



Year-end letter 2018

Dear Friends of Los Angeles Poverty Department,

2018 is wrapping up and I'm still checking daily to see whether our Constitution will bend or break.

At LAPD, we believe our job is about surprise. When we imagine ourselves as Public Radio Underwriters, we include in our verbal logo design, the fast spoken line *"confusing the categories since 1985"*.

The mantra of a wise friend of mine is that *"policy follows perception"*, and the sad reality is that misrepresentations of the Skid Row community abound.

Art interventions can be the unpredictable element that results in changing perception and then policy. In 2018 LAPD's energies have continued to focus on the preservation of the Skid Row neighborhood and building an understanding of the community that exists in Skid Row.



The "[Zillionaires against Humanity](#)" exhibition at our Skid Row History Museum & Archive, with cartoons by Adrian Riskin, the Skid Row Neighborhood Council Subdivision Election Timeline by Katherine McNenny and General Jeff, and videos by Linus Shentu, scrupulously documented how power politics, replete with lobbying and City Council dirty tricks, were employed to

prevent Skid Row from gaining its own neighborhood council – which would have had advisory clout in mega dollar land use decisions within Skid Row.

The exhibition helped keep the controversy in the news as The Skid Row Neighborhood Council Formation Committee filed suit against the city.

Our playful 2017 "[The Back 9](#)" performance / installation project in collaboration with Rosten Woo, lives on and contributed to the formation of the community coalition of grassroots organizations and residents, the Skid Row Now & 2040



Coalition that in 2018 generated the Skid Row Now & 2040 Plan to ensure that people now living in Skid Row (housed or un-housed) will continue to live there in 2040. And the Skid Row Now & 2040 Plan identifies funding mechanisms to realize the augmentation of low-income housing.

Our [Public Safety FOR REAL](#) performance project is nearing completion with performances coming up at REDCAT during the first week of April. The performance mines community safety practices that organically create safety and obviate the need to outsource compassion to “outreach teams” or worse to identify public safety with policing. So we hope you’ll mark the performances on your calendar and come visit us when we’re at REDCAT.



We’ve just held our 9th Annual [Festival for All Skid Row Artists](#), this year at San Julian Park, (as Gladys Park is getting renovated including the installation of permanent bathrooms long advocated for by the community). Thanks to the 125-plus Skid Row artists who performed, showed their work or led workshops. LA Poverty Department started the Festival to reveal and support all artistic activity in

the neighborhood and to instantiate that Skid Row is a neighborhood. Over 800 different neighborhood artists are now included in our artists registry. Not only is the Festival widely anticipated by neighborhood artists, but it also, importantly, draws in and connects sizeable numbers of people living on the streets to the web of community and opportunities that exist in Skid Row.

Kerem, an architect from Germany volunteered to work at the festival and said of his experience, *“I found people to be super accepting. I felt really accepted and I felt really good about it and grateful for that. And what I learned about myself is how to practice that and to be open as well. And what this Festival gives me is ... I feel like I can talk to people on the same level and eye-to-eye, which is, not very common. This Festival creates a common ground.”*



In May we produced our 4th biennial [“Walk the Talk”](#) parade, generated through a community nominating process that acknowledges people living and working in Skid Row whose work and vision have benefitted and helped to transform the community. These folks are interviewed at length and their words used to craft a scene that is performed by

LAPD during the parade --- at the location of the honoree's choosing. Their interviews become a part of and available at LAPD's Skid Row History Museum & Archive. A New Orleans style brass band leads the parade through the neighborhood. The Walk the Talk parade, like our Festival, is an event that reaches the unconnected people in Skid Row and in an informal and joyous manner brings them into the social matrix of the neighborhood.

"I was new to Skid Row. I was in Gladys Park. I was in a dark space when a parade, with tubas, trombones, bass drum, entered the park. People carrying portraits of people, people dancing to the music, Skid Row people, young people, all kinds of people. Wow. During that parade I met people. I learned about opportunities, possibilities, things to do. That day turned me around." --- Doug.



The Museum has become a go-to source for a number of journalists reporting on housing and homelessness policy.

Our Skid Row Archive has gained expertise from Clancey Cornell, who's now working with us, and support from UCLA's School of Information Sciences and UC-Riverside's Department of History. LAPD uses it to generate exhibitions. In all it's a circular process in which public conversations, etc.

initiated for LAPD projects become material in the archive and then are used by others as well as a resource for their projects.

Over many years Skid Row has emerged as a neighborhood with a number of profound and important values including: empathy, looking out for each other, sharing, second chances, recovery, inclusion, tolerance, and embracing difference.

A donation to LA Poverty Department helps us to celebrate and further imagine these values in our neighborhood manifestations of arts and culture.

Super Best wishes for a transformative 2019,

John Malpede
Director

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Los Angeles Poverty Department, POB 26190, Los Angeles CA 90026

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