



May 21, 2025

Dear Friends,

When the grant termination letters from federal funders started rolling in last month, LAPD was in the midst of touring LA County with our Skid Row ensemble's latest performance, "The Covid Hotel Welcomes You to the Future." With the "Covid Hotel" tour (we're still at it) we set the ambitious goal of reaching all 8 Service Planning Areas (SPAs) in the course of a few months. Why? Because the play tells the stories of County frontline health care workers whose innovations saved lives and got people housed. Those stories need to be told—and retold—until their compassionate recuperative care practices are scaled so that our vulnerable community members can access the care they need and the housing they deserve.

Executed grant contracts for the project (from NEH, IMLS, and California Humanities have been terminated). Because LAPD is intrepid and this project is critical, our work on the project continues, unreimbursed.

In all we've lost roughly 25% of our funding.

IMLS also terminated a \$75k grant awarded to our next project—on the implosion of a major supportive housing provider in Skid Row and the grim ramifications felt by tenants who, as a result, lost access to social workers and healthcare providers, while living in increasingly squalid and unsafe studio apartments. We're determined to find a way to maintain our space and realize this exhibition/public convenings in collaboration with artist Rosten Woo, because we know from past projects that LAPD's artistic/civic interventions can mobilize the neighborhood, engage stakeholders, and effect outcomes. In this case, providing better living spaces and-social services to thousands of Skid Row community members.

As we all know, these abrupt terminations of support for arts and cultural institutions large and small were designed to deliver maximum destruction. They were designed not just to hobble, but to destroy.

Our Skid Row History Museum & Archive was created because of the absence of available cultural space for Skid Row residents—housed and unhoused. To meet the vast need, today, our Museum space is in use 365. (Meanwhile, we still do programs in parks, streets and neighborhood settings to meet people literally where they are.) In a typical day, we might hold an LAPD theater workshop, provide meeting space for a neighborhood coalition on zoning, the downtown tenant's union, a writing workshop, while also receiving a steady stream of visitors seeking help. We offer food, water, clothing, aid for getting housing, and a place to feel welcome and hang out. Not to mention bathroom access to all—houseless and housed Skid Row residents, tourists and shoppers, and grateful LA Metro bus drivers—whose stop is outside our door—who aren't provided facilities on their routes.

For the first 30 years of our existence LA Poverty Department's survival strategy was—in the advertising slogan of defunct department store Robert Hall—"LOW OVERHEAD." For us it meant "nearly no" overhead, as we used a variety of arts venues and social services spaces in Skid Row – and outdoors – for our programs. Ten years ago we rented a space and gave it a big name to grow into: The Skid Row History Museum & Archive. The purpose was two-fold: to provide the accessible space that was absent in Skid Row and to assert that Skid Row is a community, a neighborhood, and it has a history of achievement in the practice of compassion and in standing up for itself to successfully prevent being bulldozed.

The Skid Row History Museum is a bulwark against displacement and erasure. Our space and activities bring people together. The letters on the following pages say it better than we could. They are from... Skid Row residents, artists from Skid Row and from other parts of the U.S., researchers, educators, students, archivists, and many others who have come to rely on our space and our work.

This is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LAPD's founding! LAPD's artworks and advocacy have been a bulwark against the displacement of Skid Row for four decades—and we're not going to stop now!

We hope that in this grotesque moment, you will be able to help us outsmart the devil, keep our doors open, and continue supporting our beautiful Skid Row community for decades to come.

With enormous appreciation, warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the 'i'.

John Malpede  
Artistic/Executive Director/Founder  
Los Angeles Poverty Department

# LAPD

## SUPPORT OUR GREATEST NEEDS



### **FOUNDERS FUND**

Suggested donation \$15,000

Contributions help support artist salaries, artist fees, and other costs for the creation of new LAPD multidisciplinary artworks, biennial "Walk the Talk," and annual Festival for All Skid Row Artists.

### **EMERGENCY FUND**

Suggested donation \$20,000

Contributions cover operating costs, staff salaries, and other urgent needs.

### **SKID ROW HISTORY MUSEUM & ARCHIVE FUND**

Suggested donation \$60,000

Contributions cover rent on our current downtown LA space, leased at market rate. We would also gratefully consider an in-kind donation of space in or adjacent to the Skid Row neighborhood.

### **WAYS TO GIVE**

Checks can be mailed to LA Poverty Dept. PO Box 26190, Los Angeles, CA 90026

[PayPal - Link to our online donation page.](#) By bank transfer. For details, please contact: Pamela Miller, Chief Operating Officer, 917.656.1860 [pamela@lapovertydept.org](mailto:pamela@lapovertydept.org)



## Support Letters Writers

Addie Tinnell, organizer, The Public School Los Angeles  
Ana Lara, community archivist  
Ananya Roy, director, UCLA Luskin Center for Democracy and Inequality  
Anonymous LA resident, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Andy, Skid Row artist  
Antonio Mendoza, DTLA artist  
Austin Hines, former LAPD volunteer/founder, Reel Solutions  
Azad Namazie, Digital Archivist, UCLA  
Aza Babayan, archivist, LA Public Library  
Benno Herz, Program Director, Thomas Mann House  
Brian Belak, Film Preservationist, UCLA  
Carol Zou, social practice artist, lecturer Cal State LA  
Cassius Paxton, Skid Row artist, Urban Voices Project  
Chris Herring, Professor of Sociology, UCLA  
Christine Manley Martinez, Arts Program specialist, Studio 526  
Christopher Ewing, Skid Row artist, Urban Voices Project  
Christopher Mack, co-founder Urban Voices Project  
Clancey Cornell, social worker  
Dr. Claudia Gordon, Director, Villa Aurora  
Crushow Herring, Skid Row artist  
David deRozas, filmmaker  
Dawn Mendelson, coordinator Skid Row Arts Alliance  
Desha Marie, Skid Row artist  
Diana Orduna, Echo Park Film Collective resident scholar  
Emily Benoff, Curationist, UCLA  
Fernando V, DTLA Tenants Union member  
Franny Alfano, archivist, Academy Film Archive  
Friedel Schmoranzler, Program Director, Via Aurora  
General Dogon, Skid Row activist  
Greer, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Hannah Roth, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Helen H Kim, artist and researcher  
Iron Donato, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Jackie, Skid Row artist  
Jagdeep Raina, adjunct professor, Rhode Island School of Design  
Jaiye Kamson, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Jasmine Gutierrez, former SRHMA intern  
Joshua Nathan, Head of Production, The Rec League  
Joyce Lu, Associate Professor, Pomona College  
Kate Richards, Executive Director, Urban Voices Project

Kei Riggins, Choir Director, Urban Voices Project  
Kristy Lovich, Community Programs Manager, Luskin Institute  
Laury Fong Gonzales, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Leeav Sofer, Artistic Director, Urban Voices Project  
Leyla Martinez, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Lorraine Morland, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Luz Mack, artist  
Reverend Marilyn G Irizarry, Personal Recovery Assistant  
Mary Clare Stevens, Executive Director, Mike Kelley Foundation  
Megan Hobza, specialist, Nonprofit Strategy for World Builders  
Melissa Skillens, media archivist  
Michele Lancione, Professor, University of Torino  
Michelle Caswell, Professor, Information Studies, UCLA  
Monica Nouwens, photographer  
Nancy Mintie, founder, Inner City Law Center, Uncommon Good  
Noah Um, former SRHMA intern  
Dr. Oliver Hartmann, Director, Thomas Mann House  
Oliver Wurzbacher, Germany-based historian  
Peter Sellars, Distinguished Professor/Opera, film, theater and festival director  
Ptah Ahochi Tehuti Eil, Skid Row artist  
Prudence Boczarski, Skid Row artist  
Rafael Gutierrez, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Richard Volis, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Rixt Bilker, dramaturg and theatre scholar  
Rob Oschorn, media theorist, CEO, Reduct Video  
Robby Herbst, artist and professor, SUNY New Paltz  
Rosten Woo, artist  
Sara Daleidan, owner, Sara Daleidan Consulting  
Sasha Anawalt, Professor Emerita of Journalism, USC  
Simone Forti, artist  
Sir Oliver, Skid Row artist  
Soma Snakeoil, Executive Director, The Sidewalk Project  
Sonja Cayetano, artist, former SRHMA intern  
Stephanie Bell, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Tara Morgan, Vashon Island theater maker  
Theresa Hillery, Real Estate and Tax Attorney, community advocate  
Tom Grode, LAPD Skid Row ensemble member  
Vickey Maturo, Skid Row artist  
Victor Divas, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Victor Gomez, Downtown Tenants Union member  
Victoria Romano, composer and ethnomusicologist,  
Young Mi Chi, founding member, Creative I

“After being homeless for eight years and sleeping in a doorway, this place has embraced me to rise again in the right direction.”

-Lorraine M., Skid Row artist/LA Poverty Department performance ensemble member

“In the mid-’80s John Malpede realized that the spectacle of homelessness should be engaged and given a better script, moral dignity, and recognized as a strangely powerful spiritual path through the desert of materialism, as an opportunity for truth-telling in an era of public relations, cover-ups, and photo-ops, and as a fresh test of everyone’s humanity.”

-Peter Sellars, international theater director

“The museum is the history of Skid Row and the future of where we want to go.”

-Crushow, Skid Row artist

“LAPD gives moral support to people who would otherwise be pushed aside in a dreary world.”

-Simone Forti, postmodern artist, dancer, choreographer and writer

“The cultural and intellectual practices developed by the Skid Row History Museum amount to an immeasurable value, constructing and protecting a record of resistance to targeted disappearance and a primer on the development of a community voice.”

– Ananya Roy, Director, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy

“Sin LA Poverty Department, no hubieramos conocido a toda la gente que representa la vida y experiencia de mas de 800 familias e individuos que viven en esta comunidad.”

- Fernando V., Downtown Tenants Union member

“I have friends who have lived in Skid Row for decades who say, “The Poverty Department saved my life” - and not in the sense that they provide housing, or medical treatment. Rather, because of their programs, opportunities for building connections with others, being heard, and building relationships are made possible.”

-Clancey Cornell, Skid Row volunteer

# LAPD

Support Letters  
Link to Sections



Skid Row Community Members



Artists & Arts Institutions



Scholars & Researchers



Skid Row Service Providers & Advocates

# LAPD

## Skid Row Community Members



"The Museum is for those who want to make a mark and say, 'I represent Skid Row, and I'm proud of it.'—Crushow, Skid Row artist

"After being homeless for eight years and sleeping in a doorway, this place has embraced me to rise again in the right direction."

-Lorraine M., Skid Row artist/LA Poverty Department performance ensemble member





Dear Policy Makers:

Ever since I relocated myself from Japan after 14 years abroad, major depression and hardship awaited me here in L.A. where I had to start my life over.

Without a place to call home, or anyone to connect to, even thoughts of self-harm or exit often flustered me, especially for the first couple of years.

What did save me was finding places to go, and connect.

LAPD, Poverty Dept./SRMA, Skid-Row Museum Archive, was one of those places where I could feel alive again.

Please help fund and support The SRMA and please never dismentle what works as it should - building a safe and inspiring community of all those creative people that can give meanings in lives.

PBK&D, Plant-Bless Kindness & Diversity, May 1, 2025



4/30/2025

My name is Prudence Boczariski - Chukwudi and I have had the privilege of being welcomed and provided for by the Skid Row Museum, I am a member of the Urban Voices Project and I received such generous - free of charge - treatment when I supported sock puppet - making as a program of Urban Voices Project. I have also been welcomed, as part of the UVP choir, to sing at the Museum. They have always been generous, welcoming, and accomodating on their dime. I wholeheartedly support the Museum and all they do to include the whole community, including, Urban Voices Project into their facilities and generosity

UrbanVoicesProject.org

Prudence Boczariski -  
Chukwudi

## Letter of Support for the Skid Row History Museum and Archive

To Whom It May Concern,

Skid Row History Museum? It is a *must*. First off, I can't even express how proud I was—because we don't have an archive, and we don't have a museum that speaks on the culture and the people of Skid Row. Our voices need to be heard as a community. It's *vital*. Skid Row is the hardest-working community probably in Los Angeles.

People always see Skid Row as just our mental health community, but they don't realize that our Skid Row community starts from the garment district, the flower district, the toy district, the fish district, and a little bit of the business district. While most people are asleep, we have folks who are at work at 4:30 in the morning—with their families, with their kids. Like, at 4:00. They have to be on the job by 5:00 for the flowers, the produce. We have some of the hardest-working people here. And that's *not even counting* those in the tents, already up before our cars start to move, recycling. This is the hardest-working community in L.A.

And this *history*—you can find it right here in the Museum. If you want to see the jewels and the diamonds in the rough from Skid Row, you can catch it here. The museum hasn't even been around as long as it needs to be for you to really see all that it can offer.

To me, I see Skid Row as a mother. I hope people start to understand that's what it is—for the community of Los Angeles. Not just for the people in Skid Row. It nourishes everything. The toy district—kids want toys. The garment district—people need clothes. Skid Row gives you what your mother gives you. And imagine the people who don't have their mothers anymore. Your grandma's photo album? That's your history. That's your bloodline. Everything you've accomplished—*gone*. Washed away. If we don't have this museum, it would be like erasing that. Like taking away books and only putting up Google pages—you lose it. You lose us.

The L.A. Poverty Department helps run the museum, yes—but the museum is the history of Skid Row and the future of where we want to go. And there's not another place where you can come and hear that. Everyone else, their voices come from outside, or they're ready to leave. They're passing through. It's not about here. But this is for those who are claiming here. Who want to be known for being from Skid Row. Who want to make a mark and say: I represent Skid Row, and I'm proud of it.

If we don't hold on to this space, then it just becomes "Central City East."

I don't know what's going to happen with my work when I pass. That's why I'm planning for everything to come here—before any other museum. I'll have my paperwork ready. I don't know what my kids are going to do with it. I don't know what they're thinking about it. We don't have storage at Sidewalk Project...so it with this museum. Whoever wants it—*they* have to talk with you. With Sidewalk. Some pieces I'm not selling. Regardless of what anyone's saying. Those red and black pieces? They need to go on a world tour to teach. That flag hanging from a noose, the books under it, the hate hung out—*that* needs to go teach the world something. Then maybe it can be sold. But not before.

This museum is a home for those stories, those pieces. It's where I want my work to live. I'm painting scenes of L.A. the way I see them—places people don't normally notice. But if someone sees the painting and says, "Oh, that's nice," then maybe they can go there, and see it's nice too. And if it's not? Maybe they'll figure out some kind of way to make it so.

Sincerely,  
Crushow  
Artist, Community Leader



A Historical place to gather  
For people to express themselves  
we have memories and its so many  
memories ~~having~~ a place for  
organizing art music etc. Skid Row  
Museum  
we need it for unity  
together in Art music & Love

Debra  
manf



04/29/2025

To whom it may concern:

My name is Christopher Ewing. Not only have I visited the L.A. Downtown Skid Row Museum many times, it has educated me on the value of the city's historical growth and journey through time.

Downtown L.A. Skid Row Museum is not only a landmark that has been there many years, it has also served the interest of educating many people about what's going on around them.

Best Regards Christopher 

4/16/25

To Whom it may concern

Soy un miembro del sindicato de inquilinos  
trabajando en el centro de Los Angeles.

Por los últimos dos años hemos tenido  
juntas con inquilinos de todo el centro.

Gracias al LA Poverty Department  
tenemos un espacio para reunirnos, construir  
comunidad y aprender muchas cosas  
sobre nuestras derechos y la belleza de  
esta comunidad.

Además de esto hemos participado  
y visto muchas presentaciones sobre la  
comunidad y los diversos artistas  
que existen en nuestro vecindario.  
Sin LA Poverty Department no hubieramos  
conocido a toda la gente que representa  
la vida y experiencia de más de  
800 familias e individuos que viven  
en esta comunidad.

Todos apoyamos este centro y su  
trabajo y esperamos continuar  
visitando y celebrando la  
vida de Downtown en este  
centro

Gerardo Vique

I'm General Dogon. I work, standing on the shoulders of the Poverty Department [LA Poverty Department]. They are a strong force in the community. I have done so much work with them. Culture is very important, because a lot of people forget where they come from. And culture sets a standard, sets a foundation. When we come in, we always do community grounding at all our meetings. And we let people know it wouldn't be possible without folks before us. You don't see too many cultural groups that are left in the community. Much of the fight is that people feel culture ain't what we need. "We need housing, we need this, we need that," —but no, what we need is culture. We need to be able to kick back and say, "okay, how did we get to this point?" And then we need to be able to say, "okay, we need something we can symbolize." I like culture because of symbolism. I'm always wearing culture.

I'm an artist. I like painting, drawing, and creating new works of art. The Poverty Department will give you that opportunity to do that. I'm honored to talk about the history of Skid Row, because there's a history here that needs to be talked about. There's fucked up shit that's going on all around the world and my heart goes out to people like in Palestine. I can't imagine losing family members, like in the way that you have to fight and go through that. It's the same thing going over here with genocide. We're not getting blown to pieces, but we are dying seven a day, and genocide is genocide, right? So we need culture. Culture is what keeps us together as a people. It's what keeps our legacy together, our stories. We gotta always talk about the fight. What we're going through, how we're feeling. And then we gotta not only talk about it, we need to create art. We need to show it. The Poverty Department gives us that. We need to keep it going, keep it going, keep it going.

The Poverty Department is gonna be here to let us know what the fight is. Once you know what the fight is, then it's your duty to do something about it and get involved in it.

**-General Dogon, Los Angeles Community Action Network**

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of myself, Carolyn Gomez. I am a member of the Downtown Local of the Los Angeles Tenants Union. We work with tenants in the downtown area of Los Angeles. Many members are families or elderly people who are living in downtown. Tenants face job insecurity, food insecurity, and their housing is lacking. Thousands of people ~~live~~ live in the streets of Los Angeles. We fight to keep those who are housed housed. We also work with our houseless community because they are human beings who deserve respect and love. Our meetings are held weekly at the Skid Row Museum / Los Angeles Poverty Department. The relationships we build in our meetings at the museum are strong. The support from Skid Row Museum is important. The museum also opens its space to other organizations. It is a pillar in our community. Please help keep the important space open. The volunteers and people who work with the museum are also an important factor in what the museum has become. Please support the workers of the museum and the community of downtown by keeping the space open.

Thanks,

Carolyn Gomez

Member of the Downtown Tenants Union

From : laury fong gonzalez

To :

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the LAPD space. Me encanta estar acá en este espacio. Considero esencial que espacios como este se mantengan abiertos para nuestra comunidad. Los Angeles Poverty Department ayudan a promover y ayudar a los artistas y personas de esta ciudad y es muy importante que puedan mantener sus operaciones. Muchas gracias por su cooperación.

