

THE OFFICIAL NEWS ORGAN OF THE LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

Community Connection

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THE VOICE, THE PULSE, OF OUR VILLAGE

HISTORIC CORE TENANT VICTORIES!!

Huntington Hotel Tenants Finally Compensated for Horrendous Living Conditions as City Attorney Settles Lawsuit with Owner

On March 4, 2008, the City Attorney announced a \$10 million settlement with Landmark Equity Management, Inc. for engaging in a scheme to drive low-income tenants out of more than 800 rent-controlled units in the City of Los Angeles. About 200 of these units are at the Huntington Hotel, which is covered by the settlement (see page 2 for more details of the settlement).

During the course of the lawsuit, one of the owners was sentenced to jail time for the criminal violations against tenants, particularly at the Huntington Hotel. For years, the building has been in extreme sub-standard conditions and tenant rights have been routinely violated. However, even incarceration did not result in substantive changes in living conditions.

Because of this and many other violations, the City Attorney has forced the owner to financially compensate tenants based on the conditions of each building. Huntington tenants will receive a 70% rent rebate for the entire period of Landmark Equity ownership, beginning in February 2003 and continuing until the building meets safety and habitability standards. Additionally, the settlement creates incentives for the owner to sell the properties within the City of Los Angeles, hopefully putting this slumlord out of business in our City.

Displaced Frontier Hotel Tenants to be Paid Restitution for Illegal Evictions and the 28-Day Shuffle

On March 13, 2008, the City Attorney announced a \$1 million settlement agreement with Rob Frontiera, former owner of the Frontier Hotel. A minimum of \$700,000 is set aside to ensure that tenants that were illegally vacated from the building will be paid relocation benefits they should have received. The City Attorney filed the suit in 2006, after LA CAN worked with them to gather evidence of the 28-day shuffle - a practice long used by Mr. Frontiera and other downtown landlords to attempt to prevent residents from establishing tenant rights.

While the suit was originally intended to stop the practice of the 28-day shuffle, other violations were found during the course of investigation. Most importantly, records showed that the landlord avoided his obligation to pay tenants proper relocation,

as required under the Ellis Act, as he planned to remove affordable units and convert to high-end lofts. Tenants who were displaced during this process (between approximately late 2005 and early 2007) will be eligible for relocation benefits.

LA CAN members worked diligently on this suit, helping identify 28-day shuffle victims and coming forward themselves to document the practice. We believe this outcome sends a message to Mr. Frontiera and all downtown landlords that tenant rights violations and other illegal activities will no longer be swept under the rug. We also acknowledge the City Attorney's office, particularly Steven Gold, for their attention to this case. An administrator for tenant restitution payments will be put in place by the City Attorney soon. Contact LA CAN for more information.

Months of Alexandria Tenant Complaints Validated by Federal Court: Judge Issues Temporary Restraining Order against Further Evictions

Although the publicly-funded renovation project at the Alexandria Hotel was designed so that no one would be displaced, over 100 people were displaced in the first year of operation by new ownership and management. Additionally, tenants have documented discriminatory practices against them based on race and disability. Tenants have also been without hot water, elevators, heat, and other basic needs for substantial amounts of time. After months of public requests for intervention by the City on these urgent matters, Alexandria Hotel tenants and LA CAN filed a federal lawsuit against the owners and managers of the Alexandria and the City's Community Redevelopment Agency on December 20, 2008.

Just two months later, tenants achieved victory at the very first hearing regarding the case. The United States District Court issued a temporary restraining order on February 22, 2008 prohibiting the Alexandria Hotel from permanently or temporarily displacing any tenants until a decision is entered on Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Injunction. This means that no one can be evicted or otherwise displaced until at least the next hearing in early May. This court action validated the public complaints of tenants who had been ignored and in some cases ridiculed by elected officials and City agencies.

ALEXANDRIA, on page #2

“I have been doing redevelopment for a number of years and have always been able to see the improvements that have taken place, or will take place for the people that we serve. Am beginning not to see this here and am overwhelmingly sad.”

Monday July 30, 2007
Lillian Burkenheim (CRA staff) Email to
Blair Besten of Amerland Group,
Alexandria Hotel developer

Source: LA CAN California Public
Records Act Request

Where's Our Ordinance?

Tenants from across Los Angeles march on City Hall to demand long-overdue residential hotel ordinance.

On February 27, 2008, about 100 supporters of a Citywide Residential Hotel Ordinance marched through downtown's Historic Core to City Hall to demand action. The current moratorium on demolition and conversion of residential hotels expires on May 24th and, two years after the City Council instructed a permanent ordinance be drafted, there had been no progress to date. The march followed two weeks of public testimony at a variety of commissions and committees. At the end of the march, Helmi Hisserich of the Mayor's office came out on the steps of City Hall to inform people that she had finally received the ordinance from the Housing Department and she would review and release it right away. It actually took awhile, but the ordinance was released and will be in public hearings soon.

LA CAN members planned the march to create pressure for the residential hotel ordinance to be released and passed, but also to bring attention to current violations happening at the Alexandria and Cecil hotels. We need a permanent protection law, but enforcement of that law and other tenant rights is even more important. Mildred, a Cecil tenant, told of how she had been moved out of her room on a top floor to make way for tourist rooms, then served eviction papers soon after. Mildred was able to avoid eviction with the help of a lawyer obtained through LA CAN's legal clinic, but she and many others have been forced to move illegally and the Cecil has ignored the moratorium altogether by trying to convert to a tourist hotel. A stop work order was recently issued to the Cecil.

The march was successful in bringing together organizations from across Los Angeles who support housing preservation in residential hotels – more than a dozen organizations participated. It was also successful in moving the ordinance out of the Housing Department. But during April LA CAN members and supporters will be busy ensuring that a strong ordinance gets passed before the moratorium expires. **Protect residential hotels permanently to protect our homes.**



HOTEL WATCH ON PAGE #6

GET MORE OF THE LATEST DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL HOTEL INFORMATION



LA CAN member, Veronica Doleman, spoke at a press conference on the steps of City Hall on March 5, 2008 to highlight Housing LA's three-point plan for addressing LA's housing crisis. The plan would increase the production of affordable housing and preserve the limited affordable housing we have.

Current and Former Huntington Hotel Tenants

You may have heard that the City Attorney reached a settlement agreement with Landmark Equity, owners of the Huntington Hotel, last week. The following describes the key points of the settlement:

1. Huntington Hotel tenants are eligible for a 70% rent rebate, starting in February 2003 and continuing until the building is completely up to code.
2. If you lived in the Huntington for any period of time between February 2003 and the present, you will likely be eligible for the rent rebate.
3. If you have paid into the REAP program, you have already been receiving a 50% rent rebate. Your rebate payment will only include 20% of your rent for the months you paid into REAP.
4. The rebate program is expected to start within 60 days. Begin collecting your documentation of residence at the Huntington (rent receipts, mail, phone bills, etc.). After you submit all the required paperwork and it is approved, you will receive a cash rebate based on the length of time you have lived in the building and the rent you have paid during that time.
5. The Huntington is NOT coming out of the REAP program at this time. Continue paying 50% of your rent to the REAP program unless you receive written notice from the Housing Department that the building is being removed from REAP.
6. It is very possible that your building will be sold. Remember that you have many tenant rights and you cannot be evicted or forced out because the building is sold. Keep paying your reduced-rate rent to ensure you can protect your tenant rights.

