



STREET POETS RECORDING STUDIO LAUNCHED

Since January, our Street Poets Recording Studio has been up and running under the able direction of Chenjerai Kumanyika. Chenjerai's combination of music industry experience (as a rapper and producer) and mentoring wisdom has made him the ideal person to launch this new part of our program. In addition to one-on-one recording sessions with individual poets, Chenjerai leads a collaborative workshop on Friday nights from 4-8pm. "It's a chance for our community to gather as a group, check in on a creative level, and record poetry and music," Chenjerai explains. "Plus it puts our poets in a positive state of mind heading into the weekend when things tend to get a little hotter on the streets." ■ Antonio, 18, a formerly incarcerated veteran of our Camp Miller poetry workshop, takes a two-hour train ride into Los Angeles from San Bernardino County to participate in the studio workshop each Friday. "Every time I come to Street Poets, I feel better," he explains. "This poetry thing is like my new addiction." ■ The mission of the studio mirrors that of our organization: to amplify truth in its myriad forms. "The truth is a highly underrated resource in our society," Kumanyika states. "We're here to empower our city's most disenfranchised young people to speak their truth, on paper, on stage, and now into a studio microphone, so that it can be heard and felt throughout the community. Our goal, simply, is to transform our culture, one poem, one verse at a time."

The first Street Poets compilation CD (featuring original spoken-word poetry and music) is scheduled to be released on September 28th. In the meantime, check our website for updates and the latest download-able tracks: www.streetpoetsinc.com.

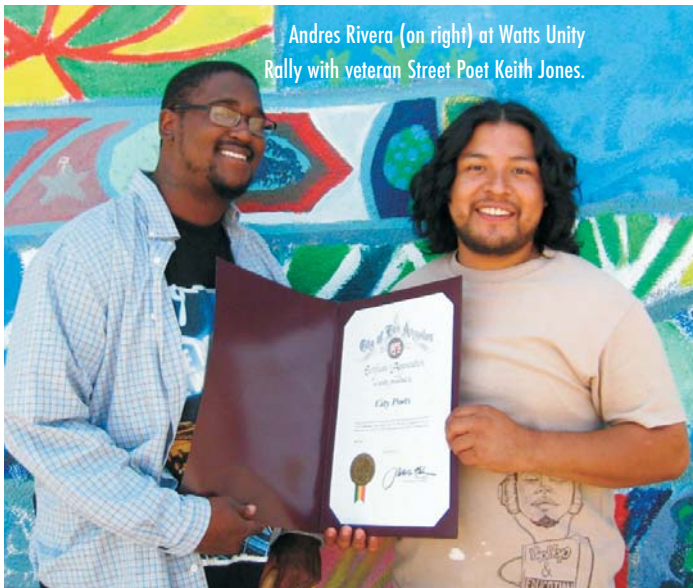
SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, September 28th
Street Poets Open-Mic
and CD Release Party

Andres Rivera Jr. joined our staff as Community Outreach Coordinator and Teaching Artist in October of 2007. In the course of just a few months, he has grown from a fledgling facilitator into one of our lead teachers, using the Street Poets methodology to expand his natural gifts as an artist and mentor. Andres grew up in South L.A. and brings first-hand knowledge of the streets to his work in the classroom, where he is especially committed to breaking through our city's racial barriers. "I've led workshops with Andres," says Street Poets Co-Executive Director Alison Tatlock, "his quiet openness and deep poetry have an immediate impact on young people . . . they want Andres to hear their

STREET POETS STAFF SPOTLIGHT

stories." Before coming to Street Poets, Andres completed an internship at Public Allies, where he was placed at the non-profit organization W.O.R.K.S. (Women Organizing Resources, Knowledge, and Services). In addition to his deep roots as a community organizer, he is also an active presence in L.A.'s underground hip hop scene, where he uses his outreach skills and passion for peace-making to establish open mic's across the city. His experience as a performer and recording artist furthers his ability to inspire younger writers to share their voices in Street Poets workshops, at our community events, and in our recording studio. In his own words: "I chose this work because I have a passion for creativity, it's what gives meaning to my life . . . I want to give young people a new lens through which to see their lives, a newfound sense of hope."



Andres Rivera (on right) at Watts Unity Rally with veteran Street Poet Keith Jones.

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.

One Street. One Heartbeat. One Love.

HELP US PUT POETRY IN MOTION!