Best regards,  
laury fong gonzalez

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to express my enthusiastic support of the work LA Poverty Department does and the gathering space they provide to the community. I'm a musician and community builder, and have had the pleasure of organizing with the LA Tenant's Union, which gathers here. It's an environment that fosters connections between people of all backgrounds - a place to gather in a spirit of love and solidarity that unifies us across differences. It is a true gem in DTLA - in the community here - and I kindly request whatever support you can provide to keep it going strong. We live in isolating times, and community is everything. This is truly a community space.

Thank you +  
with love,  
Hannah Rauth

“To Whom It May Concern”  
HeartArt, Poetry, By Me, Iron G

I'm going to start  
To be wholeheartedly  
Writing from my heart  
About the place, that's divinely  
Become my healing, safe sanctuary

The Skid Row History Museum And Archives  
Which is a spirit aspiring soul lifting inspiring  
Project of our LAPD's Theatre Company

We create change by telling the story  
Of the community in a way that  
Supports the initiatives of  
Community residents.

We want the narrative of the neighborhood To be in the hands of neighborhood people.  
We work to generate this narrative and to Supplant narratives that perpetuate Stereotypes used  
to keep the Neighborhood people down or  
To justify displacing the community.

Support Our Arts, Exhibits & We'll Overcome  
The Loss Of Our Government Funding  
For With Your Letters, We'll Be Singing  
Arts, Theatre, Exhibits, Music, Laughter  
Oh Yes Oh Yes, That Is, What We're After

🌈🎵 Much Love ❤️ Iron Donato 🌻🎉🎊





In a nation where histories have been lost & voices continue to be silenced, there has never been a more important time to inspire our communities to think critically about our humanities. The Skid Row Museum has been a leader & anchor in cultivating that conversation.

Thank you to the Skid Row Museum ~~at~~ the intersection of documenting the past & designing new futures.

Grateful participant,  
citizen archivist  
& creative alchemist

Jessie  
Ag

April 17, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter to tell you that I find value in the LA Poverty Department's Skid Row History Museum and Archive.

Not only does the space hold value as a historical archive, storing over 40 years of curated material, but also serves as a community hub, providing activities and offering itself as a link to other services in the community. I find myself in the theater workshops the LA Poverty Department holds, where I am encouraged to express myself, connect with others, and learn about the history and struggles of community I am a part of.

The space also holds book clubs, sock puppet classes, support groups, music wellness labs, and movie nights. I do not do all the activities listed, but I find having the options available to me empowers me to do more, and I like that effect.

The space also does exhibits throughout the year by local community groups and artists, and I get to learn more about the community and its roots. I find the Skid Row History Museum & Archive is an essential part of the community and much would be lost if the LA Poverty Department no longer had a physical location.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chris K.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hi,

I want to thank LAPD for allowing us the space for rehearsals.

I will say when we did the Coffeehouse photoshoot, they (John and Henriette and the whole staff there) were so accommodating and the space was amazing for that photoshoot. We were able to make a little corner feel like a photography studio and the other half a hair salon/makeup studio. The space also became an area where everyone could hang out and enjoy themselves and get beautiful photos. We do have photos and videos from that day I can share as well!

Our rehearsals in the space are special too- really a huge amount of gratitude to them as they let us use the space for many things.

Thank you,  
Kei

--

**Kei Riggins**  
**Choir Coordinator**

(she/her/hers)

[kei@urbanvoicesproject.org](mailto:kei@urbanvoicesproject.org)



<http://www.urbanvoicesproject.org/>

Instagram: @urbanvoicesproject

Facebook: [facebook.com/urbanvoicesproject](https://www.facebook.com/urbanvoicesproject)

May 10, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of a request to share my personal experiences with the Los Angeles Poverty Department. I was apprised of their Houseless Advocacy when I was a resident of a SRO (Single Room Occupancy) Facility in 2011 in "Skidrow". After having been injured in 2008, ongoing health issues, without any income and becoming displaced myself. I have been an Advocate of Houseless residents since 1968. I began my own tenure of Advocacy in New York City at that time through the Vista/Peace Corp program in Harlem.

I have been in "Recovery" since 1987 and worked as a Counselor for those in need of support in various arenas since then. The Los Angeles Poverty Department has been a Haven for the people who cannot Advocate for themselves, for those of us who need a Home base for our individual talents which are used to Uplift the community we reside and work in. Their years of having Many Platforms for expressing individual and communal education and support particularly through the Arts are Greatly Appreciated.

I started a Program in which community members are given the materials to make "Sock Puppets" since 2022. I was Invited to do the workshops at the LAPD once a month and have been doing so for over a year. While some may question how such a simplistic "hobby" could be beneficial to any community, as a Personal Recovery Assistant I have seen the Heart Felt advantages of those who have made themselves Sock Puppets and hold them in their arms for Comfort. This Free Workshop is just one example of the many Free opportunities that have been offered at the Los Angeles Poverty Department throughout the years.

I had been a choir member as well as a Board of Director member of The Urban Voices Choir (a Skidrow Musical Program) for 9 years. Which uses Music to Bridge communities, educating and supporting individuals and their audiences. Having performed at the LAPD Skidrow Museum has been an Important Platform for our intended outreach.

I personally have enjoyed their Artistic Installations and performances throughout the years. As well as the Encouragement/Support that they have supplied for Houseless and Human Advocacy. Many of the interactions that have occurred through people coming to and meeting at the L.A.P.D. Skidrow Museum location, have had Long term benefits such as Housing, Jobs, Health and connection which is necessary for people to thrive, not merely survive. It is the proverbial "Village" where our community members can meet and get the assistance through networking that makes a Huge difference in their lives.

With Appreciation,

Respectfully,

Reverend Marilyn G. Irizarry

Personal Recovery Assistant

Life Coach

April 14/2025

My name: Leifa Martinez

LAPD member: Since September/2019

I am so glad to be part of this great group of artist that was created in Skid Row by John Malpede

The group with their good ideas ~~plans~~ plans to help "homeless" have been created the best environment to sit and talk about the housing, harm reduction, substance abuse, and more situations that every day occurred in skid row shelters.

The museum of art is a legend place that accumulated memories, debates and support for people that leave in Skid Row. We need more people involved in this great project that is handle by all kinds of performance:

dance, music, poetry, theater, and  
more and more artists.

Thank you for your great support  
and amazing help.

Los Angeles poverty Department, you're such a joy to be a part of they help us create a stage performance and make sure you learn to read and interact with people. We need this place to help us grow to be the best that we can be in our community after being homeless for eight years sleeping in a doorway this place has embrace me to rise again in the right direction so so many other people as well

*Lucie Melane*



Throughout this turbulent time it has really been a challenging year I know it has been for me and so many other I've been through so much in my life but nothing as scary as this pandemic. One day I came home and I looked in my mailbox and I noticed I had received something from Los Angeles poverty department and urban voices project about doing art and with a lot of supplies of paints inside this big envelope. It crossed my mind what am I going to do with this? I knew nothing about painting and I really didn't like it but don't get me wrong I love other people paintings. But the kindness they had bestowed on me, I knew I needed to

do something to keep my mind off all the things that was going on in our world. So I started one day at a time to create art the more I created the more I loved it what came to mind all the time was crosses and hearts why I don't know I guess it was the spirit reaching out to me more and more each day I painted it and then I started making greeting cards out of my art and sending them to people blessing them with crosses and my hearts. They wrote me back telling me they love my art work on the cards and the paintings I would send them in the mail. I was so glad to read what they wrote back to me I felt that I was touching people's lives through my art giving them hope for a better future putting a smile up on their faces. I am so grateful and ever thankful to LAPD and urban voices for thinking of me and helping me stay focused on a better future and what they brought to my world and others as well. It's like a miracle! Even in the pandemic people are sticking together helping each other leaning on one another and making it. That is a wonderful thing.

Lorraine Morland



I am so thankful to you  
guys for providing such  
a lovely space for all  
concerns. I pray you will  
get thru these tough times

My prayers are with  
you. We need more

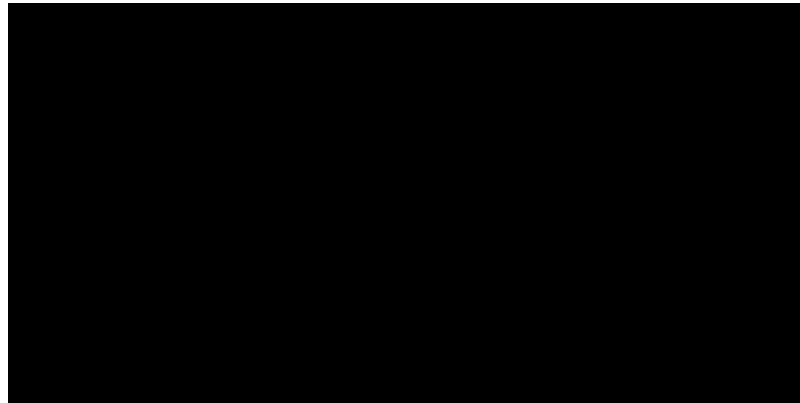
programs like you

CASSIUS PAXTON

UNP. STAFF DRUMMER

To whom it may concern, 05/01/2025

I am Ptah Ahochi Tehuti Eil a White Male Autochthon American of Choctaw Descent. With Power of Attorney and Authorized representative for the fiction, Raymond Harold Lewis. [Received, Statutory Declaration Nov 18 2024](#)



**Received, Statutory Declaration Nov 18 2024**

Governor recieved my Statutory Declaration of Indigenous Heritage on 11-18-2024

The Los Angeles Poverty Department has been a safe place for so many individuals like me, for so many years. It has maintained a full star rating from companies such as; Charity Navigator and is recognized on the, "Americans For Art," National Arts Administration Publications and policy database for its community activism.

The museum's space has opened its doors to many people in the community who were in need of healing and a safe space to be themselves while learning and exploring creative expressions. The exhibitions have allowed us to gather in unity to inspire and support one another. Life can be tough at times, but when you have a community, you can tough out the hard times together. I can honestly say it's been one of the catalysts in my total life transformation from homeless to housed. I have great conviction that it was meant for me to be within city limits during my time of need.

I personally have had the pleasure of bringing the performances of Ase Ashe Drummers and Dancers from the heart to the center to share and celebrate Indigenous culture. LAPD

has also allowed me to host monthly Sound Bowl Meditation workshops in the space. The community gets to experience the healing frequencies that are very much healing to the human body. According to the NIH-National Institution of Health, singing bowls have a powerful effect on the human body's energy system. It has healing power, relieves tension, improves mood and overall wellbeing. Healing sounds can produce physiological and psychological responses-reducing negative effects and increasing positive effects.

In addition, LAPD has honored and respected my right to self-identity as a White Male Autochthon American Indian of: Choctaw Descent. They will cease and desisted from using the term, "Black," or "African American," (which is a categorization and racial identification misnomer) and use correct verbiage such as indigenous people, dark skinned, Nubuns. The US Office of Personnel Management guide to personal data standards defines (SF-181). White, a person having origin in any of the original people of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa. Hopefully their publications will reflect this. Also, it is imperative that they bring in a specialist on indigenous American Indian culture to teach workshops. I feel the perfect candidate for this position will be Chief Nanya Shaabu Eil. So, they can recognize it is improper syntax and an assault on indigenous people heritage. I value the acknowledgement and support they provide most and will attest that the services they provide are both essential to the community and beneficial to the economy. In closing the funding provided to LAPD provides the necessary resources to continue with everyone's growth progress.

Sincerely, Ptah Ahochi Tehuti Eil

## Protect Our Space.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Rafael Gutierrez; reason for my letter is simply to share my experience with the Downtown Local- which has left a huge impact in many members of community. Such great resources and charitable events and other positive outreach has come from ~~the~~ the ability of having access to such resources, to see these things go would truly be devastating to all of our community. Truly hope you can reconsider from taking such great access to resources from our community.

Best,

Rafael Gutierrez.

Rafael

Los Angeles, April 24, 2025

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my unwavering support for the LA Poverty Department - Skid Row History Museum & Archive, under the direction of Henriëtte Brouwers and John Malpede. As you are likely aware, the federal government's recent cuts to federal grant agencies have significantly impacted various cultural and community-focused organizations, including ours.

The Skid Row History Museum & Archive stands as a beacon of hope and understanding in our community. Its exhibitions and public programs are not merely artistic endeavors; they are vital narratives that give voice to the often unheard stories within our society. Each exhibit and program is meticulously curated to reflect the diverse heritage and struggles of our community members, fostering a sense of unity and empowerment.

The need for the Museum's space is more pressing than ever. It serves as a sanctuary where individuals can engage with their history, learn from past experiences, and envision a brighter future. The federal cuts threaten this invaluable resource, but we are determined to persevere.

In light of the aforementioned challenges, your support is crucial. The Skid Row History Museum & Archive is not just an institution; it is a lifeline for the community, providing a platform for expression, education, and advocacy. Together, we can ensure that the Skid Row History Museum & Archive remains a dynamic and impactful presence in the community.

Sincerely,

Richard Volis

Greetings, my name is Sir Oliver Simmons founder of Sir Oliver Productions and as of this year 2025 Sir Oliver Productions Films. I've been doing live entertainment events in Skid Row downtown Los Angeles area for over a decade year at least twice sometimes three times a year. All of this would not be possible with out the help of Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and Skid Row History Museum (SRHMA) respectfully.

Not only the use of the space of the Skid Row Museum but their work in raising the awareness of the problems of every day life in the Skid Row Community. The events at Skid Row Museum help inspire people to address the needs of the community of the homeless and how what happens in this neighborhood impacts all of us. The Museum and John Malpede and Henriette teaches us what we can do to help.

John and Henriette have their hands on the pulse of Skid Row in the museum space— from programs in education in Grant writing to tenant rights for the homeless, to putting on live events with local Skid Row artists, supporting community outreach program for schools— all of this under the direction of John and Henrietta never asking for a dime all free for the community. The museum also raises awareness on information about Covid in Skid Row, acts as a space to explore and learn about voting rights for the homeless, and most importantly, it is just a place were a person just walk in when its raining knowing they're living on the street, and they can come in and try and stay dry a little longer.

This space is needed in our community and it needs all the help it can get. I am a recipient of the Skid Row Arts Alliance Grant twice, which enabled me to host my events at the Skid Row Museum and provide food and performers from the community. To have this help is a blessing and thats what the L A P D and S R H M A plus all the staff at the Archive do.

It is a blessing — no one has programs that are more needed now than this space. If they were gone, it means stopping the people who lead the fight for the homeless. To silence these programs will be a disservice in helping other Sir Oliver Productions events. We plan to start a series of short films about the music of Skid Row and the effects it has, these are important stories to tell.

John, Henriette, and the Museum is an inspiration in how it helps, teaches and educates the homeless. We need these programs if we care about people learning— even if they're living in a tent if their hope is darkened by a shadow of uncertainty. Don't end the only line of positive change they have in there life

Thank you  
Sir Oliver Simmons founder Sir Oliver Productions  
& Sir Oliver Productions Films



April 29, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

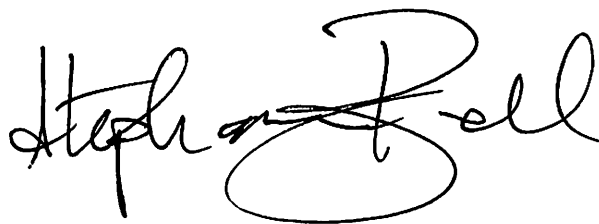
My name is Stephanie Bell, and I am a part of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD). I have been a part of Downtown Los Angeles since the 90's. I am a gospel singer, writer, and speaker that has done a lot for the community. I joined the LAPD in 1996 after Sonya Mims invited me to participate in theater workshops; and am still a part of it. Since then, I have performed from San Pedro to Crocker Streets in Skid Row.

When in downtown, I cook and participate with the LAPD. As a theater group, we go out and promote the LAPD and what we are accomplishing. We rehearse at the Skid Row History Museum & Archive (SRHMA) – which is a project of the LAPD. Here, exhibitions, community organizing, and free monthly programming occur. Additionally, we host community conversations and panel discussions that directly relate to current issues in Skid Row. The museum space is great to experience, and our current exhibition, “Walk with Me,” showcases the artistic modalities of Studio 526 artists doing what they love.

You can visit the SRHMA from Monday through Saturday. There is always something going on with the Los Angeles Property Department. Because of its social value to our Skid Row community, it is important for the LAPD to sustain this space to be maintained through time. I would like to thank you for time and energy in reading this letter.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Bell

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "S" at the beginning and a large "B" at the end.

April 16, 2025

My name is Tom Grode and when I moved to Downtown Los Angeles from Santa Monica back in 2012, I got heavily involved in Skid Row as a volunteer.

I have a background in the entertainment industry and so when I learned about LAPD, the oldest arts organization in Skid Row, I wanted nothing to do with it because I was creatively burnt out through the entertainment industry.

But as I got more involved in Skid Row through a Social Justice lens, I ended up at LAPD because they were so clearly doing great creative work through advocacy and activism. Not long after I got involved in 2015 as an actor and writer, we opened up the Skid Row History Museum and Archive.

The History Museum and Archive feed into each other.

The History Museum is a community space for LAPD programming and for collaborative events and projects with a variety of creative and social partners who have a similar compassionate heart.

The Museum is easily accessible - just walk in from the sidewalk. Once you walk through the front door, you'll enter the exhibit, panel discussions, movie nights, and all kinds of Skid Row celebrations where everyone is welcome.

Up the stairs is the Archive. An absolute beehive, the Archive documents both the history of Skid Row and present day activities from an arts/culture residential neighborhood perspective. If you want to read a twenty page policy paper from City Hall about Skid Row, you'll find that as well.

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive is a beautiful marriage between the physical infrastructure and the human infrastructure.

Sincerely,  
Tom

HERE'S WHAT I THINK.

THE SKID ROW HISTORY MUSEUM & ARCHIVE  
IS ALL THAT & MORE. ITS A FLEXIBLE SPACE  
THAT TRANSFORMS ITSELF - SOMETIMES 3 OR  
4 TIMES DAILY. THERE'S AN EXHIBITION ON THE WALLS  
- SO PEOPLE COME IN & VIEW IT. WE CLEAR THE  
FLOOR SO WE CAN HAVE A THEATER WORKSHOP.  
WE SET UP TABLES FOR A COMMUNITY MEETING -  
SKID ROW ARTS ALLIANCE, DOWNTOWN TEMPLES ASSOCIATION,  
FIREHOUSE, SKID ROW NOW & 2040. MANY MEETINGS &  
COMMUNITY COALITIONS - BECAUSE ~~WE~~ SKID ROW IS  
OPEN FOR ACTIVITIES FROM 9 AM UNTIL 10 OR SO AT  
NIGHT. THERE ARE ACTIVITIES 7 DAYS A WEEK.  
OK! BACK TO PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE  
SPACE - WE TAKE THOSE MEETING TABLES DOWN. THEN  
<sup>WE</sup> ~~WE~~ SET UP ROWS OF CHAIRS FOR A MOVIE - WITH  
FREE POPCORN, AN ARTIST TALK, A COMMUNITY OPEN  
MIC. OK AFTER THE MOVIE CIRCLE THE CHAIRS FOR  
A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FILM. 10:30 - TIME  
TO STACK THE CHAIRS. ~~WASH~~ THE FLOOR,  
THE BATHROOM, TAKE OUT THE TRASH. LOCK IT UP.  
~~GOODBYE~~. GOODNIGHT.

