

INSIDE  
Emily Winters speaks on murals - 2  
Billboards, Penmar Park - 3  
Venice Skate Park - 4  
PO Mural, Gentrification - 5  
Shootings in Connecticut - 6  
Moonlight Glass - 7  
Swami, Boat Parade - 8  
Poetry - 9  
Community Calendar - 11  
On Being Homeless - 12

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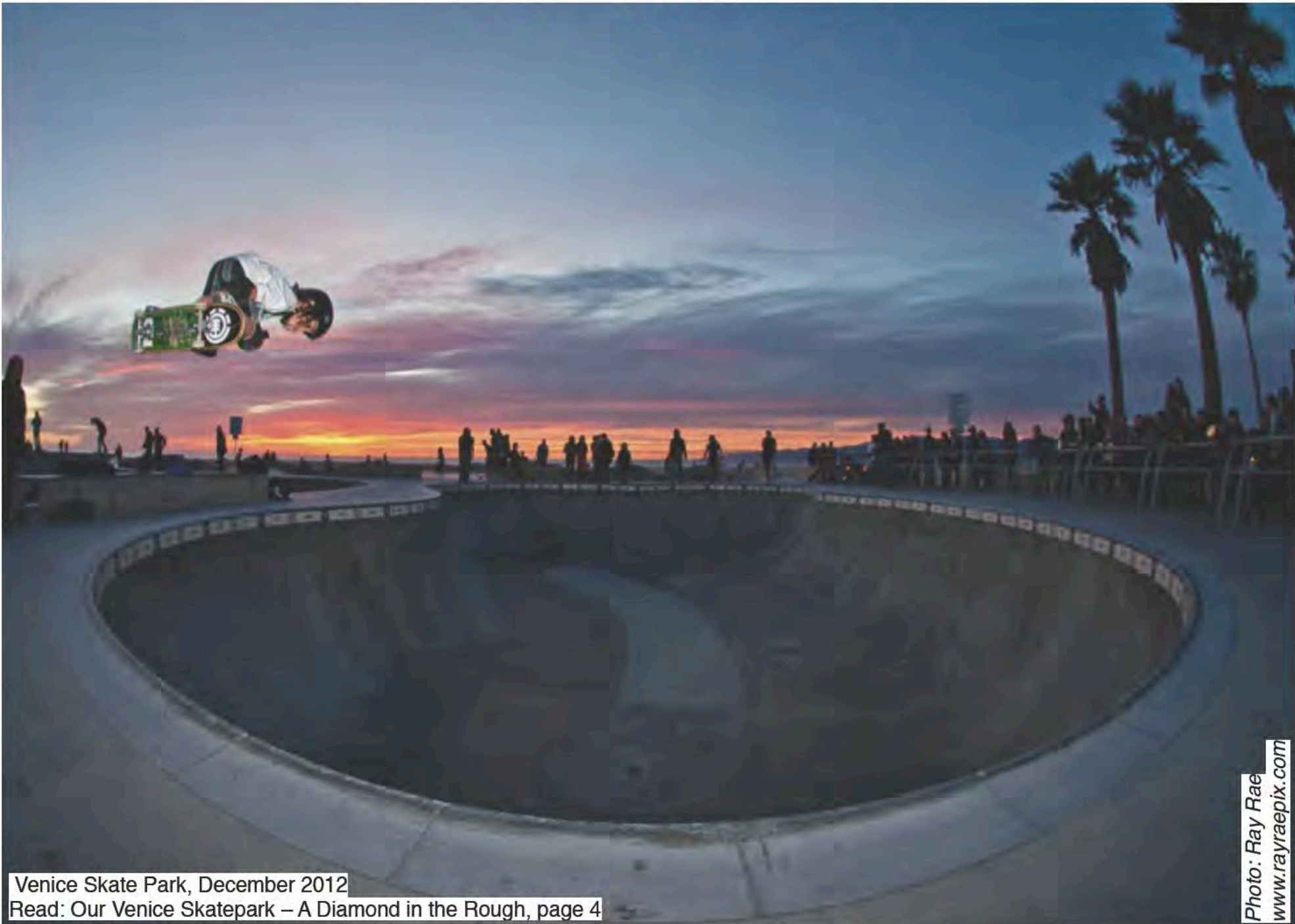
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Happy New Year!  
**January**  
**2013**  
**#375**



Venice Skate Park, December 2012  
Read: Our Venice Skatepark – A Diamond in the Rough, page 4

Photo: Ray Rae  
[www.rayraepix.com](http://www.rayraepix.com)

# Venice Homeless Person Not Guilty – For Erecting a Toilet

By David Busch

I love you.

After a year now of controversial Venice arrests, 12 jurors have found that a homeless person's "porta-potty" erected here in Venice on Third Ave. near Rose – and which was torn down and destroyed by the LAPD last April – had been a lawful benefit to this community.

I'm David Busch.

And the porta-potty was mine.

The potty, covered with hippy peace signs – and bearing a smiley-faced placard, stating, "Hi, I'm your porta-potty" – had been erected by me as a way to serve all of Venice.

And, like all basic human needs must be – it was free. For I have been given so much to my spirit, I now know this.

I first came here to Venice in 1980 and rented for a couple of years on the boardwalk. I was a diesel mechanic back then – for the city; and today I'm a proud Venice Hippy.

But early this year, after pushing literally hundreds of us "homeless people" and youth travelers several blocks off the people's Boardwalk from midnight until 5 am each night with the City of L.A.'s illegal beach closure and with no toilets available until nearly 8 am, I was actually arrested by LAPD – and charged with "creating and maintaining a public nuisance" (P.C. 372), for erecting a much-needed homemade porta-potty behind Digital Domain.

Where up to 120 people – and still without toilets right here in Venice – have been attempting for all this time, to this day, to find themselves a safe spot for nightly shelter in Venice. As the poor, youth travelers, street kids – and we hippies in Venice – long had on the Beach and Boardwalk, before its illegal closure. And with plenty of room for both us

and the thousands of tourists we welcome here, in our own Venice way.

So starting with a tent, I had began collecting donations of soap, cleaning supplies and toiletries; and I soon found myself daily emptying and carefully re-cleaning a bucket, and a toilet seat lid for the porta-potty. Later, a beautiful lady here named Mariska donated a bigger tent. One homeless man, living in his car, donated rolls of toilet paper he bought himself – each week. I kept things washed, and had some water with chlorine for occasional spills.

This setup was in line with procedures outlined in Red Cross emergency manuals.

For months, maintaining this potty further required the hauling of some tightly-sealed 5 gallons buckets for nearly four city blocks, down to the Rose area Beach toilets once they were opened.

But I want you to know, I now know that any of us can do it – and juries will stand with us on this. And even the hazmat officials who arrested me agreed that our porta-potty beat out the City's Beach toilets for over-all cleanliness.

At the end of the four day trial, the verdict was handed down in Los Angeles' LAX/ Airport Superior Court on Wednesday, December 19. And in declaring me innocent, this jury had to find that the utility of my conduct to the community outweighed any other offense.

Additionally, I was also charged in this trial by LAPD with violating the Los Angeles municipal code LAMC 56.11: leaving or permitting to remain "any article of personal property upon any parkway or



David Busch's legal porta-potty on Rose Ave.

sidewalk." For having, on Third Ave., my homeless shopping-cart wheeled box, which holds my, and other people's on the streets, possessions.

At trial the jury deliberated for many hours over two days, and after three requests to the Judge for the

Continued on page 10





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## The Venice Neighborhood Council needs to reconsider it's mis-informed vote on the proposed LA City Wide Mural Ordinance

By Emily Winters

A vote whether or not to accept the incomplete mural ordinance came to question before the Venice Neighborhood Council at its last board meeting Dec. 18, 2012. There were four people from the community who spoke against the vote at this time as the ordinance has not been perfected for a final vote. No one spoke for the ordinance. This mural ordinance is going back to Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) for further revisions before it goes to a final vote from the LA City Council. There were people who spoke at the VNC meeting who have been working for several years with the LA City Wide Mural Ordinance Working Group to develop this ordinance to separate the rules for fine art murals from advertising signs. Advertising signs have over-run the mural rules confusing many issues to the point that caused a moratorium on no new murals since 2002. We have worked hard to finalize this ordinance, but there are a few main issues that are unresolved. The VNC was urged to vote down this ordinance until there is a final version, or vote for it excluding the issues of controversy, or table it until a final document is ready to be accepted or rejected. There was no one who spoke in favor of voting for the present status of the ordinance. The VNC chose to vote for this unfinished ordinance without examining the issues, basically making an uninformed vote! I am astounded at their short sightedness!

This kind of disregard of the knowledgeable members of the community who come forward before the board and then just plow ahead with thoughtless uninformed voting, destroys the credibility of the VNC. Kudos to Sylvia Aroth who voted against accepting the ordinance and Ira Koslow who abstained. I voted for Ira for a seat on the VNC for the very reason that he is able to objectively evaluate the issues that arise during the meeting, and can think out side the box.

The LA Mural Ordinance is still in process with PLUM and there is another hearing in January. There are 10 issues that need to be resolved with PLUM before it goes to a final vote from the LA City Council.

The ten recommendations are:

1. Remove prohibition of murals on single family homes.
2. Remove the 100 foot height restriction on murals.
3. Omit the allowance of mural de-registration by property owners.
4. Abide by global standards of mural conservation & restoration.
5. Prohibit the use of vinyl material. (Environmental & aesthetic issues)
6. Remove digitally printed murals from mural definition.
7. Prohibit property owner compensation.
8. Protect murals from destruction under the guise of vandalism abatement!
9. Registration for vintage and existing murals.
10. No fee for mural permits.

Recommendations compiled by UPPA (United Painters of Public Art)

The LA Mural Working Group and UPPA are made up of many muralists and mural organizations from around the City of LA.

The main issue is #6, digital murals and the question of whether they are reproductions or original art. Digital murals are not recognized by Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) and California Art Preservation Act (CAPA) as works of art. Vinyl material that digital murals are printed on is an environmental hazard due to its material Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) the most damaging of plastics. If accepted under the mural ordinance, this will be a loophole for the advertising sign companies to continue digital super ads on public spaces and call them murals.

I urge the Venice Neighborhood Council to reconsider their vote under the need for more information, and re-vote when the final Mural Ordinance is completed. I would greatly respect the VNC if they would consider this most important option.

Sincerely,  
Emily Winters

Chair and Co-Founder, The Venice Arts Council  
Member of the LA City Wide Mural Working Group Muralist and 50 year resident of Venice  
Dec. 28, 2012

Thanks for your generous donations!

