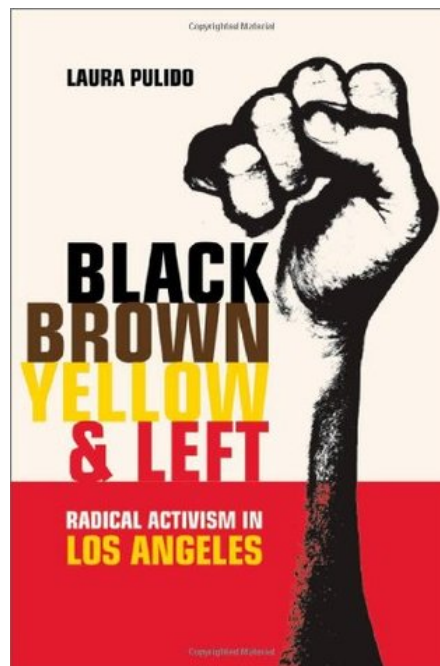




Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles

Laura Pulido

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Laura Pulido traces the roots of third world radicalism in Southern California during the 1960s and 1970s in this accessible, wonderfully illustrated comparative study. Focusing on the Black Panther Party, El Centro de Acción Social y Autonomo (CASA), and East Wind, a Japanese American collective, she explores how these African American, Chicana/o, and Japanese American groups sought to realize their ideas about race and class, gender relations, and multiracial alliances. Based on thorough research as well as extensive interviews, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* explores the differences and similarities between these organizations, the strengths and weaknesses of the third world left as a whole, and the ways that differential racialization led to distinct forms of radical politics. Pulido provides a masterly, nuanced analysis of complex political events, organizations, and experiences. She gives special prominence to multiracial activism and includes an engaging account of where the activists are today, together with a consideration of the implications for contemporary social justice organizing.

Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles Details

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From Reader Review Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles for online ebook

Vileana says

Great history or radical activism in Los Angeles.

Jess says

This book delves into the history of and theory behind leftist racial activist groups which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. It takes on the complicated issues of race, geography, unions, discrimination, the nation-state, and the U.S. government. Very informative and translates to how modern activist groups work today.

Anjali says

simultaneously history, geography, and sociology, pulido's book is incredibly successful at mapping a history of resistance in los angeles within communities of color. BBY&L also helps us think about the historic challenges to liberation movements-- particularly relevant NOW in navigating the bumpy terrain of political organizing, nonprofit work, especially with the aim of social justice.

ryo narasaki says

pretty useful! I learned quite a lot about the panthers and other leftist groups of color barely-recognized-by-academia. only 2 critiques: not accessible! analysis of "yellow" leftist politics not deep enough

Karla says

Not raw enough for me. However, probably good for undergrads. Section on patriarchy and gender was v. incomplete and confusing.

Andrea says

A brilliant book on a subject that far too people have written about, and it goes a long way towards grasping how people themselves felt about and saw their movements, while also maintaining a larger critical framework of how race (and it steps completely outside of the black/white binary! So vital to critical race thinking today!), class and gender intersect. It started with a question about how 'different racialization leads to distinct forms of radical politics' (19), but has come to be so much than that.

I always feel that books like this need to be part of a mosaic, as such in depth and ethnographic work is so

desperately needed to tease out and grapple theoretically with the concrete issues and tensions between long term vision and daily practice that radical organisers and organisations face in their work. This is absent from almost everything I have read, yet here it is in plenty, and provides exactly the kind of theoretical tools that radicals need to think through their praxis. Given this it must, by its very nature, fall a little short in providing the political economy within which this work is taking place (though this section is still quality and while very much a summary, a good overview), along with the larger context of LA histories of activism, where the third world left emerged from, how it impacted and interacted with other progressive movements, and its role in the much larger movement for change and the fierce reactions in the 1980s through to the present (again this is also touched on, but a whole other book could, and probably should, be written on this).

I loved how it tries to disentangle the various racial dynamics of an extremely multiethnic Los Angeles, and the complexities of how various groups related to each other at both the institutional level as much as with member's personal experiences on the ground. Her choices of studying the Black Panthers, the latina/o CASA, and Asian East Wind make this possible, and exploring the histories of these three organisations allows a brilliant opportunity to compare and contrast varied practice and theory, along with their contextualization at this key intersection of class, race, and gender. The book grapples with the theoretical roots and the strengths of nationalism as a vehicle for social change, along with its many weaknesses, drawing out how it is tied into relationships of patriarchy and dominance, problematising its usefulness in a movement dedicated to equality and increased democracy. It shows how people really tried to come to terms with racial, class, and to a lesser extent gender hierarchies as they exist, and their efforts not to ignore, but to work through and possibly transcend them. This continues to be what we need most in the movements and organisations of today, so I never cease to be amazed at how few people have tried to study or theorise this.

The last chapter really brought it home for me, as she draws out the brilliance and the pathos of where activists have ended up 4 decades on, and outlines the four key lessons she feels that we can draw out and apply today. I confess I almost shed a tear or two in reading them as they resonate so strongly with all the glory and heartbreak of my own experience of organizing in Los Angeles. They are:

- democracy and nonviolence. It is so hard to practice a genuine and direct democracy within organisations that are facing impossible odds, constant emergencies, and almost unbearable inequities and injustices. Yet not to do so ensures disillusionment and failure. We still haven't figured that out, and far more tools are needed to make it possible given there just aren't enough hours in the day. I think on the issue of violence, particularly heartbreaking within CASA and the BPP, we have come a long way, but there is still some distance to travel.