April 24, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I first recall coming to LAPD as a member of the community arts program now known as Studio 526 about ten years ago. I attended free movie screenings with coffee, popcorn and conversation, and, over time, I continued to attend more LAPD events, including Studio 526 art exhibits that showcased my artworks at LAPD. In 2014, I started working as an artisan at Piece by Piece, now a member of the Skid Row Arts Alliance, and I continue to work there today. Piece by Piece enriched my art practice and allowed me to earn a small income that helped me to attain my permanent housing in 2019 after I had experienced over ten years of homelessness.

I hold an MFA in Film and Television Production from USC School of Cinematic Arts, from which I graduated in 2003. Finding arts opportunities and employment always has proven difficult for me despite my hard work to improve my condition. About a year ago, I learned that LAPD had received an NEH grant to conduct VHS to digital platform transfers. As I have worked extensively in VHS over the years, particularly while I attended graduate school, I wanted to use the LAPD equipment to conduct the transfer of my own private work from VHS to a digital platform for preservation and screening opportunities. I completed the NEH online training program for this process at LAPD, and I had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the required transfer equipment for some time so that I could digitally transfer my work. Unfortunately, the removal of grants makes this opportunity harder to attain at this time.

In addition, I regularly perform at the LAPD Open Mic, attend LAPD classes, exhibitions and shows and, most recently, I contributed my own writing and illustration to a zine produced through the LAPD creative writing workshop.

As you can see, LAPD is an important place where I work creatively, socialize, and enhance my interactions with my community. I hope that I can continue to use this space for creative work and showcasing, leadership, communication and trailblazing into new creative future endeavors. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Vicki Maturo

04-16-2025

To whom it may concern:

IT IS ABOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY  
WE REALLY APPRECIATE THE SPACE WE ARE  
HAVING TO MEET HERE TO VENT OUR TROUBLES  
AND NEEDS. WE REALLY NEED TO GET THE  
VERY BEST FUNDING THAT WE CAN IN ORDER  
TO IMPROVE OUR MEETS AND TO GET OUR  
LEGAL PROBLEMS RESOLVED & TO HAVE  
OUR NEEDS MET, ON THE VERY BEST THAT  
WE CAN. AND IMPROVE ALL WE CAN DO IT.  
FOR MEDIATION AND ALL IN ALL.

VICTOR DIVAS

# LAPD

## Artists & Arts Institutions



**“LAPD gives moral support to people who would otherwise be pushed aside in a dreary world.”**

- Simone Forti, postmodern artist, dancer, choreographer and writer

**“We are so invested in the success of this unique nonprofit that since 2016, we have supported LAPD with over \$200,000 in grant funding from the foundation—more than any other awarded grantee.”**

- Mary Clare Stevens, Executive Director, Mike Kelley Foundation

**“This group has incredible support and legitimacy in Skid Row, incredible smarts, commitment, and artistry. They are the real deal, committed to real change.”**

-Rosten Woo, artist

**“In the 80s, as a high school student in the deep South, I read an article about John Malpede and LAPD - it forever changed my trajectory of thinking about art's purpose.**

**I dedicated my life to creating art and opportunities for art to be not just a one-way street, but an intersection of collaboration and experience.”—Tara Morgan, theater maker**

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Antonio Mendoza. I live in 725 S. Spring St. I am an artist as well as a union activist. I feel that the Skid Row History Museum & Archive and the LA Poverty Department are extremely important institutions for our neighborhood and our city.

Their exhibit, "Welcome to the COVID Hotel" was a powerful testament of how LA County took action to help the marginalized downtown homeless population tackle a worldwide health crisis. The show revealed the revolutionary approach by the county to quarantine and accommodated over 10,000 unhoused individuals in empty motels with great success and very few deaths.

The most recent event I have attended at the museum was, "Tents and Tenants: After Echo Park Lake," curated by the Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy and the After Echo Park Lake Archive Collective. This was a moving recount of stories and personalities surrounding the Echo Park encampment.

As part of the downtown tapestry, the Skid Row History Museum & Archive allows myself and other artists the opportunity to connect with and be inspired by all the fellow artists that are part of the downtown unhoused community.

At a time when our rights are being attacked from all sides, we need more places like the Skid Row History Museum & Archive and the LA Poverty Department that humanize and give a voice to the unhoused and underserved communities in Skid Row.

Sincerely,  
Antonio Mendoza

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support the absolute vitality of the Skid Row History Archive and Museum in Downtown Los Angeles. Without the Skid Row History Archive and Museum, there is no place in Los Angeles that consistently supports the cultural contributions of unhoused people. The Skid Row History Archive and Museum is a vital part of the community because it houses culture that would otherwise go unhoused.

The Skid Row History Archive and Museum is important because an average of 5 unhoused people in Los Angeles die per day. Grieving and memorial are a constant part of the reality of what it means to work with unhoused communities in Los Angeles. The Skid Row History Archive and Museum helps us remember. It stands as a living, breathing memorial to all the loved ones that we've lost on Skid Row, and helps us remember them through art and culture associated with them. Additionally, as a community, we need places to grieve together. The community events and gatherings that the Skid Row History Archive and Museum hosts serve as a way for us to reconnect in community after tragedy has occurred, and to strengthen our bonds in the face of tragedy.

The Skid Row History Archive and Museum tells the stories of unhoused people by and for themselves. In the time that I've known the Los Angeles Poverty Department, they have archived and presented the stories of real estate development struggles, responses to COVID, evicted encampments, and more. This also is a form of collective memory building that helps us understand the lived experiences of unhoused people.

Lastly, The Skid Row History Archive and Museum hosts vital community conversations that help build analysis and advocacy for housing justice in Los Angeles. They regularly host panels, screenings, and talks from a range of artists, activists, scholars, and government officials in order to galvanize a broad base of support for ending homelessness in Los Angeles. They have also opened their doors for me and collaborators to host art and advocacy events. I do not exaggerate when I say that The Skid Row History Archive and Museum is the art space where I spend the most time in Los Angeles. It is a vital part of our community and I support all efforts to continue its work.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Zou', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Carol Zou  
Social Practice Artist  
Lecturer, Cal State Los Angeles

(512) 470 2339

[carl.twombly@gmail.com](mailto:carl.twombly@gmail.com)

thisliferecorded.com

Los Angeles, May 1st, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am David de Rozas, filmmaker, visual artist, and educator based in Los Angeles, California. I have been involved and collaborating in the activities and programs organized by the Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA) and Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) in the last several years.

I was brought to participate in the SRHMA programming because of my deep commitment to projects that center social practice, collective authorship, and meaningful community engagement. I am especially drawn to initiatives that not only invite participation but are fundamentally shaped by the people and places they serve. The Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) is one of the most enduring and visionary arts organizations rooted in Downtown's Skid Row district—an area too often misrepresented and overlooked. LAPD's long-standing presence and practice of co-creation with residents, workers, and neighbors deeply resonated with me. From my first encounter, I was captivated by their mission, programming, and the care with which they build relationships. I found in LAPD a rare model of ethical collaboration and mutual respect, and I was moved by how genuinely they welcomed me into their fold. This reciprocal exchange of trust, care, and creativity has had a lasting impact on me, reinforcing my belief in the value of art as a transformative and liberatory force when grounded in community.

The SRHMA and the LAPD programs hold invaluable significance to the communities living and working in the metropolitan district, the city of Los Angeles, and by extension this country. Their uniqueness stems from being spaces run by individuals who have been part of the Skid Row community for decades. As such, this space's programming, activities, and priorities reflect the needs and values of the residents it serves, creating an authentic environment where Downtown neighbors feel genuinely heard and represented. Both the SRHMA and the LAPD breathe and embrace a sense of collective ownership and self-representation that fosters individual growth and affirmation that is difficult to find in other institutional and cultural spaces located in the district and, by extension, the city of Los Angeles.

Participating in SRHMA and LAPD has provided me with knowledge and experiences that cannot be encountered in conventional cultural institutions. I've come to better understand how cultural work can function as a form of love, resilience, resistance, and affirmation. I learned how aesthetics and ethics must be intertwined when working in community-engaged contexts, and the importance of practicing togetherness. These experiences have reshaped my understanding of the meaning of love, care, and collaboration, teaching me that meaningful cultural production is about recognizing, amplifying, and embracing the many voices and stories that are part of our communities. The type of collective ownership, self-representation, and mutual affirmation that both the SRHMA and LAPD foster is exceedingly rare in a city increasingly defined by social inequalities, displacement, and privatization.

What makes SRHMA and LAPD exceptional is how they merge the personal, communal, cultural, and historical into a living, breathing practice of collective engagement. They are multidimensional spaces where connection, reflection, and growth occur simultaneously. Through workshops, discussions, performances, screenings, and collaborative art-making, the SRHMA programming cultivates an environment that is deeply responsive to the community's evolving needs and realities. Whether grappling with historical injustices, honoring the rich cultural heritage of Skid Row, or creating space for healing and learning, every activity is rooted in sustained dialogue with the people it serves. Thus, during these years of operation, the SRHMA hasn't just served the community, but it has grown with it, affirming that history, creativity, and care are not separate domains but interconnected practices vital to collective well-being. During these years, I have witnessed how the Skid Row History Museum and Archive has become a cultural hub that serves as both guardian and incubator of the Downtown to come; a place where multiple identities and lifeways are embraced and celebrated rather than questioned or marginalized.

In addition, the Skid Row Archive housed at the Museum is far more than a static collection of documents but a living, breathing testimony to the neighborhood's enduring struggles, resilience, and achievements. It is a community-rooted archive built on oral histories and lived experiences, curated and preserved with the active involvement of those whose stories it tells. This archive doesn't speak about Skid Row from the outside; it speaks from within, offering a unique, unfiltered glimpse into the realities, wisdom, and creativity of a community too often misrepresented or ignored in Los Angeles. To protect and care for the voices and stories this collection safeguards is to affirm the value of local knowledge and to recognize Skid Row as a site of cultural and historical significance in this city. It ensures that future researchers, students, artists, and community members have access to narratives that are frequently erased or marginalized by mainstream institutions. The archive stands as both a repository and a catalyst—a place where memory, resistance, and imagination converge, and where the past is actively called upon to shape more just and inclusive futures for our communities.

If the SRHMA and LAPD programs disappear, what will happen to those of us who are part of them? Why are spaces that grow from the bottom up—rooted in care, participation, and local knowledge—so often placed at risk, especially at a moment when they are more necessary than ever? What kind of inclusive artistic and cultural future can we imagine for Los Angeles if not all voices, lifeways, and experiences are heard, included, and empowered to participate? Why do SRHMA and LAPD matter? I believe in an art practice that fosters social and environmental transformation—an art that emerges not from exclusivity or spectacle, but from the everyday needs, dreams, and struggles of our communities. Art-based community practices are essential to the health of our society. They promote resilience, inclusion, and collective growth. LAPD was the first arts organization in the United States to center its work on collaborations with unhoused individuals, beginning in the mid-1980s. Since then, they have maintained a continuous presence in Skid Row, modeling a practice of affirmative, transformative engagement through creativity and experimentation.

To support SRHMA and LAPD is to support a vision of Los Angeles where culture belongs to everyone. It is to invest in the city's capacity for social innovation and citizenship-driven artistic practice—one that doesn't just reflect the world as it is, but helps shape the world as it could be.

For these reasons, I am writing this letter of support.

Sincerely,

David de Rozas

April 26, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, an invaluable institution that is not only a repository of history but also a sanctuary for creativity, dignity, and community-driven storytelling. As an artist and researcher, I have had the privilege of working with the museum on several projects, including my installation piece *Our Only Guide Is Our Homesickness*, featured in the “Dogs in the House” exhibition in 2019. I also participated in the Walk the Talk video essay program and engaged in panel discussions with other artists, all of which deepened my understanding of the museum’s significance.

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive is not just an exhibition space—it is a lifeline for the community it serves. Empowering the Skid Row community to document and share its own history, the museum provides a powerful platform for voices that are often marginalized. Its programs create a lateral, symbiotic energy that connects people across different walks of life, making it a rare and essential space where the full spectrum of humanity is honored. What makes this institution truly special is its commitment to multi-faceted self-documentation: the Skid Row community speaks for itself here—without external influences dictating or steering the narrative. While outside historians, academics, and artists like myself contribute to the ongoing dialogue, the museum’s collaborative approach allows for a more inclusive and authentic history of Skid Row to emerge, something rarely found in traditional archives or academic institutions. People not only feel seen and heard; they have the agency to contribute in significant ways.

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive is an important cultural and civic resource—not only for the Skid Row community, but for the broader arts sector and the city of Los Angeles. It offers individuals who have long been excluded from dominant narratives the opportunity to reclaim and share their histories on their own terms. The loss of this institution would be the erasure of a vital space for community storytelling, cultural preservation, and grassroots empowerment, leaving a profound gap in the city’s civic and artistic landscape.

I urge you to consider the critical role this museum plays in not only preserving history but also fostering a sense of dignity and belonging. It is incredibly important that we continue to support the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, ensuring it remains a thriving, accessible resource long into the future.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Helen H. Kim

Community-Based Artist and Researcher  
reachme@theotherhelenkim.com



To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jagdeep Raina. It is a profound honour today to be writing this letter of support for the Skidrow History Museum and Archive. I'm an adjunct professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, where I also received a graduate degree. In addition to teaching as an adjunct professor at RISD, I am also attending Queens College, City University of New York as a part time student where I am currently pursuing a second masters degree in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies; working towards my Masters in Library and Information Science with an advanced certificate in Archives. I am a 2021 Paul Mellon Fellow at Yale University and I have attended artist residencies at the Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, MacDowell, the Fine Arts Work Center, and Skowhegan School of Painting and sculpture. If I could summarize my artistic practice in one sentence, it would be an aim at identifying the residue left behind by the human touch, and finding its restorative potential.

The quote I think about all the time as an artist is by Nalini Malani who poses the following question:

*How can human pain and social suffering, past and present be rendered visually in such a way that its representation nurtures and illuminates life, rather than indulging in aesthetic stylization, voyeuristic titillation, or succumbing to fatalism in the face of mythic cycles of violence?*

It is naturally this quote that allowed me to discover the incredible work of The Skidrow History Museum and Archive in downtown Los Angeles. I first encountered the Skidrow Museum when I was in Los Angeles in the Spring of 2024: I was in the city where I was doing research on an art project I was exploring: examine the historical connections between forms of labor— particularly domestic work— and the way that this has played out across Los Angeles's architectural landscape, and how domestic labor moves throughout the architectural landscape of Los Angeles's elite; far away from the gritty, urban downtown core to the beachfront mansions and palatial seaside homes of neighbourhoods such as Bel Air, Beverly Hills, and Malibu. With rising droughts, wildfires, and climate change, I wanted to look at how Los Angeles ecological insecurity exacerbates the housing market and how this is affecting the architectural spaces of Los Angeles's most vulnerable communities, particularly its domestic workers. I then started examining architectural structures in Los Angeles that offer solace for domestic workers in a world that is rife with exploitative precarity. Spending time at the Skidrow Museum— a physical brick and mortar space that hosts a wide variety of events ranging from public conversations, readings, movie screenings, revolving exhibitions and performative events to address issues surrounding gentrification and displacement — locally, nationally and globally was deeply moving. I was touched by the generosity of the staff, who shared with me the programs that they are engaged with, and the ways in which this space has in a sense turned into a sense of home for the Skidrow Community.

In addition to the museum, I was also moved to spend time with the extensive archive that documents the activist, artistic, and recovery culture of Skidrow. This location— allowed me to physically inhabit a culturally rich and historic space that peels back the glossy veneer of Los Angeles in order to focus on

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN  
20 Washington Place, Providence, RI 02903



peripheral residents that have managed to create their own spatial communities across a city going through rapid gentrification and displacement.

A space like this is profoundly important, and we must protect the Skidrow History Museum and Archive at all costs to ensure that it continues to be a sanctuary for people—regardless of their class, sexuality, race, gender, immigration status, and access to housing—to gather and immerse themselves in the power that the arts has to transforms lives. The Skidrow History Museum and Archive allows us to find freedom with—rather than freedom from—each other, so we can all work together to create the conditions for a more equitable Los Angeles: a place where everyone can go in order to build a better life for themselves.

With Gratitude,  
Jagdeep



Joshua Nathan - Head of Production - The Rec League - [www.TheRecLeague.com](http://www.TheRecLeague.com)  
118 Sunridge Street, Playa Del Rey, CA 90293 – 620-747-0288 – [Zev@TheRecLeague.com](mailto:Zev@TheRecLeague.com)

5/4/2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I work as the Head of Production for The Rec League. We are a full service agency, production, and post-production commercial shop working worldwide. We are focused on sports-based content. Some of our clients include New Balance, Amazon, Warner Brothers, and EA Sports.

I'm writing to support The Skid Row Museum and Archive operated by the Los Angeles Poverty Department (L.A.P.D.).

I've been working as a volunteer for the L.A.P.D. since 2018. While I've helped out across a breadth of their programs, I specifically curate and help run a movie night program on the first and third Friday of each month. Not only do I curate films based on our audiences taste, I also get permission from filmmakers and studios to screen films for free for the unhoused residents of the Skid Row community. In fact, just last month we screened the Oscar winning film 'Everything Everywhere All at Once,' and both of the directors, Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, were in attendance to join us for a Q&A session.

In my nearly ten years of volunteering at the L.A.P.D. I've been most impressed with the ongoing exhibitions inside the museum, and the ever-present public programs that are provided for the unhoused community in Los Angeles. The exhibitions raise awareness for people like me about so many important issues regarding homelessness, and how change can actually be affected – whether that's humanizing people who are so often made alien by society, or helping us understand the political matters that will create the positive change for our fellow citizens and friends stranded in dire circumstances.

On the flip side, the L.A.P.D. offers crucial public programs for the unhoused. Its original mission is to create art by and for homeless people. I've witnessed so much positivity occur from these programs, it's one of the reasons I've decided to commit a significant chunk of my personal time to this institution.

We all need to play our part to make this world a better place – whether it be by volunteering, donating money, or committing one's entire existence to the betterment of community and to those less fortunate. The L.A.P.D. has done the latter. I hope my volunteering has helped in some small way, and I hope you will be able to assist in the ways that will best help us as well.

