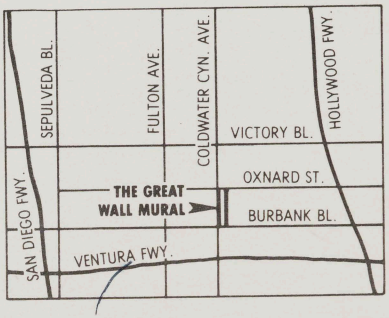
To purchase Great Wall postcards, slides, blueprints, t-shirts, additional Walking Tours, or to arrange a guided group tour of the mural contact SPARC at (213) 822-9560.

Social and Public Arts Resource Center
685 Venice Blvd.
Venice, California 90291
(213) 822-9560




Support for the Olympics Section of the Great Wall of Los Angeles was provided by the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) through the support of the Times Mirror Corporation which is the official sponsor of the Olympic Arts Festival of the 1984 games.

Walking Tour Credits
**Copy:**
Eva Cockcroft and Robert Pierson
**Production Coordination:**
Mary-Linn Hughes
**Assistance:**
Nancy Angelo
Sharon Spencer
**Design:**
Renee Harcourt
**Printing:**
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
©1983, SPARC, All Rights Reserved

## *Make History! Help Support The Great Wall of Los Angeles*



The history you have seen depicted in the mural is little known and not often portrayed in popular images. You can help make this history live for thousands of people by joining the hundreds of Great Wall supporters. Be a part of the longest mural in the world. Your tax-deductible donation will help the Mural Makers paint the 1960's, 70's, 80's and future visions. Send your check today and become part of the family of Great Wall supporters.

**YES**, Sign me up for the Great Wall! Enclosed is my donation:

- ☐ $1,000
- ☐ $500
- ☐ $100
- ☐ $50
- ☐ $25
- ☐ Other_____
- ☐ Also enclosed is an additional $25. Please make me a SPARC member.

Name _____

Address_____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Make checks payable to SPARC, 685 Venice Bl, Venice, CA 90291
Contributors of $1,000 and above get their names or their business' name painted on the mural.

Being a crewleader and all, it gave me responsibility and an incentive to perform the desired duties to its full extent. It was hard to ask a friend to do a difficult job but in time everything fell into place. I want this mural to continue forever. I hope we paint in the summer of 1984 and every year after. I was a born surfer and I gave up the beach for the project and I will always be dedicated.

***Marc Meisels, age 18***

This year has definitely been a year to remember, with the accident of the weather and the media. But in the end we pulled through. Everyone now seems to know the spirit of unity; sharing, caring and working it out.

***Esther Martinez, age 19***
***Third summer on the project***

The mural project is composed of a group of young people working toward one mutual goal: the completion of a work of art from which will come an in-depth look to the drama and importance of many great persons who have worked toward the banishment of racial injustice, discrimination, and human struggle. These are goals that we, as Mural Makers see daily working on the mural. There is a feeling of comraderie and friendship among the persons. Out of this bond shall be initiated another strong addition to the Great Wall.

***Glenn Cho, age 16***
***First summer on the project***

When I started working here I did it for the money, then I began to take great pride in the mural and in the Chicano section in particular. At first I didn't think an assortment of races could work together because in my neighborhood there is primarily one race. This project made me realize that the prejudices I had inside me were not only false but also ignorant. I only wish all mankind could have gone through this experience with me. I regret that when I leave here my new attitude will change back to before. I hope that when people see this mural they forget all their prejudices and try to live with all people, no matter what race, in peace.

***Sergio Moreno, age 16***
***First summer on the project***

In today's society where there's not many constructive and positive activities or happenings, this mural is a very positive thing. Where else can kids from all kinds of cultural backgrounds come together and work towards a goal. I have found this experience to be very rewarding and got a lot out of it. The work was very hard at times but the finishing product was well worth the effort, you know, the end justifying the means. There were times when I had my bad days but mostly they were great. I'm very proud that I worked on the mural this year and if there's any way possible I would more than happily come back next year. It got to the point where I didn't care if I was getting paid or not, but the pay was nice to get for it. It's kind of neat knowing that you're becoming part of history and that it's a community project that people will appreciate.

***Michelle Russell, age 21***
***First summer on the project.***

To me the mural means a piece of art, it means workmanship among others, it means a part of ourselves, also making new friends, doing a good job and having lots of fun.

***Alex Alvarez, age 14***
***First summer on the project.***

There's one way to describe our worksite of people and that is we're one **Big Family** and I hope when the public comes to admire our mural they'll share the magic and emotion that our crew shared with one another.

