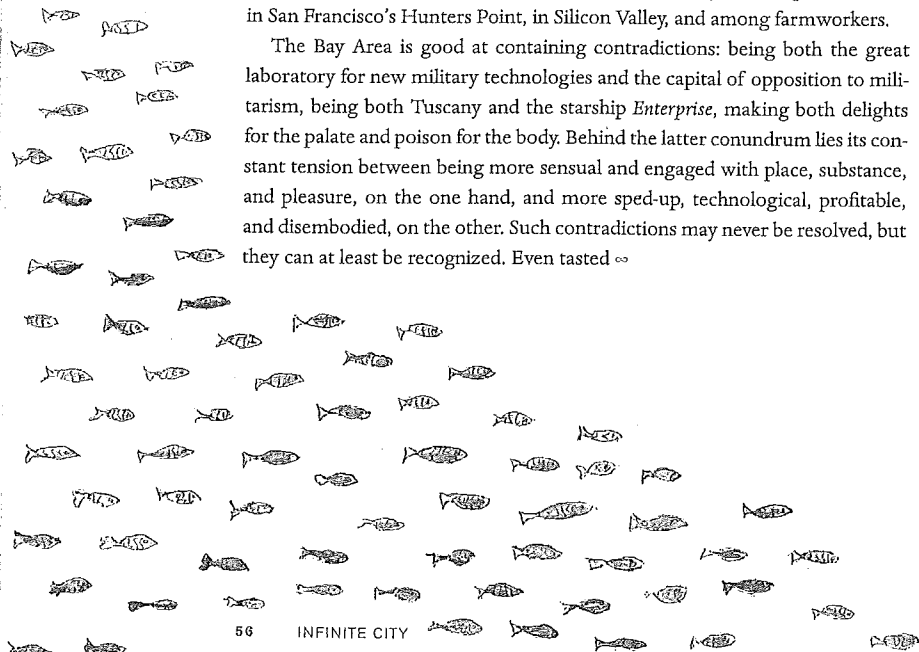


West Oakland. The Black Panthers served breakfast to inner-city children, and the Symbionese Liberation Army forced *Examiner* newspaper mogul Randolph Hearst, father of the kidnapped Patty Hearst, to give away groceries on a grand scale. This place is rife with food as redemption, from Cathy Sneed's food-gardening project at the San Francisco County Jail, begun a few decades ago; to Mission Pie, which connects inner-city youth to jobs in food production at Pie Ranch, a peninsula farm, and in food preparation at a diner in the Mission; to La Cocina, a flexible industrial kitchen that helps poor women set up small food enterprises.

Another landscape of labor poisoned workers and left behind more toxins for the rest of us. The New Almaden mine at the southern end of the region supplied a lot of the mercury used to refine gold during the Gold Rush; the miners ended up putting ten times as much mercury into the water systems of California as the amount of gold they took out of streams and rivers and rock and dirt. The region is still dotted with ancient mercury mines, many of them continuing to leach toxins. The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition long ago pointed out that the high-tech industry is not nearly as clean as its image.

Bay water, groundwater, soil, food—and then there's the air. Chevron is not only involved in human rights abuses and environmental devastation in other countries; it's also the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases in California and is responsible for more readily detectable emissions such as ammonia and benzene, which affect the seventeen thousand poor people who live within three miles of Chevron's Richmond refinery. In 1999, the refinery suddenly released eighteen thousand pounds of sulfur dioxide and told ten thousand residents to stay inside; those who lived even closer were evacuated. The stuff "killed trees and took the fur off squirrels," a resident reported. The Bay Area is one of the centers of the environmental justice movement in part because it's also a center of environmental injustice, in Richmond and all through the toxic corridors of refineries and chemical plants along the Carquinez Straits, in San Francisco's Hunters Point, in Silicon Valley, and among farmworkers.

The Bay Area is good at containing contradictions: being both the great laboratory for new military technologies and the capital of opposition to militarism, being both Tuscany and the starship *Enterprise*, making both delights for the palate and poison for the body. Behind the latter conundrum lies its constant tension between being more sensual and engaged with place, substance, and pleasure, on the one hand, and more sped-up, technological, profitable, and disembodied, on the other. Such contradictions may never be resolved, but they can at least be recognized. Even tasted ∞



SHIPYARDS AND SOUNDS

This map could be imagined as a detail of the map of the Great Migration from the Jim Crow South, which created concentrations of formerly rural African Americans in many northern cities and helped to shape the histories of their new homes. This migration brought a flood of African Americans from the South to the Bay Area for shipyard jobs during the Second World War and then, when the jobs evaporated, left many stranded here in isolated neighborhoods and housing projects—though others from this Great Migration did well afterward and traveled throughout the region and beyond. For the Bay Area, this human tide launched a rich new musical and political era whose impact was felt nationally, and the music and the politics were often intertwined. CARTOGRAPHY: SHIZUE SEIGEL ∞ MAP APPEARS ON PAGES 58–59

HIGH TIDE, LOW EBB BY JOSHUA JELLY-SCHAPIRO

*I left my home in Georgia
Headed for the 'Frisco bay . . .*

It makes all kinds of sense that the modern soul song most identified with San Francisco should mimic the sound of waves lapping a pier and be voiced by a singer who had washed up from afar. When Otis Redding composed the tune that would become his epitaph—he finished recording "(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay" just days before his plane plunged into an icy Wisconsin lake in December 1967—he was not a Bay Area resident but a musician passing through: he penned its first verse on a friend's houseboat in Sausalito, after his storied appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival down the coast that summer, the same festival for which Scott McKenzie recorded that other sixties anthem of questing west: "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)." Released just after the Summer of Love had made San Francisco the center of global hippiedom, and as the Black Panthers were building Oakland's reputation as a font of black revolution, "Dock of the Bay" used a timeless leitmotif of African American culture—sea, ships, and waiting—to offer a timely invocation of this newly hip region. Yet, as with most great pop laments, part of the song's lasting power comes from a story that resonates with a larger social history. In this case, it is the history of thousands of emigrants from the Jim Crow South who'd come west looking not to put daisies in their hair but to build the boats and guns that won World War II—and who then remained, after the shipyards and factories closed, to make the bay their home.

