

# proofs



7/13/09 issue 8

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## In this issue:

*Law & Disorder!*

*Profiles in Courage!*

*Butterflies!*

*& much, much more!*

The Studio for Southern California History is a non-profit organization whose mission is to critically chronicle & disseminate the region's social history.



Writer & poet Luis Rodriguez adds his best wishes to the Studio's timeline as part of the Studio's 3rd birthday celebration. For more see page 10.

# NEWS NOTES

The Studio for Southern California History is proud to participate in the July 14 conference 2001-2101: THE EDUCATION CENTURY? REBUILDING OUR ECONOMY THROUGH EDUCATION REFORM. This One Day Conference is presented by TOWN HALL Los Angeles and CORWIN PRESS. One of the Top 10 Forums in the nation, TOWN HALL Los Angeles has been a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization since 1937. This conference will be held in downtown Los Angeles at the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy. For more information visit: [www.townhall-la.org](http://www.townhall-la.org) or call 213.628.8141.

Welcome New Board Member! The Studio is pleased to announce the addition of Catherine Gudis to its Board of Directors. Dr. Gudis is in charge of the Public History Department at the University of California Riverside and is the author of numerous books, publications and public history projects. Dr. Gudis began her career at the Museum of Contemporary Art, where she continued to work even after she began graduate school at UCLA and, then, Yale University. At MOCA, she was an innovator in creating books that, according to Dr. Gudis, provide "a cultural historian's approach to contemporary art." Her work with the Los Angeles Conservancy as the organization's former Director of Education is particularly stellar-- she initiated and/or worked on projects like Spring on Spring, Last Remaining Seats and Curating the City. Gudis is an LA intellectual the Studio is proud to learn from. Welcome, Cathy!

New Studio T-Shirts! The Studio has added 4 new designs for its T-shirts, which still remain at the low price of \$12/each. Customers have a choice between T-shirts that highlight the histories Chavez Ravine, Ramona Lubo, Bridget Biddie Mason & Ruben Salazar. All proceeds support the Studio. Come to the Studio or buy one online!

Pepperdine University & the University of California at Los Angeles visit the Studio. Both universities arranged private walking tours and receptions at the Studio to introduce students and staff to Los Angeles history. If you are interested in arranging a tour call us at 213-229-8890 or e-mail us at [thesocalstudio@gmail.com](mailto:thesocalstudio@gmail.com).

CONGRATULATIONS to Studio Board Member Hillary Jenks whose dissertation on Little Tokyo won the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association dissertation award. "Home is Little Tokyo": Race, Community, and Memory in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles," examines the spatial and memorial practices by which both the state and urban communities produce ethnoracially-inscribed neighborhoods (barrios, ghettos, and enclaves) in the twentieth century.

The Watts Towers Summer Expo & Resource Fair will be on July 18 from 11-4 and is organized by the Community Redevelopment Agency.

## Profile in Courage:

### Isa-Kae Meksin

Profiles in Courage is a regular column in **proofs** where we choose to highlight one of our history interviewees. If you know of someone who should be interviewed as part of our oral history program, please refer them to us by calling 213-229-8890.

To those who know her, Isa-Kae Meksin is a vibrant whirlwind who comes into your life, stirs it up for the good, and when you're not looking, leaves you to learn in her wake. We at the Studio call her "**Empress of Echo Park.**" She is involved in local politics and history preservation. Her family originally came to New York City from the Ukraine.



Her father Arnold Meksin was a concert pianist and her mother Clara, a homemaker, showed her how to think on her feet and to question authority by example. The family is featured in the 1930s photograph with her brother Paul. She is a former secretary to visionary C.L.R. James and the political group known as Correspondence, which included James, Grace Lee Boggs and Raya Dunayevskaya. They believed in observing how workers, African Americans, women and American youth were agents of change. It was this work that led her to Los Angeles, ultimately to connect with and record the activities of factory workers. She then reported her observations to the larger group.

Later Isa-Kae attended California State University Los Angeles for her teaching credential; she'd received her BA earlier from Hunter College. Ms. Meksin is also a retired teacher from the Norwalk-La Mirada School District where she worked with students with disabilities, specifically those who were vision impaired. She maintains lifelong relationships with some of her past students. A great patroness of the arts, Ms. Meksin has hosted numerous Los Angeles artists and artist collaboratives at her home including El Teatro Campesino in the early 1970s.

