

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS YOUTH THEATRE PROGRAM

FALL 1999 NEWSLETTER

Unusual Times

Letter from the executive director

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS ARE IN TWO PLACES AT ONE TIME! I'm thrilled to report that our theatre program is flourishing as we enter the new millennium. **US** has expanded to two workshop sessions: half of our volunteers continue to work with high-risk male offenders at Central Juvenile Hall, while the other half are working with a group of kids from foster care, group homes and other kids-at-risk organizations at ArtShare, Inc., a theatre space in downtown Los Angeles.

Super Suspect Thanks go to Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Supervisor for the Second District, who is largely responsible for recruiting the kids from foster care and group homes for our program at ArtShare, Inc. Many of the boys and girls participating in the theatre workshops are referred through the Department of Children and Family Services. Supervisor Burke's office helped us when we weren't making progress getting kids into our program. Thanks to Miriam in Supervisor Burke's office who made the calls for US. I'm happy to report that not only is the workshop filled, but there is a waiting list for kids to participate!

Our thanks go to Chip Hunter, Artistic Director of ArtShare, Inc., who has generously agreed to allow the Unusual Suspects to use the 99-seat theatre. It's exciting for the kids to work in a theatre space, on stage, with theatrical lighting. Thanks to Alena who comes in on her day off while we're working in the building.

The Central Juvenile Hall kids reached out to the kids at ArtShare by making an oversized poster welcoming them to the Unusual Suspects. In a reciprocal act of goodwill, the new program kids created their own poster and sent it to the kids at CJH.

Our Central Juvenile Hall program continues to thrive—we are in rehearsals for our third show there. The CJH staff has been very accommodating to the Unusual Suspects. The first-ever CJH prom (Unusual Suspect Corey was chosen as Prom King!) was recently held there—due, in part, to the responsible behavior and improved attitudes shown by the kids in US workshops and performances.

Our 15th Unusual Suspects session produced the comedy, "A Day To Remember," which received a tremendous response. However, between the two weeks of performances, the show lost 4 boys in the cast to sentencing—25 years to life. It's a sobering reminder of the reason we're working at CJH.

Thank you to guest host Roma Maffia of *Profiler* and to Senator Tom Hayden for coming to the show. The US Volunteers once again did a terrific job with the kids. Special thanks to Noel McCarthy who designed the set, and special thanks to our dedicated costume designer, Denise Martinez. She flew back to L.A. from the set of a Robin Williams' film, on her only day off, to do the costumes for the show.

The story of "A Day..." was set as a wedding between members of two rival families. Several of the performers, dressed in suits, served as "ushers", escorting audience members down the aisle to their seats. The performances combined rap, poetry and comedy to show how love conquers all.

Mentors for US: We are privileged to be working with Executive Service Corps. This is an arts service organization where retired management executives offer professional, affordable consulting to executive directors of non-profit organizations. Ed Attanasio will be mentoring me one-on-one to help provide access to financial, informational, and technical resources to US.

Fund-raising News: The **Entertainment Industry Foundation**, which recently gave US a grant, hooked up with eBay to auction celebrity memorabilia to benefit US. See the story inside...

US Volunteers Update: **Lisa Lindstrom** produced a film with Jon Avnet and Marsha Oglesby entitled "Things You Can Tell Just By Looking At Her" starring Glenn Close, Holly Hunter and Calista Flockhart. **Laura Leigh Hughes** appears in the film. Our newsletter designer, **Mary Ann Hagan** is getting married next year to Rick Goldman. **Susie Spear** is understudying in a new play at the Mark Taper starring Henry Winkler, John Ritter and Rita Wilson.

Thankyouverymuch to our two volunteers, Angela Pallota and Carly Crooker, for their indispensable help in our office. Thanks to Rodrick Spencer for donating a much-needed laptop computer and to Samy's Camera for our new 35 mm automatic camera. And thanks to Catherine Anderson for responding to the request in the last edition of *Unusual Times* for someone to work with an aspiring writer, Twilah.

Double the program, double the shows: Now that the Unusual Suspects are operating out of two spaces, we've got two upcoming productions. Please see the ads on this page and come to both! Don't forget, because of Central Juvenile Hall regulations, we are not allowed to charge admission to the show, nor are we permitted to solicit donations at the CJH show.

As the year and the century come to a close, I am reminded of the importance of our work. Please support US in helping these kids discover their own amazing gifts that they can contribute to the world...

