

THE OFFICIAL NEWS ORGAN OF THE LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

# Community Connection

SUGGESTED MINIMUM DONATION: ONE DOLLAR (\$1)

THE VOICE, THE PULSE, OF OUR VILLAGE

## Abuse Continues Under the Banner of "Safer Cities"



OFFICERS BEAT SKID ROW RESIDENT

On July 24, 2008 James Foster--one of many downtown residents who suffer from mental illness--was confronted by LAPD officers on San Julian St. near the Union Rescue Mission. Eyewitness accounts assert that Mr. Foster was standing near the wall eating something that appeared to be sunflower seeds when officers arrived on the block in their patrol car. What happens next is amazing, inhumane and degrading.

Eyewitnesses go on to say that the two officers barked out something over their loudspeaker which froze Mr. Foster in his tracks. The officers then got out of their patrol car and approached Foster, who was standing still, demanding that he open his mouth. Foster complied by spitting out sunflower seeds which he happened to be chewing.

At this point the LA CAN videotape begins to roll.

The video shows a non-combative Foster standing in a bent-over fashion grasping a steel security gate with officers pulling his arm. There is clear audio where he is telling/pleading with the

ABUSE CONTINUED ON PAGE #8



**4** LA CAN Blows into the Windy City

**5** Bringing the Safer Cities Initiative to its Knees! Take action on Thursday, September 25th!



**7** Skid Row FilmMaker Claims Victory!

## Were you displaced from the Alexandria Hotel between August 2006 and May 2008?

If so, a Federal Court has determined that you may be eligible for relocation benefits. LA CAN encourages everyone who was displaced to come forward! You can call Paragon Partners directly at 888-899-7498. Paragon Partners will also be conducting interviews of displaced tenants at LA CAN twice in September - you can call in advance or just walk in.

Friday, September 12 and Friday, September 19

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

LA CAN Offices: 456 S. Main Street

Contact LA CAN at 213-228-0024 for more info

## Where There's Smoke There's Fire: Amerland Owned Building Burns in Vallejo, CA



[see story on Page# 3]

## Seattle's Failing Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness: Less spin, more courage (Real Change News, USA)

By Timothy Harris

Ending homelessness, you may be thinking, is a goal that is both audacious and difficult. At least they're trying. No. They are not.

Depending upon your source, the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in Seattle/King County is succeeding, or failing. This week, the Committee to End Homelessness (CEHKC) released their 2007 Annual Progress Report. "By December 31, 2007," reads the report, "we had opened 1,449 units with another 1,411 in the pipeline."

Having reached the 30 percent mark in less than three years, we can presume that homelessness will end on schedule.

This is pure, unadulterated spin. Plan benchmarks call for opening 950 units of housing and subsidized rentals annually over 10 years. Units "in the pipeline" don't count. On the other hand, units in the pipeline prior to the plan are counted as units opened. At least they're being consistent.

The sad reality is that CEHKC, a public/private sector consortium of business, government, philanthropy, churches, and non-profits, is falling short on meeting stated goals by nearly half.

One need look no further than their own Governing Board minutes of last April to see the truth.

"The Ten Year Plan has a goal of creating 9,500 units of housing — 4,500 units through new development and 5,000 from the use of existing housing through master leasing/rental subsidy. Our current rate of 500 units per year (approximately 300 new construction and 200 subsidised rentals) is double the pre-Plan pace, but still less than that needed to reach the Plan's proposed 10-year average of 950 per year. To achieve our goal, we need to increase our production by 450 per year."

This progress came during a time of state, county, and city budgetary surplus. We now face a contracting economy and budgetary shortfalls at all levels of government. According to CEHKC's own numbers, sustaining current housing production rates will cost a total of \$55.6 million annually.

To produce the units required to meet plan benchmarks and cover the current shortfall will take another \$67.8 million each year.

Worse, the 2008 One Night Count of homeless people in Seattle/King County documents a 15 percent increase in homelessness over the previous year. This should surprise no one. Rental vacancy rates are at an all time low and the cost of housing is at an all time high. Several times the number of affordable units produced has been lost to condo conversion and other market forces.

The Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness has no mechanism to re-assess benchmarks in relation to affordable housing loss and increased homelessness. The 950 units produced annually target is a static number that exists within a dynamic landscape of growing inequality.

Bottom line: The Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness is in deep trouble.

Proposed solutions include greater efforts to leverage federal resources, and a stronger push for state and local resources. In a time of contracting budgets, prospects here are dim. We are hitting the wall. Laughably, the plan for "increasing political will" rests largely on a revision of the CEHKC communications plan.

Newsflash: Building the political will to end homelessness cannot be separated from building a broader movement for economic justice. This includes addressing issues of responsible development, tax fairness, growing inequality, racialized poverty, and broadly felt economic vulnerability.

Homelessness cannot be ended without the confrontation of power. Ending homelessness, you may be thinking, is a goal that is both audacious and difficult. At least they're trying.

No. They are not. Trying takes courage. It means stepping on a few toes. It means sincerely giving a crap about the condition of those who are on the street tonight, and not deferring the solution to the full implementation of some half-assed plan that is clearly failing.

Seattle's homeless sweeps are making the city safe for the most affluent at the expense of the most desperate. Over nearly a year of intense community opposition to city policy, CEHKC has offered only silence. City officials routinely hide behind the Ten Year Plan, even as they dodge the

critical question of where people are supposed to go.

"Thank you for your comments about illegal encampments," begins the Mayor's standard reply. "For too long, society has viewed homelessness as a problem that can only be managed, not solved. I disagree. ... Allowing people to live in tents and under tarps in greenbelts without water, sanitation, and hidden from police is neither a safe nor humane approach. We can do better. Working with local partners, we have created the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness...."

Homelessness cannot be ended at the expense of meeting immediate survival needs. To say that more shelter beds are not the answer and that outdoor survival is illegal when 2,631 people were counted on the street — outside of an over-capacity emergency shelter system — during the cold dead of a single January night, is a dodge at best.

This is not courage. This is hypocrisy, the tribute that vice pays to virtue.

Across the nation, more than 300 municipalities have adopted Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness. This is not a social justice movement. It is a bureaucratic response to federal funding requirements.

In most of these cities, certain similarities can be seen. Urban living is in for those who can afford it, and visible poverty is a problem to be managed. Extreme and growing inequality defines the urban landscape, and quasi-governmental bodies have implemented various strategies to manage the contradiction. This typically looks like the repression and criminalization of those on the street, and "homeless advocacy" that ignores the broader issues of poverty, inequality, and declining human and civil rights.

