

# International Connection

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## USC Continues Outreach in Asia

Meeting with prospective students and educators strengthens bonds

by Tony Tambascia, Executive Director and Assistant Dean of Students

It is often said that the Trojan Family extends well beyond US borders, and last Fall I experienced USC's global reach up-close during a trip to five cities in East Asia.

The primary purpose of the trip was a series of student recruitment events called Discover USC-Asia, with stops in Taipei, Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai and Beijing. Organized by USC's Enrollment Services Division, Discover USC-Asia receptions are held each Fall with the intent of promoting USC's academic programs to prospective undergraduate and graduate students. For last year's trip, I joined about ten other USC staff and administrators from the Admission office, the Viterbi School of Engineering, the Marshall School of Business, the Annenberg School for Communication, the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, and the School of Policy, Planning and Development in a collaborative effort to convince some of the best and brightest students in Asia to come to USC.

In addition to the hundreds of interested students and parents who showed up at the events, a large number of alumni greeted us in each city, demonstrating the reality of the Trojan network. Despite their busy schedules and commitments, many dedicated USC alumni attended the receptions, spoke about their USC experiences, and answered questions late into the evening. These volunteers, removed from their days at



Tony Tambascia with Prof. Hiwon Yoon, Dean, Office of International Affairs, SNU; Steven Lee, Director, USC Korea Office; Jeongnam Hwang, Director of International Exchange and Education, SNU

USC by many years and thousands of miles, impressed upon me the true spirit of the Trojan Family. Their enthusiasm for the university, and their continued involvement with USC-related activities, sent a clear message to the prospective students about the lifelong nature of a USC education.

The trip began with the USC Global Conference in Taipei, which brought together over 600 people associated with USC for two days of meetings and networking. USC alumni from across Asia, as well as several members of the senior administration, were on hand for discussions about key topics related to education, global business, health care, and environmental issues.

Between the Discover USC events

and the time spent travelling between locations, I was able to make visits to some of the top universities in the region. In most cases, these were institutions that USC already works with for student exchanges and other partnership agreements. Among the highlights were visits to Seoul National University (SNU) and Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). At both institutions I was able to meet with colleagues who are responsible for providing services for incoming international students, and we had a chance to compare ideas about the best ways to help students from abroad to make the most of their university experience.

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## USC in Asia

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Happily for me, I did manage to do a bit of sightseeing, and two places in particular stand out among all the fascinating places I visited. First, while in Seoul, a few colleagues and I toured the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating South and North Korea. As part of this visit we had the opportunity to go inside one of the “infiltration tunnels” that have been discovered underground in the past several decades. The tunnel we visited, the Third Tunnel, is well over 200 feet below ground and is only about 6 feet high in most places. As a person who is over 6 feet tall, and who does not generally enjoy being confined in small spaces, it was quite exciting to be walking bent over through hundreds of yards of dark tunnel cut into the bedrock underneath the DMZ!

A few days later, as the trip drew to a close in Beijing, I spent part of a day at the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall, my first visit to this great historic site and wonder of human engineering. On the day of the visit, I awoke to cloudy skies, light rain, and very cold temperatures near freezing. This turned out to be very lucky indeed, because only a few visitors chose to tour the wall that day due to the weather. When I arrived at the site about 90 minutes outside of Beijing, the skies had cleared and it turned out to be a perfect day to experience the Great Wall, with plenty of room for a long quiet stroll—and of course lots of climbing steps!

If many of the students we met while in Asia choose to apply to USC and eventually enroll, then the trip will be deemed a success. But just as importantly, I came back home with a new appreciation for the strength of the global Trojan network, and a little better understanding of why USC is so highly regarded in the Pacific Rim. During the trip, while checking email at Hong Kong International Airport, I saw the announcement that our President, Steven B. Sample, will retire next year. One of my first thoughts upon hearing this news was that the new president will be assuming leadership of a truly global university, one that expects its participants to be interested in and knowledgeable about the world around them, and one that rewards its members with inclusion in a lifelong and worldwide network of friends and colleagues.