Sincerely,

Laura Leigh Hughes, Executive Director



Roma Maffia, right, guest host of "A Day To Remember" with Laura Leigh Hughes

Photo by Joseph Hughes

OUR FIRST SHOW AT ARTSHARE!

Our silent Voices

Don't miss our latest show!

Thursday, December 16
Friday, December 17
7:30 p.m.
Saturday, December 18
1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

ArtShare, Inc.
801 E. 4th Place L.A.

COME SEE THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS' NEW SHOW AT CJH!

"INSIDE OUT"

Saturday, December 11
1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 12
6:00 p.m.

Central Juvenile Hall

1605 Eastlake Ave. L. A.
(near USC Medical Center)
RSVP required (323) 634-0383

Our 3rd CJH show!



THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS
THEATRE COMPANY
EXISTS TO BRING
THEATRE ARTS TO
AT-RISK TEENS.

THROUGH
IMPROVISATION AND
WRITING EXERCISES,
PROFESSIONALS IN THE
ARTS WORK TO HELP
YOUNG PEOPLE
CREATE ORIGINAL
THEATRE AND TO FOSTER
PRIDE, SELF CONFIDENCE
AND RACIAL TOLERANCE.

THANK YOU THANK YOU

The Unusual Suspects are establishing a core of benefactors who will make contributions of \$5000 or more in order to sustain the program. We invite any individual or corporate benefactors to join the **#1 Suspects** roster to help us continue this valuable program. Thanks to this quarter's benefactors:

Super Suspects

Grants and Endowments
The Eisner Foundation
Martin W. & Dorothy Anne Early Family Fund
Anne & Scott Litt Fund/California Community Foundation
Together Strong, Inc.
Entertainment Industry Foundation
Faber Family Fund/California Community Foundation

#1 Suspects

Gifts of \$5000 or more
Peter Morton
The W.E.B. Foundation

Prime Suspects

Gifts of \$1000 or more
Maresa and Matt Bahr
Dr. and Mrs. Firestone
Tony Ganz
The Gas Company
Liberty Hill Foundation, Joseph B. Kirshbaum Memorial Fund
Los Angeles Marathon
Steve Tisch-The Steve Tisch Company

Suspicious Characters

Gifts of \$100 or more
Jon Avnet
Gina Blumenfeld
MaryAnn Dolcemasclo
Joseph D. Hughes, Sr.
Kathryn Layng and David Henry Hwang
Stacy Keach
Jordan Kerner
Bob Levitt
Lisa Lindstrom
Jordon Roberts
Carol Schreder
Valerie Scoon

Colorful Characters

Gifts of in-kind donations

Edward Asner*	Roma Maffia*
Jon Avnet*	Don Mancini*
Television cast of <i>Becker</i> *	Mark McEwen*
Amy Brenneman*	Arthur Miller*
Broadway cast of <i>Death of a Salesman</i> *	Miramax Films
James Caan*	Peter Morton*
Castle Rock Entertainment*	Multigroup
George Clooney*	Edward James Olmos*
James Cromwell*	Television cast of <i>Profiler</i> *
Tom Cruise*	Television cast of <i>Providence</i> *
Brian Dennehy*	Rob Reiner*
Cameron Diaz*	Keri Russell*
Mike Farrell*	Kathee Schneider
Joely Fisher*	Will Smith*
Diane DeLaurentis*	Rodrick Spencer
Free Arts For Abused Children	Nick Stabile*
Hugh Grant*	Jennifer Tilly*
G2 Graphics	Todd AO
Harry Guidotti/Universal Promotions, Inc.	Jeanne Tripplehorn*
Helen Hunt*	Television cast of <i>Two Guys and a Girl</i> *
Elizabeth Hurley*	Gedde Wantanabe*
LaCienega Cleaners	Bill Wyman*
Bob Levitt*	Miss Yvonne of Pee Wee Herman's Playhouse*
Jim Livie, Eastern Costume Co.	

* Indicates donation of memorabilia for eBay auction to benefit US. Space doesn't permit US to acknowledge every donation, but **thank you** so much to **everyone** who has made donations to support the Unusual Suspects Theatre Company.

UNUSUAL SUSPECT PROFILE CARLOS

Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes



Carlos, whose identity must be protected by Central Juvenile Hall regulation, is currently appearing in his third Unusual Suspects production, "Inside Out," which he also co-wrote. Carlos played the groom in the last US show at CJH, "A Day To Remember."

