



For Immediate Release  
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## LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH HOSTS WE RISE 2021 TO CELEBRATE CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE, SUPPORT RECOVERY

*Series of countywide events marks Mental Health Awareness Month in May,  
safely connecting communities after a year of isolation*

May 1 - 31, 2021

[werise.la](http://werise.la)

**Los Angeles** – As part of its groundbreaking WE RISE initiative, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) is hosting a month-long series of free community programs, events and experiences highlighting the healing powers of art and connection during Mental Health Awareness Month in May. In its fourth year, WE RISE is needed now more than ever as the region emerges from the isolation of the global pandemic and continues to grapple with related stressors and racial injustice.

WE RISE encourages wellbeing and healing through art, connection, community engagement and creative expression. WE RISE 2021 includes **Art Rise**, a series of **21 art experiences**; **Community Pop-Ups**, over **50 hyperlocal activities** across Los Angeles County neighborhoods; and a robust **Digital Experience**, offering original programs that can be enjoyed from anywhere. All installations and activities are meant to be viewed from a distance, individually or in small groups, in order to remain COVID-safe while still fostering community connection and collective healing

"WE RISE is a celebration of wellbeing, healing and resiliency, which is of greater importance as we emerge from the challenges created by the public health pandemic," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, author of the Board Motion to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month. "This initiative, and our ongoing efforts to enhance mental health resources and services for our residents, is an integral part of the County's ongoing commitment to support our communities."

Safe, socially distanced and family-friendly, WE RISE events will be offered both online and at sites across the county.

"Connectedness is vital to mental health and wellbeing, more so now than ever as we begin recovering from the multiple collective traumas experienced across our county this past year," said Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D., director of LACDMH. "Our WE RISE campaign, in its fourth year this May, is designed as a heart-forward opportunity and movement built to empower our diverse communities to come together for strength and healing."

### [Community Pop-Ups](#)

Community Pop-Ups are hyperlocal activities that will take place in each of LA County's five supervisorial districts, in partnership with over 50 community groups, artists, grassroots leaders, healers and other LA County Departments such as Parks, Libraries and Metro. WE RISE 2021 highlights and supports the vital

community-centered and civic work taking place in these neighborhoods. The Pop-Up projects, programs and collaborations include mural-making, ancestral healing workshops, a countywide public literary art project and more to celebrate the remarkable resources and communities in LA County and use arts-based strategies for healing and wellbeing.

**Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural** will present the *16th Annual Celebrating Words Festival: Written, Performed and Sung*. The virtual programming will include creative arts workshops, educational presentations, queer poetry night and live entertainment, focused on providing a creative space for self-expression as a form of healing and connection. This year's drive-thru experience will provide an engaging space for families to safely experience our festival and continue to promote literacy as a viable way to cultivate knowledge, imagination and wellbeing. The festival's book giveaway will provide access to 1,000 culturally relevant and social justice-oriented books for all ages, including Spanish language and bilingual books. Additionally, the drive-thru experience will include a multifaceted art installation highlighting the voices of youth in the community and their experience of 2020, as well as showcasing the impact of incarceration and encouraging a re-imagination of community safety.

**Community Coalition** will create *Culture Cures*, a participatory community altar to lives lost to COVID-19 in South LA. The altar will serve as a way to heal and envision an equitable future where everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

**Mujeres de Maiz** will feature mural pop-ups, performances, art and holistic workshops exploring ancestral wellness topics and digital storytelling presented through a bilingual, intercultural and interdisciplinary lens with a goal of fostering collaboration among neighbors, artists, cultures and communities across LA County's five districts.

**18<sup>th</sup> Street Arts Center** will present *Recovery Justice: Being Well*, a series of self-organized artist workshops, panels and projects addressing wellbeing as key to civic health, one of the central guiding principles of the City of Santa Monica. Dan S. Wang will facilitate ***Together in Contradiction: Asian American Unity Now***, a roundtable discussion on racial justice for Asian Americans. The Arts Learning Lab @ Home will provide take-home art kits with supplies for workshops on the Mexican tradition of paper flower-making, as well as other forms of art for self-care during these uncertain times.

