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June
2014
#392

Call to Action: Oppose Big Ugly Boxes! Let's Keep Venice, Venice!



Above: Sunset in Venice Photo: Ray Rae

Front Porches or Fortresses: You Decide

By Krista Schwimmer

As the fast-paced, inappropriate and illegal development of Venice continues its rush towards infamy, a symbol of community and connection is being eroded from Venice forever: the front porch.

Once a place where people could meet each other naturally, the loss of the porch first began with the increased height of fences. Next came the “BUB's”*- strange, over-sized, box-shaped homes that not only do not fit the character of neighborhoods, but make a statement of isolation rather than of invitation. Not homes, not places of sanctuary, these structures are more like the castles of feudal lords distancing themselves from the peasants around them.

Despite the uproar in the local community at the (often ineffective) Neighborhood Council, demolitions continue. And they will continue unless we act. We need to complain to the Coastal Commission and the City of Los Angeles on each one and to demand a study of the cumulative impact on our community. Street by street, neighborhood by neighborhood, people must organize together and say ABSOLUTELY NO! No to any development that has no thought of people, environment, history, parking, affordability, green space, or traffic.

Go to the Coastal Commission and write letters of opposition. Next time you walk down the streets of your neighborhood, take a look around. Notice what is happening. Decide if you agree. And don't hesitate to take action. Here is what Venice Coalition to Preserve our Unique Community Character (VCPUCC) calls for:

Monitor and collect information on ALL developments springing up in the community by: Signing up to receive advance planning notices in the Venice area at: <http://bit.ly/1jJ6REm>

Check the address on www.cityhood.org for project details. If it looks like a significant project, take a photo of the existing house for the record. Even if construction has begun, take photos and document clearly the location and possible violations. Take photos of places with and without notices. Take photos of the home as well as the surrounding area, particularly

– Continued on page 7

We Are Venice - Get Up and Fight!

By Peggy Lee Kennedy

Venice is being demolished and rebuilt right in front of our eyes, but good people can act to stop this. Public pressure works. So Venice needs you, the public, to show up and write emails - now.

On Friday June 13, please attend the monthly Coastal Commission meeting at Huntington Beach City Hall, 2000 Main Street, in Huntington Beach to OPPOSE EIGHT DEMOLITIONS and one restaurant project. The current Coastal Commission meeting agenda is always online at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/mtgcurr.html>.

Go to the Coastal Commission current meeting link and scroll down to Friday. It's a three day agenda: Wednesday through Friday. Venice is all on Friday, which is the last day of the meeting and at the bottom of the agenda. Each Venice item has a link to the Coastal Commission staff report and each one has the Coastal Permit application number.

It is very easy to write an email, so PLEASE WRITE AN OPPOSITION EMAIL RIGHT NOW for each one of these, with the application number in the subject field of the email, and send it to Charles Posner at chuck.posner@coastal.ca.gov. I suppose you can write one for all of them and ask him to put it in each file, but it is less effective.

Here are the demolition applications you need to notate in your emails:

- June 13 Agenda 10c Application No. 5-14-0074
- June 13 Agenda 10d Application No. 5-14-0084
- June 13 Agenda 10e Application No. 5-14-0111
- June 13 Agenda 10f Application No. 5-14-124
- June 13 Agenda 10g Application No. 5-14-0212
- June 13 Agenda 10h Application No. 5-14-0237
- June 13 Agenda 10i Application No. 5-14-0239
- June 13 Agenda 10j Application No. 5-14-0240

And just in case you need something to say:

• CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together,

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OH RATS!

By Carol Fondiller

The Catellus Development company has devised a plan for evicting long-term residents of a 45-acre site situated on a Playa del Rey bluff.

The original plan was to poison the long-term bluff residents with an anti-coagulant, which would cause the residents to bleed to death, but would prevent the residents from invading the surrounding homes.

Catellus Corporation wants to eradicate the residents that have inhabited the bluffs for eons in preparation to build 114 homes on the bluff. The development was about to eradicate the residents by adding the killing agent to the soil when Councilwoman Miscikowski ordered the developer to “re-evaluate” the plan. Several community organizations and environmental groups had sprung into action to prevent this holocaust.

The developers then countered with the proposal of relocating the inhabitants to the Ballona Wetlands. The developers were treating them like long-term tenants. Except these are not tenants, they are Rodents, rats, vermin, who have lived on the marshes forever with the exception of the European Rattus Whateverous, which the Europeans imported at great expense to the Americas, and the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and Gophers that are indigenous to the Wetlands.

Environmentalists and safety groups were concerned that the rodents—which are midway in the food chain in the wetland ecosystem—i f poisoned would kill off birds and other animals who feed on the rodents, and could pollute the wetland ecosystem.

The Diaspora of the rats to the wetlands was frowned upon by environmental groups because it would upset the delicate balance of the Ballona Wetlands.

Some groups of the conservation community see this as an opportunity to purchase the bluffs to ensure the viability of the wetlands below the bluffs.

Unfortunately, efforts to dislodge developers from the bluffs so far have been futile, because they won't go, and as for using anti-coagulants on developers – well, it just won't work.

Developers don't bleed.

This is a re-print from the June 2003 edition of the Beachhead – the more things change, the more they stay the same. June 22 would have been Carol Fondiller's 78th Birthday. Happy Birthday, Carol! The Beachhead misses you...



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Anne Alvarez, Anthony Castillo, Greta Cobar, Don Geagan, Mary Getlein, Ronald McKinley, Krista Schwimmer, Laura Shepard Townsend, Alice Stek.

The FREE VENICE BEACHHEAD is published monthly by the Beachhead Collective as a vehicle for the people of Venice to communicate their ideas and opinions to the community at large. The Beachhead encourages anyone to submit news stories, articles, letters, photos, poetry or graphics of interest to the Venice community.

The staff reserves the right to make all decisions collectively on material published. There is no editor on the Beachhead. The printing is financed by ads, sustainers and donations. The articles, poetry and art work express the opinions of the individual contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Beachhead Collective.

To submit material, include your name and telephone number. Anonymous material will not be printed, but your name will be withheld on request. No payment is made for material used.

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Dear Beachhead,

The mission of Venice and its newspaper seems to be to stop progress wherever it rears its ugly head. Instead of staying in the 1960s why not go back to the 1940s, when the boardwalk had trams that went from one bingo parlor to another and the sand was full of bathers and the biggest concession was umbrella rentals, and we had the Lick Pier at Ocean Park with a rickety roller coaster and unsafe rides any ten year old would love? Or why stop there – why not go back to the days when Venice was just a few unpaved roads? I've been here long enough to remember when the locals called Venice "Where the sewer meets the sea." Try gentrifying that.

Sincerely,
Don Schraier

The Beachhead Responds:

Unfortunately, much of the ‘progress’ that is being proposed for Venice kills the soul as well as the heart, while lining a lot of outsiders’ pockets. So yes, I do agree with you – it is indeed an “ugly head”. The development at 1414 Main Street is about one of the ugliest structures I have ever seen, and I have seen my fair share – in Los Angeles.

