

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Shaken, AND Stirred

By Chris Carlsson

Introduction to the book: This collection of historical essays starts in 1968, the year of the San Francisco State College Strike, and runs to 1978, when the twin traumas of Jonestown and the assassinations of Mayor Moscone and Harvey Milk punctuate a tumultuous and influential decade. These are ten years that shook and shaped the City today. The 1960s is a seminal decade in world history, and it is sometimes defined as running to 1972 or even 1974 in a “long Sixties” perspective. But this is a book more about the 1970s, when many of the initiatives described here came to climaxes, sometimes deepening and evolving from their initial impetus into lasting cultural and institutional forms. The popular explosions and experiments of the era morphed and were taken in by the larger culture, or found ways to survive in its margins. From today’s organic food and community gardening movements to environmental justice, gay rights and other identitarian social movements, neighborhood anti-gentrification efforts, and much more, the 1970s are the years when transformative social values burrowed deeply into society.

On Strike! We’re Gonna Shut it Down: The 1968-69 San Francisco State Strike

By Margaret Leahy

At San Francisco State College in 1968, the discharge of an African-American lecturer led to a faculty strike, followed quickly by a mass student strike led by the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front. They demanded the teacher’s reinstatement, but also insisted on a new approach to education, incorporating new curricula on overlooked and underrepresented populations. Margaret Leahy, a young woman born and raised among the Irish-American Catholics of San Francisco’s Sunset District, tells the story of the Strike from inside, showing how events can alter individuals and institutions. Spilling out from the brutal police repression of the State Strike, student activists became vital participants in the unfolding social struggles of the ensuing decade.

“With the Soul of a Human Rainbow”: Los Siete, Black Panthers, and Third Worldism in San Francisco

by Dr. Jason M. Ferreira

Black power and Brown power movements arose, partly driven by ongoing police repression, partly driven by a new sense of self-awareness and an ur-

gent need to establish community self-reliance and dignity. In the wake of the brutal police assaults during the State Strike, members of the Black Student Union as well as other students who were part of the Third World Liberation Front, were well prepared for the gritty urban confrontations to come. This new shared Third World sensibility is the subject of Jason Ferreira's groundbreaking analysis. Black Panthers organized and launched breakfast programs while decrying the imprisonment of their leaders and the violent harassment and murder of their members. During a protest of Huey Newton's imprisonment at San Francisco's Federal Building on May 1, 1969, across town in the Mission, a policeman was killed while investigating an alleged burglary. This led to a protracted legal battle over the fate of the seven young accused Latinos, who became known as "Los Siete de La Raza." Ferreira shows how the overlapping struggles of the City's different ethnic communities forged a new expansive identity that built solidarity among many of the era's local political movements.

“All Those Who Care About The Mission, Stand Up With Me!”: Latino Community Formation and the Mission Coalition Organization

By Tomás F. Summers Sandoval, Jr.

Over a hundred community groups formed the Mission Coalition Organization in 1968 to contest the plans to impose redevelopment on the Mission District. The MCO was rocked by internecine conflict, but out of its demise in 1970 dozens of social service nonprofits and grassroots groups continued to shape the politics of the neighborhood and the City, once again with strong involvement of activists who had been at State in 1968-69. Tomás Sandoval recounts the fascinating history of the MCO.

Poetry and Solidarity in the Mission District

By Alejandro Murguía

Alejandro Murguía not only describes the early literary efforts of Editorial Pocho-Ché, but also brings us to the late 1970s when Mission District activists joined the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement by repeatedly occupying the local Nicaraguan consulate.

Lost Murals of the Seventies

By Timothy W. Drescher

Tim Drescher has been documenting and writing about public murals since that era too, and he brings a number back to our memory in "Lost Murals of the 1970s."

Mujeres Muralistas

By Patricia Rodriguez

Patricia Rodriguez was one of the “Mujeres Muralistas” who helped launch the mural movement in the 1970s.

My World Incomplete/To Complete My World

By Roberto Vargas

Roberto Vargas, another Mission veteran who later became a Nicaraguan ambassador after the Sandinistas took power, regales us with a poem, “My World Incomplete,” that takes us back to the foggy Mission District streets of the 1970s.

Where Did All the Flowers Go? The View from a Street in Bernal Heights

By Peter Booth Wiley

The Vietnam War brought thousands of troops and tons of war materiel through SF’s ports, while a steady stream of casualties and discharged soldiers returned by way of the City’s Presidio. The anti-war movement gained strength across the country, and San Francisco was one of its epicenters. Radicals poured in from elsewhere and, having settled in the City, made vital contributions to the increasingly diverse and multiracial metropolis. Peter Wiley recounts his community of friends, many from Madison, Wisconsin, and their efforts to launch a left-wing theoretical journal, while settling in to a quiet working-class neighborhood on the northern slopes of Bernal Heights.

Up Against the Bulkhead: A Photo Essay with Text

By Stephen Rees with Peter Booth Wiley

Along with Stephen Rees’s poignant photojournalism, Wiley also contributes an account of GI anti-war organizing that more than anything else stymied Nixon’s efforts to prolong the war.

My Teacher, My Friend

By Andrew Lam

San Francisco writer Andrew Lam was a refugee from Southeast Asia in the early 1970s, fleeing the defining conflict of the era, and his poignant story reminisces about the small world of the refugee child, which happens to have been the same world the rest of these contributions address from so many angles.

Filipino Americans in the Decade of the International Hotel

By Estella Habal

One of the City's largest powerbrokers and real estate tycoons was locked in an epic battle with the elderly Filipinos of the I-Hotel at the edge of downtown and North Beach. Young Asian Americans flocked to their cause, and the I-Hotel became an iconic headquarters for militants of many stripes, notably hard-Left factions from the Chinese and Filipino communities. Estella Habal was one of them and she tells the story.

“Hush Puppies,” Communalist Politics, and Demolition Governance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Fillmore

By Rachel Brahinsky

Rachel Brahinsky delves into individual and institutional memories of the devastating neighborhood destruction that was imposed on the Black Fillmore District in the name of redevelopment.

The Fight to Stay: The Creation of the Community Housing Movement in San Francisco, 1968-1978

By Calvin Welch

Calvin Welch, a 40-year activist in San Francisco's progressive movements, provides an overview of the Community Housing Movement. Nonprofit housing developers combined with rent control have been crucial to preventing San Francisco from turning itself into an exclusive enclave of the super rich. The mid-'70s electoral effort to bring about district elections and run progressive campaigns for municipal office was rooted in this same citywide coalition-building effort of the time, an oft-fractured “progressive coalition,” that nevertheless still has a presence in municipal politics today.

Reflections from Occupied Ohlone Territory

By Mary Jean Robertson

Native Americans in San Francisco, some of whom were enrolled at San Francisco State and other local universities, and inspired by the Third World strikes, occupied Alcatraz from 1969-1971. The surge of self-confidence and pride that arose from this bold move galvanized the American Indian Movement as well as the quarter-century-long effort to establish an International Treaty on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mary Jean Robertson follows the activists from the Alcatraz Occupation back to the City and various reservations, and ultimately across the country to the capital and the United Nations.

Making Sexism Visible: Private Troubles Made Public

By Deborah A. Gerson

Women's liberation emerged in the late 1960s as a potent rebuke to the traditional male-dominated New Left as well as the overwhelming male-oriented power structures of society. A women's self-help health movement took shape, leading to underground clinics for abortions and birth control information, but also challenging many of the paradigms shaping western medicine at the time. Deborah Gerson revisits a time when so much of what we now take for granted was new and still had to be fought for.

Sometimes You Work With The Democrats, And Sometimes You Riot

By Tommi Avicolti Mecca

Though a gay-baiting politician lost the 1959 mayoral election, police repression of the growing gay population persisted as religious leaders sought tolerance, leading to a premonitory riot of queer youth at Compton's Cafeteria in 1966. Tommi Avicolti Mecca describes how an assimilationist homophile movement gave way to a range of more assertive homosexual rights activists, themselves divided among left-wing politicians and more flamboyant cultural radicals, who for a time were united by Harvey Milk's candidacies, as well as the rising tide of reactionary homophobia.

Coming Together: The Communal Option

By Matthew Roth

During the hippie crescendo that the Diggers were trying to radicalize, San Francisco was the urban launching pad for an extensive back-to-the-land movement that brought a fresh approach to the urban/rural dichotomy. Matthew Roth examines the 1970s movement of communal living that resulted, tracing its roots back to early America, but showing how diverse the experiments were, too. Alarmingly, the bucolic fantasies of retreat from modern life's contradictions were often distorted and even destroyed by other kinds of madness.

San Bruno Mountain

By David Schooley

David Schooley describes the decades-long effort to save San Bruno Mountain, the ecological treasure dividing San Francisco from the rest of San Mateo County.

The Farm by the Freeway

By Mirjana Blankenship

Urban gardening, food conspiracies, people's cooperative food stores, and collective food wholesalers and producers reshaped American cuisine and shopping paradigms as well. Mirjana Blankenship digs up the history of "The Farm by the Freeway," an unlikely rural redoubt practically underneath the freeway at the edge of the Mission District.

A Personal History of the San Francisco People's Food System

By Pam Peirce

Pam Peirce edited *Turnover*, the journal of the People's Food System in the mid-1970s, and she recounts her story of that legendary effort.

Ecology Emerges

By Chris Carlsson

Chris Carlsson takes a wider view of the nascent modern ecology movement in "Ecology Emerges," asserting that the anti-war movement was the crucial cauldron which turned it from its patrician roots. Political currents, running from rural Northern California to San Francisco's neighborhoods and back again, moved activists to go beyond the limits of historic environmentalism to contest nuclear power, the oil industry, automobilism, and much more.

San Francisco Labor in the 1970s

By Jesse Drew

Workers in the Bay Area, like their counterparts in the old mid-country Rust Belt, still had ideas of their own. Jesse Drew remembers the smells and sounds of a still-industrial city. He examines how new social actors, finding themselves in local factories, offices, hospitals, restaurants, and universities, sought to build on the legacies of labor radicalism once familiar to the entire City.

The Rise and Fall of the Underground Comix Movement in San Francisco and Beyond

By Jay Kinney

Another movement that got its start during this era, coincidentally also situated in the Mission District, was underground comix. One of the early participants, Jay Kinney, maps it out for us.

San Francisco Bay Area Posters: 1968-1978

By Lincoln Cushing

The explosion of new kinds of artistic expression was not limited to the mural movement. Political artists produced hundreds of stunning posters, a small sampling of which is presented by long-time collector and curator Lincoln Cushing.

Jung Sai Garment Workers Strike of 1974

By Harvey Dong

Harvey Dong provides a detailed account of an early 1970s Chinatown strike involving a small group of over 100 workers, but because it was against the plant that made clothes for the up-and-coming designer label Esprit, their fight took on additional meaning. It galvanized Chinese workers and garment workers more generally, and created new connections among youth activists and an older generation. It also confronted the amnesiac San Franciscan middle classes with the dirty reality behind their new prosperity.

When Music Mattered

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Electrically amplified rock 'n' roll infused the new social milieu with liberatory energy before being channeled into the familiar album-and-concert form that we mostly remember. Mat Callahan, a San Francisco native, lived through the rise of rock 'n' roll and free music and dance festivals only to witness its rapid commercialization, and he brilliantly analyzes that process.

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An Introduction

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This collection of historical essays starts in 1968, the year of the San Francisco State College Strike, and runs to 1978, when the twin traumas of Jonestown and the assassinations of Mayor Moscone and Harvey Milk punctuate a tumultuous and influential decade. These are ten years that shook and shaped the City today. Few of the essays stick to that time-frame rigorously, most having to look before 1968 or go beyond 1978 (or both) to fully make sense. The 1960s is a seminal decade in world history, and it is sometimes defined as running to 1972 or even 1974 in a “long Sixties” perspective. But this is a book more about the 1970s, when many of the initiatives described here came to climaxes, sometimes deepening and evolving from their initial impetus into lasting cultural and institutional forms. The popular explosions and experiments of the era morphed and were taken in by the larger culture, or found ways to survive in its margins. From today’s organic food and community gardening movements to environmental justice, gay rights and other identitarian social movements, neighborhood anti-gentrification efforts, and much more, the 1970s are the years when transformative social values burrowed deeply into society.

