

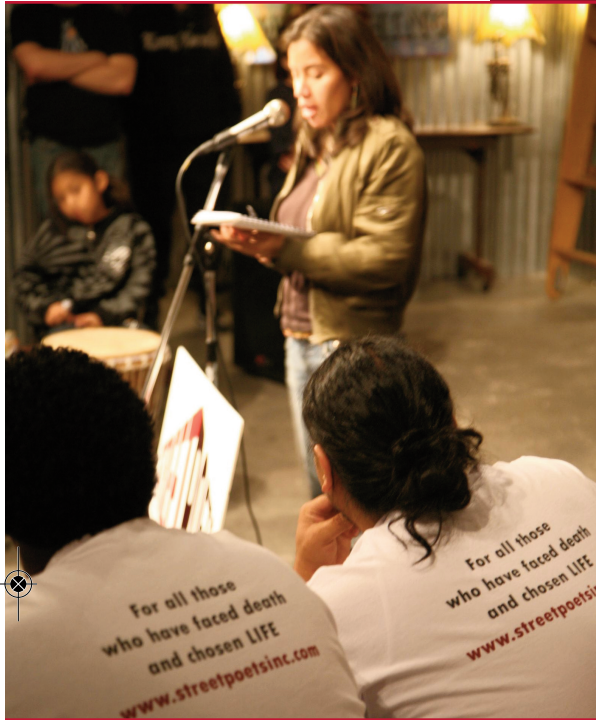
# WORD ON THE STREET



Fall 2009

## DEAR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS:

When an 18-year-old boy was shot three times in the back, his homies told him to retaliate. Instead, he turned to Street Poets to help channel his fear and anger in a positive direction—and his inspiring song is now featured on our new CD. When a 14-year-old girl was raped, she felt like dying. Wounded and ashamed, she kept her pregnancy a secret for months. Today, that girl has a beautiful 3-year-old daughter, and uses our poetry workshop for pregnant teens and teen mothers to help heal and tell her story.



At a time when our workshops are greatly impacting the lives of others, we at Street Poets Inc. are facing the greatest financial challenge in our 12-year history. Because of rules governing public charities, we must go without the support of our most generous foundation over the next two years in order to diversify and balance our fundraising base. What this means is that **WE NEED YOUR HELP now more than ever**. We need to raise \$200,000 over the next six months, or we will be forced to make radical cuts to our current programming.

We are counting on you to help Street Poets continue its life-saving poetry-based violence intervention and community-building work by making a generous tax-deductible donation on-line at [www.streetpoetsinc.com](http://www.streetpoetsinc.com) or in the enclosed self-addressed envelope (no amount is too small... or big!). Thank you for your support in these challenging times.

*With Much Respect,*

Chris Henrikson, Founder  
& Co-Executive Director

Alison Tatlock,  
Co-Executive Director

## HOW YOUR DONATION CAN HELP

- \$25 funds 20 fresh notebooks for our new students!
- \$100 funds a one-hour session in our recording studio for one of our youth!
- \$250 funds a Street Poet teaching artist's visit to an underfunded school classroom!
- \$500 funds a Street Poets violence prevention performance at a school assembly!
- \$1000 funds a poetry workshop in a school or detention facility for an entire month!
- \$2500 funds one Street Poets community-wide open-mic event!

For info on volunteer opportunities, contact [marjorie@streetpoetsinc.com](mailto:marjorie@streetpoetsinc.com)

## EXPLORE.ORG Premieres Street Poets Doc Oct. 29th

We invite you to visit [www.explore.org](http://www.explore.org) for the premiere of a new 11-minute documentary short about Street Poets (featuring footage from our recording studio and a Community Sweatlodge). Explore.org produces high-definition video profiles of inspiring non-profit organizations and NGO's from around the world and distributes them for free on-line. Visit [www.explore.org](http://www.explore.org) anytime on or after October 29th to check it out!