If you have any questions or if you receive any notices from management or the City that you don't understand, please call or visit LA CAN at 456 S. Main Street, (213) 228-0024.

ALEXANDRIA, from page #1

The court's order prevented the imminent displacement of two LA CAN members who were threatened with actions for permanent displacement by the Alexandria which could have been filed as soon as Monday, February 25th had the court not issued its order. The order similarly prevents the displacement of any other tenants, including several tenants who were also facing imminent displacement.

This is just the first step. The lawsuit seeks to redress violations of Civil Rights, Disability Discrimination, Community Redevelopment, and housing habitability (slum housing) laws occurring during the rehabilitation of the Alexandria Hotel. Contact LA CAN to get involved.

Are Developer Interests Buying Our City?

This year's presidential election is very telling for a variety of reasons. However, one of the most interesting things is the attack on corporations and developers--and their lobbyists--who collectively have a Herculean strangle-hold on Washington D.C. It turns out that they have a hold on OUR local government too.

One does not have to go as far as Washington D.C. to witness the power and prowess of big-money interests as they go about their work. In Los Angeles developers contribute freely to policy-makers that not only back their projects but, more importantly, keep the questions to a minimum. The fiasco at the Alexandria and Frontier Hotels, where multiple officials went far beyond the call-of-duty to ensure the projects moved forward, serves quite nicely as sterling examples of just how deep this problem runs.

For example, on August 16, 2007 it was very odd to see Councilmember Cardenas, Councilmember Perry with staff in toe, and staff for Councilmember Huizar camped out throughout the majority of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board meeting to approve funding for the Frontier Hotel project (now named the "Rosslyn Lofts" project).

It is not a rarity for our duly elected leaders to make cameo appearances for their pet projects. However, five hours waiting to testify on behalf of a fairly small developer brand new to LA is strikingly odd. The situation was so awry that it led CRA Commissioner Janis to state the following to the Los Angeles Times:



"There was all of this political pressure put on every member of the board," Janis said. "It was direct, like having two council members sitting there the entire time, to the indirect, like hearing back that the developer was really angry and was going have retribution against any CRA board member who didn't support him."

--Los Angeles Times, September 15, 2007

Not only were Councilmembers present but attempts were made to nullify the influence of tenants who faced illegal evictions, broad sweeping discrimination and a host of other nefarious practices at the hands of the same developer at the Alexandria Hotel.

While most would agree that it is okay for elected politicians to advocate on behalf of a project, refusing to even investigate the statements of injured residents is a totally different thing. Councilmember Cardenas went as far as saying that he was there as a character witness for the developer. Moreover, the fact that Mr. Cardenas does NOT represent the district where the

project was located simply added fuel to the fire. It was this precise point that inspired additional digging by LA CAN.

It has unfortunately become common knowledge that if you want to find out why politicians voted in particular ways, just follow the money. So of course the first logical place to visit was the LA City Ethics Commission website. By law the City Ethics Commission has to publish the source and amount of campaign contributions going to our electeds. It is a great source of information to find out who is really pulling the strings. As one could have guessed we were simply one click away from answers that made errant behavior appear a tad bit logical.

Council Member Cardenas



Tony Cardenas was the most vocal advocate for the developer, Amerland Group. He has been a significant beneficiary of Ruben Islas and Jules Arthur, Amerland's principals, and their families since the development process started at the Alexandria. Not surprisingly, the dates of public appearances and votes on behalf of Amerland's project at the Frontier directly coincided with campaign contributions from the Amerland "family." The timeline demands closer scrutiny.

Contributions from Ruben Islas and Jules Arthur began on 08/10/06. The City Council had voted for the final approval for the Alexandria Hotel project on 07/26/06. Both Ruben and Sandra Islas, as well as Jules and Michele Arthur, all contributed separately on 11/16/06.

Then, on 7/20/07, just weeks before the contentious Community Redevelopment Agency [CRA] public hearing on their Frontier project, Ruben and Sandra Islas contributed a total of \$4,000 to the Councilmember. And on 09/24/07, ten days after the City Council approved the same project, Ruben and Sandra Islas, as well as Jules and Michele Arthur, contributed a total of \$2,000 to Mr. Cardenas.

Neither the Alexandria nor the Frontier projects are in Mr. Cardenas' district. Yet, between these two developers and presumably their wives, a total of \$9,000 was contributed in a 13-month period directly coinciding with their project approvals. All of the individuals live in the San Diego-La Jolla area. Jumping on the bandwagon was Blair Beston, Amerland's Director of Community Development, who contributed in November 2007.

Council Member Huizar

Campaign contributions from Amerland leads and their families followed almost exactly the same pattern in the



case of Councilmember Jose Huizar of the 14th District. This time there are a couple more Amerland "givers." About one week before the Council's final approval on the Alexandria project (on 07/18/06 and 07/20/06), the Islas and Arthurs contributed a total of \$3,000 to Mr. Huizar. On these same dates Martha Enriquez of Logan Property Management, site managers of the Alexandria, gave an additional \$1,000.

Then on 12/29/06 Ruben, Sandra, Ana and Martha Islas, as well as Martha and Thomas Enriquez, all contributed to Huizar's re-election campaign. Jules and Michele Arthur contribute to the re-election campaign later, in February 2007.

Councilmember Huizar's contributions were less significant during the approval of the Frontier, which was not in his district. Ruben and Sandra Islas each contributed on 09/18/07, just 4 days after Huizar voted yes on Amerland's Frontier project.

Councilwoman Jan Perry



Councilwoman Perry played an aggressive and vocal role in advocating for the Frontier Hotel/Rosslyn Loft project, also attending the five-hour hearing at CRA.

However, unlike Huizar and Cardenas, as of press time she had received NO campaign contributions. Perry fought equally as hard as Cardenas for approval of the Rosslyn Loft Project, but one clear distinction that should be made is that the project was actually in her district. However, she totally ignored the testimony of Alexandria tenants that were experiencing a living nightmare. She listened while residents demanded that Amerland not be given any additional tax money until the complaints at the Alexandria Hotel were handled. She supported the developer anyway and approved \$8 million in local funds for the Frontier.

This is but one example of how developers and deep pocket contributors control the way business is done in our city. These specific developers received almost \$20 million in local funds and tens of millions more in state funds in the process. Multiply this experience by the thousands of transactions that happen annually and a daunting picture is revealed. Public hearings, committee meetings, and council sessions are becoming less and less relevant. The only way for us to salvage this system is to fight for a publicly-financed election system. That way there will finally be a more level playing field and people will be elected based on their work and vision versus the amount of money raised.

Until that time, people power must challenge money power. The brave Alexandria and Frontier tenants needed support from hundreds more downtown tenants. We have won many times and we can win again. Let's not let the Alexandria and Frontier payoffs become the norm in our community!

