On a vibrant July evening, The Los Angeles Community Action Network celebrated its 20th Freedom Now Awards, highlighting the extraordinary philanthropic and social justice contributions of some of Los Angeles’ lights of compassion. LA CAN acknowledged the contributions of Marsha E. Bonner (Director of Programs, Community Grantmaking & Special Initiatives, Annenberg Foundation), Kaci Y. Patterson (Social Good Solutions) Mark Casanova (Homeless Healthcare Los Angeles), the Democratic Socialists of America, Pastor Cue Jnmarie (the Church Without Walls), as well as Craig Roberts and Linda Leigh (community activists and LA CAN core members). The celebration brought LA CAN’s family of social justice advocates, donor activists, community warriors and elected officials together in one room -- the Freedom Room. The event featured rousing music, provided by the recently formed Freedom Singers (led by musical director Kayo Anderson), deliciously healthy cuisine by Eastside Eats and moving spoken word, featuring KeKe.

Honoree Kaci Patterson exemplified the brilliance and commitment of those in the social justice fight by stating “LA CAN is the most fearless organization in L.A. And not just fearless in fighting for dignity and human rights but fearless in love.” Kaci thanked LA CAN “for being a model for social justice organizing and showing how to live equitably and with inclusion every single day.”

The Freedom Now Awards celebration has passed, but you can still make a special tribute donation in honor of the Freedom Now Awardees by going to cangress.org and donating.
Worldwide Crisis? Struggles for Housing

By Lisa Riedner

Unhoused people in Munich Germany have been protesting against street sweeps and demanding improved social services. “The struggle for a place to stay has become part of my life. My friends and I, are forced to constantly change places, day and night. I want this to stop. I want to have a peaceful life and a place to stay as it is normal for most of the inhabitants of Munich. I want to live my young life with dignity,” said Vasil Damyanov (25) at a recent rally in front of the Municipal Housing Authority after city employees had just destroyed the encampment under a bridge in the city center where he had been staying. Together with different community organizations and advocacy groups that formed the campaign “Housing for All,” the group protested against the eviction and demanded access to housing.

Munich is the third largest and one of the richest cities in Germany. It has a booming economy but many of its 18 million inhabitants struggle to find affordable housing. Between 2012 and 2017, rents have increased by 35 percent during roughly the same period that the city estimates the number of people experiencing homelessness has tripled. Germany is known to be a relatively strong welfare state that guarantees basic support to every inhabitant by law. Since the early 2000s, however, many social services have been undermined and dismantled. Migrants are among the groups that have been specifically targeted and subjected to rules of exclusion and activation. Migrants from other EU-countries such as Vasil Damyanov, are free to move within the EU and do not need to apply for a visa, asylum or another permit to stay. Damyanov could not find a job in Bulgaria, so he moved to Germany to work in construction. Like Damyanov, thousands of working class EU-migrants do manual, relatively low paid but essential jobs in Munich: They build houses, clean offices and care for the sick and elderly. These are the very groups being targeted for exclusion.

Although Germany profits from EU-extension, many within Germany use chauvinist and racist sentiments to describe migration, calling it ‘benefit tourism.’ Since 2007, EU-citizens, although legally allowed to stay in Germany, are excluded from social rights if they are deemed ‘economically inactive’. While wealthy and highly educated EU-citizens are welcomed, poor migrants who are not deemed productive are excluded from basic rights in order to deter them. This strategy has led to increased destitution, homelessness and precariousness of labor.

The city of Munich with its social democratic government (in coalition with the Green party till 2014 and now with the conservative CSU), have taken a similar stance towards EU-migrants. In 2010, the municipality recognized that it was legally responsible to give shelter to all people experiencing homelessness in its territory. However, since then, the city has continued on page 5 "Housing Crisis"
THE STATUS QUO IS NOT AN OPTION

By Alan Sutton

When it comes to ending L.A.’s homeless crisis, the mayor and city council are not up to the task.

In the aftermath of this year’s homeless count, which jumped 16% in the city despite record spending to get people housed, Mayor Eric Garcetti recently held a press briefing on how L.A. is responding to the homelessness crisis.

At a time of widespread discord over the failure of elected leaders to alleviate L.A.’s homeless crisis (Garcetti is facing a possible recall election over public unrest over the escalating problem), City Hall stands to receive millions of dollars next year from state and federal sources. Governor Newsom has designated $124 million for the city’s homeless programs and Representative Maxine Waters has introduced a bill calling for $13 billion to address the nation’s housing crisis.

