

OCTOBER 16, 2021

12TH FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS



By John Malpede --- Los Angeles Poverty Department's 12th annual Festival For All Skid Row Artists took place October 16th as this year's festival MC Coach Ron would say, "...in world famous, Gladys Park, in world famous Skid Row." Last year, it was a hybrid event, mainly on Zoom with only a few performers in the park, as only 50 people were allowed to gather there.

We called this year, "the half-way back festival" as it took place live in the park –but on one day rather than the customary two. That meant we packed one performance on top of another. Many artists who have performed at the festival for years were eager to be back: Lyrical Storm, Crushow, Rosa Miller, La Ronda, Unkal Bean, the Cubano Percussion group from the corner of 5th and San Pedro Streets, Robin Hoodloom, DJ Sir Oliver, Urban Voices Project, Street Symphony, Big Mama and Silkii. Lee Maupin, a well-known performer in Skid Row who does James Brown dance moves including the splits--- graciously gave up his time slot to accommodate newcomers who'd just found out about the Festival days before when a dozen LAPD'ers fanned out through the neighborhood going tent to tent looking for singers, dancers, actors and visual artists. And we found them, pop lockers like Mr. Dimples (who didn't actually show), the rappers –Young Kilo and Ayoo Duce who did show, Divine Being who read a pretty profound text and Kenneth Ross, who brought his abstract paintings on wood from around the block where he'd had them propped up against a metal fence.

Here's the deal about world famous Skid Row: it's a low-income residential neighborhood in the center of downtown Los Angeles. 60% of Skid Row residents live permanently in hotels, 20% are in transitional housing programs and 20% ---3,000 people are living in tents on Skid Row's streets. As one former L.A. County official said, "Skid Row is a resource for all of Southern California." And she meant it, because its where the services are and the housing. The only reason it hasn't been bull dozed and rebuilt for people with money, is the ongoing history of community activism that's been defending Skid Row from encroachment and displacement since the 1970's. It's an amazing history--- for a neighborhood under siege.

LA Poverty Department is a part of that history. LAPD started as a performance workshop for anyone in Skid Row. That was in 1985, a year or two after people were forced to the street in large numbers due to rising rents and cutbacks in public assistance. From the beginning LAPD was working with the activist groups in Skid Row, performing at actions and testifying at city hall. LAPD's intention was to strengthen community in Skid Row and through its performances, to get the real deal out to Normalville ---in other words, represent Skid Row from a resident perspective.

Oh ya, back to the Festival.

Now, decades later, LAPD is still making performances, but also exhibitions, Skid Row wide festivals and parades, public conversations and convenings and we have an extensive archive of Skid Row history, with specific attention paid to the history of organizing. Our work is focused on making clear to the world – utilizing all our artistic means—that Skid Row is a vital community that cannot be bull dozed nor can its residents be displaced.

Oh ya, back to the Festival. In 2009, I co-authored a paper with Maria Rosario Jackson, published by Americans for the Arts, entitled "Making the Case for Skid Row Culture". The paper was the result of a number of convenings with Skid Row resident artists who articulated the obstacles and needs of artists working in Skid Row. The Festival for All Skid Row Artists (2010) and our cultural space the Skid Row History Museum and Archive (in 2014) came into being to expand the art making opportunities for Skid Row residents, and to instantiate and affirm the community.

OK now, for real, back to the Festival. The vibe was serene, the vibe was grateful. Everyone, just about everyone, turned out happy to be together again. Skid Row is a community that protects itself through culture: artistic culture, organizing culture, recovery culture. Skid Row is resilient, smart and sophisticated in its use of all the dimensions of culture to defend itself and prosper.

At the Festival we were accepting nominations from community members for the 8 or 9 people who will be honored in next May's Walk the Talk performance parade. It's a biennial project of ours because it takes 6 or 7 months to make it. We got a lot of nominations, including those from previous honorees like General Dogon, Charles Porter and Zelenne Cardenas. People were thrilled to be back. The thrill was deep felt and gently articulated by people who know and value one another from years of seeing and being in community.

When performers like Mello Bluez and Mark Phillips hit the stage, their presence affirmed the continuity of community. Mello always peppers her improvisational singing with allusions to the Harlem Renaissance and LA's Central Avenue jazz scene. Mark Phillips linked his singing with the history of the neighborhood and the genesis of the festival. And Stephanie Bell and Mike Mahaney, who'd admired one another's singing at previous festivals, hooked up to sing gospel together.

