoning Commissioners to stop a project that would have placed a full-bar restaurant in a hotel inhabited by people in recovery. Travis Diehl, writing for **ARTFORUM** described *What Fuels Development?* as “***an impassioned dramatization of a true life fight... a specific episode to counter the abstract surety of gentrification.***” While there we’ll engage in an exchange on gentrification and in-placement strategies with Pangea and their very aware and seasoned community.



Our new project “**Public Safety for REAL**” intends to articulate a ground up rather than top down framework for public safety that reflects the reality of Skid Row and embodies community wisdom, practices and vision. Many community members and grass roots organizers in Skid Row, including LA Poverty Department,

have generated successful community safety practices. It’s an exciting moment in Skid Row as some of this community thinking becoming visible, most notably with the innovation of public toilets and showers staffed with trained community attendants. The project seeks to identify and articulate community practices and extrapolate from them. The project is in development with rehearsals ongoing and public research programs about to begin. We’ll perform it in the spring. The project is supported by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation’s Artist as Activist program and California Humanities.

One last connection KevinMichael Key was able to participate in and facilitate was our about to begin collaboration with 3 re-entry programs at the **Weingart Center**. We’ll be conducting weekly performance workshops with the men in these programs this year and next with the support of the California Arts Council’s Re-entry Through the Arts program. We intend to build on our previous connections with the program and it’s wise and compassionate staff, to make work that heals, affirms and surprises, with the intention of eliciting squeals á la Walt Whitman, “I didn’t know how much goodness I contained.”

Weirdly, some local foundations have suspended arts funding because of the dire social situation we find ourselves in --- in the age of Trump. This makes no sense. But, it does make a good pitch line:

Your individual donation to LA Poverty Department is both needed and appreciated.

Hope to see you in 2018.

Sincerely,
John Malpede Director, LA Poverty Department

Donate on our secure website: <https://www.lapovertydept.org/donate/>

Or send a check to: Los Angeles Poverty Department, POB 26190, Los Angeles CA 90026

*Los Angeles Poverty Department is a 501(c)3 charitable organization.

*Donations to Los Angeles Poverty Department are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.