And that's music, theater, poetry, rap, drums, singing, drawing, painting, mosaic, dance... the list goes on. Check out the following pages for high highlights of a special selection of incredible people who live and work in Skid Row.

We started the festival in 2010 in response to a study by John Malpede (Los Angeles Poverty Department) and Maria Rosario Jackson (Urban Institute) named Making the Case for Skid Row Culture: Findings from a Collaborative Inquiry by the Los Angeles Poverty Department and the Urban Institute released by Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts. The study documents the role of arts and culture in Skid Row. They found that culture comes from the ground up in Skid Row and is initiated by residents and resident-driven initiatives. We started the festival to recognize these people and initiatives and to stimulate a new way of envisioning and talking about our neighborhood.

LAPD’s Festival for All Skid Row Artists gives audiences a chance to hear what you usually don’t hear about Skid Row: that it is a community rich with talent! The two-day festival of performing and visual art with PLENTY of music, showcases the diverse range of talents among Skid Row residents and has become one of the most anticipated grassroots cultural events in Skid Row, where over 100 Skid Row Artists perform or display their artwork to enthusiastic audiences. Festival attendees are invited to participate in a range of artist-facilitated workshops and creativity stations.

LAPD partners with Studio 526 and United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP) to produce the Festival. This year, the Goethe-Institut was an additional producing partner and organized the event series “Worlds of Homelessness” which included discussions, music and film screenings. The conference brought together local and international artists, architects, scholars and others at LAPD’s Skid Row History Museum & Archive (with additional sites at Sci-Arc and Navel) and culminated with the 2 days of the Festival. "Worlds of Homelessness" opened with music by the LA Playmakers who also closed out the Festival.

This year’s performances were just as colorful as the artwork. We had Unkal Bean, Lyrical Storm, Olushey, Cuba Percussion, Kalif, Geraldine and Blac Blossom. Tom Grode gave a spirited rendition of the TOILET LADY and Lee Maupin (even more spirited) hit the stage with Papa’s Got A Brand New Bag. Lee and Footie win the award for ANIMATING the audience, they got the crowds moving and shaking! We were serenaded by Urban Voices Project, Street Symphony, Gerald Alexander, and the poetry of the IRON GLADIATOR. And of course, Kaniah and her mom Angela Harper, Stephanie Bell, Patti Berman, Mike Mahaney, Mark Phillips, Foc-C, and Kayol! Charles Porter even graced the stage to share some beautiful songs from the Yoruba faith. He played the African instrument Agogo and sang for OSHUN the Orisha (deity) of fresh waters, love and compassion, and OYA the Orisha of the winds, lightning, death and rebirth.

Crushow Herring showed off his many talents bringing the community together with his skills on the mic. He MC’d the festival for the first time, performed multiple original jams, represented his organization Without Shelter, kept the park safe, AND kept the positive vibes going. And of course, we honored those incredible artists from our community who have passed on. After all, TEN years is a loooong time. Chris Mack sang a beautiful tribute to these Skid Row Artist heroes - Queen Mary Barnes, Travis Kemp, Robert Chambers, Franc Foster, Brian Palmer, Linda Harris, Robert Tolbert, Keith Jackson, Kevin Michael Key, Twin - Skid Row Flowing, and other remarkable people. Their legacy lives on each year, and the festival is a beautiful opportunity to loudly and proudly celebrate our community and the vibrant artists within it - new and old!

Our Menacing Cool Skid Row Artist Registry, which we started ten years ago, now includes more than 900 self-identified artists in the community. And that’s music, theater, poetry, rap, drums, singing, drawing, painting, mosaic, dance... the list goes on. Check out the following pages for highlights of the past ten years, and brace yourself... because we’re ready for ten more!
#1 FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS 10/26-27/2019 in Gladys Park

Adrian Tarnage aka Paper

My alter ego Paper performed a free style today. A little bit of history: I was here at the first Festival. I actually designed the shirt for the first festival. So I’ve been here since the start. To see it grow to what it is now is amazing, honestly. To come out and see this place have given me so much. It’s like a nourishing mother.

Stephen Folds

“El Dorado 1957” is the band—named for the saloon where the church began in 1853—the Los Angeles First United Methodist Church. We’re talking about creating affordable housing instead of creating a church. Church is a friend of ours and we did one of his originals.