In his July 8 speech at the Unified Homeless Response Center, Garcetti outlined how the city intends to spend the windfall from the state; reviewed current efforts to address conditions on the street, including his citywide A Bridge Home shelter program; and touted plans to increase affordable housing in L.A. and expand the public hygiene infrastructure in Skid Row.

Yet the mayor’s idea of a “comprehensive strategy to turn the tide on homelessness in Los Angeles” does little more than repurpose old strategies that have never helped people exit homelessness. Temporary shelters, outreach teams that gather detailed information from homeless residents without offering housing in return, and rental vouchers that landlords refuse to accept siphon resources that should be used to provide housing.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s 2019 report found 36,300 city residents experiencing homelessness. Given the magnitude of the crisis, the mayor’s efforts fall woefully short: four shelter facilities providing a total of 222 beds, 110 Prop. HHH projects “in the pipeline,” with 327 units available in 2020 (“224 of them designated for our homeless neighbors”).

The increase in the number of homeless Angelenos nearly three years after the passage of the Proposition HHH homeless housing measure raises the question: Why give more money to the homeless industrial complex — elected officials, administrative agencies, real estate developers, business improvement districts, and service providers — to do what they do, regardless of the outcome? As the Los Angeles Times stated in an editorial following the release of the latest homeless count: “How can it be that Angelenos voted in November 2016 to create a $1.2 billion fund to finance as many as 10,000 units of housing for chronically homeless people in the city of L.A., yet not one unit of housing has come online?” Times columnist Steve Lopez chimed in, “We’re in troubled waters on a ship without a captain, and though there might be a few pretenders on the bridge, nobody trusts them.”

The status quo has failed, as evidenced by mismanagement of the Proposition HHH rollout. With nearly all of the bond proceeds committed, unhoused people are dying in record numbers (918 deaths last year alone), sidewalks across the city are crammed with tents and makeshift dwellings, the LAPD continues to cite and arrest unhoused people for minor infractions, the FBI gathered Prop. HHH records as part of its ongoing corruption probe of City Hall, and homeless advocates charge that HHH funds have been misappropriated for projects that are prohibited under the city’s own regulations for permanent supportive housing.

The way to end homelessness is through community-driven solutions. Citing “the culmination of longtime advocacy by the Los Angeles Community Action Network and other groups in the Services Not Sweeps coalition,” the Los Angeles Times reported that the Sanitation Bureau has introduced a plan to overhaul how homeless encampments are cleaned. “Many of the ideas reflected in the report, such as providing more trash bags and bathrooms for encampments, had been backed by those groups,” according to the Times.

Houseless people, who know what they need and have proven solutions that foster self-determination, stress the need for housing and supportive services. The Skid Row Community Improvement Coalition’s “Refresh Spot” personal care hub, which the mayor said will be getting a major expansion, is the most visible example of community-driven models of service delivery.

The system isn’t working and the Los Angeles Community Action Network calls on Mayor Garcetti to conduct a major overhaul of the city’s response to the homeless crisis — in particular empowering unhoused people and advocates to help create and implement homeless policy. Among our priority recommendations: invest heavily in upgrading the public health infrastructure in Skid Row, utilize new manufacturing technology such as micro homes, modular/prefabricated/3D printing to build homeless housing faster and cheaper, and preserve existing low-income housing.

Drastic change is needed. It’s time to tap L.A.’s vast human and financial resources and creativity to ensure that all Angelenos are properly housed. The status quo is not an option.
Produce the Permit (PTP) = Fighting Displacement!

by Craig Roberts

Displacement is the cynical business strategy to use fences/gardens/planters to remove houseless residents and their tents in Skid Row (and other areas around the city) from sidewalks, by pretending to have a legal right to do so. We at the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) say “produce the permit!” (PTP) that says you, Mr. Businessman, have legal permission to obstruct the public sidewalk. We don’t believe that the vast majority of business’ using this displacement/harassment tactic, which has spread around the city like a cancer, have a city permit that will stand scrutiny by the L.A. City attorney.

That said, due to our organizing and policy proposal efforts the City Council has passed a motion that instructs the Department of Building and Safety to jointly investigate and remove illegal fencing citywide. We know that a citywide coalition of organizations led by LA CAN will continue to document these violations of the public right of way and houseless’ public right to stay. And e will, along with the people, document any new violators which pop-up. Please call LA CAN (213-228-0024) with addresses and descriptions of new obstructions you spot around the city! LA CAN and the people will also be actively monitoring the city’s new enforcement/removal of illegal obstructions. Remember PTP = Produce the Permit or tear the down! All Power to the People!!