Sincerely,

Joshua Nathan

6 May 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and the Skid Row History Museum and Archive. I first learned of LAPD when I was a student at Occidental College from 1988 to 1992. I moved to the Bay Area after my graduation, but when I returned to Los Angeles to work as a professor, I knew that I wanted to get involved with their work. I brought many students to their workshops and had the honor of participating myself on a number of projects. The directors, John Malpede and Henriëtte Brouwers, brought artists from Europe to collaborate with the local company members most of whom live in the Skid Row community and or have experienced houselessness.

Los Angeles has one of the highest houseless rates in the United States and LAPD has a vital role in serving this community. They have saved many lives through their arts and advocacy work for the past 40 years. More than “just” a theater company, LAPD is unique in their collaboration with social service agencies like Los Angeles Community Action Network and local policy makers. The Skid Row History Museum and Archive is a space for art exhibitions, performances, and dialogues. It is also a sheltering space where the Skid Row community can watch movies and enjoy popcorn, attend theater workshops and other group activities that help to ensure peoples’ health through meaningful connection. LAPD ensures that the most vulnerable people in Los Angeles are cared for and allowed to experience basic human rights: to safe housing, to food, to health care, and dignity.

Most recently, Malpede and Brouwers visited my class at Pomona College to talk about their 40 years of working in Skid Row. My students then helped to produce their most recent performance, *The COVID Hotel Welcomes You to the Future*, which they have been presenting in various service provider areas in Los Angeles. The goal of this project is to proliferate the valuable learnings about human centered care that came out of the quarantine hotels that served houseless people during the Pandemic. The cast of 10 performers were joined by a panel of public health experts, doctors and houselessness activists and advocates. LAPD is expert in working this way, from the grassroots, to effect real change. Nobody else in Los Angeles has this unique combination of long-term relationships and experience that they bring to their advocacy. LAPD is such a valued institution in the city, that Malpede and Brouwers and other company members, some of whom have passed on already, are captured on a mural in the Little Tokyo Metro Station.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Joyce.Lu@pomona.edu](mailto:Joyce.Lu@pomona.edu) or 909.607.4385.

Sincerely,



Joyce Lu, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

# Luz Mack, Artist

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May 22, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to express my support for the Los Angeles Poverty Department. I have been to several of their events--from art exhibitions that display powerful works alongside individual artists' stories of their journeys to performances that reflect the issues facing people living in the Skid Row neighborhood and the larger picture of the world. I especially appreciate the performances, which both engage and uplift the actors and participants. The overall feeling is of support and empowerment and I can see that in every person's eyes.

I have also been to several of their movie nights. Every film reflects and highlights topics of interest to the group, and also includes discussions afterwards with directors and producers. Movie nights and Open Mic nights are great ways for the community to come together and connect with each other, which is essential for those who are facing isolation and housing insecurity.

This organization is an incredibly valuable and critical resource for the community for its artistic vision and its inclusive approach to community building. Please support their important work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Luz Mack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Luz Mack

Thank you!

Monica Nouwens  
1691 Sargent Ct.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

May 2, 2025

Subject: Keep the Lights On for LAPD

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing to urgently advocate for the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), the groundbreaking arts organization that has amplified the voices of Skid Row's residents through transformative theater since 1985.

For the past decade, I've photographed LAPD's exhibitions and performances—where unhoused actors turn raw experience into standing ovations, where community protests become avant-garde art and where founder John Malpede's and Associate Director Henriëtte Brouwers have the legendary ability to make even bureaucratic meetings fascinating and greatly entertaining.

But here's the stark reality: Losing federal funding wouldn't just cut programs—it would silence a lifeline for Skid Row's most vulnerable. LAPD doesn't just produce art; they restore agency, build solidarity, and force this city to confront the policies that perpetuate homelessness. In a crisis where solutions are too often performative, LAPD's model—art as action—isn't just valuable -it's essential.

I ask you to stand with LAPD and preserve their funding and recognize the irreplaceable role they play in Los Angeles. Their work aligns with the goals of equity, creative placemaking, and harm reduction—priorities that deserve investment, not cuts. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I've attached a few photos of their work performed at the Armory Center for the Arts—published in Art Forum

Gratefully,  
Monica Nouwens

May 21, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

The Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) is my favorite theater in America.

John Malpede founded LAPD in the back room of a Skid Row legal aid office in 1985. They became the first performance group in America formed by primarily homeless and formerly homeless people. Over the years, they have re-imagined the art form of theater in the context of survival and life on the streets of downtown Los Angeles, in the process linking the powerless to the powerful, redrawing the social landscape, and creating the conditions for participants to articulate their life situations for themselves and for the rest of us. LAPD creates performances that illuminate and expose the phenomenon of homelessness in its largest public meanings and costs, and in its personal costs and consequences.

John Malpede's visionary theater has created extraordinary and transformative experiences in communities across America for more than 40 years now. Over the past 10 years, LAPD has operated the Skid Row History Museum & Archive, a beacon of cultural and civic engagement where the Skid Row community can experience art and social connection with each other, and with their more affluent neighbors from other parts of the region.

The list of distinguished grants, awards, residencies, and citations is impressive, but the LAPD project remains something of a hidden treasure. For example, the Los Angeles Times culture desk seems to have a standing policy that the work of "amateurs" is unworthy of review – in LAPD's case one article every couple of years is deemed sufficient -- so most of LAPD productions remain unrecorded in the city's newspaper of record. But misperceptions in the cultural field are the smallest part of the company's daily obstacle course – they are negotiating with government funding cuts, rising rents, the tolls of gentrification on their community, and the complex and elusive population of Skid Row itself. They are an enduring and engaged arts and social practice that have amassed years of experience through courageous trial and error, and meticulous crafting of relationships to emerge as a model in multiple fields.

LAPD and its many collaborators and supporters have created a space of refuge, recovery, hard-won sanity, personal gravity, wildness, and deep responsiveness. Please join this wonderful community.

Sincerely,



Peter Sellars  
Distinguished Professor  
Opera, film, theater, and festival director

Oslo, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025

To whom it may concern,

My name is Rixt Bilker, and I'm a Dutch dramaturg and theatre scholar specializing in text- and repertoire theater, with a deep commitment to community-based art. In 2023, I had the privilege of spending three months with the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), attending rehearsals and witnessing the creation of powerful, deeply personal monologues on the one hand, and diving into the archive to look into 40 years of performance history. I'm honoured to have been part of it.

It was a moving experience. I met wonderful people whose raw and honest stories I saw being created into compelling theatre. This is the kind of work that reminds me why theatre matters: it connects people, gives voices to the unheard, and reflects the realities of our world. It is the people and participants from LAPD who make this all possible. With its performances, exhibitions, and rich archive, LAPD not only tells the story of Skid Row but actively preserves and honours its community.

Theatre connects, theatre tells stories, theatre holds up a mirror. But to do so, one needs a place to create, to come together, to connect. To lose the space, is to lose a place to meet. When making and showing art that is vulnerable, one needs a place of safety and comfort in order to make such art. For the Skid Row community, losing this place would be devastating: a loss of safety, of community, of the ability to tell their stories freely and fearlessly. For the broader cultural sector, it would mean the disappearance of a site of artistic and social value. Spaces like LAPD are, thus, essential. They are both creative hubs and safe havens.

Art reflects, questions, connects, and transforms. LAPD, with its theatre making, its museum exhibitions and the archive does all of this and more. It not only shows the history of Skid Row ever since 1980s but also reflects on the present. To lose this space would be to lose a living archive of resilience, knowledge, creativity, and community. All in all, it would be a loss. For so many people. Therefore, I urge you to consider the significance of this place. Not only for those who create within its walls, but also for all of us who believe in the transformative power of art.

With kind regards,

Rixt Bilker (f, 26)

4/29/25

Robby Herbst  
28 Old Bedford Rd.  
Goldens Bridge, NY  
10526

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and their exhibition space The Skid Row History Museum and Archive. I am an artist, writer, organizer, and professor whose field of expertise is community art and political art. I have taught these topics internationally and am currently with SUNY New Paltz in NY. I lived in Los Angeles for over 25 years. There I wrote about contemporary forms of community art and culture for KCET TV as a regular columnist for their *Artbound* program.

I have known of Los Angeles Poverty Department for decades. I first learned of them when I came across their name in a magazine back in the 1990s when I was a young man. When I moved to Los Angeles a few years later, they were on my radar as artists who do meaningful work in the City of Angels. As my relationship to the city grew, so did my understanding of the significance of the work that LAPD does.

The City of Los Angeles has been unable to effectively provide housing and social services for the critically poor for much of its post-war history. For half of that almost century, LAPD has been doing the work of advocating for that population, and supporting and developing its creative output. LAPD is more than a theater company, it's a community, a family, and among the institutional bedrock of a Skid Row community who so many critical institutions have failed. LAPD brings meaning, and is meaning, to the lives of its theater company and community.

Los Angeles is a city with art's institutions that trade in both the glamour of the high art world, and develop the talent of visual and new media artist's that will expand America's understanding of itself. LAPD's Skid Row Museum and Archive performs another vital service. While it is understood to be a critical and cutting edge institution (innovating in the field of community and social art), their particular location within a constituency who otherwise are regarded as powerless makes their work vital. The Museum's programming serves simultaneously as a community center for the unhoused population of Skid Row, while it also serves as a point of contact for these folks and the artists, thinkers, activists, and governmentally oriented policy-wonks that otherwise would encounter Skid Row's expansive blocks as mysterious and unapproachable place.

I have had the pleasure to work with LAPD and to participate in events at their Museum. It is a unique and special place where you have the opportunity to encounter and interact with the

breadth of people who make up the population of the city. There is no other organization in the county, and likely the country, that mixes a community forward service mission, with an avantgarde sensibility, and a humanist floor plan.

I support and adore LAPD and their Skid Row Museum and Archive.

Sincerley,  
Robby Herbst  
323 206 2122

Rosten Woo  
3826 Lomitas Dr  
Los Angeles CA  
90032

April 23, 2025

To Whom It may Concern

I am writing to confirm the importance of the work of Los Angeles Poverty Department and the Skid Row History Museum and Archive. I was reminded of the importance of this project quite recently when I attended an event and exhibition related to the history of the recent encampment at Echo Park Lake. I was struck by how important and beautiful this history and this document of this community was and also how unlikely it would be that any other institution in LA would be able to tell and hold this story. Without institutions like the SRHMA this community's story would quite literally disappear. We can't let that happen. I believe in the project's premise that community participation and community engagement can be actively fostered and developed through creative engagement. I also believe that LAPD is the group to do it. This group has incredible support and legitimacy in Skid Row, incredible smarts, commitment, and artistry. They are the real deal, committed to real change.

For the last 15 years, I have worked at the intersection of art, education, and advocacy. I believe strongly in the ability of art to catalyze meaningful political participation. I produce community-based design, and civic-scale artworks. In addition to my own work, I act as a collaborator and consultant to a variety of grassroots and non-profit organizations. My work has been exhibited at the Cooper-Hewitt Design Triennial, the Venice Architecture Biennale, Netherlands Architectural Institute, and various piers, public housing developments, tugboats, shopping malls, and parks. I was co-founder and executive director of the New York City-based non-profit the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), winner of the National Design Award for institutional achievement in 2016.

I have known of LAPD's work for many years but met them in person nearly a decade ago through Our Skid Row, a community-led planning project that I worked on with architect Theresa Hwang. The LAPD participants in that process frequently gave profound contributions to the group design process. I was immediately impressed with LAPD as an organization and as a process or organization devoted to creating personal and community-wide transformation. When John Malpede asked me to collaborate with the group on developing "The Back Nine" by designing an educational mini-golf course/set for performance, I immediately said yes. In developing that project, we have begun to organize public conversations and workshops around the zoning and redevelopment issues that tie into it.

The SRHMA is a vital community space in Los Angeles for both a highly specific and geographically distinct Skid Row community as well as a widely dispersed but highly engaged artist and activist community. Whether through exhibitions, workshops, movie nights, parades, or scholarly fora - this space is absolutely vital to Los Angeles.

Sincerely,



Rosten Woo

**From:** Simone Forti simoneforti77@gmail.com  
**Subject:** LAPoverty Department  
**Date:** April 30, 2025 at 9:10 PM  
**To:** John Malpede john@lapovertydept.org

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To Whom it may Concern,

The LA Poverty Department (LAPD) is an arts organization run by and for members of the Skid Row community. It gives moral support to people who would otherwise be pushed aside in a dreary world. It offers a welcoming environment where a member can feel at home attending workshops such as for writing journals about their current or childhood experiences, and watch each other's writing practice flourish. I have seen some of their theatrical productions, both serious and humorous, and enjoyed their well produced festivals, rich in songs and stories, giving voice to their musical talents in this festive environment.

Now in the new financial climate, several of the organizations that had regularly donated to The Los Angeles Poverty Department are no longer able to continue.

We very much hope that your purse and your heart will bring you to making a donation to the LAPovertyDepartment.

Art Keeps Me Strong

April 22, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to you from a small island in the Pacific NW, where I've lived since 1994, after graduating with a Theatre Management degree. The road that led me to a successful and long career in the arts started in large part because of LAPD's work. In the late 80s, while still a high school student in the deep South, I read an article about John Malpede and the LAPD - it forever changed my trajectory of thinking about art's purpose beyond entertainment. I dedicated my life to creating art and opportunities for art to be not just a one-way street, but a 4-way intersection of collaboration and experience. Here's what I know: The people who write and appear in LAPD's works are not just the heart of LAPD projects - they represent connection, Skid Row past and present, artfully and deliberately telling the stories of lives lived as wide as they are deep. I'm honored to be a fan and a donor to the cause and I invite you to join me in this perilous time - where story and bravery will keep us alive.

Thank you for being a part of something that changed my life forever.

Tara Morgan

Vashon Island, WA



Los Angeles Poverty Department  
Skid Row History Museum & Archive  
250 S. Broadway  
Los Angeles CA 90012

### Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern,

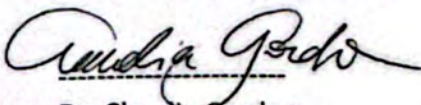
On behalf of Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House, we write to offer our full support for the work of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and the Skid Row History Museum & Archive. As cultural institutions dedicated to the promotion of democracy, pluralism, and the ethical responsibilities of intellectual and artistic life, we recognize LAPD as one of the most vital forces in Los Angeles' cultural and civic landscape.

We have had the pleasure of working with the LAPD as early as 2015 through a series of meaningful and productive institutional collaborations. Notably, LAPD's founder and artistic director, John Malpede, participated in our 2023 annual conference, *Arts in Times of Crises: The Role of Artists in Weakened Democracies*, where his contributions significantly enriched the program. In June of 2022, Mr. Malpede also played a key role in our initiative *Carpool Community Engagement – How Civil Society Shapes L.A.'s Neighborhoods*, offering valuable insights through interviews and in-depth conversations. We are currently looking forward to continuing this important partnership on June 6, 2025, with a performance recital of works by Thomas Mann at the Thomas Mann House, featuring members of the Los Angeles Poverty Department.

For nearly four decades, LAPD has modeled a profoundly democratic approach to art-making—one rooted in community, social justice, and lived experience. Their long-standing commitment to amplifying the voices of Skid Row residents has resulted in a body of work that is not only artistically rigorous but politically urgent. Whether through performance, public dialogue, or archival engagement, LAPD insists that culture is not a luxury—it is a necessity. The Skid Row History Museum & Archive furthers this mission by preserving and activating a people's history of downtown Los Angeles that would otherwise remain invisible. We are deeply concerned about the consequences of funding cuts and the loss of NEH, IMLS, and California Humanities support for LAPD that are threatening the very existence of an institution which is vital for the cultural life of the city and an invaluable partner for Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House. LAPD is not only a local treasure but a national model for how artists, archivists, and activists can collaborate with marginalized communities to imagine more equitable futures. Their work speaks directly to many of the issues we explore at Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House: exile and belonging, the public responsibility of intellectuals, and the role of culture in defending democracy.

To support the sustainability of LAPD and its museum space is to invest in an inclusive vision of the arts—one that understands culture as a shared civic resource. We urge you to join us in affirming the value of this extraordinary organization and ensuring its continued presence in the cultural life of Los Angeles and beyond.

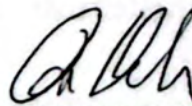
With respect and solidarity,



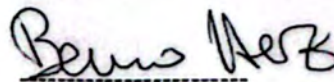
Dr. Claudia Gordon  
Director Villa Aurora



Friedel Schmoranz  
Program Director Villa Aurora



Dr. Oliver Hartmann  
Director Thomas Mann House



Benno Herz  
Program Director Thomas Mann House

# MIKE KELLEY FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

May 8, 2025

Re: Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)

To Whom it May Concern:

mikekelleyfoundation.org

As part of the first cohort of recipients of Artist Project Grants in 2016 the Mike Kelley Foundation is a proud supporter of the Los Angeles Department of Poverty and Skid Row History Museum and Archives (LAPD). In fact, we are so invested in the success of this unique nonprofit that since 2016, we have supported LAPD with over \$200,000 in grant funding from the foundation—more than any other awarded grantee.

LAPD gives voice to a community of artists and performers that are often underrepresented. For over 30 years, they have worked to empower unhoused and formerly unhoused neighbors in downtown Los Angeles through multidisciplinary performances and exhibitions that inspire performers and audiences alike to envision a world that is more just, caring, compassionate, and creative.

LAPD projects supported by the foundation include collaborations with contemporary artists such as Rosten Woo (2017) for *The Back 9*, a playable miniature golf course addressing current and historic zoning issues in Los Angeles and *Compassion and Self-Deception* (2021) which examined the political, ethical, and psychological dimensions of contradictory attitudes toward homelessness, manifesting as an exhibition, performance, and distribution of guides in the form of annotated maps of the city (with artist Robby Herbst). Lastly, between 2021 to 2024 the foundation awarded LAPD four Organizational Support Grants to bolster their work through the challenges of the pandemic.

7019 N. Figueroa St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

323.257.7853

It is critical that LAPD and the Skid Row History Museum and Archive not only sustain their innovative and impactful programs but that they continue to grow. The Mike Kelley Foundation will proudly continue to support this unique, critical artistic voice in LA and encourages others to do so as well.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts.