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## One of a Kind: Being from the Bahamas

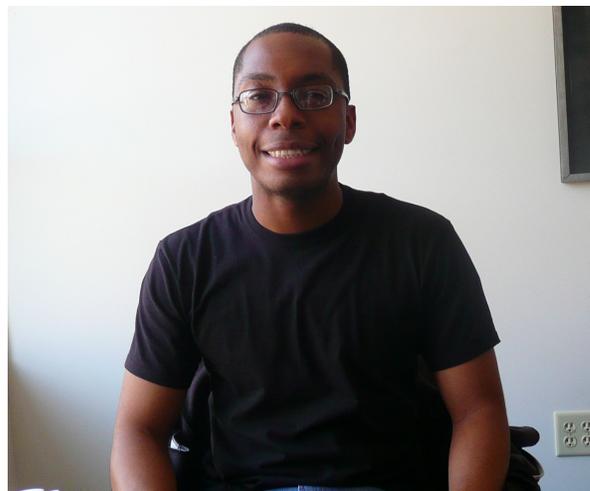
by Judy Hartwich, Senior Associate Director

**Last year Kevin Ginton was the only student from the Bahamas studying at USC (this year there are two more Bahamian students). Kevin grew up in Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, and attended Fiske University in Nashville, Tennessee for his undergraduate degree in chemistry. Kevin is currently pursuing a Ph.D in chemistry at USC.**

“Sometimes you get worn out with people’s responses when you tell them where you come from. The usual response is – oh, you’re so lucky, life must be so great coming from such a beautiful place. Don’t get me wrong, the Bahamas is a beautiful place to grow up. But what I think a lot of American students don’t really appreciate is the good fortune they have living in the US. There is so much choice, so much freedom. The US is SO BIG – it’s like eight different countries in one.

In the Bahamas there is only one university. When Bahamians take a vacation they usually go to US cities like Miami or Atlanta, and sometimes to other Caribbean countries like Jamaica. A lot of students at USC assume I’m from the US because I don’t have an accent (I can turn it on, if I want, but if I did you wouldn’t understand me). In the Bahamas there are several different accents. Accents are thicker on the smaller islands and much less pronounced in the capital.

My family were a little concerned that I was coming to California for advanced study. California is so far away – and when you leave a small country there is the worry you’ll get swallowed up by a big city like Los Angeles.



*Kevin Ginton, the only Bahamian at USC last year*

Some of the stereotypes of Los Angeles are true. It is so spread out and there are so many people. The people are relaxed (yes even in comparison to Bahamians). One of the things I like about LA and USC is the multiculturalism. In the Loker Hydrocarbon Lab my colleagues are from Kenya, Hong Kong, France and West Africa.

I like being here. I like the mindset, the lifestyle, the variety of daily life. I’m not sure yet what my career path will be after I complete my studies, but I know I’m glad I came to California and to Los Angeles.”

**This is the first in a series series of profiles of international students who, at sometime in their study at USC, were the only student from their home country.**

## The Tax Season: An early reminder

by Becky Peterson, International Student Advisor

U.S. Tax reporting season for both federal and state taxes occurs in the Spring following each calendar year for any income earned in the previous year (e.g., you would file your tax forms for any income earned in 2009 in the spring of 2010).

OIS provides resources for our students in the form of online software for federal forms and on-site workshops for the State of California forms.

The deadline for filing your federal and state tax forms is Thursday, April 15th. Please go to the OIS tax website for further information on taxes in the United States and pos-



sible forms you might need to file and OIS will be releasing information through the International Update as tax season unfolds.

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/tax/tax.html>

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## From China to Canada: Healthcare systems around the world

by Anne Kaufman, Immigration Advisor

On November 5, the USC Office of International Services sponsored its biannual “State of the World” seminar, entitled “From China to Canada: Healthcare Systems around the World.” The seminar featured international student panelists from France, England, Canada, China, and India, who spoke about differences between their national healthcare systems and the American system that is currently embroiled in political debate over reform.

