

# Unusual Times

## YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

Kick off the Holiday Season by catching the latest plays created by The Unusual Suspects Teens

### December 3

Performance written and performed by youth at Optimist Youth Homes in Highland Park

Directed by Howie Deutch

### December 10

Performance written and performed by Star View Adolescent Center youth at (location TBD) – NEW SITE!

Directed by Colin Campbell

### December 17

Performance written and performed by youth at Camp Gonzales in Calabasas

Directed by Marc Gomes

**FREE ADMISSION!**

RSVP to 310-558-3190  
or melissaus@sbcglobal.net

## ALUMNI updates: *Where are they now?*

By PRISCILLA J. QUINTANILLA



[Photo by Rick Paladino]

### Richard D. Morgan

AGE 25  
1998-99 AND SUMMER  
2005 ALUMNUS

This summer Richard choreographed The Unusual Suspects first alumni presentation of *F-Words*. Not only

did he choreograph some stellar moves for the cast to perform, but he also coordinated a Back 2 School Health Fair in south Los Angeles this past August.

Currently, he is finishing his book titled, "A Little Piece of Me, In A Whole Lot of Words," and is completing his certification to become a personal trainer. Last but not least, Richard is a gem and we just couldn't let him go, so he's agreed to volunteer at Camp Gonzales this fall.

"No matter where Unusual Suspects is conducting theatre workshops, I can't help but feel at home. I am very thankful to be part of something that not only welcomes my creativity but also inspires me as well."



[Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes]

### Daniel Jackson (Daniel Blak)

AGE 20  
1998 AND SUMMER  
2005 ALUMNUS

Most recently, Daniel's stunning musical performance as a bipolar personality and his creative contributions to the storyline, resulted in The Unusual Suspects summer hit of *F-Words*. You can hear more of his original music on his

*Digital Demon* album, which is being sold at [www.cdbaby.com/danielblak](http://www.cdbaby.com/danielblak).

He is continuing the welding program at Pasadena City College and recording a second album, while currently looking for a manager or agent to pursue further musical goals. He recently performed in a concert for Hurricane Katrina Relief.

"I've been with the program since I was twelve and this group has given a lot to me. They showed me that I had talent and taught me how to use it. Not only have they given me the tools to succeed, but the encouragement and support that's needed to succeed. Had it not been for *US*, I don't know what I'd be up to right now."



[Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes]

### Sophia Sou

AGE 17  
2001 AND SUMMER  
2005 ALUMNUS

If you didn't get a chance to see *F-Words* this summer, you missed Sophia in action! She dazzled the audience with her amazing vocals and dynamic characterizations.

Not only did Sophia participate in our first alumni program this summer, she attended a Congressional Student Leadership Conference in Washington D.C., called Lead America. The ten day conference exposed her to the fields of Intelligence, Diplomacy and National Security. Currently, she's interning at the 49th district Assemblywoman, Judy Chu's office and has started her Senior year of high school.

She also delivered a speech about the importance of public service at a Hurricane Katrina Relief Benefit organized by volunteer artist Deborah Geer.

"Thank you very much to the Unusual Suspects for giving me a place to explore my dream, for believing in me, and for your ongoing service to the youth-of-tomorrow."

# Letter from the Executive Director



In 2005, we have formed two new partnerships and served the most teens ever in one year. We opened our pilot alumni program in partnership with Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock and a community program at Star View Adolescent Center in Torrance while we continued to serve teens at Camp Gonzales and Optimist Youth Homes, partners since 2004. Next year, we will open a 6th site in conjunction with LAPD in the Harbor-Gateway as part of the Weed and Seed initiative working with teens on probation. With increased funding, we are thrilled to be able to answer more requests for our services. Still,

the demand continues and we must find the financial support to serve all of these teens.

Our program works. Preliminary results from our 3-year study show the positive effects of our program on youth. You can read more about the study in these pages. And, those of you that have seen the shows know how much our teens can accomplish when given the chance.

