

# NOVEMBER 3 & 4, 2018

## 9TH FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS



**By Walter Fears and John Malpede** --- WELCOME TO THE 9TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS, and now put your hands together for the final act of the Festival → this here newspaper!!!! Are you ready? I can't hear you. ARE YOU READY!? OK that's more like it. That's right, this newspaper is the last act of the Festival where we report back to you Skid Row with the back stage conversation and insights from many of the Festival artists. Get to know the artists in their own words. Find yourself and your friends in the Festival photos. Yeah.

The 9th Annual Skid Row Artists Festival soared in San Julian Park, November 3 & 4. It did. Usually the Festival (FASRA) as most folks know takes place in Gladys Park on the 3rd weekend of October. We postponed it a few weeks this year due to the long awaited construction of permanent toilet facilities at Gladys Park. We had hoped to celebrate that achievement in person, but when we got word from the Parks Department that they were doing more construction, we moved the permit to San Julian --- cause we wanted to celebrate the Festival before we got any further disruption --like from the rainy season. And ya, as it turned out we beat the rain by about a month.

But guess what, San Julian is a bomb place for the Festival, with lots of Skid Row population centers right there within a block of the park. Well you know, all the Hotels, the missions, the Weingart: it's all right there. Not only that, the park is well populated and lively every day of the year. The regulars treated us right proper and **Wendell Blassingame**, the Major Domo of the park did a great job of taking care of every little thing as did the park staffers. Cool thing was, it was Wendell Blassingame's birthday and everyone sang and danced while eating cake to the rhythms of the **Skid Row Playaz**, the local drum troupe that we call the "house band" at the festival and who are well known throughout Skid Row.

**THE FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS** is just that. It aims to highlight the vibrant artistic culture that exists in Skid Row and that means highlighting known talents --- like **Jo Clark** as "Michael Jackson" dancing to "I'm Bad" and **Lee Maupin** as James Brown, dancing and telling us to "Get Up Off of That Stuff", whose performances on each day brought the standing crowds to levels of sheer exhilaration. Just as great, the 'open mic' performances drew in folks who had no idea that such opportunities were out there FOR THEM. These folks got up on the stage for the open mic and shocked the world -- themselves included, when the audience started standing and screaming. Yeah!

The two-day event is sponsored by the **Los Angeles Poverty Department**, the Skid Row theater group that creates performances that lay out the dynamics and challenges of those who call Skid Row home.

San Julian has a lot of shade, not only from the Russ and Florence Hotels, but also from some very old trees that have a lot of personality ---as you would expect since they too are permanent residents of Skid Row. Especially sassy is that one that arcs diagonally over the walkway as you enter the park from the corner of San Julian and 5th Streets. BUT, this year the Festival brought its own shade in the form of 8 or 9 bright yellow shade structures that were printed on specially by a group of **design students at USC**. One of the group also made a giant inflatable in the form of the yellow, "**Skid Row Artist: Menacing Cool**" shades that each of the 125 participating artists get. The inflatable turned out to be marvelous but fragile -and it sprung some leaks and spent most of the weekend in 2 dimensions --rather than 3. Well, really the idea was so cosmic that I'd rather say it entered the 5th, 6th and 7th dimensions --even as it was hiss-hiss-hiss deflating. It's spirit endures.

The festival serves as a showcase for Skid Rows' artists to display their artwork. Not only was there a big presence from the artists of **Studio 526**, our indispensable festival partner, but many other amazing visual artists were there, some were showing and some were making and showing work. And there were workshops to boot. One of the really cool ones was a stencil workshop where people spray painted all kinds of original made up on the spot images -- on tee shirts, on cardboard, on whatever. And, of course, on stage there were non-stop live performances: spoken word, song or dance. A highlight was an interactive art installation that crossed all genre boundaries: it was a mannequin and body painting workshop, a spoken word performance and a parade, "The Love Walkers" by **Natosha Smith**. The parade and all the elements of the project were a healing ritual, healing from sexual abuse. But, don't take it from me, you can read all about it inside this newspaper, in an interview with the artist.

The Festival generates an archive of participating artists and their artworks. The registry currently has more than 820 recognized artists in the Skid Row community. All artists receive a complimentary "Skid Row Artists" t-shirt, a pair of "menacing cool" sunglasses and lunch. This years t-shirt, as usual beautifully designed and printed by community partner **Love Nail Tree**, memorialized **Franc Foster** of "Francs Melting Pot", who's band showed up and showed out every year bringing da noise and people to their feet. Franc, who passed away last summer, is sorely missed but the community members he inspired and his music live on and continue to r-o-c-k.