The modern era of homelessness has everything to do with the question of power. Who benefits? In the global economy, private capital has eclipsed the power of an increasingly deregulatory government. Profits are privatized, risk is socialized, taxation is regressive, and those who are written off by the new economy are largely abandoned.

You don't end homelessness with a better communications plan. You end homelessness by challenging power and fighting back like it matters. As billionaire investor Warren Buffet has said, "There's class warfare alright, but it's my class — the rich class — that's winning."

## Where There's Smoke There's Fire: Amerland Owned Building Burns in Vallejo, CA

The saga continues when it comes to Ruben Islas and Jules Arthur of Logan Property Management/Amerland Group.

First, they illegally displaced disabled and Black tenants in the Alexandria Hotel and find themselves in federal court as a result. Next, the City Attorney filed a criminal complaint against Amerland for failing to comply with the Los Angeles Fire Department's orders to fix the broken fire systems in their Rosslyn Lofts (formerly Frontier Hotel) and Alexandria Hotel projects.

An April 4, 2008 LA Times story entitled "Hotel Owners Face Charges" reported,



CASA DE VALLEJO ENGLUFED IN FLAMES

*"The fire protection systems at Rosslyn, formerly the Frontier Hotel, were in such disrepair that the owners were supposed to ensure that the building was patrolled by employees around the clock under a so-called fire watch ordered by the Los Angeles Fire Department. The owners failed to patrol the building, the complaint alleges."*

Now a variety of Northern California-based newspapers, blogs and television stations are reporting on the tragic fire that ripped through the Casa De Vallejo Retirement Homes on August 15, 2008.

Located in Vallejo, California, Casa de Vallejo is a former residential hotel turned into a senior living community. Similar to residential hotels in the downtown community the tenants of Casa de were people on fixed incomes, seniors and veterans. Also, to add one last twist to the story, **Casa de Vallejo is owned by none other than Jules Arthur & Ruben Islas--owners of the Alexandria and Frontier hotels.**

The eight-alarm blaze took residents by surprise at 4:00 AM or so. It was reported that while common areas of the building possessed sprinkler systems individual units were left with only smoke detectors. In one interview, conducted by Marc Garman of the Vallejo Independent Bulletin, a caregiver questioned whether an actual fire alarm was ever activated throughout the entire ordeal.

Another interview conducted by Rachel Raskin Zrihen of the Vallejo Times-Herald yielded an even more blunt characterization of both the management and alleged fire systems failure:

*"Logan management is scum," said former Casa de tenant James Banigan. "They're all about the money. They're worried about a lawsuit. They just want us dispersed and out of the way by the time the grand jury meets, which it will."*

*"Questions will arise over why no alarms went off in the building, and why overnight security was removed in late 2007," he said.*

Your concern should go out to the residents of Casa de Vallejo whose temporary relocation assistance was due to end in early September 5. As you can only imagine, many of the former tenants will most likely find themselves homeless with no other housing option. However, as concerned residents of downtown LA, we must continue to ensure that Amerland Group and their related entities treat tenants fairly, operate buildings safely, and do what they are required to do by law in their two buildings in our community.

Check out LA CAN's new blog at [cangress.wordpress.com](http://cangress.wordpress.com) for more on this story and other late breaking community news.

### Cecil Hotel

As reported in the Community Connection previously, the owners of the Cecil Hotel filed a lawsuit against the City claiming that the Cecil is NOT a residential hotel. The formal complaint actually seems to claim that the Cecil Hotel has NEVER been a residential hotel and that they never engaged in the 28-day shuffle.

Subsequently, two long-term Cecil tenants came forward to attempt to legally intervene in this lawsuit, since tenants have so much at stake in this issue - their homes! Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and the law firm of Stroock, Stroock & Lavan are representing tenants in this legal action.

LA CAN members have long documented the Cecil's attempts to convert to a tourist hotel in the past couple of years. All of these changes came while a moratorium was in place explicitly to prevent conversions of residential hotels to tourist hotels. Now a federal court will determine the status and outcome for the Cecil Hotel and its tenants.

If you live or recently lived at the Cecil Hotel, get involved with other tenants fighting to save their housing. We have heard numerous reports of problems with bed bugs at the Cecil - you do not have to accept unhealthy living conditions! Come to LA CAN to find out how to get involved and how to protect your tenant rights.

### Huntington Hotel

After a long wait by Huntington tenants, the City moved forward with a claims process for much-deserved rent rebates for any rent paid since February 2003. This was the result of legal action against the Huntington owners by the City Attorney and compensates tenants who were treated unfairly and illegally and put up with horrendous living conditions.

While we are happy to see tenants receive compensation for their hardship, there is much more work to be done. Join Huntington tenants who have been working together to improve health and safety conditions. We worked together to get individual mailboxes installed (required by law in residential hotels as of July 1, 2008) to avoid long-standing mail problems - and now we need to pressure management to work faster to get keys distributed to tenants! Additionally, many tenants at the Huntington have received eviction notices in the past few weeks. We must work together to avoid mass displacement in this hotel.

## LA CAN Blows Into the Windy City to Discuss Gentrification



MEMBERS OF KENWOOD OAKLAND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PROTEST GENTRIFICATION

Early in August 2008 the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization [KOCO] contacted LA CAN and extended a warm invitation to participate in their upcoming community townhall and rally. The event would focus on the pending 2016 Olympic bid in Chicago and rampant gentrification that has removed much needed affordable housing on that City's Southside.

KOCO has been doing work similar to that of the Los Angeles Community Action Network for a number of years. That said, it is not surprising that they are up against similar impediments. But, true to form, they have refused to give up. On Chicago's Southside they have emerged as the voice of a community that had been long silenced. More importantly, much to the chagrin of those who would like to see them disappear, their staff and members are comprised of local residents who live in Kenwood and are fighting to stay in their own communities. The likelihood of them just packing up, closing the doors, and going somewhere else is NOT high.

The threat of massive displacement, resulting from a successful Olympic bid, looms large for many organizations and neighborhoods on the Southside. The removal of affordable housing; the closure of Michael Reese Hospital, a vital organ within the health care delivery system for poor families; and plans to create an Olympic Village where services now stood was enough to cause alarm. This alarmed served as the impetus to create a coalition now dubbed CEO or Communities for an Equitable Olympics.

CEO 2016 is a coalition of community and labor organizations working to create a community benefits agreement for several of the communities that will be most affected by Chicago's Bid for the 2016 Olympics. Members include: Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Action Now, American Friends Service Committee, Centers for New Horizons, SEIU Healthcare Illinois and Indiana, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, The Grassroots Collaborative, The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Illinois Hunger Coalition, Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization, Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations, and Metropolitan Tenants Organization

Research and investigation was the first slated task of the newly formed CEO. Outreach was conducted in US cities who had formerly hosted the Olympic Games to gauge their experience. After connecting with those cities CEO arrived at one conclusion: without a Community Benefits Agreement problems such as displacement of low-income and working families, limited minority business participation, and processes that lack transparency were highly probable.