Sincerely,



Mary Clare Stevens  
Executive Director  
Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts

# LAPD

Scholars and Researchers



**“The UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy looks to the Skid Row History Museum & Archive as a trusted site of research and scholarship.”**

—Ananya Roy, Director, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy

**“I believe the Skid Row History Museum & Archive represents the very best kind of community empowerment that grassroots memory institutions can catalyze.”**

—Michele Caswell, Professor, UCLA Department of Information Studies/Special Advisor to the Executive Vice Chancellor/ Provost on Community Engaged Scholarship

**“SRHMA fills a critical void by offering a radically different model—one that centers Skid Row residents as knowledge-holders and local historians in their own right.”**

—Emily Benoff, MLIS, Archivist

**“By giving voice and credence to those who have not historically been heard or given power over their own narratives, LAPD offers the opportunity for a range of perspectives to be considered, grassroots solutions to be uplifted, and new ways to think about the most intractable problems we face as a society.”**

—Catherine Gudis, Catherine Gudis, Director, Public History Program UCR  
Pollitt Endowed Chair for Interdisciplinary Research & Learning in the Humanities

To whom it may concern:

In a city like Los Angeles, renowned for its dazzling images of success, wealth, and progress, the stories of its most vulnerable residents have too often been rendered invisible. The Skid Row History Museum and Archive offers an important and urgent counter-narrative. It serves as an antidote to the erasure of homeless individuals from the historical and civic fabric of the city. Without this space, Los Angeles' history remains fundamentally incomplete. The city's rapid growth, gentrification, and development would have obscured the real experiences of those living in poverty, whose lives, policies, and struggles shape the city as much as any high-rise or luxury development.

As Los Angeles grows, so does the divide between those with wealth and those without. Gentrification and development are pushing people out of their neighborhoods, and with each new high-rise or luxury building, the real experiences of people living in poverty are harder to see. The people who've been fighting for dignity and survival are just as much a part of Los Angeles' identity and history. They are also part of the future of the city. I cannot see any future of Los Angeles without the history of Skid Row History Museum and Archive being part of the authentic record.

In my time as an archival intern, I have witnessed the space and organization embrace people from all walks of life. The community embraces the ebbs and flow of the current social-political landscape, always putting the community first. Unlike many other projects that often extract or essentialize the homeless experience, the SRHMA actively works to give agency to the community it serves. The board, staff, and all volunteers of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) Skid Row History Museum and Archive are committed to creating a space where everyone is an active participant in the creation of their own history in any medium. This is a space where residents are not only invited to share their stories but to shape the museum's exhibits, its archives, and its message. The Skid Row History Museum and Archive hosts a variety of events, including monthly open mic nights, free movie screenings, creative workshops like sock puppet making, different theater projects, and a local gallery space. Skid Row residents are encouraged to define their own narratives, resist external stereotypes, and actively engage in the ongoing conversation about the future of their community. This museum and archive activates the response and also the compassion that we should have as Angelenos for all of our community members. This sets the SRHMAA apart from other initiatives that too often treat

homelessness as a singular, monolithic experience, without recognizing the political complexity, and urgency of those who live it. Without sustained support for this museum and archive, these vital moments of connection and creative resistance would be lost. The Los Angeles community of Skid Row would lose a space to reclaim its history and shape its future.

**Ana Lara**

*Archival Studies*

UCLA Library and Informational Sciences

April 25, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

The Skid Row History Museum & Archive contains stories of the city that aren't reflected anywhere else, shepherded by people who have set a standard for community-grown archiving. Connecting these stories across decades to what's happening now conveys a vital history of activism in the neighborhood and has established an invaluable base for future work.

From 2020-2021 I interned at the archive as part of the UCLA Community Archives Lab. My perspective of Los Angeles and the possibilities of archives will forever be shaped by my time with the collections and the people around them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Belak". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brian Belak

Master of Library and Information Science, 2021  
University of California, Los Angeles

30 April 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Emily Benoff, and I'm writing in strong support of the Skid Row History Museum & Archive (SRHMA), a vital community-based organization that has deeply impacted my life and the lives of many others.

I'm an archivist and cultural heritage worker with a decade of experience in academic, museum, and grassroots settings. I earned my MLIS from UCLA in 2023, where I focused on incorporating place-based community knowledge into cultural heritage preservation. I first encountered SRHMA in 2021 while researching community archives in Los Angeles and was inspired by its radical approach to public history and archival activism. After relocating to LA, I volunteered as an archivist and was later hired part-time through California Revealed and Mellon Foundation grants. While these experiences were invaluable professionally, they also introduced me to a passionate and resilient community working to uplift Skid Row culture and resist state-led displacement. As someone committed to using archives for solidarity and transformative outcomes, I consider SRHMA a model of the work I strive to support and learn from.

SRHMA is located just two blocks from Maine Street, at the western edge of the 50-block Skid Row neighborhood. It is the only archive specifically dedicated to preserving and amplifying Skid Row's activist, artistic, and recovery cultures through community-led documentation. As Director John Malpede explains, SRHMA exists to "make the case for Skid Row culture" and "empower community leaders concerned with neighborhood improvement and quality of life," (Jackson and Malpede, "Making the Case for Skid Row Culture," p. 3). Its programming and collecting policies demonstrate that Skid Row is not a temporary zone of crisis, but a rooted and complex community. Collections documenting the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN), and the "Blue Book Plan"—which helped slow urban renewal threats in 1976—showcase decades of grassroots resistance and community care.

But SRHMA's work extends beyond historical preservation. Through collaborations with groups such as LA Tenants Union, Downtown Women's Center, and UCLA's Luskin Institute, and projects like *After Echo Park Lake* and *Welcome to the Covid Hotel*, the museum creates a space for present-day organizing, reflection, and action. SRHMA effectively brings archival research into the streets, supporting initiatives like the 2001 campaign to rename Gladys Park as General Jeff Mark, in honor of a longtime Skid Row community activist, and reframing public understanding of the neighborhood's cultural history through events such as the Walk the Talk parade.

I can say with confidence that the knowledge generated and shared at SRHMA is truly rare. It actively challenges the erasure, stereotyping, and misrepresentation of marginalized communities—work that is urgently needed in this moment. Working with SRHMA was especially meaningful because I witnessed its mission in action every day. Staff and volunteers collaborate at a large table in the mezzanine above the main exhibition space. Whether processing collections, transcribing oral histories, or learning analog preservation techniques, SRHMA's work is always guided by a shared vision of inclusion and care.

Directly below the archive, the Los Angeles Poverty Department--the first performance arts group in the country composed primarily of unhoused people—holds weekly rehearsals. During these rehearsals, the mezzanine often doubles as an IT help center, a digitization station, or even a communal photo album. On one occasion, while I was cataloging a collection of photographs, the person pictured happened to walk upstairs and provided critical context that greatly enriched the collection. That moment perfectly captured what makes SRHMA unique: it is a living archive, shaped by the community it serves.

Research and archival practice like this—rooted in a community’s lived experiences—is rarely achievable in larger institutions. While they might have more stable funding, they often lack the deep relationships, long-term trust, and accountability needed to preserve history in ways that are ethical and accurate. This gap results in distorted or biased narratives that reinforce dominant power structures. SRHMA fills this critical void by offering a radically different model—one that centers Skid Row residents as knowledge holders and local historians in their own right. It is also important to recognize that for the Skid Row community, SRHMA is not simply a museum or archive. It functions as a cooling and heating center, a place to rest, get free food, triage social service issues, meet neighbors, be creative and critical, and learn new skills. It’s also a site where documentation is gathered and mobilized in support of Skid Row place-making—evidence that has been taken to city officials to advocate for the neighborhood’s needs/ In many ways, SRHMA serves as a public library, social services hub, and community center combined. Its absence would leave an irreplaceable gap, not just for Skid Row, but for Los Angeles as a whole.

Regards,  
Emily Benoff





April 23, 2025

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES  
BOX 951520  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1520

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to give my greatest possible endorsement for the crucial work of the Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA). As Co-Director of the UCLA Community Archives Lab, a scholar who studies community-based archives and the co-founder of a community archives, I believe the Skid Row History Museum and Archive represents the very best of the kind of community empowerment that grassroots memory institutions can catalyze. SRHMA's truly transformative work is all the more necessary in the current political context. We need to ensure the space and programs of SRHMA are available to the community over the long-term.

I first became aware of the Skid Row History Museum and Archive more than nine years ago, when a board member from the organization, Dr. Catherine Gudis, invited me to their offices—then located in a church—to see the state of their files. I was immediately taken by their mission to serve a community whose history is often denied and I was so impressed by the connections they were making between a community seeing itself in history and larger issues of homelessness, gentrification, and disenfranchisement. That year, I had several students do a cursory inventory at the site for a project in my community archives class. The students had a transformative time—their work at the site enabled them to see how seemingly tedious tasks like creating an inventory can be part of larger liberatory memory project. The next year, in 2017, I received a three-year Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant to pay MLIS students to intern at local community archives. I knew immediately that the Skid Row History Museum and Archive would be a perfect site to place students. I have now placed student interns there seven years in a row; two of the former interns have even been hired by the organization after graduation. The students always have transformative experiences at this site, digitizing files, processing collections, developing policies, creating digital preservation plans, etc. But most importantly they see the *value* of archival work—to greater Los Angeles, but most importantly, to the Skid Row community. It has been awesome to see the Skid Row History Museum and Archive grow over the past few years, from an office in a chair, to an active and dynamic community-centered storefront museum space with a fully functioning archives. They perfectly embody the community archives ethos that preserving the past can have a meaningful and lasting impact on the most vulnerable communities in the present.

SRHMA's archival work is crucial. Their materials have immense value, not only to scholars of history, performing arts, public policy, and urban planning, but to artists, activists, and, most importantly, Skid Row residents themselves. The performances, workshops, and community conversations captured in these collections will be activated by Skid Row residents, as they listen and watch, see themselves represented and reflected back to them, respond, remix, learn activist tactics, and get inspired. This has always been important work, but at this particular moment it is urgent, both that independent community archives are supported and sustained and that the voices of those most directly impacted by public policy are heard loudly and clearly. Support for this project achieves both of these goals.

I have personally and professionally benefited from SRHMA's public programs. I have gotten new vocabulary to describe the importance of archives after attending a SRHMA public program in which a Skid



Row Resident shared her story and another respondent stood up and said “your story is my story.” I have used the space for multiple field trips, bringing international groups of information studies scholars, undergraduate digital humanities students from historically Black colleges, and groups of master’s of library and information studies students on field trips to the site. These visitors always leave inspired and informed.

Without access to greater resources, the organization cannot build a sustainable infrastructure to support the important materials they have over the long term. They have the expertise to carry out their work; they just need the resources to make it happen. I have no doubt that, with funding, SRHMA will positively impact the Skid Row community for decades to come.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [caswell@gseis.ucla.edu](mailto:caswell@gseis.ucla.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Caswell".

Michelle Caswell, PhD

Professor, Department of Information Studies

Special Advisor to the Executive Vice Chancellor/ Provost on Community Engaged Scholarship

To Whom it May Concern,

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive is a vital space that protects the neighborhood's historical memory while envisioning futures rooted in dignity, creativity, and collective care.

As a former intern in the archive, I've witnessed how this museum preserves Skid Row's cultural and political legacy through art, documentation, and testimony. Amidst continual threats of erasure, the archive safeguards stories and strategies that model mutual aid, recovery, and resistance. As such, the archive honors a culture that survives gentrification and displacement and creates beauty, strategy, and solidarity in the face of it.

More than a repository, this museum is a gathering space for public dialogues, film screenings, performances, and exhibitions that spark collective action. This museum radically shaped my worldview, art practice, and relationship to this incredible community. I hope you'll stand with us in ensuring it can continue to do this empowering and essential work.

Sincerely,  
Sonja Cayetano

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sonja Cayetano". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I'M A MEMBER OF THE LA TENANTS UNION DOWNTOWN LOCAL, WHICH MEETS WEEKLY AT THE LA POLICE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZED W/ DOZENS OF LOCAL TENANTS IN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE SPACE IS CRITICAL SPACE MANY ARE LOU DOWNTOWN INDIVIDUALS LEAVING NEARBY, THE GROUP IS ONLY ONE YEAR OLD, BUT QUICKLY GROWING - IN NO SMALL PART DUE TO THE ACCESSIBILITY + AVAILABILITY OF THIS SPACE.

I AM ALSO A PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT UCLA, WHO WORKS + RESEARCHES DOWNTOWN. IN COLLABORATION W/ THE LATU DOWNTOWN LOCAL + THE UNIVERSITY I HAVE ALSO USED THE SPACE FOR WORKSHOPS RELATED TO COMMUNITY RESEARCH. WITH HAVING A SPACE ACCESSIBLE TO DOWNTOWN WITHIN WALKING + HOUSING INSECURE FOLKS ARE ABLE TO COME TOGETHER + FEEL WELCOME + ALSO ENGAGE W/ THE BROADENED INSTITUTIONS LIKE UCLA IS RARE + CRITICAL, I HOPE SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE TO ALLOW THIS SPACE TO REMAIN OPEN.

Sincerely,  
Chris Herring

04.17.2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I started volunteering at the Skid Row History Museum and Archive in 2021. I was a student through Pasadena City College's Archives and Digital Collections Assistant Certificate program and was searching for hands on experience. I tried to apply for internships throughout the city but found that many of them either required you to be in a graduate school program or asked for a weekly time commitment that didn't fit with my restaurant work schedule. I wandered into the SRHM&A one day, curious if they might be able to host me. Archivists Henry Apodaca and Zach Rutland were happy to give me the opportunity to volunteer. I immediately found myself in a supportive environment, where both the staff and LAPD company members welcomed me and made me feel part of the community. I had no experience digitizing audio-visual materials, and yet that's what they got me started on—my inexperience was not seen as a weakness but rather a time to be curious about what archival work might consist of. This volunteer work ultimately inspired me to continue working with audio-visual archival materials. In September of 2024, I started up a new internship at SRHM&A as a student archivist, this time creating a digitization workflow for their VHS materials. I will be graduating in May 2025 from the University of Alabama's MLIS program with a concentration in audio-visual archiving and am now working in the field at an established film archive. I don't think I would've ended up on this path without the initial trust and support from the archivists at the SRHM&A.

SRHM&A offers more than its archive, though. Every time a community event takes place, whether it's an open mic night, movie night, or the Festival for all Skid Row Artists, community members come out in droves, excited to perform, learn and celebrate with each other. The SRHM&A commemorates the individuals living and working in Skid Row and ensures they have a community to lean on. On the simplest level, the archive assists these community members through research help and electronics or preservation related questions. More than that though, the archive shows community members that their art, stories and history matters; that it's worthy of being preserved. The archive provides a reflection for community members, showing them their community's past, present and bright future.

I'm grateful and proud to be part of the SRHM&A community, and I'm excited what the future holds for this organization.

Franny Alfano

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Franny Alfano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

To whom it may concern,

I first came to the SKID ROW HISTORY museum and archive in the summer of 2024. I'd just begun working on a project about BLACK Belonging in the city and I stumbled into the space as the team practiced ~~a~~ an exhibit walkthrough. They weren't open yet but someone let me in so I could listen, and everyone was excited to field my questions so they could help my project along.

Over the next 6 months SKID ROW HISTORY museum became a second home by facilitating my own learning and belonging in the city. ~~As~~

As a student at UCLA I worked on a project called "TENANTS and TENANTS" which highlighted the powerful community and organization that took place in Echo Park Lake from 2019-2021 and beyond. That show was hosted at the museum from ~~the~~ Beverly through the end of week. I was here at the ~~SKID~~ museum every week and I'm here now for a LOS ANGELES TENANTS UNION meeting that happens every week right in this spot. This place is needed. It's belonging in the city and it's saved me.

Thank you for your consideration

WARMLY,

GREER

April 29, 2025

To whom it may concern,

I began my journey with the Skid Row History Museum and Archives as an undergraduate archive intern in December 2022. Amongst several options for internship opportunities, SRHMA piqued my interest the most as their morals, principles, and practices aligned with what I believe to be of greater importance. I write this letter as a former intern to say that a loss of funding for SRHMA will greatly affect many unhoused people. It is vital to the Skid Row community that the museum continues to exist as it brings the Skid Row community to life through art, motivating community members and making them feel like a part of something special.

SRHMA and their archive department provided me with the tools and skills necessary to begin my career in archiving. They did so within a space where I felt welcomed and my opinions were heard and acknowledged. They made me feel like my impact as an intern was just as great as theirs despite only going into archiving for the first time. I value the museum's opportunity to house various archive interns that want to be a part of something greater through means that support a largely underrepresented and misunderstood community.

The museum space is necessary and vital to the Skid Row community for various reasons. As an outlet for artistic expression, SRHMA platforms Skid Row-based artists during a time where it may be nearly impossible to do so anywhere else. SRHMA removes the gap between the privileged and unprivileged by providing a space where anyone belongs. As they state, "We meet people where they are. Society judges, gives labels rather than giving the space for recovery. LAPD doesn't do that. Not judging, we build compassion." I think this quote largely emphasizes the principles of this space. If the museum was to go away, the entire Skid Row community and its members would be negatively affected. Art historically has been used as a means of combating social, mental health, and cultural issues by highlighting the importance of community efforts and self-reflection. We cannot let the current political climate demise the spirit of thousands and we must continue advocating for the free expression of the Skid Row community through an outlet that provides more than a space for art, but a space for community gatherings and resources.

Best,

Jasmine Gutierrez

[jgutier029@gmail.com](mailto:jgutier029@gmail.com)



**Politecnico  
di Torino**



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DI TORINO**



Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio

**Michele LANCIONE**

Professor of Economic and Political Geography

[michele.lancione@polito.it](mailto:michele.lancione@polito.it)

+39 0110907404

Turin, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Letter of support for the The Skid Row History Museum & Archive**

My name is Michele Lancione, I am Professor of Economic and Political Geography at the Polytechnic University of Turin and Visiting Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Sheffield. It is with the outmost pleasure that I am writing this letter of support for the Skid Row History Museum & Archive.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Museum & Archive several times in recent years, both pre- and post-pandemic times. In my visits I took part in public events organized by the colleagues at the LAPD and I conducted archival research, which I am to expand on the future. On the basis of my multi-year experience, I cannot stress enough the cultural, societal and historic importance of the work that is done at the Museum & Archive for the sake of Skid Row, the City of LA and the wider impact these have in fostering new understandings around homelessness across place.

The Skid Row Archive and Museum is a quintessential resource to preserve and nurture the history of Skid Row in downtown LA. Preserve: because in there you can find materials, originally sourced or donated, which are not available anywhere else (including resources from the personal archives of key organisers and doers who have done much work in Skid Row throughout the 1980s, 1990s and thereafter). Nurture: because the Skid Row Archive and Museum is alive. Community members use the space of the Museum to interact, to rest, to speak and to perform and, while being there, they get to interact with the archive too, both through the exhibits and through the knowledgeable archivists, who are there to share information and resources.