New understandings of politics and history have their roots in this era, too. Previously excluded populations became vocal and insistent, reshaping urban politics and reorienting the framing of history itself. The deep distrust of government at all levels dates to this period, whether in response to the national government’s venality in Vietnam and subsequent Watergate scandals, or the local government’s unabashed efforts to dismantle working-class neighborhoods through redevelopment.

With a long pedigree of contrarian culture and political radicalism, San Francisco was in the mid-1960s still dominated by the large corporations headquartered in downtown, and the old and newer elites who owned them. The City’s liberal reputation and tolerance for dissent and diversity have been much touted, but the underlying history of the City is one of old monied families dominating property ownership and commercial development throughout California and the Pacific Rim. By the mid-1960s Bay Area corporate planners had already restructured the Bay Area economy to “regionalize” production, an important precursor to the wider campaign to accelerate globalization from 1970 to the present.

Organized labor was squeezed in the 1970s. On one side newly aggressive and globalizing capital was determined to reduce the leverage and wealth gained by the working class since the upheavals of the Depression and post-WWII prosperity. On the other, the national economy was no longer globally pre-eminent and emerging world market competition was shrinking the room to maneuver, too. A seminal agreement by the dockers and shippers in 1960 ushered in the mechanization and modernization of the waterfront, and the containers that came in its wake inadvertently set the stage for the deindustrialization of the US. But it was not going to be a quick process.

Workers in the Bay Area, like their counterparts in the old mid-country Rust Belt, still had ideas of their own. Jesse Drew looks back at “San Francisco Labor in the 1970s,” remembering the smells and sounds of a still-industrial city. He examines how new social actors, finding themselves in local factories, offices, hospitals, restaurants, and universities, sought to build on the legacies of labor radicalism once familiar to the entire City. Harvey Dong (“Jai Sung Garment Workers Strike”) provides a detailed account of an early 1970s Chinatown strike involving a small group of over 100 workers, but because it was against the plant that made clothes for the up-and-coming designer label Esprit, their fight took on additional meaning. It galvanized Chinese workers and garment workers more generally, and created new connections among youth activists and an older generation. It also confronted the amnesiac San Franciscan middle classes with the dirty reality behind their new prosperity.

The organized Left, rooted in the longshoremen and other unions had led vigorous protests against the House Un-American Activities Committee that rocked City Hall in 1960. Some of the same students who were washed down City Hall steps in May of that year helped the Civil Rights Movement come to San Francisco. Students at San Francisco State were speaking freely at The Commons on campus as early as 1962 and that agitation was central to the 1963 eruption. That year Civil Rights protesters demanding racial equity in employment besieged Auto Row on Van Ness and the Palace Hotel downtown. This multi-ethnic youthful grassroots energy crossed the Bay to re-emerge in the 1964 Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley. In September 1966, a White officer shot a young unarmed Black man running from a stolen car in Bayview-Hunter’s Point. A three-day riot ensued, leading to a declaration of martial law in the two predominantly Black neighborhoods in San Francisco. 1966 was also the year when students at San Francisco State began pushing for new classes on “Black consciousness” as part of a general political awakening happening on many campuses across the country. With the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, and social revolts erupting from Paris to Prague, and Beijing to Mexico City, San Francisco too was a churning ground zero for political opposition and cultural experimentation.

At San Francisco State College in 1968, the discharge of an African-American lecturer led to a faculty strike, followed quickly by a mass student strike led by the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front. They demanded the teacher’s reinstatement, but also insisted on a new approach to education, incorporating new curricula on overlooked and underrepresented populations. Margaret Leahy, a young woman born and raised among the Irish-American Catholics of San Francisco’s Sunset District, tells the story of the Strike from inside in “On Strike! We’re Gonna Shut it Down!” showing how events can alter individuals and institutions. Spilling out from the brutal police repression of the State Strike, student activists became vital participants in the unfolding social struggles of the ensuing decade.

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This new shared Third World sensibility is the subject of Jason Ferreira’s groundbreaking analysis in “With the Soul of a Human Rainbow: Los Siete, Black Panthers, and Third Worldism in San Francisco.” Black Panthers organized and launched breakfast programs while decrying the imprisonment of their leaders and the violent harassment and murder of their members. During a protest of Huey Newton’s imprisonment at San Francisco’s Federal Building on May 1, 1970, across town in the Mission, a policeman was killed while investigating an alleged burglary. This led to a protracted legal battle over the fate of the seven young accused Latinos, who became known as “Los Siete de La Raza.” Ferreira shows how the overlapping struggles of the City’s different ethnic communities forged a new expansive identity that built solidarity among many of the era’s local political movements.

The Vietnam War brought thousands of troops and tons of war materiel through SF’s ports, while a steady stream of casualties and discharged soldiers returned by way of the City’s Presidio. The anti-war movement gained strength across the country, and San Francisco was one of its epicenters. Radicals poured in from elsewhere and, having settled in the City, made vital contributions to the increasingly diverse and multiracial metropolis. Peter Wiley’s “Where Have All the Flowers Gone? The View from the Street in Bernal Heights” recounts his community of friends, many from Madison, Wisconsin, and their efforts to launch a left-wing theoretical journal, while settling in to a quiet working-class neighborhood on the northern slopes of Bernal Heights. The relationships and projects that they started 40 years ago still resonate today, and a surprising number of individuals and institutions are still shaping the City. Along with Stephen Rees’s poignant photojournalism, Wiley also contributes an account of GI anti-war organizing that more than anything else stymied Nixon’s efforts to prolong the war in “Up Against the Bulkhead.”

San Francisco writer Andrew Lam was a refugee from Southeast Asia in the early 1970s, fleeing the defining conflict of the era, and his poignant story “My Teacher, My Friend,” reminisces about the small world of the refugee child, which happens to have been the same world the rest of these contributions address from so many angles.

Redevelopment was already changing San Francisco by the end of the 1950s. The old Italian neighborhood centered on the produce district between North Beach, the waterfront, and the Financial District, was the first to be dismantled. The old White ethnic majority (mostly Italian and Irish) that had dominated the City began leaving for the suburbs, along with the jobs that once made San Francisco an economic powerhouse. As it became more white-collar—tourism,

medicine, education, and financial services—the new workforce diversified with the City’s changing population. Immigration from both in and outside the US brought growing numbers of highly atomized, hyper-mobile people, perfectly suited to the new metrosexual and dress-for-success culture of business.

Aggressive urban redevelopment efforts of the City’s elite sought to clear neighborhoods for these new urbanites. One of the City’s largest powerbrokers and real estate tycoons was locked in an epic battle with the elderly Filipinos of the I-Hotel at the edge of downtown and North Beach. Young Asian Americans flocked to their cause, and the I-Hotel became an iconic headquarters for militants of many stripes, notably hard-Left factions from the Chinese and Filipino communities. Estella Habal was one of them and she tells the story in “Filipino Americans in the Decade of the International Hotel.” They also targeted the neighborhoods where African-Americans (the Fillmore) and Latinos (the Mission) were concentrated. Over a hundred community groups formed the Mission Coalition Organization in 1968 to contest the plans to impose redevelopment on the Mission District. The MCO was rocked by internecine conflict, but out of its demise in 1970 dozens of social service nonprofits and grassroots groups continued to shape the politics of the neighborhood and the City, once again with strong involvement of activists who had been at State in 1968-69. Tomás Sandoval recounts the fascinating history of the MCO in “All Those Who Care About the Mission, Stand Up With Me!”

Rachel Brahinsky delves into individual and institutional memories of the devastating neighborhood destruction that was imposed on the Black Fillmore District in the name of redevelopment in “Hush Puppies and Demolition Governance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Fillmore.” Calvin Welch, a 40-year activist in San Francisco’s progressive movements, provides an overview of the Community Housing Movement in “The Fight to Stay.” Nonprofit housing developers combined with rent control have been crucial to preventing San Francisco from turning itself into an exclusive enclave of the super rich. The mid-’70s electoral effort to bring about district elections and run progressive campaigns for municipal office was rooted in this same citywide coalition-building effort of the time, an oft-fractured “progressive coalition,” that nevertheless still has a presence in municipal politics today.

In the early 1960s the Save the Bay movement arose to stop its destruction. In the late 1950s and early 1960s San Franciscans revolted against freeways and stopped most of the plans to crisscross the city with them. Up north in Sonoma County the beginnings of anti-nuclear activism stopped the big utility PG&E from building a nuclear plant on the San Andreas fault at Bodega Bay. Out of these nascent efforts, Bay conservation was tightened with popular support while open space movements from San Bruno Mountain to the Marin headlands carved out a legacy much treasured today. When an oil tanker spilled into the Bay in 1971, the myriad strands of the local ecology movements gained new urgency. A cluster of articles adds new chapters to our local history. David Schooley describes the decades-long effort to save “San Bruno Mountain,” the ecological treasure dividing San Francisco from the rest of San Mateo County. Pam Peirce edited *Turnover*, the journal of the People’s Food System in the mid-1970s, and she recounts her story of that legendary effort in “A Personal History of the People’s Food System.” Urban gardening, food conspiracies, people’s cooperative food stores, and collective food wholesalers and producers reshaped American cuisine and shopping paradigms as

well. Mirjana Blankenship digs up the history of “The Farm by the Freeway,” an unlikely rural redoubt practically underneath the freeway at the edge of the Mission District. And Chris Carlsson takes a wider view of the nascent modern ecology movement in “Ecology Emerges,” asserting that the anti-war movement was the crucial cauldron which turned it from its patrician roots. Political currents running from rural Northern California to San Francisco’s neighborhoods and back again, moved activists to go beyond the limits of historic environmentalism to contest nuclear power, the oil industry, automobilism, and much more.

In 1966, the San Francisco Diggers staged politically sophisticated “Death of Money” and “Death of a Hippie” celebrations to shape the emerging political underground before the storied and hyped Summer of Love fed a media frenzy in 1967. During the hippie crescendo that the Diggers were trying to radicalize, San Francisco was the urban launching pad for an extensive back-to-the-land movement that brought a fresh approach to the urban/rural dichotomy. Matthew Roth examines the 1970s movement of communal living that resulted in “Coming Together: The Communal Option,” tracing its roots back to early America, but showing how diverse the experiments were, too. Alarming, the bucolic fantasies of retreat from modern life’s contradictions were often distorted and even destroyed by other kinds of madness.

Women’s liberation emerged in the late 1960s as a potent rebuke to the traditional male-dominated New Left as well as the overwhelming male-oriented power structures of society. A women’s self-help health movement took shape, leading to underground clinics for abortions and birth control information, but also challenging many of the paradigms shaping western medicine at the time. Deborah Gerson revisits a time when so much of what we now take for granted was new and still had to be fought for, in her “Making Sexism Visible: Private Troubles Made Public.”

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As mentioned, the Mission District successfully fended off redevelopment, in part thanks to the strong cultural resistance that grew in the neighborhood. One strand of that cultural resistance was provided by the poets and writers that came together in the early 1970s in a collective called Editorial Pocho-Ché. Alejandro Murguía’s “Poetry and Solidarity in the Mission” not only describes their early literary efforts, but also brings us to the late 1970s when Mission District activists joined the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement by repeatedly occupying the local Nicaraguan consulate. Roberto Vargas, another Mission veteran who later became a Nicaraguan ambassador after the Sandinistas took power, regales us with a poem, “My World Centered,” that takes us back to the foggy Mission District streets of the 1970s.

