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 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 indispensible 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 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 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 indispensible 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 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 indispensible 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 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 indispensible 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 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 indispensible 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.
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 box 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 broken through all these different things, she was still 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.

I performed “I saw the worst passing away”, a poem that I like for every- body 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 you need. You will get the best art in the world because now they can open up their hearts, and show who they are.
The Activist (artist/activist) has played a dynamic role in Skid Row for many years. The Art and Political Action tent was the site of some "states 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 Finan-
cial 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.

I brought along with me some mannequins that I had spent a lot of time making really beautiful. What to create an environment where artists and their audiences can experience the healing and enriching moment. Skid Row, and by fighting for more toilets, public housing and more opportunities for artists we hope the Skid Row neighborhood. Artists sharing their work uplift the beauty and dignity of the people of that despite all our preparation, we only began a series of conversations with residents, activist and stakeholders the at the corner of Gladys park and 6th street. They are a part of an anti-
dote to the "displacement" 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 Tuesday” at 3rd and Gladys street corner. The students were directed our way as a part of a USC initiative “Artists Addressing Homelessness”. --- Katherine McNenny

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.

 authorization anonymous - poetry writing workshop

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 and 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 given 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 them-
selves 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 Mahmuryan & 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 these 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.

The Artivist (artist/activist) has played a dynamic role in Skid Row for many years. The Art and Political Action tent was the site of some “states 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 Finan-
cial District” to “California to the New York island” as land that’s made for you and me.
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.

Los Angeles Poverty Department
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.

WRITE OR CALL 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

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 Tshirts - against 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.


INTERVIEWERS: Chella Coleman, Catherine Gandis, 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.

WRITE OR CALL 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

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 Culture 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.

Los Angeles Poverty Department
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.

WRITE OR CALL 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

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.

WRITE OR CALL 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

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.