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# Billboard Blight Banned

By Dennis Hathaway

As a new year dawns, the issue of illegal billboards in L.A. has come to the forefront in a major way. First, an appeals court ruled just a few weeks ago that the city must revoke the 105 permits issued to Clear Channel and CBS Outdoor for converting conventional billboards to digital. Second, after being sued the city finally released the long-sought results of its citywide billboard inventory and inspection program.

Each of these actions could potentially result in significant changes to the visual landscape of the city, reducing billboard blight and giving citizens and neighborhoods relief from the effects of brightly-lit, constantly-changing ads that have generated numerous complaints of light trespass into houses and apartments, along with serious concerns regarding traffic safety and energy use.

Of course, if Clear Channel, CBS and other billboard companies with their powerful army of City Hall lobbyists have their way, this won't happen. Instead, the city will agree to a revenue-sharing deal allowing all or most of those digital billboards to keep beaming their electronic ads, and conventional billboards found to either have no permits, or to have been illegally altered after they were put up, will be protected by an obscure state law.

For those who haven't followed these issues closely, digital billboards started appearing shortly after the City Council approved a lawsuit settlement with Clear Channel and CBS Outdoor back in 2006 that gave the companies the right to "modernize" a total of 840 billboards by converting to digital technology that allows copy to be changed remotely. The billboards typically show a rotation of 6-8 ads that change every eight seconds, which greatly expands the amount of advertising on a single billboard and brings much more revenue to the billboard owner.

The companies were able to convert 101 billboards to digital before public outcry led to a moratorium on the conversions in 2008 and then a permanent ban in 2009. In the meantime, a small billboard company called Summit Media sued the city on the grounds that the 2006 lawsuit settlement was illegal because it allowed the digital conversions without any public notification or hearings as required by city ordinance, and violated the city's 2002 ban on new off-site signs and alterations to existing ones.

That case worked its way up to the California Court of Appeals, which ruled on Dec. 10 that the lawsuit settlement was indeed illegal and ordered the revocation of the permits. Since Clear Channel and CBS are expected to appeal that ruling to the California Supreme Court, the order will probably not take effect for several months, depending upon the outcome of such an appeal.

The issue of the conventional billboards put up without permits or illegally altered dates back to 2002, when the City Council approved the off-site sign ban. At the same time, it instituted the Off-Site Sign Periodic Inspection Program (OSSPIP), which levied a fee on billboards to support a city-wide inventory and inspection. The lawsuit the city settled with Clear Channel and CBS Outdoor in 2006 actually began as a legal challenge to OSSPIP, which delayed its start until late in 2008, when a lower fee was approved and the inventory got underway with inspectors from the city's Department of Building and Safety going street by street to photograph and gather data about the city's billboards.

By late 2010, building department officials said both informally and in public meetings that the inventory and inspection work was done. Approximately 6,000 billboard structures with a total of 9,000 sign faces were found, and nearly 1,300 were out of compliance in some manner with their permits. According to the OSSPIP program, all of

that data in detailed form was to be compiled in a database that would be publicly accessible on the department's website.

For reasons still not entirely clear, that database wasn't made public until a USC graduate student named Lisa Sedano sued the city under the California Public Records Act. The database is now posted on the Department of Building and Safety website, although in a form that makes determining the legal status of any particular billboard somewhat difficult.

In the database, billboards without permits or with unpermitted alterations such as the addition of a second face or enlargement, are listed as "Presumed Lawful" pursuant to a section of the California Business and Professions code that deals with a little-known provision called the "rebuttable presumption." That provision essentially says that if a billboard hasn't been cited by the city within five years of its unpermitted erection or alteration it is "presumed lawful."

That would seem to mean that Clear Channel, CBS Outdoor, Lamar Advertising, and the city's other billboard companies with illegal billboards don't have to be worry about being forced to take down or otherwise bring those signs into compliance with their permits. However, a recent court case casts serious doubts on the ability of billboard companies to use that provision as a defense, and activists working on billboard issues are asking the city to take action to rid communities of any billboards that don't comply with the proper codes.

In Venice, there were nine billboards that fell into that category at the time of the inventory, although one of those has now been removed. Eight of those signs are on Lincon Blvd.; one is on Venice Blvd. Six were found to have second faces added without permits, and two were enlarged or raised beyond what was allowed.

There are two digital billboards in Venice, both owned by Clear Channel and both on Lincoln Blvd, and the company has headed a massive lobbying effort in city hall on behalf of a deal that would keep the billboards in operation. In October, the City Council voted 11-3 to direct city departments to report back in 30 days with the details of just such a deal, although that deadline has passed without any indication that a deal has been worked out.

*Continued on page 10*

## Penmar Park Project Lacks Public Hearing

By John Davis

The City of Los Angeles has undertaken a project at Penmar Park to clean

dirty storm water before it reaches the ocean. The project is being completed by the City Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering. While the project appears to be sound, the process leading to it has had at least one procedural error.

Given the project is in a Park facility controlled by the City Recreation and Park Department and its Board, a hearing should have taken place so that the public could weigh in on the merits of the project at the Park Dpt. level. The rules of the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles requires that, "Posting of public hearings and land-use changes shall be made sufficiently in advance of Board meetings at the facility or facilities affected." The DPW responded that since the prior baseball diamond would be replaced that no change in land use existed. However, this disregards the fact that the new land use includes a massive new underground structure. A new land use in this case was added.

The Secretary of the Board confirmed that no hearing was held at Penmar by the Parks and Recreation Board for the project, removing the public from the process as it relates to the Park Board and land use changes at Penmar. While the Department of Public Works is conducting the project, it still requires a hearing by the Parks Board according to its rules.

The project seems good though. It consists of a large underground cistern, like a huge and very deep swimming pool. It is designed to catch polluted storm water from the street and to deposit in underground pool. It holds a maximum of 2.75 million gallons of polluted water. That water, according to the project manager, then trickles into the storm sewer. It is then cleaned by the Hyperion Water Treatment Plant before reaching the sea.

Importantly, a Phase 2 project is also in the works.

Phase 2, as described by DPW, would use some of the captured water for irrigation purposes at the park. One major question looms though. How would the water be treated before it is used on the grass at

the park? This is very important because adults and their families sit on and touch the grass at the park.

No approval of Phase 2 exists yet and no permits for the California Environmental Quality Act have been filed. So, there is still time to weigh in on Phase 2 at the Recreation and Parks Board level as well as with the Board of Public Works, if the Parks Board follows its own written rules.

The concept is without question good for the environment, but only if the public is involved in the Parks Board hearings so that residents can ensure the quality of the water will be fit for human contact.

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Political cartoon by Khalil Bendib





# Our Venice Skatepark – A Diamond in the Rough

By CJ Gronner

Happy New Year, People! In the interest of shining a light on the things that are still awesome about living in Venice in 2013, I recently dug a little deeper into the everyday goings on at the Venice Skatepark. I grew up with my brother's half-pipe in our backyard, smashed my own face trying to drop in off that thing, and was always surrounded by skaters, so I have a soft spot for the whole scene, but also recognize the beauty and importance of this place in our community. Officially known as the Dennis "Polar Bear" Agnew Memorial Skatepark, this gleaming jewel of a skatepark smack in the middle of Venice Beach is maintained - every single day - by the Venice Surf and Skateboard Association (V.S.A.), which really means by professional skate legend and V.S.A. President, Jesse Martinez, and his helpers.

After working for over 20 years to erect a skatepark in what many believe is the birth place of skateboarding, Venice finally got its skate home in 2009, and skaters have been tearing it up ever since. Which is why the maintenance of the park is such a big deal. Many places have skateparks put in by well-meaning skate companies and foundations, or grants or whatever, but then they leave and it's up to whomever else is left to keep it up and running. Venice Skatepark is on Park and Recreation (City of L.A.) territory, but no one from the city has ever stepped a foot into the park to clean it. Ever. ALL the clean up and maintenance of the park is done by beyond dedicated, hard working and meaning it volunteers (hmm ... kind of like The Beachhead).

The head of these volunteers is the very reluctant interviewee, Mr. Martinez. He's out there seven days a week, before dawn, cleaning up the sand, glass, piss, blood, booze, graffiti, and whatever else winds up in the bowls of the skatepark overnight. I don't think people really know how much work this takes, and that the skatepark isn't just magically sparkling pristine and perfectly skateable every day on its own.

I'm impressed to my core that someone of such legendary skate stature as Martinez (which he completely down-plays every time it comes up - and it comes up a lot down at the skatepark) is the one that willingly gets up at 4 a.m. every day to make sure the park that he and his friends all worked so hard for so long to bring to life, is given the respect it deserves. As impressed as I am though, Martinez isn't. He suggested I go interview a guy who lives down the street from him, a doctor, "that saves kids. THAT'S someone worth interviewing ...". As much as I admire his true humility, I would also argue that Martinez, in his own way, also saves kids.

Kids that - because of him - have somewhere safe to skate, which in turn, may be saving them from a more thug life, like the one Martinez came from, and feels that skateboarding really saved him from. He rejected gang life for skate life, and has dedicated most every waking moment to that end. Injured now (ankle), and a couple healing months away from shredding at his normal level, you can feel Martinez just aching to be in there, as he watched the others skate a few days ago, offering pointers (like leaning forward when you drop in, not back. That might have helped me out years ago ...) and encouragement. You can also feel the very tangible respect all the kids down there have for Martinez. Respect not just for his Pro/Dogtown/Bones Brigade status, but for the fact that they can feel the deep care he has for the park, the up and comer skaters, and for skating itself, and that respect is infectious (if also a little fear-based, as no one wants to get chewed out by Martinez and Company).

That respect is there because of the specter of Venice's skate past. Dogtown, Z Boys, the Bones Brigade ... all those guys had was the streets and the pools, and look what they did with it! They created a legendary time, legendary tricks and styles, and legendary names for themselves. Now that today's skaters have a beautiful skatepark, perfectly kept and maintained by one of their own, they need to step it up, and represent VENICE, like the guys before them did. Martinez remembers when every contest they went to, it seemed like every other name called was "So and So - Venice, California!" Now you're lucky if you hear of one or two competitors called out for Venice. With that gorgeous park as their home turf, we'd like to see some new legends coming out of here. And not just coming out of here, but respecting it on the same level as the guys before them did. Which also means helping. If you appreciate that you get to have this unreal, super clean, amazing view, skate mecca as your home park, maybe you'd like to give back a little too - take turns helping on a dawn patrol clean-up one day a week. Push yourselves to charge it, and not just because you want a cool sponsor or a rad photo in a magazine, but because you love it to your core, like they used to and still do. Have PRIDE, like they used



Jesse Martinez skating at the Venice Skate Park

Photo: Ray Rae  
www.rayrae.com

to, and still do. They knew what they represented back then. That is how you stand the test of time. And the Dogtown guys still do, which is why THEY are giving back now, in so many ways.