Nowadays the murals of the Mission are world-famous, but it was during the

early 1970s that the movement began. Patricia Rodriguez was one of the “Mujeres Muralistas” who helped launch the mural movement. Tim Drescher has been documenting and writing about public murals since that era too, and he brings a number back to our memory in “Lost Murals of the 1970s.” The explosion of new kinds of artistic expression was not limited to the mural movement. Political artists produced hundreds of stunning posters, a small sampling of which is presented in “San Francisco Bay Area Posters 1968-1978” by long-time collector and curator Lincoln Cushing. Another movement that got its start during this era, coincidentally also situated in the Mission District, was underground comix. One of the early participants, Jay Kinney, maps it out for us in “The Rise and Fall of the Underground Comix Movement in San Francisco and Beyond.”

Another essential front in the culture wars that percolated through this era was music, at first rooted in the free parties and performances of the mid-1960s. The San Francisco Mime Troupe began performing in public parks for free in 1965, and LSD-inspired parties shattered many preconceived notions of what was possible, before the drug was made illegal at the end of 1966. Electrically amplified rock ‘n’ roll infused the new social milieu with liberatory energy before being channeled into the familiar album-and-concert form that we mostly remember. Mat Callahan, a San Francisco native, lived through the rise of rock ‘n’ roll and free music and dance festivals only to witness its rapid commercialization, and he brilliantly analyzes that process in “When Music Mattered.”

Diminished and partially dispersed by the climactic 1978 assassinations of Mayor Moscone and gay Supervisor Harvey Milk, followed days later by the traumatic mass suicide of San Franciscans (many who had been left-wing activists) at Jonestown, Guyana, the alliances, programs, goals, and activities of that historic decade continue to shape San Francisco (and the US, perhaps the world) in the early 21st century. Left-wing party politics following traditional models all went into long-term decline by the end of this period, but a rebellious, anti-authoritarian sensibility was not crushed. It mutated like a smart virus, and took on a highly decentralized, superficially less political form. The cultural and political experiences of that era shaped a generation; millions of people still carry a common sense of justice and fairness, and hope for a world based on ecological sanity, without discrimination or grossly unequal division of wealth. The inheritors of this era are potentially a formidable political impediment to the authoritarian tendencies that dominate the United States. The Culture War between neoconservative right-wingers (Christian fundamentalists and Big Capital in an unstable alliance) and “the rest of us” is rooted in this same persistent shift in values, a common refusal to submit to stupid rules imposed for religious or ideological purposes. This volume provides a broad look at diverse ways these ten years shook the City, and shaped the world we’re in today.

Index

- 24th Street Women's Health Collective 175, 180
60 Minutes 202
330 Grove 98, 99
409 House 159, 160, 161
848 Community Space 226
1934 San Francisco General Strike 138, 258
1949 Housing Act 143
1965 Grape Strike 129
1967 Black Youth Conference 146
1968 Democratic Convention 273
- A**
- A-1 redevelopment program 143, 144, 150, 152, 156, 157
A-2 redevelopment program 143, 144, 150, 151, 152, 156, 157, 158, 159
AAA Shipyards 260, 267
Abalone Alliance 250, 257
Abrams, Jerry 321
Adams, Tom 214
A Day On the Green 324–325
Advocate, The 46, 189, 190
AFL-CIO 262, 291, 315, 316
African-American 10, 15, 18, 30, 47, 52, 55, 63, 70, 114, 142, 143, 146, 150, 152, 155, 187, 188, 204, 238, 239, 255, 262, 307, 311
African American music 320
After Dark 190
Agnos, Art 154, 189
Aguila, Pancho 70
A History of Underground Comics 278
AIDS 104, 107, 190
Akwesasne Notes 168
Alameda County Central Labor Council 291
Alameda Naval Air Station 108, 111, 119, 120
Alarcon, Frankie 131
Albert, Paul 70
Albright, Thomas 230
Alcatraz 10, 11, 40, 44, 117, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 256, 323
Alegría, Fernando 62, 63
Alemany Farmer's Market 232, 233
Algarín, Miguel 65
Alinsky, Saul 50, 52, 146, 244, 256
Alioto, Mayor Joe 24, 25, 52, 58, 147, 156, 157, 158, 159
A Living Library 229, 230, 231
Allen, Chude (Pam Parker) 170, 171, 176, 177
Allende, Salvador 63
Allen, Robert 182
Alliance of the Rank and File 263
Alta 173, 182
Altamont 323, 325
Alvarado, Roger 17, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 45, 46
Alvarado Street 32, 35, 64
Amador, Carlos Fonseca 92
Amador, Donna 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 45, 46
Amalgamated Clothing Workers 304
Amazon Yogurt collective 234
American Can Company 64, 260
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees 264
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) 24–26, 265, 331
American Friends Service Committee 108, 246
American Indian Arts Workshop 168
American Indian Center 72, 164, 167
American Indian Civil Rights Act 163
American Indian Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 168
American Indian Movement (AIM) 10, 164, 166, 167, 204
AIM for Freedom Survival School 167
American Indian Religious Freedom Act 167
American Psychiatric Association 186
Ammiano, Tom 154, 187, 188, 190, 224
Ananda Institute 193
anarcho-syndicalism 106
Anarchy Comics 283
Anderson, Chester 301
Anderson, Mad Bear 165
Andres, Inez 147
Angelou, Maya 107
Ann Arbor, Michigan 98
Another Mother for Peace 249, 250
anti-Communist hysteria 183
Anti-Martial Law Coalition 140
anti-war movement 11, 13, 95, 97, 101, 102, 108, 114, 115, 117, 176, 248, 258, 259, 264
Arcade 279, 280, 282
ARC/Ecology 246, 257
Arlington, Gary 275, 276
Army Street 61, 219, 221, 230
Arnautoff, Victor 300
Arnold, Dick 213
Artists' Liberation Front 221
Asawa, Ruth 87, 88
Asian-American 33, 40, 44, 70, 126, 127, 134, 138, 236, 258, 294, 295, 303, 309, 314
Asian Community Center 128, 307
Asian Legal Services 128
Asia/Pacific Environmental Network 257
AT&T 259
Attard, Tony 212
Autumn Records 320
Avalon Ballroom 95, 274, 300, 319, 325
Ayers, Bill 107
Ayson, Felix 131, 136, 139
Aztlán 42, 43, 63, 70, 330
- B**
- Baby Farm 103
Bacon, David 47
BAGL 187
Baktivedanta, A.C. 200
Baldwin, James 73, 188
Balmy Alley 71, 81, 83
Bank of America 71, 259
Ban the Bomb 97
Banyaquaya, Thomas 166
Bardis, John 159
Barnes, Peter 91
Barretto, Ray 42, 63
Barrish Bail Bonds 25
Bartolini, Jack 49, 50, 51, 54
Basta Ya! 37, 39, 46, 298
Bay Area Gay Liberation 187
Bay Area Radical Teacher's Organizing Committee 265
Bay Area Rapid Transit BART 49, 66, 91, 94, 155
Bay Area Research Project 113
Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) 242, 244, 256
Bayview-Hunter's Point 10, 41, 46, 73, 102, 145, 152, 156, 162, 255
Beagle, Danny 97, 98
Beatles, The 200, 273, 317, 319, 320, 321, 327
Beau Brummels, The 320
Bechtel 260
Bedesem, Dr. Helen 29
Beer Drivers Local 888 262
Belardi, Joe 263
Belasco, Warren J. 242, 247, 256
Beliso, Dolly 68
Benmayor, Rina 60
Benton, Nick 187
Bergman, Gregory 214
Berg, Peter 225, 252, 253, 256, 257
Berkeley Barb 97, 168, 184, 273, 281, 284
Berkeley Bonaparte 301
Berkeley Ecology Center 244, 250, 251, 252
Berkeley Free Press 300
Berkeley Graphic Arts 300
Berkeley Oakland Women's Union 179
Berkeley Tribe 284
Bernal Dwellings housing projects 89, 104
Bernal Heights 7, 11, 61, 62, 69, 75, 92, 94, 95, 102, 103, 105, 162
Bernal, José 61
Bernal Recycling 251
Berrigan, Daniel 65
Berry, Chuck 319
Berry, Joe 271
Best Foods 260
Bethe, Hans 97, 107
Bevington, Douglas 243, 256
Bhaktivedanta, Swami A.C. 196
Bicol Club 133
Bierman, Sue 159
Big Mountain 168
Big Sur 194, 201
Big Table 197
Bijou Funnies 272, 276, 283
Bill Graham Presents 317, 326
Bill, Joe 164
Bindweed Press, The 300
bioregionalism 253
Black Bear Ranch 195, 196, 197, 206
Black Cat Café 183, 185
Black consciousness 10, 17
Black exodus 142
Black Flag 227
Black Fraction 114
Black Light Explosion 107
Black Light Explosion Company 99
Black Nationalism 17, 31
Black Panther Party 19, 21, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 97, 141, 146, 289, 326
Black Panthers 7, 11, 19, 22, 30, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 129, 146, 184, 186, 200, 203, 205, 258, 273, 322, 323, 325
Black Power 21, 129, 330

