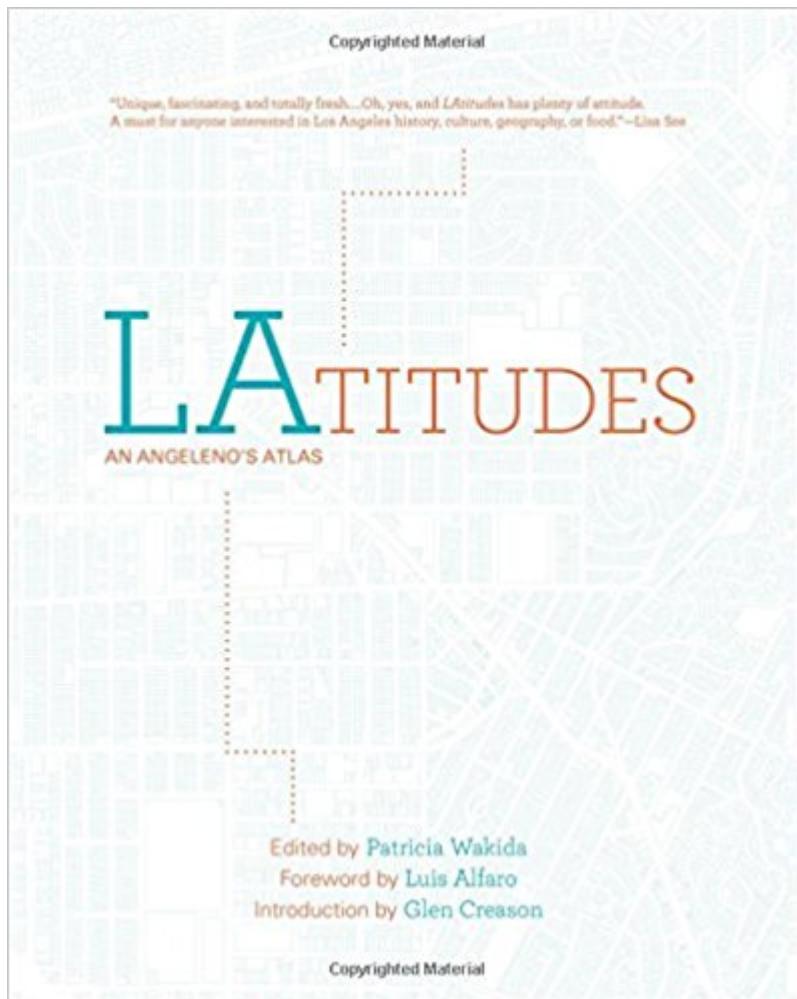


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# LAitudes: An Angeleno's Atlas



## Synopsis

A transformative look at Los Angeles This literary and cartographic exploration of Los Angeles reorients our understanding of the city in highly imaginative ways. Illuminated by boldly conceived and artfully rendered maps and infographics, nineteen essays by LA's most exciting writers reveal complex histories and perspectives of a place notorious for superficiality. This chorus of voices explores wildly different subjects: Cindi Alvitre unveils the indigenous Tongva presence of the Los Angeles Basin; Michael Jaime-Becerra takes us into the smoky, spicy kitchens of a family taquero business in El Monte; Steve Graves traces the cowboy-and-spacemen-themed landscapes of the San Fernando Valley. Overlooked sites and phenomena become apparent: LGBT churches and synagogues, a fabled "Cycleway," mustachioed golden carp, urban forests, lost buildings, ugly buildings. What has been ignored, such as environmental and social injustice, is addressed with powerful anger and elegiac sadness, and what has been maligned is reexamined with a sense of pride: the city's freeways, for example, take the shape of a dove when viewed from midair and pulsate with wailing blues, surf rock, and brassy banda. Inspired by other texts that combine literature and landscape, including Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City*, this book's juxtapositions make surprising connections and stir up undercurrents of truth. To all those who inhabit, love, or seek to understand Los Angeles, *Latitudes* gives meaning and reward.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In consciously directing readers down a series of proverbial paths less taken, *Latitudes* belies that laziest of stereotypes of Los Angeles as a homogenous, undifferentiated mass. As the