Suspect's Name: Carlos

How long a suspect: One year

Has being in The Usual Suspects changed you?

Yes, a lot really, because I was kind of a shy person and wasn't able to express my feelings. But now I'm able to open up a lot more—not just with the Unusual Suspects but with everybody.

What would you say to somebody who was thinking about joining The Unusual Suspects but who was somewhat shy about it?

I'd tell him, 'You gotta face your fear someday. You gonna have a lot of fun. You're gonna learn a lot of stuff, and the people you meet, you're going to like.'

What's your favorite part of the play process?

The play itself. Watching the way people gel, come together. If they're enemies or not, they put that aside and they have the goal of making the play the best they can. Just watching that and knowing that the audience is satisfied with what we're doing. And hopefully, they got our point.

So you would encourage other people to do this? No doubt.

What is this play about? The story is based on three characters—me, Divine, and Lilo. We're supposed to be crime partners. We come into juvenile hall, and it's going to show how we change.

What is your hope for this play? The play is kinda like our last chance to express ourselves, our last chance to get people to look at us with an open mind and not to close it off with tunnel vision, or put a brick wall in front of us.

If it could just open one person's eyes to look at us, not by what people say about us, but from what they see if they get to meet us.

Society looks at a figure that somebody has made out of us; they're not looking at us. A lot of time, they'll see the orange suits and it's like—'danger'. We show 'em our hearts, that our intentions are good, and that we're not just thinking about gang-banging and selling drugs but that some us do have goals, like going to college.

Society looks at a figure that somebody has made out of us; they're not looking at us. We show 'em our hearts, that our intentions are good, and that we're not just thinking about gang-banging and selling drugs but that some us do have goals, like going to college.

When you look back on this, what's the thing you'll take away from it? That just because you think you might not like something, you should try it anyways. 'Cause if you say you can't, you won't. If you quit, you lose; but if you say 'I'll try' then you have the choice if you're gonna win or lose—if you try. I live by that now. I refuse to say 'I can't do it; I won't do it; I quit.' Because you never know.

—Valerie Scoon

POEM

What do you see,
When your eyes gaze upon me,
Do you see a murderer,
Or a scared teen?
It all depends on your state of mind
Or your perspective.
But that's the essential ingredient
That society has neglected.
Their eyes have been blinded,
They only see what they choose.
But they fail to realize,
An open mind is something you should use.
If you only see black and white,
And refuse to blend them to gray.
You will lose all knowledge,
Of the things happening each day.
When a wise person flips a coin,
They can look at both sides,
But the ignorant refuse to see
What our fruitful futures can provide.
Lost souls we are not,
The future of this world we are,
Take a look through our eyes,
We promise not to go too far.
What we see,
Is not all song and dance,
What we are merely showing you,
Is our last chance,
To open your eyes
To the unspoken truth,
And to hopefully change
How you see the so-called "at risk" youth.

—Carlos, Unusual Suspect

One of Carlos' original poems

entertainment industry **FOUNDATION**

Teams Up With **eBay** To Benefit The Unusual Suspects

Celebrity Memorabilia Donated for On-Line Auction

One of our newest benefactors, the **Entertainment Industry Foundation**, hooked up with eBay, the popular auction website for collectibles and memorabilia, to raise money for the Unusual Suspects. This innovative fundraiser utilized the worldwide exposure of eBay to auction celebrity memorabilia to benefit kids' charities like ours.

This was a great opportunity for **US** since every dollar raised from the sale of the donated items went directly to benefit the Unusual Suspects. Celebrities donated autographed items which were posted for sale on the eBay website location,

www.ebay.com/bidshelpkids, during the month of September.

Some highlights of the auction items include Ethel Merman's pearl necklace, donated by her son, Bob Levitt; the book of *Death of a Salesman* (50th Anniversary Edition), signed by playwright Arthur Miller; a script of the first episode of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* signed by Edward Asner; and a *ER* scrub shirt signed by George Clooney.

Additional items that were donated included autographed headshots, posters and memorabilia from film, television, Broadway

and the music world by such stars as James Caan, Tom Cruise, Cameron Diaz, Mike Farrell, Joely Fisher, Hugh Grant, Helen Hunt, Edward James Olmos, Will Smith and Bill Wyman.

Thanks to Jim Hooker of the Entertainment Industry Foundation for coordinating this fundraiser. And thank you to everyone who made this fundraiser possible through their donations of all the wonderful memorabilia. The generosity of supporters of the Unusual Suspects are the best!

