



CREATE & RAISE WITH US

FAQ'S

the UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

VIRTUALLY UNUSUAL CREATE-A-THON

Get some of your frequently asked questions answered about how you can support the Create-A-Raise fundraiser.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Can you tell me more about
The Unusual Suspects
Theatre Company?**

A: The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company (US) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the mission to mentor, educate, and enrich underserved youth through the creation of collaborative, original theatre. Our mission supports our vision of a world where all youth are given the opportunities & support they need to succeed. For nearly 30 years, our award-winning, participant-driven theatre-arts programs, centered around storytelling through the page and stage, have empowered underserved youth and families in Los Angeles with lifelong skills, going beyond the reach of a typical arts education workshop to provide vulnerable participants with the hope and confidence to overcome their difficult surroundings and develop a strong sense of agency over their own lives.

Founded in the wake of the 1992 L.A. Uprising, US has evolved from a small, volunteer-led youth intervention program into a collaborative leader in the fields of arts education, youth development, mentorship, and community building, embedded in underserved neighborhoods and juvenile detention facilities throughout Los Angeles County. Founder Laura Leigh Hughes established US to give strength to our vulnerable youth, deter them from acting out in harmful ways, all through a powerful and constructive tool for communication — the theatre. US has since grown into a collaborative, community-based theatre-arts organization with a presence in underserved neighborhoods and juvenile detention facilities throughout L.A. County. Serving over 1,600 individuals annually, US's seven complementary programs provide a well-rounded impact on underserved Los Angelinos — including underperforming students, students with special needs, foster youth, struggling parents, English Language Learners, adolescents suffering from PTSD and incarcerated minors. Los Angeles is home to some of the highest rates of youth incarceration, high-school dropout, teen pregnancy, and gang violence in the nation. A major tenet of US's model is to meet youth where they are — as such, we maintain a presence in areas with high youth crime/incarceration rates, and offer programs on site at under-resourced schools, community centers, and juvenile detention facilities. In conjunction with county and state approved curriculum custom-developed in-house, US teaches youth to write, direct, and perform their stories, uncensored and in their own voices. The outcomes for participants are lasting and life-changing, including fostering academic, social, and emotional growth, all through the theatre stage. A majority of our youth live in poverty in regions with little to no arts funding, have visions of futures shaped by violence and loss, struggle with reading and writing skills, and as a result, have low self esteem and broken relationships. Our team uses the stage as a vehicle for confidence, hope, reconciliation, and belonging.

Visit theunusalsuspects.org for more information.



Q: Why are the arts so important?

A: Demand for US programming continues to rise as the factors that negatively impact the well-being and future prospects of the youth and communities we serve are inversely proportionate to their access to quality arts education and mentorship. This is especially true of the system-engaged youth we serve, the majority of whom struggle to heal from trauma induced by violence, abuse, and/or neglect. Similarly, bleak is the outlook of the LAUSD student population, 88% of whom have experienced at least three traumatic events in their short lifetimes, with 55% of those students displaying symptoms of depression, anxiety, or PTSD. Research demonstrates that trauma increases the likelihood for school failure, juvenile delinquency, and recidivism.

Unfortunately, LAUSD students and system-engaged youth lack consistent exposure to arts education and access to services, resources, and opportunities to explore their innate strengths, none more so than African American and Latino students — the majority of our target population. Yet, long-term developmental studies have shown that high-quality, curriculum-based, TA-led arts education programs like ours help build the very kinds of protective factors youth need to overcome risk factors and build healthy personal, family, and community lives. By providing arts education and mentorship that improves well-being at both the individual and social levels, US has successfully disrupted these patterns of inequality via utilizing our unique curriculum to mitigate the underlying family and community risk factors that threaten the healthy development of underserved Los Angelinos: We provide youth in underserved communities with access to enriching arts education — regardless of income, race, gender, or ability; offer a physically, virtually, and emotionally safe space where they are encouraged to discover their creative voice, develop self-respect, and explore non-violent solutions to conflict; and help prepare them for successful engagement in education, work, and community. US has achieved measurable success in serving youth and families with our program data confirming significant gains in 21st Century Skills such as academic and social skills, as well as emotional growth. Many of our participants have gone on to lead successful personal and professional lives working in the creative industry, serving on our Board or Advisory Council or joining the executive ranks within other industries.

Q: Many of my friends and family might not have heard of The Unusual Suspects. How will they know this is a good cause?

A: When your friends and family see how passionate you are about The Unusual Suspects, they will be excited too! You can also share with them that The Unusual Suspects is committed to being ethical stewards of the resources entrusted to us, with \$0.81 of every dollar going directly to program services. We have a responsibility to maintain integrity in our financial practices, and accountability and transparency are an integral part of our culture.