By the time you read this we hope that Gladys Park will be world famous General Jeff Park, with a name change honoring General Jeff, a community activist who fought hard to get the city to upgrade the park with exercise equipment, a basketball court and permanent toilets (not port-o-potties). General Jeff died on October 23 – one week after the festival- and the community is grieving, while working to change the name of the park. It's important. It would be the first Skid Row location to be named after a community member –with street names for other deserving community members, like KevinMichael Key, to follow. That's right, the streets of Skid Row named for people who've lived there and made the community. As Lee Maupin would say, "Thank you very much."

12TH FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

ALL ARTISTS:

COACH RON
GARY BROWN
LORRAINE MORLAND
TOM GRODE
THE TOILET LADY
CRUSHOW
MELLO-BLUEZ
SIR OLIVER
UNKAL BEAN
DANNY SINGLETON
GERALD ALEXANDER
LINDA LEIGH
MATT HORNS
MATT MIYAHARA
CREATIVE I
YOUNG MI CHI
RITA BAKER
MARY JACOBS
REGINA PATERSON
HARVEY FULTON
LAZARO ROJAS
ELZIE ALEXANDER
MOSES TASHEEN
SUSAN HAMPTON
GERALD AUSTOURIAN
KENNETH ROSS
MARYLIN ZARRY
BIG MAMA
KANNIAH CHAPMAN
LYRICAL STORM
LARONDA HARTFIELD
ROSA MILLER
ROBIN HOODLOOM
GEORGE RIVERA
KERRY
DAKARRI ASHBY
QUEEN MAMA TABIA
MIKE MAHANEY
STEPHANIE BELL
ASHAE AGE DRUMMERS
RAY LEWIS
SALIOU M'BOUP
BARA M'BOUP
WILL GORDON
MICHAEL CLARK
OMAR LEWIS
DONALD REESE
WILLIAM MAYO
MARK PHILLIPS
URBAN VOICES PROJECT
ANA PEPE
BIBI ROSALIA
CAROL GERARD
GERALD ALEXANDER
HERSHE
KATE RICHARDS
MARILYN IRIZARRY
RENE LOPEZ
CASSIUS PRAXTON
DALLAS NOBLE
HARRY DEARMAN
CUBANO PERCUSSION
LEYLA MARTINEZ
WILLIAM DUENAS
PEDRO AGUILAR
MANUEL ZAYAS
JULIAN CALDERON
ROBERTO HERNANDEZ
LUIS CORRAL
LAZARO HOOLIGANS
DENISE WILLIAMS ELDER
IRON DONATO
BEN FRANC
BLACK BLOSSOM
NEW SOUL RENUWAL
SUNSHINE QUEEN
KATHY STEWART
AYGO DUCE
YOUNG KILO
SUPREME BEEING
DELANOR
STREET SYMPHONY
DUSTIN SEO
DUANE GRACIA
LEE MAUPIN
NATOSHA SMITH
DENISE SILKIE HARRIS
KAYO ANDERSON &
THE FREEDOM SINGERS

KENNETH ROSS

PERCEPTION ART



SILKII HARRIS

"SMOOTH OPERATOR"



UNKAL BEAN

"CARRY YOUR BAG
- THAT'S YOUR BAG
NOT MY BAG"



MARK PHILLIPS

"A SONG FOR JOHN
AND THE OTHER LAPD"



BEN FRANC

"MAKE THAT MONEY"



DENISE WILLIAMS -
ELDER

BROKDONG GOSPEL
FROM BELIZE



ROBIN HOODLOOM

"PEACE UNITY
LOVE AND HARMONY
BY ALL MEANS
NECESSARY"



URBAN VOICES PROJECT

BY TOM GRODE / FOR TOM GRODE



Urban Voices Project had a last-minute choir rehearsal in the alleyway behind Gladys Park (now General Jeff Park) and that brought over some curious Skid Row folks. Dallas the Violinist with Colburn School brought Joey the Trumpet Player to rehearsal and his unexpected sound was a delight. The performance highlight on stage was a spontaneous community interactive version of "You Are My Sunshine" where the choir and musicians became backup for some Skid Row Artists / Singers.

"Urban Voices Project" tuvo un ensayo de coro de último minuto en el callejón detrás de Gladys Park (ahora General Jeff Park) que atrajo a algunos curiosos de Skid Row. Dallas, la violinista de Colburn School, llevó a Joey, el trompetista, al ensayo y su sonido inesperado fue una delicia. El punto culminante de la actuación en el escenario fue una versión interactiva espontánea de la comunidad de "You Are My Sunshine" donde el coro y los músicos se convirtieron en el respaldo de algunos artistas / cantantes de Skid Row.

