Walk the Talk is no ordinary walk. It’s a parade! A brass band, Paradigm Brass, (and pick up musicians), will lead the way through the streets of Skid Row for three afternoons in May. It’s a performance! LA Poverty Department will bring the neighborhood to life with performances along the parade route that pay tribute to neighborhood initiatives and 36 men and women whose contributions to the community call for a big, blaring celebration. It’s visual art dancing down the street! That’s right, we’d be holding high 36 unbelievable gorgeous portraits of these hardworking people, that have been created by bighearted, big brained street artist Mr. Brainwash. It’s YOU! Join the parade. Be part of the New Orleans style 2nd Line. Bring your tambourine, your kazoo, your cowbell, your laughter, your attention. Put your hands together.

This peripatetic performance will bring the history of the community to life and the 36 portraits are destined for a permanent outdoor site in the community, that will keep this history alive.

Walk the Talk is a celebration of a long process of community engagement that began in 2007, and has included performances, exhibitions, public conversations, interviews, drawing, writing, singing and improvising – with the aim of enlisting community brain power to identify initiatives and people whose actions who have helped weave the social fabric of Skid Row. We began by inviting some of the most widely recognized social visionaries from the neighborhood, who were asked to speak about other people and initiatives that they valued. This input led to the installation of the Skid Row History Museum at The Box Gallery in 2008, which included more performance and public conversation events to solicit further community input.

At these events, Skid Row residents described the neighborhood’s vibrant cultural community and the many organizations and countless dedicated individuals who are not only improving the community, but who are leading the way for how this can be done in other communities. Those we celebrate with Walk the Talk, and commemorate with the Community Portrait Gallery are just a few of these individuals.

The parade/performance will take place on 3 consecutive afternoons. Each parade will take a different route through Skid Row and tell a dozen neighborhood stories. For instance, on Saturday, May 26 we’ll tell 13 stories along the route. One stop will be at Gladys Park, home court of the Skid Row 3 on 3 Basketball League, where we’ll tell the story of the league’s founder, O.G. Man. One of the stops on the next day’s parade will be Los Angeles Street, where in 1979, Rosa Alvarez and Jill Halverson created the first day center and then decent housing for women on Skid Row. On Monday we’ll start out on Main Street and end up at the Central City Community Church of the Nazarene on San Pedro St. Those celebrated along the routes will include Tony and Lucy Stallworth who started the joyous Wednesday night Karaoke at the church a decade ago.

Read on for the schedule, complete parade routes, and to learn more about who you will find on Skid Row’s own Community Portrait Gallery.

-John Malpede
The city was debating a redevelopment plan that basically would have demolished all of Skid Row, got rid of all the affordable housing. We made up our own plan. They could gentrify outside Main Street and we could build our community in the 50 blocks down here.

-Jeff Dietrich
WHY WE'RE WALKING - WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

In 1985, Mike Neely founded the Homeless Outreach Program. The idea: recruit formerly homeless people to help their brethren find their way through the bureaucratic snags of social service programs they're entitled to. The idea held such appeal for the Community Redevelopment Agency and its Chairman Jim Wood because it reminded him of Alcoholics Anonymous, where recovering alcoholics talk to current alcoholics, that CRADA funded the innovative program with a $50,000 grant. From there, HOP grew into an organization with 65 employees, a $5.5 million budget, providing services to 5,000 people in 3,000 families throughout L.A. County for special needs populations. Also in 1988, she founded Beyond Shelter to develop affordable permanent housing for families living in shelters.

In January 1987 a group of 80 people living in tents on Towne Avenue, between 4th and 5th streets organized a Christmas Tent City. A group of permanently housed residents, who are confident in the community, pooled their incomes to purchase and renovate the St. Marks Hotel. Second Baptist Church, the first African-American Baptist Church in Los Angeles, partnered with Skid Row Housing Trust to purchase and renovate the St. Marks Hotel. The hotel, which provides low-income housing, was opened in 1995.

In 1970, Catherine Morris and Jeff Dietrich joined the Los Angeles Catholic Worker. The Catholic Worker is a lay Catholic community of men and women who operate a free soup kitchen, a hospitality house for the homeless, an AIDS ministry, a newspaper and a hospice for the dying. Jeff and Catherine have been active at all levels: from direct service to policy planning to the development of neighborhood amenities for people living in poverty. Their early involvement in the neighborhood has encouraged the involvement of many others, including the founding of Las Familias del Pueblo and Inner City Law Center.