The U.S. effort to defeat the Axis powers during the Second World War brought more profound changes to the Bay Area than to any other region. The larger Bay Area—one of the world's great natural harbors, linked by rail

SHIPYARDS AND SOUNDS

THE BLACK BAY AREA SINCE WORLD WAR II

World War II shipyards

African American political and musical landmarks

Black Panther George Jackson killed, San Quentin Prison, 1971

MARIN COUNTY

Home of Tupac Shakur from 1988 to 1992

Black Hawk: Lester Young and Billie Holiday perform their last club dates; Fillmore teen Johnny Mathis performs his first

Fillmore District: Club Alabam, New Orleans Swing Club, Elsie's Breakfast Club, Café Society, Long Bar, Blue Mirror, Ebony Plaza Hotel, Booker T. Washington Hotel, and more

KPOO 89.5 FM: oldest black-owned radio station on the West Coast

Black Panther Kathleen Cleaver runs for California State Assembly, 1968

Willie Brown becomes Speaker of the California State Assembly, 1980

Tower of Power records "East Bay Grease" at Mercury Recording Studios, 1970

Sly and the Family Stone record "Stand!" at Pacific High Recording Studios, 1969

First four-year U.S. black studies program, San Francisco State College, 1968

Carlos Santana attends Mission High School

North Richmond: Tappers Inn, Savoy Club, Brown Derby, Pink Kitchen, and Minnie Lue's

Singing Shipbuilders Gospel Quartet

Rosie the Riveter Memorial opens, October 2000

First ten female welders hired by Kaiser, July 1942

Otis Redding writes "(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay," 1967

Marine Shipyard

Bob Marley records "Talkin' Blues" at the Record Plant, 1973

Tracy Sims leads anti-discrimination demonstrations, 1964

Sylvester's solo debut at Birnbo's 365 Club, 1972

Fillmore District

Herbie Hancock records "Head Hunters" at Different Fur recording studio, 1973

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

James Baldwin visits Bayview, 1963

Police shooting of Matthew Johnson sparks Hunters Point Uprising, 1966

Hunters Point Naval Shipyard

Western Pipe and Steel Shipyard

Country Club Crest: home neighborhood of Mac Dre

E-40 records hip-hop anthem "Tell Me When to Go," 2006

SOLANO COUNTY

Sylvester Stewart (aka Sly Stone) and his siblings sing in their father's church as the Stewart Four

Men involved in Port Chicago Mutiny imprisoned

Port Chicago munitions explosion, 1944; 320 men killed, 390 injured

AFRICAN AMERICANS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BAY AREA POPULATION

	1940 (%)	1950 (%)	1960 (%)	1970 (%)	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
All Bay Area counties	0.01	5.6	6.7	7.9	9.0	8.9	7.5
Alameda County	2.40	9.4	12.3	15.0	18.4	17.9	14.9
Contra Costa County	0.05	7.4	6.2	7.5	9.2	9.2	9.4
Marin County	0.90	3.8	2.8	2.4	2.5	3.5	2.9
San Francisco County	0.80	5.6	10.0	12.4	12.7	10.9	7.8

Ishmael Reed writes Mumbo Jumbo, 1972

Richard Pryor hones his act at Mandrake's, 1970

Edwin Hawkins Singers record "Oh Happy Day" at Ephesian Church of God in Christ in Berkeley, 1969

Berkeley/Oakland: Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Black Panther Party founded, 1966

Seventh Street, West Oakland: Bob Geddins's Big Town Records, Esther's Orbit Room, Slim Jenkins's supper club, Saunders King sings "S.K. Blues," Lowell Fulson sings "San Francisco Blues"

Nelson Mandela Parkway

Pointer Sisters' childhood church, West Oakland Church of God

Boots Riley and Pam the Funkstress form left-wing hip-hop group The Coup, 1992

U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Lee's office, Ninth Congressional District

International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, West Coast headquarters

Tajai, A-Plus, and Casual meet Del Tha Funkkee Homosapien at Howard Elementary School; beginnings of the Hieroglyphics

Dwayne Wiggins and Raphael Saadiq (Tony! Toni! Toné!) attend Castlemont High School

Too \$hort sells "Born to Mack" cassettes from the trunk of his car, 1986

Shock G and Chopmaster J found Digital Underground, 1988

Russell City Country Club, Mission District

to the midwestern steel needed to build ships, and by water to the war's key Pacific theater once those ships were built—was transformed with astounding speed into what the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce could fairly call, in 1943, "the greatest ship-building center the world has ever seen." It turned out an astonishing fourteen hundred vessels during the three and a half years of the war—more than a ship a day. The flood of federal monies for war-related industries attracted a flood of people, who caused the Bay Area population to grow by half between 1940 and 1945 alone. Their arrival forever altered the region's demographic mix, its politics, its culture, and its music.

With some ten million Americans drawn into military service and leaving the domestic labor force, Bay Area firms who had contracted to build the ships could ill afford to turn away able-bodied workers. What famously held true for women ("Hitler was the one who got us out of the kitchen," as one female worker put it) also applied to racial minorities. During the war, industries long restricted by the prejudiced practices of employers or whites-only unions were opened to new groups of workers (helped along by President Roosevelt's order to end discrimination in war-related hiring)—Asian Americans, who had earlier been excluded from skilled trades; Mexican immigrants, who had previously been prevented from legal employment in California; and, perhaps most significant in terms of how they transformed the area's demography and politics, African Americans from the South. These southern migrants—tenant farmers, laborers, and domestics, still accustomed to earning a quarter a day in Dixie—struck out by bus and train and car from Tupelo, Texarkana, and New Orleans on hearing from recruiters and relatives that jobs paying a dollar an hour were open to all comers; and they didn't stop coming until, by war's end, some half a million had arrived to make new lives in California.