The starting point of the rally and march was a parking lot at the soon to be closed Michael Reese Hospital. Michael Reese Hospital, much like our own Martin Luther King Hospital in Watts, is one of few facilities providing medical services to resource-starved Southside residents. If successful in its Olympic bid, the City would level the hospital site and replace it with the Olympic Village.

LA CAN's Pete White was slated to deliver the keynote address in a jam-packed Olivet Baptist Church. The press conference, which was held outside because cameras were not allowed in the sanctuary, was well attended by a sea of media outlets. One could stand to reason that the Rev. Jeremiah Wright incident, [Senator Barack Obama's pastor of twenty-years] which turned into a huge media spectacle, has Black churches nationwide re-thinking their open door policies. Attendees were eager to hear the Los Angeles Olympic experience, and other current gentrification efforts, and Pete did not let them down.

The keynote presentation highlighted the experience of community residents during the 1984 Olympics. Pete recalled how the only opportunity for community residents in his neighborhood was to clean the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. He recounted how his friends and neighbors all picked up brooms and trash bags, gracefully sweeping the stadium in the wee hours. Never in a million years, during that time, would he have known about the billions of dollars that passed through his community but not benefitting the same. He also talked about the current struggles facing LA residents who live squarely in the midst of a rapidly gentrifying community. He received a standing ovation when he said:

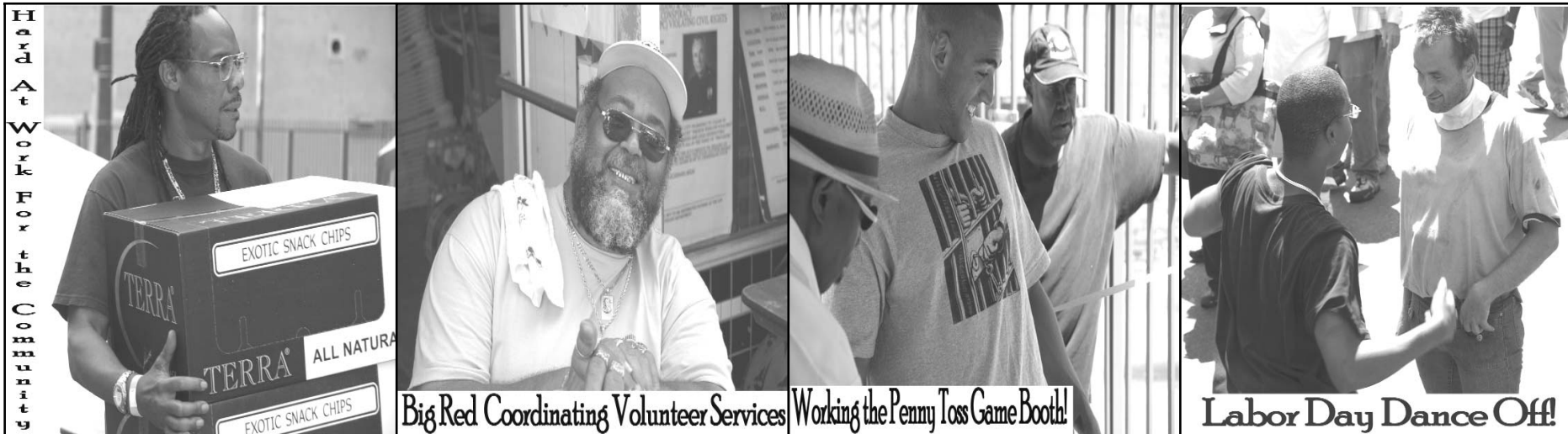
"We have achieved a greater understanding of why we needed to create the tension that Dr. King speaks of, that leads to negotiation and ultimately to a more equitable distribution of our resources. That our actions must mirror the ferociousness of indifference that fuels the destruction of our communities."

He left the audience with one piece of advice, to never allow outsiders to control the destiny of your community.

LA CAN continues to build partnerships with grassroots organizations across the region and the country who are fighting gentrification and poverty and holding firm to their land and their principles. There is a growing movement of low-income people dedicated to ensuring continued access to our own communities and cities.



LA CAN'S PETE WHITE ADDRESSES A PACKED OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH ON CHICAGO'S SOUTHSIDE



Hard At Work For the Community

## Labor Day Block Party A Smashing Success!

LA CAN continues to entertain residents and visitors with their annual Labor Day Block Party. From its inception the Labor Day Gala, as it is called, was designed to recognize the hard work of residents throughout the year. While most Labor Day events celebrate the many advances of organized labor, LA CAN felt that it was important to recognize another form of organized labor: the work that goes into broad-based community development. We felt that it was important to recognize those leaders who toil on a day-to-day basis on a mission to improve their community.

This year, similar to years past, there was an abundance of laughter, dancing, games and stuffed bellies. One great addition to this year's festivities was the Central City East Sounds of Skid Row troupe that recently formed in the neighborhood. The drummers played rhythms for hours seeming to never tire, Gabriel blew his trumpet over driving drum beats, and spoken word provided a soothing melodious opportunity to get educated old-school style. Rhythms filled the air and pulled residents from all parts of downtown to the pavement where they danced joyously. It was a beautiful display of diversity and a snapshot of what is possible in our downtown community when we come together.

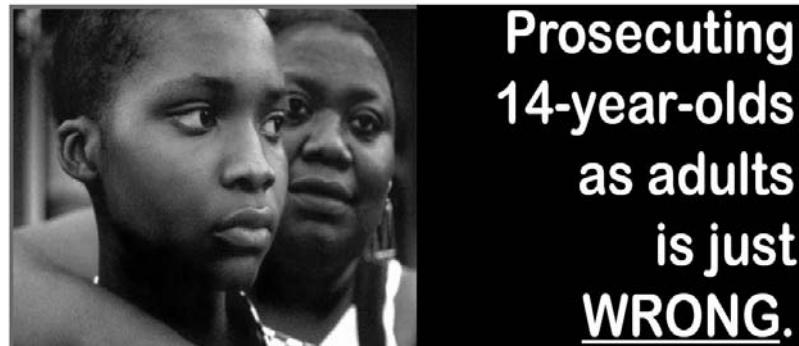
We would like to thank all of our supporters that made this day possible, and we look forward to partying with you next year!