In 1989, Nancy Mintie wanted to go to a place where people were being exploited without recourse, and be there to represent them. The poorest among us should have the same access to justice as the richest and most powerful. Nancy Mintie approached the Catholic Worker, and started a legal clinic behind their kitchen at 6th and Gladys. The clinic became the Inner City Law Center, which has been serving the most vulnerable individuals and families in the county since 1983. Nancy Mintie has developed a legal clinic behind their kitchen at 6th and Gladys. The clinic has expanded to include 15 attorneys and over 200 volunteers.

The Catholic Worker began the 3-on-3 Basketball League at Inner City Law Center. The league has been successful in providing a sense of community and a place for people to come together. The league has been expanded to include other neighborhood centers.

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When I arrived down here, there was nothing to do on the weekend. We decided that someone should step up to the plate. So I started Movies on the Nickel.

-Wendell Blassingame
While working for the Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness Pete White saw the need for an organization of people on Skid Row who could themselves articulate and advocate resident’s issues and concerns. While founded Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN) in 1999, to ensure that people living in poverty have voice, power and opinion in the decisions that impact their lives. LACAN, comprised of neighborhood residents has been a persuasive voice in preserving low income housing downtown, and in ensuring compensation for displaced residents. LACAN also has a variety of programs focused on individual wellbeing, including, exercise programs, a community roof top garden and the production of community cultural events.

In 2000, professional blues guitarist, S.S. Jones and Bill Edwards, also a musician and at that time a housing manager for SRO Housing, organized the Skid Row Musicians Network. Edwards secured a basement rehearsal space for the Network, which offered neighborhood musicians a safe place to gather, rehearse and to keep their equipment. The Network produced monthly free concerts at San Julian Park and the Leonide Hotel, with members performing an exchange for rehearsal space. The Network produced CDs’ including “Live at the Leonide” with a dozen participating neighborhood bands. Network bands performed throughout Los Angeles.

An ex-cop from Portland, Andy Raubeson came to Skid Row to salvage the single room hotels as housing for the poor. He became the first executive director of the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Corporation, whose first project was the purchase and renovation of the 60 room Florence Hotel in 1984. Andy knew everybody who was living in his hotels, and when he walked through the streets, everybody would yell “Hey Andy!” With a series of subsequent SRO makeovers, clustered around 2 vest pocket parks and the planting of 400 trees on Skid Row sidewalks Raubeson followed his vision that the properties’ proximity to one another would form a small community and help humanize Skid Row.

Wendell Blassingame provides a safe haven free of drugs and alcohol where one can learn to respect others and more importantly, oneself. He’s also provided free medical cards to community members every Wednesday, enabling them to receive treatment. Wendell is a Skid Row representative on the Downtown Neighborhood Council.

Darlene Berry got clean and sober in Skid Row after many years of addiction. She started working for Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing Cooperation and became the first female hotel manager and then the manager of the two SRO parks. In that role she assumed responsibility for producing the yearly San Julian Park, Recovery on the Frontline Cocaine Anonymous Marathon, which started by Mike Dolphin, in 1989, who passed it on to her.

Lillian Abel Calamari is a talented painter who exhibits her work in many galleries each year. She is also an intuitive and remarkable social worker with SRO Housing Corporation. When she started working at SRO in 1982 she initiated SRO Art Workshop open to all Skid Row residents. The long-lived workshop initially took place at the Saint Vincent de Paul shelter and later at SRO’s James Wood Community Center. The workshop now has a dedicated atelier provided by SRO at the Skid Row Community Center. Lillian was a graduate of Ohio University, and attended the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League of New York and the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting & Sculpture. She also attended the Santa Reparata Graphic Art Center and Il Bisonte International School of Graphic Arts in Florence, Italy. Her work has been shown in New York, Los Angeles, Krakow, Poland, and in numerous galleries and exhibitions across the country.

I picked the first set of tenants in the Regal Hotel. They were my residents. We had a monthly meal, barbequed in Gladys Park, and played music. I never had problems in my building because I got the residents to take ownership.