Gentrification is inevitable as well as progress. However, progress needs to utilize the framework that made Venice and continues to make Venice the second largest draw in the state after Disneyland. We have history, and we darn well need to safeguard it!!!!

The locals called Venice ‘where the sewer meets the sea’ **after** the annexation by the City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles has much culpability for creating these sewers with the erection of oil derricks to ensure the transformation of paradise to hell! And why did L.A. even want troublesome Venice? Because they knew oil and its revenue was to be had. And what was L.A.’s very first project for the newly annexed Venice? To fill in all of the canals built by Abbot Kinney. Not spend the money to revitalize them, but to abolish them for macadam.

And of course, as you know, the deterioration of the Lick Pier was definitely taking place under either the City of L.A.’s watch or that of Santa Monica, not Venice.

As to the time when there were “not many paved roads”, let me quote from the enchanting foreword written by William Carroll for Delores Hanney’s book, *The Lure of a Land by the Sea*. Carroll was here in 1920, when there were not many paved roads. Of course you meant it sarcastically, but frankly, I would love to try to emulate in present day Venice what is being described here:

“I remember a Venice of mythic wonders, enjoyed as never-ending opportunities for mischief, pleasures found nowhere else and random accomplishments of questionable value.

So tell me, where in the world could one find a tiny train parked downtown? Just give the conductor a coin and be rattled home serenaded by a steam engine whistle announcing the crossing of streets.

Or wander to a beach and ocean so clean you could be yourself without a care. And when the huge saltwater plunge appealed, swim there with noisy friends to dive for coins tossed by spectators. Perhaps these were the same people standing on the beach one evening of 1923 to watch a re-creation of the Dempsey-Firpo prizefight, as directed by continual telegraph messages from the New York ringside site.

Even the outside world was cared for. Visitors could arrive from as far as 50 miles away in Red Car electric trains. Then walk across the street to a wonderful roller coaster, or eyeball a random collection of stores on Windward Avenue leading them to the Venice pier; clustered with even more coasters, sideshows and a dance hall. Then, at the end of the pier, find Billy Ball’s two marvelous launches, powered by twelve-cylinder aircraft engines, ready to hurl themselves over ocean waves in a trip to be long remembered.

I was too little to enter the Ship Café but Noah’s Ark was for me. A crazy place. The tilt of the room made it appear that water was running up hill, that you were off balance and in trouble touching enough wall to keep from falling down. The Fun House was of even greater madness with spinning barrels to walk though and wonderful slides just right for us little people. For me it was heaven on earth with only an occasional bit of hell when I’d so easily manage to do it all wrong.

This was a special world where adults could laugh and giggle without shame, enjoy things they’d never dreamed of, and sample from a never ending supply of foods and liquids; all just a streetcar ride from almost anywhere in Los Angeles and adjoining counties.

Then there was the St. Marks Hotel where Jimmy the waiter had a dog named “Bum” whose single trick began with guests laying a \$1 bill on the floor so Bum could roll over on it, then carry the money to Jimmy. And Jimmy was no dummy either. He married my mother, quit waitering and opened a hamburger stand next to the pool hall. When he and mother would disappear to “take a nap” I

Thanks for your generous donations!

- Electric Lodge
- Summer Fest
- Linda Albertano
- Michael McGuffin
- Charles and Terry Bloomquist
- Ira Kuslow
- Green Scene Gardens
- Richard Abcarian

Dear Beachhead,

Your May cover story about the beach curfew and the homeless drove me to write this letter with anger.

First of all, the biggest reason we have a homeless problem is that our leaders, the police, PATH and the many other agencies that deal with this issue have no real answers on how to fix it.

In fact, they all make it worse. Arresting homeless people for sleeping somewhere does not help them. Giving them tickets they can't pay does not make a homeless person's situation better. "Clean ups" and other tactics to get homeless people moving only shows how stupid our leaders are. If a homeless person has to move, then he or she will only crash at the next location.

In the meantime, another homeless person is kicked out of their location and takes the place of the person just kicked out. It's a cycle that goes on and on. Homeless people have to sleep somewhere and they will. If they can't be inside, then they will be outside.

What part of this do the police not understand? Also, the economy is still bad. In the last several years, people have lost jobs, belongings, homes and in some cases, their own families.

Many of these former tax payers wound up on the streets. If what they went through was not bad enough, here comes the law making things worse. To prove the fact that no one has answers to the situation, our leaders backed up by the authorities, enact illegal laws to deal with things.

The beach curfew that now extends to Ocean Front Walk is as idiotic a "law" as some of the worst on record. You can't treat human beings like animals. The entire situation is disgusting and wrong. The motto of the police is to Protect and Serve. That means protecting and serving all people no matter their income or how they live.

The current treatment of the homeless has to stop. Either have answers or shut up. In getting back to the curfew, please end it.

Not only does it hurt the homeless, but it hurts everyone who wants to live in a free society to enjoy the beauty of the California coastline anytime of the day or night.

End this curfew nonsense and give us back our way of life the way we once knew it.

Sincerely,
George Vreeland Hill

was in charge. Cooking ‘burgers on a grill was easy and many a customer received the world’s greatest for only ten cents.

A bit later they opened the DeLuxe Café next to the Venice National Bank and I found work selling newspapers in front of the People’s Drug store across the street. That didn’t last because I was too noisy and the store manager had me fired. Or perhaps I should not have clipped all those “Free Pier Ride” coupons from the *Venice Vanguard* to enjoy everything on the pier at no expense.

Next up was selling Sunday papers from a coaster wagon by walking down the center of the street and shouting the morning away. One day a buddy told me the bowling alley needed a pinsetter. But that night my mother was visited by a policeman who suggested that working in a bowling alley was not really the best thing for me. For this was a Venice like no other place in the world.

– William Carroll

I would like, along with the rest of the Beachhead Collective, to try to continue to ensure that Venice continues to be “like no other place in the world”. We heartily welcome the newbies who come to add to the Venice community because they love it, not because they wish to scavenge Venice and con us Venetians. Unfortunately, all too often, it is the latter rather than the former who are the ‘developers’ of our community.

Santa Monica and Marina del Rey love this level of progress. The sad truth is that the developers are here only to pick up deals they can’t get in Santa Monica and Marina del Rey.

Sincerely,
Laura Shepard Townsend

Help A Free Press Survive:
Annual Sustainer: \$100. Individual Subscriptions:
\$35/year Institutional Subscriptions: \$50/year
Mail: Beachhead, PO Box 2, Venice, CA 90294

VEN-

By Jim Smith

Public space is taking a beating in Venice lately. First, our beautiful beach is off limits to Venetians, and everyone else, from midnight to 6 a.m. Then our nutty L.A. City Attorney, Carmen “Nuch” Trutanich, decided our busiest street, Ocean Front Walk, was actually a park and promptly took it away from the public during the same nighttime hours. Now our Venice Circle is off-limits to the public 24-hours a day, every day.

The concept of public space goes hand-in-hand with local democracy. Public spaces allow people to gather and exercise free speech. In years gone by, Venetians like Swami X and Bill Mitchell would climb up on a park bench and begin haranguing the crowd that quickly gathered. It didn’t matter if they said lewd or slanderous things about well-known people. That’s what free speech is all about. You can’t go into the Binocular Building, stand up on a bench and loudly launch an verbal attack on Google. But you can do that in a public space.