Vagina Monologues Return to Main Street



New Orleans Style

On February 22nd & 23rd, Lamp Community's Main Street Art Gallery was transformed into a theater laced with a taste of New Orleans. The occasion: a return of Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues. For the past three years the Downtown Women's Action Coalition has put on jaw-dropping performances of Ensler's signature piece. The downtown cast--which recruits new performers each year--were featured in the *Daily Variety* in their first performance in 2006 and their audience has continued to grow. This year's performance was definitely no different.

Debbie Burton, Becky Dennison, Veronica Doleman, Yadira Enriquez, Laveeta Marbury and Linda Valverde were all Monologue veterans, better known as Vagina Warriors. The experienced crew took the audience on a wild, emotional roller coaster ride. The ride, however, left the crowd enlightened and on the edge of their seats.

The new crew, monologue virgins as the veterans fondly called them, also brought their "A" games to both performances. Kelly Delgado, Emma Leigh, and Jennifer Powell sailed through their monologues with ease.

Below is a special monologue created by Eve Ensler for the 2008 worldwide performances:

WELCOME TO THE WETLANDS

NEW ORLEANS IS THE VAGINA OF AMERICA.

AND IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW SOME FOLKS
FEEL ABOUT VAGINAS JUST LOOK AT NEW ORLEANS SINCE THE
STORM.

WE ARE NOURISHED AND SUSTAINED BY HER
GENEROUS WET FERTILITY

BUT DON'T HESITATE TO RAPE HER, DEFILE HER, ASSAULT HER,
SHAVE AND MUTILATE THE MARSH GRASSES AND TREES WHICH
PROTECT HER.

WE CALL HER SULTRY AND SEXY WHEN WE CRAVE HER, BUT
AFTER WHEN WE WANT TO DEMEAN HER AND DISMISS HER WE
CALL HER SWAMPY AND SOILED.

WE BRAG ABOUT HER MUSIC, THE WAY SHE MOVES, WE BEG TO
GET INSIDE HER, BUT DISOWN HER LATER WHEN SHE HAS
NEEDS.

WE USE HER TO ENTERTAIN US AND EXCITE US, THEN JEALOUS
OF HER POWER AND EMBARRASSED BY OUR AWE, WE MAKE HER
A WHORE.

WE TAKE HOLIDAYS AND GET LOST AND HAPPY IN HER EMBRACE,
WE EAT HER, WE LOVE THE FISHY TASTE, WE LOVE HER SPICES.
BUT WHEN SHE IS HURTING, WHEN SHE IS WAVING FOR HELP, WE
IGNORE HER AND LET HER DROWN.

NEW ORLEANS IS THE VAGINA OF AMERICA
IF WE HONOR HER
IF WE HEAL HER
IF WE PRAISE HER

WE CHANGE HER STORY AND THE STORY OF WOMEN.

When Poetry & Art Fill the Air



Artwalk Featured Poet
Roland Poet X

Artwalk Featured Artist
Spartacus Cacao

There is a special magic that happens when poetry and art fill the air. It mysteriously, even if only temporarily, removes senseless barriers and lifts prejudices to a height that insists they be forgotten. This magic has visited LA CAN six times over the past six months. It arrives only once a month but its effect is lasting.

In a conversation with Joe Wright--acclaimed director of *Pride & Prejudice*, *Atonement*, and the soon to be released *The Soloist*--he put the reality of this magic in very simple terms. In no uncertain terms he stated, "art has no address!" Take a breath...think about that for a second...now say out loud "HOW TRUE IS THAT!"

For months straight, on every second Thursday, the LA CAN headquarters has been transformed from the "people's headquarters for truth and justice" to a downtown cultural center. Now, in a perfect world there would be no separation, no transformation would be necessary. However, we are far from a perfect world but trying to get there nonetheless.

The powerful hosting duet of Dr. Mongo and Mona Jean, both poetic pillars of downtown poetry for a number of decades, have worked steadfastly to ensure that ALL community residents get a steady diet of downtown culture. Working throughout the month to secure feature artists and their supporting cast has proven to be quite amazing.

For example, February's feature performer was none other than the riveting Roland Poet X, Filmmaker, Video, and Poetry Slam Champ. He not only captivated the standing room only crowd with his prowess at the microphone, he also previewed 3 dynamic short-films that left your jaws on the floor. To get a better flavor of his filmmaking talents visit www.youtube.com/rolandpoetx; be prepared to digest social commentary at its finest.

Roland Poet X was joined by a strong cast of poets eager to get their chance at the podium. VLM--with keyboard in toe--performed a few musical selections and poetry. It must be noted that VLM [Vachelle McFarland] is one of the LA CAN spoken word pioneers. Arnell, another regular performed a number of poetry selections. Michelle Y. Autry served up a couple of fiery pieces; however, *It Could Have Been Me* moved the crowd to an eerie silence.

Spartacus Cacao was the featured artist on the canvas side in February and March. He displayed a variety of works utilizing an array of mediums; all of Cacao's pieces left you speechless. Spartacus was on-site and bombarded with inquiries and accolades.

Other local artists that displayed their dynamic works include Marianna, Barbara Aduwa, and the neighborhood's one and only, O.G. Man. If you would like to display your artwork at the LA CAN Gallery, please contact Pete White (213) 228-0024. If you want to perform at the spoken word open mic, or just listen, show up Thursday April 10, 2008 and every second Thursday of the month.

Is the Safer Cities Initiative the Right Approach?

BY MS. JAMIE ROMANO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Such was the theme for a luncheon conference, organized by the New York-based Manhattan Institute, on January 17, 2008 at the Downtown Los Angeles Marriott hotel.

Senior Fellow to the Institute, George Kelling, co-authored the “Broken Windows” theory of policing, the premise of which is the belief that strict enforcement of minor offenses leads to a reduction in major crime. It is this method of policing that is the foundation of the Safer Cities Initiative and “quality of life” ordinances that are being utilized to prepare Central City East for renovation.

The conference consisted of two panel discussions, “Saving Skid Row from Squalor, or Criminalizing Homelessness?” and “Lessons of Skid Row: Implications for Public Space and Order.” Panelists included Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute; Commander Andrew Smith of LAPD Central Division; Mark Kleiman, Professor of Public Policy at UCLA; Carol Wilkins, Director of Intergovernmental Policy with the Corporation for Supportive Housing; George Kelling of MI and author of “Fixing Broken Windows;” Gretchen Dykstra, former President of New York’s Times Square Business Improvement District; Estela Lopez, Executive Director of the Central City East Association; and Torie Osborn, then-Senior Advisor to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Speakers and panelists selected for the conference unilaterally represented economic and municipal interests. However, one academic critique of “Broken Windows” policing was offered by Mark Kleiman, who began his comments by explaining he was not opposed to the theory, but was invited to provide the “con” argument.

Opening comments were made by James Wilson, Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy at Pepperdine University, and Co-Author of the infamous Broken Windows theory. His opening included the following statements: arrests of homeless people are “...messy. They don’t smell well, and their trash should be handled only if one is protected by haz mat gear.” This sentiment seemed to set the tone for the day’s discussions.