***Nancy Jane Avila, age 17***
***First summer on the project.***

This was my second year on the mural, but it was a completely new experience. The group feeling was tremendous, stronger sooner than two years ago. This year had obstacles that weren't present previously, and this unity kept us going, because we were so proud of our unity that the idea of giving up after the flood, and splitting the crew, was inconceivable. After my first year on the mural, I left with a sense of who I was and what I could do that was unlike anything I'd ever felt before. The feeling came from encountering people of different backgrounds and outlooks, and confronting history from new perspectives, and seeing what I was personally capable of at a time in my life when my self-confidence had been extremely low. This year was different largely because I had been changed by my earlier experience with the mural. The feelings of identity and pride came in new ways. Because of the unity we shared, I feel now that everything on the mural is **my** history, in a deeper way than I think I felt before.

***Todd Ableser, age 18***
***Second summer on the project.***

***On the last day of the 1983 summer project, each of the Mural Makers sat down to write about his/her experiences of working on the mural. The following are excerpts from their thoughts.***

This was definitely not a waste of my time. I feel I have accomplished something very worthwhile. I have educated myself and with the work I have done I will help to educate countless others. I have never been involved with the creating of a landmark before, but if I had a choice of any the mural is the one I would choose. The fact that this mural is recognized internationally is very exciting and has fulfilled my dream of doing something with international impact. I'm not just a Mural Maker, I'm a history maker and proud of the history on the wall I got the chance to show.

***Kelly Watts, age 19***
***Third summer on the project.***

If I can come back next year I would come back right away. I have a lot of feeling that I can't explain on paper. All I can say is I wish everybody the best of luck in the future and I wish Judy all the success that she needs to continue.

***Robert Martinez, age 18***
***Third summer on the project.***

It's been great working at the Great Wall and having a large family of forty. I bet you can't top that I've learned to get along with people of all colors and the responsibility of doing for myself. I would do it again. But it was not all fun and play. It takes time to get things all together. But still in all, the best part is getting to the end and looking back at what you helped do.

***Rena Robinson, age 17***
***First summer on the project***

### The Beats:

In this panel, the Beat movement represents another popular underground movement which was harassed by the Establishment. Various Venice cafes sponsored Beat jazz sessions, abstract art exhibitions and poetry readings. But disgruntled conservatives moved to halt these activities and close the cafes, provoking Beats to protest.

### Jewish Achievements in Arts and Science

Just as Jewish writers like Allen Ginsberg took risks in developing a new creative movement, Jews in Los Angeles started out in high risk businesses which, by the 1950's, had become among the most important in California. New York garment workers became recyclers of rags in Los Angeles and, eventually, the backbone of the garment industry. Also high risk in the 20's was the fledgling film industry built by Jewish studio owners into highly successful enterprises. Finally a huge image of Albert Einstein holding a diagram of an atom reveals his concern that atomic power be used for peaceful purposes but not war.

### Indian Assimilation

In this ninth scene, the forced assimilation of Indians is depicted by a government official stripping an Indian boy of his traditional dress and cutting his hair. Indian youth were sent several states away from their homes to boarding schools where they were taught to give up their traditional culture for Anglo ways. Concurrent with this program was the urban relocation off of reservations of many other Indian adults and children.

### Asians Gain Citizenship and Property

Despite harsh immigration quotas, Asian Americans made progress in the Fifties by attaining naturalization and land ownership rights. A Korean civilian is sworn in as the first to be granted American citizenship. Behind the scene, a Japanese farmer stands proud in his newly purchased field, depicting the gains of Japanese Americans also to become citizens and to own land.

### Olympic Champions 1948-1964 Breaking Barriers

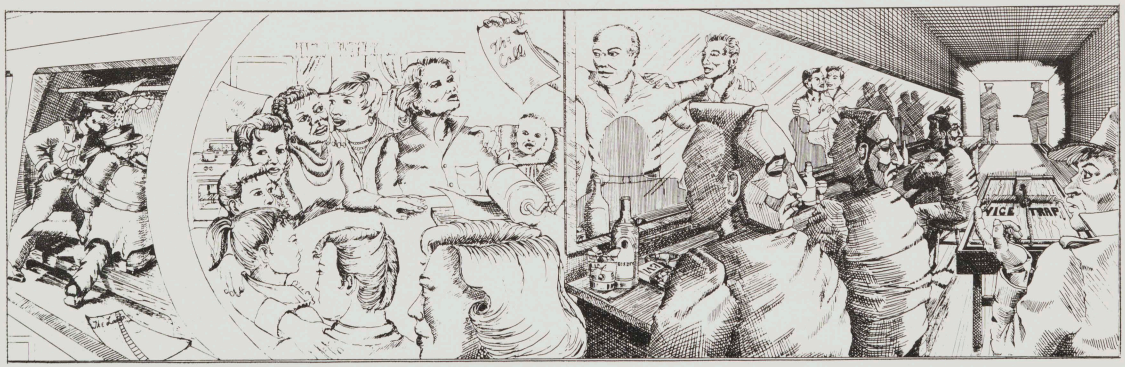
In this final panel, a woman runner carries the Olympic torch, its flame and smoke swirling into scenes of athletes who overcame tremendous obstacles to win Olympic events. Billy Mills, a Dakota-Oglala marathon runner, overcame his repression in boarding schools to become an important symbol for Native American pride. Black runner Wilma Rudolf, overcoming her childhood infirmities (being unable to walk until her eighth birthday) throws away her leg braces and wins three gold medals, the first American ever. Tommy Lee, a Korean American diver, and Vicky Manalo Draves, a Filipina diver, win gold medals as well. The symbolic final runner carries the torch of the 1950's into the civil rights movements of the 1960's.

