

Create the Big Picture with Art in the Park

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 21, 2015

/EINPresswire.com/ -- There's a lot of powerful therapy in a box of crayons. You've heard that a picture is worth a thousand words. Or, as GaKnew Roxwel expresses it in terms more acclimated to modern vocabulary, art is "bigger than a hashtag." When that picture is created by an inner city youth who might not be able to express his feelings to other adults, but finds that he can communicate his emotions on canvas, or in clay, then a dialogue is created. Each month, several artists go to inner city parks with art supplies for youth and their families. Creating a space for open expression builds a rapport with the young and raises morale in the community. Whether it's crayons on paper or paint on canvas, the art frees the voices and unlocks the silence.

That's the motivation of [Art in the Park](#), a recurring event that takes place in Los Angeles. There's no charge for the supplies, but for a few hours each month, pictures tell the stories that don't need words. It's not just about the art, Roxwel explains. Many of these kids don't feel like they matter. The world isn't listening. Adults aren't listening. The art project might sound basic. Crayons, paints, and markers . . . what kind of social service is that for communities that need so much? But Roxwel sees the big picture. "It allows them to feel like they're being heard," Roxwel says. "Something we all need in order to feel like we matter."

Roxwel describes himself as an author, muralist, poet, musician, and social worker. He's started a successful



[Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign](#) to raise \$500 to pay for art supplies such as canvases, easels,

large boards, paints and paintbrushes, aerosol paint, crayons, markers, and pencils, paper, and other items that the kids can use to create. The crowdfunding donations—which have already exceeded \$1,000, doubling the original amount targeted—will also be used to pay the costs of renting tables and chairs where the young artists can work. Because this is a recurring event, donations of materials are also appreciated.

Roxwel knows that the emotional landscape of those who are unheard can be bleak. He's been fortunate in finding his own voice through the arts. Roxwel branched out from a recording career in the 1990s, then moved to the spoken word scene, becoming a two-time Grand Slam Champion at Da Poetry Lounge, which might be the West Coast's largest weekly open mic venue. He and his DPL slam team battled more than 70 teams from across the United States to win first place in the PSI National Poetry Slam. Having found his voice, Roxwel wants to hear the words of the young who feel silenced by the social boundaries that inhibit them.

In 2001, Roxwel joined Mentorship 2000, participating in workshops with incarcerated youth at Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles. He's worked with AIM, the non-profit inner city outreach program founded by Leila Seinberg, the ex-manager of rapper Tupac Shakur. His credentials include serving as a youth advocate at the Caldera Youth Arts Summer Camp in Sisters, Oregon, and teaching music production and songwriting to at-risk youth. Currently, he's a senior social work investigator for the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles.

In his book *Under the Influence*, which, according to Roxwel is “where hip hop meets psychology,” the author tells the tale of Calvin Lloyd, who triumphed over the destructive web of perpetual abuse. The book, which is written like a film, analyzes Lloyd's psychology, mapping out a path to follow that leads to balanced emotional health and inner peace. The accompanying CD *Sound of Silence* gives a first person narrative of Lloyd's journey.

As his work demonstrates, Roxwel has figured out how important it is for the young to have their voices heard. Art supplies can be a [surprisingly effective megaphone](#). Listen up! Those pictures are talking.

About Art in the Park

GaKnew Roxwel's Art in the Park project creates a space for open expression with youth. The artists take art supplies to young people, mentoring them through hands-on activities in inner city parks that give youth a voice and a sense of being heard. With an Indiegogo campaign that's already surpassed its original goal, Art in the Park can look forward to crowdfunding support.

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