## Street Poets Enlisted To Create Student Planners



In the spring of 2009, Street Poets Inc. was tapped by School Specialty Inc., a large North American school supplies company, to create the original content for a new breed of student planners scheduled to be distributed throughout the U.S. and Canada in the fall of 2010. The "UGO Planner," featuring original poetry, inspirational quotations and eye-catching design, draws on our many years of experience reaching Los Angeles' most unreachable kids. Like our Street Poets workshops, the UGO Planner empowers students to dive into the creative process and into a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. Look for the UGO next fall at a middle school or high school near you!

## SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, November 1st

### STREET POETS OPEN-MIC & CD RELEASE PARTY

Come check out your Street Poets community in action! Sunday, November 1st, 4-6 pm @ Eco-Logical Art Gallery (4829 W. Pico Blvd. - 2 blocks east of La Brea). Listen to some inspiring poetry and music and help us celebrate the release of Street Poets' second CD "Smoke Signals" (available at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com) and on itunes). ALL ARE WELCOME!



## WORD ON THE STREET

Fall 2009

### ANCIENT SOLUTIONS TO MODERN PROBLEMS

In recent years, our violence intervention work has been informed and deepened by what we've come to call "Old Ways" - indigenous wisdom, rituals and practices that have served to strengthen our creative community and deepen our transformational impact on the lives of the at-risk youth and young adults we mentor.

At Street Poets, we've always seen the writing process as ritual, as a sacred practice through which we each have the opportunity to explore our wounds and access the deep gifts that lie beside them within us. Poetry empowers us to tell our stories, to bear witness to our own lives, and to illuminate the path on which we've found ourselves. This creative process is by nature a healing one - but it is not without its dangers.

Once we've given voice to our wounds, and owned our own story, it is also important to be able to release it, to let it go - like a snake shedding a layer of skin. This clears the way for continued growth. In recent years, we've begun to facilitate community healing rituals to assist our students and staff in this transformational process. These practices, which include a monthly Lakota Sweatlodge, and various elemental (fire, water, mineral, earth) rituals, help restore balance within a person, while bringing him or her into a deeper relationship with the natural world. We have found these rituals to be particularly effective at engaging the psyches of gang-affiliated youth who have been exposed to violence and death at a young age. They are invitations to choose the right kind of death - one that opens the door to transformation and clears the way for new life.

From an indigenous perspective, it is understood that every person is born with a unique medicine that he or she is meant to deliver to this world. Since we began in 1997, we've learned a lot about how best to serve as facilitators of this delivery process, and to support our city's most wounded and wounding young people as they engage in their own healing work. Often, the deeper the wounds a person carries, the more potent their medicine - which is one of the main reasons we continue to work extensively with incarcerated youth, pregnant teens and teen mothers. Now more than ever, our culture, our world, needs the kind of deep healing medicine that our emerging Street Poets carry.



## I AM

My Mom and Dad jumped the fence of opportunity to discover a new world.  
But I am from the graffiti'd streets of South Central Los Angeles.  
I am a complicated blueprint for a new human - in progress for 16 years.  
I am living with an alcoholic guardian who would rather guard his own plate.  
I reside beside a kind vicious idol, my first teacher.  
I am a caretaker for her kids, my brothers' keeper.  
I am from a vast ocean of unknown families, nameless shame.  
I am an identity crisis, in search of myself.  
I am a whirlpool of drama.  
I am from concrete roads where low self-esteem grows block by block  
Where ghosts slang rocks to their own people.  
I create my own drug.  
I get high on what's inside me, my Spirit.  
I am from an ocean of music and sound  
That saved me from drowning in this strange world.  
I am rising from a pitch black hole to come back to the light that is my life.  
I am BLoO, the color of inspiration and sorrow.  
I am a Street Poet - today and tomorrow.

-Sergio (age 16)

### STREET POETS MISSION

**TO INSPIRE** at-risk youth in the juvenile detention facilities, schools and streets of Los Angeles to discover and develop their voices as writers, artists and human beings.

**TO EMPOWER** these young people to use the skills and increased self-awareness engendered through the arts to transcend self-destructive lifestyles.

**TO CREATE** a healing community that unites different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic segments of our city around the transformational power of the creative process.

**STREETPOETS**  
INC.  
2116 Arlington Avenue, Suite 310  
L.A., CA 90018  
[www.StreetPoetsInc.com](http://www.StreetPoetsInc.com)