Blac Blossom

I’ve been livin’ in Skid Row since I was thirteen years old. Yeah. I’m a Skid Row baby. I did two songs today. Wawa is about a girl trying to tell a guy that she likes him but she don’t know how to say it in words. So she’s crushin’ over him through chips, Doritos with the chips. Rollie with the candy, she tryin’ to express herself but she goes so sweet that she’s all about candy and stuff like that.

Catalina

Many of these people on Skid Row are innocent people. They don’t do drugs, they’re always stressed out, they work every day. And some of them work two or three jobs. And these police officers taking away their stuff from them, Cuz OK! It needs to stop because they are hindering them from succeeding. They don’t know how much damage they have already caused to these people. Including myself.

Brent Westing-Miller

My stage name is Fantastical the Tap Dancer. I sprung up on my taps, on my toes and my heels and I had to come. A community that, no matter what’s going on around us, we bloom. We have so many actresses, artists, performers of every culture. The beautiful part of it is that we bring love, joy and peace, and happiness to those that we don’t think really felt it. So yea, I appreciate it here. The 10th annual! And may we have ten more. I love it!

Charles Porter with Unkal Bean & Crusiow (L>R)

I work for UCEPP. We’re one of the co-sponsors of the event. I got a chance to get on the mic. I’m really deep into culture and history. I had a mentor from Cuba. A lot of culture in the diaspora is African culture. All the songs are in Yoruba. I also sang one song from Nigeria to show that black people are connected to a whole diaspora. And there’s strength in knowing that. There is a lot of diversity here in Skid Row.

#2 FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS 12/4/10

Performers: Linda Harris, Jennifer Campbell, Raspin Stewart, Carol Shelly, Ciera Payton, Robert Gupta & Zach Dellinger with Street Symphony, Khalil, Gary Brown, SkidRowPlayaz & Big Rob, G-Nut, John Kays, TWIN Skid Row Flowen, Brian Beasley, Queen Mary Barnes, Crushow Herring, Queba Tabi Salima, Predestined, Michelle Yunnre Atur, Unkal Bean, Mariella & Samira Saba, Charles Porter & UCEPP, Youth Leaders, Doc DC Dijon, A LIVE, Mark Philips, LA Poverty Dept. staff, Joe Clark & Anthony Page, Billy Clay, Yolanda R. Roberts Ball, Big Mack, Bobby Cooper, Chesterlas Nelson, Samuel Nunez, Michael Jackson, Norman Tate, Steven Angel, Jeffrey Jackson, King Howard & Don Ovan Johnson, Paul McCarthy, Wesley McIntosh, Fran Foster & James Garcia, Jose VanDenburg, Tony Newman & Faith Factory, Anthony Ross, Soni, and others.

#3 FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS 6/20-31/10

Rain was forecast for the 3rd annual festival, but we weren’t going to let anything dampen our enthusiasm. Our Skid Row artists really showed up and showed out. They have come to recognize the importance of having this Festival in Skid Row, not only as a way for them to display their talents, but also as a means to find inspiration and to get to know new people or deepen their relationships. Jeffrey Jackson literally walked his whole drum set to the park and had us all dancing and stamping the ground with him!
The FOURTH FESTIVAL saw the likes of many different types of artists and... sports artists? That’s right. The Skid Row Basketball League had a game during the festival! The athleticism on the court was definitely a work of art and a compliment to the sounds and visual arts that adorned the park. Myka Moon, from Lamp’s Fine Art Program, set up both days and worked on her latest paintings. Flo Hawkins sketched portraits for people free of charge and Michael Blaze of Veterans in Photography took pictures and printed them for people, right there on the spot. The park was packed and a seat was a hot commodity.

The music minister of the church on the corner and part of a band called the LA Playmachers, or actually the Central City Praise Team. It’s a new group, made up of members from our church, past and present. You can see the talent that we have in the group. On drums we’ve got JD, Stan Watson on bass, myself on keys, Edwin Fontaine on guitar – fabulous guitar player. On percussion we have Marlene, and Kenny the trumpet player also sings. Of course the singers: Tommy and Carma, so that night, we were trying to get in the last couple years but we couldn’t get here in time to set up. I love the effort that goes into putting on this event and all the participation. It’s a good thing and it needs to continue to happen because the community needs it. It was off the chain.