### They say get back, we say fight back!

SAVE the Date  
 September 25, 2008  
 Meet at LA CAN at 9:30 am  
 Safer Cities Anniversary Action

Mayor Villaraigosa's Safer Cities Initiative has failed to deliver housing, enhancement, and help for those that need it most. Instead, it has criminalized an entire community by incarcerating, ticketing and displacing thousands of residents. Moreover, as a result of the Safer Cities Initiative policing, countless numbers of residents will not qualify for food stamps or housing programs--making them perpetually homeless.

Come to LA CAN for more information:  
 456 S. Main Street, LA, CA 90013



Prosecuting  
 14-year-olds  
 as adults  
 is just  
**WRONG.**

On Nov 4th *Defend Our Youth* -  
**DEFEAT Proposition 6!**

Call us at (213) 387-2800  
[www.thestrategycenter.org](http://www.thestrategycenter.org)

## VOTE 2008: As if your life depends on it...

### Making History

Are you willing to sit out the most important election of you lifetime?  
 Are you going to be part of problem, or part of the solution?  
 Are you satisfied with the current state of things?

### You can vote if:

- You are a naturalized citizen
- Not incarcerated at the time of election
- Not on parole [this does not include probation]
- You are currently on probation
- Have a felony record

### You can not vote if you are:

- Not a citizen
- On parole at the time of election
- Incarcerated at the time of election

### Register to vote today if:

- You are not registered
- You have moved since you last registered
- Your political party affiliation has changed

If you are ineligible to vote at this time it does not mean that you are absolved of your civic duty. Ineligibility does not mean that you can't participate in voter registration activities, voter education, or Get Out the Vote campaigns. Instead, you now have the obligation to rally friends, family, and neighbors to the polls.

Once one assumes an attitude of intolerance, there is no knowing where it will take one. Intolerance, someone has said, is violence to the intellect and hatred is violence to the heart.

--Mahatma Gandhi, 1924



## 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?

Every THURSDAY NIGHT at 6:00 PM

456 S. Main Street  
 Thursday Nights 6:00 - 8:00 PM  
 LAST Intake at 6:30 PM  
 For More Info: 213-228-0024

"Life without liberty is like a body without spirit."  
 --KAHLIL GIBRAN

## THE DELIBERATE DESTRUCTION AND CRIMINALIZATION OF A COMMUNITY

The launching of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's "Safer Cities" program has coincided with a string of unsolved LAPD assaults, including several recent incidents. On July 29, 2008 LA CAN members and a contingent of organizations and residents met at San Julian Park to address the media. Nothing was going to stop residents who have grown tired of rampant police conduct; not even the earthquake which struck at high-noon.

The July 24th assaults of two Black men on the same day, on the same street and within hours of one another were simply too much for our community to bear. Community residents assembled in full force to speak out, and take decisive action against the attacks which were meant to show who was really "large and in charge." LAPD's plan, beyond the shadow of a doubt, had backfired. Skid Row residents know our rights and we are prepared to defend them.

First James Foster--one of many downtown residents that suffer from mental illness--was confronted by LAPD officers on San Julian Street near the corner of Sixth Street. Eyewitness accounts and videotape confirm that Mr. Foster sustained multiple blows to the back of his head by way of clenched fists. He was kned in the mid-section and wrangled down, like an animal, by a swarm of over-zealous cops. When it finally ceased, Mr. Foster was carted away in an ambulance. (see full story on page 1)

Then, several hours later on that same day, a teenager was sitting in San Julian Park, asleep next to his mother, when an officer on horseback approached. Eyewitnesses stated that the mounted officer awakened the teen and asked him how old he was, where he slept the night before, and a variety of other pointless questions. Next the officer ordered the youth to stand and to put his hands above his head. From this defenseless position the officer scoops him up and slams him to the concrete headfirst. When other officers join in on the m el e the mother tries to shield her son and move officers that are now smothering his body, and she too is arrested. Videotape also documents a portion of this incident of police violence.

These are the most recent incidents, but they follow in a long string of police abuse over the past two years of the racist and violent Safer Cities Initiative. For example, in July 2007 Faith Hernandez, a 90-pound woman Black

woman, was brutally beaten by four LAPD officers. Eyewitnesses affirm that Central Division officers appeared to be playing a game of cat and mouse as they toyed with her. They would allow her to get up from the pavement only to sweep her off her feet knocking her back to the ground. After they grew tired of this "game" the force became more brutal. During Faith's Preliminary Hearing, LAPD Officer Doan admitted to punching her with a closed fist-multiple times and kicking her. When asked why he punished her in this way he stated, "to cause pain." This incident happened in broad daylight and in plain view of nearly two-hundred onlookers. Again, as in other incidents, Faith was carted away hog-tied and bleeding profusely from the face & head.

Shortly after the Faith Hernandez beating, another woman was victimized on 8th and Los Angeles Street. According to eyewitnesses the woman was extremely distressed and asking for help. Store employees attempted to help the woman, who was nude, and get her some assistance. She asked to use the restroom and locked herself inside, at which point the LAPD was called. Accounts of what unfolds at this point becomes fuzzy with some witnesses describing her as being dragged from the bathroom and tased, while others state that she was in a scuffle with officers that resulted in her being choked.

Regardless of the version, one fact remains consistent within all accounts: when the woman went into the bathroom she was fully conscious and when the officers dragged her from the bathroom she was conscious. However, after her interactions with Central Division officers, she was rendered unconscious. Witnesses state that she was revived at the scene and taken away in an ambulance. The woman later died as a result of her injuries.

LAPD's Central Division has assaulted, harassed, illegally charged and falsely accused many men, women, and children to "protect and serve" the gentrification efforts in Downtown LA. Central Division's continued rhetorical claim has been that they are protecting poor people from themselves because we are in fact more likely to become victims of crime versus perpetrators. When all is said and done, their role is simply to remove black and brown faces out of downtown. Moreover, it is all done so Yuppies can walk their \$5,000 French Poodles down Main Street while sipping on lattes or drinking cold beer.

LA CAN members understand the context of Safer Cities - the deliberate destruction and criminalization of our community. We have not accepted and will not accept it and will keep fighting until it ends.

THEY SAY GET BACK, WE SAY FIGHT BACK!

## Another LA CAN Organizer Arrested For Observing the Police

Deborah Burton, longtime LA CAN member and staff, was arrested on the morning of September 9, 2008 while she and her team observed and documented LAPD officers in the course of their duties. Her arrest brings the number of LA CAN staff arrested simply for exercising their rights to three. Many others have been cited, detained, and often subsequently cleared of the false accusations. Poor residents should understand that this is one more example of the intimidation and harassment tactics used to keep us quiet. More troubling is that these violations occur in broad daylight, often on videotape, under the color of legal authority.

