

The Next Los Angeles: Struggle for a Livable City. By Robert Gottlieb, Mark Vallianatos, Regina M. Freer and Peter Dreier. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005. 279 pp. \$21.95 paper.

The authors of *The Next Los Angeles* present the book as “a history, a policy analysis, and an evaluation of the opportunities for change, both in Los Angeles and in other regions of the country.” For those who are intrigued or inspired by the political insurgency of labor and community organizations in this enigmatic city, whether or not they believe that L.A. is the future of urban North America, *The Next Los Angeles* is a worthwhile resource. The book reclaims L.A.’s progressive roots, arguing that diverse social movements over the course of the city’s development have provided an alternative vision about Los Angeles, its urban landscape, and its social relations.

Much of the book is devoted to L.A.’s evolution over the twentieth century, framed by an asymmetrical struggle between business interests and activists. The first section explores the interwoven legacies of socialists and radical trade unionists, the civil rights movement, community activists in Latino and African American neighborhoods, and other “radicals and reformers” that constituted “Progressive L.A.” The second section focuses on key economic, demographic, environmental, and political changes through the 1992 civil unrest to the present that have led to growing inequality, political and social balkanization, and deteriorating quality of life.

Critically, these developments have also energized an array of labor, community, environmental, and immigrant groups that, acting individually and collectively, that constitute a new Progressive L.A. The last section highlights the political vacuum created by the failure of

civic elites to reckon with the region's ongoing urban crisis, and the emerging electoral coalition anchored by labor and Latino immigrants. It puts forward the key possibility that the new Progressive L.A. network and its platform for a socially equitable, livable region might prevail over further balkanization and dissolution.

As a student of labor and urban studies, I deeply appreciated the book's illustration of how, faced with multiple injustices that detract from their day-to-day well-being, working people mobilize at different times as union members; as neighborhood residents; or as members of a particular race or ethnicity. The challenge of labor and community activists is to link causes and constituencies together into a coherent vision and broader progressive movement. But in that same vein, I thought the final section gave short shrift to the concrete processes by which activists made connections and forged a common agenda, which might have offered more concrete lessons to labor and community activists in other regions.

Overall, *The Next Los Angeles* is highly readable; the language is energetic, direct, and free of excessive jargon. The authors deftly weave discussions of economic growth and change, demographics, politics and policy with their discussion of social movements. Some of the historical material may feel familiar to those who have read Mike Davis, minus the polemical and hyperbolic tone—in my view a good thing. And because the chapters are thematic rather than chronologically divided, most of them do well as stand-alone readings. For these reasons it is appropriate for undergraduate as well as graduate courses.

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