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GRYD Youth Break Barriers to Bring Theatre to Hubert Humphrey Memorial Park

Award Winning Gang Prevention Program The Unusual Suspects Presents *What You Give is What You Get* Saturday, August 29th at 6:00pm

August 25, 2009, Los Angeles, CA- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company (US), in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program (GRYD) and El Nido Family Centers, presents the original play *What You Give Is What You Get*, completely conceived, written and performed by GRYD youth in Pacoima. The performance is Saturday, August 29 at 6:00PM at Hubert Humphrey Memorial Park. Admission is free.

Hubert Humphrey Memorial Park has a history of being a battleground for rival gangs in the Pacoima region. Youth in this area are often subject to gang intimidation, coercion into joining gangs or being the victim or witness of a violent crime. According to the City's Pacoima-Foothill GRYD Zone report, youth have begun to perceive gangs as a career alternative and are being recruited at younger ages, as young as 10-12 years old.

In an effort to curb the influence of gangs over Pacoima youth The Unusual Suspects, in partnership with El Nido Family Centers and GRYD, have been working with a group of youth ages 10-15 that are critically at risk for joining gangs or ending up in prison. Over the past nine weeks **US's** team of professional teaching artists and volunteer mentors has been guiding participants through an ensemble playwriting process and theatrical performance process. By developing a safe environment with each other these youth have been able to break down emotional barriers, increase their reading skills, and provide a theatrical experience for their community, which is often lacking substantial arts opportunities.

What You Give is What You Get follows Paco and Lizette, two classmates from different social groups who both learn to face life's difficulties through their own strength and the support of one another. The story examines social barriers, financial struggles, and the importance of family, friendship and communication.

The Unusual Suspects 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. We fill a gap in arts education, providing a much-needed service to youth who would otherwise not have access to the arts. **US** 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 **US** website at www.TheUnusualSuspects.org.