

Roundtable Discussion of *Under the Perfect Sun:* *The San Diego that Tourists Never See*

Six years ago, Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller published *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego that Tourists Never See* and explicitly shot across the bow of the San Diego historical establishment. Miller and Mayhew (both English professors at San Diego City College and founders of the San Diego City Works Press and the San Diego City College International Book Fair) and Davis (professor at the University of California, Riverside, a recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant, and an author of many influential books in urban and environmental studies) blasted “booster” accounts of the city that skated on the surface, failed to ask hard questions, and supported existing relations of power. The authors explained that their book would peel back layers of illusion, spectacle, and myth and reveal the city’s truer and darker past. They intended, they said, to write a “people’s history of San Diego,” a history that would serve as a tool for activists and that would “stimulate further explorations of San Diego’s controversial past, especially the neglected histories of labor and communities of color”(4).

The editors of *The Journal of San Diego History* invited five noted historians of San Diego history to assess the significance of *Under the Perfect Sun*, to share thoughts on the state of San Diego historiography, and to point in new and promising directions for future historical research on the city and region.

Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr. is Assistant Professor in the Asian Pacific Studies Program at Arizona State University and is currently working on a manuscript entitled “Mexipino: Mexicans, Filipinos, and the Forging of Multiethnic Identities and Communities.” Kyle E. Ciani, an Assistant Professor of History at Illinois State University, has published a number of articles on San Diego history and is working on a book entitled “Calculated Assistance: Choosing to Care for Urban Children in America, 1880 to 1950.” Matt Bokovoy is an independent historian, an editor for University of Nebraska Press, and author of the book, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940*. Abe Shragge teaches history at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of many articles on San Diego history and a much-cited dissertation, “Boosters and Bluejackets: The Civic Culture of Militarism in San Diego, California, 1900-1945.”

In addition to the five responses, we also republish here a 2003 book review of *Under the Perfect Sun* written by Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, Dwight Stanford Professor of History at San Diego State University. Following Cobbs Hoffman’s review and the five other essays, Jim Miller, speaking on behalf of the authors of *Under the Perfect Sun*, responds.

We hope that this roundtable will inspire lively discussion about our city’s past, present, and future. The editors welcome reader responses that can be included in the next issue of *The Journal of San Diego History*.

The Editors



The San Diego Union-Tribune published the following book review on September 28, 2003. We republish it here with the permission of its author, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman.

“MUFFED MUCKRAKING: `Sun’s’ claims of wide-scale corruption and caustic criticisms of San Diego are perfectly unconvincing”

Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, Dwight Stanford Professor of History at San Diego State University.

Civic promoters toss and turn at night wondering when a town becomes a world-class city. When it hits a million people? When it acquires a national sports enterprise? When it builds a decent library? When a teen idol immortalizes it in song (“I left my heart in Chula Vista...”)?

By these criteria, San Diego is halfway there, batting around .500. But authors Mike Davis, Jim Miller and Kelly Mayhew have just pushed this former cow town into the major leagues: San Diego now has its own scathing historical portrait. What Upton Sinclair did for Chicago in *The Jungle* (1906) and Lincoln Steffens did for Boston, Philadelphia and New York in *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), Davis and his colleagues have done for San Diego. Roasted it well done.

Not everyone will agree the service was necessary. As the title suggests, many San Diegans take pride in the city under the perfect sun, considering it “America’s Finest.” But muckrakers have a role to play. They keep us from complacency.

Steffens, the granddaddy of urban crusaders, defended his own assault on civic smugness by saying, “Not alone the triumphs and the statesmen, the defeats and the grafters also represent us, and just as truly. Why not see it so and say it?” In other words, a city’s failures are as fair a measurement as its successes. The homeless person cadging dollars at the freeway offramp reflects our town just as surely as the bronze surfer riding the curl at Sunset Cliffs.

Mike Davis, a local boy made good as a historian, is the lead author of *Under the Perfect Sun*, lending his considerable prominence and finely sharpened pen to the project. The authors admit their work is partisan, calling it a “tool for activists.”

In part one, Davis surveys San Diego’s financial history from Alonzo Horton to John Moores. It’s a lively, well-told tale of real estate schemes, cross-border vice, military boondoggles and political double-dealing. Davis argues that “private governments” composed of wealthy families have long ruled San Diego, from the Marstons and Fletchers in the early years to recent businessmen such as Ernest Hahn, Dean Spanos and Corky McMillin. Occupying comfortable spots in their vest pockets, he says, are politicians such as Pete Wilson, Susan Golding and Ron Roberts. Davis particularly highlights political corruption, notably the convictions of financiers C. Arnholt Smith, J. David Dominelli and Dick Silberman, and the prosecution of mayors Frank Curran and Roger Hedgecock.

Davis’ charges are based mostly on information already in the public domain, including traditional histories of the city and articles from the *San Diego Union* (though he accuses the Copley family of suppressing bad publicity and maintaining “an almost Kafkaesque stranglehold on San Diego public opinion”). What turns Davis’ story from old news into new news is how he sums it up.

Davis, who won a MacArthur “genius award” a few years back, is likely to attract national attention with his bold claim that “San Diego is arguably the

nation's capital of white collar crime" and a "seat of municipal corruption to rival that of Youngstown and Providence." The recent indictment of three city council members underscores the point.

But Davis fails to make the allegation stick. All major cities suffer from sleaze and graft. Davis doesn't provide factual comparisons with crime elsewhere that would allow the reader to agree, or disagree, that San Diego is exceptional. Still, the accusation will rankle, and should inspire San Diegans to take a harder, more self-critical look at the reputation they are earning. Davis may also help citizens get a grip on why bulldozers continue to gobble up our natural heritage despite long-standing, grass-roots opposition to "Los Angelization." If so, his book will have made an important contribution.

Regrettably, though, the author's cynical tone could easily alienate the local readers he seeks to rouse, while pleasing national audiences eager for snappy prose. Davis reduces glorious Balboa Park to a romantic folly "to seduce wealthy hicks." With little supporting documentation, he accuses prominent citizens of "whoring" around, practicing their "skills at drunk driving" and swapping domestic partners to achieve political power. He alleges that the city has been "raped and pillaged" by its sports barons and that the cities of El Cajon and Escondido have been destroyed by developers.

In 1999, the local poverty rate stood at 19 percent, and according to Davis, San Diego is a pretty wretched place to live. But to the thousands who immigrate here each year, and the 1.2 million who call it home, this portrait will not be deeply convincing. The whole is more than the sum of these particular parts.

If Davis has few kind words for the civic elite, co-author Jim Miller has nothing but praise for those who have opposed the racist, "top-down class warfare" he believes undergirds San Diego's plastic, "theme park" veneer. In a useful survey of 20th-century reform, Miller especially commends labor, from the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) in the early 1910s to the United Farm Workers in the 1970s to unions for female strippers and UCSD graduate students in the 1990s.

At times, this praise goes over the top, considering what was achieved. Miller spills considerable ink on Ricardo Flores Magon, a Mexican revolutionary who (from the safety of Los Angeles) preached to his countrymen that "the dissolution of organized government would create real human freedom." Miller's sympathy is revealed by his rueful conclusion that the heroic Magon was "unfortunately" not up to realizing this apocalyptic vision.

Miller also misses a few legitimate bragging points for San Diego reformers. His impassioned treatment of the 1960s focuses, for example, on elite UCSD instead of the more middle- and working- class San Diego State, which established the first women's studies programs in the nation in 1969.