By the time Otis Redding penned "Dock of the Bay" in 1967, the shipyards that had drawn many of those migrants were long gone. But from where he sat, Redding could see many of the places that had been transformed by the arrival of southern black workers. Northeast from where he contemplated the Sausalito tides was Richmond, where industrialist Henry J. Kaiser—an engineering magnate with no previous experience in shipbuilding—built a complex of four "instant shipyards," which by 1945 were employing 100,000 laborers assembling Liberty Ships around the clock. Farther north on the east side of San Pablo Bay was Mare Island Naval Shipyard, where 46,000 workers launched submarines, destroyer escorts, and landing craft by the hundreds from a site hard by the North Bay town of Vallejo. (Following a munitions explosion at nearby Port Chicago in July 1944 that killed 320 sailors, many of them black, who had been loading the explosives onto ships, black sailors at Mare Island a month later refused to continue loading munitions and organized the "Port Chicago Mutiny," a strike protesting the U.S. Navy's practice of assigning its most dangerous jobs to segregated black units.)

Across the water in Oakland, the work force at the old Moore Dry Dock Company—one of the Bay Area's few commercial shipyards before the war—went from 600 workers in 1940 to 30,000 three years later. On the spur of land in San Francisco's southeasternmost corner lay the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, which during the war employed 17,000 civilians. It was from Hunters Point that the first atomic bombs sailed for Japan in 1945. Even Redding's own

perch, on a houseboat moored on mudflats at Sausalito's north end, had been the site of a major wartime shipyard constructed by Marinship, a short-lived company founded in March 1942 by Kenneth Bechtel to build oil tankers for the navy. An "instant shipyard" like its Kaiser cousins, the Marinship yard was dismantled as soon as the war was over—but it left behind, just across Highway 101, the housing projects that had been built for the wartime work force. Many of the now unemployed African American shipyard workers were unable to find other housing, and the projects became an island of impoverished blackness in the sea of white affluence that is Marin County. That community, Marin City, is best known today as the teenage home of rapper Tupac Shakur.

To list the centers of wartime shipbuilding—Richmond, Vallejo, and Oakland, Hunters Point, Marin City—is to reel off the names of places that today remain centers both of black population and of black poverty. But not all wartime African American immigrants moved into *sui generis* developments built for war workers. In some cases, they were banned from doing so—in San Francisco, five public housing developments were constructed during the war for new city residents, but the Housing Authority, citing the need to preserve extant "neighborhood patterns," banned blacks from four of them. In the East Bay, many African Americans and other wartime migrants established squatter settlements in places like North Richmond, a marshy bit of land out by the city's dump, and Russell City, an unincorporated parcel south of Oakland, which became home, by 1945, to some ten thousand mostly black residents living in ramshackle wooden homes powered by pirated electricity. (Russell City burned to the ground in 1964; today a Calpine power plant is located at the site, in the town of Hayward.)

Other new arrivals gravitated to areas where the region's small black communities had previously been centered. Best-known of these was San Francisco's Fillmore District, a mixed working-class neighborhood west of downtown, which had long been home to a majority of the city's black citizens (who in 1940 numbered just 4,086 of San Francisco's 635,000 residents). As that black population grew by nearly 700 percent during the war, reaching 32,000 in 1945 (when African Americans officially replaced Asians as the city's largest non-white minority), the Fillmore became a black neighborhood. It was able to absorb so many new arrivals—and to do so, moreover, without the racial riots that followed the wartime influx of southern blacks in cities such as Los Angeles and Detroit—in part because the government had forcibly removed and sent to internment camps several thousand Japanese residents from an area of the Fillmore known, until 1941, as Japantown. In the Victorians and storefronts left behind by the Japanese, black immigrants opened dozens of nightclubs and bars that would play host, from the early 1940s to the 1960s, to all the major figures in jazz, making the Fillmore perhaps the key West Coast hub for the evolution of that music.

In Oakland, as in San Francisco, many black newcomers settled in the part of town where the city's black populace—some 8,000 strong in 1940—had previously clustered: the West Oakland area. During the first decades of the twentieth century, a distinctly middle-class black community had grown up around the terminus of the transcontinental railroad and the adjacent West Coast headquarters of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

As Oakland's black population climbed to over 40,000 by 1945, West Oakland—which had been, like the Fillmore, a mixed neighborhood in the 1930s, with significant numbers of Irish, Italian, and Portuguese longshoremen as well as Mexicans and Chinese—became a majority-black neighborhood. It also became the geographic and emotional heart of black life in the Bay Area: the place where many new southern immigrants first arrived and then later came to cash and spend their paychecks on Friday night. With its main thoroughfare, Seventh Street, lined with rooming houses and restaurants, pool halls and pawnshops, and some forty nightclubs and bars, West Oakland was where the stories of wartime immigrants and the new music they crafted to tell their tales came to shape American music at large.

Like the Fillmore, West Oakland was home to plenty of establishments such as the legendary supper club run by Slim Jenkins, a dapper Louisianan who booked all the top national acts in black pop (also known as jazz and blues); everyone from Count Basie and Billie Holiday to Bobby "Blue" Bland and a young Ray Charles put in time at Slim's Seventh Street place. Perhaps what most distinguished the neighborhood scene, though, was the seedbed it supplied for locals—which is to say, for transplanted southern blacks—to elaborate a new musical idiom. In 1942, West Oakland legend Saunders King (birthplace: Staple, Louisiana) scored a nationwide hit with "S. K. Blues," one of the first blues songs to feature electric guitar. From there, the scene was nurtured and shaped by figures such as Lowell Fulson (birthplace: Tulsa, Oklahoma), who learned to play guitar on Seventh Street while he was a navy conscript stationed nearby and who, after making his name in its clubs with tunes like "San Francisco Blues" ("Ohh, *San Francisco/Please make room for me*"), became a seminal influence on B. B. King; by Bob Geddins (birthplace: Highbank, Texas), "the Godfather of Oakland blues," who first recorded Fulson and dozens of others in his small studio at the corner of Seventh and Center and delivered their records by hand to radio stations across the South from the trunk of his car during yearly drives back to the "old country"; and by sometime Oakland resident Big Mama Thornton (birthplace: Arton, Alabama), who made a hit of "Hound Dog" in the barrooms of Seventh Street and Russell City years before Elvis Presley got near it.