Fencing designed to keep the houseless away from businesses

THE PEOPLE’S MEDICINE

By Devorah Brous

It is outrageous when urban planners draft up designs to green Skid Row sidewalks. Several businesses have taken to hiring guards to watch their gardens. Read between the lines, this greening is an insidious ‘gardening tool’ designed to uproot neighborhoods and weed-out houseless people.

This same form of gardening is also happening in Venice. Over the past year, hundreds of planter boxes splattered with succulents and invasive plant species have appeared. I asked Adam Smith, organizer with White People 4 Black Lives, for his thoughts, “Housed residents have been able to install planters and have received approval and encouragement from high ranking LAPD captains and city employees knowing they violate some of the same municipal codes used to criminalize the houseless community. After months of grassroots organizing with the Services Not Sweeps Coalition, we’ve seen movement from the city calling for removal of the planters in Venice. Some planters were removed this week, yet some companies replaced those same planters just days later.”

When beautification is wielded to force evictions in a houseless community, it bespeaks the Urban Renewal program. ‘The Slums are Going’ was the clarion call which cleared hundreds of thousands of families from their homes and neighborhoods in the 1950s and 60s, and became more of a coordinated displacement strategy.

I want to share about another kind of greening that roots people to land, body, and life force. Growing food and making herbal medicine from a garden immerses us in the rhythms of the earth—and the cycles of life, death and rebirth. The People’s Medicine Project merges justice and wellness organizing at LACAN. This program lives in the Food & Wellness Collaborative at the intersection of health, poverty, and racism. With Skid Row residents as our culinary educators, we grow empowerment through advocacy, self-reliance, and hands-on garden / kitchen workshops. We believe that healthy food is a human right.

Since our program launch this Spring, LACAN has hosted four packed workshops and folks have learned how to make plant-based foods with crops harvested from our rooftop permaculture garden. We explore the links between diet and preventative health; between the broken parts of the food system; and between soil science and gut health.

My friend, Dr. Maya Shetreat, (author of The Dirt Cure) teaches that gardening amps up your mental, physical, and spiritual health. Check it out: touching soil actually makes you smarter while bolstering your immune system, lowering your stress, and releasing endorphins. By remembering to slow down and breathe oxygen from the plants, we weave back into a healing relationship with Mother Earth.

However, we must be clear. It is by design that you can’t touch the soil in fenced-off gardens on Skid Row, or live next to planters installed to keep the community off public sidewalks. Systematically denying land access with these ‘strategic gardening tools’ forces evictions of urban poor around the globe. Planting should never obviate housing. When soil co-mingles with our DNA and healthy food becomes more accessible in every neighborhood we all win. Consider touching soil that is fenced-off as a radical act of civil disobedience. From the soil to the soul, we root down to rise up.
Update on the Los Angeles Downtown 2040
by Steve Diaz

In the month of July, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning released its primary 2040 Community Plan update. It followed a series of reports generated by the Planning Department, including a zoning report which outlines how property can be developed.

On Tuesday, July 16th, community leaders and homeless advocates held a press conference in response to the LA Department of City Planning’s rezoning of Skid Row. The press conference marked the launch of a campaign to prevent the displacement of homeless people. The campaign is being led by the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition – a coalition of community organizations, neighborhood activists, and social services providers.

The campaign demands are:
1) Protect all of Skid Row for affordable housing. The city’s rezoning plan would effectively shrink Skid Row by 64%, carving off most of the neighborhood for gentrification. Skid Row’s existing boundaries are well-defined and must be respected in any rezoning plan.
2) Require mandatory set-asides of affordable units in residential construction throughout downtown Los Angeles, the area covered by the city’s “DTLA 2040” rezoning proposal. Nearly 500 cities and counties have established these set-aside policies, called Inclusionary Zoning. Los Angeles should do the same.
3) Create at least as many units of deeply affordable housing in downtown Los Angeles as the existing boundaries are well-defined and must be respected in any rezoning plan.

In the absence of a plan that can create and protect deeply affordable units for poor and houseless residents of downtown, Skid Row leaders estimate that 4,000 people will be displaced. Ultimately, land use planning should not betray the needs of existing residents and the Skid Row community.

LOOKING FOR JUSTICE?
Come and see if LA CAN’s Legal Clinic can help you with advice and possible representation

Community Legal Clinic

You can meet with an attorney about issues related to Housing (evictions, unfair rents, bed bugs etc.), Civil Rights (LAPD or BID officers taking your property), Public and Veteran Benefits (like Social Security).

