

has planted a triangular patch of roses in the raised curb of a parking lot divider. The Panthers, and the building in which they did their work, are long gone.

Less than a mile to the east of the former BPP headquarters, an immense field filled with nothing but weeds and dirt and enclosed by chain-link fence affords an open view of the high-rises of downtown Los Angeles. If you look hard, you might find a few nopal plants—evidence that, not long ago, this was the site of the South Central Farm, the largest urban farm in the nation, and before that, it was the site of a successful community-led struggle to prevent the building of a toxic incinerator. But if you don't look closely or know these histories, this is just another ugly, abandoned industrial lot in South L.A.

In a park five miles farther east, teenagers bounce a basketball back and forth. On this weekday, the swing sets and slides of the modest playground are empty and the dirt baseball field goes unused. There is no trace of the footsteps and chants of the tens of thousands of people who filled this park on a hot day in August 1970 to protest the Vietnam War. The Chicano Moratorium, as it is known, was the largest antiwar action on the part of any ethnic community in the United States. Nor would you know that the tiny clothing store on nearby Whittier Boulevard was once a café where the renowned Mexican American journalist Rubén Salazar was shot and killed by an L.A. sheriff's deputy during his coverage of the event, and that that is why the park—formerly known

as Laguna Park—has been named Ruben Salazar Park, in his honor.

Los Angeles is filled with ghosts—not only of people, but also of places and buildings and the ordinary and extraordinary moments and events that once filled them. There are many such places throughout the region; still others are being created while you read this. This book is a guide to such landscapes, moments, and events. Taking the form of a tourist guidebook, it both celebrates the victories occasionally won through popular struggles and mourns those struggles that have been lost.

A People's Guide to Los Angeles is a deliberate political disruption of the way Los Angeles is commonly known and experienced. A guidebook may seem an unusual or unlikely political intervention, but as representations of both history and geography, guidebooks play a critical role in reinforcing inequality and relations of power. Guidebooks select sites, put them on a map, and interpret them in terms of their historical and contemporary significance. All such representations are inherently political, because they highlight some perspectives while overlooking others. Struggles over who and what counts as “historic” and worthy of a visit involve decisions about who belongs and who doesn't, who is worth remembering and who can be forgotten, who we have been and who we are becoming. Since all historic processes occur somewhere, these questions inherently involve geographic priorities, biases, and exclusions, as some places are celebrated, others are de-emphasized, and still others are literally left off the map. Thus,

while not usually thought of as “political,” guidebooks contribute to inequality in places like Los Angeles, not only by directing tourist and investment dollars toward some places and not others, but also by socializing visitors and locals alike about who and what is valuable, and—by implication—who and what is not.

Los Angeles, a city that has been built on tourism and self-promotion for more than 150 years, certainly has no shortage of guidebooks.* They range from the conventional, such as *Fodor's Los Angeles* or *Time Out Los Angeles*, to the whimsical, such as *Los Angeles Off the Beaten Path* or the *Zagat Los Angeles Dating and Dumping Guide*. However, these guidebooks convey a severely limited image of Los Angeles as a place of glamour, wealth, and fame or the home of eccentric, creative individuals; such representations clearly ignore the vast majority of the city's population, as well as the social relations that shape their lives. Furthermore, mainstream guidebooks typically describe and interpret their sites through the story of one person—almost always a man, and usually the capitalist who invested in a place, or its architect or designer. In doing so, they reinforce an individualized and masculinist way of thinking about history. Meanwhile, the collectives of people who actually cre-

ated, built, or used the space remain nameless. The Bradbury Building in downtown Los Angeles is an excellent example. Most mainstream guidebooks credit the creative contributions of the architect, George Wyman. We agree that the Bradbury Building is significant, but most accounts of it are incomplete. Who were the workers that constructed the edifice? How did Lewis Bradbury, who commissioned the building, make his fortune? (He owned a mine in Mexico). How has the building been used? How has it fit into a larger pattern of urban development in downtown Los Angeles?

Such conventional interpretations correspond to larger geographic biases and exclusions. Most mainstream guidebooks direct visitors primarily to the Westside, Hollywood, and downtown Los Angeles. Sometimes, portions of the San Fernando Valley and Long Beach are also included. These areas have historically been—and, to some extent, still are—inhabited disproportionately by people who are white, prosperous, famous, or powerful; they are also persistently overrepresented not only in guidebooks but also in other depictions of Los Angeles, such as movies and television shows. Meanwhile, South Los Angeles and East Los Angeles are regularly and systematically excluded.