## The Birth of Rock and Roll

Pop 50's culture is captured in this scene at a drive-in theater. A huge Elvis Presley wails his rock songs from the silver screen, but behind him a smaller image of Chuck Berry acknowledges the original force of rock's creativity and inspiration in the Black community. Various hotrods and lowriders face the screen, as a star-speckled sky forms the background. Behind the movie screen and Elvis, Black musicians again testify to the spirit and contribution of the Black community to popular culture. Jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker and Blues vocalist-caller Big Mama Thorton (who wrote "Ain't Nothin' But A Hound Dog" which Elvis popularized without crediting her) perform. Behind these Black musicians, a Charles White portrait of a Black woman holding up South L.A. portrays the sustaining community activism of Black women in volunteer and church organizations. This scene emerges with another depicting the interior of a local bus. Paul Robeson, Rosa Parks, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Bunche and Martin Luther King, Jr., are rising from their bus seats and moving forward for new destinations (Civil Rights).

## Origins of the Gay Rights Movement

The 1950's witnessed the emergence of homosexual community organizing, represented in this panel by the first gay/lesbian publications and social change organizations. As police enter the closet to repress the homosexual community through violence and entrapment, women forming the first lesbian rights organization, the "Daughters of Bilitis," meet in a kitchen and mimeograph copies of their newsletter, "The Ladder," copies of which float out of the closet above the heads of the police. In a gay bar, solitary men sit in front of mirrors, cautiously glancing at one another, fearing entrapment by vice officers. Each wears a mask at the back of his head symbolizing the false front to society gays had to assume to avoid persecution. In the mirror, the men see themselves as they wish they could be—warm, affectionate, caring. The masks also represent the Mattachine Society, founded in 1950 by among others Harry Hay depicted here issuing his call to organize. Inspired by the masked Mattachine male dancers of medieval France, the Mattachine Society was the first to advocate social equality for homosexuals.

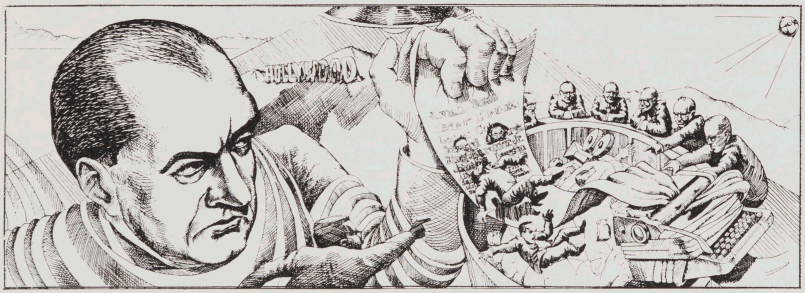


## The Red Scare and McCarthyism

Joseph McCarthy, the infamous proponent of the 50's "Red Scare," holds up a blacklist, naming film industry people who are accused of being Communist activists and sympathizers. The "Hollywood Ten," a group of Hollywood producers, directors, writers and actors, are subpoenaed and found in contempt of Congress for refusing to answer McCarthy's charges. Consequently, they are blacklisted and shunned, their professional and personal lives nearly ruined. A typewriter, tied and bound by the lists, represents the fear of being blacklisted and the repression of social criticism and freedom of speech. In the background, Sputnik hovers over the scene, reminding the viewer of the Soviet Union's techno-military progress which so startles and frightens America.

## Chavez Ravine and the Division of the Chicano Community

Freeways encircle and dislocate various areas in L.A., effectively dividing minority communities. In this panel, a Chicano family is separated by the serpentine thoroughfares as the pillared highway breaks through the roofs of houses. Resembling a UFO, massive Dodger Stadium descends from the twilight sky into Chavez Ravine. A bulldozer and policemen forcibly uproot the Chicano community so that Dodger Stadium can be built on land designated at one time for public housing. Many individuals resisted this forced eviction from their neighborhood, but to no avail.