- Black radicalism 141
 Black San Francisco 24, 144, 153
 Blackstone, Elliot 184
 Black Student Union (BSU) 10, 11, 17–26, 28, 29, 40, 146, 147
 co-op housing
 Big House, 560 Page 147
 Black House 147
 Black Studies Department 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 330
 Black Writers Workshop 99
 Blair, Sandy 175
 Blakey, Scott 60
 Blank, Joani 188
 Blinn, Horace 250
 Bloom, Saul 246, 256
 Blue Shield 134, 259, 270
 Blumenfeld, Carol 223, 227
 Blyth-Zellerbach Committee 143
 Bodega Bay 12, 241
 Bonifacio, Andres 132
 Boston Women's Health Book
 Collective 174, 182
 Boucher, Sandy 171
 Braaten, David 60
 Bradford, David 74
 Bradley, Will 229, 230, 231
 Brady, Judy 171, 172
 Brand, Roger 276, 280
 Brand, Stewart 196
 Brannan Street Cultural Center 168
 Bravo, Monsignor Miguel Obando 67
 Breed, London 153
 Brenner, Aaron 266
 Bridges, Harry 258, 319
 Briggs Initiative 189
 Briggs, John 189
 Brightman, Lemman 166
 Brisbane 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 216, 217, 218, 251, 255
 Brockway Glass 260, 267, 269
 Brodnick, Joseph 32, 34, 46
 Brothers and Sisters of Mullen Avenue 105
 Broussard, Albert 144, 153
 Brower, David 241, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257
 Brown Berets 64, 65, 91
 Brown, Jeff 223, 228
 Brown, Jerry 203
 Brown, Rev. Amos 149, 152, 153
 Brown, Willie 146, 152, 188, 204
 Bruce, Lenny 98, 132, 139, 300, 321
 Bryant, Anita 189
 Buenaventura, Enrique 63
 Buena Vista Elementary School 223
 Builders and Construction Workers
 Union, Local 261 50, 52
 Bunch, Richard 108
 Bunzel, John 21
 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) 164, 166
 Burnham, Linda Frye 230
 Burns, Jeffrey 60
 Burns, Randy 166, 188
 Burroughs, William 197
 Burr, Richard 212
 Burton, John 128
 Burton, Phil 146
 Butler, Katy 230
- C**
 Cabarga, Leslie 277
 Cade, Cathy 171, 173, 174, 177, 181
 Caen, Herb 137, 140
 Cahill, Jeremia 250
 Cahn, Laurie 175, 176, 182
 California Academy of Sciences 210, 215
 California Anti-Litter League 250
 California Arts Council 87, 223
 California College of Arts and Crafts 300
 California Dreamers 165
 California Labor School 300
 California Planning & Conservation
 League 242
 California Rural Legal Assistance 244
 California State Assembly 146
 California State Division of Industrial
 Welfare 305
 Callenbach, Ernest 229
 Cambodia 111, 113, 114, 120, 276
 Cameron, Barbara 166, 168, 188
 Campbell, Joseph 201
 Camplis, Francisco X. 90
 Camp Pendleton 116
 Campusano, Chuy 71, 75, 76, 77, 83, 90
 Canada 108, 116, 169, 246
 Canyon League 250
 Captain Pissgums 278
 Cardenal, Ernesto 65, 67, 94
 Cardenal, Father Fernando 67
 Carlsson, Chris 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 218, 230, 241, 329
 Carnaval 105
 Carousel Ballroom 324
 Carrillo, Graciela 63, 78, 81–84, 87–90
 Carson, Rachel 244, 247
 Carter, President Jimmy 204
 Carter, Rosalynn 204
 Cartoonists Co-op Press 279
 Casey, Father Jim 58
 Castell, Luria 321
 Castellón, Rolando 90
 Castells, Manuel 60
 Castro clone 185
 Caterpillar Tractor 260, 267, 268
 Catholic Archdiocese 52, 137
 Catholic Charities 50
 Catholic Council for the Spanish
 Speaking 50
 Cayce, Edgar 193
 CCP 279
 Cea, Helen Lara 60
 Center for Special Problems 184
 Center for the Study of Political
 Graphics 302
 Centro de Información de La Raza 91
 Centro de Salud 82
 Centro Social Obrero 50
 Cervantes, Lorna Dee 63
 Cervantes, Luis 90
 Cervantes, Susan Kelk 78, 87
 CETA, Comprehensive Employment
 and Training Act 71, 88, 91, 105, 168, 223, 224, 227
 Chaffee, Secretary of the Navy John 112
 Chamorro, Pedro Joaquín 67
 CHANGE 172, 174
 Chan, Marilyn 307, 312, 316
 Charlatans, The 323
 Chavez, Cesar 53, 60, 64, 82, 129, 203, 219, 240, 244, 259, 261, 271, 297
Chicago Mirror 272
Chicago Review 197
 Chicanismo 59
 Chicano Movement 34, 35, 42
 Child Care Consortium 83
 Children's Book Project, The 229
 Chile 43, 63
 China 111, 112, 113, 114, 118, 217, 246, 269
 Chinatown 10, 15, 31, 41, 44, 46, 72, 126, 127, 128, 136, 137, 140, 145, 156, 158, 160, 162, 300, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 314, 315, 331
 Chinatown Coalition for Better
 Housing 158
 Chinatown Cooperative Garment
 Factory 128, 309
 Chinese Cultural Center 307, 309
 Chinese Exclusion Act 137
 Chinese for Affirmative Action 309, 310
 Chinese Progressive Association 128, 309, 315
Chinese Times 303, 308, 310, 314
 Ching, Winston 263
 Choy, Pearl 309
 Christopher, Mayor George 156
 Chumley, Dan 96
 Chung, Lam Bick 306
 Citizens Against Nihonmachi Eviction
 (CANE) 158, 160
 Citizens for a Better Environment 256
 Citizens for Regional Recreation and
 Parks 242
 City College of San Francisco 40, 330
*City for Sale: The Transformation of San
 Francisco* 139, 143
 City Lights 1, 4, 62, 185, 191, 330
City Magazine 65
 City of Paris 160
 city workers' strikes 264
 Civil Liberties Act of 1988 295
 Civil Rights Movement 10, 16, 52, 64, 82, 97, 105, 126, 129, 141, 146, 163, 164, 170, 171, 176, 182, 194, 213, 221, 259, 264, 285, 318, 320, 323
 Clamshell Alliance 257
 Clarke, Patricia 165
 Clarke, Teveia 167, 168
 Clash, The 325
 Classroom Teachers Association 265
 Coalition of Labor Union Women 180, 270
 Coal Mine Safety and Health Act 245
 cocaine 97
 Cockcroft, Eva 91
 Cockettes, The 187
 Cohen, Robert 65
 College of Ethnic Studies 27, 165, 330
 College of San Mateo 32, 42, 45
 Collins, Terry 39, 146, 147, 150, 153
 Colma 121, 210, 211
 Colon, Willie 63
 Coltrane, John 42
Comic Book 5, 280, 284
 Committee for a Democratic Union 264
 Committee for Homosexual Freedom 184
 Committee to Save San Bruno
 Mountain, The 212
 Communications Company, The 195, 301
 Communist Party 39, 103, 107, 130, 132, 300
 Communities for a Better
 Environment 256, 257
 Community Congress 151, 161
 Community Development Block
 Grant Program 161
 Community Services Organization 50, 244

Company & Sons 276
Comprehensive Environmental
Response, Compensation, and
Liability Act 255
Compton's Cafeteria 13, 184
Concha, Jerry 82, 90
Concha, Gerald 76
Cone, Russ 60
Congress of Racial Equality 107,
146, 259
Continental Can Company 250
Conversion Our Goal 184
Coors Beer boycott 262
Corben, Richard 278
Cornell University 97, 329
Corona, Bert 82
Corporate Crime Comics 283
Correll, Richard 300
Corso, Gregory 197
Cortázar, Julio 63
Cortright, David 113, 114, 115
Council on Environmental Quality 243
CounterPULSE 5, 226
Country Joe and the Fish 293
Covey, Steven 205
Cow Palace 104, 209, 320
Coyote, Peter 91, 195, 196, 207, 225,
230
Crabill, Robin 214
Craig, Gwen 189
Crosby, Colleen 34
Crosby, Jean 172, 178
Crown Theater 56
Crumb, Robert 76, 86, 96, 107, 272,
273, 274, 275, 277, 278, 280,
281, 282, 283, 287
Crumpler, Dewey 72, 73
Crusade for Justice 35, 46
Cruz, Philip Vera 129
Cruz, Victor Hernández 63
Cuba 21, 30, 46, 92, 147, 247, 285,
329
Cuff, Bob 76

D

Daddy, Kwaku 96
Dahlburg, Edward 197
Daley, Mayor Richard 184
Dalton, Roque 63
Daly City 121, 122, 132, 210, 213,
217, 255
Dario, Rubén 66
Dasmann, Ray 253
Daucher, Linda 177
Daughters of Bilitis 185
Davis, Adelle 247
Davis, Angela 89
Davis, Jack 225
Davis, Miles 42, 145, 320
Davis, Ron 321
Davis, Sarah 225, 226
DDT 242, 244, 245, 246, 254
Debs, Eugene 258
Dederich, Charles "Chuck" 202,
203, 205
de Guzman, Emil 135, 138, 139
Deitch, Kim 272, 276, 279, 280
deLappe, Pele 300
de Leon, Richard 269, 271
Dellums, Ron 146
Demonstration Cities and
Metropolitan Development Act
of 1966 52
Department of Housing and Urban
Development 58
Descendents, The 228

Design Action 302
de Tocqueville, Alexis 237
Deutch, Carole 95, 97, 98, 103
Diablo Canyon 249, 250, 256
Diaz-Vargas, Diana 68
Diggers 13, 193, 194, 195, 196, 199,
202, 205, 206, 207, 221, 225, 230,
240, 258, 301, 322, 326, 328
Dignidad Rebelde 302
Dining Room Employees Local 9 262
di Prima, Diane 66
District elections 161
Dock of the Bay 99, 107
Dodge Revolutionary Union
Movement 262
Dolores Street 64
Domingo, Claudio 131
Domingo, Silme 267
Donahue, Don 107, 284
Donahue, Tom 320, 324, 327
Dong, James 72
Doors, The 196
Dope Comics 276
Douglas, Emory 37, 243, 256, 289,
307, 312
Dow Chemical 98
Dowd, Douglas 97, 107
Downs, Chandler 198, 199, 207
Downtown Peace Coalition 177
Drake, Luman 212
Drawn & Quarterly 283
Drewes, Caroline 231
Dr. John 323
Drummond, Judy 39
Dubiner, Shoshana 79
Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne 204
Duncan, Donald 108
Duncan, Isadora 319
Dunn, Ed 159
Duskin, Alvin 249, 250, 256
Dylan, Bob 154, 320, 327

E

Eagle, Adam Fortunate 164
Eames, Charles 196
Earth Day 243, 252
Earth First! 215
Earth Island Institute 246, 254, 257
Earthworks 226, 236, 240
East Mission Improvement Association
49
East Village Other 272
East West newspaper 311, 312, 313,
314, 316
EC Comics 275, 278
Ecology Action 242, 250, 257
Edey, Marion 254
Editorial Pocho-Ché 13, 47, 62, 70
Educational Opportunity Program 26
Eisenhower administration 107
Elbaum, Max 45, 140
Elberling, John 150, 153
El Cid 263
El Comité Civico Latinoamericano
Pro Nicaragua en los Estados
Unidos 66
El Grito del Norte 35
Ellington, Duke 145
Ellis, Arnold 151, 153
El Pulgarcito 70
El Salvador 39, 55, 63, 67, 147
El Teatro Experimental de Cali 63
El Tecolote newspaper 90, 271, 301
Emporium 261, 312
Endangered Species Act 213, 214,
215, 243

Engels, Frederick 106, 154, 155
Environmental Action 245
Environmental Defense Fund 215, 244
Environmental Project on Central
America (EPOCA) 246
Epstein, Barbara 248
Equal Opportunity Commission 53
Equal Rights Advocates 180
Erhard Seminars Training (est)
201-202
Erhard, Werner (Jack Rosenberg) 201,
202, 205, 207, 208
Erskine, Dorothy 242
Esalen 201, 205
Esche, Charles 230
Esclamado, Alex 133
Esprit de Corps clothing company 10,
303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 310,
311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316
Cecily 311
Jasmine Teas 311
Plain Jane 307, 311
Rose Hips 311
Sweet Baby Jane 311
Estren, Mark 278, 284
Eureka Valley 159, 161, 185, 189
Evans, Sara 181
Evers, Bill 242
Everybody's Bookstore 128
EVO 272, 273, 275, 277
Experimental College 17, 22

F

Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers 273, 280
Fall, Bernard 107
Falls Church News-Press 187
Falwell, Jerry 189
Family Dog 95, 200, 321, 322, 324
Fanon, Frantz 40
Fantagraphics 283, 284
Farallones Institute 222, 230
Farinon Electronics 308
Farmer, James 146
FBI 36, 63, 70, 165
Federal Arts Project 285, 300
Feds 'n' Heads 273
Feinstein, Mayor Diane 137, 162
Feringhetti, Lawrence 66, 185
Fernández, Magaly 68
Ferretti, Walter 66, 94
Filipino-American 19, 55, 129, 130,
132, 133, 134, 138
Filipino Medical Technicians 133
Filipino Nurses Association 133
Filipino Postal Employees Association 133
Filipinos 12, 96, 123, 126, 127, 129,
130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 138,
139, 140, 301
Fillmore Auditorium 274
Fillmore District 7, 12, 15, 16, 17, 41,
46, 74, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145,
146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152,
153, 188, 319, 324, 325, 329
Financial District 11, 126
Finocchio's 185
FITS Printing 301
Fleischman, Charles 286
Flint Glass Workers 267
Flood Building 68, 69
Flores, William V. 60
Flotte, Roberto 267
Focus Magazine 215
Folsom Prison Writer's Workshop 70
Fonda, Jane 64, 112, 331
Foner, Philip 291
Food Not Bombs 205