While there are hundreds of pages one could devote to Isa-Kae, she prefers to talk about others who are doing good work: currently she is dedicated to the Watts Gang Task Force, which she attends regularly on Monday mornings. She was inspired to work with this dynamic group after learning of a child's death in Echo Park. Excerpts of Isa-Kae's interview will be available on the LA History Archive in early Fall 2009.

## *A Review: Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Guide by Christian Lainez*

To see the Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Guide, please visit: [www.evergreen-losangeles.com](http://www.evergreen-losangeles.com) and if you visit Evergreen Cemetery please respect the site and those who dwell inside whether they are the living or not. It is located at 204 North Evergreen Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90033.

Evergreen Cemetery lies in the heart of East Los Angeles on Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, formerly known as Brooklyn Avenue, and Evergreen Avenue. It is a historically valuable site to our city because many imperative figures that contributed great things to Los Angeles have been laid to rest there. The important 442nd Nisei Memorial lies there with many prominent war heroes who gave their lives to fight for our country. A shrine built by the Chinese community of Los Angeles also has been built and preserved honoring their forefathers and families that immigrated to the United States to give their children a better life, like any immigrant coming from another part of the world does.

The Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Guide is a companion that helps detail some of the history that rests inside. A specifically coordinated GPS tour is part of the guide, as a means to lead us through the selected dozens of historic figures laid to rest in eternal peace and monuments that stand tall. A brief history on each person is included to inform us of what accomplishments and remarkable contributions they've left our society. A Google map is accessible on the site which has pictures of the graves or sites these people are resting beneath. A timeline has been built chronicling the history of the cemetery from its establishment to



present day with over 100 entries. The site features an introductory essay by historian Dr. George J. Sanchez that delves more into the history on this golden point of interest in our historic city.

Merely setting one foot inside the cemetery can bring a sense of the history that's gone through and is currently being made as every minute passes at Evergreen Cemetery. Taking a stroll near every road you can begin to perceive a multitude of essence roaming about the greens there and with the Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Guide built by the Studio, your experience will be heightened with the stories behind Evergreen.

Evergreen Cemetery through the Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Guide, and the Walking Tour of Evergreen Cemetery hosted by the Studio for Southern California History (October 10) make for a great time in one of the oldest and most significant cemeteries in Los Angeles because of the rich legacy behind it.

## *Upcoming Exhibit: Law and Disorder*

Law & Disorder will open October 3, 2009 at the Studio for Southern California History and will run for twelve months. This exhibit investigates moments in Southern California history that led to legislative reform, as well as episodes of vigilantism and mob behavior in the form of riots and/or rebellions. This exhibit explores both the importance of clarity in defining terms over time and why different historical agents may interpret the same event in diametrically opposed ways. This exhibit looks at the role of civil disobedience and how law enforcement reacted to such instances of protest, from the arrest of Upton Sinclair in 1923 for reading *The Bill of Rights* at an International Workers of the World labor protest, to the 2007 May Day march against in which officers are charged with using excessive force on journalists and participants in the protest. *Law & Disorder* delineates the differences between de facto and de jure forms of policy and behavior. Finally, this exhibit explores more hidden forms of crime within our society including human trafficking, gang formations, disability rights, and crimes against children. In addition to a 75' long Timeline that integrates visitor participation, *Law & Disorder* will include multimedia displays that feature video history segments where various interviewees discuss the same subject including:

racially restrictive covenants;	sexual harassment;
Japanese American internment;	discrimination and/or prejudice;
the Zoot Suit Riots;	the beating of Rodney King;
the use of atomic weaponry on civilians;	the death of La Tasha Harlins and subsequent court case;
the Bracero Program;	the 1992 Riots
the 1965 Watts Riots and	and Christopher Commission;
the McCone Commission;	the O.J. Simpson criminal trial;
1970 Chicano Moratorium and	the death of Victoria Arellano at an
death of journalist Ruben Salazar;	INS Detention Facility in San Pedro.
the death of Eulia Love;	

## *A new face at the Studio!*

### *Welcome Christian Lainez*

Since this Spring, the Studio has been graced with the help of a new staff member: Christian Lainez. A native Los Angeleno, Christian brings a fresh perspective to the Studio with an interest in horror and horror soundtracks and his family history—his parents came to the United States from El Salvador. Christian has already contributed to the Studio's projects on Evergreen Cemetery, Watts and of course, our ongoing nursing histories. We are excited to have him join the Studio family! Welcome Christian!