Heather MacDonald, who is also a contributing editor to *City Journal*, MI’s quarterly publication on urban development, was by far the most vocal panelist. Her consistent use of the word shameless when referring to homeless

people came across more like an elitist moral indictment of those suffering from drug addiction, mental illness, and an economy that leaves so many in abject poverty. MacDonald, however, did not stop there. She referred to those who work to protect the rights of downtown’s homeless as “advocates of lawlessness” who “protest clean up [of the city] and public order.” Finally, she also stated that the homeless seem to “believe they have the right to break minor laws.”

Commander Smith of LAPD’s Central Division highlighted the “partnership of [downtown] organizations” in improving Central City East, and complimented the work of “Delgadillo and the Dream Team of attorneys at the DA’s office.” Smith rhetorically spoke of “protecting the most vulnerable” of the area and commented that those who have a “have a problem” with improvement efforts are those who are “predators” of the vulnerable or those who are “profiting” from the drug trade. Interestingly enough this seems to be a coordinated message that reverberates from the top [Chief Bratton] on down to the patrol officers. It is the juvenile version of you are either with us or against us.

One of minority voices criticizing SCI was Carol Wilkins of the Corporation for Supportive Housing. Wilkins highlighted the fact that the “unintended consequences” of SCI, arrests for minor infractions and fingerprinting, leaves countless homeless ineligible for public housing, and that this practice is prohibiting long-term housing as a solution to homelessness.

Wilkins also pointed to long-term housing as being the best solution for both the homeless and the goals of improvement, adding that “cycling people in and out of jail and short term shelters” does not serve in the best interest of the City or homeless residents.

Estela Lopez, Central City East Association, was instrumental in driving home the business perspective. In Lopez’s words, most people come to Central City East to work or to run small businesses. Creating a “safer and cleaner environment” for these working people is the focus of the Central City East Association and Business Improvement District.

As an example of how the homeless negatively impact local businesses, she noted that “food-related” establishments in the area are suffering and some face closure as the “surrounding filth” of some downtown streets (produced by the homeless) creates problems with the health code standards for food establishments, especially the presence of urine and human feces on the sidewalks nearby.

As she spoke, a large screen flashed photographs of people on the trash-strewn streets of Skid Row. It was a rotation of pictures showing homeless folks, the vast majority of whom were Black, shooting up, smoking crack, sifting through trash cans, and sleeping on the sidewalk. The parade

of indignant photos continued for the remainder of the day.

Closing comments were provided by LA Police Chief William Bratton who apologized for being late. He explained to a crowd eager to hear him speak that he was late due to, “another law suit against the Department.” He described such law suits as “frustrating to the efforts of LAPD to improve the quality of life on Skid Row.”

Bratton drew laughter from the audience with a comment about the widely-held desire to “suspend the Constitution” for a little while to simplify a “quick clean up” of Central City East. He also touted the accomplishments of LAPD in reducing the number of street homeless (those sleeping outdoors) to under 700.

Of the day’s speakers, one of the strongest advocates for the interests and welfare of the homeless was Torie Osborn, at that time with the Mayor’s Office. Ms. Osborn noted the advocacy work of Gary Blasi, stating his absence at the conference was greatly missed. Osborn blasted the characterization of downtown homeless that was put forth by most of the panelists. She strongly stated that regard for human dignity was of utmost importance, and that improving life for LA’s homeless – not just pushing them out of the area – should be an integral part of renovating the downtown area.

Osborn reminded those present that caring for the homeless is “part of the history of Los Angeles” and that this legacy should remain intact. She called for an end to the demonization of the homeless and their advocates, stating that the best solutions would be found through collaborative efforts, beginning with “de-polarizing” the issue. She argued that “housing, not shelter” provides the best solution for Skid Row residents, advocating mixed use and mixed income housing.

[Editor’s note: The Mayor has steadfastly promoted and continued the current version of the Safer Cities Initiative - both during and after Ms. Osborn’s tenure with the Mayor.]

The theme of the conference, “is the Safer Cities Initiative the right approach?” is a question that remains unanswered. All but two of eleven participants seemed to think that SCI is, in fact, the right approach; however, the panel composition was jaded at best. So this attendee is left asking a very simple question, “right for whom?”

Bratton, Smith, Kelling, the Manhattan Institute and officials from CCEA/BID all agree that it is the right approach – for increasing the marketability of downtown Los Angeles. Evidence of the human toll of SCI was conspicuously absent, as neither the homeless nor anyone representing their interests were invited to participate. In the entirety of the conference, only one presenter, Mark Kleiman, asked the question, “where have the homeless gone?” That question was not answered by the day’s discussions, nor did it seem to be of any concern.

The Night the Lights Came on Along Main Street

During the Main Street “revitalization” original downtown residents have watched the City of Los Angeles pour out its heart and soul, going out of its way to please a new downtown demographic.



The City spared no costs to ensure they gave the young urban professionals, better known as Yuppies, everything they needed to feel right at home: at least hourly LAPD patrols; a stationary LAPD outpost on the corner of 5th and Main; fancy decorations consisting of elegant, historical light poles and fixtures; potted flowers and trees; new signage to hopefully make you forget that you are standing in Skid Row; and crosswalks like those found on Rodeo Drive.

But on the flip side what have they given the OG Downtowners? Prison lights!



Over the past few years Main Street has seen an increase in its number of light fixtures as part of the Main Street Lighting Project. The Neighborhood Council paved the way for the installation of antique looking light fixtures and soft light bulbs on all loft and restaurant outlets that cater to young urban professionals. Aesthetically, the antique lights fit into the Historic Core theme that many stakeholders were pushing for. However, the placement of the antique lights ended at 456 S. Main Street -- the Genesis Hotel, home to poor folks.

Instead of antique-style lighting, residents of the Genesis, Pershing, Sanborn and Rosslyn hotels received prison-style floodlights. During the installation of the floodlights residents questioned the placement of the lights and were told by installers that “they were only going on residential hotels.”

The placement of the lights are a cause for concern because they are only found at locations where Black and poor people live and patronize. In addition to long-term residents, many newbies were also troubled by the demeaning and ostentatious lights. The floodlights do not fit the historical theme that they so desired AND they did not want their neighborhood to look like the Level 4 yard at Folsom Prison. The lights sent a message which was loud and clear that they were lighting up the “Black Belt!”

The placement of the lights is so erratic that we needed to explore the rhyme or reason, which quickly became apparent. If you take a look at the picture in the lower left, the Genesis Hotel and the Neighborhood Council Office are located directly next to each other. However, one has the antique lights while the other has prison lights. When you cross the street you will notice that the Rosslyn Hotel has prison floodlights but the new “Rosslyn Loft” project at the Frontier has no lighting whatsoever. Why could that be?

North on Main Street from the Genesis, you will quickly see that all of the hip new trendy locations either have the antique lighting or nothing at all.