- gender and sexuality. Again, wow, we have come a long way. It is in great part thanks to groups like these that we have, and that the problems raised by patriarchy and heteronormative assumptions are regularly both recognised and challenged though much more needs to be done. Even with all the immense work we still need to do, I confess, LA's activist scene (at least the community organisers I knew working in South Central and East LA), was a paradise on these fronts compared to publishing and academia.

- Nationalism and multiracial politics. It is such a struggle to see how best to change the world so that skin colour in no way determines your life chances, much less your life expectancy the way it does now. But this is key

Yet the geography and demographics of Los Angeles suggest that while there is sufficient space for people to carve out their individual niches, there is a far greater need for people to come together. This is the challenge. This is meant, not to invalidate or call for the end of nationalism (not that that would make any difference), but to recognize its limitations, particularly in terms of gender equality, sexuality, and interethnic work. The real strength and potential of oppressed communities lie in the ties between them—a recognition of potential

allies based on their economic and social location and their interests rather than simply their skin color. Until white privilege no longer exists and various groups are no longer singled out for state repression and economic exploitation, there will be a need for ethnic-specific politics. And if there is one thing the Third World Left did, it illustrated the possibility of developing relationships with others while still focusing on one's community. What is needed now is to take this one step further, for communities to work with each other, identifying their commonalities and differences, while not losing sight of their unique histories and struggles.

(234)

- Toward a more humane movement. Stop the burn out. No one's figured that out, or how to treat one another better or productively resolve differences wherever possible or stop the factionalising or providing better for our human needs. There are some brilliant ideas in here, and I wish we had paid more attention to them before I burned out.

All together a beautiful and desperately needed book

Chuck says

I really, really enjoyed this book. Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, it traces the relationship between racial hierarchies in Los Angeles and third world radicalism. By placing these two things in relationship to one another, she reveals a far more complicated (and interesting) story about race and resistance than one normally finds.

She is a younger scholar and it is exciting to think that this is her first book. I'm looking forward to her next project.

Tinea says

Pulido explores a fascinating subject in this book: the activism of the Third World Left in Los Angeles during the 60s and 70s. She specifically examines three organizations in depth, the Black Panther Party, CASA (El Centro de Acción Social y Autonomo), and East Wind, who represent (for her at least), the radical struggles of African American, Chicana/o, and Asian American people in LA. She looked at how the members of these organizations became politicized; how their political theories developed over time, and how they related to other nationalist groups (including each other).

I debated whether to rate this book 2 or 3 stars, but settled on two. This book generated more questions than it answered. It gave me an important glimpse into the complex history of revolutionary nationalist activists, and in doing so opened a door for me to see how little I know about Black, Brown, and Yellow Power histories and theory. But Pulido didn't answer these questions. I was often left waiting for a deeper analysis then what came. I think the author was hampered by her comparative analysis. Effective comparisons need to engage each other more, and her chosen subjects rarely did so. We were left with three separate books, one about each organization, instead of something deeper about the Third World Left in general or one single movement within that.

It's no surprise then why her chapters on solidarity and ideologies were the most interesting: they were unified and built off each other. I was particularly frustrated by her analysis of gender and patriarchy,

especially in light of criticisms I read in *The Color of Violence*. She did not look at the particularities of sexualized violence at all, and instead focused on the ability or inability of women to "step up" to meet the demands of men in their movements. The last few pages of recommendations for future activists that came from her interviewees were pretty solid.

Finally, this book is not accessible to a general audience. Pulido doesn't explain acronyms, and expects a certain level of familiarity with the histories she deals with.

david says

Professor Pulido shows how local organizers respond to the perpetual violences of racial capitalism. By studying three organizations (the Black Panther Party, East Wind and CASA) of the Third World Left within LA in the 60s and 70s, Pulido analyzes how essential space is to social movements. This comparative study highlights the importance of understanding histories of racialization and racism in building anticapitalist movements. She also describes the challenges posed by patriarchy within organizing, though partly because of her careful analysis of the experiences of members of these orgs, she never writes them or their vision off because of organizing problems. This is a book that takes seriously the concerns and lives led by activists and also reflects the ways in which theories get worked out in the material.

She ends the book by highlighting lessons that we can learn from these movements:

1. increasing child care within movements
2. economic security for members of organizations articulated through health insurance and retirement and the need to build medical collectives similar to the legal ones that have been and were built in the 60s/ 70s
3. be attendant to burnout and intellectual development w/in movements
4. take seriously the issues of conflict resolution within orgs.

she closes by drawing on Robin Kelly and suggesting the importance of envisioning what we want. "Activists must dream in order to develop a vision of the kind of world they want to live in." (238)

Ivan says

Good book on the revolutionary Third World Left movement in LA. Looks at the Black Panther Party (Black), Center for Autonomous Social Action (Brown) and East Wind (Yellow). A lot of lessons to be learned! Intentionally leaves out and criticizes groups like the Brown Berets for their lack of revolutionary nature and anti communist rhetoric.

Eric says

I appreciate Pulido's careful analysis of 3 revolutionary organizations, getting inside them through reliance of primary sources and interviews. Yet I hoped for a deeper and broader analysis of these organizations in their historical moment, which would have elucidated more in terms of lessons learned.