This year's festival came with a new master of ceremony. **Pastor Cue** of the "church w/o walls" carried both days with his unbridled enthusiasm and warmth for the community he serves -- and he peppered the proceedings with some hot raps of his own. We also had a new sound technician who was able to navigate between the performances with grace and respect to the nuances of each performance. From bringing up the lightest voices to their fullest potential to lowering the volume on performances that were longer than time allotted. Thank you to all Skid Row Artists and the community for again making this annual event a joyful and spirited occasion. Thanks to our funders and community partners, LA Poverty Department members and volunteers for their donations of love and hard work in making this event possible. See you again next year for FESTIVAL NUMBER 10!

9TH FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

THE ARTISTS:

GARY BROWN  
TOM GRODE  
CRUSHOW  
MELLO-BLUEZ  
SIR OLIVER  
STEPHANIE BELL  
GRATEFUL VOICES  
UNKAL BEAN  
CATALINA  
GERALD ALEXANDER  
LINDA LEIGH  
YVONNE MICHELLE AUTRY  
SIDEWALK SLIM  
BIG ROB  
WALTER FEARS  
CHELLA COLEMAN  
LORRAINE MORLAND  
MARYLIN GUTIERES  
MANUEL VIGIL  
'KHALIF' GARY ANDERSON  
AMBER WILKINSON  
JAMAYA KAPRI  
KANNIAH CHAPMAN  
LYRICAL STORM  
GERALD ALEXANDER  
GOD'S CROW  
RHYTHM SPIRIT RHYTHM  
MISSION TO MIDNIGHT  
LORANDA HARTFIELD  
ROSA MILLER  
JOHNNIE HOPSON  
DORAN RANDY BELLFIELD  
HOLY GRAIL  
VALERIE HAYDEN  
DR. RAVEN  
OG BRAIN  
JIGGI  
PASTOR CONNIE  
LONNIE SHEPARD  
PLANET LOVE TOUR  
GUY ROCHE  
SKID ROW PLAYAZ  
JO CLARK - MICHAEL JACKSON  
QUEEN TABIA  
GARY PAINTON  
MICHALE  
ICE TREK  
MIKE MAHANEY  
RAY LEWIS  
MICHAEL CLARK  
NDIKO WILLIAMS  
DONALD REESE  
WILLIAM MAYO  
JAVIER MEDRA  
LARRY WILLIAMS - DOC  
MARK PHILLIPS  
JAMES NEWMAN  
LONNIE SHEPARD  
LEEARV SOFER  
CHRIS MACK  
THE PRIME MINISTER -  
FOOTIE OF SAUL DE PAUL  
DAMITRI TAYLOR  
PAMELA WALLS  
CHRISTINA COLLIER  
BRAIN PALMER  
MI MI  
MS. BLACKIE  
BRANDON  
KALEB HAVENS  
BERNARD RAY  
TONY ANTHONY  
DBK - DIRT BIKE K  
DIANE POZELLER  
HOLY GRAIL  
BLOCK  
RAMMON MOORE AKA WHET  
GARRISON  
RICKY JAMMZ  
FRANC'S MELTING POT  
STEPHANIE BELL  
LEE MAUPIN  
WAHEED  
NATOSHA SMITH  
THE LOVE WALKERS  
KEVIN KIDD  
DENISE SILKIE  
UMBERTO AKA DATCHCO  
BRANDON BILLOMS

MATT MYAHARA

The art is in the collaboration. If you can get a project together and not get in a fight and leave, then you've got a piece. But if you fight and leave then it doesn't get done.



RICKY JAMMZ

I'm a tribute artist to the late Rick James, so I did a Bobby Brown "My Prerogative" song. It shows us a sign of freedom, independence so people can feel good about what they do.



KEVIN KIDD

"Man in the Mirror" is basic to me. It's like take a look at yourself. Put your dreams and your ambitions on you. You can't expect nobody to chase your dream for you.



CHRISTINA COLLIER

I performed "I won't back down" by Tom Petty. And I felt the support, the warmth of our community. I relied on music to get me through hard times. Because, being a black person in America is like being born as target. I decided today, I'm going to use my voice to help people. I'm going to use it to empower people.



LEE MAUPIN

I just got through doing James Brown. I never wanted to be James Brown. I was just determined to be the greatest dancer that ever lived before I die.



LARRY WILLIAMS - DOC

It was rough coming up and doing art. I started in elementary school and my teachers told me to stay with it. So I hung on in there and kept doing my art. I'm just proud to be here. I sketch. I get small pictures and I sketch 'em and then I'll blow 'em up.