In South Los Angeles, only the Watts Towers and occasionally the historic Dunbar Hotel are featured; in the Eastside, just a few restaurants, such as the upscale La Serenata de Garibaldi or the renowned El Tepeyac Café, are considered worthy of tourists'

*A word on our usage of the term *city*: Although the municipality of Los Angeles is the largest and the dominant city in Los Angeles County, we often use the term *city* simply to refer to the greater metropolitan area, which includes nearly 90 distinct municipalities as well as swaths of unincorporated county land. We make it clear when the term refers to the city proper.

PERSONAL REFLECTION BY GARY
PHILLIPS, ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR OF
THE IVAN MONK MYSTERY SERIES

There is a Los Angeles of gloss and career angst and virtual whiteness, as depicted in the cable show *Entourage* and books like *The Informers*, that is not your L.A. It is not an L.A. of Korean barbecue taco trucks after *medianoche* in Pico Union, old heads playing dominoes and reminiscing about catching the Chi-Lites at Maverick's Flat back when, or the struggle by organizers and agitators to make this a sustainable city for all its residents, fighting for decent conditions and a say. This is the substrata informing my genre fiction . . . and I wouldn't have it any other way.

(and locals') time and energy. Indeed, in some guidebooks, maps literally stop at the 10 freeway—excluding the vast communities to the south, most of them Black and Latina/o—and at the Los Angeles River, which separates the Greater Eastside and its historic Latina/o and Asian American communities from the rest of the city. These omissions are hardly accidental. They deflect attention away from some of the county's most impoverished, segregated, and polluted neighborhoods, and therefore away from the forces of systematic neglect and oppression that have created such conditions. Such representations also obscure the collective efforts, past and present, of the creative ordinary people who live and work there—people who have raised healthy families and built strong communities amid formidable conditions, and who have led vibrant, in-

novative movements to resist environmental racism, the expansion of the prison-industrial complex, state violence, and residential segregation, among other forces.

What would happen if we refocused our attention on those people and places that are systematically left off the map? This book does exactly that. *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* creates a dramatically different perspective on the region: one that centers on the analysis of power and inequality. It shares the perspectives and histories of those who have been systematically excluded from most representations of the city's history: the working class and the poor, indigenous peoples, people of color, women, immigrants, gays and lesbians, environmental justice activists, political radicals, and other marginalized groups. We question common thinking about which places are desirable and worthy of time, money, and attention. We uncover the labor and hope of subordinated people and places. We show how everyday people are exploited and disenfranchised by capital and the state; how those same people sometimes mobilize to create alternative forms of power; how racism, sexism, class differences, and homophobia lead to struggle and conflict; how dominant ideas are memorialized in landscapes; and how Los Angeles has been a constant site of struggle between nature and people. Through this process we “flip the script” of the typical tourist guidebook, not only in terms of which stories and places we focus on, but also how those stories and places are interpreted.

Recasting the narrative in this way requires a fundamentally different approach to seeing and experiencing physical space. Specifically, it requires an appreciation for vernacular landscapes—landscapes of the ordinary and everyday. *Landscape* refers to what a place looks like, or to its character. To understand what a landscape is, you need only stand outside and look around. Everything you see creates a unique, interesting, and constantly changing landscape. All landscapes reflect the contemporary period, offering information about the practices and everyday life of the people currently using and inhabiting a place. Yet landscapes also provide evidence about past generations, economic and political regimes, and ecologies. History is literally embedded in the landscape. Even if certain histories are excluded from guidebooks and other representations of a place, they cannot be entirely silenced, because there will almost always be some piece of evidence in the landscape itself—an abandoned building, a paved-over lot, a nopal plant—that we can use to challenge dominant historical narratives and recover hidden histories. Landscapes also exist in documents, photographs, and various media such as newspapers, music, and literature, and in individual and collective memories. All of these sources offer clues that we can use to rethink commonsense understandings of history and local geography, and of the unequal relationships of power that sustain them.