Miller offers an essentially Marxist interpretation of local politics, seeing repression everywhere and predicting that the city's "contradictions" will soon burst its civic bubble. Even controversies over public drunkenness and broken glass reflect its mean spirit, according to the author, who asserts that "recent petty battles over whether people without beachfront property can drink beer on the beach reflect the old struggle between those who think they own the city and those who believe in the democratic right for anyone to use public space."

Yet it's hard to accept, based on Miller's evidence, that San Diego has a uniquely stark social history. He proves that the strong do indeed rule, and often badly,

but this begs the question of what alternative system he would propose. It calls to mind John Kenneth Galbraith's wry observation that "Under capitalism, man exploits man. Under communism, it's just the opposite."

The final section of "Under the Perfect Sun" is filled with the voices of activists and average citizens interviewed by Kelly Mayhew. Notably, their conclusions are less pessimistic than those of the authors.

Harold Brown, the founder of the San Diego chapter of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), acknowledges that "a lot has really changed" since the early 1960s, when the professions, electoral politics and good housing were mostly closed to African-Americans. He also recalls that the bitter struggle for change was helped, and hindered, by people of all races and classes. "Geraldo," an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, praises California's funding of education for people like himself and says that the "quality of life is much better here" than where he came from, even though people in La Jolla have it better yet. Union worker Mary Grillo calls San Diego a "tough culture" to organize partly because everybody is simply too busy "enjoying life." Even so, she notes with pride that her Justice for Janitors campaign met its goals in the year 2002.

Muckraking is not an easy occupation. It takes a wicked wit, a sharp eye and a gift for persuasion. Mike Davis comes closest to being a real pro; with previous books he has earned an unofficial reputation as a dean of American social critics. Few writers spin a story with the verve he gives to every twist and turn.

But while Davis, Miller and Mayhew have added San Diego to the roll of metropolises famously condemned, they have not boosted themselves to the ranks of Sinclair or Steffens, at least in this volume. For that, their portrait would have to bear a stronger resemblance to the livable city that, with all its faults, most San Diegans recognize.

"A Breath of Fresh Air"

Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., Arizona State University.

California and western history have long ignored the social, economic, and political importance of San Diego, despite the fact that it is the nation's eighth largest city. State historical studies have often left it in the margins regardless whether or not twentieth-century federal spending in the city rivaled or even surpassed its neighboring cities to the north. The few scholars who have taken on the arduous task of writing about San Diego history have also made some historical oversights of their own. As with many early historical studies of other cities, histories of San Diego have often minimized or relegated to a footnote the struggles and plight of the working masses and racial and ethnic groups. History here generally centers on tales of founding fathers who risked their fortunes to develop San Diego into the city that it is today. From the building of railroads that link San Diego with the rest of the country to its rising agricultural, fish canning, and defense related industries, those who have labored to build the city and struggled for social and economic justice have been ignored—lost in a sea of city boosterism and military presence.

As an historian and ethnic studies scholar, my introduction to *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* by Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew and Jim Miller

was a breath of fresh air. Their study is a riveting account of the hidden history of San Diego, discussed by each author in separate but intersecting essays. *Under the Perfect Sun* is indeed a story that crashes head on with popular booster histories that told the story of “America’s finest city” while forgetting racial and ethnic minorities, women, immigrants, and issues such as labor, free speech, and civil rights. As the authors note, San Diego’s umbilical relationship with the military during the post-war period made the city dependent upon the military industrial complex. The tourist industry and the military have worked well in limiting alternative views of San Diego history, especially those that are in direct contrast to the sunny beaches and Old Town feel that fills the tourist gaze. The gaze has no room for the kinds of struggles that would tarnish San Diego’s stellar reputation as a tourist destination. As a military and moreover a retirement town on the West Coast, San Diego’s conservative elements ensure the status quo. As the authors note, “superpatriotism, in turn, has too often been used as a bludgeon against local movements for economic and racial justice” (3). Davis, Mayhew and Miller thus provide an alternate view of San Diego’s history from those that have often been neglected. In the tradition of Howard Zinn, Davis, Mayhew and Miller provide us with a “people’s history” of San Diego, a history that highlights the controversies, corruption, and overlooked struggles of its racial and ethnic minorities, women, and civil rights and labor movements.

The story begins with Davis’s examination of San Diego’s key political figures and business elites, such as Alonzo Horton, the Kimball Brothers, Congressman William Kettner, John D. Spreckels, Rueben Fleet, and a handful of others who were responsible for the city’s development. As Davis notes, the city’s ruling class included a few wealthy people and/or families, along with their political and media allies, who ultimately shaped how San Diego would be governed and perceived. With the success of individuals like Congressman William Kettner for example (who was known as the “million dollar Congressman” because of his knack for funneling in millions of dollars from the federal government to fashion San Diego as a military town), the city was ensured its rapid growth, especially during periods of wartime. Military spending and attendant growth began in the early 1910s and is evident today as San Diego continues to remain one of the largest military centers on the West Coast. Davis also examines the various political debacles, municipal scandals, fraudulent investments schemes, and other forms of white collar crime that Davis and his co-authors argue have made San Diego into “the most corrupt city on the West Coast” (3). Examples include former Mayor Roger Hedgecock’s felony conviction charge regarding conspiracy for illegal campaign contributions (his record was later expunged) and the indictment of “Mr. San Diego” C. Arnholt Smith on corruption charges which included fraud, bribery, and connection to underworld figures, such as John Alessio.

Next, Jim Miller shows how San Diego sought to maintain its reputation as a “quiet little beach town” by marketing “an image of itself that pushes the ‘real’ city to the margins and buries its history under a mountain of booster mythology” (160). He demonstrates that San Diego was an anti-labor town, evident in the treatment of labor organizers and rank and file workers in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), the Communist-led CAWIU (Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union), UCAPAWA (United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America), other groups that sought to organize the city’s

nonwhite workers (male and female), and allies who sought to secure social and economic justice and the right to unionize. Growers and vigilante groups (such as the Ku Klux Klan) sometimes met workers with extreme violence and terrorism, as witnessed in the Imperial Valley during the 1930s. When city newspapers did report the violence and terrorism inflicted on workers and their families, they often depicted the victims as agitators who deserved their treatment because they held ideological beliefs different from the ruling class and their minions. Miller also addresses African American and Chicana/o civil rights and cultural nationalist movements which addressed racial discrimination and neglect in education, housing, employment, and other arenas. Examples include the fight by African Americans, Chicana/os, and others (including Angela Davis) to establish the Lumumba-Zapata College (Third College) at UCSD; the struggle for Chicano Park; and the dismantling of the Black Panther Party in San Diego. Miller also highlights the transnational efforts of organized labor in San Diego and Tijuana, in particular the drywaller's strike of 1992.

Kelly Mayhew's chapter is rich in personal accounts, as it is based on a series of oral interviews. The diverse group of interviewees, who include Vietnamese, African American, Chicana/o, and white working class teachers, activists, students, undocumented immigrants, union members, and artists, attests to the diversity of neglected stories in San Diego. The subjects share with the reader their lives, their hopes, needs, dreams, disappointments, and aspirations for a more equitable city where all residents are valued and all voices heard. Some of the most captivating stories reflect the relationship between San Diego and Tijuana.