LYRICAL STORM

I performed two songs. One is off my album called "My World, My Rules". It was released in 2017. That version is with a friend that passed away, Franc Foster, it's like more of an acoustic version and the second song that I did is the lead single off my new album called "Category Storm".



NATOSHA SMITH  
LOVE WALKERS  
MANNEQUIN  
POETRY  
BODY PAINT



I brought along with me some mannequins that I had spent a lot of time making really beautiful. What happened to those mannequins was, that a bus hit a car and the car catapulted and flew into the wall and landed on top of my tent. And the mannequins were destroyed, in a way. And I got into this relationship of which I'm trying to escape because it's abusive. This person was trying to break me, and hurt me and harm me. That's when I saw the beauty inside of my pieces, still, and saw that they were broken but still beautiful. My pieces now represent all the people who have been hurt through domestic violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, family abuse, or anything like that. I show a mannequin which represents a person who committed suicide because of emotional abuse and I have one that is independent even though she had been broken and been through all these different things, she still was able to make it through and persevere. I'm an advocate for domestic, emotional, family abuse.



The shame has to go down the toilet and we have to find more people to help empower each other and help each other --- but in the way that helps the healing, not in an aggressive way. If you see someone in an aggressive situation, you need to come with tenderness to pull them away because if you don't, you're just like the abuser.

STREET SYMPHONY ABOUT THE ROLE OF ART IN SKID ROW



**MY NAME IS MALEK**, I'm a fellow with Street Symphony and this is kind of our scaled down world music ensemble. I was playing the Middle Eastern flute called ney and violin. I was at the midnight mission for a year and a half. Street Symphony re-inspired that nurturing quality of humanity in me in a new way. This piece I wrote specifically for this community. Its called **Journey of Truth** and its based on the idea that we are all having a different experience of finding our way and the music is based on Sufi themes which are very much about tapping into the divine inside of you and the divine with other people. There is more availability of that experience down here because there is more of a need to connect to the music and the arts. What I'd like to see down here is, the arts breaking down the barriers of who fits in. I mean, this is a classically trained cello player, from Korea. I'm a half Iranian, half Persian, self taught violin player, raised in Chicago right, and Ray is deeply imbedded in the roots of like African culture and for us to come together like this, this is an example of what the world needs to see. And I think Skid Row would be a good, good hub for that.



**MY NAME IS RAY**, I'm a member of **Rhythm From The Heart** by way of **Street Symphony** and it's a pleasure playing with seasoned artists. I consider myself an intuitive artist. I was playing the Djembe drum from Senegal. I explain myself through my art with love through the drum. One constant beat is the two-count beat, which is the heartbeat; this is my communication with everyone around and in the universe just to be in synchronicity with. You've got to know yourself. Its all about spirituality. If I hold in myself that I am divine, that I am fearless, nothing can phase me.



**MY NAME IS DUSTIN** and I'm the project manager of Street Symphony, and we're just getting together a couple fellows and making music together and its beautiful. I'm a cellist. Here at Street Symphony we believe that art is an essential human right and very much a need in this community. When I get to work with Malek and Ray, I get the healing of "Wow, that this is real, this is not just to make money it is needed and its real." Let's just look around, people are having a good time, just sharing in community and we're breaking barriers of who fits in, because we're just enjoying art together, and its also a lot of fun, having a good time, and that's, I think, really important.

LORRAINE  
MORLAND



I performed "I see the world passing away", a poem that I like for everybody to relate. And I sung "Summer-time" a song a friend of mine taught me before she died --- she taught me for a reason and I always honor her.

I was homeless, 8 years in a doorway on Fifth and Spring. And then a nun saw me and she said, "No matter what I do today...you're not sleeping on the streets anymore." That was October 6, 1994. And from that day I never slept on the streets. I was an alcoholic, and she said, I'm gonna call the place for you to go. So I was gonna go out and get my last drink for \$1.39. But when I went to touch the door knob, the lady said that I could come today. So I was very thankful. I've been with **Urban Voices** for three years! I see art, just like in Beverly Hills, Inglewood, anywhere else: people bringing out their talents. I see people enjoying the attention just like a little kid, its like people get to grow up again. People focus on peoples talents and understanding, and the love that they need. You will get the best art in the world because now they can open up their hearts, and show who they are.

9TH FESTIVAL FOR AL SKID ROW ARTISTS

ART & POLITICAL ACTION



The Artist (artist/activist) has played a dynamic role in Skid Row for many years.