Such figures made the bay's eastern shore the most crucial site for the birth of what came to be known as the West Coast blues. Joining the feel and structure of Texas blues to the propulsive harmonies of swing jazz, the groups who played this style employed full horn sections rather than a lone harmonica, forging a music that at once recalled the rural past of ancestors brought to America in wooden slave boats and spoke to the urbane lifeways of people building steel warships in modern cities. The West Coast blues became, during the 1940s and early 1950s, one of the key forerunners of rock 'n' roll.

Even as war-related jobs disappeared in the Bay Area, both Seventh Street and the Fillmore—fed by a steady if slowing stream of black migrants joining their friends and family members in the Golden State—continued to thrive as centers of black culture and commerce well into the 1950s. Newer areas of black habitation near the shipyards themselves fared less well. In his 1946 hit "Shipyard Woman Blues," blues shouter Jimmy Witherspoon may have had his reasons for hailing the return of slacks-wearing women from the factory to the home ("*You better put on some of those fine dresses/And give us men our privilege*

back"), but for most black workers in the region, the flight of thousands of jobs from Oakland, Hunters Point, and Vallejo was nothing to cheer. In Richmond, the pain of the Kaiser yards' closing was eased somewhat by the presence of a Ford factory, which transitioned, after the war, from churning out jeeps for the army to assembling pickup trucks for returning GIs. But even the Ford factory closed in 1955, pushing the economy of Richmond, whose unemployment rate today stands at 16 percent, into a crater from which it has yet to emerge.

And soon enough, in the Fillmore and West Oakland too, what the free market left alone the state attacked. From the late 1950s on, the black residents of the Fillmore fell victim to "redevelopment," which entailed tearing down dozens of square blocks of the district's fine Victorian houses. (Many of the displaced black residents moved into housing projects elsewhere in the city from which they'd been banned during the war.) West Oakland, like many other black neighborhoods in cities across America in the 1960s, was decimated by "urban renewal" and large-scale infrastructure projects afforded by America's postwar prosperity and hubris. The first big blow to the neighborhood arrived in 1958 with the new I-880 overpass that cut off West Oakland from the rest of the city. (Thirty-one years later, the Loma Prieta earthquake flattened the elevated freeway; the resultant surface road is named Nelson Mandela Parkway.) The demise of Seventh Street as a thriving thoroughfare began in 1960 when the city razed some four hundred homes and businesses along twelve blocks of the street, to make way for a huge U.S. Postal Service distribution center; the death knell came later that decade with the building of the BART rail system, whose track in West Oakland—unlike those laid beneath main drags in downtown Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco, which left intact the street life above—was built on elevated tracks, right down Seventh Street's heart, in order to save money.

In the decades before World War II, as today, San Francisco's political classes nurtured a self-image of their city—fed by its having officially desegregated its public transit and schools as early as the 1860s—as a racially progressive place. After the war, the presence of an actual black population—and a largely unemployed and underemployed one, at that—put that myth of progressivism to a severe test. The likelihood that the city would pass that test was never high, given electoral laws mandating that San Francisco's Board of Supervisors be elected not by district but rather in citywide contests—with the net effect that as San Francisco (and Oakland as well) became an increasingly diverse city, its municipal government and police force remained almost entirely white. (In 1977, a temporary change in the election laws allowed district elections; one of the San Francisco supervisors elected that year was Harvey Milk, representing the Castro District.)

In September 1966, the riots that San Francisco had avoided during the war came to pass. When a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed sixteen-year-old car-theft suspect in Hunters Point, the resultant unrest lasted five days, and it took twelve hundred National Guard troops to finally tamp it down. A few weeks later, at West Oakland's Merritt Community College, where the nation's first black studies program had just been born, two sons of wartime immigrants—Bobby Seale and Huey Newton (places of birth: Dallas, Texas, and Monroe, Louisiana)—founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Built around a ten-point program whose demands included full employment

and "an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people," their fast-growing organization conjoined high Marxist rhetoric to streetwise style, introducing the iconography of the black militant to New Left culture in the Bay Area and worldwide. (One of the Panthers' early members, Afeni Shakur, named her son 'Tupac after the insurgent Incan emperor Tupac Amaru.)

That the Panthers came to prominence just as the Summer of Love kicked off distills much about the vivifying "ball of confusion" that was the counterculture of those years, with its utopian dreams of reconciling peace and militancy, bliss and rage, and its hippies on their communes growing food for the Panthers' breakfast program in the ghetto. Of course, in the counterculture at least as much as in the mainstream, there was little place for blacks who didn't wish to play the role of musician or militant. But no matter: in the Bay Area and elsewhere, the erotic specter of integration (not to mention interracial love) suffused the era's best music—perhaps most notably in the work of Sly Stone, the Vallejo-raised son of a Texas preacher, who became, after James Brown, the key architect of the music we know as funk. With his self-consciously integrated group, the Family Stone (whose white members the Panthers repeatedly urged him to expel), it was Sly, above all, who forged the bass-heavy grooves in which the freaks of all San Francisco's nations could get down and be whatever they wanted to be. The scene he scored was the same one in which Richard Pryor, for example, found his voice as a performer in a Berkeley bar where he shared bills with Country Joe and the Fish, and in which Carlos Santana, for another, decided to show the world that Chicano kids could play electric guitar too—and, as if to underscore the point, married the daughter of Seventh Street guitar legend Saunders King. (Santana would record a duet with the old man on his *Oneness* album in 1979.)