-Darlene Berry
Pastor Scott said: “Wouldn't it be wonderful outreach to have a community karaoke?” We’ve been doing this for fourteen years now and we’re not going anywhere. This is it. The community loves it.

-Tony Stallworth
A musician who plays the flutes, Mr. Lee came from Korea to the U.S. 40 years ago, and served on the faculty at UCLA for more than 20 years as a professor in Ethnomusicology, teaching Korean traditional music. Since 1997 when he and his wife opened D+D Deli, a convenience store on Skid Row, Mr. and Mrs. Lee have seen the neighborhood change and clean up. Family pictures rest on the top shelf at the shop. Mr. Lee has said "I love it here because there are so many nice people."

After becoming an ordained Episcopal priest, Alice Callahan started a day center for children of garment center workers, Las Familias del Pueblo. Las Familias has dedicated itself to moving families into better and more appropriate housing. Alice has consistently advocated for enforcement of the Single Room Ordinance and the preservation of the SRO housing stock in downtown. Consequently Alice started the non-profit, Skid Row Housing Trust, to renovate and save the single room occupancy low income housing stock. Today, Skid Row Housing Trust owns and manages over 20 hotels in the Skid Row area. No longer on the board of Skid Row Housing Trust, Alice continues to run Las Familias and remains committed to preserving low income housing.

A veteran having lived for more than 20 years on Skid Row, including a decade on the corner of 5th and Crocker Street in a cardboard box, Walter "Redd" Moore eventually became a member of the recovery community in the late Nineties, when he began his life’s work, serving others battling addiction. Redd's strength and presence has inspired other men and women in recovery. As a counselor with Volunteers of America, he has helped countless more veterans in need. Currently Redd is a treatment specialist for Behavioral Health Systems.

After 17 years as an addict, Orlando Ward had hit bottom. The former Stanford basketball player, who grew up in Orange County and had at one time led a successful business career, was sitting on a cardboard box in front of St. Vincent's Cardinal Manning Center and began to speak to God. "I thanked him for all that he had shown me: graduating from Stanford, good jobs at Fortune 500 companies, travel to Europe and my family. People would give their right arm to have just a tip of the things that I've had," he recalled. That was his turning point and he moved on to become public affairs director for the Midnight Mission, which he considers "...more satisfying than anything I did at Xerox or anywhere else I worked, because I represent something that, obviously, I believe. And I've got evidence that it can work." He is currently the Director of Community Affairs for Volunteers of America Greater Los Angeles.

Beginning as a volunteer with Union Rescue Mission’s (URM) Youth Ministry in 1987, Scott Chamberlain’s relationship with URM has continued in many forms. He soon became the founding pastor of Skid Row’s Central City Church of the Nazarene and Executive Director of Central City Community Outreach, where he fostered a sense of community, accountability and leadership among the Skid Row population from 1988-2003. Scott further partnered to create after-school programs for children, support groups for those struggling with addiction, and outreach programs, including a weekly Karaoke Coffee Club. From 2003-2005, Scott worked as a consultant for New Church Specialties, training pastors.

Robert Sundance, a Sioux Indian from the Rosebud reservation who had been arrested for public drunkenness on Skid Row hundreds of times, sued the city and county, demanding better treatment. The long-standing police practice had been to arrest public inebriates, and transport them to jail. When sobered, they were put out on the street and the cycle repeated itself. Sundance had amassed reams of yellow legal pads tracking his experiences while arrested, which he brought to the LA County Superior Court when The Center for the Public Interest took his case. After an eight-week trial, Judge Harry Hupp ruled that public drunks should be treated the same as anyone else arrested for a misdemeanor, and ruled that alcoholism is a disease, not a crime. He ordered that those arrested for drunkenness should receive a medical screening, a bed and food, and be directed into civil detox instead of jail.

Dr. Dennis Bleakley has seen a great deal in his years as a practitioner of the healing arts at the John Wesley Community Health Institute (JWCH) of The Weingart Center, recently renamed the John Wesley Clinic. He feels that if he prevents one person from suffering the ravages of tuberculosis, high-blood pressure and other diet-related and contagious diseases then his years of service will not be in vain. Dr. Bleakley has found a professional alcoholoholic at the clinic, since 2000, because of the clinic’s commitment to advancing and providing the highest level of medical care.