A reproduction of the 32' X 6.5' timeline that will be installed at Azusa Pacific University.

*A Review: "A Legacy of Care: A Nursing Timeline for Southern California" by Christian Lainez*

Nurses are as important as the doctors and surgeons who save lives in hospitals and offices around the world. They are the ones who take on as much work as the doctors and surgeons helping those in pain and need of medical attention. Whether it's looking after a patient's comfort or taking a patient out for fresh air in the hospital courtyard, their role in medicine defines the profession and makes it fundamental to the practice of health care. Some of the most hardworking Southern Californians and the practices they've created, perfected, and have passed on are chronicled in "Legacy of Care: A Nursing Timeline for Southern California" available for online exploration at the LA History Archive under 'Resources.' The Timeline will be physically installed at Azusa Pacific University in a few months.

The Western Conservancy of Nursing History includes individuals and institutions dedicated to preserving the history of nursing in the Western states. While this timeline is in no way comprehensive, it is an invitation for others to build on. With a span beginning from the late 19th century to our early 21st century, this nursing timeline spans over 2 centuries. Regarding the profession of nursing, Southern California individuals known for innovating and excelling in the field are also highlighted. A history of Asuza Pacific University, which has evolved its nursing program into many different forms as the school itself evolved, has also been underscored in the timeline. The innovation within medicine has also been emphasized as well as a look into the social aspects of nursing. Many photographs have also been added to the timeline to demonstrate the changes in fashion and to reveal the closeness of these students to one another.

As someone who has interviewed alumni from the California Hospital School of Nursing (CHSN) and attended their Annual Homecoming Event this past April, it is very evident that the bond that forms between the students and students and teachers is often everlasting. Nursing is held in high regards by communities as a respectable and highly coveted career to seek. Though the schooling never ends because the subject of medicine is constantly evolving, in the views given to me by alumni at CHSN the profession is worth seeking, and worth keeping because the memories they've kept and friends they've gained are invaluable. "Legacy of Care: A Nursing Timeline for Southern California" chronicles all these facts exquisitely and gracefully under the graphic design of Sharon Sekhon with contributions from many including Phyllis Esslinger, Diane Hara, Kristine Gunnell and other nurses, doctors, staff members at APU, and most notably the Western Conservancy of Nursing History.

## Getting to Know Alice

by Sharon Sekhon

In preparation for the timeline for the Western Conservancy of Nursing History, different individuals contributed to building this early nursing history. But as luck would have it, one of the most enlightening histories I learned came about in ways that I find typical of Los Angeles history. One day I casually mentioned the project to another patron at a local nail salon who said she had a friend I had to speak with: Marilyn Hileman. I followed up, discovered Marilyn and through Marilyn, her maternal grandmother Alice Kemmer Moore--someone I learned to love. But it is quite easy to fall in love with Alice who told a 1954 reporter, "It is an honor to die for one's country, but it is much more fun to live!" I was assisted by Marilyn and her



Alice circa the 1900s. Photo care of Hal Hileman.

brother Hal Hileman who now resides in upstate New York. I felt an instant connection to Alice as I learned about her from her grandchildren, now both in active retirement. Hal and Marilyn are still connected to their grandmother; she made an intense impression upon their lives and her spirit resonates in how they now live. Honoring her memory is of the utmost importance so that her spirit is continued. Alice recognized the amazing times in which she lived and moved across the globe, and she relished her moments here. In preserving and sharing her history, we increase the chance of recognizing the amazing times in which we currently live and to relish our moments here.

Alice was born in Dutch Hill, Ohio and decided early that she wanted to learn as much about the world as possible. She trained to become a nurse in St. Louis, Missouri and served in the United States military before settling in Los Angeles to raise a family. When she and other nurses are honored by President Teddy Roosevelt, she remembered the introduction and his response with pride: "'Alice Kemmer, Services, Spanish American War in Cuba, Chinese Boxer War and the Philipino Insurrection.' I can still see that famous smile as President Roosevelt said 'heroine of three wars, I am proud to meet you,' and he gave me a big handshake." She spent time in Japan and returned to the Philippines to assist in a small pox epidemic after her required service ended. Alice is loved for her friendliness, professionalism, and for singing in the languages of the countries where she nursed so that her patients would receive extra comfort. She returned to nursing at the Veterans Home in Santa Monica between 1930-1937 and retired there in her old age and where she was buried at her death in 1965.