Today, the stretch of Seventh Street where Saunders King once reigned is a desolate strip of liquor stores and vacant lots, its soundscape provided not by music but by the rumble of BART trains overhead. Only one establishment still standing recalls West Oakland's heyday. Proprietor Esther Mabry (birthplace: Palestine, Texas), who got her start on Seventh Street as a waitress at Slim Jenkins's Place, is eighty-nine now, but she can still sometimes be found at Esther's Orbit Room, holding court beneath a dark bar-ceiling bedecked with white Christmas lights to resemble the night sky. Her bar no longer plays host to stars like the Pointer Sisters (who grew up singing in West Oakland's Church of God a few blocks away). But I was glad to find, on a recent visit, that it still boasts the best jukebox in the Bay Area, with a selection of offerings by figures who made their name among wartime immigrants on nearby streets. In the jukebox museum at Esther's, the musical legacies of the great black migration to the bay are plainly audible. But even in the hip-hop music to which many of the Bay Area's young people now live and move, the fact and legacies of that migration have a way of cropping up: the "Brookfield Slide," one of the signature dance moves of the "hyphy" hip-hop that is perhaps Oakland's signal contribution to our national soundscape today, carries the name of Brookfield Village—a housing project for war workers, carved out of East Oakland orchard land in 1943.

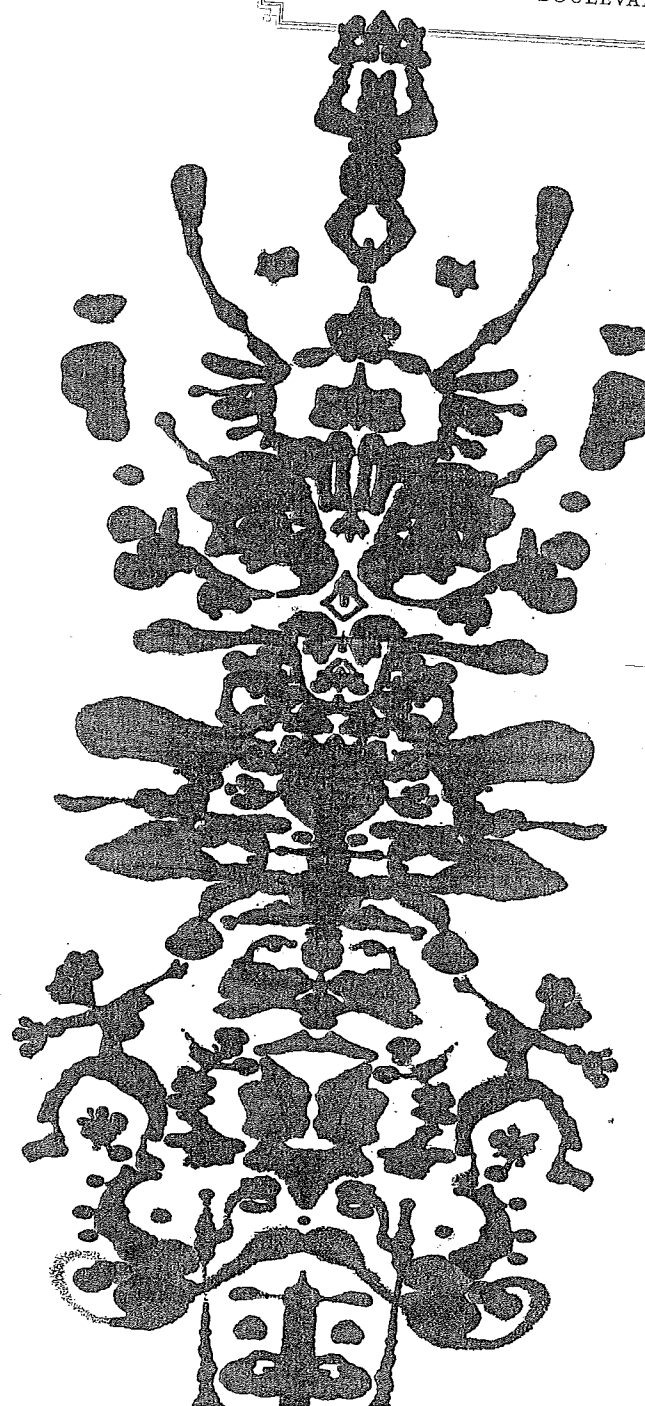
Since the end of the Great War—and before—what has always drawn many black migrants to the Bay Area is the same promise vested in San Francisco by all its newcomers: the possibility of imagining a world different from the

one left behind (perhaps, for instance, a world—it bears mentioning here—in which black people are no longer associated solely with music and woe). That the Golden State's promise proves hollow as often as it is real is no small part of the California epic. But absent the old utopian tint, it is hard to imagine much of what those broken promises have uniquely yielded here: from a pair of students at an Oakland community college (in the state where the community college was invented) imagining world revolution; to a comic, Pryor, who changed how Americans think (and laugh) about race; to a drag queen, Sylvester, whose brilliant performances with the Cockettes and as a solo act (produced by the Pointer Sisters' producer, David Ferguson) helped shape the disco era; to a congressional district, Oakland's Ninth, long known for sending to Washington dissenting representatives such as Barbara Lee (birthplace: El Paso, Texas), whose solitary vote in Congress against authorizing the War on Terror prompted a spate of bumper stickers nationwide reading "Barbara Lee speaks for me." "It's like that old song from the Gold Rush—'Oh, what was your name in the States?'" says longtime Oakland resident Ishmael Reed, the celebrated author of *Mumbo Jumbo*, who visited the Bay Area in 1968, looking for a place to write away from New York's noise, and never went back. "You can disappear here, be whatever you want to be."

Today, the Bay Area's ever-growing and more diverse populace is fed less by immigrants from Texas and Mississippi than by those from Afghanistan and Guatemala. Since 1980, each decennial census has revealed fewer African Americans in the region's main cities: the ceaseless march of gentrification and the skyscraper-high cost of living continue to push blacks and other members of the old working classes to cheaper towns inland. In San Francisco and its surrounding area, too many of those who remain are confined to ghettos made only more monolithic and marginal across the years by the state's determination to defund its once-vaunted public schools in favor of building up the huge state prison system, with which no family in such neighborhoods is unfamiliar. In places like Hunters Point, one can still vividly feel what James Baldwin meant when he declared, during a visit to the neighborhood at the height of the civil rights ferment in 1963, that "there is no moral distance between the facts of life in Birmingham and the facts of life in San Francisco." Speaking to a group of local youths above the old shipyard where their parents once worked, Baldwin sagely inveighed that "there will be a Negro president of this country, but it will not be the country we are sitting in now."