Within minutes of Debbie's release she was back on duty canvassing the neighborhood for civil and human rights violations. Her message was clear, "I am not afraid to fight for what I believe in!"

Stay tuned because there will be more to come on this story.



# The Prisons are the New Plantations

by: Yvonne Michelle Autry

It is my belief that the three strikes laws were designed to set America back 300-400 years. I do not support violence in any way, shape, or form! On the contrary, I strongly oppose violence against all of God's creations. I oppose all violence against men, women, children, animals, the earth ...I am even against cutting down the trees! I am a vegetarian and an environmentalist! Yes, I am an extremist in that I do not smoke. I do not choose to use recreational or pharmaceutical drugs! (I encourage others to do same) I routinely encourage the teachings of The Most High, God Almighty, Black History and self-love, especially in our community. I do this so that we will learn to love ourselves, know ourselves, value ourselves, respect ourselves and co-exist harmoniously within our own communities, and with other nations as well.

We all have issues to overcome. I only hope and pray that as we continue to do so, we will minimize the pain and the suffering that we cause ourselves and others. However, I do not think the Three Strikes Law is the answer; nor do I feel that it is a deterrent to crime. Especially since the majority of its victims are Black and prisons are still overcrowded.

I know that many white collar criminals have been exonerated, permitted to make full restitution, and then continue to maintain respectable and adequate employment and housing. The poor must be given the same opportunities for a quality of life recovery. The laws must be fair and equitable for all. No double standards! No partiality for the rich, white or privileged.

It is my belief that the reason that the City of Los Angeles refuses to house the homeless is because they plan to incarcerate them, adding them to a growing population of cheap slave laborers.

America has gone back to slavery! The Prisons are the new plantations! As such, the plantations (prisons) need slaves. The white people do not want to house the 'homeless' primarily because they don't want to look at us. They consider us stinky and undesirable. They think that we are ugly because we do not look like them. However, we are not spending thousands upon thousands of dollars for make-up, bleach, lip enlargements, skin tans, breast, hip, buttock enhancements, plastic surgery, botox shots etc. They say that we are ugly, however I wonder what they really look like?

Corporations such as Starbucks, Victoria's Secret, McDonalds, Nike, Microsoft, Target, Toys R Us, Nordstrom, Pierre Cardin, Kmart, J.C. Penney, Revlon, Eddie Bauer, Allstate, Honeywell, MCI, Motorola, Dell, Texas Instruments, etc. all profit directly from prison slave labor. That is primarily why the City of Los Angeles refuses to house the homeless. The City is deploying more and more police to chase, corral, and to "capture" Black people, just like 400 years in Africa. There are even bounties for our capture. Remember, the Black people were only brought here to build this country.

The Black people left on "The Outside" will be used as house negroes, i.e. tokens, uncle toms, counter-intelligence, government informants, athletes, entertainers and or sex toys for the 'fantasy' servicing purposes of the rich white people. This is the order of things ... 'The Pecking Order' in the 'New World Order' ... if you will. ( New Age Slavery, American Style )

I have one question: Are the lofts being illegally searched for cocaine and methamphetamines like the homeless are being searched for crack? This double standard has long been a point of issue between the Black and white races. I don't believe that they are being searched. Frankly, the City of Los Angeles will tolerate criminal activity perpetrated by the rich, white, upper-class, i.e. the gentry, because they are avid white consumers feeding the capitalist beast, spending ever-increasing amounts of money.

One could live next to Jeffrey Dahmer, Charlie Manson, or a lawyer Ted Bundy type. As long as he keeps spending money, as long as he stays white, as long as he never speaks out on behalf of Black people, the environment, the poor, and as long as he never speaks out against the pharmaceutical industry, vivisection, the war or any injustice...he could just keep on killing because he would never ever get arrested or subjected to the same discrimination, degradation, dehumanization, harassments, torture, abuse, brutality and intimidation that we suffer everyday. We are Black people, poor people and righteous individuals of all races.

Let us end all violence and let us abolish the The Project Prison Industrial Complex Plantation, forever!



## How the U.S. deals with "social issues" in court

By Paul Boden, reprinted from Street Roots USA, August 25, 2008

The current proliferation of separate court systems — often referred to as "restorative justice" — within the U.S. criminal justice system tells us all we need to know about how government is addressing the health care and housing needs of America's poor. Because many poor, mentally ill, unhoused or drug addicted people get arrested, the courts became more and more overcrowded with what were deemed "social issues."

The response was to create separate systems for the administration of these cases. Ironically, these substance abuse courts, mental health courts and, most recently, homeless courts all coincide with drastic reductions in state and federal government funding of community-based treatment and housing programs. In one classic example, the King County (Wash.) court system established mental health courts while at the same time the state cut \$6 million in community-based mental health programs.

This is not an isolated incident. It has become a national trend. While the social-service branches of government have divested themselves of responsibility to fulfill their initial mandates, the branch of government charged with incarceration and rehabilitation has created a whole new role for itself, that of an access point to treatment, social workers and shelter services. In 1997 only two mental health courts existed in the United States. Today we have over 100. It is ironic that today the three largest residential mental health facilities in the United States are the Los Angeles County jail, Cook County jail in Chicago and Rikers Island in New York City!

