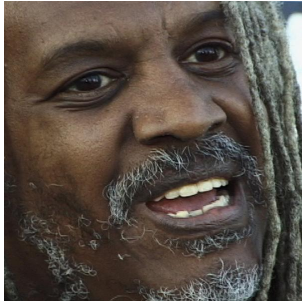


Leimert Park: The Story of a Village in South Central Los Angeles

CAST BIOS & PHOTOS



Richard Fulton
Fifth St. Dick's
Coffee Company

Richard Fulton ran Fifth Street Dick's Coffee Company, a storefront coffee and jazz house. Homeless for four and a half years, he lived on the streets of downtown Los Angeles and was known as "Fifth Street Dick." In homage to his former life, his logo for the coffeehouse was of a homeless man pushing an overflowing shopping cart.

He opened the coffeehouse only a few days before the 1992 Rodney King upheavals took place in Los Angeles. He often said that the first people he served coffee to were the National Guard. Yet despite the devastation in the community, Fifth Street Dick's soon flourished as it provided a much-needed spot for the people in the community to gather. Everyone was welcome, whether or not they purchased a coffee or anything else.

Fifth Street Dicks soon became associated with the trademark high-volume high quality jazz that Richard would play throughout the day and evening. Tables and chairs outside Fifth Street Dicks became the location of intense chess games sometimes going on until 3 or 4 A.M. Soon, he started offering live jazz performances seven days a week. Inside, people lined up for coffee, read, and upstairs in the jazz club, musicians jammed sometimes until five or six in the morning. World-class jazz musicians & jazz groups would play or stop by to jam after their gigs at the Jazz Bakery, Catalina's or Hollywood Bowl. And he provided opportunities for young musicians to play and older musicians to make a "comeback".

Richard Fulton died in March 18, 2000 from throat cancer.



Kamau Daaood
spoken-word Poet,
community activist &
Co-founder of World Stage

Kamau Daaood started his writing career in the 60's with the Watts Writers Workshop. Daaood credits Horace Tapscott with being one of his mentors, and has performed regularly with the Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra since the 60's. For thirty years now, he has been a presence among Los Angeles poets.

Dedicated to the community, he established the World Stage as a place for artists and musicians to meet/rehearse and share their work. The workshop-performance space seats only fifty, but has provided a rehearsal space and a nurturing environment that has fostered important jazz groups and served as a performance space for jazz greats such as Pharoah Sanders, & Nina Simone, and poets such as Pulitzer prizewinner, Yousef Komunyakaa. It has given birth to at least two young jazz groups, Black/Note and B Sharp Quartet and several poets & novelists, including Pulitzer prize-nominated Ruth Forman, novelist Jenoyne Adams, & Michael Datcher. During the week, there are instrumental and vocal workshops, Wednesday night poetry workshops and Thursday night jam sessions.

When a similar venture, Artworks Four folded, Daaood began the World Stage by gathering \$3,000 from a small group of people, including Billy Higgins. Using the stage and the chairs from Artworks Four, The World Stage was born. Daaood has written two volumes of poetry and has a spoken word CD entitled, "Leimert Park." He performs spoken word poetry with his "Army of Healers" around the world, and has just published his first book of poetry for the renowned "Pocket Poetry" series with City Lights Press to much critical acclaim.





Horace Tapscott
World-class jazz pianist,
composer, community
artist, founder of the Pan
Afrikan People's Arkestra

Horace Tapscott's involvement in the community goes back to 1961, when he decided to turn his attentions to his community and to work at getting Los Angeles youths off the street and into community activities, particularly the arts. His passions for the music ran deep. "The only way I felt like I could get satisfied was to make a move toward preserving the music that black musicians, through the years, have died unknown for, and have contributed so much to this country musically for." A world-class musician & composer, Tapscott would pack concert halls in Europe, Japan and New York and yet come back home and play gratis at events and venues in the community. He has mentored hundreds of artists, many among the leading jazz artists of today.

In 1961, he formed the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra (originally called the Underground Musicians Association). The Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra played at churches, big park events, or at lunchtime in schools. Rarely paid, they saw the music as a necessary service to their people. During and after the uprising in Watts in 1965, the Arkestra played on the streets and in the backs of flatbed trucks amidst the debris of the rebellion. They brought the music back to the community. Since that time they have performed in Europe, Asia and across the U.S.

Horace Tapscott passed away in February 27, 1999 from lung cancer.



Billy Higgins
Jazz Drummer &
Co-founder of World Stage

Co-founder of The World Stage, Billy Higgins, known as the most recorded drummer in jazz history, also directed the Summer Jazz Institute for young musicians in the Los Angeles area, and has served as a mentor to many drummers and jazz musicians. Higgins gave young musicians an opportunity to learn jazz history, theory, improvisation, instrumental technique, composition and arranging with some of the great jazz masters.

He also ran a drum workshop for all ages on Monday nights, where children of 3 to veteran drummers, would come for his guidance and wisdom. Black/Note bassist Mark Shelby says, "We all really look up to Billy Higgins for inspiration. He's open, he's encouraging. Even though he is who he is, he's still down-to-earth and humble. He's someone who really puts his money where his mouth is."

Billy Higgins died in May 3, 2001 from liver disease.