The Museum & Archive does something no other institution is doing in Skid Row: to nurture the connective tissue of the archived history of place with the lived and felt present of the people inhabiting Skid Row. One feeds into the other, in this special community-driven institution. The relevance of this kind of relationship can only be underestimated, at a time in which Skid Row is at the centre of a number of urban development projects that might engender the lives of those living there. By showing how Skid Row is not an empty place,

**DIST – Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio**

Politecnico di Torino, Viale Mattioli, 39 – 10125 Torino – Italy

tel: +39 011.090.6650 | fax: +39 011.090.6498

[dist@polito.it](mailto:dist@polito.it) | [www.dist.polito.it](http://www.dist.polito.it) – [www.dist.unito.it](http://www.dist.unito.it)



**Politecnico  
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**UNIVERSITÀ  
DI TORINO**



Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio

**Michele LANCIONE**

Professor of Economic and Political Geography

michele.lancione@polito.it

+39 0110907404

or a place of the 'less', the Archive offer a fundamental resource to show what the Skid Row community is made of - in its past and present endeavors.

In my most recent visit at the Museum & Archive, in Spring 2024, I accessed the personal collection of John Malpede, where I was able to learn from the first plays Malpede and the LAPD put together in the early 1980s - which are still relevant to today's dynamics in Skid Row, particularly in relation to the upcoming Olympics. I have also dug into a number of organised clippings from newspapers and magazines describing the policing of Skid Row communities always in the 1980s and 1990s. I then accessed the wonderful collection donated by Mollie Lowery and peaked through the materials in the Alice Callagan collection. Only by keeping these materials organised and accessible, researchers like myself and the wider community are able to understand the history of Skid Row and LA at large. Preserving and nurturing the past is the only way to plan for the future: The Skid Row History Museum & Archive is a crucial space where both things are possible.

I remain at the disposal of the recipients of this letter for any further clarification they might need.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Michele Lancione (he/they)

DIST, Polytechnic and University of Turin

Visiting Professor of Urban Studies, Urban Institute, University of Sheffield

Co-Director, Beyond Inhabitation Lab

PI, ERC Starting Grant "Inhabiting Radical Housing"

PI, FARE Italia Grant "Precarious housing in CEE"

**DIST – Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio**

Politecnico di Torino, Viale Mattioli, 39 – 10125 Torino – Italy

tel: +39 011.090.6650 | fax: +39 011.090.6498

[dist@polito.it](mailto:dist@polito.it) | [www.dist.polito.it](http://www.dist.polito.it) – [www.dist.unito.it](http://www.dist.unito.it)

April 29, 2025

To whom it may concern:

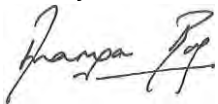
The UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy looks to the Skid Row History Museum and Archive as a trusted site of research and scholarship, the only one of its kind which prioritizes the first-person account of those most impacted by the violence of poverty and homelessness in Los Angeles.

During the development of our seminal report, *(Dis)Placement: The Fight for Housing and Community After Echo Park Lake*, authored by the *After Echo Park Lake Research Collective*, (a project of the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy), the archival material held by the Skid Row History Museum and Archive provided the requisite ground for our research through access to the historical record that frames the contemporary social-political landscape surrounding homelessness, housing, and the right to exist in this city. The outcomes of the report led to the formation of the *After Echo Park Lake Archive Collective*, which aimed to document the militant reclamation of Echo Park Lake that took place from the Fall 2019 to March of 2021, bringing together the unhoused people living at the park and housed tenants in the neighborhood into a practice of collective organization. The Skid Row History Museum and Archive, namely Media Archivist, Henry Michael Apodaca, guided our collective through the entire process of establishing the *After Echo Park Lake Collection*, documenting the politics, culture, and economy of people whose own histories do not typically register in the official record. As the permanent steward of the collection, the Skid Row History Museum and Archive partnered with *the After Echo Park Lake Archive Collective* to build an exhibition based on this archive. On February 1, 2025, *Tents and Tenants: After Echo Park Lake* opened to display key photos, objects, and ephemera contained in the archive along with multiple public programs. These projects were made possible through the mentorship offered by the Skid Row History Museum and Archive and its established role as a flagship organization in the field.

Throughout our partnership, our team has looked to the practices developed by the Skid Row History Museum and Archive – its integration of historical documentation, original theatrical production, and accessible programming as a model. The space created by the museum is a unique and irreplaceable hub for the production of community knowledge, uniquely anchored by the agency and participation of community members with direct experience of homelessness. The pursuit of accessibility, inclusion, and meaningful activation of research is an endeavor undertaken by many numbers of formal academic associations and cultural producers, but rarely do they achieve what occurs at this museum.

We are situated within a critical moment in our collective experience, one that is defined by the erasure of cultural and intellectual production authored by the most vulnerable members of our communities. The cultural and intellectual practices developed by the museum amount to an immeasurable value, constructing and protecting a record of resistance to targeted disappearance and a primer on the development of a community voice. As a member of a wide community of scholars, artists, and community advocates, the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy relies on this critical archival work and cultural work and we look forward to supporting the Skid Row History Museum and Archive in perpetuity.

Sincerely,



Ananya Roy  
*Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography*  
*Meyer and Renee Luskin Chair in Inequality and Democracy*  
*Director, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy*



Kristy Lovich  
*Community Programs & Research Manager*



April 25, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Azad Namazie. I am a writer, multimedia artist, and archivist born and raised in Los Angeles. In June 2024, I received my Master's in Library and Information Science from UCLA. While completing my studies, I had the honor of working at SRHMA for a year as an Andrew W. Mellon/UCLA Community Archives Lab intern. I was initially drawn to SRHMA because of its rich recordings of LAPD's theatrical performances on a variety of formats, including VHS, Betacam, miniDV, and optical discs. I got invaluable hands-on experience conducting large-scale digitization and reformatting projects, using open-source tools such as VRecord and FFmpeg, and creating finding aids to further access. As I got more involved in the day to day of staffing the archive, I became familiar with the artists who made up the SRHMA community. They are poets, dancers, filmmakers, and even puppeteers, in addition to theatre makers. The breadth of artistic achievement in this community reflects a strong legacy of steadfastness and world-building that the archive is committed to documenting with humility, respect, and truthfulness. It is this commitment that makes SRHMA unique as a community archive, and even more, as a cultural and political landmark for artists, organizers, researchers, and Skid Row residents. My experiences as an intern were incredibly enriching, both personally and professionally. Without the support of archivists Zach Rutland and Henry Apodaca, I would not have my current position as Digital Archivist at UCLA Library Special Collections. Their mentorship, creativity, and expertise in audiovisual preservation have deeply shaped how I approach my current role as an archivist and steward of public memory.

Though my internship ended in June 2024, I am still well-connected to SRHMA and LAPD's programs. Just last month, I attended the "The Liberatory Living Room: Belongings Precede Belonging" performance, which was the closing public program of the Tents and Tenants: After Echo Park Lake exhibition. In this performance, members of the After Echo Park Lake Archive Collective presented on the politics and poetics of how an encampment became the commons, documenting a period in local history in which poor and unhoused folks made a home for themselves in LA in the face of repressive state violence. Performances were educational, poetic, heartfelt, and hopeful all at once. A neighbor and friend of mine is one of the lead organizers of the After Echo Park Lake Collective, and after the performance we chatted about the gaps in our history of Echo Park Lake. This interaction cemented the fact that this space is invaluable not just for the sharing of knowledge and histories, but for the sharing of on the ground testimonies and human experiences.

If the role of the artist is to help people make sense of their material reality, then SRHMA's role is to provide the space for that artist to experiment, create, and thrive. Third spaces are under attack in the US, but especially in Los Angeles, where socioeconomic segregation, racist policing, and rising cost of living makes it nearly impossible to gather safely and freely. It is incredibly rare for an institution to provide its space for free in partnership with so many organizations. If SRHMA were no longer to exist at its brick and mortar location, it would be devastating for public history, artistic expression, and community survival.

If you require any additional information regarding the importance of this space, I urge you to contact me at [namazie818@gmail.com](mailto:namazie818@gmail.com).

Thank you,

Azad Namazie

# To Whom it May Concern:

It has come to my attention that the Skid Row History Museum is currently in need of assistance. At this time, I would like to share my experience with the museum in the hopes of encouraging further support to ensure the continuation of archival operations and the cultivation of its unique community.

My time with the SRHMA started during my time as a university student. I spoke with a history professor who was offering internship opportunities to students interested in pursuing a career in public history. And to my surprise, she generously reached out to the museum's media archivist on my behalf to inquire about any opportunities that would start my path as an archivist. I then began as an intern, learning the basic archival procedures of filing and managing museum items that hold historical and educational value.

I was brought into the SRHMA only because my professor gave her energy to inform me about opportunities that I otherwise would not have known about myself. The museum is responsible for cultivating the lives of many community members in the same way that my professor had done towards my own. Working with SRHMA made me realize that the museum doesn't offer just a space to store and collect archival material; it also gives community members a living, breathing space to belong, share, or organize.

One trait that I value the most about the SRHMA/LAPD is that it was a grassroots effort. The museum does not sit behind closed doors nor tedious bureaucracy but is instead nestled in the busy streets of Los Angeles in close proximity with Skid Row. The museum space, hosted by talented and capable individuals, is easily accessible to the greater public; its easy accessibility is its strength. And this same accessibility allowed new faces such as myself to contribute towards the museum's growth in return for gaining valuable work experience. In addition, the museum was able to amass an extensive library of archived material due to its accessibility. Without the generous donations of material from the people of the Skid Row and Los Angeles, our museum would not be able to serve the community in return. This includes not only people in academia, but also creative directors who want to showcase the community and activists who want to bring awareness to contemporary social issues.

When I first visited the museum, my first impressions about it were that it was only modest and unassuming. But I had only thought so because I had not yet realized then that the museum space was also used to serve the community free of charge. The building may be empty during quiet and uneventful times, but when the time comes, it is crowded by community members gathered in a common interest to serve the Skid Row/Los Angeles community. The museum space is a space for community activism, mutual aid, artistic/cultural expression, and social enrichment. While I am not a native Los Angeles resident, I can certainly understand why many people depend on the museum as their platform, whether for convenience, financial hardship, or for an opportunity to connect with like-minded people.

The SRHMA has carved, cultivated, and then supported a group of passionate and like-minded people. As such, our community is alive and vocal.

I formally give my support for the Skid Row History Museum and Archive. I would very much like to see it continue to operate and provide not only a space but a place for its people, both old and new.

Sincerely,

Noah Um



**In support of Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)  
May 2, 2025**

Dear Reader,

It is almost impossible for me to put into words what the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) means to me. As a journalist, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, I pitched writing a story about the company and was told by my editor that the company “didn’t count” as legitimate theater because the actors were not professional. This was in the early 1990s. The *Times* refused the story. But I fought back. I went to rehearsal after LAPD rehearsal. I familiarized myself with John Malpede, who was the sole director at the time, and the founder. I got to know the actors, the writers, the company members and the space where they worked on Skid Row.

**Annenberg School for  
Communication  
& Journalism**

Arts Journalism Programs

**Sasha Anawalt  
Director**

I promised myself that this story would not be a “drive-by” story, where the journalist shows up for a superficial under-a-tight deadline story about the do-goodiness of Malpede who is helping all these “down-and-outers” who have pitiable stories to tell. I promised myself that I would commit to depth over time. Why? Because, in fact, LAPD’s work was, and is, of the absolute highest standard in terms of its uncompromising rigor and commitment to finding, revealing and telling human truths.

There is still no company like LAPD. None. Anywhere. It’s a Los Angeles distinction. To have a company for unhoused and formerly unhoused people for this length of time -- and this is in large part due to the continuous steady leadership by Malpede and Henriette Brouwers.

LAPD is a foundational center for Skid Row and the people who live and work there. The festivals, the music and art and theater, the archiving of Skid Row history, the reinforcing of the community as one that has real roots, real history and deserves to be given the respect – these are what LAPD brings. Where would homelessness in L.A. be had there not been these decades of care and attention by LAPD? So much worse. So much worse.

In the end, victory! The *Times* saw the wisdom of my proof that the LAPD is an exemplary and wholly original artistic force and published my story. And they have published more by others on LAPD since.

Please restore funding, if you can. Let LAPD continue to shine its bright theater light on the pain and suffering, which isn’t anything to be afraid of, because beneath there is an enormous capacity to build, heal and join forces toward a better Los Angeles. LAPD is the proof.

Thank you for your time reading my letter.

Sincerely,

**Sasha Anawalt**  
Professor of Professional Practice Emerita of Journalism  
**USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism**  
<https://annenberg.usc.edu/faculty/journalism/sasha-anawalt>  
C: 818-640-4038  
E: [anawalt@usc.edu](mailto:anawalt@usc.edu)

University of  
Southern California  
3502 Watt Way  
Suite 307C  
Los Angeles,  
California 90089-0281  
Tel: 213 740 1818  
Fax: 213 740 1519  
[anawalt@usc.edu](mailto:anawalt@usc.edu)  
[annenberg.usc.edu](http://annenberg.usc.edu)

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Melissa Skillens and I currently work as a media archivist at a non profit called Heart and Soul (HAS) Center in South Los Angeles where I'm managing their media archive that contains rare interviews with Civil Rights leaders, African American leaders in the South LA community, and coverage of historical local events in the local community. I'm working on digitizing older video tape formats, and organizing a future archive space for our physical media. I studied for my Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) at UCLA from 2016-2018 and I have a strong passion working for community based archives.

Through a colleague from the MLIS graduate program at UCLA, I was introduced to the Skid Row Historical Museum and Archive (SRHMA) and Los Angeles Poverty Department(LAPD), and I was able to intern at their archive doing inventory work from their Walk The Talk (WTT) events which Skid Row community members come together annually and celebrate through performing arts, activism, and pride all across Skid Row and DTLA. While I have never personally been to a WTT event, I loved learning about some of the artists and activists when I was working through those media archives.

While interning with SRHMA/LAPD, I was able to get a tour through Skid Row and learn about the area and the programs that this organization does for the amazing people that live there. I would sometimes show up during one of the art workshops and see community members having fun and enjoying a break from the hot sun and expressing themselves through painting without judgement in a safe, clean environment. The Friday night movie nights were another way for community members to get inside for a movie, free food, and a nice discussion afterwards. Again, this was providing a safe, inclusive space for everyone to socialize and be a whole community.

The archives(located upstairs) offer a great opportunity for someone to look up, watch/listen, and learn about some amazing artists and activists from Skid Row, and see their amazing work. Without the archive and the museum space, I believe it would

be impossible to find them anywhere else. So without the SRHMA/LAPD museum space, the historical Skid Row community and many other people who visit from other cities and countries would not have the opportunity to learn about the amazing people here and use the space to express themselves in a safe space as we challenge and push for change in Los Angeles.

Lastly, I believe the importance of the space provides a judgement free artistic community for everyone to express themselves, to socialize and organize events, to have fun and teach one another, as well as it being a place that can provide health and safety information for community members and access to basic human needs such as shelter, food, and water. I will always be grateful for the opportunities I've received for volunteering at their archives and I'll continue to support them anyway I can. I hope you can join me as well in doing that.

Sincerely,

Melissa Skillens

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Skillens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Skillens".

Dear friends and supporters of the Los Angeles Poverty Department,

My name is Victoria Romano, and I am a music composer and ethnomusicologist<sup>1</sup>. While completing my PhD at the University of California, Riverside, I served as a Community-Based Archives Intern for the Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA), stewarded by the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD). Ultimately, my internship capstone project flourished into a Mellon/ACLS Scholars and Society Fellowship in collaboration with SRHMA's Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Catherine Gudis. Since then, you can catch me at the Festival for All Skid Row Artists or Walk the Talk Parade, handing out swag, or in the crowd with my camera.

As a graduate student at the University of California, training at the SRHMA bolstered every facet of my scholarly practice. Day-to-day operations required critical thinking, attention to detail, making sense of data, and finding the throughlines. Above all, my time at SHRMA provided an in-depth understanding as to how the archive's subjects (and the LAPD) have responded to local and historical goings-on in the Skid Row neighborhood.

I moved to Southern California from the Northeast in pursuit of my graduate degree in my mid-20s. Many of my peers also moved to this area of the country in pursuit of opportunity, but avoided confronting local issues and policies, and seldom earned the privilege to work alongside those most impacted by them. My stint at SRHMA educated, directly involved, and empowered me to participate in local politics. It enumerated the stakes and introduced me to the stakeholders. While processing materials in the archive, I observed how the cityscape of Los Angeles has changed over the past five decades. I took stock of the various incursions into- and attenuations of historic neighborhoods, previously occupied by minoritized communities for generations. But then, reliably, I witnessed how long-standing organizations like the LAPD put up a firm and steady resistance to forces which sought to undermine Skid Row, its culture, and its residents.

As the 2028 Olympic Games approach (and as government institutions persist to abandon the arts and humanities) may we remember the catastrophic outcomes of Los Angeles 1984 for this community. In many ways, the resultant uptick in State violence against homeless Angelenos necessitated John Malpede form the LAPD in the first place. Now more than ever, Skid Row needs a strong, reliable center for advocacy - a space for telling the truth, for congregating and sharing resources, and for exercising what is—at the time of this letter—our protected right to free speech.

In solidarity,



Victoria R. Romano (she/they)  
Composer & Ethnomusicologist

*BMus in Music Composition, Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*  
*PhD in Digital Composition, University of California, Riverside*

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<sup>1</sup> One who studies the social dimensions of music.

**Oliver Wurzbacher, MA**

Louisenstraße 44  
01099 Dresden  
Germany

15 May 2025

**Dear future SRHMA/LAPD supporter,**

I am a German historian who has specialised in the impact of deindustrialization on disadvantaged communities. When I first arrived in Los Angeles in 2023 for research, I had heard about the drastic economic inequality in the metropolitan area, the challenges facing unhoused people and the scale of homelessness across Greater Los Angeles. I came across absurd content on social media, such as ‘poverty porn’ and depictions of addicted people as zombies, and became interested in the ways economic inequality and segregation were experienced on the ground in Skid Row. I quickly became aware of the pivotal work of the Skid Row History Museum and Archive.

During my first visit to SRHMA, I was given a warm welcome by Associate Director Henriëtte Brouwers. She explained the history of the LAPD and SRHMA to me and I was highly impressed by the organisation’s approach to empowering disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, I recognized that the SRHMA played a unique role in educating the broader Los Angeles community about experiences of homelessness and solutions grounded in the values of dignity, empathy and respect. I decided to volunteer in the SRHMA archive team for the remaining six months of my stay in Los Angeles.

Under the supervision of Archivist Zachary Rutland and Media Archivist Henry Apodaca, I processed an important collection of documents donated to SRHMA by housing advocate Alice Callaghan. Over the past four decades, Callaghan has been a central figure in the development of affordable housing in Skid Row. The documents she donated to SRHMA record important information about urban development in Downtown Los Angeles and advocacy for Skid Row and surrounding districts. I was fascinated by this collection of material as it was a unique opportunity to learn about the city’s history from primary sources. I later [published an article](#) on Skid Row’s history in the German urban planning and architecture journal ‘Bauwelt’ in December 2024.