# *The 1950's: Summer Project of 1983*

*This is no normal art project. Already more than 2,000 feet long on the 13-foot high wall, it will stretch more than a half-mile when completed. Nor does it portray conventional history. Recorded already, far more dominantly than history-book images, are unfamiliar ones: Dust Bowl refugees and blacklisted actors, Mexican-Americans being deported and Japanese-Americans being dragged off to internment camps. More positive portrayals, of opportunity found and rights gained, will appear as progress on the mural continues. It's important that it does continue. Only rarely can an art project teach so much, not only to viewers but also to the young people down there in the ditch, learning and painting the summer away.*

Los Angeles Times
Editorial
August 24, 1983

The 1950's section was painted in the summer of 1983 with a crew of 30 youth, seven artist supervisors and muralist-director Judith Baca. This 350-foot segment attained sponsorship from such groups as the National Endowment of the Arts, the California Council for the Humanities, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and numerous other groups and individuals. With the aid of over a dozen humanist scholars and historians, workshops and programs were held for the muralists in selecting, designing and enlivening the images.

## Farewell to Rosie the Riveter

During World War II, millions of American women left their traditional roles as housewives and entered the war industries as manual laborers and managers. But in the post-war years, "Rosie the Riveter" returned to the kitchen as the men returned home and reclaimed their power and position in labor. Women's access to work positions traditionally dominated by men was postponed. The television set propagates mass social images of the housewife and depicts a working woman being sucked into the T.V. image.

## Development of Suburbia

Behind the televised images of American womanhood, an all-American family of 2.5 kids (.5 equaling "Howdy Doody") moves into a new suburb of endless box houses in endless rows, representing White flight from the Central City. Meanwhile, minorities and poor immigrants move from rural communities into the city. Rows of orange trees have been uprooted as suburbs sprawl throughout the L.A. basin and valleys.

## Zoot Suit Riots

The contradictions in the Chicano experience are expressed by contrasting the experience of Chicano servicemen with that of discrimination at home. David Gonzalez, a local Chicano Congressional Medal of Honor winner, is shown standing with his mother, in a collage of photos from a family album. In the next panel, taxis bring servicemen into Los Angeles for the Zoot Suit Riots in which Mexican-American boys wearing Zoot Suits were stripped and beaten by marines with the consent of the police. Trains carry "braceros," Mexican farm workers, contracted to work temporarily in the California farm fields. The struggle to organize the farm workers and demands for more humane working conditions are represented by the portrait of labor organizer Luisa Moreno, who is wrapped in the flag of the Congress of Hispanic Groups.

Photo: Linda Eber

*Jewish Refugees*

## Jewish Refugees

Parallel to the train bringing migrant workers is the St. Louis, the ship filled with Jewish European immigrants which was refused entry to the U.S. because the Jewish immigration quota was already met. The spirit of these starved and suffering Jewish victims of the Holocaust emerges from the ship and reaches for American soil. Behind are depicted the death camps where the Germans murdered more than six million Jews. Beyond the death camps is the mushroom cloud of the Atomic Bomb, another symbol of death, and beyond that the founding of Israel and the greening of the desert.

The end of the War brings in a spurt of prosperity—tract houses and a baby boom! In the kitchen of a typical tract house in the San Fernando Valley (the rest of the development can be seen through the window) a baby screams. On the television Ronald Reagan stars in a 1940's era war movie. Outside, peering through the plate glass windows at the "American Dream," the Soldiers of Color discover that little has changed for them on their return.

## *The 1940's: Summer Project of 1981*



***Each episode is thoughtfully balanced with positive or nonstereotypical scenes that emphasize minority and ethnic groups' substantial contributions to the building of California. Thus, Charles Drew bleeds to death because Southern hospitals will not treat a black man, but the panel juxtaposes his achievement as the developer of blood banks. The railroad barons cold-bloodedly import and exploit Chinese laborers, but next to these scenes, a muscular Chinese man wields a sledghammer, showing the heroic effort the Chinese made in building the railroads. And although many minority group members remained passive and acquiescent under the domination of the anglo majority, many resisted, and the mural shows these balancing achievements.***

La Comunidad
1982

The 1940's section, painted in the summer of 1981, with a crew of 34 youths, six artist-supervisors and two designers, Judith Baca and Jan Cook, begins where the Thirties section ends: With the role of the Japanese-Americans during this period.

### World War II

The 442nd Japanese-American infantry division comes out of the stripes of the American flag—yet, in the shadow of these stripes, Japanese-Americans move backward toward the internment camps depicted in the previous section, forced to discard their possessions as they go. The mural continues to explore in turn the contradictory situation of each of the other ethnic minorities in California. A Jewish-American family, in the shadow of Hitler's hand, listens to the news from Europe. Hitler's other hand is a fist. From it goosesteppers lead toward an anti-Fascist rally in Los Angeles and toward World War II. Below, on the homefront, is the building of the California Aqueduct which transports water from north to south to aid developers, but creates a desert in the Owens Valley region. The World War II segment shows Jeanette Rankin in Congress below and Pearl Harbor above. A group of generals and businessmen plan the war effort (above); from that cooperative effort stream the lines of soldiers, arms and women war workers.