Also, on the 3rd Wednesday of the month we have a Citation Defense Program for tickets such as jaywalking, 41.18 (d), littering, and Prop 47 Reclassification Assistance, etc.

(No traffic/parking violations). Bring your ticket and meet with attorneys who can represents you in court.

EVERY WEDNESDAY
5:30 PM
838 East 6th Street, L.A.
Last Intake at 6:30 pm
For More Info: 213-228-0024

continued from page 2 Housing Crisis

issued several regulations that excluded migrants from other European countries from regular shelters. Requirements for a place to sleep included access to social rights on a federal level, a work contract and proof that you do not have anywhere else to stay. Confronted with a self-made crisis of rising houselessness and extreme poverty the city answered with opening counselling services and shelter program of minimal humanitarian relief. In the winter 2013/2014 everybody was given a bed during the night only when temperatures fell below freezing. The aim was to prevent houseless neighbours from dying on the streets of Munich. In February 2014, protesters demanded an expansion of shelter access to all winter and during the day, and other improvements. In March 2016, a citywide campaign made a more expansive demand for the right to housing for everyone and an improvement of conditions in the shelters. In August 2017, Hristo Vankov, a day laborer living under the same bridge as Damyanov, successfully sued the municipality for shelter. Despite the court ruling, the municipality kept the regulations that excluded many houseless people from regular shelters and continued to restrict the human right to housing.

To make matters worse, the city has also recently changed its rather tolerant policy towards encampments of people experiencing houselessness in public spaces. They have rounded up and destroyed existing encampments. In a paternalist and pathologizing move they said that the inhabitants of those encampments had to be ‘saved’ from their own ‘bad decision’ not to stay at the substandard shelter. Since 2013, more regulations have targeted the presence of poor people in public spaces: begging was regulated and partly banned, a new municipal police force was introduced and, on a federal level, day labor markets were banned.

To summarize: On both federal and municipal level, basic social rights and the right to housing are more and more restricted and subjected to conditions such as nationality and economic status. The excluded communities are confronted with a two-faced approach of criminalizing and humanitarian relief that goes hand in hand with victimizing, chauvinist and racist stereotypes. These recent policy changes foster houselessness and the precarization of labor. But the example of Munich shows also that working class and poor communities resist those attempts of governing, exclusion and displacement on a daily basis and that community organizing and campaigns can make a difference.

To influence not only the municipal but also the federal level, the local community organization, together with other groups from all over Germany, has recently launched the campaign Europe in Movement. They demand social rights for all, independent of employment and residence status.

Join the Fight! Your participation is needed at LA CAN to fight for equality, equity and civil rights of poor and homeless community. 838 East 6th Street, DTLA. For more information call 213-228-0024
LA CAN Hosts First Wellness Retreat for Women
by Monique Noel

In the Spring of 2019 LA CAN hosted one of its most important events to date - the ‘Women’s Wellness Retreat’ a celebration of women in Skid Row! This event served to bring the women in our community together and provide a safe space for respite and healing through joyful, self-caring experiences, informal conversations, story-telling, pampering and nourishment of the mind, body and soul.

Promoting wellness and love was the theme of the day and community members, leaders, organizations and healers came out in droves from far and wide to share, support and reflect divine shine! With an all-woman-star program, close to 200 Queens enjoyed comedy; song; spoken word, indulged in massage; pedicures/ manicures; tribal mark body painting and participated in classes including, healthy food demonstrations by ‘People’s Medicine’; creative writing; portraits; herbal healing; womb wellness; self defense; head wraps; sexual health; yoga and much more! The days activities culminated with a healing dinner circle where attendees discussed “what it means to be well”, “how we love and support one another” and the necessity of coming together to organize against the many forms of injustice women face. This was led by Nana Gyamfi, Susan Burton and Kila Acey - all fierce and beautiful warriors!

The event ended with a closing ritual circle, guided by mother Eagle Turtle - releasing and affirming our intentions. The retreat was organized by the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC) in continuing our efforts to remove barriers that exist to community involvement and participation. Part of DWAC’s work assesses and highlights the targeting and criminalization of women in Skid Row and the health disparities and dangerous health conditions facing women who suffer the extremes of the feminization of poverty. DWAC places great importance on engaging and supporting women through wellness themed workshops and activities. Our main objective is to develop and nurture a pipeline of long-standing women leaders to organize to obtain equity, equality and well-being. If you identify as woman and would like to get involved with our work, come and join our weekly meetings, every Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. at LA CAN!

