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CONTACT: MARION MACKENZIE/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-5621/922-2700
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MTA HONORS ITS EMPLOYEES THROUGH TRANSIT ART

In honor of the men and women who make the Metro Bus system work, the MTA has released its third set of bus posters featuring the stories and photos of four more of its employees.

The interior posters, which are now visible on 2,000 Metro Buses throughout Los Angeles County, showcase the photographs of Willie Garcia and the texts of writer Marisela Norte.

"Not only are these people's lives fascinating and unique, but they also help put a human face on the MTA," said Maya Emsden, who heads the Metro Art Program. "Additionally, it helps those of us in the agency to get to know each other a little better and feel closer as a community."

First among the featured employees is Metro Bus operator Louie Madrigal who has been driving with the MTA for more than 14 years. To his riders, he's the friendly guy who takes them where they need to go, but to his high school wrestling team, Louie is the coach who led them to first place in the San Gabriel Valley wrestling championships and fifth place in Southern California.

"I was too small for college football, so I wrestled instead," said Madrigal. "I just sort of fell into it. It's great for the kids. It teaches them discipline, helps them set goals, handle disappointments and bounce back."

The second poster features a smiling Yvon Davis. During the day, Davis uses her hands to earn a living as a stenographer at the MTA Long Beach Division. But nights and on Sundays, her voice is the instrument as she sings in the choir at Greater New Vision Missionary Baptist Church.

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"I've been singing about the Gospel for 13 years," says Davis, "It's my greatest joy."

A lifetime commitment to martial arts is what characterizes Metro Bus operator Ricardo Kingi. Eighteen years ago he opened the Kajukembo Institute of Self-Defense in Inglewood where he is the chief instructor. Kingi also works with 'at-risk' teens through an LAPD-sponsored Jeopardy and Vandalism Abatement Program at the MTA. He has been driving a Metro bus for 22 years out of the West Hollywood division.

Kingi says he tells his students: "Self-respect is the bottom line. Keep your mind open and it's a lifetime of learning."

Senior Communications Analyst Irma Licea is Metro Art's fourth featured employee.

"Language allows us to reclaim our past and future," declares Licea. "In my thesis titled *The Transformation of the Chicana Identity* I've gone through a self-evaluation and a self-journey exploring issues of cultural history, gender and sexuality."

Licea says she's writes from a positive place.

"Writing is the most powerful tool because you're setting the record straight, and you're getting your voice out."

Metro Art invites artists to participate in a variety of permanent and temporary projects throughout the Metro Bus System with the objective of making transit more friendly to commuters and neighborhoods. Artists are selected by panels which include art professionals and community members. To date, the MTA has commissioned more than 130 artists for projects at Metro Rail and Metrolink stations, the Gateway Transit Center, and the Metro Bus system.

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