Critically, however, the SRHMA is both a space for research and a social space that brings people from all walks of life together. This is a crucial part of the organization’s work in facilitating understanding for those experiencing homelessness and poverty. To be able to talk to people who live and work in Skid Row and gather for events at SRHMA brought the archive to life. It is important to understand how the area was planned *and* the reality of living there, especially in the case of vulnerable populations. I was struck by how engaged and proactive people were despite the circumstances. I had stimulating conversations that opened my eyes to the lives of those around me, and participated in cultural events in a community-minded atmosphere I couldn’t find elsewhere in Los Angeles.

The SRHMA/LAPD has established a unique hub of social, cultural and intellectual life for Skid Row and beyond. When you study Skid Row’s history, you will quickly find that this part of the city is as important for shaping Los Angeles’ identity – past, present and future – as more well-respected neighbourhoods in the metropolitan area. With all its challenges, Skid Row is an affordable refuge for many people who are not as fortunate, do important work and who all deserve respect. LAPD and SRHMA tell their stories, provide them with a public platform and enable the community to meet and enter into conversation like no other place. If there was no space like this anymore, one of the most important advocacy organisations in the fight against poverty in Downtown Los Angeles would be critically weakened. An immense social network would lack a critical point of contact. Downtown Los Angeles would be poorer for the loss of a cultural institution it needs desperately. An irreplaceable treasure of Los Angeles history would no longer have a home. **I ask you to support LAPD’s fundraiser to lease the museum space for another five years.**

Sincerely,  
Oliver Wurzbacher

# LAPD

## Skid Row Service Providers & Advocates



**“Like others in Skid Row, LAPD is responsible for many successful health, community building and land use initiatives and cannot simply be considered an arts organization.”**

- Sieglinde von Deffner, LA County Dept. of Health Services, Housing for Health

**“The impact of the Museum cannot be measured solely by attendance numbers or exhibition titles. It lives in the ripple effects: in the person who attended a workshop and decided to start a recovery group, in the artist who found their community here, in the student who wrote their thesis after discovering the archive.”** - Clancey Cornell, MSW Clinical Social Worker

**“I had come to love the unhoused people who were my clients, and ached as I felt the depth of their pain and humiliation. So it was with tremendous joy that I saw LAPD giving a voice, dignity, and a new sense of purpose to its members.”**

- Nancy Mintie, Executive Director, Founder, Inner City Law/Executive Director, Retired, Uncommon Good

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing on behalf of The Public School Los Angeles to express our wholehearted support for the Skid Row History Museum & Archive.

Our relationship with the Museum is rooted in a shared commitment to community memory, collective liberation, and resistance to systems of oppression. For years, the Skid Row History Museum has served not just as a space of preservation, but as a vital platform for people living on Skid Row, those too often erased by gentrification, policing, and institutional neglect. In collaboration with the Museum we've hosted dozens of classes, events, and political education sessions that offer a space for self education and communal learning. And in this way, the Skid Row History Museum is truly a lifeline for our work and without them our programming would suffer greatly.

As organizers and educators, we see an urgent need for the Museum's continued presence. Beyond safeguarding Skid Row's activist, artistic, and recovery cultures, it provides an accessible, non-commercial space for political and cultural education. In a city where spaces for the community to gather and share knowledge and connection, the Skid Row History Museum remains one of the few open spaces left to host programming of this kind, and for that reason alone, its survival is crucial. Supporting the Museum is supporting the possibility of another kind of city, one where memory, resilience, and community care are not luxuries, but foundations.

We urge you to join us in supporting the Skid Row History Museum & Archive, not just to preserve a space, but to ensure the continuation of a vital voice in this city's ongoing struggle for justice.

In solidarity,

Addie Tinnell

The Public School Los Angeles

My name is Diana Orduna, I am Ecuadorian. I came to Skid Row History Museum and Archive through the recommendation of Echo Park Film Collective, a space where I was in residence for research and project development during April of this year. My experience in the archive was absolutely magical, because I arrived with a lot of questions that the archive answered from the first moment. The very professional work of everyone involved speeds up the work in such a way that one has more time to investigate and discover other lines of research. Through the materials available, I discovered a side of Skid Row that I could never have imagined before visiting the archive, which is why it is vital to maintain the archive, it helps us shed light on an invisible reality. My research focused on the work of LAPD performance history addressing the war on drugs not only in the United States, in Bolivia for example. It has been material of such depth and significance that as soon as I returned to Quito I proposed it as the center of research for my Master's thesis in Latin American Cultural Studies, and I am waiting for feedback to move forward with the project.

-Diana

May 7, 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in full support of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), their programs, and their home, Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA).

They've recently faced funding changes that could impact the museum and its programs. I wanted to share my story as someone whose life has been touched by this organization, to help illustrate the lasting value of their work.

My journey with LAPD began in 2010 when I joined as an intern while studying English at Cal State University Northridge. What started as an internship turned into one of the most transformative chapters of my life. I found a family, a creative community, a deeper understanding of humanity, and a meaningful career.

After my internship ended, I worked for, and was a member of, LAPD for seven years, creating theater and community in Los Angeles' Skid Row. During that time, we wrote and performed many plays that explored the lived experiences of the members of the group, many of whom were experiencing poverty, had recently been released from jail or prison, or were suffering from a mental or drug related illness.

*That* was okay. Everyone was welcome and so were their stories, poems, jokes, laughs, fears, frustrations, imperfections and all. I don't think how much we knew it at the time, but I think we were there to learn from each other and to help each other heal.

Back then, LAPD didn't have a space and we would rehearse in a small donated community room on the corner of 6th and Stanford. When I joined, the group had just started working on, *State of Incarceration*, a piece that explores the trauma of incarceration and culminates with the making of the "spread," a community get-together where everyone adds ingredients and shares their food, a symbolic gesture of peace, love and community.

We performed the play locally, at re-entry programs and rehabilitation centers, at galleries, museums and theaters, including the international theater festival Radar L.A. and at The Queens Museum in Queens, NY as part of LAPD's 30-year retrospective. Like so many others in the group, I was tremendously honored to be a part of this production that spanned over multiple years, numerous venues and cities, and performances were often coupled with a panel or community discussion about incarceration and people's experiences.

It brought us a huge sense of pride. It was long, hard work that brought us closer together and created life-long bonds of friendship.

For those who had actually experienced prison, it was cathartic, and an opportunity to transform the dehumanizing experience of incarceration into an artistic expression that literally transformed lives and uplifted the people who were able to experience it.

*State of Incarceration* was one of five plays I was truly grateful to be a part of during my time with LAPD; *Biggest Recovery Community Anywhere*, *Chasing Monsters from Under the Bed*, *Red Beard/Red Beard* and *What Fuels Development* were the others. We explored issues of addiction and recovery, mental health, public safety, and of course, poverty, among others.

During that time, LAPD started two other projects: *Festival for All Skid Row Artists (FASRA)* and *Walk the Talk*. These projects are focused on community building through amplifying Skid Row's rich artistic and altruistic cultures that are often overlooked.

Now in its 15th year, FASRA brings residents together to celebrate the artists of the community. It takes place at a small park in Skid Row where artists perform or display their work, and connections are made. One of my jobs was to pass out flyers in the neighborhood, talk to and meet artists to sign them up for performance slots, and during the festival I would coordinate the lineup and take photos of the artists while they were performing.

Year after year, many of the same artists returned to take the stage, sometimes with other artists they met at the festival or in the neighborhood. Thousands of artists have participated, and the festival has become a staple for artists to perform, connect and pursue their passion.

Skid Row *is* a neighborhood where people live and work, pursue their dreams, and it's a place where people do some pretty amazing things to help others. LAPD's biannual parade Walk the Talk serves to honor those individuals who have made significant contributions to the Skid Row community. It's a peripatetic parade, moving through the neighborhood, stopping to perform skits that tell the stories of the honorees.

A live brass band joins the parade and plays in between performances. Often, honorees give small speeches, and a local artist creates portraits of the honorees that are held high on sticks. So much love, so much appreciation and so much community building is taking place.

Skid Row has a rich history, and LAPD—through its Walk the Talk parade and other initiatives—is helping to preserve and celebrate it. From the founders of missions and soup kitchens to grassroots organizers, healthcare workers, activists, and artists, LAPD shines a light on the people who have shaped the neighborhood, honoring their stories and lasting contributions.

While LAPD has been a strong part of the neighborhood since 1985, they never had a physical space until they opened SRHMA in 2014. I had the privilege of helping transition LAPD into a permanent space. I helped find the space, set up exhibits, and just did whatever needed to happen to keep the space up and running.

We were in a small mall on Broadway, on the second floor. The mall was actually slated for demolition in a few years and because of that, we were able to rent two small spaces for a relatively low rate, one for the exhibits/rehearsals/community events and the other tiny room was the archive.

It was not the ideal location by any means. It was small, the building was in disarray, there were cracked windows, cobwebs, and strange substances oozing from the ceiling. The landlord was reluctant to repair issues, but we did the best we could with the resources that were available to us.

We painted, cleaned the carpets, made curtains, set up chairs, and installed a "Skid Row History Museum and Archive" sign outside the building. Window decals and projectors went up as we prepared our first exhibit, *Blue Book / Silver Book*. It was an interactive display that spotlighted how community members created the Blue Book as an alternative to the City's proposed Silver Book. These competing documents helped define the 50-square-block area of downtown Los Angeles known as Skid Row, a neighborhood that provides more low-income housing and essential services than anywhere else in the City.

The exhibit was a collaboration with MIT graduate, Robert Ochshorn, who had programmed a computer to interact with the two books that were laid on a table. Flipping the pages of the book would trigger different videos to be projected onto the wall. Ochshorn also created the Walk the Talk Archive that was featured in the archive room and included the stories, portraits and performances from Walk the Talk.

Sometimes, one of the systems would need to be rebooted and I would work with Ochshorn to restart it, or he would tell me some piece of code that I would need to run and then magically everything would be back on track again. It was so interesting to me and it was wonderful to see people walking in off the

street to check out the museum and learn about the history of Skid Row. It was also great that some of the theater members were able to pick up shifts manning the exhibition.

We were also holding rehearsals there and finding other ways that we could utilize the space to provide value to the community. We started hosting writing workshops, poetry events, and—a big hit with the community was the movie nights! It was poppin', literally we served popcorn, showed great films, documentaries, and then we would have conversations afterward.

I even had the opportunity to show my documentary film there, a film that was inspired by 2014 Walk the Talk honoree, Clyde Casey, who transformed an abandoned gas station in Skid Row into a 24-hr art and communication center for the people of the neighborhood.

I remember having a lot of fun in that space and learning so much. We rehearsed there, we performed there, we had 1920s-style rent parties there—and there was a wealth of knowledge through the various people, exhibitions and especially the archive.

All types of people showed up and it was an honor to be part of something that was providing such value to the community.

Eventually, my path led me to Arizona where I live with my wife and our two children. I believe my work with LAPD has forever shaped my understanding of life and what's important. I learned so much about empathy, compassion, patience, and I am grateful to now be able to instill these qualities into my children, my work and the rest of my life.

That's why when I learned that LAPD had lost a significant amount of their funding—funding that was promised to them and then taken away by the current administration—I was devastated.

Since I left LAPD in 2017, they have continued to build on the work that we started with SRHMA; they've moved to a permanent space on Broadway and 2nd, they continue to create exhibitions, festivals, parades, performances, host community events, have movie nights, open mic nights—and they have become more involved with policy making, advocating for the homeless, and providing access to services and information to get people the help they desperately deserve.

LAPD and the Skid Row History Museum and Archive are truly vital—not just for the people of Skid Row, but for all Angelenos and beyond. Their programs are life-changing and offer the support that our society could truly benefit from. We need more healing, we need more love, and I think we need more LAPD.

LAPD is facing a critical moment, and it threatens the future of the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, along with all the programs and services they provide to the community. If you believe in their mission, if you value what you've read in this letter, I urge you to support their work right now.

Los Angeles Poverty Department is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law and can be mailed to:

Los Angeles Poverty Department  
PO Box 26190  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

To make a one-time or recurring donation online or for more information about their work, please visit their website, [www.lapovertydept.org](http://www.lapovertydept.org).

Sincerely,

Austin Hines

June 6, 2025

To whom it may concern,

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA) has been a beacon for the Angelenos who reside in the Skid Row neighborhood since they opened their doors in 2015. I first learned about their work while a graduate student at UCLA's Department of Education and Information Studies as part of my archival studies curriculum. Several years later, in my current role developing a community-based archiving initiative at the Los Angeles Public Library, I look toward SRHMA's dedicated engagement with the very community they document, serve, and bolster as a model.

Ranging from their recent slate of exhibitions and panel discussions to their bi-annual Walk the Talk parade, it's clear what SRHMA and the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) are doing transgresses the notion of archival work as passive accumulation. To be embedded in the community one works with offers a depth of knowledge, experience, and connectedness that enlivens the historical record. Increasing access to LAPD's audio-visual materials through this grant would keep the collections local, accessible to the predominantly Black, homeless population LAPD's archives are for and about.

In its singularity, they have completely shifted the role and potential for archives as sites of transformation by connecting a largely disenfranchised community to its own history. It is with the deepest gratitude that I recommend and support the Skid Row History Museum and Archive in fulfilling their vital mission.

Sincerely,



Aza Babayan  
Community Archives Program Manager  
Los Angeles Public Library



Christine Manley Martinez  
Arts Program Specialist  
The People Concern – Studio 526  
cmanley-martinez@thepeopleconcern.org  
323-574-3636

05/07/2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the Arts Program Specialist with The People Concern's Studio 526. Our program serves individuals experiencing homelessness by providing free access to a fully equipped art and music studio. At Studio 526, we believe in the power of creative expression as a vital tool for healing, connection, and self-empowerment.

We are proud to partner regularly with the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) as part of a collaborative network of organizations serving the Skid Row community. We often refer participants to one another so individuals can benefit from the broad range of support, community, and creative opportunities both our programs offer. Our missions are deeply aligned in creating pathways for people to heal, grow, and thrive.

LAPD is a pioneering and indispensable presence in this work. Since 1985, they have provided theater workshops, public performances, art exhibits, writing groups, open mic nights, film screenings, book clubs, and more—always centering the voices and experiences of people navigating poverty and homelessness. Their programs are rooted in trust, creativity, and transformation.

The arts are not a luxury; they are essential. Creative expression allows people to process trauma, rebuild confidence, foster relationships, and envision new possibilities. LAPD provides a consistent and caring environment where deep healing is possible. This is not just the first step toward reclaiming personal agency, it is the long-term, ongoing support that helps individuals not only get housed, but stay housed.

Without healing, connection, and purpose, housing alone is often not enough. LAPD understands this and meets the need with compassion and innovation. Their work affirms that every person matters, every voice deserves to be heard, and community care is the foundation of real, lasting change.

I urge you to support the Los Angeles Poverty Department with the funding they need to sustain and grow this vital work. They are an anchor in the Skid Row community and a national leader in the intersection of the arts, homelessness, and healing.

Sincerely,

Christine Manley Martinez  
Arts Program Specialist  
The People Concern – Studio 526



2116 Arlington Ave, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, CA 90018

T: 323.334.9000  
thepeopleconcern.org

The People Concern is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization  
Tax ID: #95-61438651



This letter is a testament of truth,  
because we don't tell the truth about  
a social condition in which we  
discard members of this urban  
social construct.

We must first identify the condition,  
The lack of clarity of what Skid Row  
is in the human experience. I must  
state right here in this thought, the  
Skid Row Museum, not only understand  
the condition, but it offers a solution  
to an otherwise unmanageable  
social, demanding of social interaction  
This museum provide a healthy structure  
for community engagement and social  
interaction using art as a platform for  
thriving for the individual and the community

The mission has proven to be a healthy  
way for human engagement

Christopher Mack

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for The Los Angeles Poverty Department's Skid Row History Museum and Archive. My name is Clancey Cornell, I am a Clinical Social Worker and Somatic Trauma Therapist with a background in nonprofit management, archival work, and grassroots arts programming. I have been involved in the Skid Row community since 2015, primarily in the continued development and preservation of the archive of the Skid Row History Museum, and supporting various arts programs in the neighborhood.

I have volunteered at, personally benefited from, and worked at several LA Poverty Department programs, including the Festival for Skid Row Artists, their Walk the Talk Project, and several museum exhibitions and community events over the last decade. I have also represented LA Poverty Department at various institutions and on panel discussions. I have done so and will continue to because of how impactful their work is for the wellness of the Skid Row Community, as well as for the dissemination of knowledge and education around the community's struggles and triumphs to the larger city and the world.

Significantly, the Skid Row History Museum and Archive is the heart of the Los Angeles Poverty Department's work—a vital space that not only houses their programs but embodies their mission. The museum makes room for people doing positive work in the community to gather, collaborate, and be seen. It is intentionally designed to highlight and elevate the stories and contributions of individuals who are too often overlooked. It is also a place of alchemy and transformation—one of the rare spaces in the city that is truly accessible, where unhoused residents, artists, academics, city workers, and families can share space, learn from one another, and create connection. The museum doesn't just document change; it catalyzes it. As with the recent and ongoing COVID Hotel Project, visitors come to learn—often about movements and people they might never have encountered—and leave inspired, sometimes to become artists, sometimes activists, organizers, or contributors to long-term community change.

The programs hosted at the Skid Row History Museum have always celebrated and created community. To me, community = wellness, especially in a world of increasing isolation and polarization. I have friends who have lived in Skid Row for decades that will directly say, "The Poverty Department saved my life" - and not in the sense that they provide housing, or medical treatment. Rather, because of their programs, opportunities for building connections with others, being heard, and building relationships are made possible. Programs like the Artist Festival, Friday Movie Nights, and the Walk the Talk Parade offer something to look forward to—a stage to be heard, a chance to be seen, a moment to belong. That experience can spark the vital internal shift: *my life matters*. This shift, and the relationships that come with it, are foundational to healing and well-being.

The Skid Row museum itself is kind of like a plot of fertile soil. Over time, seeds have grown into cultural movements, public health campaigns, housing efforts, friendships, mentorships, art pieces, and better lives. The impact of the museum cannot be measured solely by attendance numbers or exhibition titles. It lives in the ripple effects: in the person who attended a workshop and decided to start a recovery group, in the artist who found their community here, in the student who wrote their thesis after discovering the archive.

If the Skid Row History Museum and Archive were to vanish, it would be a devastating loss—not just for Skid Row, but for the entire city. The museum is not just a programmatic space; it is a cultural and emotional anchor. Its loss would mean fewer places where people of radically different walks of life come together. Fewer opportunities to counter the dominant narratives of neglect and invisibility with stories of brilliance, resistance, and humanity. The museum's absence weakens the ecosystem of support, creativity, and mutual care that it has so carefully nurtured.