Less obvious to the casual observer, but central to our approach in this book, are the structural forces that shape vernacular

landscapes. Corporate and governmental decisions that create landscapes are typically obscured or, in some cases, deliberately disguised. This is, in fact, one of landscape's greatest tricks and one of the most important ways in which landscape operates in the service of maintaining an unequal status quo. Because it is not always apparent why a landscape looks the way it does, it becomes easy to assume that it somehow naturally reflects the character, qualities, and moralities of the people who inhabit it. Yet in reality, all landscapes are the result of much larger historical, social, and economic forces that both enable and constrain individual actions and choices. While working on this book, we were continually struck by the mundane nature of landscapes that symbolized the engagement of people with larger structural forces. Take the case of residential discrimination, which has a violent history in Los Angeles County. We found numerous houses throughout the county that had become sites of struggle when people of color tried to buy them or move in, in defiance of legal policies of segregation enforced by the state, such as restrictive covenants. One would never know by looking at these houses or their neighborhoods now.* But this is precisely how places and landscapes are produced—through millions of individ-

*These houses, among numerous other sites in this book, are still private residences. While we think it is very important to highlight such places, we also ask readers to use common sense and be respectful when visiting such sites. Current residents may or may not know the history behind their homes. All private residences listed in the book are identified as such.

ual decisions, all made within the constraints of state policies and capitalist imperatives that are occasionally, and sometimes successfully, resisted by people with an alternative vision of how the world should work.

By rereading vernacular landscapes in this book with attention to the interaction between ordinary people and larger social structures, we hope to create a more complex understanding of how power works. We define power as a transformative capacity, or as a person's or group's ability to use whatever resources they may have to create new opportunities, new relationships, and new ideas. In other words, power is our ability to control the conditions of our lives, to impose our will on others, and to create change. Everybody has some power, but, given the inequalities that exist in the world, the resources through which we can exercise our power are not evenly distributed. Some institutions, such as the state and multinational corporations, have far more power than, say, the mom-and-pop store down the street. The impacts of our actions are likewise uneven; some of us have the capacity to affect the lives of many thousands of people, while some of us are more likely to find our lives affected by the actions of others. For example, when the mom-and-pop store closes, local residents who depended on that store for fresh produce or after-school snacks for their kids are affected differently than when a multinational corporation employing tens of thousands of unionized people at living wages decides to shut down or move elsewhere. Both processes are clearly impor-

tant, but in different ways and at different scales; thinking through this unevenness and how it manifests in everyday landscapes is a crucial part of this guide.

We also wish to call attention to how power works through ideology, or belief systems that guide political action, not only at the ballot box but also in the decisions and activities that guide our everyday lives. Most of us can easily recognize how brute force or violence uphold oppressive social relations, but the role of our ideologies—the products of socialization by our family, friends, schools, the media, and other cultural forces—is far less obvious. In the United States, dominant cultural institutions teach us that inequality is the result of individual failures or deviant subcultures, not that it is created by powerful, vested interests such as political elites and multinational corporations. As a result, we learn to accept unequal distributions of power and resources as natural, justified, and even desirable, so that we may rarely stop to think about how these inequalities have been created, much less organize to challenge them. And yet the reach of such ideologies, like the distribution of power, is also uneven. On occasion, under some circumstances, people ask the “big questions” about why their lives are the way they are. They talk with others, share stories, and formulate their own theories about the structural forces shaping their lives. They forge relationships; they build communities; and sometimes, they organize to resist. When they do, ordinary people can and do create significant change, thereby exercising their power in unexpected ways

and showing that even the most dominant ideologies are fragile and contested. These contests occur on the ground, in vernacular landscapes, some of which we feature in this book. In documenting these histories and the everyday landscapes in which they occurred, we hope to cultivate new ways of seeing, thinking, and being in the world that challenge dominant ideologies and the inequalities that they seek to justify.

A collaborative project more than 15 years in the making, this book grew out of our deep commitments to both scholarship and activism in Los Angeles, and our refusal to separate the two in our work. The initial idea for the guide came from a book project of Laura Pulido's: *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*. During her research, Pulido uncovered numerous sites where pivotal events had occurred that were not recorded in standard histories of the city. When she shared this information with friends, local teacher Tony Osumi suggested that these sites should be collected in a volume called “The People's Guide to L.A.” His idea immediately resonated, and for several years Pulido sought and saved information on sites that recorded class and racial struggles.

Eventually another friend suggested producing a poster. At this point Pulido reached out to a set of collaborators, including coauthors Laura Barraclough and Wendy Cheng, as well as Sharon Sekhon, director of the Studio for Southern California History.