Shout out to East Side Eats, Black Women for Wellness, A New Way of Life, BAJI, Justice Warriors for Black Lives, and all the other warriors who showed up to make the Women’s Wellness Retreat a truly special event - DWAC & LA CAN thank you! Stay tuned for more Woman magic.

Arts & Culture Thriving at LA CAN

By Kayo Anderson

Arts and culture has always been a mainstay at LA CAN. Pete White, founder of LA CAN, is, after all, an artist. Not just any artist... a Refined artist. As a connoisseur and purveyor of many different forms of artistic expression, He has always dreamed of a curated Arts and Culture experience at LA CAN. I am grateful and pleased that he has entrusted this responsibility to me...and even more grateful for his continued guidance and participation in what is being formed.

Informally, artists have always heeded the call to use their gifts to help the skid row community celebrate, organize and even mourn. As we embark on a new journey into arts and culture at LA CAN, I think it is incumbent upon us to reflect on the organizations rich past in this effort. It is hard to think of music at LA CAN without thinking of “Pancake”. Even if you’ve never met Pancake, if you’ve ever been to Skid Row, you have likely heard him give us the street music musings that uniquely bellow from his amazingly rich voice. He regularly lilts melodies in full force while walking on Los Angeles and 5th Street. It isn’t unheard of for him to spontaneously lift his voice (and consequently, our spirits) at committees in LA CAN, or at the Refresh spot, or anywhere else in Skid Row where a potent injection of musical and artistic energy is warranted.

It will come as no surprise that Pancake is one of the inaugural members of the LA CAN Freedom Singers. This new ensemble, founded and directed by me, Kayo Anderson, is the beginning of a full range of artistic offerings coming to LA CAN this fall. In accordance with LA Can’s model of committee based and community led...
On the morning of August 27, 2019 a shining star, a great artist, and our brother was taken from his community. For all that knew him he could always be found making music or playing Jimi Hendrix tunes -- most could not tell the difference between the two geniuses.

Originally from Flint, Michigan, Darrell began his career, not on the guitar for which he mastered, but on the trumpet. He soon switched to the guitar when he fell in love with rock and roll. Darrell was infatuated by Jimi Hendrix as a youth and began to play along to a record player to learn the songs by ear. While attending a rock and roll performance in a bar he was asked to sit in for an absent guitarist. Darrell was only 15 but his genius was discovered and he started playing professionally. He eventually formed the Purple Haze Experience and toured the country.

He met many famous musicians but he was most proud to hear that Jimi Hendrix’s bassist, Billy Cox, commented that he sounded more like Jimi than Jimi.

Darrell settled and played in Las Vegas for years and it was there he met his musician girlfriend, Valerie. It was a great match -- she was from Detroit and loved Motown and R&B and he had a love for Rock ‘n’ Roll. He and his partner Valerie moved to San Diego where he continued to perform and tour with the Purple Haze Experience.

He and Valerie later moved to Los Angeles. Several years ago Darrell began to visit LA CAN and was soon welcomed as a treasured addition. He surprised everyone with his majestic talent. He started by giving guitar lessons, playing at LA CAN events and later becoming an integral musician in the newly formed Skid Row Band.

“...a shining star, a great artist, and our brother was taken from his community,” said LA CAN executive director Pete White. “Skid Row stand up as we celebrate the life, mastery and artistic vision of Darrell.”

Photos by Linus Shentu, Paul Freedman and LA CAN

In Loving Memory

Darrell Fields
By Paul Freedman

Over the last fifteen years I’ve documented unimaginable suffering in places like Rwanda, the Darfur region of Sudan, eastern Congo, northern Uganda, Haiti and Sierra Leone. Through it all, I’ve heard countless stories of heartbreak and loss from folks subjected to profound human rights abuses, including genocide, sexual violence in war, forced labor, child soldiering and more. Even though I often felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of human tragedy playing out before me and my camera, each place I visited, heroes always emerged. These many stories of courage, compassion, faith, strength, and resilience, gathered from some of the most troubled places on the planet, have become the fulcrum of my storytelling and ultimately, the reason for my being. I have always tried to do my journalistic best to not ignore the root causes and symptoms of these horrific situations—portending a happy ending does no one any good. But if I’ve learned anything from telling the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, it is that hope is given a voice—even in the face of hopelessness—inspiration can help mobilize a movement, and movements bring change.