In my field of social work and mental health, and in the larger arts and cultural sector, we often emphasize the importance of “meeting people where they are”—of creating spaces where individuals feel seen, respected, and empowered. The Skid Row History Museum goes beyond this principle: it creates the conditions for people to reflect, connect, express, and transform. It invites community members not only to participate but to shape the narrative—to be collaborators in telling their own stories and building shared meaning. This model of deep, radical inclusion reflects the very best of trauma-informed, community-centered practice.

With gratitude,  
Clancey Cornell, MSW, ACSW  
[clanceyjo@mac.com](mailto:clanceyjo@mac.com)

May 22, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support of the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), an exceptional arts organization that merges the transformative power of community theater with a passionate commitment to social justice. Their work not only uplifts artistic voices but also serves as a vital platform for dialogue, inclusion, and community empowerment, addressing concerns specific to the neighborhood of Skid Row in Los Angeles.

I have worked with a number of nonprofit arts programs and have seen up close how art impacts individuals—especially those experiencing trauma; housing and income insecurity; and isolation. I have seen how art builds community and connection, providing a safety net of support that can be the pivotal element to help someone recover and rise. Throughout the years, my heart always goes back to the LAPD. The programming they offer and the welcoming, safe space for creativity and self-expression is unparalleled. Everyone is treated with kindness and dignity, and as a group, they address the challenges directly affecting their neighborhood.

A recent exhibition and performance especially had an impact on me: Welcome to the COVID Hotel. This program had a series of presentations and panels talking about successful solutions to healthcare and homelessness developed during the pandemic. It was incredible to not only watch the performance, which quotes directly from doctors and healthcare workers, but also to listen in on the panel discussions.

I have also joined their Festival for All Skid Row Artists several years in a row and love spending the day listening to musical performances, comedy, open mic, singing, dancing and reading poetry. There are tables from different arts groups offering opportunities to be visually creative. This event is anticipated by the community and is a point of entry for many who do not have access to art, who want to sing, and connect with like-minded souls. Every person who walks out of that event walks a little taller and carries that feeling into other aspects of their life. Please support the Los Angeles Poverty Department and arts programming in general in any capacity you can. Investment in arts programming is an investment in a more creative, compassionate, and just society.

Sincerely,



Dawn Mendelson

# NONPROFIT STRATEGY FOR WORLD BUILDERS

4/17/2025

To Whom it May Concern:

I write, as an L.A.-based nonprofit strategy specialist who has worked in arts, humanities, homelessness, and health for 30 years, to recount some of the vital services provided to the county, the city, and to Skid Row by the L.A. Poverty Dept. and the Skid Row History Museum & Archive.

Los Angeles is home to the nation's largest unhoused population. Its most populous unhoused neighborhood is Skid Row, which is home to 10,000+ people who live outside and thousands more who have experienced being unhoused. Homelessness is a policy choice, not a personal failing, yet our legal system punishes people excluded from the social safety net. Selective criminalization of our unhoused neighbors disproportionately affects women, people of color, sex workers, people who use drugs, people with unmet behavioral health needs, and immigrants.


Serving an under-documented community, the Skid Row History Museum & Archive preserves and celebrates Skid Row's collective histories, affirms and uplifts its existence and identity, and helps combat patterns of misinformation. The Museum and its partners use the archive to validate and inform Skid Row specifically, and the wider public generally, through direct engagement and media partnerships, about the historic, economic, and cultural value of Skid Row and how stigma and mischaracterization result in its residents' criminalization and exclusion from public resources.

Skid Row leverages the archive's data and historic and evidentiary materials for reparations work to advance bodily autonomy and human rights through organizing, movement building, research, education, and legal advocacy. The Museum provides a trusted environment for preserving the truth of Skid Row's history and achievements, and for perpetuating Skid Row's solidarity, knowledge, and self-advocacy. A counter response to a long legacy of extraction and misrepresentation by mainstream media, government, and the academy, the Archive is essential to establishing the Skid Row community's historic, economic, and cultural significance and its place in the American story.

In addition to collecting and preserving vital historic data and artifacts that are kept nowhere else, the Museum also provides a "third space" for curated exhibits, classes, meetings, and performances. In this space, the artists and activists of Skid Row mingle together and welcome stakeholders including policymakers, academics, media members, and others invested in Skid Row's future. I've enjoyed many convivial and educational evenings at the Museum with friends and colleagues. The Museum also brings performances and exhibits to audiences around L.A. County – I'm currently working with the public library in my hometown of Whittier to bring "COVID Hotel" to SPA 7. Because I enjoy the Museum's events and also understand the deep value that this organization offers to L.A., I myself am a monthly donor to LAPD/Skid Row History Museum & Archive.

I likewise encourage the reader to support this essential hub for community vitality, data sovereignty, political agency, and the arts in Skid Row.

  
Megan Hobza  
meganhobza@gmail.com

**From:** Kate Richards Geller kate@urbanvoicesproject.org   
**Subject:** in support of LAPD's Skid Row Museum & Archive  
**Date:** May 1, 2025 at 11:52 AM  
**To:** Pamela Miller pamela@lapovertydept.org  
**Cc:** Henriëtte Brouwers info@lapovertydept.org

KG

My name is Kate Richards Geller, Executive Director of Urban Voices Project.



May 1, 2025

Since moving to LA in 2015, I have played many roles within the context of an arts nonprofit community partner that is currently unhoused since the pandemic. Placemaking is an essential element of this community in which many are living in the condition of homelessness or houselessness. Having been displaced for myriad reasons, people still gravitate toward gathering spaces because we are social beings. Introverts and extraverts alike find welcome at Skid Row Museum & Archive.

For decades, Skid Row Museum and Archive has created a place of belonging while documenting the history of the neighborhood and the role of arts in addressing homelessness as a social economic condition that has led to unfathomable human suffering alongside vibrant artistry. Since the Reagan administration's closing of the institutions that provided homes and services for the population, a fascinating social experiment has occurred over 50 years in which the exact same unsafe and unsanitary conditions have been recreated in the SROs, sidewalks, and missions that provide the current housing option in this neighborhood. Skid Row Museum and Archive have been present for, reported on, documented, and produced artistic expression of the community members in this life journey.

Thank you, Los Angeles Poverty Department for being "home" for so many, including me.

I am at your service to support every effort to keep your programs running in the face of this despicable retraction of contracted funding.

Listening,  
Kate  
917-514-1891

**From:** Leeav Sofer [leeav@urbanvoicesproject.org](mailto:leeav@urbanvoicesproject.org)  
**Subject:** Letter in Support of LAPD and the Skid Row Museum  
**Date:** May 1, 2025 at 11:18 AM  
**To:** henriette [henriette@lapovertydept.org](mailto:henriette@lapovertydept.org), John Malpede [john@lapovertydept.org](mailto:john@lapovertydept.org)

LS

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is **Leeav Sofer**, and I serve as the Artistic Director of the **Urban Voices Project**, a Skid Row-based community music organization that uses the power of group singing to amplify the voices and wellness of our unhoused and under-resourced neighbors. I'm writing to express my unwavering support for the **Skid Row History Museum & Archive** and the **Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)**—a foundational pillar of the Skid Row arts community.

Urban Voices Project would not exist as it does today without the early encouragement, creative partnership, and visionary example of LAPD. Our missions are kindred: to lift up the stories and artistry of Skid Row residents, and to assert the undeniable truth that creativity, dignity, and community belong to everyone—regardless of housing status. The museum space itself has been a central, beating heart of this neighborhood—hosting free performances, discussions, archives, and platforms that challenge the narratives imposed on this community.

The recent news of federal and foundational funding drying up for LAPD and the museum is more than just unfortunate—it's dangerous. Spaces like these don't just enrich lives; they *save* lives. They spark connection, reflection, and belonging in places where systems have failed people time and again. If society is the bell, then **art is the hammer that rings it**. The Skid Row Museum rings loud and true, not only within our neighborhood, but across the country and internationally, as a model of what justice-centered, community-led art can look like.

We cannot afford to lose this space. To let the Skid Row Museum disappear would be to erase decades of lived history and future potential. We stand in **solidarity with all of our arts partners in Skid Row** doing this tireless, innovative work under increasing strain. We urge funders, government agencies, and cultural stakeholders to not only restore but expand support for this irreplaceable institution.

With gratitude and conviction,

**Leeav Sofer**  
Artistic Director  
Urban Voices Project

--

Leeav Sofer  
[Pronouns: He/Him]  
[Urban Voices Project](#), Co-Founder & Artistic Director  
Email: [leeav@urbanvoicesproject.org](mailto:leeav@urbanvoicesproject.org)  
Cell: (714) 606-4818  
Insta: [@urbanvoicesproject](#)  
FB: [facebook.com/urbanvoicesproject](https://facebook.com/urbanvoicesproject)





April 21, 2025

To whom it may concern:

I am honored to have the opportunity to write this letter of support for the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and its application for a grant to digitize its early theater performances.

I first met John Malpede, LAPD's Founding Artistic Director, in 1984 when he traveled from New York to Los Angeles to create performance art about the mistreatment of the poor and unhoused during the 1984 Olympics hosted in Los Angeles. At the time, I was the Founding Director of the Inner City Law Center, a legal and social services center for the poor and unhoused. (After two decades at the law center, I started and ran another nonprofit organization, Uncommon Good, from which I recently retired.)

I was impressed by John's initial work highlighting police brutality during the Olympics. As he came to know the unhoused community, and came up with the idea for a theater group of homeless people, I offered to create a position for him of Artist in Residence at Inner City Law Center, giving him space in which to meet and rehearse with his group.

As LAPD started to give performances of their work, written by their members, I was astounded. I had never before, and never since, seen such powerful theater. It was raw, real, and utterly transformative, both for the audience and the performers.

I had come to love the unhoused people who were my clients, and ached as I felt the depth of their pain and humiliation. So it was with tremendous joy that I saw LAPD giving a voice, dignity, and a new sense of purpose to its members.

I have worked with many extremely talented people over the course of my half century serving the poor and homeless. But even among these wonderful people, John Malpede stands out. I consider him a genius. He was able to relate to homeless people with great humanity and knew how to bring out and support their creativity and acting talent to an astonishing degree. He is highly intelligent and understands the social issues that create

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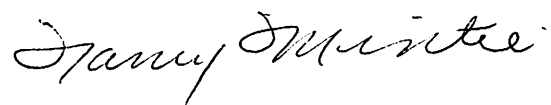
Daniel Woods, JD  
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and perpetuate homelessness. He is able to work with the unhoused community to masterfully translate these issues into theater that is accessible to the public.

The LAPD's Skid Row Museum is a treasure trove of people's history. The early performances that it documents took place against a background of an historic explosion of the homeless population, the systematic destruction of housing for the poor, the brutalities of the welfare system that degraded its participants in countless ways while not even providing the basics of life, the abject neglect of the mentally ill, and a ballooning defense budget that robbed the poor of the help they needed. The LAPD's performances are the only place where the people's voices could be heard who were devastated by these social policies that were adopted by this country during these years. It is very important that this living history be preserved, especially today when our nation is repeating many of the mistakes made during that era.

As someone who lived during that time and personally witnessed the power and raw beauty of the art that John and the LAPD members created, I urge you to consider the importance of this work and help the LAPD to preserve it. If you do, I can assure you that you will be "on the right side of history!"

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Mintie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Nancy Mintie

Executive Director, retired



**SARA DALEIDEN CONSULTING**

Sara Daleiden, Owner

323-630-7272

[saradaleiden@yahoo.com](mailto:saradaleiden@yahoo.com)

[saradaleiden.com](http://saradaleiden.com)

May 26, 2025

**John Malpede, Founding Artistic Director**

**Los Angeles Poverty Department**

250 South Broadway

Los Angeles, CA 90012

[john@lapovertydept.org](mailto:john@lapovertydept.org)

Dear John,

I write this letter in support of your innovative and sustained efforts with Los Angeles Poverty Department in the Downtown Los Angeles neighborhoods we share, including with Skid Row neighbors. I empathize with the termination of several government grants for your arts nonprofit in recent weeks and believe this is destabilizing as you work so diligently to sustain as an anchor in Downtown for us as neighbors.

I appreciate working closely with you and our Skid Row partners through the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition you introduced me to in 2019. This coalition introduction followed your generous offer to host a screening with a panel discussion at the Skid Row History Museum and Archive about the first feature documentary I produced called *Civic Art: Four Stories from South Los Angeles*, made with our Los Angeles County government about new public art for parks and libraries. As a long-time Downtown neighbor living and working down the street from you on Broadway, I was touched by the conversation I was able to have with neighbors and visitors during this public program about art investment in collaboration with our local government bodies. I sought to deepen my neighborhood impact as an artist committed to Downtown and you offered me a pathway to do so through this coalition's focus on our community plan process.

I am proud of our creative coalition work to bring our City of Los Angeles DTLA 2040 Community Plan to adoption in 2024. We used our toolbox as artists and cultural leaders throughout the community planning process to engage with neighbors living on our streets as well as in low income housing in Skid Row and Downtown. I realize we have a long walk ahead of us to activate our community plan and pursue accountability with our City government and neighborhood partners to build healthy neighborhood and street experiences in Skid Row and Downtown.

The Skid Row History Museum and Archive you steward, and the art and social justice experiences you offer there, have been crucial to our neighborhood organizing work with the community plan as well as other government development initiatives. Your continued cultural leadership as an arts nonprofit and a community center with the museum is pivotal to building the health we seek for all neighbors.

**Consulting + Cultural Exchange**

117 West 9th Street #1024 Los Angeles, CA 90015



**SARA DALEIDEN CONSULTING**

*Sara Daleiden, Owner*

323-630-7272

[saradaleiden@yahoo.com](mailto:saradaleiden@yahoo.com)

[saradaleiden.com](http://saradaleiden.com)

I enjoy that our work with the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, builds from other collaborative art-making we have had in Downtown over the years, as well as our respect of each other as artists in Los Angeles seeking quality of life for people in poverty alongside other neighbors in the region. I welcome many more years of connection with you and the Los Angeles Poverty Department team as you have influenced my practice many times. Your international legacy is essential for our shared field at the intersection of art and social justice.

Warmly,

Sara J. Daleiden

**Consulting + Cultural Exchange**

117 West 9th Street #1024 Los Angeles, CA 90015



The Sidewalk Project  
801 E 7<sup>th</sup> St Unit 114A  
Los Angeles CA 90021

Tax ID # 82-5073158

April 24, 2025

Re: Support for Los Angeles Poverty Department

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Sidewalk Project, I am pleased to offer this letter in support of the Los Angeles Poverty Department. Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) which founded in 1985 was the first performance group in the nation made up principally of homeless people, and the first arts program of any kind for homeless people in Los Angeles. From our perspective they are still the only program of its kind in the nation because of their unique combination of performance art, museum space for unhoused people and their providers of care, and a highly valued archive of multidisciplinary arts that dates back to the 1980s.

The Sidewalk Project (TSP), a lived-experience mobile harm reduction SSP, aids unhoused, drug-using, and sex worker populations, providing residents of Skid Row and Greater Los Angeles case management including medical care and housing linkages and system navigation services. Our street team provides direct services including crisis response, system advocacy, wound care, job placement, and medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and creative community resources for mental health. Our drop-in day center for cis and trans women set in Skid Row provides safe space and a range of supports including case management, self-defense and empowerment activities, and linkage to a wide range of social services. The Sidewalk Project is first and foremost a community building organization that sits at the intersection of the arts & public health.

Since our arrival in Skid Row at our founding in 2017, we were very quickly connected to LAPD by area activist and artist Crushow Herring, an award-winning muralist, who became our first participant, then our first hire, while he was living in the streets of Skid Row. A referral from the streets is a very big compliment for any program, and LAPD boasts that street legitimacy for many members of the Skid Row community. We soon joined in on their community planning efforts ahead of the 2040 plan for DTLA.

Much like other providers in the Skid Row area, LAPD is responsible for many successful health, community-building, and land use initiatives and can not simply be considered an arts organization. The Los Angeles Poverty Department is a vital and necessary organization that protects, sustains and builds on the culture of a neighborhood that is classically suppressed, stigmatized and erased. During the Covid 19 pandemic early days they participated in programs to encourage vaccinations

and then deeply engaged with the community of stakeholders, providers and unhoused individuals who went through the pandemic together utilizing innovations that may not have been replicated anywhere in the country.

Henriette and John and their team are beloved individuals who uplift, empower and co-create cultural milestones in a community that has no other organization dedicated specifically to cultural preservation. This organization is a priority for all of us to see them receive more funding not less. At a time where our understanding of history is being categorically erased, we must prioritize strengthening and sustaining cultural titans like Los Angeles Poverty Department. We hope you will work to see this group's efforts strengthened, deepened and protected.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Soma Snakeoil  
Executive Director/CoFounder  
TheSidewalkProject.org  
415-966-6019  
Soma@thesidewalkproject.org

May 12, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Young Mi Chi, artist, arts educator and advocate who has been an arts volunteer in the Skid Row neighborhood and throughout Los Angeles County as a founding member of an arts collaborative, Creative I. During over 10+ years that I have been volunteering in numerous arts activities and events in the this community, I have participated in and have been impressed by the strong community bonds that continue to be built through such a wide variety of ongoing opportunities provided by Los Angeles Poverty Department at Skid Row History Museum and Archive (SRHMA).

LA Poverty Department's programming is very diverse and comprehensive and it serves the many needs of this community as a whole through advocacy, as well as the social and emotional needs of individual members who often feel seen, respected, and cared for. Through ongoing workshops that provide positive outlets for self-expression such as creative writing, sock puppet making, visual art and open mic, community members are able to regain a sense of their humanity, self-esteem, and support through shared experiences.

LA Poverty Department also provides much needed sense of stability and continuity through its monthly activities, annual events and festivals such as Festival for All Skid Row Artists and Walk the Talk Parade, which celebrate and honor committed, positive contributors to this community. Ongoing art exhibitions at the Museum also feature artworks and themes that are very timely and relevant to the issues the community faces, and related forums and panels provide opportunities for discussion and information sharing that are not held anywhere else in the city.

The vital archiving work done by SRHMA is invaluable not only to local history but as a powerful testament to the creativity of the human spirit in the context of a positive community that engenders and fosters hope in spite of the circumstances.

Everything LA Poverty Department and SRHMA does is centered around creating and maintaining life and love of a healthy community and they have been for over many decades and continue to be a vital part of what is actually working to nurture the human spirit of many in dire situations. Their ethos in how to meet the needs of the community with so much love, care and respect is reflected in the unique programming and how they are carried out. It is absolutely vital that LA Poverty Department continues to be funded because it really is well established and known hub for the arts and safe environment that many vulnerable members of this community rely on and depend on for social and emotional support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "YMC", written in a cursive style.