### Charles Drew

The war industry provided jobs for Black women workers—they are shown opening the doors to the war industry with Dr. Charles Drew, the inventor of blood plasma. Dr. Drew is shown cradling himself in his arms as he dies unnecessarily because of the refusal of a southern hospital to treat him for loss of blood. The iron hand, symbol of the dehumanization that racial discrimination brings, is shown cutting off the flow of blood, cutting off life. Beyond Drew, the other side of the opportunity presented by the new employment given Black women in the war industry, is the discrimination that continues in housing. "We Fight Fascism At Home and Abroad" commemorates the struggle by Mrs. Laws against the covenant laws that denied Blacks access to equal housing in South Central L.A.

Photo: Linda Eber

*Dr. Charles Drew*

## Crash and Depression

In spite of the efficiency of the assembly lines, the cornucopias of prosperity and the fantasies of romance produced by Hollywood's movie industry, the depression is inevitable. It cannot be hidden by the Hollywood fantasies, which only serve as a facade that tries to cover up the reality of the breadlines behind. While the unemployed sell apples and warm their hands on a trash can fire, the marching feet of the unemployed lead directly into the strikes against low wages.

The strikers symbolize the beginnings of the militant union movement of the Thirties and show the brutal repression. Victimized by invalid treaties, Native Americans are forced to sell two thirds of their land to developers at 45 cents an acre. Three hundred fifty thousand Mexican-Americans are rounded up and shipped across the border in mass deportations.

## Dustbowl Refugees

At the same time as the Mexicans are deported, the ''Okies,'' refugees from the dustbowl whose fields were destroyed by drought, provide a new source of cheap farm labor. The ''Okies,'' in spite of their misery, came voluntarily. The next migration, that of the Japanese forcibly taken to internment camps during World War II, was involuntary. The problem of how to connect these two migrations puzzled the Mural Makers. Baca remembers asking her assistants, ''What did the Okies and the Nisei have in common?'' The answer, when it came, was obvious. Laundry. Lines of hanging wash form a visual connection between these two sections.

Photo: Linda Eber

*Internment of Japanese Americans*

## *The 1930's: The Summer of 1980*

***The "Great Wall of Tujunga Wash" has the same heroic pioneer types you see in your local post office, but often their skins are brown or black.***

Kay Mills
Ms. Magazine
October 1981

In 1980 the crew consisted of some 40 youths, a group of historians who held workshops and programs for the participants and a team of five artists working under the supervision of Judith Baca. The last 1,050 feet of the wall, painted in the summers of 1980, 1981 and 1983, are more complex in design and the linkages between sections more sophisticated. The increased aesthetic quality of the wall begins to bring both national and international attention. Feature articles on the Great Wall appear in **Life Magazine**, **Art In America**, **Ms**, and the German newsmagazine, **Der Spiegel**. In October, 1981, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, provided the Great Wall with its "first museum show." The mural was also the focus of a segment of Bill Moyers' "Creativity in America" public television series.

### Illusion of Prosperity

The temperance movement's axe looses a river of whiskey from the barrels of booze that the gangsters, symbolized by an Al Capone figure, used to become rich and powerful, while flappers dance in an "illusion of prosperity." During this heyday of jazz, racial discrimination against Blacks continued. Black musicians and their audiences were not allowed in White hotels; only the now fabled Dunbar allowed them to stay in Los Angeles. Above the musicians, between the hotel and a bank beginning to topple in the crash of 1929, a Black worker drinks from a fountain marked, "Colored Only."

Photo: Linda Eber

*Dunbar Hotel*

*On the west side of the Tujunga Wash flood control channel as it passes Valley Junior College is an enormous painting, more than one-third of a mile long and 13½ feet high. As you pedal your bike along the trail and through the minipark, you see it unfolding the story of California's minorities. If it is summer, you may see its makers, fifty or so kids of diverse parentage, swarming on fifteen-foot scaffolds, adding to the story panel by panel. And you may see their leader, Chicana artist Judith F. Baca, directing, cajoling, scolding, laughing, shouting, encouraging.*

La Comunidad
1982

Many lessons were learned through the experience of the first summer's work. In looking back, Baca realized that, "In those first 1,000 feet, the mural is a loosely connected series of easel paintings." Beginning in 1978, she exerted more control over the design, which resulted in more stylistic unity and an evolving complexity in the transitions between the sections and linkages between historical incidents.

## World War I

Emphasis in this section is on women's role in the war experience. The "doughboys" leave, kissing their wives and girlfriends goodbye. In the recruiting poster, woman appears in her mythic form as the symbol of Liberty. In reality, she works in the war industry replacing men in nontraditional jobs like welding, as well as contributing to the war effort through "women's jobs" like nursing.