Although their book is a valuable contribution to a "people's history" of San Diego, their work has limitations. The experiences and struggles of racial and ethnic minorities, such as the Chicana/o and African American communities, are given some attention, which is applauded because most historical accounts of San Diego often mention them briefly or not at all. We need, however, a more complex look at the city's ethnic and racial minorities. The contributions and struggles of San Diego's Asian and Pacific Islander communities are largely overlooked in *Under the Perfect Sun*. The Chinese and Japanese communities are covered briefly in three pages (164-167). Filipinos are mentioned only in passing, despite the fact San Diego is home to the second largest Filipino community in the nation and they constitute the largest Asian Pacific group in the city and county. Their labor and civil rights struggles, which were sometimes shared with Mexican and later Chicana/o counterparts, is given scant attention. Indeed, Filipinos have often been at the forefront of San Diego and neighboring Imperial Valley labor struggles. Similarly, the city's Chamorro, Hawaiian, and Samoan communities were also intricately linked to San Diego's military and economic development. With regard to the Southeast Asian and African immigrant/refugee communities, more historical context would have been useful when reading the personal narratives in Mayhew's section. As for San Diego's Chinese and Japanese communities, their experiences and struggles are well worth mentioning beyond what the authors provided. Both groups were vital to the city's agricultural and fish canning industries, which were crucial to San Diego's development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Indeed, the Chinese and Japanese for example, were part of a larger multiracial cannery workforce, which included Mexican, Filipino, and some European ethnics. The cannery work force and their

unions (which incidentally were predominately female) labored intensively to make San Diego “the tuna canning capital of the world” by the 1950s. Moreover, indigenous communities are also missing in these narratives.

Historically, San Diego’s newspapers have often neglected to acknowledge the city’s racial and ethnic communities, labor or civil rights struggles, racial segregation, and violence. Stories that seemed to make regular headlines only focused on cultural activities or holidays, such as Mexican Independence Day, Cinco de Mayo, or Rizal Day. This is a city where Shamu, the San Diego Zoo, and Petco Park have reigned supreme in the public imagination, overshadowing racial, social, and economic inequalities. This book by Davis, Mayhew, and Miller is an important contribution to the neglected history of San Diego’s marginalized populations who are very much present and have struggled and fought to this day to make a home for themselves and to have their voices heard. *Under the Perfect Sun* is a book that will continue to influence scholars like myself, who are interested in re-examining and re-writing San Diego’s past so that it is more inclusive. It is indeed a notable work that has shattered previous notions about our idea of San Diego. It has prompted probing questions about our city’s history and critical thinking about how we might write more complex histories. Only by doing so can we come to terms with our past, reevaluate our present, and make an effort to tell an honest story in the future. Only then can we live up to the image that we are “America’s finest city.”

“In Search of a Real San Diego History”

Kyle E. Ciani, Illinois State University.

People in Central Illinois often look at me aghast when I say I voluntarily moved from San Diego to our mid-sized community in the middle of cornfields. The myth, romance, fantasy, and pure media hype of “America’s Finest City” is well ingrained in the heartland, so trading coastal paradise for the prairie seems crazy to them. They’ve never heard of “June Gloom” nor do they realize that minimum wage earnings (or mid-level professional pay) cannot buy you a home in San Diego. As a teen I bought into the myth, believing I needed the bay, the ocean, and the salt air to be whole. A scholarship to study at the University of San Diego sealed the deal for my flight from hell (Phoenix, Arizona) to paradise. Idealistic? Naïve? Adventurous? Sure, all of the above, and San Diego’s boosters have banked on these emotions since the mid-nineteenth century.

I first experienced San Diego as a child-tourist when my family escaped the Valley of the Sun’s 110-degree August misery for several days of camping at the now non-existent “Campland at the Bay.” We knew nothing about C. Arnholt Smith and John Alessio or Bob Peterson and Dick Silberman nor did we care who sat in the District Attorney’s chair. *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* offers a few reasons why these names and positions mattered. Authors Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller believe most people are like my family in 1968: ignorant of the ways in which elites have monopolized the city’s economy and politics. They also suggest that most tourists—“the happy tourist in shorts and a Sea World T-shirt proffering his credit card to the gods of commerce”—is far removed from the “recent Latino immigrant, whose invisible labor sustains the

luxury lifestyles of Coronado, La Jolla, and Rancho Santa Fe." In between these widely divergent positions sit military officials and enlisted personnel, "smiling" boosters, low-paid service workers, and the "scorned dissenter, trade unionist, or civil rights activist" (3). The trio are passionate about their goals to provide "a useful tool for activists and stimulate further explorations of San Diego's controversial past, especially the neglected histories of labor and communities of color." They hope to "annoy" those in positions of power, they admit to their partisanship, and they want their words to "sting" (4). Their blunt rhetoric is jarring at times but the truth is a messy and uncomfortable business.

Under the Perfect Sun offers an introductory compilation of stories directing future scholarship and they are ambitious in their historical timeframe. The sheer volume of activists, organizations, protests, scandals, and confessions they bring to light should give readers pause. Written in three parts, the authors outline the history of boosterism from the mid-nineteenth century through the 2000 mayoral election (Davis); detail the machinations of corporate San Diego to keep labor unorganized and poorly compensated (Miller); and end with narratives of people involved in the day-to-day struggles of living on the edge in a very expensive city (Mayhew). They no doubt riled "the rabid radio talk-show hosts, sports franchise publicists, downtown renewal cheerleaders, and Pentagon lobbyists who too often pass themselves off as "San Diego public opinion" (4); perhaps they also riled those groups left out of the analysis: philanthropists of large and small denominations, not-for-profit volunteers and employees, social and public health workers, private school administrators, and educators at the hundreds of poorly-funded elementary, middle, and high schools in the city. While Davis, Miller and Mayhew never pretend to be balanced in their analyses, they could have offered a richer history of the city's "other" heroes if they paid closer attention to the efforts these groups of advocates have made throughout the twentieth century.

For every John Spreckels and John Moores endured by the city, an Ellen Scripps and Joan Kroc have mended some of the ill. For me, it's not enough to lump the "others" in an ending narrative because advocates of diverse racial ethnic and class positions have engaged in social activism throughout San Diego's history. Female benevolence in the nineteenth century sheltered abandoned children, cared for the diseased, and comforted "wayward" girls. They organized networks of social welfare in the twentieth century, building San Diego's first settlement house and providing immunizations, literacy, and waged work to the disenfranchised. They operated within the circle of civic power as well as challenged its authority through diverse organizations, including the Woman's Home Association, the Women's Industrial Exchange, the Vice Suppression League, the College Woman's Association, the Traveler's Aid Society, the Federated Jewish Aid Society, Catholic Charities, the Chinese Mission School, and the Women's Civic League. These vibrant groups worked with and listened to the underclass, and fought with them against the tight controls enforced by the white male powerbrokers. Yes, these men did and continue to hold power. But people with seemingly few sociopolitical resources have always challenged that power, making the tension between these groups of people critical to understanding San Diego's development.

Perhaps at this point a few confessions of my own are in order. First, I have been researching the history of the city's social welfare agendas from the 1850s to the 1950s, using childcare efforts as my lens to assess various programs. As

a historian of women and gender trained in the labor history tradition, I view childcare as a work issue and understand its tenuous position among American workers. Secondly, I come from a long line of working class laborers and continued the tradition by, among other jobs, waitressing. I've also done a lot of clerical work, most of it poorly paid. My degree in history introduced me to philanthropy, and I experienced much of my professional life in San Diego's not-for-profit sector where I helped raise funds for the Zoological Society, Sharp HealthCare, Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, and the San Diego Historical Society. In all of these areas, I interacted with both the "haves"—those with race and gender privilege, political and economic power, and supervisory authority—and the "have nots,"—those with limited privilege, power, and authority—and each group demonstrated generosity and compassion to diverse groups and institutions.

