

LA County and Community Organizers Unveil Mural at Watts Historical Train Station

LA vs Hate and Build Plus Community Marketplace
Present Mural Celebrating Multiculturalism and Unity

LOS ANGELES – March 4, 2023 – A new 200-foot mural entitled “Unity Under the Sun” was unveiled at the Watts Historic Train Station, presented by the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations’ initiative [LA vs Hate](#) in partnership with nonprofit Build Plus Community Marketplace. The highly visible mural spanning the walls surrounding the train station was created by local artists [Showzart](#) and [MisterAlek](#) after a community engagement process.

The mural unveiling was celebrated with an event at the Watts Historic Train Station, opening with remarks by Robin Toma, Executive Director of the LA County Commission on Human Relations and Los Angeles City Councilmember Tim McOsker of District 15, sharing insight on the history and culture of Watts. The community celebration also featured performances by African drummer group Inu Oluron and indigenous dance group Danza Mexica, live music from DJ Orator, art and free food.

“Watts and its surrounding cities and neighborhoods have a diverse and multicultural history that lives on today,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell. “We are thrilled to have these artists create a vibrant, inclusive and thoughtful interpretation of the history and culture of this community on the walls of this historic landmark.”

“Murals have the power to draw awareness and understanding to the lived experiences of diverse cultures and communities in Los Angeles,” said Robin Toma, Executive Director of the LA County Commission on Human Relations. “At LA vs Hate, we see art interventions as a strategy for prevention of hate by reminding the community that standing in solidarity matters. We hope this mural provides the community a canvas to share powerful expressions of compassion, inclusion and understanding across diverse cultures and backgrounds.”

“Working on this mural has been very uplifting,” said artist Showzart. “To have so much history and to be able to depict it for the community has been nothing but a pleasure. I hope that people will see community, love, and undeniable royalty when they view this mural.”

“Painting the mural has been a journey of wisdom acquired through my research of history, deep self-reflection, and finding atavistic connections between my community ancestors and myself,” said MisterAlek. “Sparking a strong feeling of purpose in me to communicate and illustrate through my art the ancestral knowledge I once knew and have now invoked.”

“Unity Under the Sun” depicts a vast amount of cultural and historical symbols that reflect some of the many peoples, cultures, and movements that have been rooted, nurtured, and grown in Watts, and the surrounding area. These symbols showcase a global, multicultural narrative of resilience, integrity, and dignity in the pursuit of harmony with the Earth, ourselves, and one another. The illustrations reflect the arduous and yet beautiful human journey towards our collective unity under the sun.

The mural features celebrated members of the Watts community like Simon Rodia, builder of the Watts Towers; Arturo Ybarra, Executive Director of the Watts Century Latino Organization; and Wajeha Bilal,

Executive Director, Build Plus Community Marketplace, a celebrated community leader who has dedicated her work to advocating for the people of Watts.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass is also depicted in the mural, celebrating her legacy as a community activist in South Central as the founder of Community Coalition. The mural highlights diverse members of the Watts community and reflects back the remarkable accomplishments of a region now led by an all-female County Board of Supervisors and Mayor.

In the coming weeks, visitors exploring the mural will be able to scan a QR code on the mural directing them to information about the symbols and people depicted in the mural. This digital library is being developed in partnership with university archives from around the region.

"This incredibly vibrant mural is a masterful work of art that encompasses and reflects the reality that since the earliest times and during the worst periods, Black and Brown people, especially Blacks and Mexicans, have aided, defended and united with one another in opposition to colonization and slavery," said Ron Wilkins, Africana Studies historian.

"Unity Under the Sun" is an art intervention to fight hate, heal and bring communities from different ethnicities and cultures together, as part of the LA vs Hate community-driven approach to empower all residents of Los Angeles County to unite against, report, and resist hate. In 2021, LA vs Hate commissioned a #StopAAPIHate comic strip mural by artist MariNaomi to address violence against the Asian American Pacific Islander community and issue a call to action for residents to report hate crimes by calling 2-1-1. These murals serve to draw awareness and understanding to the lived experiences of diverse cultures and communities in Los Angeles.

For more information, visit www.lavshate.org.

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About LA vs Hate

LA vs Hate is a community-centered system designed to support all residents of Los Angeles County. Led by the Human Relations Commission, LA vs Hate partners with community partners from all five County districts, representing a diverse coalition of voices committed to ending hate. The system aims to address the normalization of hate and inspire people to stand up to it, build understanding about what constitutes a hate act and how to report it, as well as support individuals and communities as they heal from the trauma of hate. By tracking and reporting hate, we can ensure that resources are allocated appropriately, that those targeted by hate receive the support they need, and that together, we can build respectful and resilient communities.

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