US is poised to develop exponentially. In the next year, we will double our budget and serve over 300 teens. To grow responsibly, we will need to hire more staff allowing us to add 1 to 2 new sites each year and open a community center providing a safety net for teens as they transition back to their communities. If you donate now, your investment will pay off


10-fold in the coming years in saving thousands of youth from being lost to a life in corrections, and in savings to society by reducing prison and medical costs resulting from teen violence.

This fall, teens at Camp Gonzales, Optimist, and Star View will present their original plays on three Saturdays in December, the 3rd, 10th, and 17th. We hope you will come out and support our youth. And bring a friend. Bring 10!

Sally Fairman

## IN THEIR WORDS

### Poem BY ANA



I AM..  
I AM SHY BUT I CAN ALSO BE ... BRAVE  
I AM A DROP OF WATER BUT I CAN ALSO BE ... A FLARE OF FIRE  
I AM THE SMILE BUT I CAN ALSO BE ... THE FROWN  
I AM THE SUNSHINE BUT I CAN ALSO BE ... THE MOONLIGHT

## A Star View Story: US's newest site from the POV of a volunteer

BY JAMIE DIAMOND, *Workshop Volunteer/Writer for The New York Times*

Four Tootsie Roll Pops fan out in a half circle above the girl's ponytail forming a sort of halo. But her mouth is sullen and her eyes mistrustful. Are these hard things on sticks a warning to stay away? Are they asking you to look at her? Maybe the lollipops would break in her pocket and the hair arrangement is an ingenious storage solution. This is my first day as a volunteer at the Star View Adolescent Center, where all the boys and girls have "failed" at other foster homes and are living here are under lock and key. It seems they are a danger to themselves; the cafeteria does not stock plastic knives. Some kids have been in 24 different foster homes, missed years of school.

The one-story building, with its concrete blocks painted IHOP-pastel blue with white

creeper roses planted in terra cotta pots, looks like a motel. Then you see that all the windows are all covered with heavy-duty you can't get-out-of-here wire mesh. Even outside, a set of four bus seats leaning against the wall have buckled belts, as if to keep even the visitors from escaping.

In our dealings with the kids, we've been told to use our last names in order to establish boundaries and authority. But this formality does nothing to shield me when I see that three of the girls bear deep scars on their wrists - or when I learn what certain ordinary objects mean to them. Take CD's. To most teenagers, these mean music; to these teenagers, CD's are tools for cutting themselves. Or charcoal. For drawing? Not here, explains a girl wearing baggy basketball

shorts. "Almost all of us have overdosed." She says, "and charcoal's what they give us in the hospital to neutralize the drugs."

Curiously, despite their erratic schooling, these kids seem less comfortable with acting improv and more comfortable with writing exercises. Is that because they don't act out on society as much as turn things inward on themselves? The assignment: Write from the point of view of a character in the photographs we've handed out. After some ruckus and recalcitrance in the first hour, every single participant not only writes an imaginative story but insists on reading it. Including candy hair, minus the four lollipops, because she's eaten them.

# IN THEIR WORDS

Song Lyrics from the pre-show of F-Words

BY YOUTH PARTICIPANT DANIEL BLAK

## Morbid Hand

Now my dark angel, your halo is bent,  
Your raven wings are broken, you can't  
fly back into bliss,  
weak from the battle, you lay  
on the ground...  
With wounds from your past...

Physically strong, mentally lost,  
You damn yourself, it's your weakness...  
Allow yourself to heal...& soon fly back...

Ref: Sometimes I wait for the morbid hands  
to lift me into the air, & in  
that moment of understanding, release  
me...lets me fall to the earth...  
to die...For the feel of freedom...

Fought for your freedom, & got nowhere,  
you stride the earth alone  
without a care, saw what you-once  
wanted burn all up in your face...  
welcome to my realm...