Third, I'm a product of Catholic School, baby-boom style: a curious blend of guilt-ridden anxiety and civic responsibility coupled with the mandate to wear badly styled, wool uniforms. So, I understand Mayor Maureen O'Connor's "Catholic conscience" differently than Mike Davis (123-124). I cringed with embarrassment for her during her escapade as a "homeless" person but believed she truly wanted to explore the plight of the homeless. In reading Davis' take on the media debacle, I kept looking for attention to Father Joe Carroll and his extraordinary work with San Diego's homeless and at least a mention of Joan Kroc's generosity. Her husband Ray has attracted plenty of attention in exposés such as *Fast Food Nation* so we know the origin of the Kroc money.¹ However, Joan Kroc's benevolence and Catholic conscience helped build the multi-faceted St. Vincent de Paul Village that has sheltered families since its completion in 1987. Her philanthropy has funded the Institute for International Peace Studies at USD, which has attracted world leaders (political, religious, and cultural) in an intellectual enterprise of peacekeeping; Ronald McDonald House Charities; National Public Radio fellowships; and built the Salvation Army's 12-acre community center on University Avenue. Helen Copley persuaded many people through her ownership of the *San Diego Union* but she also contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to civic causes, not least among them her donation funding the YMCA in Mid-city. One may not like the source of the money but one cannot deny that Catholic guilt has provided critical services for many of the city's underserved groups despite corporate greed.

Fourth, I no longer live in San Diego, but I know it well since I lived in several neighborhoods and among several cultures: dorm life atop the Linda Vista hill, surf culture of Wind n' Sea, the service sectors in North Park and Pacific Beach, and adjunct teaching in Normal Heights. Some of these addresses may seem luxurious but those who have lived in these neighborhood's rental properties know they are filled with undocumented, unemployed, and underemployed workers. These workers were my neighbors and friends, and we helped one another out by tending to each other's children, running to the grocery store, and exchanging clothes when an interview presented itself. As a renter, I learned that a "quaint cottage" advertised in the classified section could be nothing more than a rat- and roach-infested dump. My privileged position as a degreed white worker allowed me to move away from troubled housing, but many of my neighbors remain in their "cottages."

1. Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

Fifth, in the '80s I religiously watched the guilty-pleasure drama series, *Knotts Landing*. Some of the figures in Davis' "Next Little Dollar" seem to come right out of central casting, but they are real and that's a bit scary. Davis is best when he tackles the agendas of the wealthy, and it makes for juicy reading. On two occasions I was commissioned to research and write about some of those booster types, discovering that often the wealthier the executive the more eccentric.² So, perhaps readers should keep these confessions in mind as they read further, for these experiences have shaped my commentary.

The authors' essays counter the city's booster-driven historical narratives, which is not an easy project.³ As every historian understands, one's work is only as good as one's access to sources, and "bottom-up" history depends on the accessibility of sources beyond the published elite voice. Herbert Gutman taught us to honor the worker; Gerda Lerner guided us to include the majority (women, that is); Joan Scott encouraged us to consider how communities filter work and home through a gendered screen; David Roediger reminded us that racial construction is critical to the analysis; Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa showed us the effect of silencing people's voices; and they all cautioned us to recognize and make clear our biases.⁴ Putting these theoretical insights to practice opens the reader to a whole new vision, and I believe the authors hoped for this kind of view.

They reach into the nineteenth century to show us the foundations for elite attitudes, but the sections that detail the politics of the New Right and its influence on 21st century poverty gives local historians fodder to expand the analysis. Randy "Duke" Cunningham's fall from grace makes sense when read in the context of Chris Petti's arrest by the FBI in 1989 (127). Likewise, the sea of protesters in May 2006 wearing white t-shirts and "Sí, se puede" attitudes in support of immigrant amnesty should not have been surprising when situated within the context of the United Domestic Workers unionization struggles (254) or the stories of Sonia Rodríguez, Peter Zschiesche, or Mary Grillo (312-320, 332-346). Mayhew documents a series of interviews with San Diegans who do not get featured in the mainstream media. Here we see how San Diego actually operates: the daily routines of people who live paycheck to paycheck or the decision-making processes of advocates working to improve the lives of the under- and unemployed San Diegan. Her attention to diverse experiences and socioeconomic positions is this chapter's strength, and I was reminded of Juan Gonzáles' provocative *Roll Down Your Window*.⁵

While the authors offer a different assessment than certainly San Diego's

2. Kyle E. Ciani and Cynthia Malinick, "From Spanish Romance to Neon Confidence and Demolition Fear: The Twentieth-Century Life of the El Cortez Hotel," *Journal of San Diego History* 46, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 3-33; and Ciani, "A Passion for Water: Hans H. Doe and the California Water Industry," *Journal of San Diego History* 40, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 232-259.
3. Richard F. Pourade's seven-volume series published in the 1960s by the San Diego Union-Tribune Publishing Company is a good representation of such endeavors.
4. Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977, c. 1976); Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, New York: Verso Press, 1991); and Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass. : Persephone Press, 1981).
5. Juan Gonzáles, *Roll Down Your Window: Stories of a Forgotten America* (New York: Verso, 1995).

Chamber of Commerce, their analysis suffers a bit from the lack of archival sources. Whereas Davis reproaches earlier authors for using coffee table accounts of the city's inner-workings, he relies on such accounts (Roger Showley's book comes to mind) for his own essay. Davis is a veteran at stinging, having shocked many readers with his award-winning critiques of western cities. *City of Quartz* was required reading in graduate school, noted for its methodology and attention to argument, so I was surprised to find much of his material comes from newspaper and magazine articles.⁶ We can make the same point with Miller's essay on San Diego's workers. His connections to the secondary literature are solid, but use of union meeting minutes, negotiated contracts, and employee correspondence would have nuanced the analysis. These sources exist throughout the city in various archival repositories: for instance, Scripps Institute for Oceanography (fishing and cannery industries); San Diego State University's Special Collections (meat packing and canning industries); and San Diego Historical Society Research Archives (agriculture). The typos should have been corrected in its second printing. For example, Helen Marston Beardsley founded the Southern California chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1924 and not Women Strike for Peace (50), and I'm most sure there is an "r" in Stoorza Communications (143). I point these out not to be picky with the material but because so often the histories of women have been ignored or are inaccurate. We need to be as precise about the actions and names of women as the actions and names of men, no matter their race, class, ethnicity and age.

Despite these shortcomings, *Under the Perfect Sun* captivated this reader and reminded me how hard it is to live in that paradise. Social activism in San Diego occurs within a constellation of power and privilege through which it is extremely hard to maneuver. San Diego is a fabulous place if one has the resources to enjoy its offerings. Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller want us to understand how life is for the majority of people in San Diego who do not have those resources. I wish more scholars would pay attention to how the boosters got it wrong. It can help us get it right.

"A New Historical Narrative for San Diego"

Matt Bokovoy, University of Nebraska Press

I appreciate the invitation to join the forum on Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller's book, *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*. I was quite excited when The New Press released the book in Fall 2003 because there was no scholarly interest, critical writing, or research being published about any aspect of San Diego history, except in the *Journal of San Diego History*, where I was book review editor and interim co-editor from 2002-2005. At the time, I was finishing the final revisions for my book on San Diego's two world's fairs, and was fortunate to meet all three of the authors at the San Diego Public Library one summer day. As you can imagine, the mutual interest in San Diego's history led to professional relationships based on shared research interests. Those who write on the city's history constitute a very small circle. I know the authors quite well, but I also feel that I can speak objectively about the significance of and problems with the book.

6. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London, New York: Verso, 1990).

There are very few writers and scholars involved in writing book-length works about San Diego. Kevin Starr has written brief sections on San Diego in his volumes on California history, but most of the information comes from the *Journal of San Diego History*. Roger Lotchin included two chapters on San Diego in *Fortress California* (1992), but most of the material was also drawn from secondary works. An older generation of scholars, including Harry Crosby, Raymond Starr, Iris Engstrand, Ramón Ruíz, Paul Vanderwood, and Richard Griswold Del Castillo, has done important work on the city. Their collective work has focused on either San Diego proper or the relationship of Tijuana to San Diego. Some of these scholars, however, have retired or are close to retirement, even if most of their work is fresh.

The study of San Diego skipped a generation and no baby boomer scholars write about the city, except perhaps Larry Ford and Lawrence Herzog at San Diego State University and Mike Davis at the University of California, Riverside. Some journalists, editors, and lay historians like Gregg Hennessey, Rick Crawford, Richard Amero, and Roger Showley have written some very good works on San Diego history as well. Some younger scholars like Miller and Mayhew and myself have published book-length works on the city's history (University of Oklahoma Press published Miller's San Diego novel *Drift* in Spring 2007), and Kyle Ciani, Theodore Strathman, and Judith Schultz have written dissertations on San Diego's history that will reach publication soon at university presses. So far as I know, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (2005) is the only scholarly book researched from archives to be published in a generation, except for the two chapters on San Diego in Phoebe Kropp's new book *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (2006).

So grandparents and grandchildren appear involved in writing the history of the city. There are almost no parents. For some strange reason the scholars at University of California, San Diego in the humanities have shown almost no interest in examining San Diego within the larger history of Southern California, California, the American West, or the United States. The exception at UCSD is Abraham Shragge, who wrote a very impressive dissertation about the role of the military-industrial complex in the Urbanization of San Diego. He has published a number of fine articles from the dissertation in *Pacific Historical Review*, *The Journal of San Diego History*, and *the Southern California Quarterly*. Yen Le Espirtu's work in Asian American Studies explores San Diego's diverse Asian communities, particularly Filipino-Americans, and a few scholars have considered the large Vietnamese American community in Linda Vista. San Diego history is strongest at both University of San Diego, under Engstrand's guidance, and at San Diego State University. However, these programs only offer master's degrees in history, although the M.A. theses from these programs are often indispensable reference works on local history. The finest, most artful and insightful work ever written on the city is a product of fiction. The novelist Lê Thi Diem Thúy's wonderful novel, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003) is arguably the greatest work ever written about San Diego.

Despite some excellent contributions, scholarly work on San Diego pales in comparison to the literature on cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York City, Phoenix, or Philadelphia (where urban social history was codified through the Philadelphia Social History Project). In addition, San Diego history has rarely shown conceptual innovation and often lags far behind the main fields and sub-fields of American history.

I believe *Under the Perfect Sun* helps rectify this problem. The authors succeed in constructing a new narrative for San Diego history. This has not been done since Richard Pourade's multi-volume *History of San Diego* commissioned by the Copley's San Diego Union-Tribune Company during the 1960s. Regardless of whether one agrees with the arguments in *Under the Perfect Sun* about power and injustice in the city's history, it is an achievement in terms of scholarship and cultural criticism. When scholars and even ordinary people think of "Southern California," the importance and image of Los Angeles invariably comes to mind. I often wonder whether *Under the Perfect Sun* will generate new scholarship on San Diego history, as Davis's famous book *City of Quartz* (1990) did for Los Angeles. Thanks in part to *City of Quartz*, the study of Los Angeles has become somewhat of a cottage industry within academe. With this book and future books on San Diego history, one hopes that San Diego's historical significance will be greater recognized and that this will alter our understanding of both Southern California and California history.

It is true that *Under the Perfect Sun* does not make comprehensive use of archival research. If they had drawn extensively from archives, they never would have finished this book. I spent close to ten years researching my book on San Diego's world's fairs, and I only peeled off a thin layer of San Diego history. The lack of a rich historical literature makes works of broad synthesis, such as this, extremely difficult. That said, the book does use enough primary sources to forge its arguments, and the book does uncover and synthesize the "public transcript" of magazines and newspaper sources, municipal government publications, and secondary sources.

The one section that draws on original primary-source research, Kelly Mayhew's oral historical investigation, will remain of interest to both general readers and scholars for a long time. The sections by Davis and Miller are compelling interpretations of the city, but they compress far too much history (over one hundred years) into their respective essays. When the next young writer or scholar does necessary work in the archives, the story and interpretation laid out by their essays will be revised and find more nuance. Still, their essays are as fruitful as Carey McWilliams's bold, ambitious, and generous work from the 1940s.

The book is bold and ambitious, constituting an entire research agenda for future San Diego scholars. The essays offer a modern, sophisticated conceptual framework for local history. It replaces the empty rhetoric of years worth of Chamber of Commerce and local booster histories with serious and unsentimental portrayals of how private interests, greed, and power have shaped the city over time. When The New Press released *Under the Perfect Sun*, it pleased me to see largely positive reviews. It received very few scholarly reviews, which is appropriate for a commercial trade title and for cultural criticism. When scholars did review the book, I could not feel anything but disappointment at the reception. Los Angeles scholars largely ignored the book, perhaps since a high-profile title on San Diego competed with the master narrative of Southern California history under their complete dominion.

The review of the book in the *San Diego Union* in September 2003 by Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman from the history department at San Diego State University focused on whether the book reached the level of muckraking insight achieved by Lincoln Steffens or Upton Sinclair, with much of her critique focused on recasting the

authors' criticisms as "cynicism." She believed the authors had not been fair and had not cataloged the city's triumphs over time. The reviewer thought Davis's focus on white-collar corruption excessive, yet the *Los Angeles Times* recently ran a story in April 2007 entitled "San Diego Elite Shun Public Spotlight" to indicate the "closed door" nature of politics and influence-peddling in the city, thus confirming Davis's compelling argument about the problems of "private government" in the city over the twentieth century. I believe Davis nailed San Diego's historic lack of coalition interests on the head, and Paul Vanderwood's new work on the "Border Barons" will also confirm Davis's view when published.

Cobbs Hoffman also takes Miller to task for his "Marxist interpretation" of local politics and his focus on social movements, like the Magonistas and the Industrial Worker's of the World Free Speech Fight during the 1910s. Yet those familiar with San Diego history know that a very concerned San Diego Chamber of Commerce between 1912 and 1916 asked Governor Hiram Johnson repeatedly to mobilize the state militia to deal with the I.W.W. and border insurrectionists. The correspondence is in the Hiram Johnson Papers at the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Cobbs Hoffman had almost no criticisms of Mayhew's interviews. Overall, the review focused on what the book lacked rather than evaluating its stated intent. To this writer, Cobbs Hoffman, like some conservative reviewers of Mike Davis's other books, engaged in *ad hominem* attack rather than seriously addressing the intent and achievement of the book in question. The review certainly did not live up to the infamous and generous suspension of belief seen in the criticism of Susan Sontag or Joan Didion.

In the end, *Under the Perfect Sun* should be evaluated within both the corpus of work on San Diego history and also according to its stated goal: it is a work of both history and cultural criticism that hopes to initiate discussion about the city's future by looking at its past. The book inherently calls for a sense of civic and municipal accountability rather than allowing private government in search of generating wealth for the bipartisan political elite of the city to undermine a larger sense of the "commons." I think the authors offer important historical context for understanding the city's political instability and financial insolvency since 2000. The authors also offer some roadmaps to a more progressive and accountable politics as the city moves into the twenty-first century.