For anyone who doesn’t know, the third takeaway of public access, the Circle, is located where five streets come together, including Main, Windward and Grand. It is sometimes called the traffic circle, although real estate agents prefer the “Windward Circle.” Although “Main Street Circle” would define it just as well, “Windward” sounds classier.

In recent years, the Circle has been the site of free speech activities. Our 100-year anniversary of the founding of Venice and Independence Day parade on July 4, 2005, ended at the circle where speeches and music entertained Venetians. See the August 2005 Beachhead for photos and articles about the celebration. A couple of years later, the Venice Peace and Freedom Party initiated a peace vigil at the Circle opposing the ongoing Iraq occupation, the war in Afghanistan, and the threat of war with Iran. The vigils continued every week for 54 weeks.

Later, in 2011, the Circle was the site of the first Occupy Venice encampment. It has also been a place over the year for peaceful retreats, perhaps a day dream or two while lying on the green grass, or simply watching the people and the cars go by.

We can’t talk about the Circle without thinking about that adjoining public space that we recently lost, the Venice Post Office. Here, at the center of Venice, we could wander in and run into one or more of our neighbors, and marvel at the beauty of the 1939 building and its beautiful mural, called the Story of Venice. For more than a year, the building has been an eyesore as it has turned from a public space into a private ego trip. Hollywood mogul Joel Silver bought the building and found it not up to his standards of excess. Now the inside has been ripped out, the mural torn off the wall and only shown to those he wants to impress at the L.A. County Museum of Art.

Did Silver ask for signs to go up at the Circle prohibiting pedestrians from entering? Perhaps, when he takes possession of his plush office, he won’t want to see any real Venetians malingering in the Circle. In any case, after more than 80 years, the City of Los Angeles has decided that visiting the Circle consti-



Above: Venice Circle through the years

Top to Bottom:

2014: Everywhere a sign

1925: Before the city of L.A. covered the lagoon

and most of the canals with cement

1905: Building the dream: Venice of America

ICE

tutes a hazard to us, similar to walking on a freeway. Oh yes, the same ordinance that bans pedestrians from walking on a freeway – L.A.M.C. 80.42.1 – now bans us from this lonely piece of our public land.

It wasn’t always like this. When Venice was a free and independent city (there I go again), the Circle was a lagoon that was the hub of the canal system in central Venice. When, after a farcical election for annexation, Los Angeles filled in all the canals and the lagoon.

As a sop to angered residents, the new Circle was named the Abbot Kinney Plaza, which is still its true name as far as I know. But don’t look for a statue to the founder of Venice, or a bandstand as in many Latin American plazas. Thanks to the Venice Historical Society, there is a replica of a gondola in the Circle, even if we can’t inspect it closely.

Thanks to another colossal ego and artist Robert Graham, we have to share our Circle with a statue to a dismembered Black woman. The statue was a gift from one of Graham’s patrons but the city paid

\$90,000 for the base on which it stands. To date, L.A. has only contributed \$5,000 to the fund for a memorial to Japanese-Venetians who were put in a concentration camp during World War II. Such are the priorities of our oppressors. From the 1970s to the 90s, a people installed statue, called “Freedom,” which people actually liked, graced the Circle. It was stolen away one night by the L.A. street department without a word.

There have been lots of ideas over the past decades to beautify our Circle. One suggestion was to have a Farmers’ Market at the Circle every week. Another was to create a statue garden where we could wander through a flower garden, sit on benches and look at representations of the heroes and artists of Venice, including Kinney, Irving Tabor, Arthur Reese, Flora Chavez, John Haag, Vera Davis, Rick Davidson, Marvena Kennedy, Philomene Long, Carol Fondiller and others. Yes, we have quite a history in Venice!

If the downtown bureaucrats really cared about the safety of pedestrians going to our Circle, couldn’t they have considered other options. No, because in L.A. cars always come first, and people second, if at all. And no, if a 1 percenter like Silver wanted people out, who are we to think our opinions would even be considered?

In a better world, cars could be banned from the Circle. Most of the dangerous traffic is from cut-through commuters going from north of Venice to south of Venice. Surely, they could find a way to travel that didn’t involve roaring down residential streets in Venice. If they can’t be moved, how about a aerial bridge over the traffic. Let’s hold a contest for the most beautiful design. Oops, I forgot, Venice is all about taking money downtown, not bringing it back.

Will Venetians give up and go quietly into that good night? Or will they rage, rage against the dying of the light? When hat-in-hand appeals to the powers-that-be don’t work, then stronger tactics are required. If any public space is to survive, if any cottages and courtyards are to survive the Big Ugly Box onslaught, if Venice is to regain its soul, and independence, we must put our bodies where our words are.

If 50 of my closest friends invited me to a peaceful candlelight vigil in our Circle, how could I refuse? How could you refuse? As the police and TV vans roll up, could we not sing that old union free speech song, “We Shall Not Be Moved”?

And the next night...

Hate Crime on Glyndon Ave.

By Mary Getlein

May 12 was celebrated by most Americans as Mother's Day. On Glyndon Ave., things were not the same. A guy was living in his camper and that irritated someone, and they decided to take the law into their own hands. So they firebombed the "Magoo's" camper.

Rick Sealent, a man who lived on Glyndon Ave., said he could hear the guy screaming when it happened. Magoo was lying in his bed when they bombed the camper.

The next morning I heard about it and went over to take a look. There was just a shell of twisted metal left. The guy from Bruffy's re-po yard was there, getting ready to haul it away. Magoo didn't want to talk to me. He was talking to police about the prosecution of this case. The cop said Magoo had to look that up with Arson. The guy looked like you would expect someone to look after being attacked with a firebomb: dirty, overwhelmed, scared, and desperate. He was lucky to be alive. He lost everything he owned, including his home, in about ten minutes.

I hope they catch the guys that did this. The night before, someone had come by the camper and broke all the windows. Magoo called the police, but the police didn't respond. The firebombing happened the next night.

It surprised me that this happened on Glyndon Ave. It's such a clean, pretty neighborhood with people who care about their kids' education, with beautiful gardens and trees lining the streets. It's the last place you would expect a firebombing to occur.

Firebombing was one of the weapons leveled at civil right activists in the '60s. Firebombings and straight-up assassination were the weapons of choice of some of the most twisted, hateful people the world



had seen. Born in the U.S.A., our modern, "today" hateful twisted beings are back to using such horrible tactics against the crime of being poor and living in your camper.

Now Magoo has nothing and nowhere to go.

It's someone declaring war on you because you live in a camper. Most people who live in a vehicle know the rules and try to blend with the other cars, and not attract attention. When you use such violence against undefended people, you join the brutal forces of hatred. There are many ways of killing people, but

burning someone out of their homes has got to be one of the worst.