***Love Letters in Light: Messages of Hope, Heartbreak, Resilience, and Love to a County on the Mend***, an installation with over 300 heartfelt and uplifting messages from local poets and artists, installed at 10 Los Angeles County libraries in LED message boards produced by artist and curator **Leila Hamidi** with a group of five core writers that includes **Victoria Chang, féi hernandez, Jerry Quickley, Yesika Salgado** and **Imani Tolliver**. Like slow, analog tweets emitted in light, ***Love Letters in Light*** acknowledges the heartbreak of a county affected by the twin impact of a pandemic and a reckoning of racialized violence. The hundreds of messages include contributions from the greater Los Angeles community, who are invited to submit brief messages of love in 15 words or less at [lovelettersinlight.la](https://lovelettersinlight.la). Selected messages will be shared at one of the participating library locations.

Artistic events and health and wellness experiences provide additional opportunities to connect through mobile murals, live dance and music performances, cooking classes, healing meditations, art-making, storytelling and much more, including the team of **CicLAvia**, LA's beloved open streets event partnering with the artists at Subsuelo for a music-powered bike ride tour of historic Central Ave.

Additionally, Community Pop-Ups will support the greater Los Angeles community by offering resources and supplies to those in need, including food banks and food drives, PPE distribution, COVID-19 education and outreach with an emphasis on access to testing and vaccination, distribution of hygiene boxes to LGBTQ+ youth and art-based healing services to families and individuals impacted by violence and trauma.

## [Art Rise](#)

*\*begins May 7*

Art Rise is a series of 21 art experiences created in collaboration with museums, cultural institutions and artists. Each work in the series uses the power of art toward collective wellbeing, health and connectedness. Taking place across five neighborhoods (Downtown Los Angeles, Koreatown, Mid-Wilshire, Leimert Park, South Central) and intended to be experienced as a whole, Art Rise is composed of 18 art installations and three special projects in 14 locations, from 35 artists and collectives. All are designed to be COVID-safe with socially distanced viewing and are easily accessible by foot, car or Metro.

**Grand Park**, powered by **The Music Center**, will present ***Grand Park's Celebration Spectrum*** by **dublab**, in collaboration with **Tanya Aguiñiga** and curator **Mark "Frosty" McNeill**. This month-long public art installation, programming and digital experience reflects the multifaceted ways in which Los Angeles County's diverse populations express their joy with installations that will create space for all the missed celebrations in Los Angeles during the last year. From May 1–31, 2021, ***Grand Park's Celebration Spectrum***, a TMC Arts program, will transform the outdoor expanse of Grand Park into a deconstructed party, unfolding in a progression of installations that represent the arc of an epic party. Responding to the hurt and heightened anxieties associated with the pandemic, ***Grand Park's Celebration Spectrum*** offers the communities in Los Angeles the opportunity to heal and re-emerge, thanks to the transformative power of the arts.

**LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes'** building will be transformed into a monumental neon mural by Patrick Martinez with social-political messages addressing the plight and resilience of essential workers in Los Angeles. Entitled *Only Light Can Do That*, after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s beloved sermon given in 1957 at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, the more than 25 new neon artworks at this site-specific installation give recognition to essential workers as behind-the-scenes heroes who champion representation and healing for all.

The art collective **Classroom of Compassion** will mount a mixed-media installation and large-scale floral altar titled *Los Angeles, I hope u know how loved u are* featuring photos and stories submitted by the community to remember the many residents lost as a result of COVID-19, particularly in Latinx communities disproportionately affected. The project in collaboration with **The Mistake Room** will be installed in a truck wash lot in Downtown Los Angeles.

**LA Commons** and artist **Dominique Moody** worked with associate artists and youth groups through a series of five story circles in South LA to capture the narratives of residents in their neighborhoods. The resulting "story portraits" will be human-scaled laser-cut metal sculptures that represent each of the storytellers and located in the respective communities in which the storytellers reside, with the full series of eight portraits on view outside of the California African American Museum.

The **Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)** will transform part of its construction fence into an exhibition wall. A series of commissioned works from five different artists – **Scoli Acosta**, **Andy Alexander**, **The Revolution School**, **Favianna Rodriguez** and **Kerry Tribe** – will be displayed in vinyl on the fence along Wilshire Boulevard. The selected artists used various strategies to communicate the vast range of cognitive and affective processing styles that are encompassed within the human experience.