As the war reached into every aspect of American life, Charlie Chaplin, the famous silent movie comedian and a symbol of the common man, became involved in the national campaign. He is represented in the mural as a typical "doughboy" fighting in the trenches for the ideals in which he believes and for which the war was being fought. His presence also links the war section with the development of Hollywood and the movie industry.

## A New Perspective on Edison

In researching Thomas Alva Edison, inventor of the lightbulb without which movies would not be possible, the Mural Makers found much evidence to support the theory that Edison was born in Zacatecas, Mexico, and adopted by U.S. parents. According to Edison's daughter, Madeline Edison Sloane, there is no birth record for her father in the United States. In addition, almost all American biographers and historians agree that Edison could speak, read and write Spanish as fluently as a native speaker even though he had only three months of formal education.

Edison's Mexican-American heritage is symbolized by the Chichimeca corn goddess who whispers the secrets of the ancient builders and inventors in his ear. In one hand he holds a light bulb which lights the world, in the other a movie camera symbolizing the modern communications industry.

Hollywood is celebrated in the final image of William S. Hart, star of the first cowboy movie ever made, "The Great Train Robbery." The scene shows the movie actors on the set and also in the camera viewer.

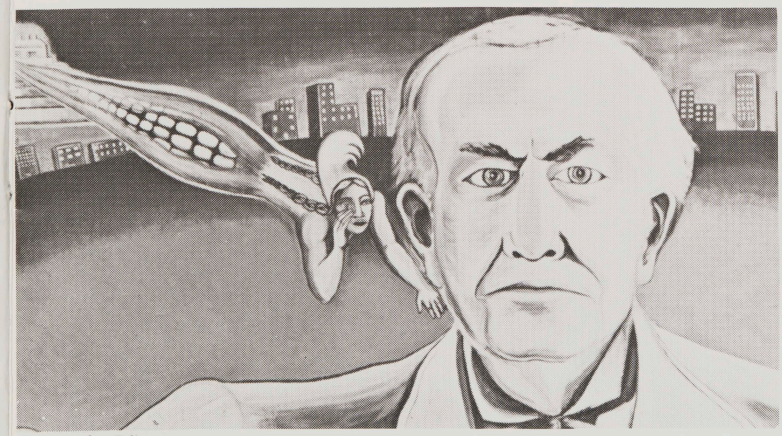


Photo: Linda Eber

*Tomas Alva Edison*

## Sojourners

The ''Iron Horse'' also brings a wave of Chinese immigration. Designed by Gary Takamoto, the Chinese segment shows the workers on the transcontinental railroad, which was built largely by Chinese labor. The faces which appear in the smoke of the locomotive honor those who died in the course of this mammoth undertaking. A surge of racism that accompanied the Chinese immigration led to the so-called ''Chinese Massacre,'' when vigilantes hung 11 Chinese in a downtown Los Angeles street.

The signing of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, in which Mexico ceded ''Upper'' California to the U.S., opened the West to a boom of settlement and development including the beginnings of the citrus industry. At the same time, the suffrage movement (segment designed by Olga Muñiz) began its work in the state.

## 1890 L.A. Mountains to the Shore

Designed by American Indian artist Charlie Brown, ''From the Mountains to the Shore'' begins with San Pedro Harbor where, until recently, there was a great abundance of flying fish. In the town the ''Red Car'' provided an early energy efficient form of transportation. The typical shops and buildings of turn-of-the-century L.A. are depicted in this lyrical segment.

The first summer's work concludes with a homage to the new wave of immigrants and their labor, so important in the development of this region. Designed by Isabel Castro, the section begins with an image showing these new arrivals in a wave of flags which indicated their varied origins. The segment continues with the invention of the car and airplane, which shaped the development of 20th century California.

The first 1,000 feet were completed in nine weeks of painting. Then, the names of all those who participated were stenciled onto the wall.

the Chumash religious sentiments. Much of this section was painted by an American Indian boy who shares this world view. The peaceful early history of the region ends with a White hand rising from the sea, symbol of the destruction of Native American life by White settlers.

### Spanish Arrival

The arrival of the Spanish explorer Portillo, who brought the first expedition from Mexico to L.A. in 1769, begins the third segment designed by Judith Baca. The figures in the clouds of smoke that rise from the Indian campfires represent the legendary Black Amazon Queen, Califia, whom Portillo expected to find—and for whom California is named. Further on, riding a mule, Father Junipero Serra arrives. Founder of missions throughout California, he is depicted with the San Fernando mission behind him. Within a year after the arrival of the Spaniard, a large percentage of the Native American population of 150,000 inhabitants died of diseases to which they had no immunity that the White men brought. For this reason, the San Fernando Mission became known to the Indians as the "House of Death."

It is commonly believed that the founders of Los Angeles were Spanish. In fact, of the 22 adult members of the expedition that founded the city in 1781, only one was Spanish. The rest were Mulatto, Black, Mestizo or Indian, as they are in this representation.

