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**New Arts Program Makes an Entrance with *Reaching the Exit***  
**One Night Only Performance Friday, August 13<sup>th</sup>**

*July 22, 2010, Los Angeles, CA-* Earlier this year The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company premiered its awarding winning theatre and mentoring program at San Fernando High School in San Fernando, CA. This new after-school program will culminate with a special performance of *Reaching the Exit*, an original play written and performed by San Fernando High School students. A one night only performance will take place Friday, August 13<sup>th</sup> in the San Fernando High School Auditorium.

The performance is a part of The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company's new after-school program at San Fernando High School (supported by City Council Member Richard Alarcón 7<sup>th</sup> District, Educare-Beyond the Bell, and LA Education Partnership). A team of professional teaching artists and volunteer mentors have been guiding students through an intensive ensemble playwriting and rehearsal process to bring *Reaching the Exit* to life. The Unusual Suspects is filling a gap in arts education at the high school as well as serving an important gang prevention function in the San Fernando and Pacoima community.

- San Fernando High is a federally designated Title 1 School—indicating a majority of low-income students—with average test scores well below district and state averages.
- Youth are often subject to gang intimidation, coercion into joining gangs, or being the victim or witness of violent crime. The crime rate in Pacoima is 30% higher than the LA County average.
- Children exposed to violence, either as victims or witnesses, are more likely to become juvenile and adult offenders.

*Reaching the Exit* follows the story of Bella, a love sick teenager caught between caring for her ailing mother and her puzzling relationship with two boys, Robert and Todd. Traveling from an ice cream parlor to Paris to outer space, this coming of age story examines the peculiar ways people escape their personal problems and how they finally choose to confront them.

The performance will take place Friday evening, August 13, 2010 at a time to be announced in the San Fernando High School Auditorium located at 11133 O'Melveny Avenue, San Fernando, CA 91340. Admission is free. To make a reservation or for more information call 213-488-8488 x201 or email [RSVP@theunusalsuspects.org](mailto:RSVP@theunusalsuspects.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 each) 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](http://www.TheUnusualSuspects.org).*

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