Traveling on Main Street south of the Genesis, the picture becomes more clear. Instead of the lights or no lights option, you see floodlights in the Genesis parking lot, on the 5th Street side of the Main Street Grill, and then a solid wall of floodlights on residential hotels on the east side of the street - lighting up everything until the Sanborn Hotel. This is where it almost gets funny. A new trendy restaurant is going in where the old taco shop used to be (see Mai Tacos picture, above) and it was not blessed with a floodlight. However, the buildings to the right and left are lit up like a Christmas tree. Then the floodlight madness stops again just short of the loft building that also houses Pussy & Pooch.

Lets stop for a moment and make something perfectly clear: LA CAN does NOT have anything against the historic lighting project. However, we do believe that if it is good for the goose it MUST be good for the gander. Simply put, if there is to be lights on Main Street they MUST be all the same.

Residents, old and new, should be troubled by the “separate and unequal” lighting program that currently illuminates Main Street. Shining prison-style lights on *CERTAIN* properties and not others, on the same street, has a chilling effect. It clearly articulates a certain attitude that continues to permeate the community - that long-time residents are less-than. On the other hand, it also shines a spotlight on those responsible and at some point the rubber will meet the proverbial road.

HOTEL WATCH

Ford Hotel

The Ford Hotel has been purchased by SRO Housing Corporation, a non-profit affordable housing developer. LA CAN has received numerous questions from tenants about relocation assistance. Relocation assistance is not triggered until you are asked and/or required to move. At this time, no one is required to move. Keep paying your rent and more information about the project will be available soon. A few tenants have reported problems beyond relocation – please visit LA CAN if you have problems, questions, or receive any notices you do not agree with or understand.

Cecil Hotel

As always, Cecil tenants are NOT required to move from their original units. If you have been told you have to move, you do not. If you moved because you didn't know your rights, you can file a complaint with the Housing Department. Also, the Cecil is required to get an approved Tenant Habitability Plan from the City before it does any more major rehabilitation or moves any tenants. This plan has not yet been approved, as of press time. If you have questions or complaints about construction or notices from management, visit LA CAN.

Huntington and Frontier Tenants Eligible for Lawsuit Payments

If you are on some type of government benefits, like SSI, GR or CalWORKs, you ARE eligible to receive your restitution (see articles on page 1 and 2). But you MUST handle your lump-sum payment in a very specific way to ensure your benefits are not cut off or reduced. This is very important. We want everyone to receive the payments they are due and avoid any loss in monthly income. Please visit LA CAN's legal clinic on Thursday nights and see Nicole, the government benefits attorney. She can help you plan for your lump-sum payment.

Central Division Racial Profiling Nets Wrong Fish



(L) LA CAN Organizer General Dogon video-documenting the illegal arrest of LA CAN Director, Pete White; (R) General Dogon then handcuffed and detained to prohibit him from lawfully documenting the illegal arrest.

LA CAN has been monitoring LAPD activities for the last two years to both deter and document illegal actions by officers and to document the use of police to target, criminalize, and remove low-income and African American residents from downtown. On Friday February 1, 2008, LAPD took more extreme action to stop us from filming them.

Under Safer Cities, LAPD has been using parole status – both legally and illegally – to increase harassment and arrests of downtown residents and to incite fear of low-income community residents. On Friday February 1, 2008--which also happened to be the first day of Black History Month--LAPD planned a parole raid on a hotel near 5th and Towne. There were at least 30 LAPD officers and 10 parole agents on-site. A community resident alarmed by the sheer number of officers descending on the community called the office of LA CAN to report it.

Responding to the call, LA CAN members Pete White and Gerald Barnes grabbed pen, pad and camera and headed to 5th & Towne streets to document the activity. On location White began taking pictures and within minutes of being there was cuffed and against the wall. He was publicly detained for more than 20 minutes. He was later charged with a “pedestrian in the roadway” violation. However Barnes, who was in the exact same places at the same exact times before White was arrested, was neither handcuffed, cited or arrested. White repeatedly asked to exercise his right to speak with a supervisor and to receive officers’ cards, serial and badge numbers. All of his requests were summarily denied.

Soon after White was handcuffed, LA CAN member General Dogon arrived with a second camera and began documenting the illegal detention. Within minutes of him filming, he was also cuffed and up against the wall. They ran him for warrants and claimed they found a felony warrant. One officer told Dogon, “We really got you now.” Of course later, they claimed it was a “mistake.” When they released Dogon, still on the sidewalk, they gave him a ticket stating, “observed pedestrian cross street against don’t walk sign,” although Dogon had arrived on a bicycle.

Instead of releasing White on-site, they transported him to Central Station. When he got there, followed by 13 additional officers, they told him he was being charged with “walking in the roadway” and he needed to sign the citation to leave. Needless to say, he didn’t sign the citation because he did not commit the offense and the officers were well aware of that fact. They booked him and he spent the day at 77th Street jail.

Central Division brass quickly started a concerted media push to smear White’s credibility. Embarking on a journey to exonerate

themselves, and officers in their command, they went to their “goodie bag.” Using the age-old, highly-volatile stereotype of “the angry Black man,” Captain Jodi Wakefield and Commander Andrew Smith unleashed commentary that would make Bull Connor beam with pride. In the February 8-14, 2008 *Los Angeles Garment & Citizen*, Captain Wakefield stated, “LA CAN members behaved in a hostile manner that led her officers to take White to the station house...”

In the February 20-27, 2008 *Our Weekly*, reporter Greg Reese wrote, “Police claimed that White attempted to incite the crowd that gathered.” In the *Our Weekly* story both Captain Wakefield and Commander Smith provided the old *hostility* trick. Finally, on February 26, 2008, in an article by *Daily Journal* reporter Anat Rubin, LAPD brought forth the *coup de gras*. In this interview Captain Wakefield says, “When they finally got him out of the street, he became hostile and aggressive.” She was not finished yet as Wakefield went on to say, “And it became a hostile crowd. It’s not uncommon to take someone to the station when a crowd becomes hostile.”

Well Central Division, for the record, it is also not uncommon for the POLICE to charge someone for disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, inciting a riot, or a variety of others charges that you are more than capable of giving. And, in this case, your public statements are an attempt to skillfully craft a message that suggests all or some of these things transpired. If they really did, why was the only charge for pedestrian in a roadway? Their assertions are laughable and only continue the effort to frame all poor and Black downtown residents as criminals and justify the unfair policing under the Safer Cities Initiative.

On February 29, 2008--the last day of Black History Month--the fabricated charges against Pete White were THROWN OUT of court *in the interest of justice*. More importantly, however, on February 21, 2008 Case# CV08-01191 was filed in the United States District Court for the Central District of California against the City of Los Angeles, Chief William Bratton and the officers involved. The complaint, brought by the Law Office of Carol A. Sobel and Law Office of Rebecca F. Thorton alleges multiple civil rights violations below. The lawsuit is just a small piece of our organizing to end police occupation and abuse in downtown LA. Join LA CAN in these efforts!

Civil Rights Complaint

- 42 U.S.C. 1983 First Amendment
- 42 U.S.C. 1983 Fourth Amendment
- Calif. Constitution: Art. 1, sec. 2, 3 and 7
- California Civil Code 5 1.7
- California Civil Code 52.1
- Assault and Battery
- False Imprisonment
- Failure to Intervene to Prevent
- Violation of Civil Rights

Looking For Justice?