"Reflections on Davis, Mayhew and Miller's *Under the Perfect Sun*"

Abe Shragge, University of California, San Diego

Under the Perfect Sun takes a few good steps in the direction its authors promise in their introduction to the book: it does highlight some of the glaring "discrepancies between tourist San Diego and working San Diego." Moreover, it surely provides elements of "a serious history of the city" along with at least a glimpse of the "social extremes" that have characterized life in San Diego since the time of earliest non-native settlement in the region (3). Parts of the book make compelling reading, as Mike Davis and Jim Miller in particular express themselves in clear, often passionate prose while harnessing excellent original research performed by others. Kelly Mayhew's oral histories, which comprise the

third section of the book, both humanize and personalize the critical episodes that appear in the first two sections by transcribing the candid reminiscences of some of the key challengers of the dominant culture who appear in the first two sections.

As a work of history, however, *Under the Perfect Sun* fails to satisfy. It reads more like a collection of anecdotes than a thoughtful analytical work based on a clear and continuous chronology. The several tales share a common theme based upon a radical critique of the immoral/amoral behavior of San Diego's elites and the oppression they have brought to bear on the city's working class, immigrants, and people of color, but they do not in the aggregate present a solid or even coherent "alternative people's history" that the three authors promise in their introduction. I believe that their narratives of the outrages experienced by those who campaigned for civil rights, human rights, racial equality and social equity in San Diego add a great deal to our understanding of the region's troubled history. Even so, I still want to know much more about the lives of the underrepresented and oppressed groups who are the subjects of their stories. Davis's and Miller's exposés of the ruling class give readers precious little sense of what it was like to live in neighborhoods restricted to people of color. They tell us little of the dreams and aspirations of those who came to San Diego in search of a better life. We learn next to nothing about how those hopes were disappointed or fulfilled.

In "The Next Little Dollar: The Private Governments of San Diego," Mike Davis briefly sketches the tribulations of San Diego's severe pre-1900 growing pains as experienced by the struggling, failure-prone Anglo business community; retells the story of the city's emergence as the nation's preeminent martial metropolis between 1900 and the end of World War II; and then offers an extended rendering of the grotesque shenanigans carried out by a coterie of dishonest, avaricious businessmen who ruthlessly bought and sold the city's natural, human and political resources as if the city were their own ripe plum to pick. Jim Miller's contribution, "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America's Finest City," tells six stories of reactionary hypocrisy, misguided patriotism, perfidy and oppression that occurred in or around the city over the span of the twentieth century. In so doing, Miller hopes to debunk once and for all the myth of the "Heaven on Earth" that San Diego's elites tried to sell to the world. Thus Davis and Miller attempt to prove that San Diego is "open to greed and closed to social justice." They conclude that San Diego is the "most corrupt city on the West Coast (3)."

Taken all of a piece, Davis's and Miller's narratives paint a grim, even horrifying, picture of the social, political and economic structures upon which San Diego's boosters and businessmen built their fiefdoms. They succeed admirably in their portrayal of the life of the city that the tourists might indeed "never see," as long, that is, as the tourists avoid reading the newspapers. The newspapers themselves (in contradistinction to the copiously cited radical underground press), as the two authors point out repeatedly, are notoriously partisan and biased—all on the wrong side of the political spectrum—and have been that way for generations. But Davis's principal contribution in the book, the rise and fall of C. Arnholt Smith, was big national news in its day, as was Pete Wilson's racist neo-populist political trajectory, as was the sudden collapse of the Nancy Hoover-Tom Shepard-J. David Dominelli-Roger Hedgecock axis. To the uninitiated,

these revealing, true-to-life and well-told tales of the city might seem deliciously steamy. But to anyone who has read the local newspapers and local as well as national magazines, or who has even a mild, locally-based sense of historical or political curiosity, consciousness or conscience, they are old news, explored in these pages in relentless detail. Mike Davis establishes thoroughly the point that succeeding generations of corrupt businesspeople, all deeply invested in socially and environmentally rapacious real estate development, wielded sufficient power to direct the life of the city with more authority than the properly constituted government—an apt but unoriginal assertion.

In terms of presenting a real and crucially important “secret history” of the people whose equally real blood, sweat, and tears made the city a vital place to live and work, Jim Miller’s episodic history of San Diego’s hard-pressed civil rights and labor movements does a greater service to its readers. Miller’s accounts of the violence and repression that working people have suffered as they tried to organize and sustain unions since the late 19th century are harrowing indeed. The quixotic tale of the Magonista Revolt of 1911, during which a small group of Mexican and American radicals victoriously fought pitched battles with Mexican federal troops, and then briefly occupied Mexicali and Tijuana, contrasts effectively with the highly disturbing (and much more historically significant) story of the Free Speech Fight of 1912-1914. The more contemporary vignettes that follow these similarly illuminate other elements of the city’s dark though not particularly hidden past. But any reader with even a shred of affection for the region must ask, were there *any* successful agents of change for the better in San Diego? For all of the gross oppression, repression, high handedness, unfairness and inequality that really have characterized life in San Diego, can one find *any* positive factors at all in order to better balance the historical equation? Miller’s work implies some excellent questions for historians to ask now and in the future, and it is this kind of detailed social history of San Diego that we still need.

Under the Perfect Sun provides a fine jumping-off point for students who take my History of San Diego course at UCSD, and it is in that regard that I find the book’s greatest value. Because the authors expose glaring injustices in so many different aspects of life in the San Diego region that have occurred over such a long period of time, my students have no problem devising critical research questions of their own, derived from issues and sources they have found in the pages of the book. Someday we may get our comprehensive social history of San Diego after all. But who else will read and enjoy *Under the Perfect Sun*? Radicals on the Left, activists committed to social, political, economic and environmental justice, and perhaps even less-than-radical but liberal-minded people who happen to be curious about San Diego will find satisfying “aha!” moments here. But the authors did not do enough original research or analysis if their goal was to find something new under the perfect sun.

The book will surely prick the consciences of members of those groups who are not already committed to activism. Readers, however, who for any reason are not so sympathetic to radical Left criticism will probably find it difficult to get past the introduction. If they do in fact manage to read further, they will likely feel bemused if not belabored by the stridency and relentlessness of Davis’s and Miller’s approach. The authors tell us over and over again, it seems, that San Diego is nothing more than a moral cesspool; that the city’s mainstream institutions and

traditions are wholly corrupt; and that the only voices worthy of attention come from the ranks of the oppressed. There is some truth in these assertions, but they cannot stand as whole story.

Response to Roundtable Essays on *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*

Jim Miller, San Diego City College

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation that the *Journal of San Diego History* has recognized the significance of *Under the Perfect Sun* by doing this roundtable. We are pleased to read Matt Bokovoy's analysis that we have penned a "new historical narrative for San Diego" that gives a "roadmap" for future scholars and activists. Rudy P. Guevarra's assertion that we write in "the tradition of Howard Zinn" by offering a "people's history of San Diego" is also insightful as are his suggestions that even more work on communities of color in San Diego is needed. Both of these critics view the work in the larger context of San Diego history and though not uncritical, acknowledge the groundbreaking, interdisciplinary nature of our project. Even as I will respond in kind to the two less generous critics of our book, we thank Abe Shragge and Kyle Ciani for the time and work they put into responding to our project.