Yet, I am one of the millions of Angelenos who has ignored our houseless neighbors for as long as I can remember.

And then I heard Pete White on a radio talk show. The topic was the homeless crisis in L.A. He was talking about 100 million dollars given to the City to help combat homelessness and how 87 million of it went to the police department. Now that got my attention. Pete schooled the wonky panel on the talk show, respectfully, but passionately. It was at that moment that all-too familiar feeling washed over me like a wave—that feeling that I get when I quietly commit my soul and being entirely to a film project that will inevitably take me years to complete. At that moment, it became impossible for me to look away from a human rights crisis in my own backyard. And I figured, hey, I wouldn’t have to get on a plane to document it.

I called LA CAN for the first time in the fall of 2017 to get a meeting with Pete about featuring the story of his work in an independent documentary film about homelessness in Los Angeles. A deep, good-natured voice took my call. When I identified myself as an independent filmmaker, the deep voice said, “Well I’m an actor. I’ll be in the film”. But no one called me back. Two more tries and still nothing. A few weeks later I took a bus downtown, got off at 6th and Main, and for the first time, walked through Skid Row to the LA CAN offices. I was determined to ask Pete White to educate me— an older, white, Westside dude—on the issues of profound inequity in our city with the promise that I would use my craft to educate others.

It’s been more than 20 months since that meeting with Pete. I remember Wesley, not Lee, working on the front desk that day. And I remember greeting Eric, and chatting with Monique. But what I remember more than anything—even more than walking downtown 6th Street for the first time alone in that hard autumn light—was that in addition to committing to making the film, I committed to something far more important: I would join the fight.

For my first 6 months at LA CAN, I rarely took the camera out—although I did shoot a few events. There was the Ride4Justice ride, a walkabout with the UN Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing and a few others. But my immersion into LA CAN’s work, which includes my ongoing “re-education”, has allowed me to gain an intimate knowledge of the working apparatus of a powerful organization by the people and for the people. This has made me a better filmmaker and storyteller because, I may be a lot of things, but I’m not just passing through.

To be sure, there really is a film, friends. Sand and Sorrow took me 27 months. Merci Congo, 23.

continued from page 6 “Arts & Culture”

made the documentary film about Skid Row Marketplace

Skid Row Marketplace
838 E. 6th St., DTLA
Thursdays 10 am to 2 pm

continued on next page

PUBLIC COMMENT
YOUTH FIGHT BACK WITH ART AND CULTURE

By Nadia Khan

There is a long history in the United States of demonizing youth of color. “The War on Drugs,” “The War on Crime” and “The War on Gangs” has led to mass incarceration and destruction of young lives. Now “The War on Terror” has unleashed programs with new names with the same destructive consequences, with Black, Brown, Muslim and Immigrant youth being labeled as threats to national security. The programs we are fighting against are Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Blach Identity Extremist Report (BIER) and the Gang/MS-13 Narrative, all of which target and criminalize Black, Brown, Muslim and Immigrant youth as “violent extremists” and “threats to national security.”

On August 10th, the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition organized a Youth Art Skills Sharing workshop. The goal was for youth to learn, share, and build their creative art skills to build a strong, culture of resistance. The day turned out beautifully! Starting off with sharing how youth and others are involved in fighting the various wars on youth and then having lunch and drumming together.

We then went into different workshops. There was Digital Music making where folks used apps on their phones to compose their own beats and song, and there was Button/Pin making and Slap Sticker making, where folks made some really cool pins and stickers. The other workshops were Documentary Filmmaking, which was very interactive, as well as a very informative Digital Design session. The Barriletes or Kites and Poetry workshops were also very fun and interactive.

There is a lot of interest in doing this again. There are plans to doing another one in a few months. Feel free to reach out if you would like to help plan and/or share a skill! Join the fight. Our email is stoplapd-spying@gmail.com.

The Los Angeles City Council’s proposed rewrite of 41-18 D would ban sleeping within 500 feet of a park, school, daycare, certain service providers, and more.

41.18c States that you can not cause some one to “react with an immediate violent reaction” to the perceived threat you would pose by speaking to them. Plainly, 41-18 D creates a “stand your ground law” for public space in Los Angeles —like the one George Zimmerman used to murder Trayvon Martin.

FIGHT BACK AGAINST JIM CHOW!