The reason why they're giving back, is to keep that legacy going into the future, to raise another generation of pros from Venice, and to keep the Venice skate scene vibrant and exciting. This is the home of some of the best skaters of all time EVER, and that fact is honored and built upon every day that our skatepark exists.

And it exists in large part because of the V.S.A. In talking to Lauren Wiley of the V.S.A., I was very surprised to learn that here is no help from the City of L.A. or Park and Recs with the maintenance. When film crews shoot at the skatepark, they are charged a clean-up fee, which the V.S.A. never sees, nor do they see anyone else out there doing the fee-charged cleaning. When the V.S.A. wants to put on a contest or an event, they are charged for expensive permits and a usage fee by the City - for their own park that they use every day. These fees can run into the thousands, making it hard to pay for simple things like cleaning supplies (which also do not come from the City - but from donations and the V.S.A.'s own pockets), never mind putting on the contests themselves, or even paying a small salary to the guys out there keeping it all clean and safe. They don't see a dime as it stands now, and that just doesn't feel right. Not when they work so hard, and the park is such a tourist attraction, and when it provides such a home away from home for so many of our local kids. Though the V.S.A. is extremely grateful and appreciative for any help they do get from the City, Park and Recs, the "awesome" life-guards, the LAPD Pacific Division, Councilman Rosendahl (a champion for the skatepark from day one), and from various local business donations, I'm pretty sure we can do better for it, as a community. Like Martinez said, "ALL locals should look out for their neighborhood." Of course.

By doing better, I mean getting more involved. Local businesses can be sponsoring events at the skatepark. Local parents, grateful that their kids have a safe, fun - and FREE - place to hang out, could be donating, taking their turn doing some clean-up, organizing fundraisers so that the kids can have contests (like the one coming up in early 2013 for slalom and the crowd-pleasing Highest Ollie!), attend away contests, get prizes, have a summer camp where kids learn to surf and skate ... and the good ideas just keep flowing. Those kinds of cool things are so possible, but they also cost money. Money that is as scarce at the skatepark as it is most everywhere else, but this is a place where you can actually see the few dollars they do have in action.

Ideally, it would be great to have the skatepark take in enough donations and monies earned from contests, summer camps, etc .. that they can be en-

tirely self-sufficient and not have to worry about scrounging funds up from the City and grants and all that to do anything. The V.S.A. has already saved the City multi-thousands of dollars, because if they had to employ (and they would HAVE to) a couple full-time city workers to maintain the park, that would add up in a hurry, especially at the pre-dawn hours that it all has to be done. It would help to actually see those clean-up fees that the city collects from shoots used for clean-up - that they aren't is shady, in my opinion. It would also help to NOT charge those usage fees for use of their own park - that just doesn't make sense, Park and Recs, C'mon! Let's give them a little break. So much good can be done, with just a very little help.

SO much good. I talked to V.S.A. member and the pretty much lone consistent volunteer, Victor Blue, who like Martinez, was born and raised -and hell-raised - his whole life in Venice. After a life of trouble-making, Blue got into skating, which led him to spending pretty much all day, every day at the skatepark, giving back and helping out today's skaters. "I get to be a good example here," Blue told me, after sharing a story about how a local mother interrupted a meeting to find out who this "Mr. Blue" was that her kid had been talking about so much. She wanted to thank him for putting her son on the right path, with his counsel and support every day down at the park. As Blue sees it, "The skatepark is the brightest spot in Venice right now ... this park was built to stop destroying other areas ... and you can see the positivity down here spread through Venice like a virus." Let it!

This sentiment was echoed by local skater, Sean Vasquez, who told me that he loves to come skate Venice because "It's one of the nicest skateparks around, it's really well-kept and smooth, which makes your skating better." He went on to say that "It's all about the friendships, and the good vibes. Who wouldn't want to skate on the beach?" I think Martinez and Blue and Wiley alike would be happy to hear that Vasquez also said, "I just come here to relax and skate. This place keeps kids here skating, instead of on the streets getting into trouble ... I do it for the love of skating, which is a lifestyle, not a trend." If Vasquez's sentiments are the common ones held by today's skaters, Martinez may be able to rest a little easier.

But he won't. Because he has to get up at 4 a.m. to go clean the park all over again. Please think about that the next time you cruise past the wonderful Venice Skatepark, remember how it got that way, and consider what you can do to help preserve and protect both the history and the future of skating in Venice. Thank you in advance.



# Mural Illustrating Abbot Kinney Should Be Moved to Abbot Kinney Library

By Greta Cobar

We as Venetians are upholding our reputation of not giving up. So here's the latest on our up-and-going, not-nearly-over fight with the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the new owner of our former, historic post office, Joel Silver.

The Story of Venice mural by renowned artist Edward Biberman, formerly housed in our historic post office, remains the property of the USPS even though the building has been sold into private ownership. Ever since the sale of the building, which closed on August 2, we have tirelessly tried to obtain a copy of the covenant concerning the mural between Silver and the USPS. Both Bill Rosendahl's and Janice Hahn's offices made vain promises of obtaining the document and making it public. It took a Freedom of Information Act request filed by a Mark Ryavek to finally view the document four months after the sale of the building.

The document, dated August 2, starts out by optimistically stating that "USPS agrees to loan the Mural to the Borrower, and the Borrower agrees to borrow the Mural from the USPS, for the purpose of exhibiting the Mural for a term of fifty (50) years." However, through undisclosed maneuvering with the USPS, Silver managed to add a "First Amendment to Loan Agreement" on August 21, which states that "Borrower agrees to provide public access to the Mural six days per calendar year during the hours of 10 am and 6pm Pacific Time by appointment."

There goes the request by the Coalition to Save the Post Office, representing virtually all Venice organizations and a wide spectrum of citizens, to maintain access to the mural during the same hours as the USPS had back when it owned the building.

In addition, although the initial loan agreement states that "prior to any such restoration (of the Mural), the Borrower shall send notice to the USPS of the proposed restoration for USPS review and approval," the August 21 amendment negates any such responsibility by stating that "Borrower shall not be obligated, prior to any Mural restoration, to obtain the approval by the USPS of the proposed restoration provided."

No wonder Silver was able to remove the mural from the wall in spite of expert and community opposition.



Abbot Kinney, as depicted on the Edward Biberman

I personally filed an official request with the Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) to introduce a motion to move the mural depicting Abbot Kinney from Silver's property, which does not allow public viewing, to a public space, such as the Abbot Kinney Library. Let's hope that the VNC will represent the wishes of the community on this issue, and let's hope that their recommendation will actually have the power to make a difference.

The battle against the USPS is still being fought on more than one front. A new brief was filed on December 19 in Washington DC in our lawsuit against the USPS. The Circuit Court has combined our case with two others, involving Pimmit Branch Post Office in Northern Virginia and the Spring Dale, West Virginia Post Office, all represented by Elaine Mittleman.

The current brief submitted by Mittleman quotes the USPS as stating, in its own document, that "to maintain the spirit of the section in placing artwork in Post Offices, postal policy provides for the relocation of these works into the new facility when a Post Of-

fice moves so the art can continue to enrich people during the normal course of their lives" (<http://1.usa.gov/12RK0kW>).

Although our new mini, hole-in-the-wall post office at the mail sorting annex does not currently have enough space to exhibit the Biberman artwork, the original building has a very high ceiling. With minor modifications the current ceiling could be raised to accommodate the mural. However, after our one-way communications with the USPS over the past two years, we might choose to avoid dealing with them and move the mural to the Library instead.

"The Postal Service will include measures to ensure the mural will remain available for public viewing in any plan for reuse or disposal of the Post Office property" is a commitment that the Final Decision about the Venice Post Office included, according to the latest brief filed by Mittleman in Washington DC.

The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), whose mission is to represent the public in dealing with the USPS, "failed to consider the commitment by the Postal Service that the mural will remain available for public viewing. In addition, the PRC did not address the historic preservation issues concerning the Venice Post Office and the mural," according to the brief submitted by Mittleman.

Yes, we are taking on a big, federal institution whose mission seems to be self-destruction in favor of private shipping companies behind the excuse of a manufactured crisis. And yes, we are taking on Silver, the multi-millionaire Hollywood producer who was recently kicked out of Burbank and decided that Venice is hipper. It doesn't make sense for Silver to keep the mural after removing it from the wall, without provisions for public access. Could we get the building back? If through our current lawsuit we can prove that the USPS or the PRC failed to follow procedures when disposing of our historic post office, the USPS would have to buy the building back from Silver and reinstate postal services.

Please contact the VNC at [secretary@venicenc.org](mailto:secretary@venicenc.org) and urge that the motion to move the Biberman mural to the Library be placed on the January VNC Agenda. Then get involved by attending the VNC meeting on January 15 at 7pm at Westminster Elementary School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd.

## Silicon Tsunami Wipes Out Free Venice

By Jamie Virostko

About a year ago, I was walking a dog, crossing Abbot Kinney up San Juan, when a tattooed guy in worn jeans, stopped me on Electric Ave. His long hair in a salt and pepper braid, he was returning from buying breakfast. As the big Samoyed sniffed longingly at a steaming paper bag, my mid-forties friend lamented all the changes in Venice, "Man, used to be, we'd make fun of the yuppies with their long boards who think they're f---ing cool... Now we just take it."

He had my sympathy, until he suggested I come to his place for a massage. When he opened his arms in anticipation of a "brotherly" neighborhood hug, I moved on. I had learned, the hard way, that those "free love" embraces with senior skater and surfer dudes, often lasted too long and sometimes involved an ass grab. Around here, you're better off hugging the homeless. Too bad there's not many left...

The Techies have a vision, and they are actualizing it. *Major* increases in property values since Google's arrival! And, they are *recruiting* from outside Venice Beach! Now Microsoft has office space, along with a crapload of hungry startups. Wealth is sweeping through like a tsunami, washing everything affluent and white and clean.

The "Coolest Street in America" title, bestowed on Abbot Kinney, freaked me out. Great, now we'll get Hipsters from all over the world, journeying like pilgrims to the Apex of Hip. If that wasn't bad enough, Rose is blossoming into Abbot's well dressed and über trendy kid sister. And, if you haven't noticed, they've been awfully zealous of late, enforcing that two hour parking for *all* vehicles along Rose Avenue curbs.