Food Stamp Act 199
Ford, Gerald 115
Ford Motors 260
Fort Jackson 110
Fort Leavenworth 108, 110
Fort Ord 108
Fouratt, Jim 328
Four Seas Investment Corporation
128, 137
France 87, 246, 283
Freed, Alan 318
Freedom Summer 16, 97, 286
Free Food Conspiracy 199, 232
Free Food Family 199
Free Frame of Reference 195, 221, 323
Freeman, Jo 178
Freeman, Mark 185
Free Print Shop 198
Free Space 172, 176, 182
Free Speech Movement 10, 16, 194,
259, 285, 290, 320
Free University of Berkeley 250
Freeway Revolt 159
Frente (see also FSLN) 65–69, 93
Freund, Michael 215
Friday of the Purple Hand 185, 186
Friedman, Yona 221, 230
Friends of Endangered Species 215
Friends of the Earth 245, 246, 253,
254, 257
Friends of the Filipino People 140
Friends of the IRA 24
Frisco Bay Mussel Group 253
Fromer, Irving 300
Frost, Jack 79
FSLN 65, 66, 92
Free Speech Movement (FSM) 285,
300, 321
FTA (Fuck or Free the Army) Tour
64, 112, 331
Fuapopo, Sekio 89
Fuentes, Juan 63
Furutani, Warren 45

G

Gabriner, Bob 97, 98
Gaffney, Brian 214, 216
Galería de La Raza 43, 81, 82, 90, 223,
226, 229
Gallegos, Herman 50, 53
Gallegos, Pete 82
Gallstones 172, 174
Gamboa, Jr., Henry 63
García, Jerry 194
García, Rupert 42, 43, 63, 90
Gardner, Fred 110
Garment Shop Special Use District 305
Garrett, Jimmy 17
Garry, Charles 35, 36, 46
Garson, Barbara 247
Garson, Marvin 97
Garvey, Marcus 89
Garvin, Penn 180
Gaskin, Steven 200, 205, 207
gay 9, 13, 14, 92, 95, 96, 102, 105, 126,
143, 173, 177, 178, 183, 184,
185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190,
234, 258, 262, 330
Gay American Indians 166, 188
Gay Asian Information Network 188
Gay Latino Alliance 188
Gay Liberation 325
Gay Liberation Front (GLF) 185–187,
330
Gay Sunshine 187
Gearhart, Sally 189

General Motors 260, 262
Genet, Jean 187
Gerassi, John 19, 107
Gerth, Hans 106
Gethsemany, Ky 65
GI and Veterans March for Peace 111
GI Bill 131, 164
GI coffee house 110, 115
Gilbert, Louise 300
Ginsberg, Allen 65, 66, 107, 185, 194,
197, 201, 206, 327
Gintis, Herbert 269, 271
Gladden, Nyla 170
Glass Bottle Blowers Association 268
Glass Worker Support Committee 268
Gleason, Ralph J. 320, 321, 324, 327
Glide Memorial Church 63, 170, 172,
173, 177, 178, 181, 184, 297, 301
Glide Publications 62
Goercke, Paul 212
Goldberg, Art 46
Goldberg, Harvey 106
Goldberg, Whoopie 259
Golden Gate Bridge 104, 112, 122,
252, 256
Golden Gate Park 186, 195, 324, 325
Polo Fields 325
Speedway Meadows 325
Goldhaft, Judy 225, 242, 247, 248,
252, 256
Goldman, Emma 258
Gonna Rise Again Graphics 296, 302
Gonzalez, Abel 50, 52
Gonzalez, “Corky” 82
González, Robert 90
Goodlett, Carlton 24, 30
Goodman Building 158
Goodman Group 158, 160
Goodstein, David 189
Good Vibrations 188
Gordon, Robert 244
Gorz, André 106
Gothic Blimpworks 273
Gottlieb, Lou 196
Grace, Reverend William R. 50, 51
Graham, Bill 95, 321, 324, 325, 326
Grahame, Kenneth 122
Grahm, Judy 173, 182, 188, 191
Grain of Sand 40
Graphic Art Workshop 300
Grateful Dead 194, 317, 321, 322, 328
Gravanis, Ruth 241, 251, 256
Graves, Sherol 168
Great! Society, The 320, 322
Greenbelt Alliance 242
Green, Justin 276, 279
Green, Keith 279
Greenpeace 246, 256
Griffin, Rick 274, 284, 287
Griffin, Susan 173
Griffith, Bill 276, 277, 278, 279, 280,
283
Grogan, Emmett 326
Guadalajara de Noche Restaurant 61
Guardia Nacional 62, 67, 69, 92
Guatemala 49, 55, 67, 74
Guevara, Ernesto “Che” 38, 43, 63, 92,
101, 258
Guinea-Bissau 30
Gullick, Esther 241
Gurnon, Emily 45, 46
Guy, Buddy 42
Guzmán, Ruben 75, 76, 77, 83

H

Haber, Al 98

Habitat Conservation Plan 214–216
Hagan, Father James 60
Hagedorn, Jessica 63
Haight-Ashbury 26, 64, 72, 95, 96, 102,
110, 111, 150, 156, 158, 159, 160,
161, 162, 168, 180, 185, 188, 193,
194, 195, 200, 206, 207, 221, 263,
272, 274, 275, 284, 287, 322, 324,
328, 331
Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic
195
Haight Ashbury Muralists 72
Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood
Council 251
Haight Ashbury Women’s Health
Collective 180
Hall, Della 104
Hallinan, Terrence 21, 26, 299
Hall, Mary 49, 54, 57
Hall, Richard 104
Hall, Richard Wayne 107
Ham, Bill 321
Hamilton, Rev. Wilbur 149, 158
Hare Krishna 193, 196, 200, 205, 207
Hare, Nathan 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29
Harlem 39, 97, 254
Harmon, Ellen 321
Harris, David 111
Harris, Larry 118
Harris, Paul 33
Hartman, Chester 139, 140, 143,
153, 162
Hayakawa, S.I. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 290
Hayes Valley 161
Hayward, Claude 301
Hearst, Patty 160
Heilbrun, David G. 314
Heinl, Marine Colonel Robert 112,
113, 115
Helms, Chet 95
Henderson, David 63
Henson, Dave 246
Herbert, Herbie 325
Herman, M. Justin 50, 143, 146, 147,
148, 150
Hermoso, Mario 130
Hernandez, Ester 84, 88
Hernandez, Manuel 90
heroin 96
Herrera, Hayden 63
Hestor, Sue 159
Higgins, Bette 212
Hilliard, David 46, 47
Hill, Joe 258
Hills Bros Coffee 260
Hills, Rose 119, 120
Hinkle, Warren 65
Hing, Alex 31, 34, 40
Hirschman, Jack 63, 66
Ho Chi Minh 101, 107
Hoehner, Dr. Bernard 166
Hoffa, Jimmy 100
Hoffman, Abbie 195, 277
Hoi Ming factory 304
Holden, Joan 96, 221, 231
Holiday, Billie 145
Hollis, Douglas 225
Holly Park 75
Hongisto, Sheriff Richard 128, 139
Hooker, John Lee 42
Hope, Bob 112
Horizons Unlimited 75
Hostess Bakery 57, 260
Hotel Employers Association 262
House Armed Services Committee
114
House Un-American Activities

Committee 10, 15, 318
Housing and Urban Development
58, 137
Housing Authority 78, 79, 137
Housing Rights Group 189
Howard, Alice 214
Howard, John Langley 89
Howl 185
Human Be-in 322, 323
Human Potential Movement 201,
202, 207
Humphrey, Cliff 257
Hunter, Beatrice Trum 247
Huntington, Mark 214
Hunt, Lamar 164, 256
Hurok, Sol 326
Hutch, Ella Hill 152
Huxley, Aldous 201

I

I-Hotel (International Hotel) 7, 12,
40, 44, 45, 72, 126–132, 134–
140, 153, 158, 162, 167, 176,
182, 235, 236, 240, 294, 307,
309, 312, 315, 329
IHS 164, 168
Iijima, Chris 40
India Basin Industrial Park 156
Indian Child Welfare Act 168
Indian Financing Act of 1974 165
Indian Health Care Improvement Act
in 1976 165
Indian Health Service 164, 168
Indian Relocation Act of 1956 163
Indian Self-Determination and
Education Assistance Act 165
Indians of All Tribes 40, 165
Indonesia 269
Industrial Areas Foundation 244
Industrial Workers of the World 106
Infante, Guillermo Cabrera 63
IngleSide District 20
Inkworks Press 294, 302, 329
Institute for Industrial Relations 98
Integral Urban House 222, 230
International Association of Machinists
245
International Harvester 260
International Hotel Block Develop-
ment Citizens Advisory
Committee 137
International Hotel Tenants
Association (IHTA) 128,
135–137, 160
International Indian Treaty Council
167, 301
International Ladies Garment Workers
Union (ILGWU) 304, 305,
308, 309, 311, 313–316
International Longshore and
Warehouse Union (ILWU) 100,
103, 107, 155, 258, 259, 260,
267, 319
International Society of Krishna Con-
sciousness (ISKCON) 200, 201
Intersection for the Arts 225, 226
Invisible Circus 297, 301
Irons, Greg 278, 284
Iroquois Confederacy 165
Isherwood, Christopher 187
It Ain't Me Babe 172
Ithong, Larry 129
I Wor Kuen 128, 315

J

Jackson, Mattie 308, 311, 313, 316
Jackson, Thomas F. 60
Jack Tar Hotel 202
Jacobs, Jane 146
Jamerson, Jamie 98
James, R.D. 79
James, Reverend Jesse 46, 53
Jamestown Community Center 83
Japan 87, 111, 114, 130, 246
Japanese-American 39, 45, 98, 153,
233, 295
Japanese Americans 15, 153, 154
Japantown 143, 145, 153, 295
Japantown Art and Media Workshop
295
Jaxon, Jack 275
Jefferson Airplane, The 320, 327
Jelinek, Estelle 171
Jensen, Byron 212
Jensen, Milton 212
Johnson, Huey 223
Jones, Dick 261
Jones Family, The 219, 224
Jones, Jim 152, 193, 203, 204
Jones, Mother 258
Jones, Rhodessa 226
Jonestown 9, 14, 106, 193, 203, 206
Joplin, Janis 95
Joseph Lee Recreation Center 73
Josephson, Claire 75
Journey 207, 325
Jung Sai Strike Support Committee 308

K

Kabataang Makabayan (Nationalist
Youth) 132
Kadish, Ruben 71
Kaeselau, Ernie 121, 123, 125
Kahlo, Frida 63
Kahn, Stanya 225
Kaiper, Bruce 300
Kaiser Hospital 261, 263
Kalantari, Kosoro 19
Kalayari International 128, 132, 133,
134, 139
Kaliflower 197, 198, 199, 205, 206,
207, 240
Karenga, Maulana 146
Katcheshawno, Millie 166
Katcheshawno, Vernon 166, 167
KDP 43, 127, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136,
139, 140, 301
Kearny Street Housing Corporation
137
Kearny Street Workshop 72, 300, 302
Kelley, Robin D.G. 47
Kelly, Alton 99, 321
Kelly, Vicki 120
Kennedy, Bobby 10, 21, 146, 246
Kentish Town Farm 230
Kent State 200
Kentucky 95, 96, 102, 107
Kerouac, Jack 197
Kerr, Jack 241
Kesev, Ken 193, 194
Kezar Stadium 324, 325
Khaled, Leila 101
Kikuchi, Randy 188
Kilduff, Marshall 205
Kilpatrick Bread 260
King, Jr., Martin Luther 10, 20, 89,
107, 146
Kinney, Jay 5, 14, 107, 272, 277, 279,
8, 330
Kiser, Mike 212
Kissinger, Henry 186
Kitchen, Denis 276, 280
Kitchen Sink 276, 280, 281
Klamath 44
Klare, Michael 107
Knights of Labor 192
Knoop, Judy 171, 174, 175, 180
Knotts, Reverend David 50, 51, 52
Knox, John 254
Kohl, Laura 205, 206
Kominsky, Aline 283
Koppel, Stanley 300
Korr, Barbara 242
Kozak, Mike 312, 313, 314
KPFA 165, 327
KPOO-FM radio 147, 166, 331
Krassner, Paul 274
Krishnamurti 101
Kroll, Anne 214
Kryananda, Sri 193
Kurtzman, Harvey 272, 274
Kwong, Peter 308

