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# THE RENDON GALLERY

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## **The Rendon Gallery // Ralph Ziman's *The Casspir Project***

### **Panel Discussion: From Oppression to Expression: Speaking Out Against a History of Violence**

**DATE:** Saturday, February 23, 2019

**TIME:** 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm | 7:15 pm - 8:00 pm (panel discussion)

**LOCATION:** 1242 Palmetto Street | Los Angeles, CA | 90013

**MODERATOR:** Alberto Retana, President & CEO of Community Coalition

**PANELISTS:** Ralph Ziman, South African Artist & Filmmaker, Suzanne Verge, President, Los Angeles Chapter Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Ron Finley, aka The Gangsta Gardener/Founder of The Ron Finley Project, and Mark-Anthony Clayton-Johnson, Founder, Frontline Wellness Network.

**DIALOG:** "From Oppression to Expression" is a conversation on racial oppression throughout history, including apartheid in South Africa and the militarization of police forces around the world. Using Ralph Ziman's *The Casspir Project* as a jumping off point, the panel will discuss disarmament, gun control, and the effectiveness of nonviolent forms of self-expression in response to violent oppression.

The fact that armored vehicles like the Casspir are now showing up on the streets of America during public protests highlights the fact that policing in America and Europe is more like apartheid South Africa than ever. How can this brutality best be addressed?

**BIOS:**

**MODERATOR:** Alberto Retana, President & CEO of Community Coalition

Alberto Retana is the President and CEO of Community Coalition, a nonprofit organization based in South Los Angeles that empowers residents to transform their communities, improve education, and reimagine public safety. Alberto graduated from UCLA with a degree in political science. He joined Community Coalition in 1998 as a youth organizer, and played various leadership roles within the organization. From 2009 to 2011, Alberto worked for the Obama administration in the U.S. Department of Education as Director of Community Outreach. During his time in D.C., he organized the Department's first National Youth Summit, and worked with thousands of community leaders across the country on turning around the nation's "push-out" crisis. Alberto's leadership has resulted in his recognition by the *Los Angeles Business Journal* as one of LA's 500 Most Influential People, and ACLU's Educational Equity Award. He is currently on Advancement Project LA's Board of Directors. Alberto has also completed two prestigious fellowships: Rockwood's "Leading from the Inside Out" fellowship in 2017 and the Atlantic Fellowship for Racial Equity in 2018. Alberto is the son of Mexican and Costa Rican immigrants. He currently lives in South Los Angeles with his wife, Jennifer Arceneaux, and their two children, Emile and Kahlo.

## **PANELISTS**

### **Ralph Ziman, South African Artist & Filmmaker**

Originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, artist and filmmaker Ralph Ziman is based in Los Angeles. Ralph's artwork has shown in solo exhibitions at Joseph Gross Gallery in Tucson, Arizona, and C.A.V.E. Gallery in Venice, California, as well as group exhibitions at the National Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts in Brooklyn, New York, and the FNP Art Fair in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has been featured in *Art in America*, BBC, CNN, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, among other publications. His award-winning film projects have screened at prestigious festivals around the world, including Berlinale International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, and Zurich Film Festival. His feature film *Jerusalema* was short-listed for a Best Foreign Film Language Academy Award nomination in 2008.

### **Suzanne Verge, President, Los Angeles Chapter, Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence**

Suzanne Verge is President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Suzanne has been involved since the Million Mom March on Mother's Day 2000 in Washington, D.C. Suzanne traveled to Washington to be the voice for her brother who had been murdered two weeks before Christmas back in 1978. On that momentous day, Suzanne realized she was not alone and she was now part of movement to fight for sensible gun legislation. Suzanne received the 2009 Sarah

Brady Visionary Award and 2005 Woman of the Year award for the 41st Assembly District.

### **Ron Finley, a.k.a. The Gangsta Gardener,” Founder of The Ron Finley Project**

Armed with a shovel, some soil and seeds, Ron Finley is a renegade gardener,” whose unexpected tactics have made him one of Los Angeles’ most widely known activists. Frustrated by his community’s lack of access to fresh, organic food, Ron inadvertently started a revolution when he turned the parkway in front of his South Central L.A. home into an edible garden in 2010. His goal was simple; bring healthy food to an area where there was none, which made him see firsthand how gardens build community and change people’s lives. This experience blossomed into a quest to change how we eat and to teach youth that they have the capacity to design their own lives. Based in L.A., Ron is now working on the The Ron Finley Project, which has ignited a horticultural revolution worldwide. He speaks at global conferences and in classrooms regularly, spreading his gardening gospel. He wants the world to know that if you change your food, you change your life!

### **Mark-Anthony Clayton-Johnson, Founder, Frontline Wellness Network**

Mark-Anthony Clayton-Johnson is a licensed acupuncturist and an experienced organizer. He served as the Director of Health and Wellness at Dignity and Power Now, where he provided strategic support for DPN’s two member-led campaigns for a legally empowered and independent civilian oversight commission of the sheriff’s department and to stop Los Angeles’ proposed \$4 billion jail construction plan. He also led the Building Resilience project, a collaboration of formerly incarcerated people, organizers, health care providers and academics whose goal is to decarcerate the county jails. Mark-Anthony currently sits on the Executive Committee of JusticeLA, a grassroots broad-based coalition pushing Los Angeles County to divest from the proposed \$4 billion jail construction plan and invest in the diversion of incarcerated people and community-based treatment. He is also a teacher with Generative Somatics and Black Organizers for Leadership and Dignity, an organization committed to building Black movement infrastructure and developing Black leaders. As a 2017 Soros Justice Fellow, Mark-Anthony founded the Frontline Wellness Network, a California statewide network of healthcare providers working to end the public health crisis of incarceration through political education and bridging relationships between providers and grassroots organizations.