Whenever I see a quaint, beach cottage sold on the off-Lincoln Walk Streets, it is almost *always* bought for the land. One story, character-rich dwell-

ings razed and replaced with modern mini-castles, as soon as someone can obtain the permit! That means fewer starter homes and less Middle and Working Class Families. Young White Professionals bleed into the Oakwood area, displacing the already diminished diversity. Then come new developments – like those big lofts near 4<sup>th</sup> and Rose.

Being a dog walker, I stroll Venice - up and down, front and back - everyday. Before Rose grew hip, I have watched what's left of our Black and Hispanic Communities, aging and priced out, as buildings are sold and renovated or rebuilt. Many of the Mamas and Papas of the local Counter Culture have crossed into their twilight years, with free expression settling behind seven foot tall privacy fences. Our Young Artists struggle to afford housing in this once Bohemian enclave, as wild gardens and homemade art in front yards are replaced by standardized landscaping.

Those beautiful and tragic camps along the Boardwalk - groups of kids and their dogs, soft guitar, pot, old bums, addicts and ex-cons settling into slumber, blankets and broken beach umbrellas – banished at night. The people do not cease to exist. But, where do they go, now that they cannot gather – either on Ocean Front, Rose or any other place where they were previously tolerated? How do we get them into homes when nothing is reasonably priced?

The City would like to relegate Free Venice to the murals and the Boardwalk vendors, with a few notable characters thrown in for spice. It's allowed where tourists roam and money can be made. Is that really satisfactory? They give you a fancy, A-list celebrity, sign lighting and save the Biberman work... But what about an entire way of life tossed aside?

Diversity and Homeless are the battles that, if lost, will wipe real Free Venice off the map. Unfortu-

nately, those are *huge*, hard challenges. But, sanitized homogeny will be the death of creativity, not to mention the negative blow to our Community Soul. Where are Occupy and that famous Free Venice Activism? This is relevant, tangible and happening now!

Did the Tech Panel not tell us, at the Silicon Beach Town Hall last spring, that a primary reason they came to Venice was the available talent already here? Is anyone going to hold them accountable to generate jobs for the *existing* community? For keeping our community in tact, through involvement with this new wealth, instead of swept aside by it? Google's rep at that Town Hall said they wanted to be careful not to alter the things that make Venice special. Are they keeping their word?

In everyone's lifetime, one must process change. Free Venice has often found strength in hunkering down and digging in against it, even revering its own uniqueness. But, celebration of the individual can make it difficult to really come together. Hundreds of solitary voices, when gathered, can end up a cacophony of splinter agendas, personal history, and the desperate desire for each one to be heard.

How can uninhibited free expression forge an unwavering wall of camaraderie that, wholeheartedly, puts community first? And yes, Silicon Beach now has to be included in that community, along with major bucks to the Venice Family Clinic and St. Joseph's; and, increased tax revenues to California and the City of LA.

How do we get creativity back into the streets, so we can be inspired by one another? With respect for life, there are no boundaries. We are free to go and be who we are, wherever we want to go and be. But, if we don't come together soon, it could be game over a lot faster than you think.



# The Killings in Connecticut

By Mary Getlein

Michael Moore (of *Bowling For Columbine*) told the story of a crazy man who went to a school and tried to kill some children, but it was in China and he only had a knife. No kids killed that day. The same day as the attack in Connecticut. Twenty children killed by the greed of the NRA. The NRA spent so much money for Republicans to get in office, but didn't get them in office. The NRA, who have remained silent - in "respect of the mourning of the families". The NRA, the most powerful gun lobby in the world. Twenty children killed who will never come back. Twenty children of America, living in a beautiful suburb, going to a school that was supposed to be safe.

Now all the other crazies are coming out of the closet. Some total idiot is saying to arm the teachers. Yeah, a horrible act of violence happens, let's throw some more violence at it.

Michael Moore: "Isn't eviction a violent act?" "Throwing people out of their homes, isn't that a violent act?" "Closing down factories and jobs? And cities? Isn't that a violent act?" "Our country creates wars and keeps them going with the young people of our country, isn't that a violent act?" "We sell arms to our citizens and arms to other countries, who use them to kill other women's children, isn't that a violent act?" "The side effect of war on our soldiers, PTSD and suicide, isn't that a violent act?"

Pundits on the radio, trying to figure out a way to have gun control - and keep their guns at the same time - propose taking assault weapons off the market, making it illegal to own an assault rifle, like the one the shooter used on those children. Even Senators who love hunting, even they are saying enough is enough.

But there are no guarantees. Three hundred million guns are already out there in gun owners' hands. How do you make a law retroactive ... can you demand people to give up their guns? What about just their assault rifles? You can get an AR15, which is equal to an M16, for \$500 to \$1,000. Just in time for Christmas! What better way to celebrate Peace on Earth than to buy an assault rifle?

The thing is, the best time to sell them is when they are threatening to take them off the market. The gun factories are manufacturing assault rifles right now, so there were plenty for Christmas shoppers. This guy on the radio was telling the announcer what a "cool" gun it was. She said, "Excuse me, but you are referring to the gun that the shooter used to kill 27 people, including 20 little children." He tried to back-track, and said that people would want the assault weapon to protect themselves from being mowed down by a similar murderer as the shooter.

Who do we blame for this? Well, first off, the shooter. Of course we need to have background checks, and change the laws that govern mentally ill people. Meanwhile, one of the first things that have



Memorial for Connecticut shooting victims in Venice, Paloma and OFW  
Photo: Pegarty Long

been cut from state and federal budgets is money for mental health facilities. When someone turns 18, they are considered an adult and if they are mentally ill and refuse treatment, there is nothing you can do. You have to wait, in most states, for them to commit a crime before they can be apprehended. A lot of mentally ill people wind up in jail who should be in a mental hospital, getting treatment. If someone is threatening to kill someone, or blow up a school, there should be a place to get help for that person, before that act is committed. A lot of people are in prison who should be in a mental health facility.

But you can't get away from the violent world of gun owners. The "gun culture" of the United States. No other country in the world has as many homicides as we have. There is a huge link between gun ownership and gun deaths. Every gun sale should have a background check, but they do not. New gun sales require a background check, but guns sold at gun shows, second hand guns, and guns sold at yard sales are private and are not regulated by the state or federal government.

They should make possession of assault rifles a felony, and gun trafficking a felony.

In studying other countries, they have found the same violence rates, and the same depression rates. The difference? We have more guns. If we enact stricter gun laws, we will have fewer murders.

We are living in a violent country that seems to worship violent acts. The sales of violent video games is through the roof. There are videos that kids watch to re-enact what soldiers do. The children kill people on screen and congratulate themselves. Many movies out there are violent, twisted, stories, involving mass murders. It doesn't take that much imagination to see the link between watching violent movies and video games and actually doing it in real life. If you are depressed and suicidal and filled with rage, it might look like a good way to "go out". Who the f knows?

All I know is this is not the kind of world I want to live in. We have let this go on for too long. I lived in Venice during the gang war and it was truly horrible. People in cars would drive by our house and would shoot into the yards. They would come by early in the morning and shoot into apartment buildings. It was absolutely terrifying. We have got to come to an agreement that this is no way to live. It is about gun control, but it's also about how we treat each other. Right now we are not doing well on either count. Things have to change.

## Sticking to Their Guns

By Jack Neworth

For days after the horrific massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School the National Rifle Association was oddly silent. They even shut down their Facebook page and stopped tweeting. (The NRA "tweets?" How weird does that sound?)

Eventually the NRA announced that in an upcoming press conference it would reveal how they would "contribute meaningfully" to preventing further gun violence. Everyone assumed that finally they would be willing to compromise. Everyone was wrong.

On the same day six of the murdered children were buried, the NRA held its press conference, except no questions were allowed. (The big, bad NRA is afraid of the press?) Instead, Wayne La Pierre, the NRA's Executive Vice-President (and chief pitchman) took the podium and gave a lengthy and bewildering interpretation of the Sandy Hook massacre reminiscent of something out of the *Twilight Zone*.

Self-righteously, La Pierre, whose NRA annual salary is reportedly \$1.4 million, identified the villains of Sandy Hook as the shooter, violent video games, "blood-soaked" Hollywood movies, President Obama and fluoride in the water. (Okay, I made up the fluoride part.) The truth is La Pierre blamed everyone and everything but guns.

The movies La Pierre singled out for blame were *American Psycho* (2000) and *Natural Born Killers* (1994), neither exactly current. As for the video

games, La Pierre cited *Kindergarten Killers*, a game no one had heard of until he mentioned it. With its amateurish cartoon figures, one reviewer said the game was so lame and repetitive that "after five minutes I couldn't stand any more."

Given the horror of Sandy Hook, La Pierre was shockingly disconnected. Never once did he mention that the Bushmaster AR-15 with the high capacity magazine used at Sandy Hook is the same weapon

used at Aurora, Colorado and used by the D.C. sniper in 2003.

Eerily, only days later the Bushmaster would be the weapon of choice of William Spengler. On Christmas Eve in Webster, N.Y., Spengler, 62, killed himself after murdering two firefighters and wounding two others at a blaze he apparently set to lure them to the scene. (Wayne probably blames it on a video game.) — *Continued on page 10*



Venice Art Walls, December 2012

Photo: Vivianne Robinson



# John Mooney Blows Moonlight Glass in Venice

By Greta Cobar

Venice has always fostered creativity, having drawn and inspired countless artists in endless media for over a hundred years. One such current story of bewildering, shining and colorful beauty is daily unfolding as John Mooney blows and sculpts glass, adding and mixing colors in infinite and never the same variations.

Putting color on canvas, building a castle out of sand, immortalizing a sunset with a camera or putting words on paper can, and often do, produce beautiful creations. But when Mooney puts two hundred pounds of powder in the 2100 degree furnace and draws out a fiery ball of molted glass that he then blows or sculpts into a bowl, a sea creature, or a light fixture, the transformation is one of overwhelming wonder towards the finished product and of admiration and respect for the craftsmanship that is required.