**MOCA's** Little Tokyo location, The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, will be the site of two projects with partner organizations **Crenshaw Dairy Mart** and **Los Angeles Poverty Department**. **Crenshaw Dairy Mart's abolitionist pod (prototype)** will be a garden in the form of a geodesic dome—the first prototype for a design the group hopes to implement across Los Angeles in an ambitious effort to create community gardening and collective gathering spaces across the city. **Los Angeles Poverty Department's** project *The New Compassionate Downtown* is a performance with a cast of eleven performers who live and work in Skid Row and imagines a vision of downtown that attracts people who value wisdom and compassion instead of nightlife and dining.

As a soundtrack companion to Art Rise, **REDCAT** will present *Sed (Thirst)*, a series of 16 sound works by artists **Dorian Wood** and **Carmina Escobar** that connect and engage the various Art Rise sites across Los Angeles.

These and many other artworks and performances will be on view for free throughout May, along with complementary digital experiences to bring people together for help, hope and healing.

### Digital Experience

The Digital Experience features a full month of exciting virtual programs to foster connection, healing and wellbeing. Easily accessible from home, these experiences are all community-centered and provide opportunities for creative expression and mindfulness for all ages. **Self-Care Connected Sundays** will offer workshops in yoga, roller skating, dance and drum circles that engage the LA County community in COVID-safe and mental-health-positive activities. The groundbreaking organization **Get Lit**, which increases literacy and empowers youth through poetry, will host a classic slam and a poetry workshop and competition. Additionally, the Digital Experience will present **Drag Queen Story Hour**, music performances with special guests and artists and a special Memorial Day event, as well as panels and discussions on a range of topics, including the environment, racial justice and contending with and healing from the isolation of the last year. The Digital Experience will also feature content related to both Art Rise and the Community Pop-Ups.

WE RISE 2021 adds to the wide variety of resources and services LACDMH provides. County residents can find information and support 24/7 at [dmh.lacounty.gov](http://dmh.lacounty.gov) and access the Help Line by calling 1-800-854-7771 or texting "LA" to 741741.

WE RISE 2021 will not have any live in-person events. When visiting WE RISE installations and projects, please adhere to all CDC guidelines and safety protocols and take every safety precaution, including social distancing and wearing masks. Please note, WE RISE partners may have limited attendance events and will manage these in accordance with their individual protocols.

For more information, visit [werise.la](http://werise.la) for an event calendar and map. New events are continually being added to the schedule.

### **CALENDAR EDITORS:**

#### **WHAT:**

WE RISE encourages wellbeing and healing through art, connection, community engagement and creative expression. Taking place during May: Mental Health Awareness Month, WE RISE 2021 includes **Art Rise**, a series of twenty outdoor art installations; **Community Pop-Ups**, hyperlocal activities across Los Angeles County neighborhoods; and a robust **Digital Experience**, offering original programs that can be enjoyed from anywhere. All installations and activities are meant to be viewed from a distance, individually or in small groups, in order to remain COVID-safe while still fostering community connection and collective healing.

An initiative of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, WE RISE is needed now more than ever as the region emerges from the isolation of the global pandemic and continues to grapple with related stressors and racial injustice. This is our opportunity to rise together.

#### **WHEN & WHERE:**

May 1 - May 31, 2021

Various locations

Please visit [werise.la](http://werise.la) for event calendar.

#### **TICKETS:**

FREE!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[werise.la](http://werise.la)

*If you or a family member needs help, please call the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Help Line at (800) 854-7771 or text "LA" to 741741, available 24/7. Resources are also available at [dmh.lacounty.gov](http://dmh.lacounty.gov).*

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**About the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH)**

As the nation's largest public mental health department, we ensure access to care and treatment for our most vulnerable residents in a region with more than 10 million people. With an annual budget approaching \$3 billion and a committed staff of 6,000, LACDMH embodies a "heart-forward" approach to supporting hope, recovery and wellbeing across the county. For more information on LACDMH, visit [dmh.lacounty.gov](http://dmh.lacounty.gov) or follow @LACDMH on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

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