CONTINUED ON PAGE #9

# ABUSE

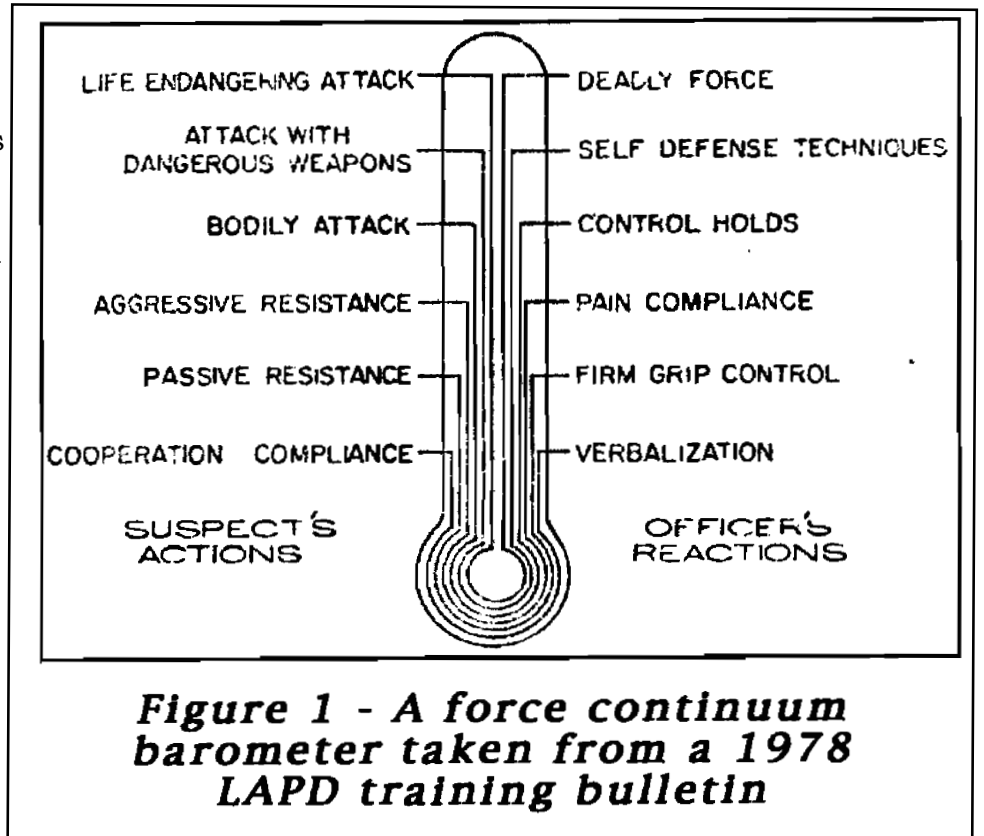
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officers to stop because he is not resisting. At one point Foster says to the officers, “you doing me wrong” to which Officer Moreno replies, “you doing me wrong, mother fucker!”

The two officers, Fiola and Moreno, are seen pulling at his legs, delivering at least three blows to the back of his head, and lastly delivering a knee strike to his mid-section. In the background you can hear bystanders pleading for the officers to stop. Also, they are urging other residents to gather around so they might serve as witnesses to the abuse.

No less than 8 additional officers arrive and aggressively tackle a non-combative Mr. Foster. Under the massive heap of human bodies you can faintly hear Foster still saying, “I am not resisting.” As the camera rolls, officers ram Foster’s head into the patrol car when trying to place him in the backseat; he is still non-combative and not resisting arrest. At the end of this disturbing display of police work Foster’s slack body is carted away in an ambulance.

One local newspaper, the Downtown Garment & Citizen, had this to say, in part, about the incident, “The scope of the video made it difficult for the Garment & Citizen to determine the reason for or strength of the blows, although they appeared to be part of an effort to gain basic compliance from the suspect as the fracas continued.” Appearance has no place in the final determination to escalate force. Instead, officers must rely on training, restraint and public duty and obligation.



Police officials continually attempt to justify the force by using vague and nebulous arguments to convince us, the public, that everything is on the up and up. What they never publicly explain is the Force Continuum. If residents knew that such a continuum existed they could then gauge, for themselves, if the level of force administered was appropriate for the situation. For example, in the James Foster incident, officers are clearly inflicting “pain compliance” by delivering blows to the head. Does this mean that the LAPD officers believe they could argue that he was demonstrating “aggressive resistance”? The videotape (which can be seen on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) by searching NetworkCAN) does not show any evidence of aggressive resistance. In fact, it is not clear if there is even any passive resistance, usually characterized by slumping over, as is done by many protesters when being carted away, or a simple bodily refusal to go. As is often the case in Skid Row policing, general protocols are thrown out the window and officers skip to the most aggressive, and sometimes illegal, forms of policing. It reflects the current culture of denial and “us against them” mentality that is so pervasive in the LAPD.

Force, and the over-zealous use of force, is at the center of a debate that rages within multiple communities, including the law enforcement community. Use of force, in general, is a sticky subject depending on who you ask. The community is rightly outraged by the steady stream of images plastered across their television and computer screens portraying out-of-control officers punishing residents. The shooting of Margaret Mitchell, an elderly homeless African-American woman shot to death for allegedly wielding a knife, has for a long time served as a grim reminder of just how far force goes. More recently, in downtown Los Angeles, the beating of Faith Hernandez, another African-American woman weighing about ninety-pounds and dually diagnosed, in full view of hundreds of onlookers simply reinforces what we all know: officers are routinely out of control, out of policy and running afoul of the US Constitution.

Nationally critics have charged that police officers are going from “verbalization” directly to “deadly force” skipping everything in between. That rush to deadly force is a cause for pause and something that needs to be seriously explored. Given a strident history of abuse and misconduct across most law enforcement agencies in the City and County of Los Angeles, it is not surprising that so many encounters end with loss of life due to deadly force.

As for Mr. Foster, the last time LA CAN members saw him was at his Preliminary Hearing in Division #35, appearing before Commissioner Rose. Commissioner Rose agreed to temporarily suspend the preliminary hearing pending a referral for Mr. Foster to Department 95. Department 95, where inmates are sent for evaluation to determine if they are competent to stand trial. The evaluation will last 4 to 5 weeks at which time Foster will be returned to court for a progress report. If at that time it is determined that Foster is still unable to stand trial, his fate is uncertain.

Given Mr. Foster’s history of mental illness and current state of being, it was clear to the public defender and the Commissioner that he could not understand where he was or why he was there, thus rendering him incapable of defending himself. In an unusual move the judge reinstated Mr. Foster’s probation and allowed his bail to stand, even though he was charged with a felony and facing prison time. Unfortunately Mr. Foster is but one of thousands of Skid Row residents with a mental illness who is now spending time in the County jail - the largest default mental health facility in the Country. But this time, he has support, witnesses, and video evidence to help him get justice in the end!

## SEPARATE COURTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE #7

Mentally ill jail inmates are 2.5 times more likely to have been homeless prior to incarceration compared with all other inmates. The criminal justice system is ill-equipped to address the social issues being dumped on its courtroom floors, so now we are getting these behavioral courts that all come with a special twist: no option to plead "not guilty."

Homeless courts are the newest incarnation of these special courts. Homeless courts are not courts as most people understand courts to be. In fact, they are just the opposite. Defendants in homeless courts are presumed guilty and must plead guilty in order to avail themselves of whatever services are to be offered through the courts. Due process, anyone?

"Defendants" are brought in for such "crimes" as sleeping, camping, disturbing the contents of a container (ie. going through trash for food or recyclables), panhandling, being in a park after hours (parks that until a very short time ago were open 24 hours and used to be considered public space), jaywalking, loitering, sitting or lying on a sidewalk and, of course, the grande dame of egregious offenses committed by homeless people, peeing and defecating. Once they plead "guilty," they are then assigned to services or community service (in lieu of jail or fines) as an alternative sentence handed down by the benevolent court.