book makes clear, the city is both palimpsest and jigsaw puzzle, all layers and fragments.Ã¢Â•--Oliver Wang, *Los Angeles Times*Ã¢Â•Ã“Written by an eclectic group of wits and scholars, this colorful and beautifully designed volume can be read again and again.Ã¢Â•--Jill Stewart, *LA Weekly*Ã¢Â•Ã“When I created my atlas of San Francisco, I was hoping that we were at the dawn of a new era of inventive, subversive, gorgeous mapping and social geographies. Let a thousand atlases bloom, I kept muttering, and I couldn't be more pleased that the first horse out of the gate first tiger lily in the flowerbed? is of the city of angels and overpasses and pastrami and tacos, of forgotten rivers, wars, refugees, voters, homesteaders, of dreams busy biting the dust and tribes miraculously reappearing. Cities are inexhaustible; they exist in countless versions, depending on who you ask and where you go and what you want; and an atlas like *LAltitudes* invites you to open up other people's versions and in so doing find your own.Ã¢Â•--Rebecca Solnit, author of *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas* and *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*Ã¢Â•Ã“Unique, fascinating, and totally fresh....Oh, yes, and *LAltitudes* has plenty of attitude. A must for anyone interested in Los Angeles history, culture, geography, or food.Ã¢Â•--Lisa See, author of *Shanghai Girls: A Novel*Ã¢Â•Ã“A great addition to any proud Angeleno's library.Ã¢Â•--Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo, *Terrain*Ã¢Â•Ã“A valuable contribution to the growing list of books in the geography of LA Letters.Ã¢Â•--Mike Sonksen, *LA Letters*Ã¢Â•Ã“Expresses the soul and spirit of Los Angeles.Ã¢Â•--Glen Creason, *Los Angeles Magazine*Ã¢Â•Ã“Whole-heartedly embraces the Whitmanesque myth of Los Angeles: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.'Ã¢Â•--Jon Christensen, *LA Observed*Ã¢Â•Ã“As a geographer I'm always quick to describe LA as a failed city, an urban planning horror that has led to people like me who lived sixty miles from downtown to claim they're basically from LA. After reading *LAltitudes*, however, I returned to Los Angeles this year with a newfound respect for the hopeful attempts, negotiations, complications, and mistakes that have made the city what it is today: a composite urban behemoth of bewildering beauty. The only thing more enticing than the quality of the prose in this book is the depth of the ideas contained therein.Ã¢Â•--Bradley L. Garrett, author of *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*Ã¢Â•Ã“A humane and beautifully written biography of the city that is also a lyrical exploration of its many layers...a source of inspiration and surprise for those of us who think we know LA as well as those who have only imagined it from afar.Ã¢Â•--Alastair Bonnett, author of *Unruly Places: Lost Spaces, Secret Cities, and Other Inscrutable Geographies*Ã¢Â•Ã“Here we have a volume that, through stories of LA's history, tells stories of our present and foretells our future. Based on insights from a diverse group of authors, *LAltitudes* reveals not only our geography but our complicated,

dark, and hopeful soul for those that seek to understand our glorious city.â€”Karen Mack, founder and executive director, LA Commons “Offers the reader secrets that Google Maps is incapable of finding, navigation tips through the past, present, and future that Waze cannot fathom, and an understanding of Los Angeles that our trusted Thomas Guides could never reveal. What you hold in your hand is the new essential atlas for Los Angeles.”—Aaron Paley, cofounder, CARS and CicLAvia “Through original and illustrative cartography, the stories of LA’s past and present are told the way they should be dynamically with essays rich in historical content and distinct Angeleno experiences.”—Liza Posas, coordinator, LA as Subject

Patricia Wakida’s published books, essays, stories, and poetry include: Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience, Generations Experience; A Japanese American Community Portrait, Letters of Intent, the San Francisco Bay Guardian, Nikkei Heritage, Kyoto Journal, Santa Barbara Review, and the International Quarterly.