Additionally, The Unusual Suspects has been featured in numerous, reputable media outlets including the LA Times, Hollywood Reporter, ABC, Spectrum News and much more. View more about US in the news [HERE](#). Further, US has received several accolades for our work over the years, including The National Youth Arts and Humanities Program Award, The National Juvenile Justice Award, and more. You can view more about the rewards we have earned [HERE](#).



Q: What will the funds raised be used for?

A: Funds will continue to fuel our mission and go toward continuing our impactful, award-winning programs at no cost to partnering schools or participants, thus helping to fill a critical gap in access to arts-education at high-needs, arts-poor public schools and juvenile detention centers.

Current US Programs include:

YOUTH THEATRE RESIDENCY PROGRAM (YTRP): Our flagship program – and focus of this request – offers experiential theatre-arts education and mentoring to improve the well-being of at-risk and incarcerated youth via a series of two sequential 10-week after-school workshops, wherein youth collaborate to create and perform an original play born out of their shared hopes and fears. US's best-practice methodology has been honed over 27 years and our nearly 3:1 youth-to-adult ratio gives students the opportunity to learn and grow via an approach not typically provided by traditional education systems. The YTRP's ultimate goal is to empower underserved youth with the skills to maintain a healthy mental outlook and pursue a positive path forward, making them more likely to decrease truant behavior, stay in school, complete community service hours, and avoid gang involvement.

VOICES FROM INSIDE PROGRAM (VIP): As a founding member of the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, US works in tandem with 14 arts-intervention organizations to provide interdisciplinary arts programming for youth offenders to build resiliency/wellness, eliminate recidivism, improve reintegration and transform the juvenile justice system.

VOICES FOR ARTS & SOCIAL THEATRE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (VAST): VAST adapts our successful after-school curriculum to provide in-class arts education to improve students' language, communication and teamwork skills.

ALUMNI RESIDENCY PROGRAM: The launch of our new Alumni Residency could not be timelier, as it fills gaps in the support system for opportunity youth (ages 14-26). Open to alumni from all US programs — including youth returning from incarceration — our newest multi-week playwriting & performance residency offers a vital bridge between high school and adulthood. The program incorporates our unique, core theatre-arts curriculum to provide continued engagement, mentorship, camaraderie, and connections to postsecondary resources for youth who lack the social/financial support networks that allow them to participate in educational & career opportunities crucial to their future success. Our newly-established Alumni Leadership Committee — made up of US staff and alumni — began weekly virtual meetings on March 17th in preparation for the residency, which recently launched at the end of June.

THEATRE & CULTURE ACCESS PROGRAM (TCAP): TCAP reduces disparities in arts access by introducing low-income youth and adults to professional theatre for free.

PARENT PRACTICA PROGRAM (PPP): Piloted in late 2016, our new parenting-focused program tailors our core curriculum to a series of therapeutic workshops designed to enhance communication skills and strengthen the bond between struggling parents and their children.

NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES PROGRAM (NV): Designed to decrease social isolation and increase protective factors for reducing child maltreatment, NV engages intergenerational community residents (ages 11-65+) in creating and performing an original modernized fable/morality play through an intensive 12-week workshop.

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On March 16, US transitioned to remote operations in the midst of the global COVID-19 crisis. The full severity of impacts from the pandemic will remain unknown for some time, but like everyone, US is also feeling the effects. We immediately responded swiftly to the rising needs of our isolated youth. In the past few months, we have successfully developed and launched distance learning alternatives for all program models to virtually deliver exceptional theatre-arts education and vital mentoring to marginalized Los Angelinos— and with it, the tenacity to transcend hardship. This year alone, we will have already served close to 500 individuals, offering over 110 remote workshop sessions, including virtual performances and our participants have benefited greatly. Continued funding will enable US to maintain the high quality of our programs — virtually or in person, fortify organizational infrastructure, and set the stage for future growth.

Q: What is the Virtually UnUSual Create-A-thon?

A: Tied to our mission, the Create-A-Thon is a unique, virtual marathon fundraiser enlisting your creative talent and your fundraising support, while also raising awareness and vital funds for our work! You can select to: write something original; or perform something original or perform a scene from our students work, sharing your progress with your friends and family as you ask for their support to continue our critical programming. Below are suggestions for what to create if you need some direction, but feel free to create ANYTHING you like - the visual arts, such as photography, painting, and more are also encouraged. The sky is the limit!

Writing:

If you choose to write something, you can select anything you want, but we suggest the following formats:

- Script
- Letter
- Play
- Article
- Poem
- Speech
- Song
- Book or Memoir (or Recipe Book)

Tips and suggestions on getting started with your writing goal and keeping pace can be found in the 'Writing and Performing Tips' section of this Toolkit.

Performing:

If you choose to perform from students' original work, you may select from any of the following options [HERE](#). Tips and suggestions on getting started with your performance goal and keeping pace can be found in the Writing and Performing Tips' section of this Toolkit.