In 1985, Mollie Lowery, along with Frank Rice started Los Angeles Men’s Place, the first day center for homeless men with mental illness, on Downtown L.A.’s San Julian Street. She was the director for 20 years and expanded LAMP to include housing and employment opportunities for women as well as men. An oasis for homeless people living with a severe psychiatric illness, by 1990 LAMP had developed and implemented new cutting-edge programs including access to health care, a housing program, and substance abuse recovery programs supported by the County. Mollie introduced the "housing first" approach of helping the homeless mentally ill in Los Angeles and she continues this work today. In 2007 Lowery started to serve the mentally ill homeless outside of Skid Row.

The Karaoke Coffee Club, begun by Lucy and Tony Stallworth, was founded in 1997 on the belief that joy and laughter are as essential to life as food and water. The Club has been hosted for more than a decade at Central City Community Outreach, which opens its doors to more than 300 people weekly. The spirited shows feature song and dance and a warm cup of coffee, and allow one's troubles to be forgotten, if only for a moment.

Jazz advocate Richard Fulton became clean and sober on Skid Row, before opening 5th Street Dick’s Coffeehouse in Leimert Park. He provided opportunities for young musicians to play and older musicians to make a comeback. “You could go to 5th Street Dick’s at 2 AM and see Japanese tourists catching a jazz set inside, and outside see while chess players peeling over the shoulders of black chess players,” said poet Kamau Daood, a seminal figure in the Leimert Park arts movement.

A musician who plays the flutes, Mr. Lee came from Korea to the U.S. 40 years ago, and served on the faculty at UCLA for more than 20 years as a professor in Ethnomusicology, teaching Korean traditional music. Since 1997 when he and his wife opened D+D Deli, a convenience store on Skid Row, Mr. and Mrs. Lee have seen the neighborhood change and clean up. Family pictures rest on the top shelf at the shop. Mr. Lee has said "I love it here because there are so many nice people."
WALK THE TALK Talks

February 20: Broken and Shared LAPD is hosting a reading and talk by Jeff Dietrich of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, about his new book Broken and Shared: Food, Dignity, and the Poor on Los Angeles Skid Row. 7-9 pm @ United Coalition East Prevention Project.

March 19: Faith On Skid Row / Faith In Skid Row Pastor Scott Chamberlain and Pastor William Campbell will talk of their pioneering efforts in creating community institutions, Church of the Nazarene and Project Open Door, on Skid Row. 7-9 pm @ Central City Community Church of the Nazarene.

April 18: Thirty Years of Organizing on Skid Row A conversation with Nancy Mintie, founder of Inner City Law Center; Gary Blasi, UCLA Law Professor; Pete White, founder of LA Community Action Network (LACAN) and You, the audience, about the ongoing struggle of Skid Row residents for social justice. A slide presentation documenting historical grassroots actions will punctuate and animate the discussion. 7-9 pm @ James Wood Community Center.

May 9: Creative Community - the ARTS on Skid Row Artists Lillian Abel Calamari, SRO art workshop; OG Man, OG’s N Service Association; Robert Chambers, Homeless Writers Coalition; SS Jones, Skid Row Musicians Network; Hayk Makhmuryan, Lamp Community’s Fine Arts Program and Bob Bates, Inner City Arts show their work and talk about the history of the rich creative community that exists on Skid Row and where we are today. 7-9 pm @ Inner City Arts.

May 16: Creating a Recovery Community on Skid Row A conversation with Darlene Berry, who started Recovery on the Frontline with Mike Neely, founder Homeless Outreach Program; Mollie Lowery, founder LAMP and General Jeff, Issues and Solutions. 7-9 pm @ The Last Bookstore, 453 S. Spring Street, corner 5th and Spring Street.

May 23: Creating Community on Skid Row A preview of the performance Walk the Talk and a conversation about empowering Skid Row with Mike Neely, founder Homeless Outreach Program; Mollie Lowery, founder LAMP and General Jeff, Issues and Solutions. 7-9 pm @ VOA Rotary House.