Mental scarring...passive self-inflictive...  
allow your soul to heal... if it's still intact

Ref: Sometimes I wait for the morbid hands  
to lift me into the air, &  
in that moment of understanding,  
release me...Lets me fall to the  
earth...to die...For that feel of freedom...

Scorch the sky...for a better tomorrow,  
let me fall to the earth...  
for the feel of freedom...

## Confidence Improves for US Youth

### YOUTH interview

BY PRISCILLA J. QUINTANILLA



Tom was not only a super star in our past Optimist production *The Bare Mitch Project* acting as three separate characters, but he's come back for more in our current program at Optimist. Here's a little bit more about this stellar alumni-participant actor!

**Suspect's Name:** Tom **Age:** 15

**What were your thoughts about your first session with US in spring 2005?**

First, I wasn't too sure and thought things were a little rocky because I didn't know the direction of the play and the story. As it progressed, I liked it!

**What brought you back for another season of US?**

The craziness of it all. Always at the beginning everything seems not clear but then it

always comes together. I like the experience of making a play and looking at what I did! The experience has been great. Overall, I love the program! It's the best thing they have at Optimist!

**What things have you learned or how have you grown in the program?**

I learned that I'm better being with people and working with them in a group. Also, I'm able to listen and take direction better than I had thought. I'm more confident in the process this time around. For example, right now in the current program the story seems confusing, but I'm confident that it'll come together.

**What are your future plans?**

Going to the Navy and then later become a police officer.

**Any shout outs?**

For Mike (Volunteer), from the last US program, miss you and I wish you were in the new program. Guillermo (Lead Artist), miss you and all the energy you brought to the group. To Unusual Suspects, keep up the program!

# Youth Participants Inspired by Professional Theatre

BY US ALUMNUS SOPHIA SOU

**This summer the Unusual Suspects'** participants and I were fortunate to see to see the plays *Tartuffe* by The Actor's Gang and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* at The Theatre District. We gained the experience of observing the actors and storyline of both productions. Prior to watching the plays, we had already established several strong potential characters for our play; however, we did not have a storyline to link all the characters together. After watching *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, it gave us a broad idea and confidence to make our play take place in a mental institution. We made our different characters mental patients at an institution and from there on we had no trouble writing the rest of our play.

*Tartuffe* is a unique seventeenth century French play, with great wit and humor, that I truly enjoyed watching and analyzing. One of the main characters I developed in *F-Words*, known as the Oracle (Vending Machine Lady), was based on a mixture of all the characters from the play *Tartuffe*. Her mysterious and flimsy personality and her costume were developed to represent a wise, yet drunk woman in disguise. The amusing thing that was not planned intentionally was the Oracle's wardrobe. Coincidentally, our costume designer gave the Oracle a fluffy authentic European robe; which made her look similar to a character that could possibly be a part of the play *Tartuffe*.

Observing two tremendously different plays, from two opposite ends of the timeline and two opposite representations of theatre emotions, helped make *F-Words* a humorous and dramatic piece of art in the twenty first century.

# First Summer Alumni Show *F-Words* takes Eagle Rock by Storm

By MICHAEL SPILLERS



THE FANTA GIRLS (Ximena, Kyle, Sam) & THE ORACLE (Sophia) perform in *F-Words*.  
[Photo by Laura Leigh Hughes]

The outdoor Sylvan Amphitheatre sat covered in dust and graffiti until Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock resurrected the space for an annual arts festival. This summer, our first Alumni Show was performed in this space. The play was titled *F-Words* - a musical murder mystery set inside a mental institution. It was written and performed by alumni from previous *US* programs and youth from the Eagle Rock community.

"*F-Words* made me a better person. It taught me teamwork and dedication. I loved working with everybody involved in the play. It was an amazing experience!" said Ana. She was one of the young people who showed up that first hot July afternoon in the park, excited to participate in the program. She's an Eagle Rock High School student and a talented young playwright.

