



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Amy Ellenberger · 213-488-8488, x206 · c-213-926-0348 · amy@theunusalsuspects.org

Pacoima Youth Bring Touring Show to Hollywood Fringe

With the Original Play *Love Has No Gender*

Saturday, June 19th at 10:00am

June 3, 2010, Los Angeles, CA- The award-winning The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program (GRYD), City Council Member Richard Alarcón, 7th District, and El Nido Family Centers brings the touring production of *Love Has No Gender* to the Hollywood Fringe Festival. **The play is completely conceived, written, and performed by GRYD youth in Pacoima, CA.** *Love Has No Gender* is slated for Saturday, June 19, 2010 at 10:00am at the Theatre of Note in Hollywood.

Love Has No Gender is a story about a community facing adversity together through the eyes of a girl coming out to her parents, a mother fighting to get her immigration papers, and a brother struggling with drug abuse. They learn through openness and honesty that it is possible for a community to grow stronger together.

- The crime rate in Pacoima is 30% higher than the LA County average. Youth are often subject to gang intimidation, coercion into joining gangs, or being the victim or witness of a violent crime.
- Children exposed to violence, either as victims or witnesses, are more likely to become juvenile and adult offenders.
- 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, some as young as seven and eight 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 (and their families) that are critically at risk for joining gangs or ending up in prison. Over the past year The Unusual Suspects' team of professional teaching artists and volunteer mentors have been guiding participants through an ensemble writing and rehearsal 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 lacks substantial arts opportunities.

Love Has No Gender will be performed on June 19, 2010 at 10:00am at the Theatre of Note, 1517 North Cahuenga Blvd., Hollywood, CA. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased by calling 866-811-4111 or visiting the Hollywood Fringe Festival website at www.hollywoodfringe.org.

*Born out of the ashes of the 1992 L.A. Riots, **The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company** has grown into an award winning, model mentoring program using theatre arts to reach youth in underserved and at-risk environments, including kids in foster care, violence-plagued neighborhoods, gangs and juvenile corrections facilities. The Unusual Suspects offers two consecutive 10-week (60-80 hours) playwriting and performance workshops where youth develop self-esteem, tolerance, and the communication and coping skills needed to make positive life choices. For more information, visit The Unusual Suspects website at www.TheUnusualSuspects.org.*

###