PERSONAL REFLECTION BY TONY OSUMI, ACTIVIST AND TEACHER

A People's Guide reminds us that teaching history needs to move beyond books and classroom walls. It comes out of the beliefs that “people are the makers of history” and “everything is political.” It also comes from taking part in political community tours in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo and seeing the power these tours have in educating young people. It intertwines stories of struggle and justice with our daily lives. It allows us to walk down the same sidewalks and breathe the same air as our history-making brothers and sisters. It transforms history from something you learn into something you feel.

The research and writing became a popular, collective process involving many people. Some worked formally on the project, either as paid research assistants or as unpaid volunteers who sought out nearby restaurants, parks, and museums. Others contributed to the project more informally by sharing a story, helping to pin down an exact address, lending a photo, or connecting us with little-known primary sources. In addition, faculty at a wide range of educational institutions in Los Angeles and beyond incorporated *A People's Guide* into their teaching by assigning students to research and write site histories for papers and independent studies.

Our research process was both traditional (grounded in academic sources) and popular (grounded in storytelling, memory, embodied experience, and alternative sources of knowledge). We pored over many scholarly books and articles on Los Angeles,

particularly those written from a critical perspective in recent years. Many of these sources, along with readings on landscape and critical cartography, are included in the list of suggested readings in the appendix. But our research also grew out of our relationships with people and organizations working within Los Angeles' progressive and radical activism circles. We participated in many of the campaigns, rallies, protests, workshops, and alternative tours highlighted in this book, and so we had an embodied knowledge of the geography of struggle and resistance in the city upon which to draw. This knowledge was particularly helpful in researching the sites of structures that had been proposed but never materialized, such as the East L.A. prison defeated by the Coalition Against the Prison, or the waste-to-energy incinerator defeated by the Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles. Through our relationships, we also heard stories about places where important events had occurred many years ago, in some cases before our lifetimes. Part of our task, when we heard such stories, was simply to put on our geographer hats and ask: "Where did that happen?" Through this process, we discovered an extensive body of knowledge about L.A.'s progressive and radical past that was not recorded anywhere, existing solely in memory and passed on through stories, myths, rumors, and jokes.

Given this rich history, it was sometimes enormously difficult for us to decide which places and histories to include and exclude. There are hundreds of fascinating stories

to be told, and *A People's Guide* represents only a taste of what is out there. However, over time we developed a few guidelines for our selection process. First, we generally did not include places that had already been designated as historically significant, although we do offer new insights on some very well-known and frequently visited places. Second, we decided not to highlight established institutions such as ethnic museums, monuments, and memorials, because our goal is to focus on lesser-known and vernacular landscapes. Instead, we list these other kinds of places in the "Nearby Sites of Interest" feature that accompanies most of the sites. Third, we prioritized diversity—of geography, historical eras, power dynamics, axes of difference, and the like—giving particular time and attention to those neighborhoods and regions within Los Angeles that have been systematically overlooked by mainstream guidebooks and other cultural representations.

Recovering and retelling the histories of ordinary people and places raised some unique challenges. Foremost, the places associated with people who have limited power are more likely to be destroyed. Indeed, many of the buildings or other structures associated with the struggles that we highlight here, like the Black Panther Party headquarters or the South Central Farm, are gone; they have been erased by urban redevelopment, destroyed by state violence, or simply forgotten because they were embedded in the everyday. Similarly, many of the movements for change we document could be categorized pessimistically as fail-

ures. Some activists and organizations were short-lived at best, and viciously repressed, imprisoned, or killed at worst. Nonetheless, because their stories offer important lessons about the exercise of power and resistance, it is crucial to document these stories, to honor them, to learn from them.

We developed a specific approach to visual material that helped surmount some of these difficulties. Coauthor Cheng, a photographer as well as a Los Angeles scholar, had been inspired by cultural landscape studies and the New Topographics school of photography, both of which have sought to recast vernacular landscapes as rich aesthetic, social, and historical documents in their own right. She approached the photographs as being not merely illustrative but a vibrant means of social and intellectual inquiry and an essential part of the storytelling process. Traveling hundreds of miles over Los Angeles' dense and ever-changing landscape, Cheng negotiated the physical and formal challenges of traversing the occasional pedestrian-unfriendly overpass for a good vantage point, looking for addresses that no longer existed or roads that had been moved, and trying to increase the visual interest of architecturally bland strip malls and parking lots that had once been the sites of extraordinary events. She learned firsthand about the operation of power in the landscape and issues of public access through encounters with wary security guards and suspicious property owners: to many, the act of taking a photograph itself was automatically suspect. To others, however, taking

photographs had positive significance, indicating recognition, respect, and the recuperation of stories of struggle. For instance, at Salazar Park in East Los Angeles, a young Chicano man approached and wanted to know why Cheng was taking pictures. She explained the project and told him the park was included as a key site of the Chicano Moratorium. "I thought nobody cared," the man said. Then he introduced himself, shook hands, and offered his help, as he had some stories to share.