Dr. Heather Wipfli, Assistant Professor of Preventative Medicine and Associate Director at the USC Institute for Global Health, moderated the event, beginning with a brief overview of the U.S. healthcare system. Dr. Wipfli added perspective to the current challenges of healthcare reform, citing historical efforts by every president since Theodore Roosevelt to campaign on a healthcare reform platform. Today, while President Obama seeks to increase healthcare coverage for America’s 46-million uninsured, improve performance by healthcare providers, and reduce costs, sensitive issues like illegal immigration and abortion hinder a political consensus on reform. “These two issues are so intertwined in American politics. They define elections, entire government programs, and healthcare is no exception,” said Dr. Wipfli. Although the healthcare debate is slow moving, Dr. Wipfli is optimistic and hopeful for the future of universal healthcare in the U.S.

Julien Mailland, a Fellow at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, opened the panel discussion with details of France’s healthcare system, which rests on two pillars: universal healthcare and a limit on out-of-pocket expenses. However, when a one Euro co-payment toward medical services to offset their healthcare system’s 18-billion Euro deficit was introduced, the French protested. Julien added that the French are fearful their healthcare system will soon resemble the British system.

John Williamson, a PhD candidate at the School of International Relations in the United Kingdom, came to the defense of Britain’s National Institute of Health (NIH), since most Britons are generally satisfied with the NIH, but dislike the long waiting periods for non-urgent care. John explained that the NIH is part of the



*Panelists discuss global healthcare systems*

political consensus; however, “political divide comes over inefficiencies and who does a better job at management.”

A panelist who is a PhD student at the School of Policy Planning Development, likened the Canadian system to the British healthcare system. Like Britons, most Canadians are satisfied with the care provided and “enjoy having a national identity based around hockey and Medicare,” but also dislike the long waiting lists. He further commented, “After going through the American and Canadian medical systems, you Americans are very right to be worried about what is going to become of your system if it is modeled on ours. If I had to make a choice, I would choose the American system over the Canadian system.”

Mei Chen, a master’s student in Public Relations at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, and Ben (Shi Xu) Huang, a PhD candidate in Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences and master’s student in Regulatory Science Program, explained how China, like the U.S., is currently reforming its system of healthcare along a European model. Mei described China’s different models of healthcare over the past 60-years, “During the 1970-80’s, China achieved universal healthcare, but it was abused, so the U.S. style free market was introduced in the 1990s. This system resulted in social inequalities between rich and poor and created a huge inequity of care between urban and rural areas.” Ben further elaborated: “The Chinese are hopeful that the new system will work and take the place of the so-called free market system.”

Aabha Bamba, a master’s student in Public Health, said

*[Continued opposite]*

that only about 10% of people in her native India are insured but that insurance is becoming increasingly popular. Most Indians seek treatment from private clinics and pay out-of-pocket. Publicly funded hospitals are available, but waiting times are long and healthcare quality can be poor. Alternative medicine is often the first form of care in rural areas in India.

Stark differences emerged over how illegal immigrant populations are cared for in each country. France and the U.K. do not officially offer healthcare to illegal immigrants, but healthcare is often provided to them without demands for reimbursement; Canada does not have a significant concern in this regard because there

are so few illegal immigrants; China's employers currently pay for healthcare, so the unemployed are not insured; In India, healthcare for illegal immigrants is not an issue because nearly everyone pays out-of-pocket; and in the U.S., all receive care at an emergency room and hospitals must absorb the cost if patients cannot pay – clearly an area in need of reform.

The evening was filled with lively debate by the panelists, who highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of their national healthcare systems. Regardless of nationality, panelists and audience members agreed that healthcare is an inalienable right and are hopeful that the U.S. will soon achieve universal coverage for all.

## International Diners' Club: Upcoming Events

by Daniel Lawlor, International Program Assistant

Explore the diversity of Los Angeles by joining the Diners' Club. Each month, you'll be able to experience a different cuisine and learn more about the country's culture and traditions. The Diners' Club is a great way to discover different customs around the world as well as a chance to meet both international and domestic students in a casual and friendly setting. We hope to see you at our events this semester!

To find out more, email us at [oisdc@usc.edu](mailto:oisdc@usc.edu). More information will be available as dates are finalized.



