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## SOCIAL AND PUBLIC ART RESOURCE CENTER

## SPARC NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 11, 2000



CIRCA 1976

Contact: Willie Herrón

(949) 581-8710

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**WORLD RENOWNED CHICANO MURALIST, WILLIE HERRÓN, FINDS HIS  
WORK ONCE AGAIN TARGETED BY LOS ANGELES COUNTY GRAFFITI  
ABATEMENT CREW.**

Willie Herrón's *The Plumed Serpent*, a landmark Chicano mural, completed in 1972 in the same alley that boasts *The Wall That Cracked Open* (restored earlier this year after a similar incident), has fallen victim to an overzealous Los Angeles County Graffiti Abatement Crew. The piece has been targeted and hit more than once by the anti-graffiti forces, with the final blow being a sloppy novice painting of olive-drab vines with dripping stenciled leaves which give the impression of strangling the spirit of *The Plumed Serpent*. The second of his world renowned murals to fall victim to County Graffiti Abatement crews, the artist has been unsuccessful in acquiring funds from the Los Angeles Department of Public Works for restoration, and is left with no other option but to board up the work to protect it from further paint-overs.

A mural dedicated to the artist's brothers from La Geraghty Loma and friends lost to gang warfare, *The Plumed Serpent* was one of Herrón's first major public artworks and is considered along with his *The Wall That Cracked Open* to be among the most powerful and renowned of the Chicano murals. The first Chicano artist to overtly incorporate the personal placas or graffiti name inscriptions of the youth who had over generations organized into barrio gangs to defend their ever-diminishing urban territory. In doing so, he was able to legitimize his visual design and message into the aesthetic realm of the barrio youth whom he wanted to reach. Herrón's work was immediately hailed as a substantial contribution to the advancement of world art and art history; his unique painting style revealed a fresh and critical mixture of his own Chicano musical and visual development fused with elements of past Mexican mural masters such as Siqueiros. Herrón now finds that he shares more in common with Siqueiros than style, Siqueiros' 1932 Los Angeles mural *America Tropical* was whitewashed due to controversial subject matter.

Anyone able to donate financial support for bringing this important mural back is asked to contact Willie Herrón at (949) 581-8710.

685 VENICE BOULEVARD VENICE, CALIFORNIA 90291  
(310) 122-9560 (310) 827-8717 FAX  
[www.SPARCMURALS.ORG](http://www.SPARCMURALS.ORG)

FOUNDER / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: JUDITH F. BACA



M E M O R A N D U M

949 581-8710

From: Herron

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4.3.00

ATTN: DENISE,

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR  
your kindness and loyalty  
I enjoyed our conversation  
& for sharing your ideas

I've sent you a copy of  
THE LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM  
MAX FOR YOUR REVIEW.

AS SOON AS YOU GET A MOMENT,  
CAN YOU PUT ONE ON YOUR (LHM)  
LETTERHEAD, FAX ME A COPY  
& MAIL ORIGINAL TO 27068 LA PAZ  
RD., SUITE 317, ALISO VIEJO CA 92656  
FAX # 949 581-8710

Will



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July 28, 2000

Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Los Angeles, California

OFFICE OF THE  
ASSISTANT VICE CHANCELLOR  
UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS  
BOX 051415  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1405

Dear Supervisor Molina:

I am writing in support of the restoration of Willie Herron III's mural, "The Plumed Serpent." Due to the whitewashing of this glorious historical artwork by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works' Graffiti Abatement Program, "The Plumed Serpent" needs to be restored. Clearly, the restoration should be funded by the County of Los Angeles.

I know that you are a great supporter of Chicano and Latino art in Los Angeles. In fact, your office and you, in particular, are responsible for funding the restoration of "The Wall That Cracked Open," also by Mr. Herron. I commend you for supporting the restoration of this aesthetic masterpiece.

In addition to my duties as the head of communications of UCLA, I am also adjunct faculty in UCLA Cesar Chavez Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. One of the courses I teach is "Chicano Art and Culture in Los Angeles." As an art historian, I can tell you that Mr. Herron's work is world class and, in my professional opinion, the match of any work by any artist in any place on the globe.

Given the role that the County's graffiti abatement program played in the defacement of "The Plumed Serpent" and Mr. Herron's standing as a world-class artist who has created some of the masterworks of Chicano art, I feel it is incumbent upon the County to fund the restoration of his work.

I urge you to do all you can to restore this great work of art by shepherding the proper appropriation through the proper County offices. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Max Benavidez  
Assistant Vice Chancellor, Communications  
(310) 825-9045