Around the famously liberal San Francisco Bay Area in 2008, the election of that "Negro president" was met by many with a sense of joy befitting what felt like the vindication of old struggles and, in this region that is home to more multiethnic families per capita than anywhere else in the country, also with a visceral sense that in a mixed-race son of the Pacific, America had sent to the White House one of its own. Whether and how we are sitting in a country different from the one we had in 1963 is a question with many answers. But, as the descendants of those once lured to the docks of the bay by the promise of jobs paying a buck an hour can attest, what the integration of elite institutions and many of our families perhaps too often elides is that—in the Bay Area as much as anywhere—to be born black in America still means, for too many, learning too young what it is to feel, as Redding sang, "like nothin's gonna come my way" ∞

PROMENADING THE BOULEVARD OF GONE



9

FILLMORE

Maps usually focus on a coherent region, but it was the metamorphosis of this street, which goes from a couple of wealthy white neighborhoods through a poor African American one into other zones and past vanished worlds of Jewish and Japanese immigrants, that made it interesting to us. It is a map of collisions, geographical and cultural. Gent Sturgeon supplied the marvelous Rorschach blot of faces and gestures that parallels the boulevard, itself an enigma that can be read many ways and a street that has been blotted out again and again.

CARTOGRAPHY: BEN PEASE; ARTWORK: GENT

STURGEON — MAP APPEARS ON PAGES 66-67

LITTLE PIECES OF MANY WARS BY REBECCA SOLNIT

Some streets function like a core sample through their cities. Fillmore Street runs through San Francisco's wealthiest neighborhood, Pacific Heights; drops into the gritty, African American Western Addition, known as the Fillmore District or just the Fillmore in its heyday; and then continues onward through the lower Haight, to end not far from upper Market Street and the Castro. Pacific Heights is sometimes called Specific Whites, but the 22 Fillmore bus line that traverses the 2.5-mile street and then goes on to cut through the Mission on its way to the Bayview has been nicknamed the 22-to-Life. The war between the states left its traces here, as did the Second World War, and the war on poverty, the war on drugs, the stale and ancient war that is racism, and various forms of freelance violence. As did a lot of potent music and spirituality that mostly went right, though at the Peoples Temple at Fillmore and Geary, it went terribly wrong.

"(Weird John Brown)/The meteor of the war" novelist Herman Melville called the just-executed abolitionist in an 1859 poem, but the outbreak of the Civil War and the failure of his own work depressed Melville enough that he rode another *Meteor*, the clipper ship of that name captained by his brother, on a planned trip around the world that ended in San Francisco, where he turned back in homesickness. On October 19, 1860, at the end of what was then Black Point and is now the grassy portion of Fort Mason Center, in the home of Jessie Benton Fremont, Melville had dinner with her and Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King, an abolitionist. Her husband, John C. Fremont, was a conundrum, the explorer who helped steal Mexico's northern half for the United States in the war on Mexico of 1846-1848 and a Civil War general who was in and out of scandals much of his life. His name was given to a downtown street and to a Silicon Valley town that now has the greatest concentration of Afghan residents in the United States, refugees from endless wars there.

A year before Melville's visit, another opponent of slavery had died in Leonard Haskell's pretty house next door, which still stands, though Jessie Fremont's cottage was torn down long ago.

On Tuesday, the 13th of September, 1859, out at Lake Merced in San Francisco County's sandy western wilderness, a pro-slavery California State Supreme Court judge named David killed a Free-Soiler California senator also named David. It was a duel, and Senator Broderick shot at Judge Terry too, but his gun misfired, while the judge's bullet went right into his chest. Broderick lives on as a street that runs parallel to Fillmore Street.

Over in the other direction, on Octavia Street at Bush, is a less overt memorial to a more charismatic San Francisco character: Mary Ellen Pleasant, the former slave become Underground Railroad guerrilla become political powerhouse, who integrated San Francisco's public transit in the 1860s and also planted a row of eucalyptus trees that still stands. The writer George Orwell once said, "The planting of a tree, especially one of the long-living hardwood trees, is a gift which you can make to posterity at almost no cost and with almost no trouble, and if the tree takes root it will far outlive the visible effect of any of your other actions, good or evil." In Jasper O'Farrell's layout of the streets, in street names and architecture and trees, the long-gone characters of that era live on, influential but unseen.

Black Point had been militarized since 1797, when Spain built Battery San Jose there to defend the Golden Gate. In 1850, Millard Fillmore, a forgettable president who compromised fruitlessly on slavery in an effort to avoid the rupture of the war, designated the site as U.S. military land. It is in his dubious honor that the street is named. The anti-slavery squatters, including the Fremonts and Haskell, were forced out by the Civil War. Thereafter, the commander of the Army of the West, in charge of the Indian wars, resided at Black Point; the panicked General Funston, who did so much to destroy San Francisco in the wake of the 1906 earthquake, had his headquarters there; and during the Second World War more than a million soldiers embarked from Fort Mason for the Pacific.

Fillmore Street got a little longer after rubble from the ruins of the 1906 earthquake was dumped at its northern end. Landfill liquefies in an earthquake, and the Marina District was badly shaken in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Several buildings collapsed, including one at Cervantes and Fillmore, where a baby died. Gas mains broke, creating a conflagration fought from land by firefighters and hundreds of volunteers and from the sea with the city's fireboat pumping seawater to the blaze. A new building stands there today, at 2 Cervantes.