L

Lacouture, Jean 107
L.A. Free Press 273
La Gaceta Sandinista 65, 66, 67, 68,
92, 93
La Honda 193, 194
Lai, Handa 306
Lake Merced 211, 216
Lakota Sioux 44, 167
La Mamelle 225
Lamb, Charles 263
Landmark Forum 202, 205
Lane, Jerry 279
Laos 111, 113, 120
La Raza Centro Legal 91
La Raza en Acción Local 91
La Raza Graphics 43, 66, 300, 302
La Raza Information Center 82,
160, 288
La Raza Park 220, 223, 229
La Raza Silkscreen Center 43, 82, 91,
288, 300
La Raza Unida Party 39
Larson, Ellie 214
Last Gasp 276, 280, 281
Latin American Student Organization
17
latinidad 49, 55, 59
Latino 7, 17, 24, 33, 38, 44, 45, 50, 51,
52, 54, 60, 62, 63, 81, 83, 85, 86,
90, 91, 96, 102, 183, 185, 188,
265, 275, 288, 302, 331
Laugh-In 26
Laurence, Leo 184
Lauritsen, John 186
La Victoria Panadería 61
Lazam, Jeanette 135, 139, 140
League of Conservation Voters 254
League of Latin American Citizens 50
League of Revolutionary Black
Workers 101, 262
Leahy, Margaret 7, 10, 15, 153, 162,
330
Lee, Lily 306
Lee Mah Electronics 307, 308, 309,
312, 314
Lee, Yook Yung 306, 308
LeFebvre, Walter 97
Left Wing Poultry 236, 240

- Lennon, John 200
 Lescalet, Gary "Pinky" 45
 Letterman Hospital 110
 Leung, Nam Hing 306
Leviathan 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 107, 108, 111
 Levi's 260
 Levitez, Herty "Mauricio" 66
 Levy, Captain Howard 108
 Levy, Howard 110
 Lewis, Christopher 148
 Leyland, Winston 187
 Liberation News Service 99, 107, 301
 Lichtenstein, Roy 86
Life Magazine 194
 Light, Allie 175
 Limeliter, The 196
 Lippard, Lucy R. 220, 222, 230
 Littlejohn, Larry 186
 Living Theatre 231
 Loarca, Carlos 90
 Local 2, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees 262, 263, 264
 Local 250, Service and Employees International Union (SEIU) 263, 264
 Local 1100, Department Store Workers 261
 Lock, Seymour 321
 London, Bobbie 276, 284
 Longest Walk, The 168
 Longshoreman's Hall 321
 Lookouts, The 228
 Lopez, "Gio" 32
 Lopez, Segundo 59
 Lopez, Yolanda 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 59, 82
 Lord, Chip 225
 Lordstown 262
 Los Siete 7, 11, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 64, 65, 68, 70, 82, 83, 90, 288, 298, 302, 323, 324
 Louie, Steve 46
 Love Canal 255
 Lowell High School 123
 Low Riders 223, 226
 LSD 14, 193, 194, 200, 321
 Lygia S. 66
 Lymon, Frankie 318
 Lynch, Jane 277
 Lynch, Jay 272, 276, 277, 279
 Lynd, Staughton 107
- M**
- MacArthur, General Douglas 130
 Mack Truck 260, 268
 Madison, Wisconsin 11, 95, 97, 98, 103, 106, 107
Mad magazine 274
 MaestraPeace 181
 Ma, Frankie 306, 310
 Maglaya, Cynthia 132
 Magnolia Thunderpussy 26
 Mahal, Taj 285
 Make-a-Circus 219, 224
 Malcolm X 17, 74
 Malo 42, 322
 Managua earthquake 65
 Mander, Jerry 253, 256
 Manhattanization 127, 138, 249, 269
 Manhattan Project 107
 Manilatown 44, 72, 126, 127, 128, 137, 138, 139, 156, 158, 300, 309, 330
 Manilatown Information Center 128
 Mao Tse-tung 40, 58
 Maradiaga, Ralph 81, 90
 Marcos, Ferdinand 132, 267
 Marcus Books 151
 Marcuse, Herbert 219, 222, 230
 Marighella, Carlos 101
 Marine Mammal Protection Act 243
 Marin Garden Club 256
 Mark, Ellen 214
 Marley, Richard 197
 Márquez, Gabriel García 63
 Márquez, Roberto 63
 Marsh, George 96
 martial law 10, 32, 132, 133
 Martí, Jose 38
 Martinet, Al 35
 Martinez, Ben 48, 52, 54, 57, 58, 59, 60
 Martínez, Denis Corrales 70
 Martínez, Elizabeth "Betita" 20, 31, 35, 47, 52, 54, 58, 59, 60
 Martínez, Juan 20
 Martínez, Mario 45
 Martínez, Rodolfo 46
 Martínez, Tony 32, 38, 42, 45
 Martin, Tony 321
 Marvel Comics 280
 Marx, Karl 40, 46, 146
 Masaoka, Miya 271
 Mattachine Society, 185
 Mayakovsky 63
 May Day 30, 31, 45, 105
 Mayor's Committee to Restore the Haight-Ashbury 159
 Mays, Willie 145
 McCarthyism 285
 McClintock, Elizabeth 210
 McClosky, Mike 79
 McClure, Michael 63
 McDonald, Donald 263
 McGoran, Paul 32, 34, 46
 McGovern, George 277
 McKay, Glenn 321
 McLaughlin, Sylvia 241, 256
 McLean, Jean 168
 McNally, Dennis 328
 McQueen, Steve 196
 McSpade, Angelfood 278
 Mead, George 79
 Means, LaNada 40
 Meany, George 291
 Me Decade 202
 Media Workshop 300
 Melara, Oscar 82
 Melendez, Danilo "Bebe" 45
 Memmi, Albert 40
 Mendez, Consuelo 77, 78, 82, 83, 84, 87, 89
 Merry Milk 236
 Merry Pranksters 193, 321
 Merton, Thomas 65
 mescaline 96
 Mexican-American 19, 20, 50, 55, 59, 70, 90
 Mexican American Liberation Art Front 90
 Mexican American Political Association 50
 Mexican American Unity Council 50
 Mexico 10, 21, 35, 39, 46, 55, 66, 74, 82, 83, 85, 87, 90, 96, 104, 164, 165, 167, 258, 269, 285
 Mexico City 10, 21, 83
 Mickelson, Donna 110
 Milam, Lorenzo 166
 Milk, Harvey 9, 13, 14, 137, 152, 161, 162, 189, 190, 262
 Miller, Mike 52, 54, 59, 60, 206, 207, 318
 Mills, C. Wright 106
 Milne, Forest (Gretchen) 171
 Milton Meyer and Company 128
 Miners for Democracy 267
 Mini Park 71, 72, 77, 88
 Minor Threat 227
 Miranda, Tony 30, 31
 Mirikitani, Janice 40, 63
 Missabu, Rumi 187
 Mission Area Community Action Board 52
 Mission Blue butterfly 213, 214, 215, 216
 Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) 7, 12, 36, 48, 49, 52-60, 75, 91, 158
 Mission Council on Redevelopment (MCOR) 51, 52
 Mission Cultural Center 91, 168, 302, 331
 Mission District 7, 12, 13, 14, 20, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 62, 65, 66, 68, 72, 74, 75, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 103, 104, 161, 188, 261, 267, 275, 276, 284, 288, 302, 322, 325, 331
 Mission Food Conspiracy 177
 Mission High School 64
 Mission Hiring Hall 91
 Mission Housing 91
 Mission Housing Development Corporation (MHDC) 158
 Mission Merchants' Association 58
 Mission Model Cities organization 83
 Mission Neighborhood Health Center 91
 Mission Rebels 35, 36, 46, 53, 76, 91
 Mission Renewal Commission 51
 Mission Tenants' Union (MTU) 51, 54, 91
 Mississippi Summer 170
 MJB Coffee 260
 Mock, Richard 225
 Model Cities Group 58
 Model Cities Neighborhood Corporation 54, 57, 58, 59
 Model Cities Program 48, 52, 83, 91
 Mohawk 44, 165
 Mojo Men, The 320, 322
 Mollenkopf, John 152
 Mona's 185
 Mondale, Walter 204
 Monk, Thelonus 323
 Monongye, David 166
 Montoya, Malaquias 42, 43, 90, 300
 Moral Majority 189
 Morantz, Paul 203, 205
 Mormon Church 164
 Mormons 192
 Morningstar Ranch 195, 196, 207
 Morris, George 262
 Morrison, Philip 97, 107
 Moscone, George 9, 14, 127, 128, 135, 137, 139, 152, 154, 161, 162, 188, 190, 204
 Moscoso, Victor 274, 287, 301
 Mosher, Mike 75
 Moskowitz, Moe 287
 Mosse, George 106
Mother Earth 323
 Mother Lode 172, 182
 Mouly, Francoise 283

Mount Adams 165
Mouse, Stanley 99
Movement for a Democratic Military (MDM) 108, 117
Mozambique 30
Mrak, Dr. Emil 254
Ms. Magazine 179
Mullen Avenue Liberation Front 104
murals 13, 14, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 329
Murguía, Alejandro "Gato" 7, 13, 61, 91, 93, 94, 330
Murphy, Willy 276, 279
Murrar, Anuar 68
Murray, George 21, 22, 27, 29, 30
Musa, Bobby 118

N

Nader, Ralph 244
Nahuatl 66
Narciso, Filipina 134
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People 107
National Center for Lesbian Rights 188
National Committee for the Restoration for Civil Liberties in the Philippines 140
National Education Association 265
National Endowment for the Arts 223, 225
National Environmental Protection Act 243, 245
National Forest Management Act 243
National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) 311, 313, 315
National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam 286
National Organization of Women (NOW) 42, 172, 179
National Peace Action Coalition 291
National Transsexual Counseling Unit 185
Native American Ethnic Studies Department 166
Native American Heritage Commission 168
Native Americans 10, 27, 31, 33, 39, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 52, 68, 70, 96, 117, 130, 164, 166, 167, 168, 169, 211, 212, 226, 322, 331
Native American Solidarity Committee 166
Native Studies Department 166
Neighborhood Arts Movement 226, 229
Neighborhood Arts Program 64, 91, 168
Neighborhood Youth Corps 105
Nelson, Bruce 98
Nevel, Xochil 84
New England Free Press 98, 174, 182
New Langton Arts 225
New Left 13, 107, 170, 171, 286, 324
Newman's Gym 64
New People's Army 132
New School for Democratic Management 239
Newsom, Gavin 154
Newsreel 45, 105, 271, 301
Newton, Huey 11, 30, 35, 45, 258, 324
New West Magazine 205
New York Ace 277
New York Times 113, 114, 182
Nicaragua 47, 49, 55, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 92, 94, 147, 246, 331

Nihonmachi 153, 158
NIMBY 250, 251
Nipomo Dunes 249
Nixon, Richard 11, 91, 113, 114, 115, 151, 165, 186, 187, 243, 245, 246, 277, 285, 292, 325
Noe Valley Community Store 233
Noe Valley Improvement Club 49
No More Teachers Dirty Looks 265
Non-Intervention in Nicaragua Committee (NIN) 67
Nordhoff, Charles 106
Norling, Jane 78
Norman Thomas socialists 97
North Beach 11, 12, 15, 61, 64, 107, 183, 185, 194, 263, 275, 308, 310, 331
Northern California Alliance 301
Notes from the Second Year 178
Not Man Apart 254
Noyes, John Humphrey 196, 198
Nuzum, Eric 318
Nygrens, Bu 240
NY Rat 277