We do differ with the roundtable's editor in believing that the Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman review from the San Diego *Union-Tribune* is a suitable starting point from which to explore our book. As Bokovoy aptly puts it, Cobbs Hoffman's review is little more than an "*ad hominem* attack" in line with others coming from the minor cottage industry of Mike Davis bashers. There is little of substance to note in her snide dismissal of Davis's seminal work and in her condescending backhanded compliment of Kelly Mayhew's contribution. As for her attack on my section of *Under the Perfect Sun*, I will let the following letter, also published in the *Union-Tribune*, stand as a response:

Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman disingenuously plays the detective in her review of *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, shockingly revealing that the authors of a book, whose preface proclaims that, "This is a partisan book, dedicated to the San Diego Left," are ideologically motivated. While noting that, "the authors admit their work is partisan, calling it a 'tool for activists,'" Cobbs Hoffman still can't resist falling prey to a knee-jerk anti-leftism. Fashioning herself as the champion of "most San Diegans," she puts herself front and center in defending "America's Finest City" against not just the red menace, but any assertion that San Diego is ever anything but a "livable city." What is most troubling about her review is its intentional and mean-spirited misrepresentation of the work's content. She claims to "reveal" my naive sympathy for Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón's "apocalyptic vision" by rearranging quotations from different sentences when, in fact, I argue that after analyzing the history written on the revolt "what emerges is the farcical story of an anarchist revolution expropriated by boosters to

sell the Panama-California Exposition that they hoped would help woo the military and promote real estate in San Diego." I also call the Magonista revolt, "one of the most bizarre series of events in the history of the city." Sadly, recognizing the complexity of the history as I actually present it seems beyond Cobbs Hoffman's reach.

Cobbs Hoffman also claims that my history of the sixties skips over the history of "more middle and working class" San Diego State in favor of "elite" UCSD, when in fact I do address SDSU and City College activists as well as the Congress of Racial Equality, the GI antiwar movement, the struggle for Chicano Park, and the local countercultural press. Hence her claim is wrong on the facts and she compounds her offense by ignoring the full scope of my history of San Diego in the sixties.

This is followed by the assertion that my work is "essentially Marxist" and is guilty of "seeing repression" everywhere, even in the beer ban at the beach. What this bit of clumsy red-baiting fails to note is that the bulk of the paragraph she quotes from cites the Free-Speech fight, thirties labor struggles, the civil rights movement, and the attacks on the countercultural press before I ironically note the "petty" battles over the use of public space in the present. This too is an intellectually dishonest bit of analysis.

Finally, the good professor cedes that my history "proves that the strong do indeed rule, and often badly," but then red-baits me a second time, insinuating that my solution to social injustice must be a "communist" San Diego. If Cobbs Hoffman had actually read my section on communists in San Diego in the thirties, she would have noted that while I applaud the bravery of leftists who fought for the rights of farm workers, I note the "brutality" of Stalinism and the "rigidity" of American Communists and quote Kevin Starr who calls Stalinism an ideological "dead end." Nonetheless, Cobbs Hoffman prefers to ignore this and go for the cheap shot by red-baiting. While my history does comment on the good things done by radical activists, it is not at all uncritical, nor does it call for an America's Stalinist City. A strong labor movement, affordable housing, a clean environment, civil rights, and racial tolerance do not amount to a system where "man exploits man," despite Cobbs Hoffman's feeble either/or argument. By her reasoning, *any* critique of the status quo amounts to an endorsement of totalitarianism, as the notion of a democratic left seems to have eluded her altogether.

It should be noted that Cobbs Hoffman's review of *Under the Perfect Sun* came during a period of time, just after the 9/11 attacks, when she was involved in publicly chastising intellectuals for their lack of patriotism. Indeed, in "Teach What's Good About the Country, Too," an opinion piece published in the *Houston Chronicle* in 2002, Cobbs Hoffman goes so far as to play the role of apologist for groups such as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni when she implies that some scholars may deserve to be on "Cheney's blacklist" (an attempt to list and demonize "insufficiently pro-American" professors). Specifically, Cobbs Hoffman

observes that, "If some American intellectuals are not as prepared to defend the nation as they are to criticize it, they may deserve the accusations of 'unpatriotic' that we have parried for 30 years." Thus with some distance from the post 9/11 zeitgeist of "watch what you say," we can place the kind of criticism in which Cobbs Hoffman was engaged in its proper context—that moment in time, during the lead-up to the war in Iraq, when many self-proclaimed patriots were telling us that we needed to be less critical of our country just at the moment when brave, patriotic dissent from the status quo was precisely what was needed. Hence, Cobbs Hoffman's attempt to belittle a prominent Leftist scholar, like Mike Davis, and condescendingly dismiss two emerging progressive scholars should be seen as part of her larger ideological project.

In sum, bias and ideology, like bad breath, are always things we say the other guy has. Our analysis of San Diego's history is no more ideological than the essays of our critics or the "Gosh, Aren't We Nice" versions of history most often marketed as San Diego history. As Howard Zinn points out in *A Peoples' History of the United States*, the writing of history is an inherently ideological exercise. We must, he argues, choose to emphasize some things more than others and "any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic political or racial or national or sexual." Cobbs Hoffman, on the other hand, still seems married to some mythical notion of objectivity that would mask her essentially conservative embrace of the hegemonic view of "America's Finest City" as neutral while chastising our "radical" approach as ideological.

As for the other criticisms of the book, the most repeated is that *Under the Perfect Sun* does not include enough archival research and is hence "unoriginal." This near fetishization of archival research misses the importance of history as argument. It substitutes a kind of narrow and pedantic disciplinary gatekeeping for insightful analysis. Abe Shragge is particularly ungenerous on this point, claiming that Davis's section offers nothing new to "anyone who has read the local newspapers." Like Cobbs Hoffman's use of marks around "genius award" in her review, this kind of glibly dismissive tone toward one of the most important intellectuals of our time is simply petty sniping. Bokovoy's point that we would have never finished the book had we drawn more extensively from the archives and that what we were aiming for was a synthesis of the public transcript that would suggest a new historical narrative about San Diego is far more accurate.

While we make no claim to have scoured every archive in San Diego, we do believe the book was adequately researched and documented. And *Under the Perfect Sun* does make use of some archival research as well as other primary sources, such as interviews. Our primary purpose (openly stated in the introduction) was to debunk booster stereotypes, provoke more research on the neglected histories of labor and communities of color, annoy the town's vapid cheerleaders, and, most importantly, "provide a tool for activists." Nowhere in the book do we claim that *Under the Perfect Sun* is a comprehensive history of every aspect of the city nor do we argue that we did the most painstaking tour of the archives in the history of history. Indeed my title notes that my history of rebellion is "episodic." What we *were* interested in doing was entering and shaping the argument about the meaning of San Diego's history and how it speaks to the city's present and future. In that regard, the book is unprecedented and completely original.

None of the writers in this roundtable can name a *single* other published work

that offers a progressive analysis of San Diego like ours. Matt Bokovoy gives us a learned and useful catalogue of articles, books, theses and dissertations yet to be published as books that deal with San Diego history, but none of the texts listed offer a similar approach or are as comprehensive as our book despite its admittedly limited focus. Indeed there is not a single book from a university or mainstream press that even attempts to look at San Diego history through the lens of labor. Revealingly, neither Shragge nor Ciani acknowledge this point nor do they address my discussion of the limitations of existing San Diego history. Why? Perhaps they could not mount a credible argument that any broad history addressing the city from a bottom up perspective exists and hence, unable to grant us that accomplishment, they turned to finding fault elsewhere. If there was a glut of radical San Diego history, perhaps we could take the arguments about our lack of originality seriously, but, seemingly unable to identify our stated purpose, Shragge and Ciani (whose essay is an extended red herring largely dedicated to discussing her own interests) take us to task for not doing things we don't say we are trying to do. Hence their criticisms are mostly irrelevant and/or off the point. Rather than engage the argument of the book that says its aim is "redressing [the] deficiency of published social criticism," Shragge and Ciani change the subject.