This is a frightening example of what happens when you take "the law" into your own hands. What happens is chaos and random acts of violence. What if there had been little children in the camper? Would that change the point of view for you? There are 50,000 people, men, women and children living on the streets of LA on any given night. These people need to be protected, just like anybody else. There can't be two systems of justice: one for the housed, and one for the homeless. Who do you think comes out on top?

Maya Angelou: An Appreciation

By Amanda Seward.

On Wednesday, May 28, 2014 Maya Angelou died at the age of 86. Although I did not know her personally, as did Oprah Winfrey, who called her "mentor, mother/sister, and friend," I was touched by her death. It is hard to describe why. Although I read most of her autobiographical books, starting with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, I did not see myself as a devotee and other than perhaps the poems, *Still We Rise* and *Phenomenal Woman*, I was not particularly familiar with her poetry. Yet I realized by my response to her passing she meant a great deal to me.

She has been called a lot of things, "diva of American culture," "national treasure," "America's conscience," "global renaissance woman," and "icon." She was all of these things. She was a dancer, writer, poet, film director, actor, civil rights activist, and teacher. She was a friend and supporter of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. She was fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic and Fanti, a West African language and spent years working in Cairo, Egypt and Accra, Ghana. She was a Pulitzer Prize-nominated poet, she was nominated for a Tony Award for her role in the play, *Look Away*, and won three Grammy Awards for her spoken word albums. She was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Bill Clinton in 2000, the Ford Theatre's Lincoln Medal in 2008 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2011. She wrote and recited *On the Pulse of Morning* for the 1993 inauguration of President Clinton. She was honored with more than fifty honorary degrees. Jerry Offsay, former president of programming at Showtime, said that of the 310 movies he was involved with during his tenure at Showtime, the company premiered 50 films at film festivals around the world, including *Down in the Delta*, directed by Angelou, and before the film even played at the Toronto Film Festival, the audience gave Angelou a standing ovation. He said that he had not seen that kind of reaction before or since.

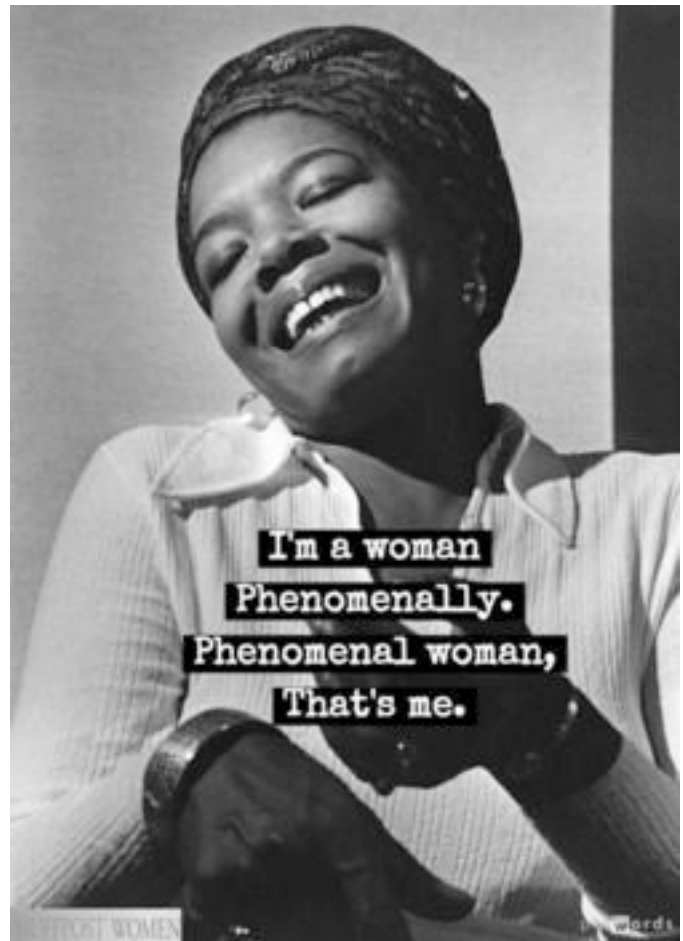
She certainly lived a full life. In the first book in her series of memoirs, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she described being sent on a train to the segregated town of Stamps, Arkansas at the age of 3 along with her brother, Bailey, who was 4, to live with their paternal grandmother after their parents divorced. When Angelou was 7, they were picked up in Stamps by their father and taken to St. Louis, Missouri to rejoin their mother and her relatives. Less than a year later, she was back in Stamps after being raped by her mother's boyfriend. After testifying at the trial of her assailant, he was sentenced to a year

in prison, but before he could serve his time, his lawyer somehow got him off and he was released. Within days, he was found dead, kicked to death, presumably by her uncles. Angelou was mostly mute for almost 5 years after, speaking rarely to anyone other than her brother. In her 7-year old mind, she thought that her voice had caused the death of someone. Still, she found solace in books, poems, and in a few close relationships. This first memoir ends when she is seventeen in San Francisco, where she is living with her mother and her new step father, and just borne a child within weeks of graduating from high school. Already, though, you see a person who loved others, who was loved, who was a listener and observer, who had courage, who had dignity in the worst of circumstances, someone who was just and still and curious and knew how to have a good time.

I was touched by an interview with comedian Dave Chappelle in which Angelou described an encounter on the set of *Poetic Justice* (1993), a movie directed by John Singleton featuring Angelou in a cameo appearance. She described walking out of her trailer to hear two men arguing vehemently with each other. She walked up to one and whispered can I get a word. He huffed and puffed. She asked, I understand that but can I speak with you a minute. The young man calmed and she said, do you know how important you are? Do you know our people lay spoon fashion in filthy slave ships in their and each others' excrement, urine and menstrual flow so that you could live 200 years later. They stood on auction blocks so that you could live. When is the last time someone told you how important you are? The young man started to tear. Angelou said she wiped his tears with her hands and talked with him. Afterwards Janet Jackson who was starring in the movie came up to her and said, "Dr. Angelou I don't believe you were actually talking with Tupac Shakur." Angelou said she had no idea who Shakur was. Shakur's mother later wrote Angelou saying that he told her about the incident and started thinking a little differently.

Winfrey said that above all Angelou was a teacher. And yes she was. At her death, she had a lifetime appointment at Wake Forest University. Yet, as Offsay said, she was also a listener. When one spoke, she heard you. He also told me that she had a quietness about her that was rare.

As I reflect on her life, I know we have lost an intelligent and courageous voice, but in so many ways she remains with us in her writings, her interviews and her teachings. There are many life lessons she shared. One is to have courage. She said, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently." Without courage, you will say "the threat



is too much, the difficulty too high and the challenge is too great." She did not let racism, sexism, poverty, or abuse stand in her way of living life fully.

She said that the most important blessings for her were first her child, and then the others that she loved, that we needed to listen to each other and really hear each other. She seemed to live this creed. Her son was once asked did he ever feel he was growing up in her shadow. He responded, "No, I didn't. I grew up in her light."

I will try not to look at her as an icon, because, as she explained, it is hard to measure up to an icon and we are all human. Her life has more meaning if she can help us be our best selves and if we don't write her off as an impossible standard. She was accessible, she danced, she smoked and she enjoyed Johnnie Walker Blue. With all of that and more, I cannot help but think there is no more appropriate person to be greeted, "Thou art my good and faithful servant with whom I am well pleased." RIP Maya Angelou.