The Art and Political Action tent was the site of some "state of the art" goings on in the world of political action Skid Row/City Hall. A colorful hand drawn poster **Skid Row Now and 2040** told everyone **'This Is Our Land.'** Lyrics to the classic Woody Guthrie song (Woody spent serious time in Skid Row and Downtown) were later sung on the Festival stage with new lyrics that added "Little Tokyo to the Financial District" to "California to the New York island" as land that's made for you and me.

**Skid Row Now and 2040** is the Skid Row Community Plan in response to DTLA 2040, the Community Plan update for Downtown now being created by the Department of City Planning. Last year, Bryan Eck and City Planning folks were at the Festival to get input for DTLA 2040. Housing Is A Human Right was the tent tablecloth where people could pick up a copy of Skid Row Now and 2040, Chat with Kaleb (possible new podcast), and sign a **Petition** calling for any market rate housing developed in the boundaries of Skid Row (or California to the New York island) to include 25% of units set aside for supportive housing.



**THESE RENDERINGS** are for colorful crosswalks at the corner of Gladys park and 6th street. They are a part of an antidote to the "displacement landscaping" happening all over the north side of Skid Row. The idea is to hire local artists to come up with the design. --- **Katherine McNenny**

**Tuesday**, who's been staying at Union Rescue Mission for the past month, felt inspired by the Tent and a painting by Gary Brown "Big Building Downtown", that she spent a couple hours each day at the tent in stream of consciousness writing - writing about the future of political and community dynamics in Skid Row and City Hall.

**Much More To Come.** Helpful to all this is proposed new policy by LAHSA on how the government should interact with the street unoused population; policy language very much what Skid Row advocates and activists have been pushing for a long time.

What was not helpful was the appearance of **Leif the Viking**, the newly hired Community Outreach Director for The North Sea. But in the spirit of Skid Row inclusiveness, Leif the Viking was welcomed. He was drawn towards the tent by artistic renderings clearly labeled "Not The North Sea" of a proposed 6th and Gladys streetscape (fancy word for intersection as canvas). --- **Tom Grode**



**LAND USE** is a field of law that very smart people with the best intentions can spend their entire lives working to understand and use as a tool to bring about social equality, so it's no surprise that despite all our preparation, we only began a series of conversations with residents, activist and stakeholders at the 2018 Skid Row artists festival. These conversations continue to build a coalition that creates housing, jobs, improved public health infrastructure and quality of life and well being for the Skid Row neighborhood. Artists sharing their work uplift the beauty and dignity of the people of Skid Row, and by fighting for more toilets, public housing and more opportunities for artists we hope to create an environment where artists and their audiences can experience the healing and enriching power of art in their lives. --- **Kaleb Havens**



This year's festival got color coordinated. All festival design flows from our famous iridescent yellow **"Skid Row Artist Menacing Cool"** sunglasses. Thanks to our long time friend Jeff Cain and his USC Roski School of Design Graduate students we now have a bunch of shade structures that extend the vibrant not so mellow yellowness throughout the park. The students also designed a number of identifying banners, for performance and workshop spaces. The banners featured silhouettes of Skid Row people engaged in making music, visual art, dancing—all that. The students were directed our way as part of a USC initiative "Artists Addressing Homelessness".

VISUAL ART | CREATIVITY STATIONS | WORKSHOPS

JAMES NEWMAN

I see a lot of homeless children and they are still happy even though they are in the midst of the turmoil they are still happy. So, I put the city in her eyes. But to be down here and have perfect tranquility, oh, *(beats his heart)*... no matter what, everybody deserves peace and love. And if you're not touching people with art, why are you doing it? If there is no feeling there, why are you doing it? I've really got to feel my art. I do it to stay happy, I'm always happy. I've been here since March, when I got out of prison. You can make the best of your situation, not anybody else. So, when I see spice fiends and dope fiends, I remember what I used to be. I can't overlook them. I pay them to get a shower. To bring humility back. People think it's OK to offer water and stuff, but to show somebody real love is to help them change. Not just give them something.



AUTHORS ANONYMOUS - POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP

We talk about how poetry can be really anything that you want. We get an idea of what kind of creative outlets people have: whether they like to listen to music or like to write on their own, what they are interested in. And we read examples of poetry that are not what you typically think poetry would be, like prose form. We let everyone read through the books that we bring and then we do a **free write** and people can talk about their experience writing and choose to share or not share.