Mexico governed California until 1843, the sword and the Bible marching hand in hand. The fourth segment, designed by Judith Hernandez, is dominated by the figure of a Spanish land baron, illustrating the "hacendados" who dominated early California. His serape is formed by the land and labor of the Indians which he has taken and used to build the hacienda toward which he looks and where an elegant wedding is taking place. The panel begins with soldiers who raise the Spanish flag and ends with the battle between the Mexican army and the U.S. cavalry for the control of California.

### 1848 Bandaide

The Gold Rush era as designed by Ulysses Jenkins provides a Black-American perspective on this period. It begins with the discovery of gold at Sutters' Mill and the migration of Blacks, Mexicans and Indians as well as Whites by ship to California. Above the bay are portraits of Mifflin W. Gibbs, publisher of the first Black newspaper and Mary Ellen Pleasant, a civil rights activist who helped defend Blacks arraigned under the fugitive slave laws. The globe represents the world's desire for the riches of the 49ers. Beside it stands William A. Leidesdorf, pilot of the first steamboat to arrive in San Francisco Bay, who later became a vice consul to Mexico.

Meanwhile, in the state capital at Monterey, ex-Southerners passed laws—WHITES ONLY—which did not allow people of Mexican, Black or Chinese descent to make claims. Biddy Mason, an ex-slave from Georgia who fought extradition under the fugitive slave laws and who became wealthy, was known for her charity and was a founder of the African Methodist Church in Los Angeles. Joaquin Murieta, a legendary Mexican Robin Hood, fights for the oppressed: The landless who "squat" on the state; the "hanging tree" victims of prejudice; and the Indians who are slaughtered with the coming of the "Iron Horse."

# *The First One Thousand Feet: 1976*

4 ***The most amazing aspect of the Great Wall is the way it telescopes Southern California history, showing the significance of various indigenous and immigrant ethnic groups. It is a monumentally scaled history painting depicting the panorama of events that contributed to Los Angeles' distinctive profile.***

Carrie Rickey
Art In America
May 1981

Painted during the first summer of work in 1976, the first one thousand feet are divided into sections of 100 feet each. Although the content is highly integrated, each section was designed by a different artist under the general supervision of Judith Baca. Many problems were encountered in the beginning. Until the Mural Makers built a staircase down to the wash, people had to be trucked two and a half miles to the work site, bringing everything necessary with them, including water, food and toilets. The entire mural area had to be sandbagged so that the residual water would not make the work area slippery. Several tons of sand were trucked in, shoveled, bagged and then dragged into place.

## Pre-Historic California

The initial segment, designed by Kristi Lucas, begins in 20,000 BC when the animals whose bones were found in the La Brea Tar Pits still wandered among the plants and trees native to the area. In their research, the Mural Makers discovered that many of the trees we think of as typical of California, like the Eucalyptus and Pepper, were brought by settlers. By 10,000 BC, as Indians migrated to the Americas, perhaps on a land bridge, the Chumash Indian peoples settled in this region. They had a special relationship to and respect for the animals, especially porpoises. These are shown both in their natural environment and at the center of the prayer wheel which forms the transition to the second segment.

Designed by Christina Schlesinger, this section provides an overview of Chumash practical and spiritual life as it might have been in 1000 BC. A vision in which human and animal spirits mingle expresses

Photo: Linda Eber

*The first 1,000 feet in progress.*

## *How It's Done*

Each section takes a full year to research, organize, and execute. Youth of varied ethnic backgrounds between the ages of 14 and 21 must be recruited and interviewed. Those selected are employed as assistants and participate in both the planning and execution of the mural. These Mural Makers, mostly from low-income families, are paid through the Summer Youth Employment Program. In 1981 and 1983 additional youth were hired through a grant from the Jewish Community Foundation. Funds must be raised, research begun, artist supervisors hired. The youths are supervised by professional artists who work with them four to eight hours a day. They also receive art instruction, attend lectures from historians specializing in ethnic history, do improvisational theater and team-building exercises and acquire the important skill of learning to work together in a context where the diversity of their cultures is the focus.

After the subjects to be included are selected and sketched, finished designs are made by the artists and blueprinted. These 1 × 2 foot blueprints are used to transfer the drawing to the wall. On site work begins with heavy labor: Sandblasting, waterblasting and sealing the surface. Grid lines are marked on the wall to match those on the blueprints, and the images are transferred—a process that provides on-the-job math (as well as drawing) training for the kids. After the lines are drawn and painted a dark blue, a magenta undercoat is applied over the entire surface. This serves to harmonize the colors as well as to cut the glare of the sunlight in the painter's eyes. The colors are applied first as flat areas and then highlighted and shaded with two tones of the same color—tri-color blends—the painters call it. Finally, a clear acrylic sealer is applied to protect the painting.