— See page 9 for Maya Angelou poetry

Beware of Google's PR Whitewash

By Anthony Castillo

As with most major corporations who move into communities where they may be less than welcome, Google is in the midst of a subtle public relations campaign to win over the hearts and minds of Venice residents who may not be aware of the extent to which Google is changing the face of our community. And maybe get the rest of us to think "well, they really aren't that bad after all." But don't believe it for a second, a mega corporation cannot be trusted.

You may have noticed Google attaching its name to the just completed Venice Art Walk. This event has been held for many years before the arrival of Google to Venice, and is something that taps into what Venice has been about for decades: an artists' community. So of course Google would want to be associated with it, if in name only. And at a recent Venice Neighborhood Council meeting a librarian from the Abbot Kinney library spoke about Google's youth training program and free training classes for kids interested in the tech world. All of this looks quite benign on the surface, but there is much more motivating these actions than meets the eye.

These recent attempts by Google to do community outreach and throw some money around town are only the beginning of what will be a long and ongoing strategy to try and sway Venice opinion in Google's favor, and get people to look the other way as Google is buying up large parts of Venice to expand its presence, while further fueling the hyper-gentrification of Venice, which will in turn destroy the very things that make Venice, Venice. The more protests that are held in front of Google's main office to call them out on the negative effects they are having here in Venice, the more they will try to put a positive spin on the company's image as a good Venice neighbor. But after all of us are priced out of Venice who will be left? Google, its supporters and a bunch of trust fund hipsters?

While some might call me paranoid or alarmist, the facts bare out my concerns. These types of superficial PR maneuvers are just part of doing business when it comes to major corporations, and Google is no exception. Fact, Google is buying up Venice first one building at a time, and now it has become one city block at a time. Fact, Google wants to encourage the



term "silicon beach" when referring to Venice. This attempt to change the image of Venice only serves to make the gentrification that Google is fueling look like progress and not what it really is, a land grab. Fact, Google is a dues paying member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and is funding extreme far right wing organizations (something I've written about in detail here in the Beachhead February 2014 issue #388).

Fact, Google doesn't give a dam about Venice, its working class, long term residents, or its history. Google is in the business of doing one thing: collecting data on all its users so it can make maximum profits off of selling this information. That is what Google cares about, period. Google is also expanding into other areas of concern. Its purchase of Boston Dynamics, for instance. This robot making company is in the business of producing some of the scariest creations ever imagined. They then are sold to the military and possibly police departments. Think on the ground

drones and you will get what I'm referring to. See for yourself on Boston Dynamics You Tube page (which of course Google also owns). Everyone, not just folks here in Venice, should be concerned about what this arm of Google is up to.

So the next time you see Google do what on the surface looks to be a good deed for Venice, remember they are no different from say a fossil fuel company, a defense contractor (i.e. Boston Dynamics/Google), or a chemical company who has to go out into the community from time to time to whitewash its image, so it can continue to do business with the least amount of push back from the surrounding community. And don't forget, all that information that Google has on all of us, the NSA also has, and Google is just fine with that. Let's see where Google comes down in the fight for net neutrality. Because either way they will still get our data. I for one will be skeptical of anything Google does to mask what it is really about, and all of us living here in Venice should be as well.

Labor and the Environment

By Mark Lipman

Righteously, there is outrage over the state of our environment. Whether mountaintop removal for coal in West Virginia, or the dumping of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, we all suffer the consequences. The man-made disasters are already too numerous to count, and affect the health of us all, as well as the stability of the entire planet.

When we look at our economy, how well paying manufacturing jobs, reliant on human labor, have been replaced by robotic assembly lines, prison labor and overseas sweatshops, the rage boils within us, as we face eviction and are unable to feed our families.

It is the poor who suffer – who always suffer at the hands of the capitalist class – and it is through their eyes that this story will be told. For when we look upon the ivory and glass towers stretching to the sky, while we live in poverty and despair, we see the economic injustice that is placed upon us and look for someone to blame.

Rightfully, our gaze falls upon those at the very top, for we know it is they who have gutted this planet for their own benefit – it is they who are to be held accountable.

Yet to solve the crisis that is now upon us, it is we who are responsible. For truth be told, it was through our human labor, and our complacency, that this all came about. Yes, we were paid to produce the consequences that we are now paying for. If we are to approach the problem, with the aim of finding a solution, then we must look scientifically at how we got here, in order to find our pathway out.

We built the society we have by hand. We built it through our human labor. Someone else gave us the job, but we did the work.

If we as a people built the problem, are we not also able to build the solution?

Global warming is the major challenge for this generation. If that challenge is not met successfully, we as a species may not live to see another generation.

Our jobs are gone. They are not coming back. The corporate masters have found a cheaper workforce. They do not need us. All they're keeping us around for is to find out how much they can take. We are on our own to fix this and the sooner we real-

ize this fact and get to work, the better.

We have an unemployed workforce slowly starving to death – officially, 42.6 million people are living in poverty in the United States – officially, 6 million people are living homeless – millions upon millions of people are ready to work, if only they had something to believe in.

Never before in history have two problems been so intertwined, so that a single solution would cure them both.

The problem began with industrialization – that is where we crossed the line with nature and it has only gotten worse since. The tools and technology are available to solve both our ecological and economic problems. As caretakers of this planet, with a responsibility to our future generations, we have an obligation to produce using clean sustainable methods that do not pollute our planet. It is time to restore our roots of local production and agriculture. It is time also to work with purpose as communities, as the owners of what we produce.

After all this time, after all these centuries, after our grandparents and ancestors did all the work – for us to own nothing of it, while those who sat on their asses live in splendor – is nothing short of scandalous.

The only logical conclusion is that we go back to work for ourselves – and do this collectively. By combining our resources, and networking with others of the same mind, we are able today to create the foundation of a sustainable future for us all.



By working together collectively, by owning our production, we actually have a say in what we produce and how we produce it; into what invest our time. Through that we become individually responsible for the direction of our labor. At which point, as a collective workforce, we have the power to change the world for the better.

“Perceptions of Improprieties” Halt 320 Sunset

By Krista Schwimmer

In one of her last acts as the Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) President, Linda Lucks opened the May 7 Land Use and Planning (LUPC) meeting by pulling the controversial 320 Sunset Avenue project off the agenda. Citing “perceptions of impropriety” as the reason, Lucks said the project would go directly to the VNC. A new staff report would be written with fresh eyes. “I think this is in the best interest of the community,” stated Lucks.

Her authority to do this was immediately challenged by LUPC Chair, Jake Kaufman, as well as Project Architect, Steve Vitalch, who claimed the applicant had already gone beyond what was necessary and

called the process a “kangaroo court”. Jim Murez also chimed in against Lucks, saying, “this board reports to the bylaws.” He said the bylaws say nothing about the VNC President being able to appoint anyone else outside the committee. Murez was recently soundly defeated by Robin Rudisill in a run to replace Jake Kaufman as the Chair of LUPC.