*Local  
Butterflies  
Are  
Nearly  
Free*

by Rosa Mazon



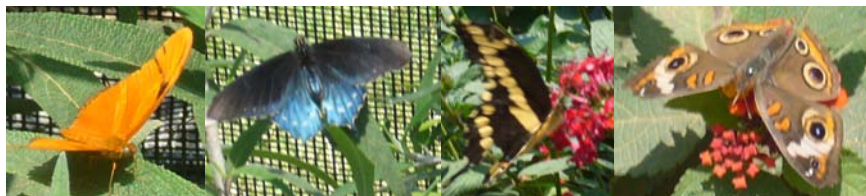
Los Angeles has a fascinating history involving people, but just as interesting to the city's identity are the natural wonders of the LA Basin. Living in a highly urbanized city, where there is more concrete than trees, the supporting cast of plants and animals often get overlooked. But there is a place, just outside of downtown, where Southern Californians can experience this at their convenience, any day throughout the summer.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County offers a unique opportunity to view some of California's most amazing creatures in the "Pavilion of Wings," a living, outdoor exhibit highlighting over forty free-flying butterflies and moths. Not just your typical petting zoo or touch aquarium, this experience allows the visitor to step into the exhibit for a rare, up close interaction with insects. Usually people catch a glimpse of a butterfly sailing by, or for a closer look, pinned inside a display case. But here, a visitor actually gets to watch the butterfly's movements, behavior and interaction with others of their species. (continued on next page)

## **Weird California: Book Review by Nancy Bautista**

The Studio has over 1,000 books dedicated to Southern California. **Weird California** is but one of them. **Weird California: Your Travel Guide to California's Local Legends and Best Kept Secrets** by Greg Bishop, Joe Oesterle, and Mike Marinacci is a must read for adventure seekers. Packed with neat photographs, **Weird California** highlights some of the state's most interesting sites. From an airplane graveyard to the world's biggest rubber band ball, there is something for everyone. The story on Turnbull Canyon marks this book as a favorite because I have first-hand accounts of paranormal occurrences in the infamous Whittier hills. In addition, the juxtaposition of fact and fiction encourages readers to conduct their own historical research. Ultimately, this book illustrates the diverse people that shaped and continue to shape our state's history. Make sure to check out the entries on Salvation Mountain, the Cabazon Dinosaurs, and the Watts Towers to appreciate some of the structures that mark California a weird but historically rich location. Whether you are looking for fun summertime outings or new ways of discovering the unknown, **Weird California** is a great source.





Just remember, visitors cannot touch the butterflies at any time; if the delicate wings are damaged, they will not regenerate. The small pavilion is a beautifully landscaped garden with a dirt path, benches and lots of sunlight. Butterflies and moths fly wildly about their guests, sometimes stopping on the path for some solar radiation, or landing on unexpected visitors wearing light reflecting colors. All the butterflies are from North America, and about half are from California. Special arrangements are required for butterflies from South America or Africa. Some of the native California species at the Pavilion are the California Dogface (also California's state insect), Luna Moth, Pipevine Swallowtail, Painted Lady, Cloudless Sulphur, Cabbage White and of course, the well-known Monarch. All possess an awe-inspiring beauty, with a variety of colors, designs and shapes.

The butterflies are ordered as pupae from a butterfly farm in California (none are caught in the wild). Metamorphosis takes about two weeks. When the butterfly emerges, it hangs upside down until its wings become more rigid and expand. Visitors may notice a reddish substance dripping from the chrysalis. This is not blood (their blood is green) but waste that has built up over the weeks and needs to be released. In a few hours, it is ready to fly. The butterfly will live for about three weeks, which is approximate to their life span in the wild.

Host plants are vital when creating a butterfly garden. Milkweed, pentas, lantana, citrus and willow are among the many flora that are planted in the Pavilion to provide a place for the butterflies to lay their eggs. All the plants in the Pavilion are appropriate host plants for each particular species of butterfly.

Gallery Interpreters are always staffed in the Pavilion to provide knowledge and explanations to enrich your visit. There is also a gift shop as you exit the Pavilion with beautiful items for adults and children. Gallery Interpreter Robert Spellman says visitors love the Pavilion and it is one of the best he has seen. Many zoos and museums have Butterfly Pavilions; there is even one at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum during the winter! Unfortunately, artificial habitats like these are increasing, mainly due to over development and loss of natural habitat. Entomologist Brent Karner explains this is the reason the native butterfly population has decreased so much. The host plants are no longer available for the butterflies to lay their eggs for the next generation.