This legislation would:

• Criminalize sleeping on the street in Los Angeles
• Criminalize your freedom of association
• Waste more taxpayer dollars on failed criminalization efforts instead of building housing

Come to LACAN’s Human and Civil Rights Committee meetings every Monday at 12:30 pm. 838 East 6th Street, Los Angeles 213-228-0024
Andrew Kang & Jas Nizar, the Chefs of Skid Row Coffee Share Their Visionary Stories are Beacons of Light in the “Spots in the Hood.”

These two visionaries of the Skid Row Community share their beginnings of how and why they created, cultivated and continue to build and expand Skid Row Coffee and community at large.

RL: Why did you decide on starting the business in Skid Row?
AK: Three years ago when Danny came to me with this idea of creating Skid Row Coffee, a community space disguised as a coffee shop. Danny was living in Oregon and during that time, he wanted to move back to LA to help out with his parent’s market (formerly known as Best Market which opened its doors in 1995). In February 2019 with the help of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, Best Market transitioned into a more community-oriented space centered in wellness, healthy eating and healthy living and is now called the Skid Row People’s Market.

Danny and I have different experiences. My mother has been involved with working with the people of Skid Row for a long-time through her church. About 7 to 8 years ago, she joined the “Church without Walls” shepherded by Pastor Cue where she serves as the church’s treasurer. I saw this community church as an effective way of working with the community and working in partnership with people. With those ideas in mind, I gained reinforcement, information and the inclination of being able to approach the idea of a community space through a coffee shop and say that, “I believe in that… I see it and let’s do it!”

RL: Why did you decide on starting the business in Skid Row?
AK: About 3-years ago, my partner Danny Park came to me with this idea of creating Skid Row Coffee, a community space disguised as a coffee shop. Danny was living in Oregon and during that time, he wanted to move back to LA to help out with his parent’s market (formerly known as Best Market which opened its doors in 1995). In February 2019 with the help of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, Best Market transitioned into a more community-oriented space centered in wellness, healthy eating and healthy living and is now called the Skid Row People’s Market.

Danny and I have different experiences. My mother has been involved with working with the people of Skid Row for a long-time through her church. About 7 to 8 years ago, she joined the “Church without Walls” shepherded by Pastor Cue where she serves as the church’s treasurer. I saw this community church as an effective way of working with the community and working in partnership with people. With those ideas in mind, I gained reinforcement, information and the inclination of being able to approach the idea of a community space through a coffee shop and say that, “I believe in that… I see it and let’s do it!”

RL: What is Skid Row Coffee’s purpose?
AK: Foundationally, Skid Row Coffee’s main purposes is to provide people with dignified experiences specifically for the Skid Row Community, but also all of those adjacent. The Skid Row Community is a beacon that is specific to who occupies Skid Row. But the Skid Row Community is open to all people with varied experiences -- it is multicultural. I think Skid Row is a neighborhood that encompasses and represents a lot of different people.

RL: What is your vision for Skid Row in 2021?
AK: I think I have aspirational visions uplifting the creative and positive spirit; specifically, the people of Skid Row. I would love to see freedom and liberation and dignified experiences for the people.

RL: Do you have any upcoming events for the Skid Row Community?
AK: We have always been a supportive entity. We oftentimes collaborate and contribute to other organizations, nonprofits and community groups for their programming, but we would like to have our own program centered in food, healing and community breaking bread together because many beautiful things happen when people come together.

RL: Jas, when did you realize that you wanted to become a chef?
JN: Food has always been a really powerful force in my life. I’ve always wanted to cook; I loved doing it growing up and learned many of the steps from my mother and helped her by finishing up what she started cooking for the family. I always wanted to do it as a career, but I didn’t do this for the most part of my life. I was a community organizer for a while in New York for tenant’s rights. I became familiar with LA Can’s work when I was in college at Occidental over 12-years ago, all which influenced me. Then I began working at restaurants because I loved to cook.

RL: What do you think you are creating in Skid Row Community?
JN: Food is a place of getting grounded, gathering and building up the community.

RL: Jas, what events would you like to see happen in the Skid Row Community?
JN: I think it is the purpose of Skid Row Coffee is to change the narrative about what Skid Row is, and, there are beautiful people who love being here and to make it better. Although there are people in a lot of pain, there are also many people taking up leadership in their community like yourself, LA Can and other organizations. A coffee shop is a place of getting grounded, gathering and building up the community.

RL: Jas, what events would you like to see happen in the Skid Row Community?
JN: I’d like to see Skid Row Coffee be more of a coffee house -- a place where we can host performances, open mic, poetry and serve coffee from the Marketplace.