Linda Lucks held her ground, however, telling all present that “I have full authority to make this decision.”

At the May 20 meeting the VNC moved and passed the motion (9-3-1) that 320 Sunset Ad Hoc Committee be formed to create a staff report on 320 Sunset Avenue Bakery/Restaurant for the board within 30 days.

ENVIROGATE

By John Davis

Many murky deals have come and gone in the Ballona Wetlands, and most of the time the bad players enriched themselves, got away, or are still getting rich at the expense of the public and the environment.

The people involved today are Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe and a person named Shelly Luce. Both engaged in an obscure agreement that was signed by Knabe and countersigned by Luce in 2005. It purported to create a Joint Powers Agreement between the County and a State Agency, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC). The result of this agreement is named the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Authority (SMBRA).

At the time of signing, Luce was a member of the public claiming to be the Executive Director of the State Agency (SMBRC). After the agreement was signed, she claimed she was also executive director of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Authority

(SMBRA). She has since resigned from her alleged posts.

According to the joint powers agreement, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors had to approve and authorize the annual budgets of the SMBRA.

The problem is, the Supervisors only authorized budgets for fiscal years 2004, 2006, and 2011. Eight out of the ten required budget approvals are absent, according to County records, leaving expenditures from those years unauthorized as required by the agreement. Yet the money was still spent by SMBRA staff.

To determine if misuse of public funds has occurred, the State Attorney General starts with the principle that public funds must be used for “an authorized public purpose.” A public interest benefits the public “rather than a private individuals or a private purpose.”

FREE VENICE

Bike your walk. No smoking. No littering. No loitering. No sleeping in cars. No overt begging. No vending after sundown. No feeding birds. No people after midnight. No vending anything useful. No bottles on beach. No dogs off leash. No selling anything wearable. No beer on boardwalk. No barbeques. No dogs on beach. (Are elephants O.K.?) No selling fruit. No public drunks. No loud music. No amplified music. No vending outside spaces. No hair wraps. No hair cutting. No dumpster diving for food. No nudity. No nude sunbathing. No living in vans. No vending without resale number. No skateboards on walkway. No massages. No smoking pot. No pot shops near beach. No dogs without poop bag. No weekend dogs Memorial Day till Halloween. No sleeping on beach. No camping on beach. No sleeping in parks. No selling water. No public urinating even if toilets are closed. No sleeping on bench. No loud drums. No noise after sundown. No drum circle after dark. No skinny dipping. No selling books. No enclosed tents. No selling jewelry. No breast feeding. No washing in bathrooms. No bathing in bathrooms. No leaving belongings unattended. No cooking on beach. No posting flyers. No being without I.D. No loud yelling. No playing music outside spaces. No talking back to cops. No having too much fun. No being different. No smelly farts. No breathing. No life. No, no, nein, no, no, no ... Enjoy Your Beaches. "One thing I can tell you is you got to be free." – The Beatles

– Marty Liboff

It appears that public funds were not used for an authorized public purpose, begging the question of misuse.

State and federal money provided to the SMBRA have been disbursed to the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (SMBRF), a private business. Luce was the executive director of this business for years..

The Supervisors approved the 2006 budget. But it did not authorize any funds for the SMBRF. Yet, out of the \$184,000 spent, SMBRF took away \$60,002.

The authorized 2011 outlay totaled over \$48,000. This time SMBRF got it all. The Supervisors included a line that said federal money would be distributed through the SMBRF. Other non-profits were excluded from this opportunity.

The unauthorized budgets show that state and federal funds were inducted by SMBRA and spent without authorization.

Records from 2007 reveal that SMBRA disbursed a total of \$289,000. SMBRF raked in a cool \$152,000.

Disbursements from 2012 indicate that of the \$36,523 that was available to the SMBRA, SMBRF walked off with it all.

The 2012 County Auditor reports prove that \$228,333 of SMBRA money went straight to SMBRF accounts.

In 2013 the SMBRA hemorrhaged more public money to SMBRF. This time the total was \$271,032.

By March 2014 SMBRA disbursed more cash, and \$66,890 went to SMBRF. If the pattern holds, more will go into the non-profit black hole this year.

The Authority loses formal control of the money after it leaves SMBRA and is deposited into SMBRF accounts. SMBRF treats this money as revenue of the business when it reports according to IRS records.

The total public funds disbursed to the SMBRF without authorization by the Supervisors is \$815,780.

As an end result of the Supervisor’s inaction, the public funds so badly needed for public purposes are being used by the SMBRA for unauthorized, private purposes.

BALLONA SIDEBAR: Scientific instruments deployed near the Playa Vista School and residential development have detected dangerous explosive gas. Sensitive instruments picked up massive amounts of methane, beyond the background (ambient) levels at the corner of Jefferson and Lincoln Blvd. The story begins by reporting on other dangerous leaks on Wilshire Blvd. Frank Snapp, a Peabody Award winning Los Angeles television news reporter, covers the reference to Playa Vista at the end of the report. We hope he covers Playa Vista next (<http://bit.ly/1u3DjZL>).

Friday, June 20 - 8 p.m.

Nearly Fatal Women

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<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/nearly-fatal-women-at-beyond-baroque-tickets-11703073207>



JUN 20

Nearly Fatal Women -- Re-Animated!

photo: Guy bourdin

VENICE LIFE

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ABOUT
QUALITY OF LIFE IN VENICE



 <p>Opening Speaker Councilmember Mike Bonin <i>A Vision for Venice</i></p>	 <p>Crime Peggy Thusing Senior Lead Officer LAPD</p>	 <p>Homelessness Steve Weller Pastor Venice Foursquare Church</p>	 <p>Livability Marc Saltzberg Vice-President Venice Neighborhood Council</p>	 <p>Substance Abuse Sarah Blanch Manager Westside Impact Project</p>
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When: Wednesday, June 18, 2014
Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Where: Boys & Girls Club of Venice
2232 Lincoln Blvd., Venice, CA 90291
Attendant will direct to parking
RSVP today at:
WWW.VENICELIFE.EVENTBRITE.COM
For more information about this event, visit
WWW.WESTSIDEIMPACTPROJECT.ORG/VENICELIFE



Above: Big Ugly Boxes sprouting all over Venice
Top to bottom, left to right:
Photos 1-5: on Grand, between Andalusia and Main
Photo 6: California and 7th

Photo 7: Palms and Oakwood
Photo 8: Church on San Juan and 6th - SOLD
Photo 9: Abbot Kinney and California
All photos by: Greta Cobar

We Are Venice - Get Up and Fight!