**Owen:** It was good. One guy Brandon was like: 'it's hard for me not to rhyme' and he wrote a page and a half of this amazing rap and we were all blown away by it and he was like "Mannn."  
**Marissa:** I am three years in recovery. Poetry has helped me through that adversity and gives me the ability to explore my feelings. It's my escape. It's my way to be with myself in a positive way.  
**Owen:** For me, doing poetry writing circles like this is such a privilege because we really get to be with people and cause community in a space of a writing circle and have people see for themselves the contributions they can be making with their words and that's what poetry has really done for me. It's helped me find the value in my own voice and our poetry writing circles are really to have people see how their voices and their words really make an impact in the world.

HAYK MAKHMURYAN & STUDIO 526

I coordinate Studio 526 and today I'm at the festival facilitating all the visual artist booths and working with the collaborative painting. I feel very strongly about having a platform that connects around people's interests and what people like to share with someone else. Arts happen to be a really great platform for those connections to be fostered. The moment a person realizes that they're not there because someone is going to tell them what they need to be doing or who and how they need to be interacting, conversations and projects and ideas just blossom. My background is in visual arts. Being in a space with fellow artists who are sharing their ideas, I get to jump in with my ideas and then we build on that together and that's extremely rewarding. The fact that we are in the Skid Row neighborhood has everything to do with arts and cultural spaces. When we talk about the importance as a human right for anyone to have space for creative work, to connect with others who also feel they need to be around arts and culture. So it's as much about community strengthening as it is about an art space.



SKID ROW HISTORY PROJECT | STENCIL WORKSHOP



## 9TH FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS



Sherri Walker, Clancey Cornell, Nick, Michael and Cathy Gudis, Kerem Halbrecht and Jamaya Kapri worked hard to sign up the artists.

We added 93 new artists to our database.



Chella Coleman, Cathy Gudis, Michael Alexander, Henriëtte Brouwers and filmer Rusty Hood interviewed more than 40 artists.

The interviews are transcribed and added to our archive.



## 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 narrative 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 in Skid Row and to amplify the voices of the people who live in 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:** Studio 526, United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP), Wendell Blassingame, Kaleb Havens, Pastor Cue and our 'house band' the SkidroPlayaz. Tyler at Love Nail Tree designed and printed our T-shirts -again! Michael Waterman of Water Corps came with water and paper cups. Council District 14 provided tables and chairs and DLANC provided the sound equipment and technicians.

... **OUR VOLUNTEERS:** Rusty Hood, Young Mi, Ian Gabriel, Maria Montag, Chen Ju, Matt Miyahara, Timothy Lanzilotta, Lisa Sandbank, Ray Ricafort, Jennifer Giron, Oscar Vasquez, Alexander Yoon, Nick, Cathy Gudis and Michael Alexander, Kerem Halbrecht, Megan Metcalf, Philip Hernandez, Ryan Reynolds, Bobby, Yolanda Venegas, Max Kwiatowski.

... **OUR ARTISTS WHO FACILITATED THE CREATIVITY STATIONS AND WORKSHOPS:** The Big Draw LA, Authors Anonymous - Marissa and Owen, Stencils & Portraits - Ian Jewett, Piece by Piece - Daniel Villa, Poems y Cartas - Jen Hofer y Rocio Carlas, Skid Row Zine - Garrison and Gary. **INTERVIEWERS:** Chella Coleman, Catherine Gudis, Michael Alexander. **DESIGNERS:** Jeffrey Cain and his USC Roski School of Design Graduate students. **VIDEOGRAPHERS:** Rusty Hood, Tristan Starr and Kelly Parker.

**GET READY FOR LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT'S**

## 10TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

**COMING UP SATURDAY & SUNDAY OCTOBER 19 & 20, 2019**

The Festival is 2 afternoons (1-5PM) 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, poetry, theater and Skid Row visual artists will display their work. We'll have workshops and creativity stations - so anyone can make some work on the spot - and of course our Art and Politics section. If you want to perform or exhibit your work, contact us anytime between now and October and get a spot at the festival.



STEPHANIE BELL AND CHRISTINA COLLIER

**LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT'S CREW AND STAFF:** Austin Hines, Clancey Cornell, Stephanie Bell, Henriëtte Brouwers, Walter Fears, John Malpede, Tom Grode, Lee Maupin, Christina Collier, Jamaya Kapri, Chella Coleman and Sherri Walker.

### WRITE OR CALL US!

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The 9th Festival for All Skid Row Artists is produced by Los Angeles Poverty Department with partners Lamp Arts Program and United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP), 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, National Endowment for the Arts, Department of Cultural Affairs of the city of Los Angeles, L.A. County Arts Commission, Department of Rec and Parks, Council District 14 and Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council.

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