WE MIGHT JUST HAVE WHAT YOU NEED AT THE
COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINIC

Have you recently received a “quality of life” citation? Some examples include jaywalking, sitting on a crate, littering, recycling, etc.

Has the LAPD, Sheriff’s Dept., Highway Patrol, BID Security, City Clean-Up Crew or any other government employee taken or destroyed your property?

Has your landlord told you to leave; makes you change rooms every twenty-eight days; served you with eviction papers; or simply to respond to your requests for repairs?

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Thursday Nights 6:00 - 8:00 PM
LAST Intake at 6:30 PM
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“Life without liberty is like a body without spirit.”
--KAHLIL GIBRAN

An Open Letter to Geraldine Ferraro

BY PROFESSOR GABRIELLE FOREMAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Twenty-four years ago, when I was a young woman studying abroad, I made a call home from a pay phone on a busy Madrid corner and heard that you had been chosen to run as vice president. I can recall even now how absolutely elated I was -- how I waved friends over to share the news, brimming with happiness about the historic shift I hoped it symbolized for the country and for me as a young woman about to begin my own professional journey.

Now, I am writing to try to communicate to you how your recent assertions that Barack Obama is "very lucky" to be Black, and that if he were a white man "he would not be in this position," can be both inaccurate and racist without your being a racist. Of course you know that as a public figure your words circulate beyond the arena of your intent. You must realize, too, that your intent seems painfully unclear because you've chosen to reiterate and sharpen your comments rather than to contextualize or apologize for them.

It's worth rehearsing why it is hard for many to understand why being African-American can be considered advantageous when compared to being white. White median net worth is 14 times black net worth (largely because of post-World War II entitlements and discriminatory housing patterns).

Black men make up just 33% of the about 40 percent of college age African-American students studying for degrees. (White men make up about 46% of white undergraduates). Black representation in business, politics and education is disturbingly low. Look, for example, at the Senate, where Barack Obama is the sole African-American member and only the third to be elected since Reconstruction, that is, in a 125 years. (A still too small number of women, 16, all Anglo-American, serve in the Senate today).

Now, as the country faces a housing meltdown, the subprime loan crisis impacts African-Americans (and Latinos) at higher rates. We are 3 to 4 times more likely to have subprime, high interest, loans. In daily life, in Maryland, for example, all drivers seem to run lights and speed about equally, but a whopping 72% of those stopped and searched for traffic violations are Black (Blacks make up about 28% of the state's population). And when it comes to the larger health tragedies, like cancer,

Blacks in this country are 30% more likely to die of that disease than are whites. Black women are almost 80% more likely to suffer from a fatal stroke than our white counterparts. In the U.S. Black infants are more than twice as likely to die before

they turn one than are white children. Obama is advantaged because he happens to be Black?

Your comments exist in a larger context, not only in the context of your past work, or in the context of the contest for the Democratic primary -- and it would display great grace and maturity to acknowledge this. Saying that a Black man has it "easy" resonates with anti-affirmative action implications -- no matter your record on that program.

Saying such things in this climate makes Black people's jobs and lives harder. It makes it harder for me not to look like someone who had it "easy" and is "very lucky to be who I am," when I grew up on public assistance and got my first job when I was 12, before going on to graduate Phi Beta Kappa from Amherst College and then becoming someone blessed enough to teach inspiring young people at a liberal arts college in Los Angeles.

More importantly, your assertions play into attitudes that discount the continued structural discrimination Blacks face when they -- like others in this country -- are trying desperately to make ends meet and to keep themselves and their children safe and healthy and in schools where they can learn and succeed.

We hear rhetoric that dismisses our reality from the Republicans -- there's no reason to hear it now from Democrats. There's no reason to make divisive assertions when the party is trying to unite across race and class and region to address concrete problems of job loss, rising student debt, inaccessible health care, poverty and global warming. This is no time be stubbornly, inaccurately, defiant when Democrats could be coming together to create green jobs, to end a war in Iraq that should have never been waged, to rejoin the global community in addressing our shared challenges, and to celebrate and encourage young people's new engagement in our political process.

Let's address reality. Public figures must recognize that words matter. We can acknowledge your contributions and also condemn the insensitive and a historical assertions you seem so eager to reaffirm. The two are not mutually exclusive. Giving you the opportunity to align your recent comments with the advocacy you trumpet is quite far from first amendment censorship. Indeed, your recent assertions and accusations -- and the vigor with which you defend them -- dishonor the spirit of change that these historic campaigns should embody.

I write to ask that you acknowledge that your comments are both hurtful and divisive.

I have the audacity to hope that you will.

Gabrielle Foreman is a Professor of English and American Studies at Occidental College in Los Angeles

An Infantile Lack of Object Permanence

BY PAUL BODEN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The current insatiable appetite to see homeless people disappear from our parks, streets, business districts and tourist areas requires us all to go back to one of the very first lessons we are taught as infants.

Just because you can no longer see it, doesn't mean it no longer exists. Think of this the next time you play peek a boo with the toddler....The homeless are here, the homeless are gone...peek a boo!!

When San Francisco's city government talks about closing our parks at night and establishing expanded camping and cooking restrictions, and when a certain columnist writes about the parks, we often hear the phrase, "This is not about homelessness. It's about the parks." While this phrase is a great tagline, it is also blatantly untrue. Park sweeps, police outreach teams and the busting up of encampments in China Basin and along the freeways has EVERYTHING to do with homelessness!

Our parks, our freeway underpasses and our streets have been around a hell of a lot longer than the very recent advent of closing, fencing and privatizing them has. In fact, a direct correlation can be made between the massive increases in homelessness in the early 1980s and the park closures, police programs with both old and new vagrancy laws, and the fencing off of State and Port-controlled open space.

The reduction in federal affordable housing programs from \$83 billion in 1978 to \$18 billion in 1983 created contemporary homelessness and led to the opening of emergency shelters. Prior to the housing cuts, we had no massive homelessness. Public parks were open for star gazing (and necking); panhandling was around but not that big a deal. After the housing cuts, Disney moves into Times Square or Union Square, million dollar lofts are built in Skid Rows, the parks are all closed at night, and practically every store front has a "no trespassing" sign in its window. For homeless people, pretty much everything other than walking and breathing can get you a ticket which then lands you in jail.

It is clearly all about homelessness. And it is just as clearly all about trying to make the homeless disappear.

We need to rediscover what we learned playing peek a boo when we were infants: the person or the toy still exists, even when we don't see it. It's called object permanence. Maybe if we remembered

See INFANTILE, page 9

INFANTILE, from page 8

that lesson, we would choose to do something about the numbers of families and individuals living without housing in the United States with housing programs instead of Recreation and Park . Maybe we could find a unified community voice for restoring the Governor's recent (in a long series of) mental health funding cuts instead of constantly reading about the potential dangers those scary crazy homeless people impose on the rest of us.

When government is allowed to play peek a boo with people's lives and have them disappear, it leads to an inevitable result. Incarceration.. . Removing a people's presence from society pretty much requires you put them somewhere, and the funding for "security" and prisons is one of the few budgets that is increasing.