– Continued from page 1

are considerable.” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355)

- Venice is approximately 1 % of the Los Angeles population, yet has 19% of the developments.
- These demolitions are cumulatively destroying the existing Venice community and the rebuilding is out of mass, out of scale, out of character, and obviously only for the wealthy to buy or live in.
- It is a violation of CEQA to approve one or more demolitions in Venice without demanding a study consisting of: Parking, Traffic, Historic Preservation, Community Character, and the Mello Act replacement of affordable housing.
- Coastal Act Sec 30624.7: The new developments have adverse effect both individually and cumulatively, because they are not consistent with the existing community character.
- Coastal Act Sec 30116 (E) & (F): Venice Coastal Zone community is a sensitive coastal resource area with special communities and neighborhoods which are significant as a visitor destination and also provide existing coastal housing and recreational opportunities for low and moderate income persons.
- Coastal Act Sec 30253 (E): This type of over-development maximizes adverse impacts, instead of

- minimizing them, and the city planning is doing nothing to protect the unique characteristics of the Venice Coastal Zone.
- Coastal Act Sec 30212 (2) & (3): New developments are exceeding floor area, height and bulk of the former structures by more than 10% along with changing the intensity by more than 10%.
 - Coastal Act Section 30320: Developers are not properly posting or notifying the public or abutting neighbors of demolitions, which is a violation of due process.
 - Coastal Act Section 30604 (f): because there is no local coastal program the commission is mandated (shall) to encourage housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income. Currently developers are evicting low income tenants, holding the property vacant to avoid Mello Act Requirements, and all of the developments are for wealthy people.
 - There are no reports on Mello Act replacement for any of the affordable housing that has been lost or removed from Venice.
- You probably have more personal comments to say in your emails, but the really important thing is that we all join together and do something to stop this. Together we are mighty!

Front Porches or Fortresses: You Decide

– Continued from page 1

noting where there is grading and no mitigation of dust, and uncovered piles of excavated dirt in the street or alley.

Organize your information by address and date. Then, send all of your information to VCPUCC@GMX.COM

The battle for Venice is an old battle, one that even Abbot Kinney himself had to fight. But Venetians, the battle that we are in the midst of now is even stronger and more powerful than before. Backed by unprecedented wealth, this battle is not only here – but around the world. Although there may be places to hide from it now, unless the majority of people wake up to the fact that a small percentage of the world is claiming land rights, eventually there will be no place to hide.

Stakeholders of Venice, we ask you to be a beacon of light for the rest of the world. The time to act is NOW.

*BUB's: Big, Ugly, Boxes. See last month's article, "Stopping Hyper-gentrification One Conversation At A Time," for more on the origins of this acronym.

Henry V - Five Stars

By Suzy Williams

Count on Pacific Resident Theatre to offer consistently outstanding entertainment. PRT's production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* is in line with that, and then some. There is no set. There is no fourth wall, and where it's not isn't where you'd expect. The props are minimal and recycled for different imaginary purposes. The blocking provides ships, walls, and cathedral doors. Kudos upon kudos to director Guillermo Cienfuegos for this brilliant overview, instilling stillness, vibrance and expansion into Willy the Shake's "Invention of Heaven."

A few of the actors are outstanding, even amongst this highly accomplished company. Joe McGovern plays Henry – the philandering party animal / wise battle-King / seductive suitor. Elizabeth Weingarten, in the minor role of Montjoy, courier to Kings, has a voice deep and surprising, and a steady gaze that makes her particularly riveting. My favorite is Dennis Madden, who, as Falstaff and the King of France, with his generous beard and robust charisma (and believable palsy in his left hand), is reminiscent of our best characters that color Venice Beach.

Henry Five is further food for thought and discussion because Shakespeare paints him as a hero, but we post-sixties hippies can't help but think that his carrying on of grandfather Edward III's imperialism into France is insane. So there we are, arguing with The Bard! (The fact is that Will sugar-coated the monarch, who was responsible for many reprehensible transgressions . . . but I digress.)

Go see the show anyway!

Thurs through Sat at 8:00 pm and Sun at 3:00 pm.

Through June 29.

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Reservations 319-822-8390

www.pacificresidenttheatre.com

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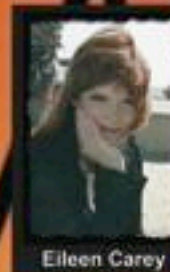
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Phenomenal Woman

By Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I’m not cute or built to suit a fashion model’s size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I’m telling lies.
I say,
It’s in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It’s the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can’t touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can’t see.
I say,
It’s in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

Now you understand
Just why my head’s not bowed.
I don’t shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing,
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It’s in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need for my care.
’Cause I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Words

When I have thoughts these words
Like words written on water, will not last
I think of idyllic dreams from the past
Elves that hide in olden wood and glen
Where the soft winds blow
Maybe I will take this complex
Jig saw puzzle with me when I go!

– Paul Beethovan

VENICE DREAMS

Remnants of a Dream...
Strewn by the trash
Along the boardwalk
And alleys of Venice –
Torn jeans, an old book,
Worn shoes, a dirty blanket –
All that's left of a Life...
L.A. Dreamers –
A rock singer, movie starlet, dancer,
Screen writer, painter, poet –
Fallen angels
In the gutter –
Drugs, alcohol, anger, delusion,
Confusion, prostitution, lies, crime,
Death.
Each day new dreamers
From the world over
Wash up on Venice Beach –
The refuse of the world
Searching for California gold.
A tiny few find their dreams.
Most are tossed back into the sea
To search elsewhere...
Or are tossed by the waves
Upon the rocks of destruction.

– Marty Liboff

For Lucca Jazz Winston, 2014

I look at you with grandmother eyes
my eyes peer out under my ancient folds of flesh –
my flesh is changing,
falling down to a new layer of gravity
you are doing the same:
changing from day to day
one day storm clouds move into your face –
and stay there –
then a discovery of a rare spider in the living room
changed the story –
back to being a brilliant ever-changing eleven-year-old
my grandmother eyes seek you out –
every day I’m around you
I learn many new things –
I’ve watched you since you were born
you gave me a new person to love
and the love just keeps on going –
there is no off button on my love
“There is nothing you can do –
to stop me loving you” –
old country songs wail in my head –
that’s about it, partner –
as you grow up and enjoy the novelties of
new technology and moving to Mars,
I’ll be down here on Earth
standing in your shadow.

– Mary Getlein

15:47 Monday, May 26th, 2014, Adullam I'm well below the radar, where I
soar. My flight's final approach to where you are. As May gives way to June. On
to July. Continuum. Ongoing. Time to fly. The afternoon will let me catch my
breath. As peaceful as it gets, May twenty-sixth. There's chatterboxes chatting
in one-twelve. Broadcast like Molly Goldberg. At my stove. Some green tea and
some oatmeal. Claim the fifth. An honor, it would seem. I'll catch my death, Or
else I will survive. Eventually. I've yet to cross that bridge. Ahead of me.
We've landed, this bright sunbeam. Borne of star. Below the radar. Unknown, as
it were Roger Houston

Street Dancing

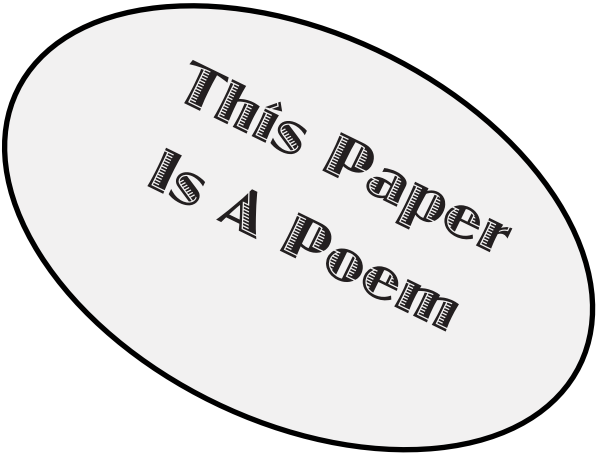
Children of the Night,
Scrawny,
Cunning
leather-clad hunters of dark alleys,
Alert as jungle cats waiting for the kill.