MURAL

BY THE TOILET LADY

FOR LA DAMA DEL BANO



Hello, you, the Festival for All Skid Row Artists. Not some Skid Row artists, all Skid Row artists. I am the toilet lady. And I am so happy to be here. So, I notice something and I'm sure you do too... there are no more port-a-potties and there are permanent bathrooms. So, let everyone turn in this direction and take a moment of silence to stare at the permanent bathrooms. (turns) SIGH ... it never gets old. (turns back) So, something very exciting happened recently. I can say the word mural and the word toilets in the same sentence. No, it's not a mural about toilets. But I can dream. It's the Skid Row Community Refresh Spot. The Refresh Spot has a new community mural. And so, walk right from here - Gladys Park - and go to the Refresh Spot (...) get to the back of the Refresh Spot, the community space, and look at the beautiful wonderful mural. It was painted by all kinds of folks and Community Input was given to Crushow Herring and he designed it. (...) The mural. It's flowers and bees and birds and more flowers. And it begins with these strong gentle hands opened up and out of the hands comes the flowers and the bees and the birds and the flowers. It's Nature. Nature. And so, from now on when someone says... "Nature Calls". (The toilet lady nods her head and leaves the stage - there are no more words)

Hola tú, el Festival para todos los artistas de Skid Row. No algunos artistas de Skid Row, todos artistas de Skid Row. Yo soy la dama del baño. Y estoy tan feliz de estar aquí. Entonces, noté algo y estoy seguro de que tú también ... no hay más orinales portátiles y hay baños permanentes. Entonces, que todos se vuelvan en esta dirección y tomen un momento de silencio para mirar los baños permanentes. (se vuelve) SUSPIRO ... nunca pasa de moda. (se da vuelta) Algo muy emocionante sucedió recientemente. Puedo decir la palabra mural y la palabra baños en la misma oración. No, no es un mural "Refresh Spot" tiene un nuevo mural comunitario. Y así, camine desde aquí, Gladys Park, y vaya al "Refresh Spot," (...) vaya a la parte posterior del "Refresh Spot," el espacio comunitario, y observe el hermoso y maravilloso mural. Fue pintado por todo tipo de personas y se le dio información comunitaria a Crushow Herring y él lo diseñó. (...) El mural. Son flores, abejas, pájaros y más flores. Y comienza con estas manos fuertes y suaves que se abren y de las manos salen las flores, las abejas, los pájaros y las flores. Es la naturaleza. Naturaleza. Y así, a partir de ahora cuando alguien diga ... "La naturaleza llama". (La dama del baño asiente con la cabeza y abandona el escenario, no hay más palabras)

CREATIVE I

BY YOUNG MI CHI / FOR YOUNG MI CHI



Two years ago, at the Festival, Creative I hosted a logo design (unique, original designs painstakingly cut out in stencils as well as pre-cut stencils) and t-shirt making art station and it was so successful that we decided to do something similar. This time with felt letters and fabric to be sewn on or drawn with permanent markers. Many very patient community members sat themselves down at our station, with the festive music from the Festival in the background, sewing and drawing away for hours! The outcome was a beautiful display of the diversity in creativity and aesthetics that they can proudly display as they wear their artwork. It was a very calm and peaceful time to hang out with friends and make new friends. It warmed our hearts to see and hug our friends we haven't seen in so long! We shall see if t-shirt making will be a tradition for Creative I at the Festival!



Hace dos años, en el Festival, "Creative I" presentó un diseño de logotipo (diseños únicos y originales cuidadosamente recortados en plantillas y plantillas precortadas) y una estación de arte para hacer camisetas y fue tan exitoso que decidimos hacer algo similar. Esta vez con letras de fieltro y tela para coser o dibujar con rotuladores permanentes. Muchos miembros de la comunidad muy pacientes se sentaron en nuestra estación, con la música festiva del Festival de fondo, cosiendo y dibujando durante horas. El resultado fue una hermosa muestra de la diversidad en creatividad y estética que pueden exhibir con orgullo mientras usan sus obras de arte. Fue un momento muy tranquilo y pacífico para pasar el rato con amigos y hacer nuevos amigos. ¡Nos reforzó ver y abrazar a nuestros amigos que no habíamos visto en tanto tiempo! ¡Veremos si la confección de camisetas será una tradición para "Creative I" en el Festival!