In San Francisco and Los Angeles, though, attorneys doing citation defense have won dismissal of all charges in more than 80 percent of the cases they represented. In legal terms, more than 80 percent have been found not guilty of the original charges against them.

In other words, local governments are creating two-tiered court systems that are determined by economic status. There are criminal courts for people who can afford attorneys or have access to a public defender. They recognize due process. And now there are behavioral courts for people who cannot afford attorneys and have no access to a public defender. They do not recognize due process.

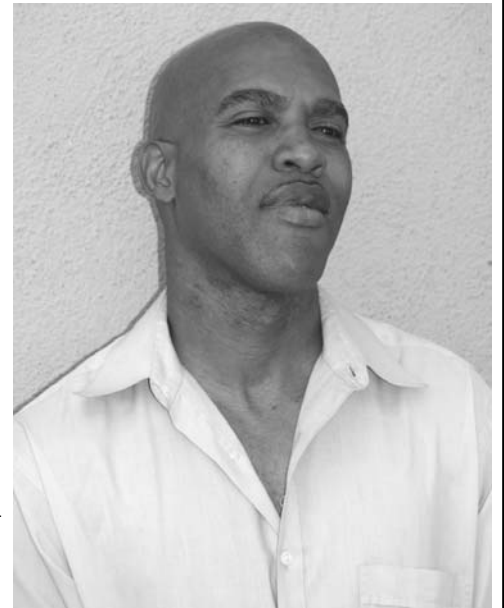
This separation that sends poor people who are homeless or mentally ill to special "courts," where they must plead guilty in order to obtain the services they so desperately need, violates the very foundation of our criminal justice system.

*Paul Boden is the Executive Director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), of which LA CAN is a member.*

## Skid Row Film Maker Claims Victory!!

By Eric "Protein" Moseley

Only by the grace of GOD ....I, Eric "Protein" Moseley, premiered the homeless documentary entitled, "SKID ROW JOURNEY." This made me become the very first homeless film maker to have documentaries shown on both coasts. This Premier took place July 12, 2008 in front of a small group, in my single room occupancy room located at the Panama Hotel in downtown LA.



This decision came after several failed attempts to get organizations down on Skid Row to support the film, so I decided to premier it myself. One fellow even gave me a date for which I could premier the film at a local community center but reneged on the very date of the film making history event. Two other organizations prolonged the event as well (one being a well-known shelter down on Skid Row). I must admit that it was a minor set back for me, especially after spending what little money I had to get flyers made and not to mention the humiliation for which I received from people whom I invited who came out to support and were turned away in disappointment.

Not only that.....this film-making history event was featured in two South Carolina newspapers (who have been following my story) who were expecting this event to take place at the community center, which never happened. This is what made me premier the film myself. HOW YOU LIKE ME NOW?

"SKID ROW JOURNEY" has been featured a total of nine times in newspapers from Los Angeles to the Carolinas and even recognized on the world wide web by going to google. Speaking of the film.....it starts off as a dream in South Carolina and takes you on a journey to the shelter system of New York and back to the Carolinas. It will have you wondering.....is it a dream or a reality? But in reality it is a portion of the struggle for which my daughter and myself have experienced.

I plan to take this film and become an inspiration to someone who is less fortunate to continue on with their dreams NO MATTER WHAT! Always remember that sometimes if you want something done, you have to do it yourself.

"Down But Not Out" is a film on Columbia, South Carolina's homeless problem in which I starred and co-produced that aired on South Carolina's E.T.V P.B.S on April 29, 2008. This has also contributed to my film making history.

For my next attempt, I plan to get the attention of a major network to follow me around Skid Row and I can illustrate to the world of how I can go from being on Skid Row to becoming an iSTAT Millionaire within a twenty-four hour period. And that's REAL TALK.

Last but not least I want to give much love to the Panama/Russ SRO, not only because that is where the film premiered but I will also remember them for providing temporary housing for my daughter as well as myself during the end of "SKID ROW JOURNEY."

Eric "Protein" Moseley can be reached at [skidrowjourney@yahoo.com](mailto:skidrowjourney@yahoo.com), or [www.myspace.com/proteinrecords](http://www.myspace.com/proteinrecords)



"If you are tired, keep going; if you are scared, keep going; if you are hungry, keep going; if you want to taste freedom, keep going."

- Harriet Tubman

# 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*

## Just Wondering

After the earth shook where did the trembling go?  
After Katrina was dismissed where now do those waters flow?  
Although not terribly gusty where I stand I feel a wind that blows  
Yet not twisted so tight also no pressure, high velocity, nor might  
And of all these things that seem to bring about the worst;  
I dare not lose sight  
Some things woefully saddening causing a mourning lament  
Then re-gentrification another agitator within systematic inflation;  
Or, adaptive reuse seriously only means they're raising the rent  
These few things I review for pondering while accepting the time given me...  
I meditate, I'm just wondering not wandering.

--Ellery Bailey 5/8/2008

## Soul Sista

Soul Sista, Soul Sista strong in the word  
A real Black Panther haven't you heard  
A positive motivator in the community  
Always around, when a friend's in need  
She speaks her mind, holding nothing back  
She growls like a panther,  
before she attacks  
But she's gentle as a lamb,  
as sweet as can be  
But don't underestimate her, listen to me  
She stands up for her principles,  
you better believe  
She's a winner, a charmer,  
as cool as can be  
She's on a mission, she's all about it,  
that's how she get's down  
So, if you want to know how she flows,  
don't act like a clown  
'Cause she's a woman, like no other,  
rare and unique  
Her words are wise, that gratify  
everyone she meets  
Her name is Michelle, she's fine as well,  
as a matter of fact  
Beauty and brains are her claim to fame,  
there's nothing that she lacks  
I treasure her friendship, it's genuine  
and she feels the same  
She's a soldier and a real Soul Sista -  
Michele Autry is her name

Billy Shaw 12//11/07

## "SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT"

You...Yes, you! Are a special part of this universe. Always remember that Jesus was in the world but not of the world. Walk by faith and not by sight. It is not where you live that counts it's where your head is at. It's not where you have been it's where you are going. We all have a purpose in life we all have a hidden talent that needs to be revealed. We all play a part in this thing called life. Now is the time to bring out your hidden potentials. Just as long as you are only thinking you cannot, you will not accomplish anything, action does it. We all have a choice. It is up to each and every one of us. Did you know that there is something that you must do and only you? You are a child of God and no one can ever take that away from you. You are special design and created by the best. Are you aware that there are not two fingerprints alike? You are one of a kind I hope that gives you peace of mind.