For ten weeks, the group met every Saturday to piece together what became a thrilling and unique revenge story. Each young person brought a different style to the writing, and during our sessions the story started to branch in all different directions... but everything came together one night when the participants went on a field trip to see a live staging of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* at The Theatre District in Hollywood. The result was an inspired parody of the classic play. They added a modern twist - instead of an ex-con Jack Nicholson-type, the lead character was a young woman coming to terms with the death of her mother.

The alumni program consisted of young men and women working together to produce

great theatre. Volunteer artist Priscilla Quintanilla said, "Everything about this summer was magical; the musical performances, dancing, and being the first *US* program ever to perform in an amphitheater. The most special part of this experience was working with the amazing young *mujeres* in the group. I was so inspired and empowered

by their maturity and passion."

Blak, an Alumnus was also able to bring his talents to the show by playing a young musician with multiple-personality disorder. The lead character was played by high-school senior Ashley, she gave a wonderful performance that allowed her to act and sing a musical solo number. "The Unusual Suspects Program inspired me to follow through on my dreams of becoming a singer and actress," says Ashley. "It was one of the most overwhelming experiences I have ever had. If it were not for the program, I would never have had the opportunity to perform in a real theatre environment."

## Audience Raves about *F-Words*

This summer at our performance of *F-Words*, we surveyed our audience. Audience members were asked to rate the quality of the following categories: Writing, Acting, Directing, Costume, Sets, Lights and Sound. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, the average rating for each category was 4.4. When asked if they would attend another performance, over half said yes, and that they would recommend the program to friends. Here's a profile of who came and what they had to say about it.

<b>GENDER</b>	
F	43%
M	45%
<b>AGE</b>	
0-9yrs	1%
10-19yrs	15%
20-29 yrs	11%
30-39 yrs	34%
40-49 yrs	19%
50+	11%
<b>RACE</b>	
African-American	10%
Hispanic	21%
Asian & Pacific Islander	13%
Caucasian	41%
Other	3%
Mixed	5%

- Wow, they were great! I loved the music. What talented & strong actors.
- A true tour de force.
- The play was outstanding!
- Fantastic! I loved the energy! Excellent actors! Very funny!
- They're amazing! So inspiring. Please keep it up!!
- I felt like I was in the play.
- Congrats to all volunteers & kids - this is what makes all the difference in the world in our time.
- This was truly a remarkable performance! The writing was thoughtful, the acting was excellent, and the directing was unparalleled. Thank you for inspiring the youth of the community. Your leadership and service will guarantee the continued future of arts in America!

Here are some comments on what the audience learned:

- How amazing these kids can be when given a good outlet
- The power of community, theater, involvement in a common goal to create something bigger than oneself
- *US* has made me more aware of the trials of kids in LA

In February 2004, a few weeks after my entrance as the new executive director for the Unusual Suspects, we held a group strategic planning session at the community room at Fox Hills Mall. It was a historic night as more than 30 stakeholders crowded into the room and, as a group, set a direction for US for the next three years. In that meeting some important ideas were born, such as expanding services to our alumni, revisiting our mission and setting up a method of evaluation.

# A Study of US

By ZOOT VELASCO

**Many of us see US as a model program** that could be spread internationally as a deterrent to violence. To make US into a model program, we must first have conclusive evidence that what we do really works. Evaluation of a program is not just justifying what you do, but finding out also what isn't working and adjusting.

Evaluation is the key to success. To that end we were fortunate enough to partner with UCLA through our collaboration with Deborah Lintz, a student there who started a film program with girls at Aviva Group Home based on our theatre program. Through our collaboration we met Maciek Kolodziejczak at the UCLA School of Social Research & Public Policy

who helped us recruit Graduate Student Frances Carley for an academic study on our program. Frances developed an evaluation tool, administered it and ran statistical analyses on the results.