### January: Jamaican

Get ready for Jamaican favorites such as curry goat, salt fish, jerk chicken, and fried plantains from a cuisine that combines techniques from many different cultures



### February: Malaysian

Influenced by Chinese, Indian and Thai, Malaysian cuisine revolves around Rempah, a spice mix made of dried spices and herbs that accentuate the richness of common Malay dishes.



### March: Irish

Join us as we celebrate St. Patrick's Day and learn the significance of the holiday with a trip to an Irish establishment.



### April: French

Often referred to as nouvelle cuisine (new cuisine), the French are famous for their style of light and delicate dishes that emphasize presentation.

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## The Great Outdoors In search of wilderness in Los Angeles

by Zachary Williams, Exchange Visitor Program Coordinator

Clubs in Hollywood, shopping in Beverly Hills, L.A. Live and an expanding list of art, entertainment and culinary delights Downtown...Los Angeles is an exciting place to live. But before all those buildings went up to house the bars, arenas and theatres, and before the freeway system was laid down like a crossword puzzle to connect everything together, there was (and still is) some pretty amazing topography.

We have mountains and beaches, deserts and fault lines. There's oil underground and hot springs that bubble warm water up to the surface. Factor in L.A.'s famously temperate climate and there are plenty of ways to escape not just classrooms and laboratories, but the concrete and traffic of the city all year long. Following are just a few of the numerous ways to experience the more natural side of Los Angeles.

### Leo Carrillo State Park

Leo Carrillo is one of Southern California's more popular beach destinations for good reason. It is located along Pacific Coast Highway at Malibu's western end. Visitors can find a cozy spot in the many coves along the park's 1.5 miles of sandy beach.

Surfers love Leo Carrillo for the right-breaking waves groomed by the cobblestone bottom and offshore winds. Mid-tide is the best time to go out, but be prepared to share the wave's tight take-off zone. Shortboards are welcome but the longboarders will be catching more waves. Nature lovers can find sea stars, crabs and mussels in the tide pools. In April and May you might even spot gray whales migrating north along the coast.

The ocean isn't Leo Carrillo's only highlight. There is a campground a short walk from the beach. The 135 campsites are shaded by giant sycamore trees and include the requisite picnic table and fire ring. The campground has hot showers (bring your quarters) and a small visitor's center open on weekends. It is also the starting point for a short nature trail loop, as well as longer hikes that meander through wildflowers or offer panoramic views of the Channel Islands.

Leo Carrillo is one of the few places in Southern California with camping so close to the beach so campsites fill up quickly. Reservations are recommended from May to October and all holiday weekends. You can reserve your campsite online at [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com).

For more information go to [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=616](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=616)



*Above and below: Some of Leo Carrillo's stunning beaches*



[Continued opposite]

## Angeles National Forest

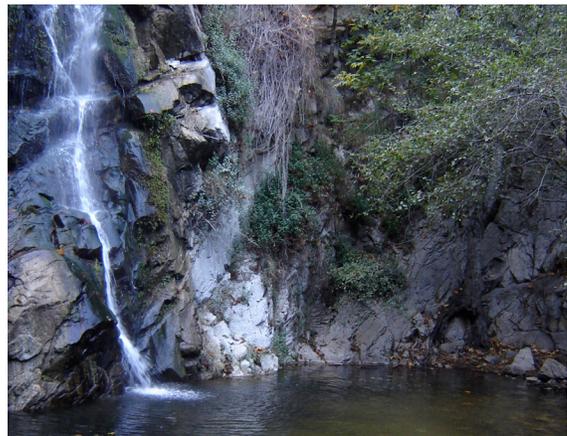
If you look north, past the high rises of Downtown, you will see the San Gabriel Mountains, home of Angeles National Forest. It is most easily accessed from USC by travelling up Highway 2, past the city of La Cañada. The forest ranges in elevation from 1,200 to over 10,000 feet at the summit of Mount San Antonio, also known as “Mt. Baldy.” Much of the forest is covered by dense chaparral of Ceanothus, Manzanita, Scrub Oak and Yucca, changing to pine and fir at the higher elevations.

In August tragedy struck the forest when over 161,000 acres were burned in an arson fire lasting over one month. Many great campsites and hiking trails were burned and it will be years before the vegetation recovers. Fortunately, there are still large sections of the forest untouched by the flames and open for everyone to enjoy.

