



Zuma Dogg FREE Speech on Venice Beach



By JOE FASBINDER
SPECIAL TO YO! VENICE

"I'm five dollars away from killing myself," wrote Venice icon, rap star, blogger and all-around public irritant Zuma Dogg in a tweet on August 2.

"They're killing me," said Dogg, who previously went by the moniker David Saltsburg. "I can't sell my T-shirts on the Boardwalk."

Right now, he's living in low-income housing in Venice, just footsteps from the Boardwalk, where he can't sell his Venice Spirit logo garments.

But it isn't because he didn't try. Mr. Dogg is a regular at Los Angeles City Council meetings. Sometimes he causes quite a stir as he fights for what he sees as First Amendment rights to express his opinion on cloth. "You can wear a billboard that has a political opinion on it, but you can't buy a Venice Spirit T-shirt because that violates City policy," said Dogg.

He's taken his case to the Council on several occasions. One time recently, he broke into song. Rap song:

"We don't need no legislation.
"We don't need no beach patrol.
"No politicians on the boardwalk.
"Council, leave our beach alone! Hootie-hoo!"

About the situation, Dogg said, "They're killing me. I can't sell my T-shirts and I can't live."

Right now, he's got only one brick-and-mortar outlet for his Venice Spirit creations: Nutri-



tion Warehouse in Venice. "And that's just because they like me," he said. Sales are lousy. "I also sell them on venicespsirit.com"

Dogg makes it clear, this thing isn't just money. It's about rights. It's about the homeless.

Look through his videos on the internet and you'll see him cruising on a bike while videotaping a homeless encampment just blocks from the Boardwalk, with a voiceover that says nobody's doing anything about it. But he's saying it in a colorful manner – lots of f-bombs.

"They camped out by the temple," said Dogg. "When the City got ahold of them about maybe showing some compassion, they put up no trespassing signs."

There have been efforts on behalf of the City to help with the problem, but they haven't been

effective. "All the [City Councilmembers] care about is million-dollar condos. They aren't doing s****."

Still, Zuma Dogg has a soft place in his heart for the late Los Angeles City Councilmember Bill Rosenthal, who passed away in March. "After he got sick, he had me over to his house, and we were hanging out. Like the Odd Couple."

It was Rosenthal who backed him on efforts to get the boardwalk to open up to his T-shirt sales – who let him carry out some of his more lively antics before the City Council. Dogg has been known to show up in costume, to sing (to the best of his ability) to dance, even to dance off the podium where he has been speaking, bob his head while rapping out his lamentations and generally making himself a colorful presence in a sometimes staid venue.

Zuma Dogg peppers his rhetoric generously with blue language.

"I mean, what the f***." It's a statement of how things are and how he wants things to be.

"They all gravitate here," noted Dogg. "Look at it... They all come here. Everyone comes here. The weather is fine and it's mostly easy living."

Except when you're five dollars away from killing yourself.

"I gotta find some way to sell my T-shirts, I sometimes wind up schlepping them around on hangers myself. I need a distributor," he said.

Dial into Venice 311 online and you'll see why Zuma Dogg is so glum.

There you'll find their article: "How To Be A Venice Beach Boardwalk Vendor / Artist / Performer / Free Speech Advocate."

"The Venice Boardwalk has approximately 205 spaces designated for artists, vendors, performers and persons engaging in free speech. In February of 2012 modifications were made to the rules on "vending" on the Venice Beach boardwalk. Read the ordinance if you want to be a vendor.

"Vending spaces are free, and are available on a "first come, first served" basis daily. You do not need a permit to vend, but you need a city sales permit which all businesses need. Performing in spaces is permitted given that you "rotate" on a schedule if other performers also want to use the same space.

"Vending hours are from 9 a.m. to sunset daily. You may not set up in a space or "mark" a space prior to 9 a.m. You must wait adjacent to the vending space you wish to occupy. Waiting on the grassy area is encouraged so you do no obstruct pedestrians or merchants along the buildings on ocean front walk. Parking is minimal, most vendors park a few blocks away and roll their vending items and tables in on a rolling cart.

"If you plan on selling anything you must have a sellers permit from the City of Los Angeles. If you don't the cops will kick you off the boardwalk and/or give you a ticket.

"Items prohibited from sales: If you plan on selling items, they must be hand crafted only, or reflect permitted free speech items. The list can be found in the ordinance. However here is a list of a few common items people often ask questions about.

"You may not sell: Food of any kind (you can only give it away for free in two designated spaces with a permit.)

"Animals of any kind, ever. That means you cannot sell your litter of puppies or kittens along the boardwalk.

"Commercial, mass produced items – even if they look hand made.

"Jewelry. That's right – you can't sell jewelry even if you make it.

"Clothing or items that have "nominal utility" or "use."

"For the second time no clothing at all.

"No clothing at all.

"No clothing at all means ties, hair bows, tshirts, socks, hats, or anything you can wear. No no no!!!"

That makes it pretty clear, and it makes Zuma Dogg sad.

"I gotta get some help here," he said. "I'm going out of my mind."

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