Her results concluded that US programs exceed the goals we set of teaching participants to work together, helping them set goals, developing social skills and giving them a positive experience. Some goals such as increasing racial tolerance and improving attitudes towards school and authorities will take more intensive studies to prove. However, for a first study and a small sample, we saw a glimpse into quantitative and qualitative evidence that shows US works!

This year a new intern will expand on Ms. Carley's initial research. Our hope is that a PhD candidate or Professor will take US on with a more thorough academic study that can be published. Such a study would help greatly in securing major government and foundation funding and expansion of the program nationwide. It was a study like this that led to Head Start programs nationwide. The Arts In Corrections program that exists in every adult prison in California since 1986 was born from a similar study.

It will be exciting to see the results of future chapters of this study by future interns. In the meantime we know we are on to something big.

## US Youth Made a Difference in Her Life

### VOLUNTEER interview

By MELISSA UHLES



**Suspect's Name:**  
Vivianne Nacif

**Suspect's Profile:**  
She's a Mexico City native who has lived in L.A. for 15 years. She's a voice-over artist, actor, producer

and volunteer.

**How long have you been with US?**  
4 years

**What was your first experience volunteering like?**

Unbelievable. These kids that seemed so angry were actually filled with so much love and hunger to be out of the world they are in. They had so much talent. Most actors need

years of class to have what they already have innately. These kids are so brave and just need a little push and belief in themselves. I laughed and cried so much and they made such a difference in my life that I knew I was hooked! Thanks Sally!!

**What do you see in the youth that changes by the end of the 12 weeks?**

Their attitude changes. They develop respect and begin to believe in themselves and others. The teens become softer inside and know they want a different life. They experience the satisfaction of going through something and getting to the end. Additionally, they learn to work with others, to depend on each other and they realize how important they are.

**How has work with these youth changed you?**

It's made me much more patient, much less judgmental and has given me a whole new respect and awe for the youth of today. It's

reinforced the idea that each of us CAN and DO make a huge difference in their lives. All they need is someone to believe in them. Each of us needs to take action.

**Was there ever a time you feared the show wouldn't go on?**

Every time! But deep down inside I also knew that it would! Somehow no matter what happens they step up to the plate and shine!

**How do you think this work helps the youth?**

They realize they have something to say and that people want to hear it. The youth realize that the hurt and anger they carry has a productive outlet. I believe a huge way it helps is by giving them confidence and the knowledge that they can TRUST not only others but themselves. And as one of the youth put it, "I had so much hate in my heart, so what I did is, I put the hate out of my heart and put all of you in and now I know unconditional love."

## THANK YOU THANK YOU

### SUPER SUSPECTS

GIFTS OF \$20,000 OR MORE

Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services  
The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

### #1 SUSPECTS

GIFTS OF \$10,000-\$19,999

City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs  
Department Percent-For-Arts Program  
Kaye Scholer LLP  
Liberty Hill Foundation & Rhino Entertainment  
New Roads Community Partners &  
New Visions Foundation  
The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation  
The Dwight Stuart Youth Foundation

### PRIME SUSPECTS

GIFTS OF \$5,000-\$9,999

Affiliated Financial Services, Inc.	Los Angeles County
The Bancroft Family Foundation	Arts Commission
California Arts Council	Northrop Grumman
Carol and Frank Biondi	SONY Pictures
Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock	Entertainment
City of LA Cultural	Star View Adolescent
Affairs Department	Center
The Herb Alpert Foundation	Teenangels LA

### SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS

GIFTS OF \$1,000-\$4,999

Cardoso Family Foundation	KES Mail
Lydia Chung	Monarch Print Copy &
Creative Artists	Design Solution
Agency Foundation	Sarah Key
Fiduciary Trust Company	Goldman Sachs
Robert Greenwald	Sempra Energy
Margarita Mix and Blue	The Streisand Foundation
Collar Productions	Merrick Velasco
Mary Haft	The Walt Disney
Karen Kay	Corporation

