

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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LONG BEACH READS ONE BOOK 2010

***THE SOLOIST* by STEVE LOPEZ**

Activities Wednesday March 3 through Sunday, March 14

Backgrounder on Steve Lopez

Author Steve Lopez is an American journalist who has been a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* since 2001. Lopez is author of three novels: [Third And Indiana](#) (1994); [The Sunday Macaroni Club](#) (1997); [In the Clear](#) (2002) and two non-fictions [Land of Giants](#) (1995) and [The Soloist](#) (2008).

From an interview with Neil Minow: "Steve Lopez thought maybe he would get a column out of the homeless man who was playing a violin with only two strings. He did get a column, and then more, and then a book, a friend, a lot of complications, an education, and a cause. The man he saw on the street was Nathaniel Ayers. The book is called *The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music.*" The selection for the 2010 **Long Beach Reads One Book**.

A Lost Dream, An Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music

When Steve Lopez sees Nathaniel Ayers playing his heart out on a two-string violin on Los Angeles's Skid Row, he envisions this "Violin Man" as the topic of his next column for the *Los Angeles Times*-- only to unearth an even more extraordinary story about the mysterious street musician. □ More than thirty years earlier, Ayers had been a promising classical bass student at Juilliard--ambitious, charming and also one of the few African-Americans at the school--until he gradually lost his ability to function, overcome by a mental breakdown. When Lopez finds him, Ayers is alone, suspicious of everyone and deeply troubled, but glimmers of that brilliance are still there. From an impromptu concert of Beethoven's Eighth - **MORE**

PAGE 2 - LONG BEACH READS ONE BOOK – STEVE LOPEZ

in the Second Street tunnel to a performance of Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suites on Skid Row, the two men learn to communicate through Ayer's music. Their bond takes torturous turns as Lopez imagines he can change Ayer's life--finding him lodging, reconnecting him with his family, taking him to Disney Concert Hall to meet a former Juilliard classmate. For each triumph, there is a crushing disappointment, yet neither man gives up. And though it's Ayers he initially sets out to save, Lopez finds that his own life is profoundly changed.

THE SOLOIST explores Friendship, Music, Art, Homelessness, Mental Health and Journalism.

Soloist is a symphony, providing an honest look at mental illness, human dignity and the need for social connection. It is also a call to action. As masters of their arts, Steve Lopez and Nathaniel Ayers deserve a standing ovation."

- Michael J. Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

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