DEBORAH THORNTON 7/4/08

## My Enemy

Much search for my enemy:  
Far and wide; from the obvious to the most obscure;  
From what the eye can see,  
To what the mind can think of;  
I still have no idea of what it really is.  
All I know is that it exists to destroy me.  
Still, the enemy eludes me.  
How can I find and go after it?  
The prodigy of pondering drags me on..

Then, in a trance deeper than dream  
I heard the gasping of my soul,  
Sounding like the least note of the scale,  
Yet clearer than the eardrum itself.  
Alas! In the wake I now know the enemy is  
within me,  
To destroy the very source of life: my soul.  
I cry out in the whirling heart of a masterless  
being!

## The soul tunes into the heart beat of being;

The mind dances with the drumbeat of the  
men's march.  
It is the mind that projects me from my center  
Into the black hole of desires; wherein I choke, sink.  
It is the mind that is like a heavy magnet,  
Attracting crooked nails and pins,  
Which further invite the likes;  
Wear out my sanity.  
What is it? Where is it from?

It is an envoy posted in me by the world,  
Who sits on the center of my being;  
Steals the "I" from me.  
Like a convict before being beheaded,  
The soul shivers and trembles.

But, even now as ever is;  
To surrender to this alien agent, and revel with him;  
Or to rebel against him:  
That is the question.

Ed Choi.

## Please Submit All

Poetry Articles &  
Other Materials

Editor:

The Community Connection  
456 S. Main Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90013  
(213) 228-0024

**"What's right isn't  
always popular,  
and what's popular  
isn't always right."**

## **A Special Thank You to LA CAN**

This is a fan letter and a thank you note! It's also a commendation of the highest order for LA CAN member King Gerald and for Ms. Minda Panelo.

I have been attending the self-defense class taught by Ms. Panelo and made possible by King Gerald since the beginning. Minda is able to translate her skills so we can understand and mimic. She continues to marvel that ladies "slightly past their prime" can learn as readily as the younger students she has taught in the past.

The class has been a blessing for me in so many ways. The exercise is beneficial, and the self confidence of knowing that I am not totally helpless in an ugly situation is simply great.

I think Gerald may be just as proud of Minda's students as she is. He beams as he watches us. I applaud and thank all of you for providing this outlet for community action.

Our grinning mayor talks a good talk, but the walk is slow in coming. Riordan's rich friends who bought all this land cheap are trying to gentrify it, but that too is incomplete.

For those women who must walk the downtown streets - sometimes after dark - we could be easy prey. This class is very valuable for all women.

*Excerpts from a letter from LA CAN member Nancy Register.*

**Join the self-defense class on Saturdays at 10:00 am. It is free!**

**Also - get involved with LA CAN's new physical fitness project. We can be healthy and happy on a budget!!**



ART HAZELWOOD, FREEDOM FROM WANT

## **Let's Get Active!**

In 2004 LA CAN launched the Community Food Assessment project. There were four low-income groups within the downtown community that LA CAN specifically focused on: homeless people, extremely low-income families, people with disabilities and seniors. The report, "Taken for Granted: Ignoring Downtown Food Insecurity," included recommendations to improve food access and alleviate hunger for low-income and homeless people living in downtown Skid Row.

As part of the project we addressed the barriers for community residents in accessing sufficient, nutritional food of their choice. This included community education about nutritional food sources by conducting food workshops throughout the community such as: Healthy Eating, Healthy Buying, Nutrition in Recovery, Food Tasting (fruits and vegetables), our Farmer's Market and most importantly accessing the food stamp program through outreach.

It is now 2008 and this October we are about to get ready for the second phase of our Food and Nutrition work in the community, so let's get ready to bring out the tennis shoes and the jump rope! Our goal at LA CAN around physical activity is to recognize physical activity as an important role of a healthy, active lifestyle in reducing the risk of certain chronic disease. Some of the physical activity challenges we face in our community may be such things as a disability, location (inner city), equipment, motivation or access to open space that will safely accommodate people. However these challenges should not stop us!

Here are some examples of physical activity that can overcome some of the challenges:

**MOVE...**jog, jump, run, dance, practice self defense moves, stretch, clean, pamper, have sex (safe sex please), yoga, tai-chi, ride a bike....simply put your body in motion!

**PLAY...**basketball, hopscotch, softball, kickball, mini-golf, tennis, jacks, jump-rope, bowling, hide-n-go-seek, tag, basketball, hopscotch, bring a child's work back into your life...play!

**WALK...**children to school, from the back of the parking lot, up the stairs, around the block, to the store, one mile a day...simply walk your way to better health!

So get ready friends and neighbors we are about to get PHYSICAL...exercise that is!

## **Nutrition Legislation Update:**

The following bills have now passed the State Senate and are in the hands of the Governor. These two bills that we highlight are only a sample of the many nutrition-related legislation that is on the Governor's desk at this moment.

AB 1996 is a bill, if signed, which will allow people convicted of a drug sales case to apply for Food Stamps after they have finished a drug rehabilitation program. This bill is extremely important in downtown Los Angeles, which has seen thousands of drug sales arrests in the past two years, especially possession for sale. When these folks return to our community, they will need assistance such as Food Stamps.

Another bill awaiting the Governor's signature is AB 2844, which would change Food Stamps and Cal WORKS to a 6-month reporting system, making it easier for recipients to meet the program guidelines and avoid terminations.

At the time the Community Connection went to press, neither of the bills have been signed. Contact LA CAN or the Governor directly to express your opinion on these bills.

## **Recipe Corner**

*Easy Chicken Vegetable Enchiladas*

### **Ingredients:**

1-1/4 lb. chicken pieces, skin removed  
 1/2 yellow onion and 2 cloves of fresh garlic  
 Salt and pepper  
 Cooking oil or cooking spray  
 1-19 oz. cans red or green enchilada sauce  
 8 corn tortillas (lightly sautéed)  
 2 cups fresh or frozen vegetables (corn, green beans and carrots)  
 1/2 cup crumbled queso fresco or shredded Monterey Jack cheese

### **Preparation:**

Place chicken in a large pot and cover with water; add onion, garlic, salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered until chicken is cooked thoroughly about 30 minutes. Drain and let cool, shred chicken. Heat oven to 350 f. Bring enchilada sauce to a medium heat, sauté tortillas on each side and set aside. Dip tortillas one at a time in sauce, place 1/4 cup vegetable, 1 tablespoon cheese and 1/2 cup chicken along center of tortilla. Roll up tortilla. Place in oven proof baking dish... Repeat step #4 until all enchiladas are in baking dish and pour remaining sauce and cover with remaining cheese. Cover dish with aluminum foil and bake about 10 minutes until heated thoroughly. Serves 2.



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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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**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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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](http://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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