### COLORFUL CHARACTERS

GIFTS OF \$500-\$999

Russ Cashdan	Michael Small and
Eastern Costume	Elizabeth East
Shari and Richard Foos	Valentino's Costumes

### SPECIAL THANKS

The Actor's Gang	Judge Michael Nash
Christian Alibrandi	Councilman
Kathryn Arnold	Paul M. Nowatka
Wendy Aron	Sil Orlando
Megan Barr	Tim Owen
Janet Borrus	Officer Teri Pacheco
Paul Cummins	Joe Perez
Mary Ann Cyphers	Anna Pheil
Amy Donnenwerth	Janice Pober
Melissa Elvidge	Alberto Ramirez
Dr. Heidi Fahringer	Michael Ritchie
Kitty Felde	Lui Sanchez
Paul Higa	Christine Sisley
David Keady	The Theatre District
Kristen Kirchner	Julie Tugend
Ken Kondo	Eric Ufondu
Jenny Krusoe	Debbie Yates
Michelle Kydd Lee	Robert Weiner
Paula Litt	Edward Wilson
Summer Mahoney	Glenda Wina
Garry Margolis	Michelynn Woodard
Fernando Montes-Rodriguez	Tad Yenawine

Space doesn't permit us to acknowledge every donation, but THANK YOU VERY MUCH to everyone who has made donations to support The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company.

# New US Board Member Profiles

By DEBORAH GEER



## Howard Deutch

Howie is a Feature Film and TV director best known for his popular 1980's retro-favorites *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. In addition to working with *US*, he is currently directing the film, *The Girl Who Invented Kissing*. Howie started as a volunteer guest director in 2004, and he joins our Board this year! He provides the kids with a working Hollywood experience.

He also had studio time donated at the Hollywood film studio Margarita Mix and editing was donated by Blue Collar Productions. This enabled the youth to make an audio recording of *The Bare Mitch Project*. He directed *The Bare Mitch Project* at Optimist in the spring of 2005 and guest directed our summer alumni show *F-Words*. His work with the kids is the primary reason Howie keeps coming back to *US* because it has given him perspective in life. A memory that stands out for Howie was after a performance when one of the participants who struggled through the process said, "I loved it, man!" Howie believes this program works and that it should keep growing. The youth are always excited to have the chance to work with a professional film director! Check out Howie's latest efforts with *US* as he directs the Optimist play this fall.



## Remy Greeno

"Unusual Suspects is such an amazing program, I can help kids my own age who are

underserved and underprivileged... It is such a great feeling when you see the changes in these boys' lives through this program."

Remy founded Teenangels LA ([www.teenangelsla.com](http://www.teenangelsla.com)) during her sophomore year of High school. Since then the 501(c)3 nonprofit, charitable foundation has obtained its own legal representation and has been fundraising since April 2004 with talent competitions including celebrity judges Jason Alexander, Seth Green and Alfre Woodard. She joined the board of directors in May 2004 with her gift of \$8200. Along with matching funds her donation provided an entire session of workshops for The Unusual Suspects serving over 100 institutionalized youth.

## Zoot Velasco



Zoot has spent 12 years as a dance/theater artist touring internationally and teaching in schools, juvenile halls, prisons and hospitals under various grants and commissions. In January of 2004, Zoot joined *US* as Executive Director bringing on many new sites and funders during a pivotal time in the organization's growth. He decided to stay involved as a Board Member to watch the actions he put into motion reach their full potential. "I really believe in what *US* does and I wanted to stay involved."