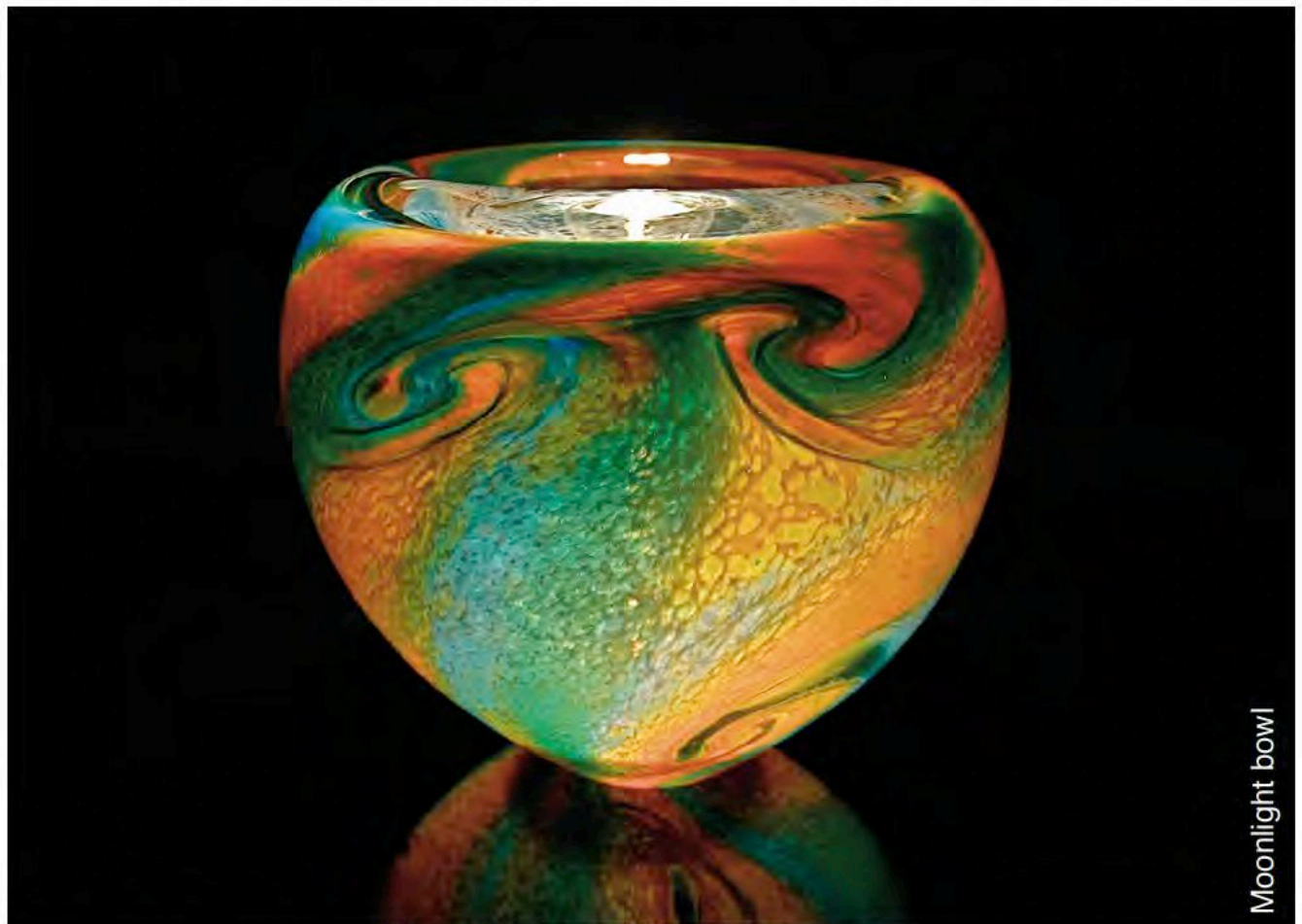
Watching him blow a bowl seemed like a series of thousands of perfectly timed and flawlessly executed movements. "Working with glass helps me become a non-perfectionist, it's good therapy," he said. Funny, I guess we are our own worst critics.

It takes hours, sometimes many hours, of an extremely intricate, split-second timely dance to bring to life the splendor of each piece. It also takes talent and consistent practice over a long period of time to master the art of blowing and sculpting glass. Mooney has been at it for 26 consecutive years, but he feels that "the lesson is never over, you have never learned everything." And so he continues on his path, as if no other path was ever even possible. "The problem is keeping the furnace on," he said regarding the expense of running his own studio, Moonlight Glass, and having to pay the \$500 monthly gas bill to keep the glass molten and ready to play with. "I like the fun and freedom of playing with glass," he said.

"Venice is cool, it's the only place to live," according to Mooney. Originally from Colorado, he spent his first spring break in Venice in 1983, and returned in '86 after finishing his BA in Philosophy from Pomona College, in Claremont. It was during his last year at Pomona that he got the chance to take a glass-blowing class with renowned glass artist Therman Statom. Once in Venice, he worked with Richard Silver for ten years before building his own furnace and opening his own studio, Moonlight Glass, in 2000.

"Abbot Kinney created Venice to be how we like it, he made it for us," is how Mooney expressed the sense of belonging and the inability to fit in anywhere else that many of us feel towards the little town we call home. "Money is a really powerful thing – but so are people. I'm not going, I'm not gonna sell out," he said when asked about the latest wave of gentrification taking over the neighborhood surrounding his studio. Located at 705 Hampton Dr., Moonlight Glass is only a stone-throw away from the recently-transformed-into-Rodeo Dr. Abbot Kinney Blvd. "Abbot Kinney would be happy seeing what I do," Mooney said of his studio and his art.

Venice, Italy, is of course famous for its Murano glass, with a strong tradition going back several centuries. However, the small-studio glass blowing movement, which is different from the factory-like system still operating in Murano, originated right here in the US of A in the 1960s and exploded in the '90s and 2000s. It is these small studios, like the one Mooney is operating, that took glass from the decorative, mass-



Moonlight bowl

produced mentality still flourishing in Murano and opened the door to self-expression, experimentation, creativity and autonomy.

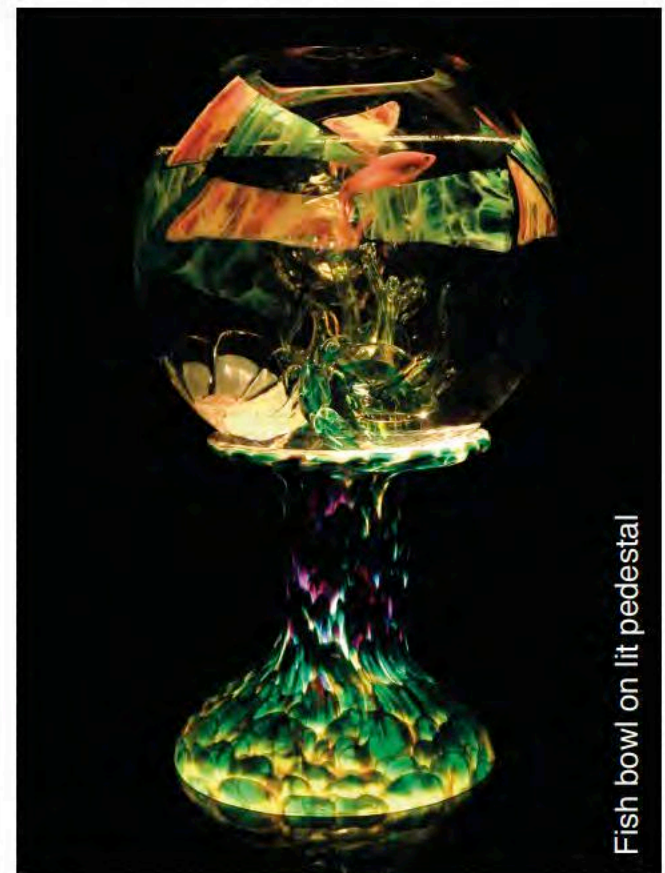
"I like the freedom – glass is free – there's no limit to what you can do with glass," according to Mooney. Not only did he purposely avoid the constraints of other media and of the Italian glass factories, but also those taught by conventional education. After just one glass-blowing class, Mooney proceeded to teach himself the art of glass. "In a school-like setting, people feed off each other and steal each other's ideas. By not being submerged in art schools, I started fresh with my own ideas," Mooney said.

And off he goes, to another full day spent blowing glass. His Moonlight Glass studio also serves as his showroom, with over 300 pieces available for admiration and purchase. The selection is almost as wide as the possibilities: tumblers, Betta fish, fish bowls on lit pedestals, his unique candlelit "Moonlight bowls", hanging lights, shot glasses, sea creatures, bowls, vases, and many, many more, each different and distinct like a non-mass-produced piece of art ought to be.

Following the stream of endless possibilities, the glass enthusiast is not limited to admiring or purchasing Mooney's art pieces, but can also take one of the classes Mooney is teaching out of his studio. That offers not only the experience of working with molten glass next to the 2100 degree furnace, but also of walking away with two of your own original glass pieces of art.

When asked for a quick description of his endeavor, Mooney described it as a "life-long exploration of color and shape through glass and time." And then he said that he wants to keep it going, because "there's a lot to explore."

To view a sample of Mooney's artwork and find more information about taking a class, visit [www.johnmooneyglass.com](http://www.johnmooneyglass.com), call 310-399-0999 or stop by 705 Hampton Dr.