12TH FESTIVAL PARA TODOS LOS ARTISTAS DE SKID ROW

HERE IS THE 'GROUP PICTURE' THAT WE COULDN'T TAKE BECAUSE OF COVID_19
THANKS TO DAKARAI ASHBY FOR PHOTOSHOPPING US ALL BACK TOGETHER!



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LEYLA MARTINEZ:

This is the 3rd time I performed at the festival. We, Los Cubanos, dance and sing. I danced and we sang. I feel really proud that I can dance and sing things I like. It's from my homeland. From Cuba. We try to teach you and bring something for you that is from us.

In Cuba we dance this type of dance: Guaguancó. It's African, most of the time it's black people who dance like this, but the whites do it, too. Because in Cuba everything is mixed, even with Chinese - we also got a Chinatown. In Guaguancó, there is a couple; the man tries to kick me and I have to try to cover so he doesn't get me. This is part of the dance. He can do it with the foot, or however he wants. I can do it to him, but I don't. I laugh at him. But if he dances too close to me, I have power to stop his advances.

LEYLA MARTINEZ:

Para mí, esta es la tercera vez que actué en el festival. Nosotros, Los Cubanos, bailamos y cantamos. Bailé y cantamos. Me siento muy orgulloso de poder bailar y cantar cosas que me gustan. Es de mi patria. De Cuba. Intentamos enseñarte y traerte algo que es nuestro. En Cuba bailamos este tipo de baile: Guaguancó.

Es africano, la mayoría de las veces son negros los que bailan así, pero los blancos también lo hacen. Porque en Cuba todo está mezclado, hasta Los Chinos - también, tenemos un Barrio Chino. En guaguancó hay pareja; el hombre intenta patearme y tengo que tratar de cubrirme para que no me atrape. Esto es parte del baile. Puede hacerlo con el pie, o como quiera. Puedo hacérselo a él, pero no lo hago. Me río de él. Pero si baila demasiado cerca de mí, tengo el poder de detener sus avances.



LEYLA AND WILLIAM DANCE THE GUAGUANCO

GERALD ASTOURIAN AND ANTONIO - WHO MET AT THE URM - SHOWCASED THEIR ART



Gerald: "I saw people using the bathroom in the street, and I started making dogs."

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 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 entire city of Los Angeles and the nation.



ENORMOUS THANKS TO...

* OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Studio 526, United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP) and our 'house band' the Ashe Ase drummers. Tyler at Love Nail Tree designed and printed our T-shirts -again! Rec & Parks provided tables, chairs and clean toilets and DLANC helped pay for the sound equipment and technicians. Carbon Health provided vaccinations and testing and Skid Row Coffee the coffee and delicious iced cool drinks!

* OUR LA POVERTY DEPARTMENT CREW:

Austin Hines, Sean Gregory, Clancey Cornell, Yamaya Kapri, Iron Donato, Tom Grode, Lorraine Morland, Lee Maupin, Stephanie Bell, Leyla Martinez, Matt Miyahara, Aram Moshayed, Zach Rutland, Henry Apodaca, Shawne West, John Malpede, Henriëtte Brouwers and Coach Ron.

*** OUR VOLUNTEERS:** Young Mi Chi, Wendy Viscarra, Kim Burns, Dakarai Ashby, Michael Gray, Kat Jung, Nick, Theodora, Cathy Gudis and Michael Alexander.

*** CREATIVITY STATIONS BY:** Creative I, Studio 526 and The Big Draw LA.

*** SOUND BY:** Joshua Leos and Sound RX.

GET READY FOR LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT'S

13TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL FOR ALL SKID ROW ARTISTS

COMING UP ON SATURDAY & SUNDAY OCTOBER 14 & 15, 2022

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. If you want to perform or exhibit your work, contact us anytime between now and October and get your spot at the festival.



LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT gave away copies of its 'Walk the Talk' book, featuring all 2020 honorees. And we gathered 40+ nominations from festival goers for the NEXT Walk the Talk. **JOIN THE WALK THE TALK PARADE ON MAY 28, 2022!**

WRITE OR CALL US!

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THE FESTIVAL 'HOUSEBAND' THE ASHE ASE DRUMMERS WITH SKID ROW DRUMMERS AND MUSICIANS

The 12th Festival for All Skid Row Artists is produced by Los Angeles Poverty Department with partners Studio 526, United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP) and Love Nail Tree.

This year's festival is made possible with the support of Department of Cultural Affairs of the city of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, California Humanities, Kindle Project, Department of Recreation and Parks, Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) and Goethe Institut.

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LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT

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