## UNUSUAL NEWS

**Sally Fairman** was officially voted in as Executive Director on October 19th. Sally comes to the organization with over 15 years of theatre experience as an actress, writer, director, and producer co-winning the Jury Award for her short play *Two Heterosexual Men* at the HBO Comedy Arts Festival, Aspen in 1997, later made into a short film starring Taylor Nichols and Jay Thomas and directed by Nichols. She began volunteering for The Unusual Suspects 6 years ago. Since 2001, she

has held the positions of Lead Artist and Program Coordinator (2002-03) with *US*, and for the past 18 months, she held the position of Project Manager – overseeing and producing the youth workshops and performances and also functioning as operations manager.

**Melissa Uhles** has done a fantastic job as our Project Coordinator for the past three months and has been promoted to Project Manager.

We are also excited to be working with Marketing/Production Consultant **Priscilla Quintanilla** (also a lead artist) and Development Consultant **Christine Sisley**.

# Fall Lead Artist Bios



**Russell Bell** is a comedian, writer, and a fifth grade teacher. He has trouble deciding which he likes best, so most days he does all three.

Russell has been a part of five Unusual Suspects performances in the past three years.



**Colin Campbell** is a writer and director for theater and film. He's won numerous awards, including Deauville's Grand Prix and the Maxwell and Janet Salter Playwriting Award, as well as having been nominated for an Academy Award and five *LA Weekly Awards*.



**Deborah Geer** has been involved in all faculties of theatre and entertainment since The Reagan years working with Zoo District, Wolfskill Theatres and Stages in Orange County. She has a B.A. in Theatre from

California State Fullerton and is presently working at getting her teaching credential, participating in community projects and keeping up the chops by studying with Natalija Nogulich.



**Marc Gomes** is a theatre and film actor and director. He graduated from The Ryerson Theatre School. He has appeared in numerous plays and TV shows, most recently on *Commander and Chief* with Geena Davis.



**Priscilla J. Quintanilla** is an actress and music teacher who recently graduated from USC with a degree in Foreign Affairs and Theatre. She's performed in numerous plays, musicals and independent films. Her background with youth includes experience at the California Science Center as an actress in educational and interactive shows.



**Yvette Morton** is from Detroit Michigan. She majored in theatre arts/communications at Wayne State University. She volunteered in the *US* alumni program over the summer. Prior to that she worked with children at risk at other Camps in and around the Los Angeles area. She also participated in the LA Shakespeare Festival this summer.



**Kaile Shilling** is currently working as Development Director for Homeboy Industries in East LA. When not hanging with the homeboys and homegirls, she's writing screenplays, and reminiscing fondly about the lovely weather in Omaha, Nebraska, where she was dragged by director Alexander Payne to work as his assistant on his first three films.

Recently, Executive Director Sally Fairman and Youth Participant Nick were interviewed by Kitty Felde on her radio show "Talk of The City". Kitty asked Nick to describe himself before and after the pro-

May production of *The Bare Mitch Project* and promoted our Summer Alumni Performance of *F-Words*. The broadcast aired on Monday August 22nd. If you would like to hear the archived interview go to [www.kpcc.org](http://www.kpcc.org) and

We're in print too. Los Angeles County Arts Commission included *US* in their recent newsletter. Here is an excerpt:

"The power of the arts to communicate ideas and alternatives is being harnessed by a number of organizations to reach youth at the margins. Among these groups is The Unusual Suspects, founded in 1993 by actress Laura Leigh Hughes, which brings together teams of entertainment industry artists – directors, actors, writers, costume and set designers – to teach their craft to kids in the juvenile justice system and foster care. A mere twelve weeks later these young people are ready to mount a play they have written and in which they will star. With new skills and heightened social consciousness, they present "hilarious, stirring, heartbreaking plays about growing up in the ghetto, the tug-of-war between good and evil, the pain of poverty and the alluring glitter of the street economy," to quote Advisory Council member Edward Asner."

## *US* is making news and is the talk of the city...

BY MELISSA UHLES



Kitty Felde

gram and he revealed, "It gave me something to commit to, taught me to take responsibility and to work with people. It opened a lot of doors and taught me to reach out."

