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Slab City Stories

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Title: Slab City Stories

Author: Jessica Lum

"Slab City Stories" is a multimedia visual journalism project documenting the people and residents of Slab City, a squatter community in southern California.

The project can be viewed online at <http://slabcitystories.com>

Slab City, located about two miles east of Niland, California, is home to a few dozen during blistering summers, but draws thousands during the temperate winter season. These migrating snowbirds seek the sun and warmth of the California desert, as well as the alternative lifestyle that flourishes here. Slab City is named for the remains of concrete foundations that dot the area, once part of the military naval reservation, Camp Dunlap. The site was decommissioned in 1956 and deeded to the state of California in 1961.

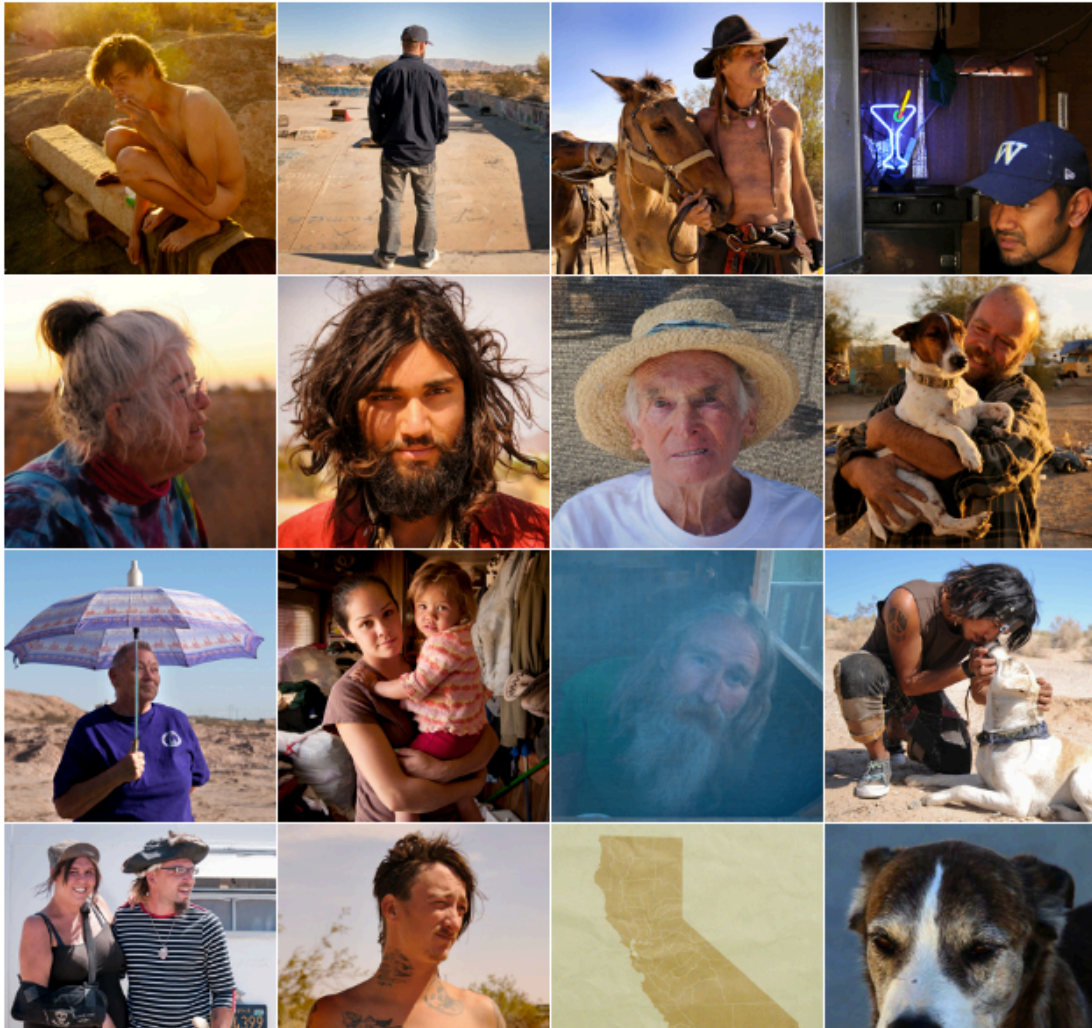
Residents of "The Slabs," as it is called, are squatters living in trailers and recreational vehicles in various stages of upkeep: broken-down or brand new "land yachts" worth several hundred thousands. Many people also build their own structures, tents and shacks.

Most subsist off of food stamps or social security benefits: usually for retirement or disability. Some support themselves through barter, trade and odd jobs from other Slabbers, or Slab City residents.

Slab City is a vibrant community, home to artists and musicians who create and display their work in places like East Jesus' art garden or Builder Bill's stage, The Range, which hosts a weekly open mic show every Saturday night. Residents join social clubs like the Oasis Club or Loners on Wheels where they meet for morning coffee, meals and happy hours. Others prefer to live on the edge of it all, because even in the desert, quiet can be hard to find.

SLAB CITY STORIES

SQUATTERS, SNOWBIRDS AND WANDERERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S DESERT



A preview of the main website, <http://slabcitystories.com>

SLAB CITY STORIES




Justin Davis created a skate and trick bicycle park in the concrete remains of an old swimming pool that was once part of the now decommissioned military base, Camp Dunlap. Davis came to Slab City six years ago, after losing his job with a carnival company in Indio, Calif. Now, Davis says he makes his own living in the Slabs, working odd jobs for cash and bartering for goods. His personal project is the skate park, which draws traveling street kids, musicians and skaters from surrounding cities.

The project includes several video profiles on Slab City residents.

SLAB CITY STORIES



The project also includes portraits of “Slabbers,” along with index cards they filled out describing their connection with Slab City.



ABOUT SLAB CITY

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Finally, the project also includes information about the place.