Fish bowl on lit pedestal



John Mooney blowing a glass bowl in his studio, Moonlight Glass

Photo: Greta Cobar



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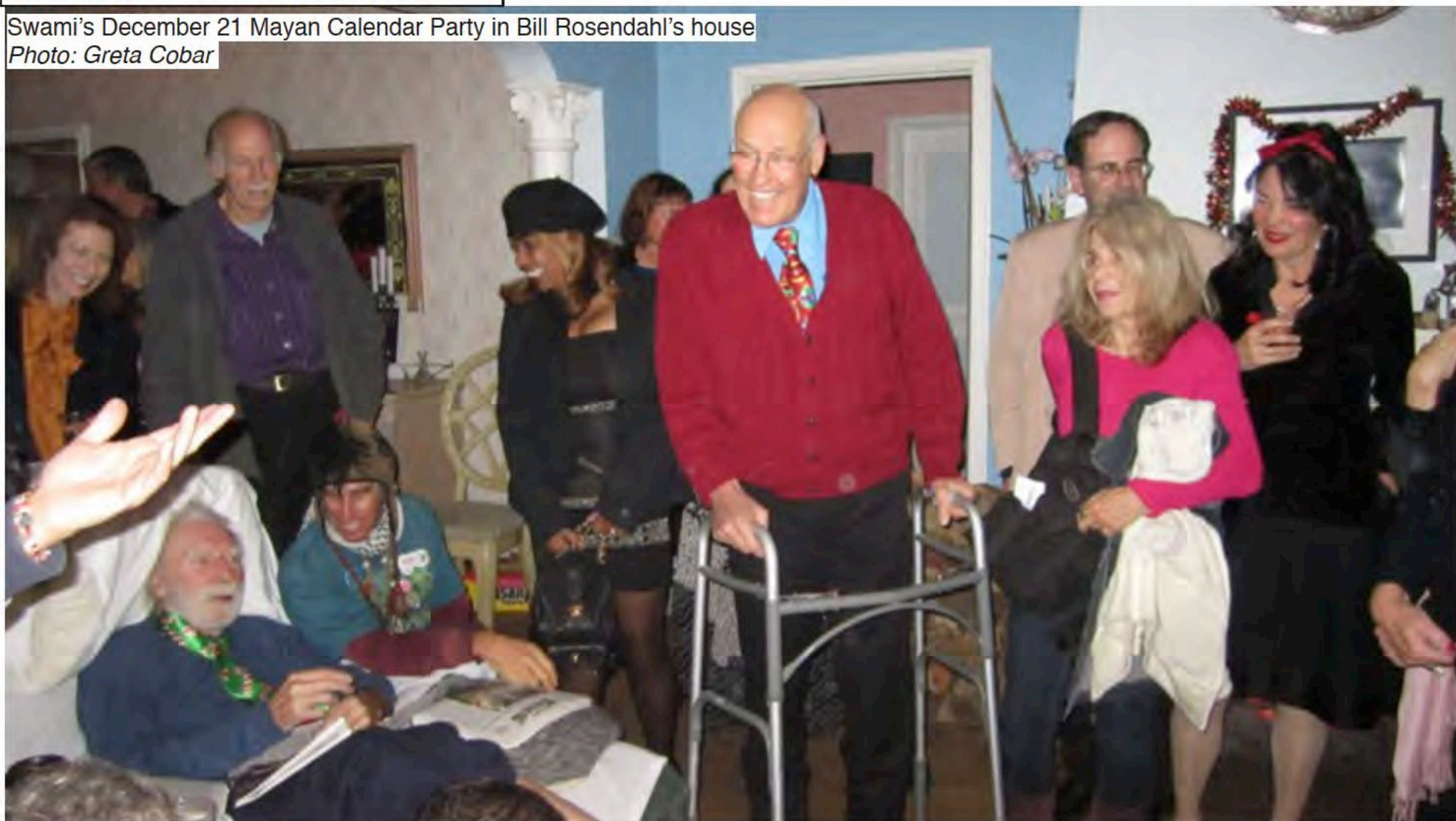
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Swami's December 21 Mayan Calendar Party in Bill Rosendahl's house  
Photo: Greta Cobar



## Swami X SPEAKS

It's not wise, or even smart, to take anything personally. Of course, you have to be at a certain level of awareness to appreciate that attitude and perception. Incidentally, Buddha stated the idea of individual souls was myopic. I'm inclined to agree with him.

Where does it all go anyway? Ecstasy is creative, this I know. There never was a beginning, and there will never be an end. We are endlessly, ecstatically creative. We are gods. Know ye not that ye are gods.

Of course, we age and die. That is, the body dies and returns to the elements. The soul travels thru the Lokas, back to the Supreme OWow, alias, God. I think when we look around, we are easily persuaded that God has a fantastic sense of humor, and endless compassion. Science has revealed that there is no end to the energy of the Multi-Verse, why can't we convince the Republicans of this? Ego does not surrender easily sometimes. The Democrats seem to be a little dense as well, or not so well.

We should wage a war on fear, or inaugurate peace projects all over the world. We could drop food instead of bombs. Wouldn't that be sweet, enlightening and inspiring for everyone? Of course, the gun-

## Party for Swami at Bill's

By Anne Alvarez

Friday December 21, the Mayans' supposed "Doomsday," had many expecting cataclysmic and transformative events worldwide. However, for local poet and astrologer SwamiX, the date had a much greater and significant meaning, a time for humanity to re-invent itself, a time filled with endless opportunities.

The day was celebrated with a gathering of local Venice artists, musicians, poets and politicians at Councilman Bill Rosendahl's home, who despite undergoing chemotherapy in the last few months, was in a great celebratory spirit.

There were musical performances by Suzy Williams, Jingles, Stephen Longfellow Fiske and Peter Demian, who led the crowd on singalongs. Plenty of food and drinks, along with a chocolate cake in the

shape of the famous Mayan temple Chichen Itza marked the occasion.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa made an appearance taking a seat on the floor next to his old college friend, Swami. Rosendahl asked for a moment of silence for the Newton Connecticut victims.

He then gave a speech in which he addressed the need for the legalization of marijuana and linked his current health condition to prescription diabetes medication. He reminisced his past work on Robert F. Kennedy's campaign as well as the last time he spoke to Martin Luther King, and the wise words he shared with him.

More than anything, the evening was a showcase of the unbreakable human spirit. Regardless of any health challenges SwamiX or Bill Rosendahl may be facing, they were the most festive and upbeat people in the room, reminding us all of what it truly is to be Alive.

runners would be a little upset. Well, you can't please everyone, as Jesus and Lincoln so dramatically proved.

Every moment is a door to creative, compassionate bliss. Learning to turn the mind off, or meditation, is a big step in that direction. God bless you on your journey back to the Supreme OWow – and Happy New Year!!



First Place winner in the 2012 Venice canals boat parade  
Photo: Jennifer Kurtley

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Limerick regarding the current American Debt Crisis and Impending Global Crisis:

Once there was a dog named Maxwell  
Who lived in a country that didn't tax well  
So Max wondered if  
There was a fiscal cliff  
And how he missed his president who played sax well

----

Je vous prie de croire,  
TravelinMaam  
*We are the words*

Where Silence Becomes Light

For Carmen Gómez, my niece.

Carmen, you are a woman according to nature. It gave you the power of the tree of life. Your equality is not an extrinsic condition controlled by the self-designated men of god—preachers, politicians, pimps, bankers, and soldiers—that you must suffer to attain. It is the intrinsic property of your being that makes you an agency of the vibratory fertility of the universal mind.

I am here,  
where silence  
becomes light.

Seeing  
how the images that populate perception  
fade away  
after the conductors of their meaning  
burn out  
in the open air.

Forcefully  
breathing the dream  
that keeps my mind impressed  
to the life stimulated  
by fantastic sensations  
profoundly.

—Humberto Gómez Sequeira-HuGóS

01:36 Saturday, November 17th, 2012, Adullam ..... Templar of regions subterranean. Stick to the script. Likewise, stick to the plan. The sky is legend. Haven't really seen. I've heard it's up there. We are in between. Imagine, I, what wonders may exist, To grasp within my fist. Likewise insist: There must be something just beyond the dome, The round enclosure that we all call home. I quietly await what may persist, In subtle hesitation. I resist The urge to open up the threshold's keen, Impenetrable door. Yet to be seen. The subterranean claims me, its man. One day, I'll not be subterranean .....Roger Houston

The Empty Place of Eddie

by Majid Naficy

Today the rain washes your blood  
And wipes it from the pavement  
There remains only your sunny smile,  
Your tall baseball bat  
Leaning against the wall,  
And your backpack full of books  
Waiting for your shoulders.  
Curse the hand that made the gun  
Curse the hand that put it in the shop  
And curse the hand that pulled the trigger!  
I am cold and empty  
Like the shell of a bullet  
Because I know that your mother  
Will not pass another school again  
And will not sit on bleachers  
In another baseball game  
And will not open her empty oven  
To heat fragrant tortillas  
For your dinner.  
March 3, 2006

Eddie Lopez a Santa Monica High School student was gunned down on Tuesday February 28, 2006 at the 26th St. and Pico Blvd.

Xavier

that little boy looked up at me  
and crawled into my heart  
he said: i like your brown hair  
it's so brown  
it was awfully good of him not to mention  
all the wrinkles on my face  
this was after he announced  
in a matter of fact way  
that his mother was dead  
i knew this but hearing him say it was so hard  
he's only five  
and technically he's not supposed to understand  
but i think he's figured it out:  
she's not coming back  
but he's alive in that jumping way  
young boys have:  
bouncing around the room and on other objects  
including his sister.  
he's a cuddler and pushes me over on the couch  
so there is room for him  
to squeeze in together.  
"we have the best family," he announced  
i couldn't help but agree  
"yes, you have the best family," i said.

- Mary Getlein

Here we stand

-Aryn Youngless

& she said

She didn’t like

The words

The sounds

& the

Textures

They seem a waste

She said

They seem contrived

She said

Yet here we stand

I probably agreed

Out loud, that is

To avoid

The words

I didn’t want

To hear

I don’t get it

I nodded

I don’t like it

I nodded

Yet here we stand

They shroud me

Like a

Fog, the words, I mean

They warm me

They’re just scribbles

They are my soul

I say

My blood

I say

My cliché

My rhythm

My me

Yet here we stand



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Join us for the launch of the new Venice based press,

**VAGABOND**

with the release of our first collection of books, featuring:  
Ernest Rosenthal, Gary Hicks, Matt Sedillo and Mark Lipman

**Saturday, February 02, 2013, 8pm**



**Beyond Baroque  
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# Venice Homeless Person Not Guilty – For Erecting a Toilet

– Continued from page 1

court to clarify the law and testimony, including one seeking a further explanation of the ordinance, which was denied, the jury, in response, returned its verdict to me on this second charge: "Guilty." For violating LAMC 56.11.

This is despite the fact that in Los Angeles LAMC 56.11 has been significantly constrained for several years by a Federal injunction, due to a prior homeless lawsuit against this homeless-abusing city: "Lavan v Los Angeles." This injunction had specifically been brought to prevent the seizure and destruction of homeless people's property that is merely left on the sidewalk, and not abandoned, just as I had maintained in this instance.

But for several years, this injunction has also brought the ire of some vocal, and winey, LAPD officers here in Los Angeles, who claim that they cannot tell what an imminent threat to public health and safety is. And a bizarre crusade to overturn this law by our current Los Angeles City Attorney, Carmen Trutanich. And now in Venice, LAPD is using this ordinance to harass the youth hitchhikers here – and lump them all in with us homeless, in violation of their rights to continued coastal access.

And so, strangely, and despite this injunction's being upheld in a recent 9th Circuit appeal – at my trial, the judge would not allow jurors to hear about this injunction. And not even a simple proposed, jury instruction that merely would have stated that the charge must be balanced – by all people's 4th Amendment right to property.

My attorney here in Venice, John Raphling, who has represented me on this, further argued that this Los Angeles city law is so vague that merely locking one's bicycle to a pole, or parking one's car in Venice, on the face of it, violates this crazy ordinance.

Yet housed people aren't driven from Venice over it.

To me it is so sad to see that our Venice, a community of 42,000, has absolutely no shelter beds now whatsoever; and this, additionally, while our Councilman Bill Rosendahl was recently bombarded by another homeless-hate campaign for his support that we homeless people merely have access to some kind of day-storage facility here.

I ask you, "What good is an equal 'Right to Property' anyway – if we haven't even a legal place to keep it? Do they make housed people here now carry their houses around on their backs, everywhere they go?"

What will you do when you loose your own house?