O

Oakes, Richard 40, 45, 164, 165, 166
Oak Knoll Naval Hospital 108
Oakland Army Induction Center 97
Oakland Army Terminal 108
Oakland Coliseum 324
Oakland Induction Center 108
OBCECA/Arriba Juntos 50, 52
Obscenity decision, Supreme Court, June 21, 1973 278
Occena, Bruce 132
Occupational Safety and Health Act 245
Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) 270
Officers for Justice 24
Ofshe, Richard 203, 208
Oglala 63
Ohlone 8, 11, 163, 164, 169, 209, 211, 216
Oh's Fine Foods 232
Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) 100, 245, 261
Okinawa 114
Olivier, Barry 324
Olivo, Miriam 84, 88
Olkowski, Bill 222
Olkowski, Helga 222
Olson, Charles 217
Omatsu, Glenn 46
Oneida Community 196, 198
Ongoing Picnic Food Conspiracy 232, 233
Ono, Shin'ya 101
Open Process 18
Oracle 168, 284
Orman, Larry 242, 247, 251, 256
Orozco, José Clemente 80, 90
Orozco, Patrick 216
Orsak, Larry 213
Oskar, Lee 47
Other Avenues 240
Our Bodies Ourselves 174
Owenite Socialists 192
Owens-Illinois 260
Owsley, Stanley 96, 321, 322

P

Pacific Counseling Service 111, 114

Pacific Discovery 215
Pacific Heights 143, 159
Pacific Maritime Association 155
Pacific News Service 113
Packard, Emmy Lou 71
Paco's Tacos 78, 87, 88
Pajaro Valley Ohlone Indian Council 216
Palace Hotel 10, 16, 259
Palao, Alec 328
Panama 27, 96
Panama Canal 27
Pangasianan Club 133
Panhandle 157, 159, 193, 195, 325
Panhandle Freeway 157, 159
Paris, Melinda 132
Paris Peace Accords 115
Parker, Pat 173, 188
Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty 246
Participation in the Movement 97
Pasias, Jerome 77, 83
Patterson, Don 166
Paulsen, Norman 193
Payett, Ed 168
Payett, Madelyn 168
Payne, Carol 178
PEACE (People Emerging Against Corrupt Establishments) 114
Peck, Abe 284
Pederson, Reverend Gerald 24
Pedrin, Verna 175
Peltier, Leonard 168
Pentagon 98, 113
Peoples for Open Space 242, 247
Peoples Action Coalition 160
People's Bakery 236
People's Common Operating Warehouse 236
People's Food System 8, 12, 107, 153, 207, 232, 233, 240, 256
People's Park 223, 324
People's Press 296, 301
People's Refrigeration 234, 236
People's Temple 152, 153, 168, 169, 193, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206
People's Union 302
People's World 107
PeRaza, Armando 42
Perez, Irene 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 90
Perez, Leonora 134
Peripheral Canal 249, 253
Perls, Fritz 193, 201
Peru 39, 63, 74
Peterbilt Truck 260, 267
peyote 96
PG&E 12, 86, 244, 248, 249, 250, 251
Philippine News 133, 140
Philippines 111, 114, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 138, 139, 140
Philippine Scouts 130
Pickett, Karen 244, 251, 252
Pickle Family Circus 224
Pietri, Pedro 63, 65
Pilipino 40, 45, 127, 133, 139, 167
Pilipinos 41, 43, 139
Pine Ridge Indian reservation 63, 166
Pit River 168
Planet Drum 252, 253, 257
Planned Parenthood 105
Planning & Conservation League 242, 256
Point Reyes Light 203
Poland, Jeff 18
Polkacide 228
Pollack, Vicki 223, 224, 225, 229
Polte, Ron 324

Polytechnic High School 107
Poniatowska, Elena 90
Poor People's March 34
Popular Front for the Liberation of
Palestine 101
Portsmouth Square 158, 312
Potrero del Sol 229
Potrero Hill 46, 49, 89, 95, 104, 221,
275, 306
Poza, Chano 42
Prashad, Vijay 47
Pratt Institute 276
Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center 72,
78, 90
Precita Neighborhood Center 103,
105
Precita Park 96, 104, 105, 311
"Presidio 27" 108, 115, 299
Presidio Mutiny 100, 110, 111, 115
Primeros Cantos 47, 65
Print Mint 274, 276, 279, 280, 287,
301
Professional Air Traffic Controllers
Organization (PATCO) 270
Progressive Labor Party 51, 53, 54,
56, 58
Project Artaud 64, 175
Project Jonah 293
Proposition 13 161, 266
Proposition U 137
psilocybin mushrooms 96
Puente, Tito 42
Puerto Rican Club of San Francisco 50
Puerto Rico 39, 55, 72, 84
Pulido, Guillermo 79
punk 225, 227, 228, 283, 317, 325

Q

Queen, Jimmy 35
queer 13, 183, 185, 186, 187, 188,
189, 191
Quetzalcoat 89

R

racial demographics 33, 145, 152
Rackley, Alex 205
Radio Free Alcatraz 165
Rainbow Grocery 232, 233, 237, 240
Rainier Ale 260
Ramirez, Gilberto 80
Ramparts 45, 108, 328
Randall, Byron 300
Rank-and-File Coalition 267
Rannels, Molly 219, 230
Ransom, Lily 147
RAW 283
Raw Egg Animal Theatre, The 224
Raz, Elizabeth 77
Reagan, Ronald 19, 23, 27, 45, 58, 60,
71, 93, 189, 246, 269, 270, 326
Real Alternatives Project 35, 46
Realist, The 274
Really Really Free Markets 205
Redevelopment 11, 49, 51, 60, 91, 98,
99, 103, 130, 141, 142, 143, 147,
153, 155, 156, 157, 188, 197
Redevelopment: A Marxist Perspective
142
Redgrave, Vanessa 114
Red Guard Party 31, 33, 34, 40
Red Pepper Posters 302
Red Star Cheese collective 234, 236
Red Star Singers 292, 293
Red Voices 166, 167, 168
Reed, Ishmael 63

Rees, Steve 7, 11, 107, 108, 110,
116, 330
Refregier, Anton 71
Reies Lopez Tijerina Courthouse
raid 164
Reinhabitory Theatre, The 225
Rent Stabilization and Arbitration
ordinance 162
Revue, José 63
Reynolds, Julie 230
Rhine, Jenny 175
Ribeldat Vorden 61, 96
Richards, Ted 284
Richmond District 131
Richmond Environmental Action 251
Rifas, Leonard 283
Rights of the Indigenous Peoples 169
Rio Pact 67
Rios, Jose 32, 33, 45
Rios, Michael 63, 72, 75, 77, 82, 83,
89, 91
Rios, Oscar 33, 34
Rios, Tom 77, 83
Rip Off Press 275, 276, 280, 281, 282
Rita, Bob 274
Rivera, Diego 71, 72, 82, 85, 86, 90
Rivera, Gustavo Ramos 90
Robbins, Trina 272, 276
Robertson, Geri 174
Robles, Al 40, 137, 139
Rodriguez, Nelson 45
Rodriguez, Patricia 77
Rodriguez, Peter 90
Rodriguez, Ruth 84
Rodriguez, Spain 75, 96, 272, 276,
287, 301
Rogers, Mary 147, 151, 159
Rolling Stones, The 320
Rolling Thunder 165
Romero, Elias 321
Romero, Rachel 294
Roof, James 211
Rosenkranz, Patrick 284
Rosenthal, Irving 197, 199, 207
Ross, John 51
Rossman, Michael 302
Roszak, Theodore 192, 328
Rotten, Johnny 317, 318
Rowe, Frank 300
Roy, Ciranjiva 196
Rubin, Jerry 195, 277
Rubinson, David 324
Rudolph, Joe 166
Ruiz, Ralph 32, 45
Rukeysner, Muriel 65
Rulfo, Juan 63
Rumford Fair Housing Law 96
Russell, James 263
Rutzick, Beverly 175

S

Sadlowski, Ed 267
Sage, Zona 175
Saigon 113, 114, 121, 122
Salinas, Raúl R. 64
Salt of the Earth 258
Samoans 41, 53, 61, 123
San Bruno Mountain 8, 12, 209, 210,
211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216,
217, 218, 331
San Bruno Mountain Watch 215, 331
Sandinista National Liberation Front
(FSLN) 65
Sandinistas 13
San Francisco Airport 111, 209
San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) 82,

83, 85, 231
San Francisco Arts Commission 5, 64,
88, 168, 229
San Francisco Arts Festival 88
San Francisco Bay Guardian 97, 139,
190, 191
San Francisco Central Labor Council
24, 25, 26, 264
San Francisco Chronicle 23, 45, 46, 53,
60, 137, 139, 140, 142, 175, 177,
205, 215, 227, 230, 231, 253, 291,
302, 308, 314, 315, 320, 326
San Francisco Comic Book Company
275
San Francisco Examiner 45, 46, 60, 139,
140, 186, 203, 231, 278, 315
San Francisco Express Times 97, 247
San Francisco Fairness League 57,
58, 60
San Francisco General Hospital 138,
180, 263
San Francisco Good Times 242, 257
San Francisco Housing Authority 78
San Francisco Housing Coalition 161
San Francisco Human Rights
Commission 25
San Francisco Mime Troupe 14, 96,
105, 195, 219, 220, 221, 229,
230, 292, 321, 322, 324, 326,
328
San Francisco Music Council 324
San Francisco Neighborhood
Legal Assistance Foundation
(SNFLAF) 147, 151, 157
San Francisco Planning and Urban
Renewal Association (SPUR)
143, 156, 157, 162
San Francisco Police Department
(SFPD) 32, 33, 34, 68, 126
San Francisco Postal Workers 261
San Francisco Poster Brigade 294
San Francisco Print Collective
301–302
San Francisco Recreation and Parks
Department 227
San Francisco Redevelopment Agency
(SFRA) 49, 50, 51, 60, 91, 141,
143–153, 155, 157–159
San Francisco's Civic Light Opera 107
San Francisco State College 9, 10, 15,
29, 30, 45, 90, 139, 157, 164, 166,
170, 181, 261, 290, 320, 324, 331
San Francisco State College Strike 9,
22, 139, 164, 166, 261
San Francisco Tenants Union 160
San Francisco Women's Building 179,
181, 182, 188
San Francisco Women's Centers 179, 188
San Francisco Women's Liberation
(SFWL) 177
San Francisco Women's Union 179
San Onofre 249
Santa Cruz 32, 108, 181
Santana 42, 96, 317, 322, 325
Sarría, José 183
Satcher, Earl 238
Save the Bay movement 12, 241, 242
Savio, Mario 285
Schell, Orville 113
Schenkman, Joe 277
Schlage lock factory 260
School of Ethnic Studies 22, 27, 29
Schurmann, Franz 113
Scott, Dwight 46
Seale, Bobby 30, 35, 203
Sears Roebuck & Co. 261
Second 104