In response to the growing use of laws and police to address social as opposed to criminal issues, local communities across the country have set up "special courts", be they mental health courts, drug courts, and homeless or community courts. All are recent programs created by a criminal justice system that is being overwhelmed by the local governments response to the fact that our State and Federal governments have abandoned any pretense of having responsibility for the Health, Housing or Educational needs of people who may be poor and/or disabled.

Even with accepting the edict that "the law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, beg in the streets and to steal bread," unless we want to play this brutal dehumanizing game of peek a boo for another 25 years (San Francisco Homeless programs opened up in Oct.1982) we had best focus our energies more on recreating the New Deal and less on recreating Jim Crow.

Paul Boden is the Director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP). Visit www.wraphome.org for more information.

www.congress.org

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www.congress.org

How Can I Eat Better?

I discovered living in Skid Row that there are many barriers to accessing nutritious foods. My eating habits definitely changed when I moved to this community. There are not enough fruits and vegetables sold in the Mom & Pop stores, stores close early, I have to travel to Food for Less to buy what I really need, and I just don't have enough money to buy the nutritious foods I want.

However as part of the food team at the Los Angeles Community Action Network I have learned how to conduct workshops on Healthy Eating, Healthy Buying and Nutrition in Recovery and eat healthier on a budget. Bottom line folks -- we need to change our eating habits and demand better food accessibility or we will end up sick or dead. Try these tips to help you and your family eat better and stay healthy:

- 1 Vary your vegetables like dark green, orange, peas and beans.
- 2 Focus on fruits. Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit.
- 3 Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereal, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day.
- 4 Choose lean meats and milk products that are lower in fat.
- 5 Make physical activity a regular part of your day - now this part is free!

In our 2005 "Taken for Granted" study, we showed that the food stamp participation rate in the Central City East Community was extremely low, with only 42 percent of survey respondents reporting that they received food stamps. Food Stamps can increase our buying power for health foods!

Maybe you are tired of waiting in long lines at the DPSS offices or think you are not eligible. Los Angeles Community Action Network can help you apply for food stamp benefits. The Food Stamp Program helps people with little or no income buy nutritious food and most grocery stores take food stamp benefits. Some of the questions as to how you may qualify are:

- Q. Do I need a social security number?
A. Yes, you must get a social security number if you want food stamp benefits.
- Q. Can I get food stamp benefits if I am not working?
A. Yes. But if you are able to work, you must look for work, take a job, or training. If you are not able to work, there are no additional requirements.
- Q. What is the income limit?
A. There are two income limits: gross (total) income and net (after deductions) income. Most households must meet both income limits, but total monthly income for one person cannot exceed \$1,107. If you are under this limit but receive SSI, you are likely not eligible.
- Q. Resources?
A. Your resources are things like bank accounts. Most households may have up to \$2,000 in resources and still qualify. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or disabled, you may have up to \$3,000 in resources.
- Q. Drug Felonies?
A. You can receive food stamps if you have a drug possession felony on your record. You cannot receive food stamps if you have a record of drug sales.
- Q. Citizenship?
A. You may get food stamps if you are a documented immigrant; you do not have to be a citizen.

Sweet Potatoes

SHOPPER'S TIPS

- Look for firm, dark, smooth skin without wrinkles, bruises, or sprouts.
- Avoid sweet potatoes with moldy spots.

FUN FACTS!

- In the United States, sweet potatoes are often called yams. It is believed that the confusion started in 1930 when growers began calling a new type of orange sweet potato the Louisiana Yam to set it apart from the common white sweet potato.
- Sweet potatoes are roots (like carrots) that came from South America. Yams are tubers (like potatoes) that came from West Africa. True yams are not commonly found in the United States.

WHAT IS IN IT FOR YOU?

One sweet potato is:

- An excellent source of vitamin A.
- A source of fiber, vitamin B6, and potassium.

SERVING IDEAS

- Dip strips of sweet potatoes in egg substitute and bake on a lightly oiled pan at 425°F for 25 to 30 minutes for a batch of sweet potato fries.
- Bake sliced sweet potatoes with apples and cinnamon for a hot dessert.

PEAK SEASON	STORAGE
California grown varieties, available in the fall, may be fresher and cost less than varieties shipped from other regions.	Do not store sweet potatoes in the refrigerator or they will develop a hard core and an "oil" taste. Sweet potatoes kept at room temperature should be enjoyed within one week.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Stamp Program.

Poetic Voices From the Community

*All great movements were joined by powerful arts, music & poetry.
This page is dedicated to our community poets who are seeking Poetic Justice*

We Are Not Trash!

By Yvonne Michelle Autry

In the City's most recent efforts to "beautify" downtown, countless homeless pedestrians and unsuspecting residents alike have been displaced, dehumanized, disrespected, and discriminated against. Poor people are being victimized by "The Safer Cities Initiative." They are depressed and their lives are being destroyed!

Police and B.I.D.'s who abuse their authority are perpetrating these crimes against our community. Ultimately, wealthy Real Estate developers and the City are directly responsible! (They finance law enforcement.)

In response: I urge the City to house the homeless!

And I Declare:

We are not trash!

We are not to be thrown away!

We are not animals!

We are human beings! We are people! We have always been people! We have always been human beings! We are not the rich white gentry, but we are people! By the way, there were human beings living downtown before the rich white people decided that they wanted it! There were people living downtown before the rich arrived! There were people living here before the gentry desired these most valuable and viable properties. They had lived here for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty + years! People have always lived here; long before the evil, greedy, selfish, gentry migrated. We have always been men and women! No less because we are Black, poor, disabled, senior citizens, people of color, etc.

The indigenous people were also human beings! The Native Americans were people long before the evil, greedy, selfish, and barbaric white Europeans renamed them "Indians." The Europeans raped, robbed and pillaged everything that they could under the most evil, false pretense called "Divine Right." The Europeans thought that they were in the West Indies. That is just how ignorant that they were! The original people were here first, just like "We the People"; the original downtown residents were here first, before the gentry!

The First Americans' civil rights were desecrated and they were exterminated by the savage Europeans. The same thing is happening right here, right now, downtown! Don't let history repeat itself!

The indigent, especially Black people and people of color are being incriminated and demonized in order to justify displacements, illegal evictions, harassments, intimidation tactics, murders, racial profiling, police brutality, etc. Those of us who speak up are constantly under attack. We endure character assassinations, smear campaigns, defamation of character, slander, and entrapment on a daily basis! Every low income resident downtown is not a criminal. I am not a mass murderer, I am not a terrorist, I am not a prostitute, I do not use drugs, I do not smoke, I am not crazy, I was not once a man, nor am I a sex offender. Why we are constantly and consistently falsely accused? In order to undermine the importance of our plight and diminish the validity of our complaints, we are constantly under surveillance, harassed, smeared, slandered, defamed, demonized and incriminated. Powers that be do this in an effort to justify arresting us or evicting us in favor of the gentry; simply because the wealthy generate more revenue and because they spend more money.

Though some downtown residents may be criminals, they still have the right to pay their debt to society and to make full restitution! They have every right to a quality of life recovery! No more double standards! We demand equality, NOW!

