

ROSE SLA Hosts Screening and Community Conversation on the Grim Sleeper Murders in South LA

Group continues push for permanent memorial in South LA park to victims

By Jasmyne Cannick

On Saturday, February 15, Reclaiming Our Sisters Everywhere South LA (ROSE SLA), a project of the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, hosted a powerful afternoon of truth-telling, remembrance, and healing with a special screening of *Tales of the Grim Sleeper* at the Exposition Park - Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Regional Branch, Los Angeles Public Library in South LA. The event was part of ROSE SLA's ongoing series creating space for collective healing in response to the public health crisis of serial murders targeting Black women in the community. The series of workshops is supported in part by Arts in California Parks.

Following the screening, attendees moved to the adjacent Martin Luther King Jr. Park for a community conversation—an intentional shift from an enclosed space of witnessing to an open space of dialogue, reflection, and resistance. This location was significant, as the park is where ROSE SLA and the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders hope to establish a permanent memorial honoring the victims whose lives were stolen by violence and neglect.

Confronting the Truth

Directed by Nick Broomfield, *Tales of the Grim Sleeper* exposes the decades-long terror inflicted on South LA's Black women by Lonnie Franklin Jr., the serial murderer known as the Grim Sleeper. More than just a recounting of his crimes, the film also shines a light on the systemic disregard for Black women's lives—how law enforcement ignored missing persons reports, how media coverage was nonexistent, and how the community was left to grieve and organize for justice on its own.

For many attendees, the film was both a painful reminder and a necessary reckoning. "It's hard to watch, but what's harder is knowing that the violence against Black women never stopped," said one participant. "We are still fighting to be seen, to be valued, to be protected."

Community Conversation in the Park

The post-screening discussion, led by attorney and Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders member Nana Gyamfi, who was also featured in the film, created space for people to process what they had just watched. Sitting on chairs set up in the park, attendees spoke about the trauma that lingers, the failures of the justice system, and the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Black women.

"People were able to connect across generations and even across racial lines because they all shared a bond with this community," said Gyamfi. "That was the first thing everyone said—'I live here,' or 'I used to live here,' or 'I'm connected to this place.' And then, as the conversation

deepened, many admitted they had no idea these murders had happened. They spoke about the pain of learning this history, the shock of how it was ignored, but also the deep connection they felt to the women in the film—especially in those final moments, which really resonated. You could feel the collective energy—everyone was overwhelmingly in support of having this memorial. They saw it as more than just a monument—it would be a place to hold memory, to honor these women, but also to celebrate community, to cherish life, and to make sure that those we've lost are never forgotten.”

Dorian, who grew up in the very community where Franklin carried out his crimes, gave an emotional testimony about the deep pain and anger she feels knowing that the police once labeled his victims as “*No Humans Involved*.” The phrase, used by the Los Angeles Police Department to classify cases involving marginalized victims—particularly Black women, sex workers, and those living in poverty—was a stark reminder of just how little value was placed on these lives.

“It just makes me angry,” Dorian said, her voice thick with emotion. “These were mothers, daughters, sisters, friends. They were human. They had names, dreams, people who loved them. But the system didn’t see them that way. They saw them as disposable, as not worth the effort, and that’s why it took decades for justice to even begin. The police ignored our community. They ignored our pain. And they let this man keep killing.”

Her words resonated deeply with the crowd, many of whom nodded in agreement, some wiping away tears. The sentiment was clear—this was not just about a single serial murderer, but about an entire system that allowed him to operate unchecked for so long. Dorian’s testimony underscored why the fight for justice and remembrance is far from over, and why the work of ROSE SLA and the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders remains as urgent as ever.

Gyamfi added, “So in contrast to the assertion that there were no humans involved in--NHI--it was clear from the reaction of the community that in fact, those sisters are humans, were humans, and were a part of the community that we all are a part of. And in spite of the attacks on their physicality and on their dignity, Black women's lives count.”

Art in the Park with A Purpose

Renowned artist Michael Massenburg, who has been tapped to design the permanent memorial honoring the victims in Martin Luther King Jr. Park, was in attendance, lending his presence and insight to the afternoon’s discussion. Massenburg, who grew up on Figueroa and 90th Streets in South LA, is known for his powerful public art that reflects history, resilience, and community, and has been working closely with ROSE SLA and the *Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders* to ensure the memorial serves as both a tribute and a call to action. His participation underscored the importance of art in healing and remembrance, as well as the urgency of creating a lasting space to honor the lives of the women taken by violence.

“To me, it’s not about the art—it’s about the impact,” Massenburg shared. “Creating meaningful artwork is part of my purpose, and this memorial is bigger than just aesthetics. It’s not just going

to be something nice and pretty that people glance at and then move on. It has to hold weight. It has to tell a story. This is about making sure that every person who encounters this piece—whether it's someone who lived through these tragedies or a young person years from now—feels that connection. I want each generation that experiences this memorial to understand the history, to recognize the ongoing fight for justice, and to feel a sense of responsibility to protect Black women. This isn't just about remembrance; it's about making sure their lives continue to speak."

Healing Through Herbs

As part of the healing process, attendees were led in creating fresh herbal tea bundles and herbal protection bundles, infusing the gathering with intention and care. Using a mix of lavender, rosemary, sage, and other medicinal herbs, participants crafted tea bundles designed to soothe the body and spirit, while the protection bundles symbolized strength, resilience, and ancestral safeguarding. This hands-on ritual served as a reminder that healing is both personal and collective—rooted in tradition, community, and the simple yet powerful act of nurturing oneself and others.

For more information on how to support ROSE SLA and the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, visit rosesouthla.org.