RL: What is your vision for Skid Row in 2021?
JN: I would love to see bathrooms and showers as a permanent place people can go to and use. Decrease the forces of gentrification and build more housing and become healthier.

RL: What words of inspiration would you say that would make people remember you?
JN: Simply, you’re enough... and you belong!
WHY WE BRING NATURE TO SKID ROW

By Matt Horns

John Muir wrote “Who wouldn’t be a mountaineer! Up here all the world’s prizes seem nothing.”

All of the world’s prizes are minuscule compared to what Mother Nature provides. Let’s start with the oxygen we breath. 70% is produced by marine algae. Marine algae keeps us alive. Polluting the ocean kills our Number One life support system. If we want to survive and thrive, we need to understand our place in Earth’s natural world. We need to work with, not against, Mother Nature.

The Quaternary Age started with the first in a series of Ice Ages and intervening Interglacial Periods 3.5 million years ago. Humans evolved during the Quaternary, a time of monumental global climate changes. We almost perished several times, but our quick wit and adaptability pulled us through the tough times.

Geologists have deemed modern times as the Anthropocene Age. This is a time in which Humans have a significant influence on Earth’s geological processes and the natural resources that they produce. The exact beginning is still in debate. Some say it began at the close of the last Ice Age 12,000 years ago, when Humans populated almost every corner of Earth and commenced to try to take command of Mother Nature. At the other end, some say Human’s real impact started with the first test of a nuclear weapon in the 1940’s. In my opinion, the start of the Anthropocene age was the Industrial Revolution in the late 1800’s. Since then, human activities have increasingly degraded our precious air, water, and soil resources that sustain us. We are killing ecosystems that keep us alive.

Many of us are alarmed and are working to counter this downward spiral. We are beginning to understand our place in Earth’s natural world. I have worked in ecological restoration and enhancement for forty years. In my world, people are waking up. The Anthropocene age now has a new Era. An Era in which Humans respect Mother Nature and take seriously our responsibility to be her loving caretaker.

A main aspect of the Anthropocene Age is urbanization. More and more people live in cities. This tends to disconnect Humans from nature. One of the best ways for urbanites to connect with nature is gardening. Gardens don’t just provide food and flowers for people. Urban Gardens support Urban Ecology. They bring nature into the heart of the city. Urban gardeners are closely connected with nature. When we take care of Mother Nature, Mother Nature takes care of us.

Our community was recently gifted something special that started as a NASA experiment to grow plants in outer space. More specifically, this summer, three state-of-the-art vertical planters utilizing Tower Garden aeroponic technology developed by the world leader in vertical aeroponics were installed at LA CAN. Our Food & Wellness Collaborative (F&W) is leading this journey of learning for our community.

Once up and running, it is hard not to marvel at this modern approach to gardening. While the towers’ bold stance is striking as it welcomes visitors to LA CAN, the beautifully populated delicious vegetables, savory herbs and edible flowers grow from seedling to harvest in about 28 days – keeping in line with the no-nonsense approach of today’s urban farmer. Its first cycle of crops swiftly grew into flourishing splendor as both curious and skeptical among us patiently watched.

We have 4 different types of lettuce, Mexican marigolds, Russian kale, Italian and lemon basil, arugula and more than 100 other plants currently producing crops to be harvested. The range of plants this technology is capable of growing is vast and provides many benefits to the community as a high-touch experience for expert and novice gardeners alike. It is a new platform for nutritional education in a no soil/no pesticides environment that also uses 90% less land and 90% less water. Our aeroponic gardens are inspiring our F&W team to experiment with offerings at the Marketplace and to make delicious healthy salads for our committee meetings, as well as guests of LA CAN and the staff.

Come ‘taste the future’ by sampling some of the lettuce from the towers next time you visit LA CAN.

photos by Todd Cunningham
Word In The Hood

By Adam Rice

What do you think about LAPD using street cleaning as an exercise to steal your stuff?

Janice - "I've never seen street cleaners assaulted, I've never seen them threatened, I've seen them do threatening things, and I've seen LAPD be used in a threatening manner."

CruShow - "I think it's absurd — if this so-called street cleaning was taking place in Santa Monica, they would have been fired. They actually don't clean they just throw people's stuff away, they don't street sweep. Don't clean the gutters, don't power wash, i think the community should snatch back the contract and do it ourselves."

Rah - "They don't clean, they just come and take "Bulk Items", which is the majority of your shit, and they throw it away. You end up worse off than when you started off, and it's hard enough being homeless."