Suspect's Name: Dorrie

How long a suspect: Three months

What were you expecting when you joined this group? I was just expecting to act. I was expecting everyone to be afraid of you—or me afraid of them—and make no friends but it's funny—you know—everybody's cool. We're all cool, and we get along and it's fun to act with them.

How has this process changed you, if at all?

It makes me see that you can't go off first assumptions of people because they're probably just as scared as you are. Because my whole thing was that they probably won't like me, and they're probably thinking the same thing about me. That's what I've learned.

Now that you're helping to write the play and not solely acting in it, how does that make you feel about theater? It makes me feel good. It's hard 'cause I'm used to writing by myself—like I can write a play, but I can write it by myself. It's not other people around me, giving ideas an' stuff. So it's kinda difficult. That aspect's kinda hard.

What makes it hard? 'Cause you have to hear other people's ideas instead of just your own. You have to hear other people's feedback. But it's fun. It's worth it. I like it.

What makes it hard? 'Cause you have to hear other people's ideas instead of just your own. You have to hear other people's feedback. But it's fun. It's worth it. I like it.

How does the session work? I'm giving ideas and then I just feed off of them and I just—it just starts bouncing off my head. I start getting ideas. I start thinking about it and slowly things will start coming together.

So what happened in your writing session today? We sat with our team...and we talked about the ideas in our scene and how we could make it

UNUSUAL SUSPECT **PROFILE** DORRIE



Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes

Dorrie performs in the workshop at ArtShare, Inc.

It's hard...cause you have to hear other people's ideas instead of just your own. You have to hear other people's feedback. But it's fun. It's worth it.

better and how could we put more action into it. So we did improv and we fed off of that. It's difficult...like I have to get mad at my scene partner like she's my daughter, and it's really uncomfortable to say what I'm saying to her. And I would suppose it's the same thing for her.

What is the benefit of doing something that is difficult? 'Cause people will listen and maybe they'll understand something that they never understood before.

So what would you say to someone who was thinking about joining The Unusual Suspects? Join it. Just join it. It's fun. You'll enjoy yourself.

What about if they were particularly shy? You'll get over it.

How did you feel on the first day? Scared. I didn't know anybody, and I wasn't trying to get to know anybody. And I figure the next question you're going to ask me is how I'm going to feel on the last day.

No, I was going to say right now since we're in the middle. How do I feel right now? Oh, I like it. I'm loving it. It's fun.

So the fear... It's gone.

So are you looking forward to the actual performance? Oh, yes. It's in that stage for me where—is it ever going to happen? Is it ever going to happen? You know it's going to happen but you're just scared— is it going to happen? And—aagggghhh—you're going crazy.

And what's your hope for the final performance? That it's really good. That it'll blow people away.

—Valerie Scoon

VOLUNTEER PROFILE



Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes

Suspect's Name: Michael Bortman

Suspect Profile: Volunteer at Central Juvenile Hall with male high-risk offenders

How long have you been volunteering with Unusual Suspects? I think about 4 years.

Why did you want to become a volunteer for the Unusual Suspects? I worked with kids before—teaching them film. I got a real kick out of it. Three or four years ago my own kids had gone on to school and I was looking to contribute.

Theater was not my background. Film was. It took me a while to transfer what I'd been doing. I liked the people who were involved. Once I got into it, it was hard to quit. It's the kind of thing that unless you enjoy the process, you wouldn't do it. I've enjoyed the process of storytelling.

What would you say to someone who was thinking of joining Unusual Suspects?

Come and sit in with us first and see what the process is like. There are frustrations involved. It's probably not for everyone.

The frustrations are not from working with the kids from the group home. The kids were great and they seemed to be into what we were doing, but we ran into trouble with some of the group home staff—how to get the staff as committed as the kids.

What effect has the Unusual Suspects had on the kids? One of the most rewarding things is seeing the kids change in remarkable ways—seeing kids blossom while in the program. Seeing them willing to take risks—step out of themselves. Was that the kid who hung back in the shadows? Something clicks with them. It's extraordinary. Absolutely the best thing about the program.

What kind of changes have you seen in yourself? We all have learned to take larger risks than we were willing to take then when we started. In terms of themes, but also in terms of the way we're going about the work. In the writing, for example, we really stress a lot of improvisational techniques to create story. It's been helpful for all of us and in my own work as well. I've had many hidden rewards.

