

Media Advisory

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Prominent Black Scholars and Community Activists to Highlight Black History Month and Emerging Civil Rights Work

Authors to Release *Downtown Blues: A Skid Row Reader* – linking past and ongoing civil rights movements in the African American community

Next Saturday, February 12, 2011 *Downtown Blues: A Skid Row Reader* will be released, an innovative collaboration between scholars, community organizers, artists, and students that explores the struggles against displacement and other civil rights violations in Los Angeles' Skid Row.

A discussion about the historic civil rights struggles being waged in Los Angeles' Skid Row will be held among: USC History and American Studies and Ethnicity Professor **Robin D.G. Kelley**, one of the nation's leading scholars of African American History and Culture; UCSB Black Studies Professors **Cedric J. Robinson**, one of the most important historians and social theorists in Black culture studies today, and **Clyde Woods**, one of the most prominent Black geographers in the country; UCLA Law Professor **Gary Blasi**, whose research on Skid Row policing informs community organizing and resistance; acclaimed actress **LisaGay Hamilton**; Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) organizers **Pete White and General Dogon**; University of California President's postdoctoral fellow **Damien Schnyder**; and famed East LA poet **Jonathan Gomez**.

When Mayor Villaraigosa launched his Safer Cities Initiative in September 2006, he unleashed the most concentrated and resource-intensive policing in the country and has sustained this intense occupation for more than four years. More than 100 additional officers were deployed to a 50-square block region, resulting in mass arrests, citations, detentions, harassment and police violence – disproportionately directed at low-income Black residents. Yet much to political leaders' surprise, LA CAN members have organized to fight back against civil rights violations and mass displacement from their community.

As Robin Kelley notes in his *Downtown Blues* essay: ***“What we witnessed was the emergence of a new civil rights movement, a struggle for social justice....and a social policy that protects and enriches the urban elite while attempting to make a displaced, poor, mostly black working class population disappear. But they are not going anywhere.”***

When: **Saturday, February 12, 2011**

Time: **1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

What: **Black History Month Event: Book Release and Discussion**

Where: **University of Southern California, Seeley G. Mudd Building # 101 (near the USC bookstore)**

Copies of Skid Row Readers, authors, and impacted community residents will be available at the event.

Spanish speakers available.