So, for standing up for this storage, the City Attorney's Office demanded at my sentencing – for parking a box on the sidewalk in Venice – that I be entirely banished from Venice for three years.

The honorable Nancy Newman was this trial's presiding Judge.

Newman, instead, sentenced me to no probation, one day in jail – and time-served for this arrest.

To me, the bottom line of this absurdly wasteful trial was that after three days, and hours and hours of truly bizarre testimony officially presented by LAPD officers, the jury, in cleaning up all this mess – just spoke for all the loving Venetians here.

The LAPD testified that they never saw urination or defecation in any of Venice's streets, gutters, or alleys – contradicted by testimony and photos, from their own hazardous waste officials, that more than 60 pounds of feces, and urine-deposited matter was collected by them from the streets, sidewalks and alleys around Third Ave.. And these Venice officers insisted that feces contained in a bucket and later dumped down the toilet was supposedly a greater threat to the public than the pounds of feces and urination that they, in fact, had found themselves smeared across Venice's sidewalks, parking lots, alleys, and streets – and all of which, supposedly, was

meant to pick apart my own effort to keep Venice safe.

Venice's LAPD officers have now been given some new, common-sense orders by their own, highest authority – we the people. Twelve jurors have now instructed LAPD in Venice to open up their eyes, and recognize that even a homemade porta-potty by a homeless person here is far better than urination and defecation anywhere in Venice's beautiful streets. I hope those that cry for "law and order in Venice" aren't just hypocrites and will recognize that this is now the law.

Homeless porta-potties, simply and properly maintained, are not a public nuisance – and without something better to meet human need and sanitation – they are a benefit to all in the community.

Finally, I just especially want to thank my Defense Attorney John Raphling, who provided his own services to all of us here in Venice in this matter pro bono, and is a member of the National Lawyers' Guild.

Because with this victory, you can bet we all who've loved Venice have even more plans. And adequate toilets for Venice are just a start.

To sign a petition demanding more available public toilets, go to [change.org](http://change.org) and search "Access to toilets is a human right."

I love you.

David Busch has recently taken a vow to begin and end all his conversations with I love you.

## Gun Control

– Continued from page 6

La Pierre's "solution" to gun violence massacring our children is to have every school in America staffed with an armed policeman. This seemingly ignores that at Columbine there were two armed security officers, at Virginia Tech there was a well-staffed campus police department and at Fort Hood, protected by military police.

Apparently, to La Pierre there can never be enough guns. The U.S. represents 5% of the world's population, but at 300,000,000 guns we account for 50% of the world's supply. (Should we chant "we're #1?")

Not surprisingly, La Pierre's "press conference" was a PR disaster. Commentators were shocked by his "tone deafness." Even Rupert Murdoch's conservative *NY Post* ran a headline, "Wayne La Pierre Is The 'Craziest Man On Earth'" and referred to his speech as a "bizarre rant." (If anything, the Post was too kind.)

But maybe La Pierre is crazy like a fox. He is, after all, a high-priced pitchman for the gun and ammunition industry and baby, business is booming. Fearing changes in gun laws, on this past Black Friday 300,000 guns were sold nationwide. And since Sandy Hook, assault rifles have been selling off the shelves as delighted manufacturers struggle to keep up with orders. (What a country.)

Since 1982 there have been 62 mass murders in the U.S., 10 this year alone. In the past, as people return to their busy lives and the NRA, with its \$250 million annual income, continues to fund pro-gun political campaigns, public outrage subsidies. But hopefully not this time.

The seeds are already there. In this recent election the much-feared NRA used their typical bully tactics, plowing huge dollars into eight key congressional races. Guess what? In seven out of eight their candidates lost. (Can you say "the Emperor has no clothes?") And I'm confident that the grieving but remarkably strong community at Sandy Hook will not let their children or their children's heroic teachers and principal die in vain.

Real hunters and gun enthusiasts attest that assault weapons have no place in the sport or even self-defense, nor do 30-100 bullet magazines. The irony is that a majority of NRA members are in favor of changing these laws (as was Ronald Reagan) and closing the gun show loophole which allows 40% of all guns to be purchased without background checks.

But as a shill for the weapons and ammo manufacturers, Wayne La Pierre is sticking to his guns. (Pun intended.) The NRA is famous for giving grades to political candidates ranking them as pro or anti-gun. Grading La Pierre as a human being with a soul I'd have to give him an "F." And frankly I'd also like to tell him what he can do with all those assault weapons but this column is rated PG.

(To encourage the new Congress to pass laws to prevent future gun violence, go to [www.bradycampaign.org](http://www.bradycampaign.org). Jack can be reached at [jnsmdp@aol.com](mailto:jnsmdp@aol.com).)

# Billboard Blight Banned

– Continued from page 3

Councilmembers Paul Koretz, Tom LaBonge, and Eric Garcetti voted against the motion, and Councilman Bill Rosendahl, who was absent due to medical reasons, sent a letter also expressing his opposition. It is no coincidence that almost all digital billboards are in those four councilmembers' districts.

Clear Channel and other billboard companies have not publicly stated what they're offering as part of a deal allowing the digital billboards to remain, although at least one councilmember has mentioned the figure of \$25 million in annual revenue. It is also known that the companies are offering to take down

some of their conventional billboards, although how many and where they are located is an unanswered question.

What is clear is the fact that the court has spoken on behalf of people who believe that city government should operate openly, within established rules, regardless of how those people feel about digital billboards or billboards in general. Should powerful companies like Clear Channel and CBS be able to circumvent the courts and the will of the people in pursuit of their profits?

That answer should be clearly NO.

For more info and to get involved, visit [www.banbillboardblight.org](http://www.banbillboardblight.org).

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# Community Events – day by day

Calendar compiled by Charles Dunn

**January, Tuesday 1**  
• 11am - **4<sup>th</sup> Annual First Swim (Polar Bear Plunge).** Swimming. 517 Ocean Front Walk. Free.  
• 11am - **Penguin Swim.** Venice Breakwater. Free.  
• 7-10pm - **Ross Altman’s tribute to Hank Williams.** Singer. Talking Stick. Free.

**January, Wednesday 2**  
• 6:30pm - **Yoga in Venice.** 122 Lincoln Blvd. Free.

**January, Thursday 3**  
• 7pm - **Laura Warshauer, Danni Rosner, Clay Priskorn, and Olivia Olson.** Singer/Songwriters. WitzEnd. \$10.  
• 7:30pm - **7 Dudley Cinema – Tenth Annual Venice Film Festival.** History of Films in Venice. Beyond Baroque. Free.  
•8-2am - **Spin Cycle.** Jazz/Funk. Trip. 2102 Lincoln Blvd. \$5

**January, Friday 4**  
• 6pm - **First Friday.** Abbot Kinney Blvd. Food trucks. Crowds.  
• 8pm - **NORA Ingmar Bergman’s.** (Adaptation of Henrik Absens A Doll House). Pacific Theatre. 703 Venice Blvd. \$20. /on-going.  
• 9pm - **High Voltage.** Dancing. Electric Lodge. \$10.

**January, Saturday 5**  
• 10:30pm - **Pet Adoption from Much Love.** Venice Blvd and Abbot Kinney Blvd. Free.  
• 7pm - **Terra Naomi, Arian Saleh, and Sonia Rao.** Singer/Songwriters. WitzEnd. \$10.  
• 10-5PM - **L & M Arts.** Exhibition that pays homage to the late Ray Bradbury. 660 South Venice Boulevard. Free.

**January, Sunday 6**  
• 11am - **Venice Beach Fellowship Service.** First Lutheran Church. 815 Venice Blvd. Free.  
• 2pm - **Mike Kelley. Gallery Opening, Raw City.** Beyond Baroque. Free.

**January, Monday 7**  
• 4pm - **Baby and Me Exercise.** Exercise. AK Public Library. Free.  
• 9-11:30pm - **Danny’s Live Music.** Free.

**January, Tuesday 8**  
• 8-10pm - **Lora Cain and Kim Foley Cabaret.** Gail singers 60’s and 70’s. Talking Stick. Free.  
• 8pm - **The other side of the room.** Brennan’s Pub. 489 Lincoln Blvd. Free.

**January, Wednesday 9**  
• 7-10pm - **Suzy Williams.** Singer/Songwriter. Danny’s. Free  
• 7-11pm - **Open Mic with Ellen and Peter.** Open Mic. Talking Stick. Free.  
• 7:30pm - **Chumash for Men and Women.** All about Chumash. Pacific Jewish Center. 726 Rose Ave. Free.

**January, Thursday 10**  
• 10:30-11am - **Kid’s Sing-Along.** Singing 0-3yrs. Cow’s End. 34 Washington Blvd, Venice. Free.

**January, Friday 11**  
• 2:30pm - **Dancexchange.** Learn Contemporary Dance. Electric Lodge. \$15.  
• 7:30pm - **Poet Peter Serchuk.** Poetry. Beyond Baroque. Students \$8, Seniors \$5, Members Free.  
• 8pm - **Friday Night Jazz.** Live Jazz. Townhouse. 52 Windward Ave. Free.

**January, Saturday 12**  
• 4pm - **Linda Albertano.** Interview with Venice Poet. UnUrban. 3301 Pico Blvd, S.M. Free.  
• 12-6pm - **Max Neutra and Amanda Marie.** Art. New Tongues. Cave Gallery. 1108 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Free.  
• 8pm - **Jackson Wargo, Emily Elbert, and Wait for Green.** Singer/Songwriters. WitzEnd. \$10.

**January, Sunday 13**  
• 3pm - **NORA Ingmar Bergman’s.** (Adaptation of Henrik Absens A Doll House). Pacific Theatre. 703 Venice Blvd. \$20. /on-going.  
• 8:30 - **Rambam Class.** Class. Jewish Center. 726 Rose Ave. Free.  
• 7-10pm - **Sunday Sol Salon Hosted by Nickie Black.** Music. Talking Stick. Free.

**January, Monday 14**  
• 12pm - **Brand Spanking New Artist Series.** Altered State. Presents brand new artist series. Show-casing new artists and designers. 1221 Abbott Kinney Blvd.Free.

**January, Tuesday 15**  
• 9-12am - **Jazz Returns to Venice.** RG Club. Music. 2536 Lincoln Blvd. \$10.  
• 7pm - **VNC Meeting.** Westminster elementary school. Open to the public.

**January, Thursday 17**  
• 7-9pm - **Venice Art Crawl.** Throughout Venice. www.veniceartcrawl.com for map and info. Free.