- Seed* 272
 Seeds of Life food store 233, 234
 Seeger, Pete 318
Self Health 175
 Selvin, Joel 302, 326, 328
 Sender, Ramon 196
 Senzaki, Wes 295
 Serrano, Nina 64
 Sex Pistols 317, 325, 327
 Shange, Ntozake 63, 65
 Shankar, Ravi 42
 Sharp Park 69
 Shasta Dam 169
 Shaw, Randy 259, 271
 Shea, Edmund 287
 Shelley, Mayor Jack 51
 Shelton, Gilbert 273, 275, 280, 283, 287
 Shepard, Paul 230
 Sheridan, Dave 284
 Sherk, Bonnie Ora 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 329
 Shoreline Preservation Conference 249
 Shorenstein, Walter 128
 Sierra Club 215, 245, 249, 253, 254, 256
 Silent Majority 277
 Silverspot butterfly 214, 215, 216
 Sioux treaty of 1868 164
 Siqueiros, David Alfaro 86, 90
 Sloan, Doris 244, 248, 256
Slow Death 280
 Sly and the Family Stone 322, 328
 Smith, Fred 214
 Smith, Pat 172
 Smith, Robert 21, 23
 Smog-Free Locomotion Day 243
 Snake, Ruben 167
Snatch Comics 278
 Snyder, Alberta 168
 Snyder, Bill 168
 socialist-feminist women's unions 180
 Socialist Scholars Conference 170
 Society for Individual Rights 184
 Solano, Haroldo 66
 Solar, Daniel del 63
 SOMArts Cultural Center 168, 226, 229
 Somoza, Anastasio 42, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 92, 94
 Sonntag, Ned 280
 Sons of Champlin 293, 323
 Sorro, Bill 138, 139
 SOS 112, 118, 120
 Stop Our Ship 112
 Support Our Sailors 112
 Sotelo, Casimiro 66, 92
 Soto, Leandro 50, 60
 South Africa 42, 63, 147
 Southern California Edison 249
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference 107
 South of Market 56, 132, 143, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 162, 239, 260, 276, 331
 South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) 113, 114
 Spain 47, 87, 96, 129, 132
 Spartacists 171
 Spiegelman, Art 277, 278, 279, 280, 283, 284
 Stalin, Josef 289
 Standard Oil (Chevron) 259, 261
 Stanford Hotel 136
 Stanford University 193, 210, 309, 320
 Stanton, Professor Bill 23
 State Strike 7, 10, 11, 15, 64, 100, 127, 153, 162, 171
 Statman, Leah 296
 Steele, Charlie 166
 Steiner, Stan 70
 Steps 97
 Stewart, Bennie 148, 153
 St. Francis Hospital 160
 St. Mary's Cathedral 143
 St. Mary's Catholic Center 137
 Stone, Sly 322
 Stop the Draft Week 97
Storefront Extension, The 234, 240
 St. Paul's Church 259
 St. Peter's Catholic Church 58
 Student Council of Indian Nations (SKINS) 166
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) 52, 97, 107, 108
 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) 17, 18, 20, 22, 97, 98, 101, 108, 117, 170
Sudsofloppen 172
 Sullivan, Helen 212
 Summer of Love 13, 185, 194, 195, 287
 Summerskill, President John 18–21
Sunburst 193
 Sundersert 249
 Sunset District 10, 15, 159, 160, 251
 Sun, Shirley 309
 Superfund 255
 Sutherland, Donald 64, 112, 331
 Sutter/Scott Street commune 197
 Sycamore, Matt Bernstein 191
 Syfers, Judy 171, 172, 177
 Sylvester 187
 Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) 106, 160
 Synanon 202, 203, 205, 208
- T**
 Tac Squad 21, 23, 64
TACTics 265
 Tan Son Hut 113
 Tate, Willie 238
 Teacher's Action Caucus 265
 Teamsters 100, 256, 264, 267, 308, 309, 312
 Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) 267
 Tenants Action Group 160
 Tenants and Owners Opposed to Redevelopment (TOOR) 157, 158, 160
 Thailand 114, 128
 Thatcher, Margaret 326
The Black Panther 31, 37, 97, 146
The Bulthead 7, 11, 102, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 117
The Colonizer and the Colonized 40
The Contested City 152, 153
The Gator 18
The Leaky Valve 267
The Mid-Peninsula Observer 97
The Movement 97, 98
 "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" 174
The National Guardian 37, 45
The New Legions 108
The New Republic 85, 91
The Paper Tiger 98
The Pony Express 261
The Rank and Filer 262
The Rank and File Report 267
The Red Cab 267
The Sun Reporter 24, 30
The Wind in the Willows 122
 Thiong'o, Ngugi wa 317
 Third World Communications 47, 62, 70
 Third World consciousness 40, 43, 129
 Third World Distribution 274
 Third Worldism 7, 11, 30, 38, 40, 43, 259, 325
 Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) 10, 11, 19–26, 28–31, 39, 40, 43, 44, 46, 139, 290, 309, 329
 Third World Strike 36, 44, 127, 330
 Third World Women 47, 62, 70, 180
 Third World Women's Alliance 180
 Thomas Reid & Associates 214
 Thompson, John 275
 Thompson, Zack 99, 107
 Three Mile Island nuclear plant 250
 Tijerina, Reis Lopez 82
Time Magazine 203, 239, 240
Time to Greez! Incantations from the Third World 62
Tin-Tan: Revista Cómica 63, 64
 Tishman, Don 149
 Tlumak, Joel 60
 TODCO 150, 158
 Tompao, Wahat 131, 136
 Tompkins, Ann 298
 Tompkins, Douglas 306, 311, 313, 314
 Tompkins, Suzie 314
 Tork, Peter 196
 Tower of Power 322, 325
 Townsend, Arnold 142, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153
 Trader Joe's 232
 Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan 166
 Transportation Workers Union 262
 Travis Air Force Base 113, 114
 Treasure Island 108, 117
 T.R.E.A.T. 224, 225, 226
 Tribal Stomps 323
 Tribal Thumb 238, 239
 Trotsky, Leon 106
 Trudell, John 164, 165
 Trust for Public Land 216, 223
 Tse, Mei Kok 307
 Tuck, Minnie 105
 Tule Lake relocation camp 295
Tumbleweed 224
 Tunis 302
 Turner, Ron 276
 Turner, Tom 253
Turnover: Newsletter of the Peoples Food System 12, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239
 Tuten, Randy 293
 Tuttle, Elba 52
 Twinkie Defense 190
 Twin Peaks 61
- U**
 UC Berkeley 10, 16, 89, 94, 97, 107, 123, 127, 129, 139, 175, 180, 182, 209, 210, 259, 290, 309, 320, 329
 UC Medical Center 263
Umbra 63
 Uniform Relocation Act 151
 Union of Democratic Filipinos 127, 301
 Union of Democratic Filipinos 43
 Union Oil 100
 Union WAGE 174, 180, 270
 United Autoworkers Union (UAW) 245, 262, 268
 United Black Brothers 262
 United Farm Workers (UFW) 39, 79, 100, 129, 130, 203, 237, 244, 245, 256, 259, 264, 271, 293, 297
 United Federation of Teachers 100

United Filipino Association 128
United Food and Commercial Workers
Union (UCW) 261
United Mineworkers Union (UMW)
245
United Nations 11, 145, 163, 167,
169, 253
United Presbyterian Church 52
United Service Organization 111
United Steelworkers Union (USW)
245
United Transportation Union 264
University of Chicago 197, 206
University of Wisconsin 95, 96
Up Press 301, 302
Uprisings Bakery 236
URA 151
US Navy 114, 131, 144, 155
USS Constellation 111, 113, 114
USS Conal Sea 111, 112, 115, 119, 120
USS Forrestal 114
USS Ranger 114

V

Vaca, Nick 47
Valdez, Luis 70
Valdez, Pablo 130
Valencia corridor 188
Valencia Gardens housing project 79
Valesco, Fran 72, 75, 89, 90
Valle, Victor Manuel 63
van der Wyn, Sim 230
Vargas, Roberto 7, 13, 32, 40, 41, 44,
47, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 91,
92, 93, 331
Vasco, Jim 18
Victor 184
Veitch, Tom 277, 278
Vegetables, The 320
Velasco, Pete 129
Venerio, Raúl 66, 93, 94
Veritable Vegetable 233, 236, 240
Veysey, Laurence 192, 206
Victory Gardens 219, 231
Vidal, Gore 187
Viernes, Gene 267
Vietnamese People's Army 114
Vietnamization 113
Vietnam War 9, 11, 17, 30, 64, 71, 80,
81, 82, 83, 89, 97, 98, 100, 102,
105, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113,
114, 115, 116, 120, 121, 122, 123,
124, 130, 163, 164, 183, 184, 192,
194, 221, 238, 242, 245, 246, 259,
264, 285, 286, 290, 291, 292, 299,
302, 325, 327, 331
Viet Report 98, 107
Villa, Esteban 90
Villamor, Manuel 90
Visitacion Associates 212
Visitacion Valley 209

W

Waddy, Mariana 17
Wahpepah, Bill 167
Walker, William 66
Wall, Cornelius 304
Walters, Donald 193
Walters, Tanis 177
War on Poverty 36, 40, 50, 52, 60,
146, 151
War Resisters League 108
Washington D.C. 46, 97, 98, 166, 199
Washington, Dinah 145
Washington Post 114, 291

Waters, Alice 256
Watts riots 17
Wayne, John 112
We Are Everywhere 112
Weathermen 101, 106, 281
Weather Underground 171, 281
Weil, Ronald 302
Wei Min She 128
Weinstein, David 116
Weinstein, Naomi 170
Welch, Calvin 8, 12, 152, 153, 154,
331
Wellman, David 98
Wells, Carol A. 47
Wellsprings Communion 239
Werber, Frank 324, 328
West County Toxics Coalition 257
Western Addition 15, 46, 49, 74,
91, 98, 99, 103, 131, 132, 141,
142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148,
149, 151, 152, 153, 155, 156,
157, 158, 159, 160, 162, 263,
275, 331
Western Addition Community
Organization (WACO) 146,
147, 148, 153, 157, 158, 159
Western Addition Project Area
Committee (WAPAC) 74, 76,
148, 158, 160
Western Shoshone 168
West Tennessee Project 97
Whalen, Phillip 197
White, Dan 162, 190
White, Lou 60
White Roots of Peace 165
White Young Patriots Organization
37, 45
Whitlow, Evelyn 305
Whitney, Mimi 212
Whittington, Gale 184
Whole Earth Catalog 196, 242
Whole Foods 232
Wickert, Jack 219, 220, 221, 223, 227,
228, 229, 230
Widenor, Daniel 47
Wild West Festival 324
Williams, Hank 320
Williams, Hannibal 148
Williamson, Skip 272
Williams, Rev. Cecil 184
Williams, Tennessee 187
Williams, William Appleman 106,
107, 274
Wilson, Dow 267
Wilson, E.O. 211
Wilson, S. Clay 274, 287
Winstanley, Gerrard 326
Winterland 300, 317
Winnum Wintu 169
Wired Magazine 196
Wolfe, Tom 202
Wolff, William 300
Wolinsky, Sid 147
Women of all Red Nations 167
Women of Color Resource Center
180
Women's Centers Inc. 179
women's leadership 102
Women's liberation 13, 176, 177, 179,
325, 326
Women's Liberation Movement 86, 182
Women's Press, The 302
Women's Printing School 302
Women's Studies 181
Wonder Bread 57
Wong, Mason 44
Woodstock 323, 325

Woods, Wade "Speedy" 146, 148, 149,
150, 151, 152, 153
World War II 9, 15, 64, 95, 111, 130,
131, 138, 142, 143, 144, 145,
153, 154, 163, 247, 269, 300,
319, 325, 327
Wounded Knee 166
Wounded Knee Legal Defense
Offense Committee 166
Wray, Link 318
Wretched of the Earth 40
Wynns, Jill 231

Y

Yañez, Rene 82, 90, 223, 227, 229
Yee, Judge Samuel 310
Yelamu 211
Yellow Cab 102
Yinger, J. Milton 192
Yogananda, Paramahansa 193
Yokota Airforce Base 114
Yoneda, Karl 39
Yoneda, Tom 39
Young Lords 37, 45, 186
Young Lust 276, 279
Youth Against War and Fascism
conference 186
Youth Guidance Center 103, 104

Z

Zane, Maitland 231
Zap Comix 107, 272, 273, 274, 275,
279, 281, 284, 287
Zappa, Frank 196, 328
Zengunro 114
Zim's restaurant strike 263
Zippy the Pinhead 283
Zumwalt, Admiral Elmo 112
Zúñiga, Bérman 66, 92
Zwigoff, Terry 96