Q: How do I participate in the Virtually UnUSual Create-A-Thon?

A: You can support the Create-A-Thon by either of the following methods:

- Become a Create-A-Raiser and establish an individual fundraising goal along with your creative goal. To do this, sign up [HERE](#) and follow the instructions.

In deciding to become an individual fundraiser, you can select to be a Prime Suspect, and commit to raising a minimum of \$2,000, or a Creative Suspect and raise a minimum of \$1,000, or a Spotlight Suspect and raise a minimum of \$500.

Don't forget to contribute towards your own goal!

- If you would like to fundraise with the help of others, you may wish to become a team captain and set up a team page and fundraising goal. As a team, you can select to be a Prime Suspect, and commit to raising a minimum of \$2,000, or a Creative Suspect and raise a minimum of \$1,000, or a Spotlight Suspect and raise a minimum of \$500. To set up your team page, sign up [HERE](#).

- You can simply donate and help spread the word by sharing information about the Create-A-Thon on social media and via email.

Don't forget to contribute towards your own goal!



Q: What's the difference between raising money as a team and as an individual?

A: Some supporters prefer to raise money as part of a team, maybe with their family, co-workers or friends. We welcome this and it's easy to set up! If you would like to raise money as an individual, this is also easy to do! See above for how to set up your fundraising page - whether it's a team page or an individual page - today!

Q: Why do I have to set up a fundraising page?

A: To demonstrate commitment to potential donors, we recommend that every fundraiser set up a fundraising page, to illustrate their commitment to their friends, family members and co-workers.

We've found that online fundraising is currently our fastest and most effective method raising money. Statistics show that people donate 3 times as much using their credit card as they do writing a check. So make sure you customize your personal fundraising page today.

Contact us at alexa.nieblas@theunusalsuspects.org for assistance.

Q: What is a Create-A-Raiser at the Prime Suspect, Creative Suspect and Spotlight Suspect level?

A: Prime Suspects commit to raise a minimum of \$2,000 through an e-mail and social media campaign, and establish a creative writing or performance goal.

*Prime Suspects who raise \$2,000, will:

- Receive US swag
- Be featured in campaign highlight videos
- Receive 10 complimentary entries to raffle drawing
- Receive opportunity to zoom with our students
- Receive the chance for their finished work to appear in final e-book of content

Creative Suspects commit to raise a minimum of \$1,000 through an e-mail and social media campaign, and establish a creative writing or performance goal.

Creative Suspects who raise \$1,000, will:

- Receive US swag
- Receive 5 complimentary entries to raffle drawing
- Receive the chance for their finished work to appear in final e-book of content

Spotlight Suspects commit to raise a minimum of \$500 through an e-mail and social media campaign, and establish a creative writing or performance goal.

Spotlight Suspects who raise \$500, will:

- Receive US swag
- Receive 2 complimentary entries to raffle drawing
- Receive the chance for their finished work to appear in final e-book of content



Q: If I'm creating a team page, how do I name my team?

A: Many teams get their name from an individual name connected to the campaign. For example, "Team Tessa". Others use their family name (The Hughes Family Team) or their business name (Team Boeing).

Q: My family, school, or company is interested in organizing a Virtually UnUSual Create-A-Thon team. Who should be our team captain?

A: The team captain should be the logical leader of the effort and the person who is willing to give the most time to the project. Often, the captain is a loyal supporter of US or their close friend/family member. In many cases team captains are themselves a passionate believer in the healing power of the arts.

Q: What if I know a company that would like to help sponsor the event?

A: We would be honored to be connected to a company that you know for sponsorship support. Please have them click [HERE](#) for more information or have them contact us at hedi@theunusualsuspects.org.

Q: Can I participate if I don't fundraise or do something creative?

A: Yes! You can support US by contributing to the cause or to a friend's, colleague's or family member's fundraising goal. You can also help by simply spreading the word on social! You can find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Q: Do you need campaign volunteers as well as fundraisers and donors?

A: Yes, all help is appreciated. If you know someone who wants to help but doesn't want to or isn't able to contribute or fundraise, we can always use assistance with spreading the word, managing the campaign and more! If you want to volunteer, or if you know someone who would like to volunteer, please contact us at alexan@theunusualsuspects.org or nieblas@theunusualsuspects.org.

Additionally, we are always looking for in-kind contributions. If you have the access to such items or know someone who does, please contact us at hedi@theunusualsuspects.org.



Q: How can I double my donation?

A: If available, take advantage of your employer's Matching Gift Program. Simply pick up the applicable form from your HR Department, fill it out, and send it to:

*The Unusual Suspects to Hedi Jalon at
hedi@theunusualsuspects.org*

MORE QUESTIONS?
**CONTACT DEVELOPMENT &
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR,
HEDI JALON.**
HEDI@THEUNUSUALSUSPECTS.ORG