Is there room for improvement with Unusual Suspects? Time is always a big concern. Our program runs only maybe three or four months in a cycle. That puts a lot of pressure on all of us to work very quickly. The theme has to be chosen and the script developed. The reason why we are limited to these short cycles is the kids are in such a fluid state. If we were to run the cycle longer, we would be losing kids. We're constantly battling that whole time problem. We'd love a situation where we could take a longer time. Even with the time limitations, it's remarkable what we manage to accomplish. It's a great experience all the way around.

How would you describe the process of your working with the kids? There always has been an interplay between what the kids have in mind and our own professional experience figuring out how to do it. The result of being through the program

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A kid hangs back in the shadows. Then something clicks with him. It's extraordinary. Absolutely the best thing about the program."

two or three times is you can step back a little and let it happen. The kids become more familiar with how we do things. This time there were some great moments where we said this and they say, "no, no that's not what we are talking about." It's what

wish list

The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company welcomes any donations. We are especially in need of the following:

- Grant writers
- Publicists
- Macintosh lap top computers
- Video Camera
- Film and developing
- Volunteer office help
- Binders
- Art supplies
- Journals
- Folding Chairs
- Folding Table

Please call the US office at (323) 634-0383 for further information. Thanks!

we're after in a way—to develop that kind of trust. The whole process has been an enlightening one. You very quickly begin to sense something important here. Most of your impression is from the newspapers. You shake your head and think, how can that be? Then you begin to be introduced to them as people as kids first of all.

I don't mean to discount the level of crimes they've been involved in. The kids have had to deal with stuff that is not part of your daily life. You see them as people. You understand they're not monsters, they're kids. They've all been through tough times in their environments. It forces a lot of choices on them. We're offering them a chance to learn about empathy.

One of the things I really love about storytelling is the creation of empathy as the end product of the program and yet there are kids who are headed off to prison. What are they going to do with that empathy? The best thing that you can hope for is that the capacity for empathy is a good thing no matter what the circumstances.

Any Final Thoughts? I'm just so knocked out by this—the Unusual Suspects program—that it could start with Laura Leigh saying 'I think I can do this.' I'm glad to be a part of it.

—Valerie Scoon

poetry

Fear of my instinct. Caught between my past and present. My seed is my fuel which keeps me burnin. But my ties keep me concealed, shackled to the darkness that consumes the hours which pass me by. Choices to be made, but I choose not to choose. Livin off of reaction. Consequences a thought. Fear of my instinct. Caught between my past and present.

—Mark L., *Unusual Suspect*,
Central Juvenile Hall

EVERYDAY THANG

I was a young innocent girl, playin' with my friends on a sunny afternoon. No worries while we kick it on our block, listen to music, eat candy and play double-dutch in the middle of the street while everyone sings songs to the beat of our steps...

This was an everyday thang.

Goin' to the store. Fightin' over popsicles, it was so hot. We see Denola and Davyon in the corner kissin' away. And we made jokes and watched their faces turn purple when they see us spyin'...

This was an everyday thang.

Racin' each other while we play hide-and-seek or hide-and-go-get-it. Havin' singin' and dancin' contests. Takin' pictures and runnin' in and out the house while momma keep sayin', "Stop slammin' that door!"

This was an everyday thang.

Playin' with the cute baby playin' with us. Goin' swimmin' at Will Rodgers Park. Stealin' books from the library. Chasin' the ice cream truck.

Eighteen-year-olds tryin' to get us near their car while Robert Earl, the neighborhood molester, tries to tell us what time it is.

This was an everyday thang.

As it gets dark, we're sittin' on the porch. It's around eight or so. Shots fire. About twenty-four rounds non-stop. We all hit the ground. People start screamin'

A lady holding her left arm limps down the block, leavin' a trail of blood behind her. As she gets closer I hear her say, "I'm shot! I'm shot! Somebody help me!" Shontae comes rushin' out the house to help her inside. I look even closer. "It's Tracy! Davyon's mom!" We are all too shocked to even move.

We all run into the house behind her. I start cryin' She sits down. V.J. runs to get a towel for me to hold over her arm.

Her son and cousin fly into the house. Who shot you momma? Who shot you!?" She says, "I don't know."

All of the guys in the neighborhood who were close to her (includin' my brother and her son) hop into cars.

They speed off.
Out for revenge.

The ambulance takes Tracy away. My momma asks from the window, "Tameka you O.K.?" I say, "Yes momma."