My recommendation is to head towards the town of Wrightwood. Appletree and Peavine campgrounds offer fire rings and outhouse toilets year round. There is no water at the campgrounds so be sure to bring plenty with you. From May to November, I encourage you to visit Blue Ridge or Guffy campgrounds. The Pacific Crest Trail, which runs from Mexico to Canada, passes right by these campgrounds and offers great hiking and scenic vistas into the Sheep Mountain Wilderness. Especially because of road and forest closures due to the fire, contact a ranger before visiting the forest. Contact information at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles/>



*Above, below: the trees and falls of Angeles Forest*



## Joshua Tree National Park

As someone who grew up 1 ½ hours from Yosemite National Park, it took some convincing from my friends to go to Joshua Tree, but I love it now. The unique Joshua Trees and other-worldly rock formations help me feel light-years away from the city, even though the drive is only a few hours east on I-10.

The desert has awed me by the openness of its landscape. I’ve watched storm systems far on the horizon and been able to time how long they would take to reach my campsite. Yes, it does rain in the desert of Joshua Tree, it even snows! The sparse landscape, punctuated by granite formations that look like blobs of molten rock dropped from the sky, accentuates the beauty of the morning sunrise.

My favorite spot in Joshua Tree is the Jumbo Rocks campground. With some luck you can find a semi-private campsite tucked away in the rock formations. I recommend hiking the interpretive nature loop that begins in the campground and highlights some of Joshua Tree’s major plant, wildlife and geologic features. It’s the desert and there is no water in the

campground so be sure to stock up with at least one gallon/per person/per day. Temperatures in the desert can be extreme, well over 100 degrees during the day and below freezing at night. The best time to visit Joshua Tree is in the Fall and Spring when temperatures are more moderate.

For more information, go to [www.nps.gov/jotr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jotr/index.htm)



*Zach exploring Joshua Tree National Park*

# International Connection

## The Oscar Buzz - Academy Award Predictions

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

On Sunday March 7th the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will be hosting their annual awards, otherwise known as 'The Oscars'. After a somewhat lackluster 2009, the Oscar buzz intensified in November, when traditionally the front-runners are released, giving just enough time for audiences and critics to build a wave of adulation that propels a film to golden glory.

For the first time in six decades, the number of best picture nominees is doubling to ten. This means that every film under the sun is getting roped in as a possible contender.



The 'Precious' poster

The favorite for the top prize this year is **Precious**, the story of an obese teenage African-American girl born into poverty and chaos in 1980s Harlem. The film blew up on the festival circuit, winning audience awards at Toronto and Sundance and a standing ovation at Cannes, and the chances are it will receive multiple nominations, including a Best Actress nod for newcomer Gabourey Sidibe.

Another hot contender is **Up In The Air** the new film from Jason Reitman, director of Juno and Thank You For Smoking and son of Ivan 'Ghostbusters' Reitman. The film follows the hollow life of a man who travels the country firing people for corporations, until his company grounds him because his job is regarded as surplus. As simple as it might sound, George Clooney's performance is being heralded as the best of his career, and might win him a Best Actor nod at least.

If there was ever a sure-fire bet for an Oscar nomination, it would be **Invictus**. Directed by Clint Eastwood? Check. Story of moving political and personal significance? Double check. If the true story of Nelson Mandela (Morgan Freeman) inspiring the underfancied South African rugby team (captained by Matt Damon) to attempt to win the World Cup doesn't put a warm glow in the hearts of Academy members, I don't know what will.



The 'Invictus' poster

A female director hasn't been nominated for an Oscar since Sofia Coppola in 2003, but there are a myriad of possibilities this year. The stand-out is perhaps Kathryn Bigelow's testosterone-fuelled machismo army tale, **The Hurt Locker**, which focuses on the exploits of a bomb disposal unit in Iraq. Danish director Lone Scherfig caught the eye with **An Education**, the story



The most coveted man in Hollywood - the Oscar statuette

of a young girl (the lauded Carey Mulligan) in the 60s who starts a relationship with a playboy twice her age (Peter Sarsgaard). Old fave Jane Campion (director of *The Piano*) might also be in for a shout with her Keats biopic, **Bright Star**.