Imagine a customized passenger van that broadcasts inspirational spoken-word poetry performances into streets, schools and parks where violence has occurred. "The Street Poets Peacemaker" will be able to respond to crises in the community, reclaiming a street corner where a young person was shot as a place of peace, or a schoolyard where a race riot occurred as grounds for reconciliation. Staffed by Street Poets teaching artists, the van will be, in effect, an open-mic on wheels.

The idea for this van or "mobile poetry unit" first came to us three years ago after Eric Henderson, one of our brightest young Street Poets, was killed on his 19th birthday at a bus stop on the corner of Florence and Central. "I remember sitting on that same bus stop bench the day after his murder with one of Eric's most inspirational poems in my hand, wishing the whole block could hear it," recalls Street Poets founder Chris Henrikson. "I promised him then that he wouldn't be forgotten."

With that goal in mind, Street Poets has launched a fundraising campaign to seek individual and corporate sponsorship for a "pimped-out" passenger van to serve as the Street Poets Peacemaker. "We want the vehicle to be as unique as Eric was - so that it will become a recognizable and inspirational presence in the community," Henrikson explains. "Eric's father was black and his mother was Mexican. He was a bridge-builder, a peace-maker. His spirit is fueling our determination to make this van program a reality for the city of Los Angeles."

If you would like to make a donation or have ideas about corporate sponsorship leads, please contact the Street Poets office 323-737-8545, or donate on-line at www.streetpoetsinc.com.



MI JEFE

My Dad was never there
But it wasn't because he didn't care
It was due to the fact
He got put off this map
By his own homie
Over some drugs
Damn Dad, I wish you could have known me
Because without you life has been lonely
Looking for a father figure
Instead I grabbed a gun
and squeezed my pain through a trigger
Aiming at enemies
Not thinking straight
Blind to the big view
Just focused on hate
But now I choose to create
Write scriptures
Paint pictures with words
About what I want to know of you, Dad
So I can put this masterpiece together
And spit it today, tomorrow and forever
Don't trip, Dad - I been all right
Just here on the mic
Telling everybody how I feel about you tonight
I love you, Dad
But I'm mad about how you used to whip Mom
With coat hangers
I know you were just
A dope slanger from Guerrero
Lost between borders pero
I got this anger in my chest
That won't rest
Until I connect with the Aztec warrior
Within
And rise above your sins and mine
One poetic line at a time

-Antonio Stephens, 18

BROTHER

I don't hate you
Not even a little bit
'Cause we were little kids
And sick of it
That's why we spit poetry through speakers
Pointed at the people to inspire
Lighting fires to illuminate the darkness
Brother, I remember when Mama would leave us
Abandoned for days on end
I remember you fell and cracked your head
Then cried as you bled
I remember the day
I walked into a broken house with broken picture frames
And glass all over the place
A phone book ripped in half
Like your heart
'Cause Mom chose her boyfriend over her kids
She kept changing where we lived
She quit her job as our mother
So Grandma would pick up the slack
And to stab her back
You attacked
The hallways and bedroom door
Brother, I remember those things and more
Like when the ambulance came to take you away
Padded rooms and apple juice for the tormented mind of an 8-year-old
Now you're on lock-down
Prison walls slammed to your core
But for you I see open doors
A path that leads a famous mural artist home
To be the father we never had
A kind, intelligent dad
With a supportive wife, big house and a dog
Mama's boy, Mama's keeper
She's too old so you feed her
Heart healed
Hardness melted to a soft seat comfort chair
Everything you need is there
I love you
And not a little bit
'Cause we were little kids
And sick of it
That's why I spit poetry through speakers
Pointed at the people to inspire
Lighting fires to illuminate the darkness.

-Darlene Chavarria, 23
(Street Poets alum and current teaching artist)

HOW YOU CAN HELP DONATE TIME OR RESOURCES

- Volunteer for our 2008-2009 Event Committee
- Serve on the fundraising committee or board
- Provide an entry-level job or internship for one of our young people
- Help us find corporate sponsors for our Peacemaker Van Program (\$5000-\$25,000)
- Sponsor a weekly Street Poets workshop for one year at a new school or facility (\$10,000)
- Sponsor a Street Poets performance at a school or youth facility (\$1000)
- Donate invitation printing, newsletter printing, or other in-kind service
- Make a \$ contribution of any amount (reply envelope provided)

Call Alison or Chris at 323-737-8545 or email alison@streetpoetsinc.com to lend a hand.