The landfill area had been the site of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, a big World's Fair celebrating the city's resurrection and the completion of the Panama Canal, which brought the city and the West Coast so much closer to the Atlantic world. The neoclassical fantasia of the Palace of Fine Arts is the last remnant of that fair. As of 2010, some of its buildings still housed the Exploratorium, the innovative science museum started by Frank Oppenheimer. He was the younger brother of nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who oversaw the Manhattan Project and the making of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Frank worked on the bomb too, but he was branded

a communist and driven out of physics. He found redemption by establishing the populist science museum in 1969 (soon to move to a downtown pier).

"Angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night" sounds a little like the Exploratorium's mission statement, but it was Allen Ginsberg, a little farther up Fillmore Street at the Six Gallery, at 3119, reading aloud for the first time his epic poem "Howl," on October 7, 1955, seven blocks west of Jessie Fremont's dinner for Melville and ninety-five years later. Ginsberg's hipsters "sat up . . . contemplating jazz" and "saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs," a New York nightscape surely, but those hipsters "reappeared on the West Coast investigating the F.B.I. in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin."

"Song of the rattlesnake/Coiled in the boulder's groin": these were among the opening lines read that night by the much more deeply West Coast poet Gary Snyder. The reading at the Six Gallery, which was founded by five artists and the very out, very gay poet Jack Spicer, is considered a great landmark in American liberation from Eurocentrism, from repression, and a step toward a language and imagination that could embrace erotic, urban, mystical, and radical experience. For decades after the Six was gone, the former carriage house structure was a kind of oriental bazaar, full of carpets and crafts, still a little magical. But no more. Even the address of the Six Gallery, which was briefly the King Ubu Gallery in 1953–1954, no longer quite exists. Next door to it in 2009 was PlumpJack, a wine business founded by Gavin Newsom, elected mayor of San Francisco in 2004, backed by his patron, Pacific Heights resident and oil billionaire Gordon Getty.

"Who is he who became all this glory?" asks one of the Upanishads. In the form of the Vedanta Society, non-European mysticism has long had a home in the neighborhood. Its fantastic 1905 temple, with lacy Moorish balconies topped by rows of onion domes, is a block off Fillmore, at Webster and Filbert; and its new temple is a little way up the hill, at 2323 Vallejo Street at Fillmore. Vedanta, as founded by the Indian mystic Ramakrishna in the nineteenth century, mixes elements of Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism and claims to be the world's most ancient religion, drawing from the Upanishads.

There was another artists' gallery over the hill that is Pacific Heights and up the street, at 2222 Fillmore: the Batman Gallery, which became a Starbucks toward the end of the 1990s. Two of the six founders of the Six Gallery, Jay DeFeo and Wally Hedrick, lived at 2322 Fillmore Street for several years, as did beat poet Michael McClure (who also read at that famous 1955 reading) and various other artists over the years, including the Bay Area Figurative painter Joan Brown. In that building, DeFeo worked on her monumental and mystical painting *The Rose*, until she was evicted in 1965. The painting, several inches thick and weighing one ton, was removed by a crane and by Bekins moving men, whom artist and experimental filmmaker Bruce Conner saw as "angelic hosts" when he filmed the event in 1965 for his black-and-white film *The White Rose*, with its Miles Davis soundtrack. Other beat-era figures in the neighborhood include Wallace Berman and John Wieners at 707 Scott Street, around the corner from Conner on Oak Street, and Kenneth Rexroth and his literary salon at Scott and Page.



Members of the congregation of the Church of St. John Coltrane, 2000. Photo by Susan Schwartzberg.

"'Fuck you!' sang Coyote/and ran" were the last lines of Snyder's poem at the Six Gallery reading. The wealthy sometimes claim to bring civilization to rough neighborhoods, but the Upper Fillmore neighborhood that was so culturally rich when it was the property of poor people in the 1950s is smoothed over into insignificance now, except perhaps for the Clay movie theater at 2261 (built in 1910 as a nickelodeon) and Browser Books, the excellent bookstore a few doors away at 2225 Fillmore. It does have a lot of places to eat and buy clothes, and it does have Mrs. Dewson's Hats, one of the last Afrocentric businesses in the upper end of Fillmore. Dewson, who sells churchgoing hats as well as hats to former mayor Willie Brown, sponsors the Western Addition Foundation for Girls scholarship program. Marcus Books, at 1712, possibly the oldest African American bookstore in the country, is a little farther away from Pacific Heights; at the party there for *Harlem of the West*, the book by Elizabeth Pepin and Lewis Watts that documents what has been destroyed on Fillmore Street over the years, people dressed up and pretended they were at Jimbo's Bop City.

"I'll be glad when you're dead," sang Louis Armstrong. Miles Davis himself played at the Fillmore, which is still a concert hall at Fillmore and Geary, in 1970; and almost everyone in jazz paraded through the neighborhood on one point or another. Charlie Parker played at Bop City, just off Fillmore at 1690 Post. So did Duke Ellington, Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald. Chet Baker came to listen there. In the post-World War II years, Minnie's Can-Do Club at 1915 Fillmore, the Encore at 1805, the Havana Club at 1718, the Club Alabam around the corner at 1820A Post, the Long Bar at 1633 Fillmore, the New Orleans Swing Club (later the Champagne Supper Club) at 1849 Post, the Plantation Club at 1628 Post, the Bird Cage at 1505 Fillmore, the Aloha Club at 1345 Fillmore, to say nothing of the Primalon Roller Rink at 1223 Fillmore and Dottie Ivory's Stardust Club on Hayes made the neighborhood sing. All those clubs are gone, though blues singer John Lee Hooker opened up his Boom Boom Room at 1601 Fillmore in the 1990s, and the East Bay jazz and sushi club Yoshi's opened up a branch in late 2007, at 1330 Fillmore, right after embarrassing itself by releasing a celebratory anniversary CD that failed to include any black jazz artists. But Yoshi's serves sushi, and it belongs in this neighborhood, which used to be a whole lot more Japanese.