In Watts this was an everyday thang.

—Tameka, *Unusual Suspect*,
ArtShare

Tameka reading her poetry at the ArtShare theatre space.

DON'T LET SOMETHING GOOD SLIP AWAY

Have you ever lost something that you really love
I have
Have you ever had to give something up that you want
I did
Do you know how it feels to lose your most prized possession
I do
I did it all when I let go of the thing I loved more than life itself
And took something else because it was offered
I made that mistake
One that I will regret for the rest of my life.
I will never forget that day
The day I left her crying
The day I felt like dying
She was so naive, innocent, and young
And didn't know a good thing when she had one
Instead of trying to teach her the right way
I simply threw it all away
I felt like a fool
Although back then it seemed cool
I wish I could go back in time and get back what's rightfully mine
She has my heart and my love
Without her I am a wingless dove
I'm burning with rage along with desire
Without her by my side
I'll forever be in this fire
Through the period of it all
I learned one very important lesson
Never let go of a good thing
You'll be like a vocalist unable to sing
Or perhaps a guitar without strings.
What I am trying to say is do your best
To keep a good thing from getting away
Because the day it happens you'll have learned the hard way.

—Alex, *Unusual Suspect*,
ArtShare

ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING

Misconception and deception, hard
Affection and rejection play a role
In my life as I try to live right.
Illusions and delusions, racism
And confusion constantly surround
Me as a try to succeed.
Condemners and judges,
Accusers and abusers
Continually build obstacles to
Make me cry.
Holding, scolding, stopping
And blocking my pathway to
Success as I continue to fly.
The game is hard yet
I continue to play.
My dreams are set.
No one can stand in my way.
I believe, I redeem, I achieve, and
I succeed.
Cuz' with God on my side
I will accomplish anything.

—Tameka, *Unusual Suspect*,
ArtShare



GRADUATE US UPDATE

Benny writes to us with this update: "I go to Glendale Community College, working for my dad's real estate property management company. I still live at home. I have parole for at least two years, but the parole office is working with me when I have problems. I still keep in touch with the volunteers, teachers and some of the probation staff people. I went back to Central (Juvenile Hall) once to

hook up a computer. I am grateful I'm free and I take every opportunity I get to help people or help younger people stay out of trouble by telling them my experience. Right now, my short term goal is to concentrate on school work and get my finance degree." Congratulations to Benny, we're very proud of him.

Twilah reports that, by coincidence, she ended up in the same group home with another Unusual Suspect, **Golda**. They had appeared in the same production. It's a small world.



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Mary Ann Hagan
Louise Manuel
Angela Pallotta
Valerie Scoon

We want to hear from you!

Please share your thoughts about any US performances you've seen, ideas about the program or comments about the newsletter to:

The Unusual Suspects

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Phone (323) 634-0383
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Unusual Times is the quarterly newsletter of the Unusual Suspects Youth Theatre Program. US is a non-profit organization which brings theatre arts to the at-risk youth of Los Angeles.

Newsletter design: Mary Ann Hagan
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Letters from inmates

The following excerpts are from some of the letters we've received from former Unusual Suspects from Central Juvenile Hall after they were sentenced and sent to prison:

...i'm just chilling here at Delano St. Prison. i've been here ten days and i already got me a job on the work crew... i gotta cell mate that's old enough to be my father but he's real cool though.... i have to borrow books from other inmates whenever i feel like reading. i don't write much 'cause i don't have much material. once i get some money then i can buy some pens and paper and finish my script...
Please say a prayer for me.

Sincerely,
Donta, 18

...everything has been the same for me, except that i got a job now i work from 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm. is the same as over in juvenile hall, just cleaning and passing out the food to the other inmates.

my baby girls had their birthdays this month. one is four and the other one is 3. they are growing and their father is not with them. that's what gets to me, i know i can't do nothing about it, just wait for my appeal...

respect...
Victor. 18

thank you for given me the best gift anybody have ever gave and that was the gift, of confidence and y'all believed in me and my ability to remember my lines and at the same time taught me how to look natural while saying my lines and for that again i thank you

Sincerely yours,

Nick, 18

ps send me a program of the new show.

One thing I learned from being in here is it don't matter where you're at as long as you're with people you love.

Well I took a deal for 13 years. I'll be going then off to the adult pen for 6 or less years. I ain't trippin' though. Life has its twists. At least I'll still in my 20's when I get out...

-Lilo, 17