If animation is your thing, Pixar's **Up** and Wes Anderson's **Fantastic Mr Fox** are both outside contenders, while Rob Marshall's **Nine**, with a stellar cast including Daniel Day-Lewis, Penelope Cruz, and Nicole Kidman, should satisfy the musical lovers out there. The Coen Brothers have returned again with **A Serious Man**, a comedy about the travails of a suffering Jewish man in the suburban Midwest, but Oscar lightning doesn't usually strike so soon after their success with *No Country For Old Men*.

Finally, the long shots – films that exploded over the summer but aren't considered weighty enough to win. JJ Abrams' **Star Trek** and Neil Blomkamp's **District 9** are two sci-fi action adventure films that caught the public's imagination last year, and people are clamoring for some recognition. On the script side of things, **In the Loop** and **500 Days of Summer** are two other outsiders whose names have been mentioned. Best actor possibilities include Matt Damon (*The Informant*) and Colin Firth (*A Single Man*), while Meryl Streep is sure to make an appearance for her performance in *Julie and Julia*.

## World Fusion: LA's international music scene

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

Los Angeles is an infamous hotbed of creative possibility, where artists, actors, filmmakers and musicians gather to pursue their dreams of being the next big thing. Due to the large number of international musicians who flock to the city, LA has a rich world music scene and diverse cultural heritage. Mexican **Antonio Cruz**, who forms the band Mar Bella with Brazilian singer Caroline Pierotto, tells us about his experiences as aspiring global musician in the city.

### How do you find it being a foreigner living in LA?

One of my favorite things about the city is that most people aren't from LA. They have moved here from different places and it seems that almost nobody can claim the city as their own. This is its welcoming characteristic: It is up for taking. The foreigner can claim the city as his/her hometown and "make it happen." I love the rich variety of cultures that you can find in LA all living together, some mixed, and some not. It gives a sense of the whole world summarized in one place.

### Do you think that there is an especially strong world music scene here?

If world music means, anything that is not mainstream and is 'purely' something else, like a purist Brazilian bossa nova band or an authentic tango performed by a trained Argentinian musician, then, yes, you can find anything in this city. If there are so many world musicians drawn to this city, there has to be a strong scene that supports world music. It doesn't quite compare to the presence of rock, hip hop or indie here, but maybe that is just a representation of the population.

I believe that to be attracted to world music, like most travelers, you have to be somewhat fascinated with other things that stream out from music and focus more on the sociological or anthropological side of art and culture. Due to its cultural diversity, I strongly believe that LA is on its way to become the cradle of world music on the West Coast.

### Tell me about your musical style and whether California has any influence upon it?

Our style of music is the marriage of mainstream and Latin American folk. We are creating a style that merges the familiar song structures of pop and alternative rock with the rhythmic beats of Samba, Bossa Nova, Son and Flamenco. California has definitely been an influence in our musicianship. I consider myself a product of my generation and living in LA makes my music a little bit "LA-ish". But I'm a product



*Mar Bella performers Antonio and Caroline at work*

of what I hear culturally and musically - everything from Queen to Maria Rita to Debussy, or even the sounds of the street on a regular day!

### Where are some of the best spots to catch world or Brazilian music?

Venues in Echo Park, Silver Lake, Venice, and Downtown are all good spots to find world music beats. Long Beach has a big flamenco and Brazilian presence, while Brazilian restaurants are a great place to start your search. El Cid in Silver Lake has a world music night every other Monday.

### Can you recommend any international bands in LA?

I would definitely recommend checking out Ozomatli (formed in LA) and Sambadá (from Nor Cal originally). A great reggae band that comes to LA every once in while is Groundation, while Ojos de Brujo is a band from Spain to look out for. A good source for World Music would be Radio Chango, which you can find online.