Still Waters Run Deep

Within my mind I fathom deep beneath the surface, beyond past sleep. I submerge myself in objective state where my being is in a tranquil wake conscious unmoved by conscious time. Here I am immersed in mind without a memory of conscious time. I find myself from deep within diluting illusions like the wind as peace and serenity unfold, (I behold me) in the light of truth, and (I become and see) the truth of life and love in me. Still Waters run deep so I've been told, now I know, for this truth is old. I now look from within with a view from the past and I've found a revelation to all those who ask before mystery, beyond memory, in objective wake when absolute mind, was in a perfect state that all is one, connected together and we are one in the future forever.

Billy Shaw 12/22/07

Skid Row No Mo'

The wonderful sound of cussin' and fussin'

The scent of Skid Row bussin' my cousins

Managers stealin', getting' over smokin' and drinkin'

Throwin' up stinkin', thinkin', dreamin' of anotha suckah

They discovah schemin', scammin', scandalous handlin'

Dirty bloody homeless money. Buildin' buildings mighty funny.

They ain't spendin' cuz donations have been given

Poor pawns packin' broken pipe dreams well wishes an things

Overseers thieves they be'ers, dead president seekers, greedy greeters.

Yuppies with puppies loffin' getting' closer to the sleepers.

Watch out here come the sweepers in blue.

They're not keepers of the dream, make me wanna scream!

Sidewalks seem eerily clean.

Where did all the people go?

Pam Walls

Please Submit All

Poetry Articles &

Other Materials

Editor:

The Community Connection

456 S. Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90013

(213) 228-0024

It's So Hard to Say Good-Bye



In Loving Memory of Peggy Cummings, November 20, 1943 - January 9, 2008

"I remember Peggy for her warm and welcoming spirit and also her ability to both recognize and laugh at the ridiculous side of frustrating situations. She had a positivity about her that I found inspirational, because it is often difficult for me to remain positive in this world. She was a lovely person, someone who I always felt happy to have bumped into whenever we met. I will always remember her performance about "Bob" in the Vagina Monologues. Peggy was a person who made the world a friendlier place. I will miss her."

Anisa Mendizabal, Ithaca, NY

"Sorry that I couldn't be present in this time of sorrow; God bless her soul and God be with LA CAN members."

Otis Howard, Los Angeles, CA

"I am shocked and saddened to hear the news about Peggy Cummings. The Peggy I knew was a tireless, generous, and rock steady presence not only with LA CAN but as a resident of the downtown community of Central City East. She was a true asset who embodied the very meaning of grassroots involvement and dedication. She was also just a kind-hearted person who never had an unkind word to say about anyone. I respected and admired her devotion to her Catholicism and the memories she often shared of being a loving wife and mother. I hope that she will not only be suitably remembered by those whose lives she touched but that somehow a monument will be erected or dedicated to her as an example to others of how to live a rich and meaningful life. Rest in peace, Peggy Cummings."

Sincerely and with the utmost condolences to friends and family,
Rickey Mantley, St. Paul, MN

"Peggy will greatly be missed. May her spirit continue to be in our hearts as we continue our quest for peace, justice and equality."

Respectfully,
Gerardo Gomez, Los Angeles, CA

Last Call

There becomes a void in the ranks
when a soldier falls
silence looms when the grim reaper calls

Yet a new cycle begins as one cycle must end
a snag in the fabric that only the master can mend

Be thoughtful of the service this comrade extended
overwhelmed of a loss of one who had been commended

One question?
Were we alright with the master at the seemingly untimely call
That's all we can ask when a true soldier falls.

--By Ellery Bailey

Peggy Cummings' Memorial

From Beverly Kanter

Peggy Cummings died in January in a fall from the fire escape at her residence hotel. She was in the best of health, as far as her friends at LA CAN know. She told me last year that when she was sixty-five she would collect her pension from thirty years spent married to her husband Jim, and move to a better apartment. She told me she looked forward to death, since she would be reborn in the body she had at age thirty and be with Jim.

One of the twenty eulogists at the memorial service said, "No matter what people did to her, she put an optimist tone on it." She told me she had gone into a depression after Jim had died and had joined LA CAN to avoid loneliness. I remember she kept busy with hobbies she offered to teach me: She crocheted caps and scarves and played solitaire. Her favorite cap was the color of her LA CAN teeshirt.

I counted fifty mourners in the clubhouse kitchen to listen to the eulogies. Twenty LA CAN members praised her, and three of her four children thanked us for being her friend. What everyone praised Peggy for was her diligence, her good cheer, and her willingness to learn new skills. For example, she was the oldest member of a Tai Chi class, and she was set to take on a new a part in our play, The Vagina Monologues.

The End.



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- ✓ INFORM RESIDENTS ABOUT CRITICAL PROGRAM AND POLICY CHANGES.



PROJECT OF THE LA COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

Call LA CAN (213) 228-0024 and ask for Pete White or just come to 456 S. Main Street on Thursdays at 1:00 p.m.

Community Connection

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Linda Valverde

Pam Walls

Become A Community Connection Sponsor

While LA CAN has been quite successful in framing our work in a way that is frequently highlighted in mainstream media, these "sound-bites" only scratch the surface of the real work and the real stories of our community. Following the tradition of all major social movements, LA CAN created a community-based newspaper with the sole purpose of telling the whole story from the perspectives of those living it. The newspaper shares LA CAN's philosophy that people are best suited to tell their own stories; therefore, all stories are written by LA CAN members and supporters. The Community Connection is LA CAN's rendition of the North Star, the Liberator and other historical examples of community-based press used to advance social change.

Our Community Connection Sponsor Campaign asks sponsors to pledge a \$50 monthly donation. Sponsors will be highlighted in each issue unless anonymity is requested.

Your support for the Community Connection:

- ◆ Provides critical information on available services, program and policy changes that affect downtown's low-income and homeless residents.
- ◆ Tells the untold stories of impacts created by policy
- ◆ Coordinates a training program for vendors which includes leadership development, popular education, conflict resolution techniques and selling tips.
- ◆ Provides extremely poor and homeless vendors an opportunity to earn much needed money with dignity

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Yes, I want to become a COMMUNITY CONNECTION Underwriter @ \$50 a month for _____ months.

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I want to support the work of the Los Angeles Community Action Network with a single tax-deductible* contribution in the amount of: (circle amount) \$25 \$40 \$55 \$70 \$100 Other \$_____

Please make checks payable to: **Los Angeles Community Action Network** and send to: LA CAN, 456 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

You can also make an online donation at www.cangress.org utilizing the donate now button.



*All donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. The Los Angeles Community Action Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Editorial Policy

The Los Angeles Community Action Network is a membership organization comprised of low-income, homeless and formerly homeless residents in the Central City East community of downtown Los Angeles [Skid Row]. LA CAN's staff and core members, more than 95% of whom live in Skid Row and/or have been homeless, write the lion's share of articles that appear in the Community Connection. These appear without a byline. Articles by people who are not LA CAN core members and extremely personal articles receive a byline. These articles do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and perspectives of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

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