"San Francisco's Japantown, the oldest in the continental United States, celebrated its rooth birthday in 2006, but it's a ghost-haunted shadow of itself," writes Shizue Seigel, one of the cartographers for this atlas. "The first-gener-

ation Issei planted roots in the face of laws denying them naturalized citizenship or the right to own land. They were a communal, collaborative group that soon founded newspapers, temples, schools and shops. For instance, Issei women saved and fundraised for years to build a Japanese YWCA at 1830 Sutter to serve as a community center and as a residence for single women and runaway wives. They persuaded Julia Morgan to donate a handsome design and the San Francisco YWCA to hold the deed. But the Japanese YWCA only used the building for ten years. A few months after Pearl Harbor, they were forced to gather in front of Kinmon Taken on Bush Street to board busses headed for the unknown. Each was allowed only two suitcases and an armload of bedding."

And she remembers what the neighborhood was like after the Japanese American community returned: "As a shy kid of twelve riding the 4 Sutter to the Buddhist Church, I stared out the windows at life happening in the street. Church ladies in full regalia sailing into the Macedonian Baptist Church, families sitting on their stoops enjoying a rare warm afternoon, young men with hairnets and sherbet-colored outfits singing impromptu quartets on the street corner. Fried fish church suppers, junk stores and washing machine repair shops jutting out of makeshift storefronts. And church basketball, teriyaki chicken fundraisers and dancing in the street in my kimono at the annual Obon festival. But Japanese Americans and African Americans alike were forced into a second migration by redevelopment."

"But baby, it's cold outside," sang Ella Fitzgerald. The neighborhood that had hosted a heyday for African Americans was then gutted by redevelopment that literally ripped out its heart and displaced thousands. Hundreds of Victorian houses were described as "blighted" and smashed into splinters (in the A2 redevelopment area on the map here). Instead of the promised better homes, the neighborhood got bunker-like housing projects, mostly demolished in the years since, and on Fillmore itself lots lay vacant for decades and then were badly rebuilt. Shiz's husband, *Infinite City* cartographer Ben Pease, remarked, "What amazes me about Fillmore is how the Redevelopment Agency and the city can walk away and say 'we're done' with A2 when the land use is so anti-urban, and sometimes downright stupid."

African Americans had come here to escape Jim Crow and take shipbuilding jobs during the Second World War, and the African American scene had flourished, on the site of what had been a flourishing Japanese community until almost all its residents were incarcerated during that war solely on account of their race. Japantown was rebuilt as a modernist island-complex of shops whose slow failure has led to various plans for revamping it yet again. The Kabuki Theater is the most successful enterprise there, now part of Robert Redford's Sundance empire, and the San Francisco Film Society often screens documentaries and non-mainstream films there. But its big blank wall facing Fillmore is an attempt to turn its back on the street.

Duke Ellington sang to a black butterfly with its "wings frayed and torn," "laughter's yours, so is scorn." Despair over redevelopment's scorched-earth policy was said to have been what pushed some locals into Jim Jones's Peoples Temple cult, housed in 1971 in the former Albert Pike Memorial Scottish Rite Temple (named after a newspaperman, trapper, and Confederate brigadier

general who later became a prominent Freemason), located at Geary just west of Fillmore. As media and government investigations of the cult stepped up, Jones led his congregation to Guyana, in South America, where almost a thousand members were eventually forced to drink cyanide in the jungle complex called Jonestown. Punk bands played at the former San Francisco temple for a few years after the mass suicide/massacre in late 1978, including the Clash on their first American tour, until the building was torn down and replaced by a post office. The Sex Pistols' last concert was held around the corner earlier that year, January 14, 1978, at Winterland, a former ice-skating rink at Post and Steiner. Jimi Hendrix had played there several times in 1968, once with bluesman Albert King—"the velvet bulldozer"—opening.

From Billie Holiday singing "Strange Fruit" to the Clash singing, "When they kick at your front door/how you gonna come?" the Fillmore district has hosted some of America's most turbulent culture, and behind it has been the violence that most of the artists resisted. "Strange Fruit" was written for Holiday by a radical Jew, Abel Meeropol, who adopted the children of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg after the couple's execution for leaking nuclear secrets in 1953. Immigrant Jews had been the dominant population of the lower Fillmore early in the twentieth century; the center of their ghetto was between Golden Gate and Fulton, but little trace of them remains on the street now.

Theaters, synagogues, and an amusement park called the Chutes are all long gone, as are the arches of light that stretched across Fillmore Street for decades before they were turned into scrap for the war effort in the early 1940s. The handsome golden brick Sacred Heart Catholic Church at Fillmore and Fell was a shelter during the 1906 earthquake, employed the city's first African American parish priest, and was the site of a food program run by the Black Panthers, but it was shuttered for good after a last mass in 2004, doomed on account of a dwindling congregation and seismic safety issues. A better fate awaited the Emanu-El Sisterhood Residence for Jewish women a few blocks east of Fillmore, at Laguna and Page, a handsome brick complex that is now San Francisco Zen Center. The building was designed by Pacific Heights dweller and pioneering female architect Julia Morgan, as was the Japantown YWCA and a few other buildings in the neighborhood.

The sprawling Uptown Church of Christ is in the middle of that stretch of redevelopment, at 949 Fillmore Street. The utilitarian replacement architecture of redevelopment that begins above Geary ends below Fulton Street, where ornate Victorian houses again line the street, with an occasional church or new building interposed. But at that point, the street is in transition once again. In the early 1980s, white kids moved into what had been a black neighborhood. Two Jacks Seafood at 401 Haight remains from the earlier era, but the storefront church at Haight and Steiner became Edo Hair Salon, Nickie's went Irish, and the neighborhood is now tattoo parlors and cafés, giving way to boutiques and bistros. It is at least a convivial section of street, and maybe here you can imagine all the jazz stars and fancy dressers, all the abolitionists and angels, scruffy poets, investigators with big pacifist eyes, kids in kimonos, all the sharp-toothed idealists and the soul-stirrers and ghost dancers together under the sign of Coyote, the scientist whose experiment North America is, and maybe imagine Fillmore Street as a swizzle stick with which he stirred the volatile mix