I found this book delightful the first time I held it in my hands and ran a finger over the cover: portions of it, like the title, are raised. Inside, the illustrations are often unexpected and almost always add to the essays. I don’t often go to the city of LA because I don’t particularly like cities. But LA is a hard place to stay away from. If I’m not driving to the airport, I’m taking the train and enjoying Union Station. I’ve watched shows in the city, gone to museums, even met friends for lunch in Chinatown. As a non-native, I found some of the essays to be especially enjoyable because they stretched my mind or set fire to my imagination--or both. In particular: Teddy Varno’s “The Bovine Metropolis,” Luis J. Rodriguez’s “How Xican@s Are the Makeweight of Los Angeles’s Past, Present, and Future Perspectives,” and Charles Hood’s “Orphans, Dwarfs, Strangers, and Monsters,” an essay (you wouldn’t guess this from the title) about trees. Unfortunately the quality of the essays isn’t uniform. A couple of them wouldn’t have passed muster in a college composition class. In addition, Heyday, the publisher, needs a copy editor with a better eye. Plenty of typos, and somebody should have caught the fact that a “mountain lion” and a “cougar” are the same animal. But on the whole I recommend this book and plan to buy several copies for Christmas presents. Oh yeah--and I love the shifting meanings of the title!

Learning so much about LA history and its’ people.

I feel like I have waited for this book my whole life. For anyone who grew up in L.A., or lived in L.A.,

or for whatever reason loves L.A., this book is a heartfelt valentine to America's most fascinating metropolis. It delves into architecture, history, geography, agriculture, the environment, and the tangled racial relations of the indigenous Native Americans, the Californios, the Anglo settlers, and the Xican@s, each of which left lasting, if not always evident, imprints on the city and who continue to mold it today. But LAtitudes is not all serious -- there are whimsical chapters on the history of L.A. radio, sure to inspire sweet nostalgia; there is a detailed map of non-chain Mexican restaurants; and there is even a quick rundown of the urban flora unique to the city. LAtitudes has something to interest everyone and certainly anyone who has the pleasure of reading this delightful book will experience a number of "ah ha" moments and a deeper appreciation of the L.A. we have lived and loved.

I'm a fan of that much-maligned city, Los Angeles. When I first went there in 1979, it was probably the case that "there was no 'there' there" as the saying goes. Certainly there was no real reason to go Downtown, unless you worked in law or for a bank or in government. And then you got the hell back out to the suburbs after 5pm. Not true any more & LA's vibrancy has returned, or been reinvented. And, fortunately its history has been & continues to be uncovered and rediscovered. This book is a fascinating look at LA - Downtown and its suburbs - placing it in historical context. LAtitudes is not all serious -- there are whimsical chapters on the history of L.A. radio, sure to inspire sweet nostalgia; there is a detailed map of non-chain Mexican restaurants; and there is even a quick rundown of the urban flora unique to the city. LAtitudes has something to interest everyone and certainly anyone who has the pleasure of reading this delightful book will experience a number of "ah ha" moments and a deeper appreciation of the L.A. we have lived and loved. "I think my favourite chapter is the search for evidence of a 1930s scheme to build a private, tolled bicycle way linking Downtown to Pasadena. It encapsulates the entrepreneurial boosterism which has accompanied this city and led to the best and the worst it has to offer.

In general. Having New York and various European cities as models in my head, it actually cost me some time wrap my head around that this was a very different type of city, and that it needs to be appreciated on its own terms. One can easily get lost in the miles and miles of traffic-ridden freeways, endless strip malls and empty sidewalks. Getting to appreciate what LA has to offer takes a real effort and it reveals itself slowly. Getting beyond cliches about "no there there" and "no history", you can see that LA, and California in general, do not have a long history in terms of written documentation, but there most

certainly is a unique, rich and diverse historical heritage that shaped the region into what it is. This book compiles essays from writers with different backgrounds that address widely different topics that are beyond the cliched narratives of Junipero Serra&#8211; missions, the Gold Rush, etc. Each essay is approximately 10 pages long and is, at least in part, based on a map showing a particular characteristic. Topics range from a description of the demographics, economy and ecology of pre-Columbian, colonial and Mexican greater LA basin, homesteading in the outer parts of what is now LA, descriptions of vegetation and the LA River, and descriptions of failed schemes and potential alternative histories they might have presented. Also included are essays that belie the idyllic stereotypical image sometimes presented, and show the struggles of various groups against the darker side of the city. This book is a good complement to Mike Davis&#8211; *City of Quartz*, which also presents an alternative history of Los Angeles.

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