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Home Grown Play to be Presented

Written by Andres Chavez, Sun Staff Reporter

Thursday, 03 December 2009

"Life. Love. Lies!," an interactive play, conceived, performed, and facilitated by Pacoima residents, will be performed on Monday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m at the Pacoima Charter Elementary and again Wednesday, Dec. 9 from noon to 2 p.m. at San Fernando High School in Pacoima. Both performances are in Spanish and English.

The production deals with the problems of two teenage girls, Vanessa and Christina, who are suffering because the people who were supposed to take care of them didn't. The play examines the themes of domestic abuse, gang culture, language barriers, social isolation and teen pregnancy.

It is as much social work, because it is geared towards sparking community discussion, as it is theater. Billed as a work in progress, the actors at the end of "Life. Love. Lies!" ask the audience to discuss solutions to the problems they have just seen.

The play shows the influence of Brazilian playwright Augusto Joel, one of the founders of Theater of the Oppressed.

"It integrates audience participation into a social piece as this one deals with the community. It has them (the audience) participate, help us resolve and find different solutions for our ending (of the play)," said David Guerra, a Teaching Artist who worked on the production.

"We're having different dialogue of how to solve them, how to find solutions. We have to be optimistic. There are solutions to all these things. The thing is it takes lots and lots of work."

"Life. Love. Lies!" was the result of workshops conducted by The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company. In the ten week Play Writing Workshop students learn how to structure a script, develop a character, and use improvisation. The play writing workshop culminates in a public staged reading by professional actors.

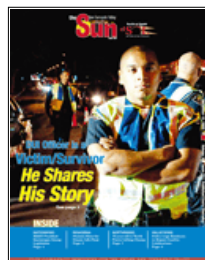
In the ten week Performance Workshop study acting, design and the creation of an ensemble. The performance workshop culminates in a fully staged production of an original work written in the Play Writing Workshop.

Unusual Suspects is dedicated to providing intensive theater arts and violence prevention workshops to at-risk youth in juvenile detention centers, foster care homes, high-risk public schools and treatment facilities in the greater Los Angeles area. The aim of the programs is to cultivate pride, racial tolerance and social consciousness.

"Life. Love. Lies!," as reported in *The San Fernando Valley Sun/El Sol*, was first performed in June to over 250 Pacoima residents. The overwhelming positive response lead to two performances next week. The goal, according to Guerra, is to bring the community together.

"And having a dialogue of the these issues but at the same time to celebrate talent. We find those people who really want to learn and they help educate

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their fellow peers," Guerra said.

The Unusual Suspects Theater (US) 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. US was given the Coming Up Taller Award, the nation's highest honor for after-school programming.

There will will be a special presentation for youth and families participating in Mayor Villaraigosa's Gang Reduction Youth Development Program (GRYD), of Life. Love. Lies! on Monday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. at Pacoima Charter Elementary. A second performance will be given at San Fernando High School on Wednesday, Dec. 9 from noon to 2 p.m. for, and interacting with, ninth graders at the school. All shows are presented in Spanish and English. For information about attending either show please call (213) 488-8488, x201 or email RSVP@theunusualsuspects.org.

Until June 30th



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