**January, Friday 18**  
• 10-1am - **Nikki’s.** DJ Spinning. House music. 72 Market St. Free.

**January, Saturday 19**  
• 7-10pm - **Altered Space.** Art Gallery. Condense a group. Free.

**January, Sunday 20**  
• 8-2pm - **Feed the Homeless.** 1011 Ocean Front Walk. Free.

**January, Monday 21**  
• 7pm - **Tango Practica.** Dancing. Electric Lodge. \$10.  
• 7:30-11pm - **Mozic Open Mic.** Poetry. Talking Stick. Free.

**January, Wednesday 23**  
• 7pm - **Lots of Love, Naomi Greenwood.** Singer\Songwriter. WitzEnd. \$10.  
• 8pm - **Wednesday Night Poetry.** Open mic. Beyond Baroque. Free.

**January, Thursday 24**  
• 4:15 - **Chess Club.** Chess. AK Public Library. Free.  
• 7pm - **Live Music at Danny’s.** Music. Danny’s. Free.  
• 7-10pm - **Elena and The Lnnocets.** Birthday music celebration with special guests. Talking Stick. Free.

**January, Friday 25**  
• 9am - **Good Dog Rescue.** Gold’s Gym. 360 Hampton Dr. Free.  
• 5pm - **Acoustic Beatles Songs by Fefe.** Live music. Figtree’s Cafe. 429 Ocean Front Walk. Free.

**January, Saturday 26**  
• 6:30pm - **Book Club.** Reading group. AK Public Library.  
• 9pm - **Beyond Music with Mark Trail.** Electronic music. Beyond Baroque. \$20, Students and Seniors \$10, Members \$5.

**January, Sunday 27**  
• 7:30pm - **Susanna Bixby Dakin.** New book reading. Beyond Baroque. Free.  
• 7-10pm - **Solange and Jim’s Comedy Show.**Comedy. Talking Stick. Free.  
• 8pm - **Bacchanal Sundays in Venice.** Townhouse. 52 Windward Ave. Free.

**January, Tuesday 29**  
• 7am - **Vinyasa Yoga Class.** Yoga. 122 Lincoln Blvd.  
• 7pm - **The Peoples Mic with Occupy.** Open mic. Poetry, Jazz, and Local Artists. WizEnd. \$5 before 8pm - \$10 after.

**January, Wednesday 30**  
• 4:15pm - **Chess Club.** Play chess. AK Library. Free.  
• 7-10pm - **Open Mic with Canyon Ellen and Peter Quentin.** Open mic. Talking Stick. Free.

**January, Thursday 31**  
• 8pm - **Comedy Show.** Stand-Up. Canal Club. 2025 Pacific Ave.

Get Your Local Event Listed

Email your time, date and a brief description to free@venicebeachhead.org by the 20th of the month. Please take out an advertisement if you charge admission.

Location Guide

- Abbot Kinney Public Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd, 310-821-1769.
- Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. 310-822-3006. beyondbaroque.org
- Burton Chace Park, 13650 Mindanao Way, marinadelrey.lacounty.gov
- Danny’s Deli, 23 Windward Ave.
- Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave, 310-306-1854 - electriclodge.org
- G2 Gallery, 1503 Abbot Kinney Blvd 310-452-2842.
- Hal’s Bar and Grill, 1349 Abbot Kinney Blvd., 310-396-3105 - halsbarandgrill.com
- Oakwood Recreation Center, 757 California Ave.
- Pacific Resident Theatre, 703½ Venice Blvd. 822-8392 pacificresidenttheatre.com
- SPARC - Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd. 822-9560 x15.
- Talking Stick Coffee Lounge, 1411c Lincoln Blvd. 450-6052 - thetalkingstick.net
- Vera Davis Center, 610 California Ave. 310-305-1865.
- Westminster Elementary School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd. (enter auditorium from Westminster Ave.) 310-606-2015.

Ongoing Events

COMPUTERS

• Vera Davis Center offers **Free Computer Use:** M-Th 10am-12pm and 1-3pm; Friday 1-3pm.

FOOD

• 12:30pm - **Free Food Distribution:** 2nd and 4th Thursdays. Vera Davis Center.  
• **Sign up for Food Stamps (EBT Cards).** Call for date and time. 310-305-1865.  
• 5-7pm - Mondays: **Hot Meals and Pre-packs.** 2-3:30pm - Saturdays: **Free Food Distribution.** 1st Baptist Church. Westminster & 7th.  
• 8-10am - Sundays - **Food/Meals** at Ocean Front Walk near Rose Ave.

KIDS

• 6:30pm -Abbot Kinney Public Library **Children’s Pajama Storytime.** 2nd and 4th Tuesday evenings.

FILMS

• 5:30pm - Abbot Kinney Public Library **Thursday Movie Night.** Call 310-821-1769 for title.  
• 7-10pm - **7 Dudley Cinema** - First Thursdays at Beyond Baroque. Free.

MUSIC

• 8pm-12am - **Hal’s Bar and Grill** features **Live Jazz** Sunday and Monday nights. Free.  
• 8:30pm - **TKO Comedy’s “Open Mic”** for com-ics, musicians. 212 Pier. Free. Thursday nights.  
• 12-2pm - Saturday & Sunday: **Music at Uncle Darrow’s.** 2560 Lincoln Blvd. Free.  
•5-9pm – **Venice Street Legends.** Venice Bistro, OFW & Dudley. Thursday nights. Free.

MISCELLANEOUS

• 9-11:30am - Free theater reading series for senior citizens with PRT theater artists. Second tuesday of the month. Pacific Resident Theater.

• 9am-4pm - **Venice High School Flea Market.** Antiques, crafts, collectibles, toys, jewelry, cloths. 2nd Saturday of every month. 13000 Venice Blvd.  
• 7-11am - **Venice Farmers Market.** Fruits, vegeta-bles, flowers and coffee. Every friday. 500 North Venice Blvd.  
• 7-10pm - MOM: **Meditations On Media.** 3rd Wednesdays. Beyond Baroque. Free.  
•11:30am-2:30pm – **The Venice Oceanarium** (a museum without walls). Venice Pier. Every Sunday, weather permitting. Free.  
• 6-8pm - **McLuhan-Finnegans Wake Reading Club.** Lloyd Taber-Marina Del Rey Library, 4533 Admiralty Way. First Tuesday of the month. Free.  
• 6-8:30pm - **Eco-Yoga.** 3rd Sunday of the Month. Church in Ocean Park, Hill & 2nd St. Bring a mat. Donation required.

POETRY

• 8pm-12am - **Antonieta Villamil’s La Poesía Fes-tival ¡en español!** and **Potluck Party:** Bring origi-nal poesía, cuento, música, pintura. First Saturdays. Beyond Baroque Library. Free.

POLITICAL AWARENESS

• **Occupy Venice General Assembly** meets Mondays/Thursdays at 7pm. 1358 AKB. Free.



# Circumstance and Opportunity

By Ronald McKinley

There is a bike parked just left of the multi-use utility pole on the corner of cold and homeless. We mill about; I mean “we”, not French for more sex. It’s cold, my hands barely work. I am writing with a pen. I prefer a lead pen. I make mistakes.

Just right of me is a man pacing. He is wrapped in a red and blue plaid blanket, the red like a freeway system intersecting at four points on a two dimensional surface. His hair is very curly framing his bearded face in a halo of thick curls. He, we are both homeless.

I will call him Laughter, that’s what he’s like. Laughter only sleeps in the daytime, he feels safe. Sometimes I don’t see him for days. I asked him once where he went, he said he just walked. He was afraid of the police; he would leave if we just talked about the police.

The police cruise looking for drinking. Most people I see drink. I get offered beer a lot. I am not much of a drinker. Most homeless can’t afford to buy drugs most the time. The housed come to the beach looking to cop, this is how the drug trade is kept alive.

There is another man looking for snipes, cigarette butts, he opens them and puts them in a large plastic bag. Snipes walks back and forth across the street of Cold and Homeless.

He talks to himself: a full conversation. If you engage him, he will stop and talk to you, then he will return to his other conversation.

There are very few women out now it is 6:20 am. I have been here in this line since 4:52 am. This morning it is a brisk 37 degrees Fahrenheit.

A man, very slight, just walked up looking for services. He is wearing a white dress shirt and a black t-shirt under it. He was shaking and trembling from the cold. I offered him another t-shirt. He was about to leave. We, some people in the line for services, talked him out of leavening. I looked for something for him to wear. Laughter offered me the plaid blanket for him to wear. I told him to warm it with his breath. The cold and shaking man balled himself into the fetal S and I covered him with blanket. Being human means being humane. My own little time-space entangled moment defines me and keeps me sane.

I do if only for this fragmented moment, there I am. Whoa! What a concept, each moment planned or unplanned should be lived. Don’t live for the moment, but live the moment.

We are separated by circumstance and a little wealth. Why does kindness require a permit and a surcharge?

If this is reality, make mine virtual. I could pause it, reformat it, get an update.

The man I gave the t-shirt to left, maybe he needed a new operating system. Maybe we all need a new operating system. Mine keeps restarting every time it seems I am getting somewhere.

I am houseless so I am suspect. I am lazy, dirty, drug user. The worst thing that can be done to a human being is to create situations where they have nothing to lose. No vested interest in country, community, humanity, self. The police heap their frustrations and the waste of their warped perceptions on

people who want to just exist. “If you cut me, do I not bleed.” I need a transfusion. I need some respect. Everything on the planet belongs on the planet. Man-made things are an exception. No matter what the ad says, your car does not have more right to exist than me.

On a daily basis I dodge cars and SUV’s of distracted, bored people. People who seem to think, to me, that I should be here, there, anywhere. They look at but don’t see me. Some pretend I am not there, shifting their gaze to avert taking in my image. Some skid to stop at corners while texting, talking on their various devices. Engaging in the vice of the moment.

Not all my bad experiences are from the housed. There is a lot of violence in the streets. Some of the people need help. Some of these people should not be sleeping outside, left to fend for themselves. The war on the homeless makes everything worst. Yes, we are under siege. The constant pressure to find food and shelter while looking out for the haters and the police takes its toll. Fear of lower property values is enough to suspend civil rights. It seems to be a crime to be homeless. We are always judged by the most vocal and fanatical.

The middle class is all but gone. The wealth has been redistributed upward. The most valued service of the Government School, Postal, Prison, and Armed Forces is being privatized. Are you so far from homelessness? I thought I was.

*Written winter 2009, when I was house-less*

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## Happy New Year!



Venice Sign dressed up for the Holidays with a 1956 Chevy Bel Air passing by. In the background, one of the latest murals painted in Venice, inspired by the 1958 Orson Wells film “Touch of Evil.” Painted by Jonas Never, the mural illustrates cars very similar to the one just passing by.

*Photo: Todd von Hoffman*