Another aspect of the criticism worthy of being addressed is Shragge's comments on Mike Davis's and my "stridency" and the "dark lens" through which we view San Diego. Apparently "any reader with even a shred of affection for the region" would be sorely pressed to find "any positive factors at all" in our analysis. What this misses, of course, is the fact that the struggles I discuss were heroic struggles. That ordinary people stood up to vigilantes and corrupt police during the free speech fight is a good thing, despite the horrible treatment they got. It's positive that protests led to Chicano Park. It's positive that CORE fought for civil rights. All the activism my section and Kelly Mayhew's document is positive. The fact that Mike Davis speaks truth to power is positive. In fact, I end my section of the book by observing that, "hope is a moral obligation." Shragge's inability to see this is more revealing of his own perspective than of ours. It suggests a defensive position that takes the booster narrative of the city as "positive" and views any criticisms of that view as "negative." Thus, whether consciously or not, Shragge's critique of our "dark lens" accepts and/or apologizes for the local hegemony, which either marginalizes or erases many important aspects of San Diego's history and present.

As noted above, Kyle Ciani's essay is largely devoted to faulting us for not writing the book she would have written. That said, the central contention of her essay is worth discussing. Her assertion that philanthropy by the likes of Helen Copley and Joan Kroc offsets the harm done by others (she names John Spreckels and John Moores in particular) is naïve and misses the primarily ideological function that charity often serves. Most corporations factor in giving as part of their larger efforts at public relations and/or "image management." Hence, it is good for a corporation like Wal-Mart to build little league fields and hire "greeters" in small towns where their supercenters kill small businesses, drive down wages, hurt the environment, and send employees to the state for health care. While they spend a relatively small amount of money on charitable PR, corporations save a lot more by externalizing costs. In the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie wrote "The Gospel of Wealth" about the importance of "giving" while he happily left the dirty business of union busting to his underlings. For every Carnegie library

there were thousands of poor workers whose long hours and grueling working conditions made the notion of them ever going to the library a joke. Indeed, as the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported, corporate giving today is getting even more linked to “outcomes” than ever before with companies looking for evermore bang for their buck. I recommend that Ciani view the award-winning documentary *The Corporation* for more information on how corporate propaganda works in the real world before she lectures us on “balance.”

Specifically, does the Copley-built YMCA compensate for the millions of dollars the Copleys spent to harass employees and bust unions at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*? Ciani completely ignores our discussion of the *UT*’s role in a wide range of reactionary political activity, so I suspect she does not have a serious answer to this question. Do the Copleys’ donations to “civic causes” negate the near daily demonization of teachers and other public sector employees that comprise the editorial pages of the *UT*? Perhaps Ciani might ask an underpaid elementary school teacher who pays for supplies out of her own pocket. Does Kroc’s generosity at USD and KPBS compensate for the failure of McDonald’s to provide living wage jobs? Does it compensate for the epidemic of obesity that the fast food industry actively fosters and profits from? Does it make it OK that the production of beef continues to contribute to the devastation of the environment both here and in the Amazon? I recommend Ciani read Eric Schlosser’s fine book, *Fast Food Nation*, for an education on this issue. As a teacher in an under-funded community college, guilt-ridden product of Catholic schools, public sector unionist, and director and chief fundraiser for a non-profit entity at San Diego City College, I would urge Ciani to ask harder questions. Perhaps start by comparing the lack of generosity of San Diego’s monied elite compared to those in other major California cities. Talk to people actually involved in fundraising in a city where the rich are largely right wing and libertarian and think that if something doesn’t make money on its own, then it’s not worth funding. Perhaps you might even ask the folks at the San Diego Historical Society how easy it is for them to find big donors. Finally, it *is* nitpicking when you go after typos.

The last aspect of the roundtable and Cobbs Hoffman’s review that is worth noting is the way almost all of them give short shrift to the importance of Kelly Mayhew’s contribution. Cobbs Hoffman and Ciani are concerned with women’s history when criticizing my work, but have very little to say about the *original* research that Mayhew does in this section. Cobbs Hoffman only cites Mayhew when using her interviews to attack me and Ciani with all her concern for women’s history relegates her discussion of Mayhew to a measly paragraph. Why the lack of respect for the only female author? Why the silence on the importance of oral history when so much concern is expressed about our lack of “original” research? Mayhew’s work is a vital record of living history that should be of great use for future generations of historians. Indeed, she has been contacted by a good number of scholars, young and old, who have sought her advice and guidance on similar projects. The miserly response to her work does it a great disservice.

In conclusion, we feel that *Under the Perfect Sun* serves as starting point for more progressive work on San Diego. We have received many letters and emails from graduate students and scholars interested in following up on particular aspects of our work. This was precisely what we hoped would happen. We have met a lot of people involved in local non-profits, unions, environmental, and legal rights

organizations who have told us that our book was an invaluable resource. We have given many talks to local groups and are proud that all of the proceeds from the book go to CITTAC, an organization that helps *maquiladora* workers struggling for economic and environmental justice in Tijuana. In addition to the activists and scholars who have contacted us, we were amused to see our book referenced in a recent mayoral election forum and have heard from a good number of local elected officials and media figures as well. In sum, contrary to the claims of some of our critics, *Under the Perfect Sun* has proven to be a very usable history for many San Diegans engaged in the vital task of working for a better future. It is our hope that Bokovoy and Guevarra are right and more scholars, journalists, activists, and ordinary San Diegans will continue to uncover more untold stories. If that happens, it was work worth doing.

What would help broaden and deepen historical, cultural, and contemporary discussions about San Diego? While there are many things to consider, several seem most important:

1. We need one of the local universities and/or a nonprofit to fund the publication and distribution of books on San Diego. Without that we will forever be wedded to convincing editors outside the city to care (not an easy task), and/or be stuck looking to private sources for funding that may be inclined to continue producing nothing more than brag books to sell to tourists;
2. The local media are, at best, only occasionally interested in serious writing about the city, whether it be critical, creative, cultural, etc. We need a new independent voice in the local media that is not the *UT* or the two weeklies that survive by selling ads. Academic journals are great, but the audience is limited and we need public intellectuals beyond the usual suspects to broaden the discourse about the city. Perhaps a *New Yorker* for San Diego;
3. We need to incorporate more local history into the curriculum of schools and colleges. Without that, there will never be an audience for local history;
4. We need a far-reaching interdisciplinary effort that encourages scholarship on things local rather than dismisses and marginalizes it;
5. We need to stop thinking like we live in a small town. Think big and stop being defensive. Yes, San Diego is a beautiful place where we all like the beach and the park. Let's get over that and think about what it means to live on one of the most crossed international borders. What is the relationship between the sunny tourist image of our city and the hard realities of being at the center of the military industrial complex? What is the relationship between the marketing of nature and environmental sustainability? What does a service sector economy promise for the future? Who owns the city? What is the culture of the city beyond our self-promotion? What moments of our past are worth revering? What legacies should we seek to move beyond?