The mural has been flooded five times between 1976 and 1983, with water rising, "as high as Edison's nose," but it is not damaged by water. More dangerous is the effect of air pollution on the colors.

Photo: Linda Eber

## *The Longest Mural In The World*



The Great Wall was already the longest mural after the summer of 1976 when a team of 80 youths referred by the criminal justice department, ten artists and five historians collaborated under the direction of Chicana artist Judith Francisca Baca to paint 1,000 feet of California history from the days of dinosaurs to 1910 in the Tujunga Wash drainage canal in the San Fernando Valley. But Baca, executive director of the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Venice, California, with a history of large collaborative mural projects behind her, was not ready to stop at 1910. Mural Makers worked in the wash again in the summers of 1978, 1980, 1981 and 1983. Each year they added 350 feet and a decade of history seen from the viewpoint of California ethnic groups: Their contributions and their struggles to overcome obstacles.

By 1980 the mural, dubbed "The Great Wall" rather than its official name "The History of California," stretched more than a third of a mile and had consumed some 600 gallons of paint and 65,000 kid-hours. With the completion of the decade of the Forties in September, 1981, the total length reached 2,085 feet while the number of young people who had worked on the mural rose to 185. In the summer of 1983, a new 350 foot segment was painted, depicting the decade of the 1950's. To date, the length of the Great Wall totals 2,435 feet, and the number of participating youths has reached 215.

However impressive the part currently completed may be, it is only part of a work in progress. The completed mural, which will run for nearly a mile, will take history to the present and beyond to future panels which will be formulated by a planning commission composed of veteran youth Mural Makers, artists and representatives for the Great Wall's diverse sponsors.

## *About SPARC*

The Great Wall of Los Angeles is a project of the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC), located in Venice, California. SPARC is a multi-cultural arts center that produces, exhibits, distributes and preserves public artworks. Public art is a vital part of everyone's culture because it exists where people work and live—in schools, on public transportation, and in our neighborhoods. SPARC is particularly committed to heightening the visibility of work which reflects the lives and concerns of America's diverse ethnic populations, women, working people, youth, and the elderly.

Since its founding in 1976, SPARC has involved hundreds of artists and community groups in the creation and presentation of public works of art. With a determined emphasis on both artistic excellence and multi-cultural programming, SPARC has received recognition from national and international media.

SPARC is located in an historic Art Deco building erected in 1923 and once used as the Venice City Jail. The 8,000 sq. ft. facility contains a unique gallery converted from the original cell block with jail cells still partially in place. There are offices, etching press and silkscreen workshops, a mural studio, and an educational center for mural research. This facility houses an array of outstanding programs which serve both artists and the general public.

Social and Public Arts Resource Center
685 Venice Boulevard
Venice, California 90291
(213) 822-9560

## *How It Happened*



In 1974, the Army Corps of Engineers contacted Judith F. Baca about the possibility of creating a mural in the flood control channel as part of a beautification project that included a mini-park and bicycle path. Two years later the alchemy of converting concrete eyesore into community treasure began.

Production of the Great Wall has involved the support of many government agencies, community organizations, businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals. This support has taken the form of cash contributions, donations of supplies and equipment, and offered services. In the first several years, SPARC received a great deal of support for the project from governmental juvenile justice funding sources. In recent years, more private sector funding has made the Great Wall possible. Throughout the years, assistance has come from the Summer Youth Employment Program, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Flood Control District.

Photo: Gia Roland

In 1975 when the Great Wall was still a dream, I never imagined it would lead me, the more than 200 young "Mural Makers" and the 35 other artists on my team through such a moving set of experiences. Nor could I have imagined that eight years later it would still be a work in progress. When I first saw the wall, I envisioned a long narrative of another history of California; one which included ethnic peoples, women and minorities who were so invisible in conventional text book accounts. The discovery of the history of California's multi-cultured peoples was a revelation to me as well as to the members of my teams. We learned each new decade of history in summer installments; the 20's in 1978, the 30's in 1980, the 40's in 1981, and the 50's in 1983. Each year our visions expanded as the images traveled down the wall. While our sense of our individual families' places in history took form, we became family to one another. Working toward the achievement of a difficult common goal shifted our understandings of each other and most importantly of ourselves.

I designed this project as an urban environmental artist concerned not only with the physical aesthetic considerations of a space, but the social and cultural as well. I am not a social worker, though people mistakenly call me one and I am not a teacher although I have teaching skills. I draw on skills not normally used by artists. I've learned as much as I've taught from the youth I've had the good fortune to know working alongside of them. They've taught me among other things how to laugh at myself, how to put play into hard work, and how not to be afraid to believe in something. I am extremely grateful.

Perhaps most overwhelming to me about the Great Wall experience has been learning of the courage of individuals in history who endured, spoke out, and overcame obstacles that were dealt them. It was true both of the people we painted about and of ourselves the Mural Makers.

Judith F. Baca

Artistic Director