They wait,
Nimble legs sheathed in faded bluejeans,
Knives glisten menacingly from hip pockets,
Leaning against a cold brick wall,
Killing time...

Stalking their prey,
A lone human shadow,
They pounce,
Sleek silhouettes displaying fancy footwork,
Beating and stabbing...

Reaching hungrily into a bloodstained coat pocket,
Satisfied smiles,
A fistful of crisp happiness
from the victim’s last breath,
They dance into the wicked darkness.

– Lynette



WORKING IN OBSCURITY / DYING OUTSIDE ETERNITY
for Jack Micheline

Ozzy vocals weave around palm trees at Venice
& I’m on *BROOKS*, with the triple S:

sun! surf! sand! & “breakfast muffin w/- Canadian bacon”
at *Sidewalk* – making notes.

Andy would add: “\$33.00 cab fare from *LAX*” –
which is fair enough, but the morning coffee issue is still:

What do you get for a life of work?

an 8am blonde with a broom sweeps concrete nearby
& considers her fate,

as bits of Biggie Smalls float in the haze.
party-train vendors haul hand-made art for sale

as expensive leisure clothing swans past
wanting you to think FAT never looked sexier, aging avoidable -

& it’s fashionably true, biologically not.
the pavement piano man warms up with a few extravagant gestures –

soon cut to pieces in the blades of the po’ chopper
& the waft of a doobie nicely completes the setting.

suddenly, the ultimate showman arrives:
spitting & yelling angry non sequitirs -

his words are golden hammers tossed into air.
you can watch him squeeze thru the sieve -

without a care.

– Jeremy Roberts

Between the Piers

By Cal Porter

I loved that pier, with its Giant Dipper roller coaster, fun house, games of chance, flying circus, salt water taffy and hot dog stands. This was the 1930's and there were all kinds of ways for a kid to have fun or get into trouble out there. In addition, my buddies and I dove for the pennies, nickels and sometimes dimes that the tourists would throw into the ocean for us off the end of the pier.

The water was crystal clear in those days and you could make enough money for a sugary snow cone in half an hour. And then the rock breakwater visible just beyond the end of the pier was always good for a few lobsters when we searched the rocky bottom wearing our primitive water goggles that Santa Monica Lifeguard Bill O'Connor made for us out of fire hose and glass.

The tourists on the pier would sometimes pay up to twenty-five cents for one of the tasty crustaceans. However, Fat Frank, a real character who lived under the end of the pier over the rough water in primordial accommodations and had lobster traps strung out all along the rocks was not too fond of us, but lobsters were plentiful in those days.

O'Connor's goggles were a great improvement over the Japanese swimming goggles we had that distorted your vision under water. Later the diving became much easier when home made face plates were invented and we got our first ones around 1939 or '40, about the same time Owen Churchill invented his black, vulcanized rubber swim fins.

The pier also helped create some nice board and body surfing waves for us in those uncrowded days. Then in 1939, for thirty-five cents an hour, I landed a job as a lifeguard in the Venice Salt Water Plunge, the building on the sand just north of the pier in where today the skateboard park stands.



jumped off the end of the damaged pier and swam another fifty yards or more out to sea to the very deep water where the storm waves were cresting and beginning their march shoreward, one of which carried me through the passage between the piers and all the way to the beach, the biggest wave and longest bodysurfing ride of my life before or after.

The end of the shorter Sunset Pier to the south was a bodysurfing, jumping off place, too, for some really fine, left breaking shoulders. We would watch and wait for a good set of waves while sitting in the hot sun behind the glass windbreak next to the empty bandstand at the end of the pier and then climb the wall for the long drop into the water and a fast ride to the beach only to run back to the end of the pier and do it all over again, and again. Waiting during lulls in the surf action out there we would play a bit of handball or practice our hand balancing stunts on the empty bandstand stage in order to show off later to anyone we could get to watch, maybe even girls.



rickety old pier, with heavy trucking involved and the possibility of injury or someone falling into the ocean. City lifeguards were sent to the pier by Captain Myron Cox to be on the scene in case of a mishap of some sort. Bill Pruitt and I were assigned the duty there together occasionally and had some interesting experiences for another story. Bill later became a captain with the L.A. City Lifeguards. After the Venice Pier came down the Sunset Pier with its lifeguard headquarters was soon to follow.

The pier is gone now and at low tide you can walk on the sand all the way to the breakwater where the ocean was once twenty feet deep. The Sunset Pier where the groin is in the photo is gone also, along with all the other amusement piers from here to Santa Monica. But of course it's very nice now with the wide, white sandy, unobstructed beach that runs for miles and the concessions all along the boardwalk but somehow it's just not the same. I take a nostalgia walk out there to the breakwater from time to time where Fat Frank lived under the pier, where we dived for pennies and the lobsters were plentiful, and I stop at the lifeguard tower to tell the young guard that long ago his tower would be under the roller coaster and in ten feet of water, and that just over there where the skateboard park is stood the largest indoor salt water plunge in the world where I was a lifeguard. And when I get that look that says, "Where did this old guy escape from?" I know it's time to move on.



A couple of years passed and I was old enough to be a Los Angeles City Beach Lifeguard starting at seventy-five cents an hour and working out of the headquarters at the base of the Sunset Pier, the first pier in the photo above, with the Lick Pier, Ocean Park Pier, Crystal Pier, and Santa Monica Pier in the distance. Today the modern County Lifeguard Headquarters building is on the sandy site where the base of the Sunset Pier once stood and where Venice Boulevard meets the beach.

"Between the Piers" was the title of our home beach, with the Sunset and Venice Piers on either side. "See you tomorrow between the piers" was the usual so long from your Venice High School pals or perhaps a girl you were hoping to spend some time with on the beach.

Our hangout on the sand was right about where the paddle tennis courts are on the beach today. In the photo above you can see the attraction for surfers and bodysurfers with the waves peeling off the sandbar buildup from the two piers. The photo shows a big day with waves forming in deep water beyond the end of the very long pier. In an earlier story I recounted the rough and stormy day of the biggest surf I had ever seen in my young life when we sneaked past the police and the safety barricade that had been erected to keep people off the endangered pier. Fortunately fins had been invented by then when my pal and I



2014 VENICE SURF AND SKATE FEST



Top to Bottom, Left to Right: Peter Demail and Hailey Lincoln Demail; Brady Walker, host of event; Beachhead Collective members Greta Cobar, Krista Schwimmer, Mary Getlein; Michael Jost; Melissa Morales and Sam Correa; Greg Cruz; Sea Shepherd members. Beachhead Collective photo by Venice Paparazzi. All other photos by Margaret Molloy

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