For the FIFTH annual festival, over 90 performers took the stage that weekend, many who had performed year after year. The lineup included many different performance styles: poetry, gospel, hip-hop, rock, rap, reggae and folk to name a few. At times, the park even became a hotbed for drama. Dramastage Gummran, a Skid Row based theater company, performed their work. ‘NoHeads,’ a play about gangsters. The playwright, Melvin Ishmael Johnson, also helped to compile stories for another play that was being featured at the festival, ‘If The SKV FIts: Voices from Solitary Confinement,’ a reading of stories from survivors of solitary confinement, performed by Rev. Sidonie Smith, Craig Walker, Paula Brooks, Shin-Wa Lee, and the festival’s renowned MC, Kevin Michael Key. Two creativity stations were dedicated to re-imagining and re-designing our Skid Row community: one by architect with Skid Row Housing Trust, Theresa Hwang with Saul and Areo’s station Our Skid Row and antoher by visual artist Faith Purvey called Build It Up!

"Hello world... broadcasting live from Gladys Park. -- I bring the same thing I bring to the community every day: love and respect. I do everything -- I do music, I do poetry, I’m a writer, I direct. I compose music. My relationship with the community is, it’s family."

The SEVENTH FESTIVAL started with a 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. A highlight was an interactive art ceremony. Pastor Cue of the Urban Voices Project. When I first started there was: Leeav, Christopher, Linda, and me doing performances. Now, at a Gala for Downtown Women’s Center, we had sixteen people show up for the gig and wow, it’s been amazing watching this group grow and watching people get their lives back in order and their souls evolve, it’s been beautiful. I live in the community myself and this is how I serve the community through Urban Voices Projecy giving people a voice through music, and healing through music.

The:list of artists:

- Bobby Buck: "Today I did my birthday, set up both days and worked on his latest paintings. He is a great man, he does a lot for this community. And I just thank you all.
- Born 4 Skid Row
- Skidroplayaz
- Create Space in Skid Row
- Skid Row Basketball League
- Urban Voices Project
- Nateasha Smith, a mannequin and body painting workshop, a spoken word performance and a parade. All the elements of the project were a healing ritual from sexual abuse.
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The 10th Festival for All Skid Row Artists is produced by Los Angeles Poverty Department with partners: Studio 526 (of The People Concern), UCEPP, and Love Nail Tree. This year’s festival is made possible with the support of: Goethe Institut, The California Arts Council, The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, The Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council, the Department of Recreation and Parks and Council District 14.

#10 FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

CHRISTOPHER MACK sang a beautiful tribute to Skid Row Artist heroes who have passed on—Queen Mary Barnes, Travis Kemp, Linda Harris, Robert Tolbert, Robert Chambers, Franc Foster, Keith Jackson, Kevin Michael Key, Twin Skid Row Flowing, Brian Palmer... We won’t forget you.

ANTI-EVICTIO\n
MAPPING PROJECT

asked participants to mark on a map a place in Skid Row that was significant to them and to tell why. Their words were recorded. The map will be digitized so you can click on the point mentioned to hear the stories.

CUBAN PERCUSSION

Leyla Martinez invited our Cuban musicians and neighbors—this was their first performance at the festival! They got everyone on their feet. We are so glad they came!!

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LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT

LAPD’S MISSION: Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) creates performances and multidisciplinary artworks that connect the experience of people 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 L.A.’s Skid Row since 1985, hosting free performance workshops and creating art. LAPD was the first theater company 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.


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 youtue.com/lapovertydepartment facebook.com/lapovertydepartment twitter.com/lapovertydept

ENORMOUS THANKS TO...


#11 ANNUAL FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

COMING UP SATURDAY & SUNDAY OCTOBER 17 & 18, 2020

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.

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Newspaper design & ads: Henriëtte Brouwers

Photos: Kerem Habrecht, Nicola Lee, Austin Hines, Clancey Cornell, Rusty Hood, Noxang Yang, Leah Mlyn, Sofia Gonzalez, Gustavo Leon, Dakari Ashley, Khalid F. and Henriëtte Brouwers.

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