### What advice do you have for international students who are looking to break into the scene here?

Talk to people like us! Musicians in LA, even though competitive at first, are usually really accessible individuals that can point you in the right direction. Music Festivals happen all the time in this city. Another great source is Open Mics, which you can google search. Most musicians do open mics on weekdays to acoustically promote their live show happening on weekends. If you want to get a gig and don't have many contacts, open mics are also a good way to break in. If you are trying to break into World Music then go to multiple traditional purist places that do not have any fusions. This should be a great influence because you can get a sense of what you want to let affect your musicianship.

# International Connection

## Against the Wall: LA's meaningful murals

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor



*'Becoming the Circle' by Francesco Letelier, a mural at 512 Rose Ave, Venice Beach*

**L**os Angeles writes its history on its walls. If you're looking for a true representation of local life, a visual story crafted from concrete and paint, look no further than the murals that adorn its streets, freeways, alleyways and dead-ends. Very often they celebrate the international diversity of the city, but they, unlike the inhabitants, are in danger of disappearing.

While many might think of meaningless graffiti when they hear the phrase 'mural', Los Angeles has turned the idea into a true art form. Every neighborhood, from Silver Lake to Boyle Heights, is seemingly driven to spill its guts on concrete canvas. By creating vibrant environments from nondescript, often run-down partitions, the murals bring communities together, uniting their stories in one collaborative artwork.

One of the most influential wall murals is The Great Wall of Los Angeles in the Tujunga Flood Control Channel in the San Fernando Valley. Half a mile long, the Great Wall represents the history of ethnic peoples from California from prehistoric times to the present day, and was created from 1976-84.



*'The Great Wall of Los Angeles', dir. Judith Baca, Hansen Dam Park*



*'Calle de la Eternidad' by Johanna Poethig, 351 S. Broadway*

Judith F. Baca, the founder of The Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), conceived the idea as 'an artist concerned not only with the physical aesthetic considerations of space, but the social, environmental, and cultural issues affecting the site as well'. The previously ugly and functional location was transformed

by over 400 young people from diverse backgrounds and their families, and stands as a testimony to the sheer variety of LA life and culture. SPARC was recently awarded \$1.2 million to restore what has been called the largest monument to inter-racial harmony in the United States. On a smaller scale, but no less infamous, is the muralist Rip Cronk, whose iconic images adorn the many shop and building sides around his favorite beach neighborhood of Venice. Cronk moved to LA in 1979 after establishing himself as a muralist in Hawaii, and he became the muralist-in-residence for SPARC, painting dozens of wall art pieces around Venice. His most famous works include 'Venice Reconstituted' (1989, @ Windward and Speedway), a Technicolor interpretation of Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus', and his homage to Van Gogh's 'Starry Night' (1990), that adorns Venice's Ocean Front Walk.

Cronk believes the power of the mural stems from its ability to 'create a cultural icon that embodies the values associated with the location.' He says that 'the community mural de-alienates and delineates the individual in society', inspiring 'symbolic experiences of actualization' and mediating 'between different classes and subcultures within the community'.

LA's murals often reflect current affairs – tens of Michael Jackson murals sprang up days after his death, as though the walls were reflecting the city's collective feeling. Many murals are commissioned to celebrate important events – a series of artworks were painted the 110 freeway in 1984 to commemorate the Olympics coming to LA.



*Victor Clothing Company Mural, 240 S. Broadway, Downtown*

But the murals are under threat from gangland graffiti and commercial advertising that regularly defaces or destroys the murals without warning. Around 60% of LA's murals are in a state of disrepair, and with this in mind Judy Baca started a campaign, [www.savelamurals.org](http://www.savelamurals.org), with the inten-



*Marilyn - one of the many icons depicted in LA's murals*

tion of passing a series of propositions to stop the decay of what she saw as valuable artifacts and pieces of the city's history.

The measures included establishing community mural education events, implementing alternative sentencing for graffiti vandals, redirecting tax money from spray paints and markers to fund mural restoration, and allocating 1% of ad space for public art.

Baca hopes Angelenos will come to appreciate the rich tapestry of public art that surrounds them every day and enjoy the city that has been called 'The Mecca of Murals'.



*Graffiti vandalism is destroying many of LA's oldest murals*

# International Connection



**All of us at OIS wish you a  
Happy New Year!**

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