



MEDIA ALERT
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**“50 Years and I Still Can’t Breathe:
Remembering the 50th Anniversary of the
1965 Watts Rebellion and Now”**

**Exhibition on View
at the
Watts Towers Arts Center Campus**

Los Angeles – The Watts Towers Arts Center Campus in conjunction with the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum presents ***50 Years and I Still Can’t Breathe: Remembering the 50th Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion and Now*** on view at the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus in the Noah Purifoy Gallery through February 28, 2016.

The exhibition presents one of the most compelling collections of socially conscious art in California in many years. Curated by Watts Towers Arts Center Campus Director Rosie Lee Hooks and artist Michael Massenburg, the show addresses themes of legal and police injustice against minority communities from the Watts Rebellion to the present.

In the exhibition, 32 multicultural artists comment on injustices that took place during the rebellion and continue today. During six days of the rebellion the week of August 11, 1965, 34 lives were lost; more than 1,000 people were injured; over 3,000 individuals were arrested; and upwards of \$40 million in property damage occurred. The atmosphere of oppression, institutional racism, and neglect still exists as noted throughout the art of this socially conscious exhibition.

The exhibition features original documentation of the 1965 Watts Rebellion, along with media accounts of the traumatic events of that August, in addition to primary source documents such as the McCone Commission’s report. The centerpiece of the exhibition is Toni Scott’s majestically disconcerting installation “Death at the Hands of Police.” Situated in the middle of the main exhibition space, this three-dimensional work features a plaster cast of a black man mounted on wood with a conspicuous target on his chest, emblematic of the



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deeper peril facing young black and brown men today. Over his face is a cloth reading, "I Can't Breathe." On both sides of the plaster figure, the artist has written an unnerving list of 82 names of people of color who have died in police custody from 1999 through 2014. Hand-written in chalk, the list compiles the all too many names of both familiar and lesser-know victims.

The works are overpowering in their impact and demonstrate the power of art to contest social injustice. They compel viewers to swiftly and viscerally grasp the human tragedy of murder and the brutal reality of the slogan "Black Lives Matter." Two smaller casts entitled "I Can't Breathe" draw poignantly on Eric Garner's last words as he died during a chokehold by New York City police officers on July 17, 2014. In the exhibition statement, the curators indicate the title of the exhibition comes from this tragedy: "Eric Garner was a human being with a family, with feelings and with hopes and aspirations for the future, whose murder should never be forgotten. He died saying, '*I can't Breathe, I can't Breathe, I can't...*' We still can't breathe in Watts."

The exhibition artists include: Lalo Alcaraz, Sharon Barnes, April Bey, Siobhan O'Mochain Breathnach, Debby Brewer, Lavielle Campbell, Junco Cache, Kenneth Carnes, Dales Davis, Harry Drinkwater, George Evans, Al Khanasa, Alden Kimbrough, Toni Love, Michael Massenburg, Jay Messinger, Ernesto Yerena Montejano, Rosalyn Myles, Max Neufeldt, Noni Olabisi, Elliott Pinkney, Greg Pitts, Judson Powell, Noah Purifoy, Lilia Ramirez, Betye Saar, Ruth Saturensky, Leon Saulter, Aruthur Secunda, Toni Scott, Joseph Sims, and Gordon Wagner.

The Watts Towers Arts Center Campus is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and is located at 17127 East 107th Street, Los Angeles. Admission is free. The Noah Purifoy Gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, please call 213.847.4646.

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