LAPD (from left to right)
John Malpede: Skid Row neighborhood, every day, Skid Row neighborhood, parade parade. Austin Hines: Walk The Talk - The seed was planted, time to water Another Planet. Bradley Spann: Is an L.A. based actor/writer and this is his first outing with L.A.P.D. He is grateful to all of L.A.P.D. for their kindness and great experience. Kevin Michael Key: Before Skid Row, I already knew how to talk the talk, now I got a brand new me, and I can Walk da Talk. Ibrahim Saba: My respect to all of you who brought life and dignity through struggles above managing levels in Skid Row. Henriëtte Brouwers: Hearing 36 Skid Row veterans talk has moved me deeply, moves me to keep on walking. Linda Harris: I love knowing that there are people that are still here making a difference, 1st come 1st serve > they came here first and they are still serving. Carmen Vega: an actor and poet performer receptive to improving the craft via actual live performances hence W the T! (know what I mean ; ). Celestine Williams: An actress: singer enthusiastically partaking of all things creative to share with the world. Anthony Taylor: YES!! I can change the world... and it starts with me. Jennifer Campbell: Education, Respiration, Revitalization, Emancipation, Restoration + Representation. L.A.P.D. want Immulaziation and WALK THE TALK like my forefathers that are represented here, for your pleasure. Chas Jackson: Life is too short not to enjoy it. I invite all to step in my shoes and enjoy “Walk the Talk”, a lively and informative project. Walter Fears: Some are called not only to leave the status quo, but to ready themselves for radical commitment and change of heart, soul, mind and strength; by living a life of restoration, consolation to those who suffer. Jose VandenBurg (not pictured): My only alliance is to change. Samyrah Saba (not pictured): Honored and blessed to work with and learn about one of the most oppressed communities today.

LAPD’s MISSION: LAPD creates performances and multidisciplinary artworks that connect the experience of people living in poverty to the social forces that shape their lives and communities. LAPD’s works express the realities, hopes, dreams and rights of people who live and work in L.A.’s Skid Row.

LAPD’s VISION: LAPD makes artistic work to change the narrative about Skid Row and people living in poverty. In doing so, LAPD aims to create a community of compassion, change individual lives and inspire the next generation of artists.

LAPD’s HISTORY: Los Angeles Poverty Department has been working in Los Angeles’ Skid Row since 1985, doing free performance workshops and making art. LAPD was the first theater for and by homeless people in the nation and the first arts program of any kind for homeless people in Los Angeles. The original goals, still among current goals of the project, are to create community on Skid Row and to employ the voices of the people who live on Skid Row to communicate the experience of living there to the larger community of Los Angeles and to the nation.

about

LOS ANGELES

POVERTY DEPARTMENT

Paradigm Brass is a new model of brass band, playing a hybrid of styles, designed to reach a broader range of listeners... AND KEEP THEM DANCING!! From church stages to nightclub scenes, Paradigm brings Bach to the bars and grooves to the concert halls. The players will include: Marc Bolin on sousaphone; Courtney Jones, Jon Bradley and Roy Wiegand, trumpet; Erim Navarro, trombone; Rich Firman, baritone sax; Tim Ganard, bass drum.

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about

MR. BRAINWASH

Mr. Brainwash is, along with Shepard Fairey and Banksy, one of the most recognized street artists in the world. He has also gained a huge amount of recognition for his gallery shows in Los Angeles, New York, Europe and Asia. Artists who have had ongoing interaction with people who live on the margins and an education in compassion and understanding.

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Enormous THANKS TO...

... all our pals and partners who have worked to make Walk the Talk happen. And that includes the LA Poverty Department production staff. Cal State LA Interns: Inelida Romero, Ida Tran, Rogelio Mendez, Rosalinda del Rio, Michelle Blas, Delia Caperon, Mike Willard, Luisana Villalba, Lorena Hernandez, Jessica Calderon, Jason Chingburanakit, Viviana Fernandez, Karen Cervantes, Cristina Pardo, Steven Mota, Sharon Zhu, Jessica Calderon. LAPDers: Carmen Vega, Jimmie Johnson, Sohrab Mohebbi, Mariella Saba, Patrick Paul, Ben Barge. Music: Paradigm Brass, pick-up musicians: Dave Muller, Kenny and Rudy of Church of the Nazarene Praise Band (Joseph Warren, director). Community partners and hosts for Walk the Talk Talks and rehearsals: United Coalition East Prevention Project, Central City Community Church of the Nazarene, SRO, Inc., LA Inner City Arts, VOA Rotary House, The Last Bookstore.