The interview featured clips from the audio CD of our

click on Talk of the City and type Unusual Suspects in the search box.

KTLA provided television coverage for the *US* production of *F-Words*, the play written in our Summer Pilot Alumni Program. Youth participant Ana was interviewed about the experience of being an integral part of the writing team for the production. The piece captured Lead Artist Guillermo Aviles-Rodriguez in action as he directed youth in a scene from the play.

# US IS BACK AT CAMP GONZALES THIS FALL THANKS TO AN OUTPOURING OF GENEROSITY!

US raised just over 17K in four weeks to bring our program to Camp Gonzales this fall. Carol Biondi made the first contribution of \$5,000 that helped us secure donations from other funders. We'd also like to give a hearty round of applause to The Herb Alpert Foundation (\$7,000), The Liberty Hill Foundation (\$4,000) and Sarah Key (\$1,000). We're so thrilled that community support poured out to help us continue to bring this vital program to Camp Gonzales.

In order to maintain our transformative programs in our current locations and expand to serve more at-risk youth we need your help! Be part of a winning team of Superstars and help us bring hope to these underserved youth through your tax deductible donation. Please take a moment to send in your contribution today in the envelope provided. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to you!

OR get involved with US

*We Need:*

- Volunteer Theatre Artists (Actors, Writers, Directors and Technicians)
- Interns
- Board Members
- In-Kind Donations of goods and services related to producing our shows



## OUR mission

The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of professional artists. We exist to bring theatre arts to youth, ages 12-21, from the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Our programs cultivate pride, racial tolerance and social consciousness.

### FOUNDER

Laura Leigh Hughes

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sally Fairman

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shawn Amos, *President*  
Russ Cahsdan  
Howard Deutch  
Remy Greeno  
Laura Leigh Hughes  
Thomas Reed  
Zoot Velasco

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

Edward Asner  
Carol Biondi  
Solomon Burke  
Leigh Curran  
Gary Erickson

Judge Terry Friedman  
Robert Greenwald  
Tom Hayden  
David Henry Hwang  
Sarah Key  
Stacy Keach  
Lisa Lindstrom  
Mwitu Ngudu  
Connie Rice  
Luis J. Rodriguez  
Cheryl Silver  
Susanna Styron  
Steve Tisch  
Julie Tugend

### PROJECT MANAGER

Melissa Uhles

### LEAD ARTISTS

Russell Bell  
Colin Campbell  
John Freeland, Jr.  
Deborah Geer

Marc Gomes  
Yvette Morton  
Priscilla Quintanilla  
Guillermo Aviles Rodriguez  
Kaile Shilling  
Michael Spillers

### VOLUNTEER ARTISTS

Tony Abrego  
Oscar Arguello  
Bobby Bennet  
Janet Borrus  
Jacqueline Christy  
Yasmine Dixon  
Howie Deutch  
Jamie Diamond  
Mimi DiTrani  
Matt Downs  
Dandy Gorzynski  
Jackie Houston  
Mark Lifrieri  
Denise Martinez

Bill Merrick  
Beth Morgan  
Richard Morgan  
Caroline Morant  
Vivianne Nacif  
Calvi Pabon  
Victor Paddock  
Rick Paladino  
Maria Sanchez  
Michelle Silver  
Martha Stroud

### ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Priscilla Quintanilla

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Lydia Chung

### WEBSITE DESIGN/WEBMASTERS

Amy Lewis  
Merrick Velasco

## 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 on our website: Message Board on our website: [www.theunusalsuspects.org](http://www.theunusalsuspects.org)

or e-mail **US** at: [melissa@theunusalsuspects.org](mailto:melissa@theunusalsuspects.org)

or write **US** at:  
The Unusual Suspects  
10536 Culver Blvd., Suite B  
Culver City, CA 90232  
Phone (310) 558-3190  
Fax (310) 558-3191

© 2005 The Unusual Suspects.  
All Rights Reserved.