Ben Caldwell
Kaos Network

Ben Caldwell runs Kaos Network a multimedia training & arts center. Started in 1990 as a meeting place for creative adults and young people, his goal today is for kids and adults to learn and use the new media technology. He worked with the Brockman Gallery in the 70's while he was a UCLA film student. He and fellow student Charles Burnett, director of "To Sleep with Anger," would "come <to Leimert Park> and say, 'Why don't we do what we're doing in the black community, not run from it? Figure out what the black community wants, and do it.'" Ben says, "It's important for me to stay here in the community...it helps to establish consistency in a community that has a lack of consistency."

Kaos Network is probably most well-known for Thursday night's "Project Blowed." Projected Blowed is a hip hop and rap open mike night that gave birth to rappers and rap groups such as Aceyalone, Medusa, Busdriver, Freestyle Fellowship, and Jurassic Five, and continues to provide an atmosphere where up-and-coming rappers can hone their skills.



Brian Breye
Museum in Black

Breye rode his motorcycle to Los Angeles from Brooklyn, NY in the 1950's. He began Museum in Black in the 80s. In addition to the African artifacts that he has in the front of the space, he has a back room with a collection (not for sale) of various African American artifacts... artifacts from this country's era of slavery and memorabilia that defines our country's segregation period. "It's a sad chapter of our history, but it's important to remember," says Breye. "Black people need to know who they are." He leads regular tours (schools & others) through his Museum and gives talks at schools and community groups regarding African and African American artifacts.

Sadly, Brian Breye was forced to close down Museum in Black in July of 2005 due to rent increases.



Michael Datcher
Anansi Writer's Workshop
at World Stage

Graduate of Berkeley and UCLA graduate school, Michael Datcher has been running the Anansi Writers Workshop at the World Stage since '93. A successful novelist, he has mentored numerous young poets and writers in the workshop – several who have gone on to garner 6-figure book deals and one of whom is now teaching at Harvard. He says of the workshop, "Everyone comes here, from dope dealers to engineers to nurses. It's a kind of communal place because of the word."



Ramsess
Artist-in-Residence
next door to World Stage

Ramsess initially rented his studio space from Dale and Alonzo Davis of the Brockman Gallery. He lived on Degnan Blvd. in his studio until he was forced to move in 2002, due to the sale of the building and the subsequent landlord's exorbitant rent increases. He travels around the country displaying and selling his work at art shows. His subject matter includes jazz legends and historical black figures in the arts. He works in stained glass, mosaic and sandblast glass, but also sells his own designed and silk-screened calendars, t-shirts and greeting cards.



Inzingha Camara
West African Dance Teacher

Although no longer teaching at the Dance Collective, Inzingha is committed to continuing her work as a teacher. She recently produced a show in conjunction with the Debbie Allen Dance Studio in Culver City. Her West African dance class on Wednesday night was well-attended, featured several live drummers and lots of sweaty flying bodies. People packed the doorway watching while others set up tables to sell handmade arts & crafts, food & fresh sage and incense.



Lady Walquer Vereen
Dance Teacher, Co-Founder
of Dance Collective

Lady Walquer Vereen was born in Harlem, and got her start in dancing there. She was discouraged from pursuing a career in dancing as the teachers considered her awkward. She also considered a career as an opera singer but that offered few opportunities for blacks at the time. She got a lucky break and eventually joined the tour of HAIR, which brought her to Southern California. The sister of Ben Vereen, she has had a successful career as a dancer and choreographer and is committed to her role as a teacher in the community.



Dale Brockman Davis
The Brockman Gallery

Dale & Alonzo Davis were brothers who began the Brockman Gallery in 1967 at 4334 Degnan Blvd. They grew up in LA and when graduating from college with degrees in art, were warned that they better get a teaching credential because they would have nowhere to show their art. Having no luck with the established art galleries they decided to begin their own – a gallery dedicated to exhibiting minority artists. They eventually controlled a whole row of storefronts on Degnan and provided artists spaces to live and work as well as to hang their work.

The Brockman Gallery nurtured the early careers of respected artists like David Hammons and John Outterbridge, and many more established black artists also exhibited there – Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White, John Biggers, Noah Purifoy and Romare Bearden, among numerous others.

They began a nonprofit arm of the gallery using grants, etc from the federal government that sponsored concerts, art exhibits and community events. Horace Tapscott and the Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra, among others, played at these all day events – free to the public. The Brockman Gallery closed in 1989, but the cultural renaissance it fostered during the 70's and early 80's continues.





John Outterbridge
World-renowned Artist
worked with Brockman Gallery

John Outterbridge is an extraordinary artist that gained prominence in the 1960's and was a key player and exhibitor at the Brockman Gallery. Several of his works hang in museums and galleries and he is regularly working on commissions and installations for prominent museums around the world. He became director at the Watts Towers Art Center in 1975 and remained there until 1992 - he had been teaching at the Center since the mid-1960s. He still has a studio/live/work space, which he owns, just down the street from Leimert Park.



Laura Hendricks
"Gallery Plus" Art Gallery

Laura Hendricks has been on Degnan Blvd. for more than 15 years. She carries moderately priced artwork and collectibles and offers framing services.

