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Theatre Thrives as Curtain Closes on Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility

**Original Youth Play Presented on Sunday, November 15th
by Award Winning Social Justice Program, The Unusual Suspects**

Monday, November 02, 2009, Los Angeles- The Nationally Recognized Social Justice Program, The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company, will present their final staged reading performance at Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility in Chino, CA on Sunday, November 15, 2009 at 6:00pm. The play is written entirely by youth incarcerated at the facility and presented by professional actors. Admission is free by reservation only.

The Unusual Suspects has a three year history of providing theatre arts for incarcerated youth at Heman G. Stark. Through a ten week, ensemble playwriting process participants have the opportunity to express themselves in a safe environment, reflect on their troubled past, and acquire new life skills. The Unusual Suspects programs have proven to increase communication skills, reading skills, confidence, and conflict resolution skills. Youth who participated in arts enrichment programs in Los Angeles County detention camps had a 58% lower rate of re-incarceration and a 45% lower rate of re-arrest. The Unusual Suspects give incarcerated youth a new chance at a better life while offering an alternative solution to the overcrowded and strained prison system.

Due to budget cuts, overcrowding and the recent riots at the nearby Chino adult prison the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) announced that it will close the Heman G. Stark facility on a date to be decided. Currently, it costs \$252,000 a year for the state to incarcerate one youth. By transferring the 400 youth currently held at Stark, the CDCR expects to reduce costs by \$77,000 a year per youth. Most juveniles will move to the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility in Camarillo and the Southern Youth Correctional Reception Center and Clinic in Norwalk. The nearby adult prison houses 6,000 people while it is only equipped to serve 3,000. The Heman G. Stark Facility is slated to be converted into an adult prison to ease overcrowding.

Reservations must be made by Wednesday, November 11, 2009 and all audience members must be cleared through the facility. Reservations can be made by calling 213-488-8488, x201 or via email at RSVP@theunusalsuspects.org.

The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company is committed to educating the public on the plight of underserved children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles County. The Unusual Suspects fill a gap in arts education, providing a much-needed service to youth who would otherwise not have access to the arts. The company was recognized at The White House in January 2008 by the President's Committee on the Arts & the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts with the *Coming Up Taller Award*, the nation's highest honor for after-school programming.

For more information visit the the Unusual Suspects website at www.TheUnusualSuspects.org.