In these ways, a visual and embodied engagement with vernacular landscapes can be a fundamentally democratic way to begin critical conversations about the operation of power. All people, regardless of language, levels of literacy, citizenship status, or age, can observe and feel inequalities between communities and the unequal distribution of resources in space. Such observations and experiences can be (and often have been) the starting point for organized resistance to inequality. We hope that, through their considered representations of ordinary places, the images in this book—Cheng's contemporary photographs, as well as carefully selected archival images—will enable viewers to draw intuitive comparisons with their own experiences of space and place and encourage readers to deconstruct all landscapes with a more critical eye.

It is crucial to note that *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* is just one contribution to a dynamic reimagining of what Los Angeles has been and will become. In particular, social

historians are using archival materials in creative ways, and conducting oral histories with previously overlooked groups of people, to capture the experiences of ordinary people and center them in the constantly evolving story of Los Angeles. Alternative institutions of social and popular history have been established from these efforts. For example, the Studio for Southern California History, created by historian Sharon Sekhon, documents and preserves the region's everyday histories of life and place. The community-based organization Inland Mexican Heritage sponsors public history initiatives that celebrate Mexican culture. Descendants of residents of Hicks Camp, a farmworkers' colony in El Monte, created La Historia Society to document local Mexican American labor and family histories. There are many other such efforts, both institutional and informal. Historic preservation in Los Angeles, traditionally led by the state and by well-financed nonprofit organizations, is also undergoing a dynamic uprising of popular initiatives. For instance, through a project known as The Power of Place (which later became the title of a related book), architectural historian Dolores Hayden led an effort to develop a monument that honors Biddy Mason, a remarkable African American slave who eventually became a free woman in Los Angeles.

Alternative tourism is being similarly reworked. Japanese American activists have created walking tours of Little Tokyo to highlight the community's rich, multiethnic history. The Southern California Library

for Social Studies and Research trained high school students from South L.A. to conduct oral histories with family members and community elders to find out about important places in their neighborhoods. Gilda Haas, founder of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy, led a studio class and community outreach program at UCLA on the subject of community-based tourism. This led to the creation of the Tourism Industry Development Council, now known as the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), one of the region's foremost economic justice collaboratives.

Finally, a reimagining of Los Angeles is occurring in the realm of cartography and spatial representation. Critical geographers have created new kinds of maps of Los Angeles that capture the structural and institutional dynamics of power, such as the exhibit Just Spaces, hosted by Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions in 2007, and the multigenre selections featured in Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat's *Atlas of Radical Cartography*, among others.

We wish to honor this extraordinary work while also building on it. Most of these initiatives are, for good reason, defined by a localized geography or a specific social group. By comparison, the central theme that links all the sites in our guide is not a particular racial or ethnic group, nor a particular type of building, activity, or locale, but power, inequality, and resistance. Collectively, the sites we highlight in this guidebook reveal a myriad of power relations that shape Los Angeles County.

We have sought to uncover and share places that might be overlooked as unremarkable, places where people have nevertheless confronted power and, in doing so, have been transformed by those struggles. Our goal is to inspire tourists, residents, and activists to seek out these places in order to reimagine themselves, their histories, their communities, and their ambitions for the world. *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* is meant to be used, to become dog-eared, and to travel with you throughout the city. We hope that you go and visit the places that are profiled here. We believe you will have a different understanding of Los Angeles and how power works in the region just by being there. We encourage you, when you go, to see the landscape as a text—as something that can be read, interpreted, and interrogated

to develop a better understanding of how power works. But we are also aware that our guidebook, like any guidebook, is incomplete and partial, and that places that may be important to you may not appear here. For that reason, we encourage you to think of *A People's Guide* as part of an ongoing conversation in which we invite you to participate. We hope that, equipped with this book, you will look at the everyday places and landscapes you pass through in your own life from a new perspective. As we have learned again and again while putting this book together, it is in the apparently common and ordinary places that extraordinary histories have been made—including, perhaps, the everyday landscapes of your own life. So flip the page and join with us in commemorating and learning from the dynamic histories of struggle, community, and imagination in Los Angeles. ¡Adelante!