



United Auto Workers Local 645 President Pete Beltran, Cesar Chavez, and Maxine Waters (from left) march with a multiracial group of GM workers past the GM plant, 1983.

previous function, the new shopping center built there was called "The Plant." Although California was once the largest producer of autos and auto-related parts west of the Mississippi, at the time of this writing the state's last remaining auto plant (Toyota in Fremont) had just closed, leaving no auto plants in California. GM Van Nuys' transition from an auto plant to a shopping center signals the regional economy's shift away from durable manufactured goods to services and retail—a change that, for most workers, involves an equally important shift from high-quality, middle-class jobs with benefits to low-wage, insecure jobs with minimal benefits (like most of those in The Plant's retail stores). (Quote is from Eric Mann, "Keeping GM Van Nuys Open," *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 9 [1986]: 36.)

TO LEARN MORE

Eric Mann, *Taking on General Motors: A Case Study of the Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open* (University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Labor Research and Education, 1987).

6.5 The Great Wall and Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)

The Great Wall Tujunga Flood Control Channel, North Hollywood 91606 (along Coldwater Canyon Ave. between Oxnard St. and Burbank Blvd.)

SPARC 685 Venice Blvd., Venice 90291 (between Pisani Pl. and Shell Ave.; this site is located in the Westside) (310) 822-9560 (www.sparcmurals.org)

The Great Wall is a mural painted by the Social and Public Art Resource Center. The

mural tells the history of California from the perspectives of those excluded from dominant narratives: indigenous peoples, the poor, people of color, women, and gays and lesbians. The half-mile-long mural on the wall of the Tujunga Flood Control Channel was painted over multiple summers, beginning in 1976, when eighty young people, ten artists, and five historians completed the first 1,000 feet, which depicted the prehistoric era to 1910. Subsequent pieces of *The Great Wall* were painted over the summers of 1978, 1980, 1981, and 1983, and the mural was completed in 1984. *The Great Wall* draws on the aesthetic and political legacies of the great Mexican muralists as well as the public art of the Works Progress Administration. Most of the people who actually painted the

mural were low-income and young people of color.

SPARC itself was founded in 1976 by muralist Judith Baca, painter Christina Schlesinger, and filmmaker Donna Deitch. Previously, Baca had been working for the City of Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks as an art teacher in Boyle Heights. In that capacity she encouraged neighborhood youth to shift their focus from graffiti, which was often associated with gang-related disputes, to murals, which could express political themes while bringing art to the public. Baca initiated Los Angeles' first city-wide mural program, which culminated in more than 400 murals painted by teams of youth throughout the mid-1970s. However, censorship issues arose almost immediately,



Judith F. Baca, detail from the 1940s section of *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*. The mural, begun in 1976, is located in California's San Fernando Valley Tujunga Wash, a flood control channel built in the 1930s. Acrylic on cast concrete, 13' x 2,400', 1983.

and the use of public walls became more restricted, leading a group of artist-activists to create SPARC. SPARC is committed to the use of public art as an organizing tool, particularly in and for Los Angeles' disenfranchised and marginalized communities, and it embraces participatory art-making practices and processes.

The Great Wall inspired a larger Neighborhood Pride program that led to the painting of 105 murals, located in almost every ethnic community throughout Los Angeles. SPARC's murals are considered landmarks, and the organization's influence, as well as its emphasis on community-based art making, has spread globally. Restoration of *The Great Wall* began in 2009. There are also plans to add panels telling California's more recent history.

FAVORITE NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANTS

Porto's Bakery

3614 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank 91505
(818) 846-9100 (www.portosbakery.com)

Extremely popular Cuban bakery and sandwich shop. Among the numerous favorites are the guava cream cheese rolls, potato balls, crème brûlée, and mango mousse. Not in the immediate vicinity of *The Great Wall*, but an L.A. legend—and well worth the trip.

Jinya Ramen

11239 Ventura Blvd., Studio City 91604 (818)
980-3977 (www.jinya-la.com/ramen)

Small ramen shop serving up delicious savory pork broth, vegetable, and tomato-seafood ramens. Great gyoza as well.

6.6 KPFK Radio Station and Pacifica Archives

3729 Cahuenga Blvd., North Hollywood
91604 (nearest cross street: Lankershim Blvd.)
(818) 985-2711 (www.kpfk.org)

KPFK began transmitting in Los Angeles in 1959 as part of Pacifica Radio. Founded by a pacifist and former Washington, D.C., newsmen, Lewis Hill, Pacifica is the oldest listener-sponsored independent radio station network in the United States. Since its founding, KPFK has served as an important alternative voice and progressive media outlet. This building on Cahuenga Boulevard houses the station's studios and contains a vast archive of public radio programming. The Pacifica Foundation recently began digitally restoring and preserving many of its unique programs, such as interviews with Alice Walker and Archbishop Oscar Romero and coverage of events like the Women for Peace rally in 1961 and the rally in support of Angela Y. Davis at UC Berkeley in 1968.

The radio station fell into disarray in the late 1990s, when programmers, staff, and audience members could not agree on how to respond to a declining audience, leading to infighting and a high turnover. Two events in recent years exemplify the turmoil at the station. In 2007, the elections for KPFK's board of directors were characterized by intense hostilities among competing factions after the station announced it would fire the general manager, who had been charged with sexual harassment and racism and had received a vote of no confidence. The camp defending the general manager argued that the claims were false and were actually part