Cost: \$3/adults, \$2/seniors/students, \$1/children ages 5-12 years old  
900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007  
Open: 9:30am-5pm, everyday except major holidays

## *Luis Rodriguez Reads Poetry at the Studio!* by Nancy Bautista

In celebration of the Studio for Southern California's 3rd birthday, Luis J. Rodriguez was invited to share his poetry with all partygoers. Luis has published fourteen books, including *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, a memoir that vividly depicts the too often tragic gangster lifestyle. Labeled by the American Library Association in 1999 as one of the 100 most censored books in the United States, *Always Running* demonstrates the history behind his metamorphosis from gang member to community activist. Devoid of fairy-tale endings, Luis' work describes his personal experiences which are often universally understood. His poetry explores everything from bewildering relationships to sew work and his performance on this very special night fully showcased his incomparable talent.

Scheduled to perform at 8:30 p.m., Luis and his associate Walter arrived at the Studio early enough to enjoy some delicious appetizers. Extremely down to earth and very real, he happily signed books and posed for pictures. The half hour reading included work from his book *The Concrete River*. "Watts Bleeds," a glimpse into growing up in South Los Angeles beautifully kicked off the performance. In between laughter and sighs, hard to discuss issues were touched upon. For example, in "Jesus Saves," Luis wishes to be the omnipresent entity everyone knows instead of a "grieving poet, a scavenger of useless poetry." In addition, Luis openly shared the inspiration behind his writing; from struggling with addiction to his first love, his poetry made everyone in the room take a minute to reflect. The night ended with the recital of "Tia Chucha" (one of my personal favorites) and a deafening round of applause for our beloved Angelino.



Loyal fans come to see Rodriguez read on the Studio's 3rd Birthday!

## A Visit to Tia Chucha's

Poet and writer Luis Rodriguez is also the Director for Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural & Bookstore in Sylmar, California. This establishment fosters local writers through a press, open mike poetry readings, and as a community space to share ideas and observations. It is named after one of Rodriguez's most loved poems about his Tia Chucha, a free spirited artist known for her wackiness but whose creativity inspired Luis. The open mike night is every Friday and on July 3rd, we visited Tia Chucha's to see it in action. What is most attractive about this amazing place is that it is cross-generational and very kid friendly. While few had the courage to read a poem in front of a packed audience, those who did share in the open mike experience discussed frustration with LAUSD and the recent layoffs of teachers and another observer expressed outrage over the amount of publicity over the recent death of singer Michael Jackson. Regardless of opinion, those in attendance displayed tolerance and respect for those who chose to express themselves, including Studio founder Sharon Sekhon who read one of her own poems "Celestial Seekers." For info on Tia Chucha's, visit

[www.tiachucha.com](http://www.tiachucha.com)

or call 818.528.4511.  
Tia Chucha's will hold its 3rd annual benefit to Celebrate Community & Culture on August 2 at 7 pm at the Ford Amphitheatre. Tickets \$25 for general admission; \$5 for students & children.

### *"Celestial Seekers"*

*If you don't know  
the Divine,  
You may find it  
in Herman.*

*In the perfection of his  
stripes of brown, black,  
grey and white.*

*In the soft sweetness of  
his white muzzle, whiskers  
and pink nose.*

*Herman.*

*A graceless, clumsy  
tabby,  
whose beauty surpasses  
any diamond--  
any jewel,  
for his eyes are  
perfect emeralds  
and black agates.*

*A regal hero who allows  
me glimpses into Heaven.*

*Sharon Sekhon  
July 1, 2009*



The TOP TEN  
Reasons to  
Join the Studio's  
Membership Program:

10. Exclusive invitations to receptions, walking tours, exhibit openings, special symposia, workshops & film screenings;
9. An annual subscription to the Studio newsletter PROOFS.
8. One Studio T-shirt with logo and "Because my history matters" emblazoned across the back (\$12 value);
7. One set of four LA History Collectors Cards (\$5 value);
6. One A People's Guide to LA (a \$10 value);
5. A Sneak-Peak at upcoming Studio programming like the LA History Archive;
4. A 10% discount on all Studio products like T-shirts, LA History Playing Cards & Collector Cards;
3. Access to local public history and a place that wants your voice added to the record;
2. FREE red licorice at the Studio;
1. Peace of mind that you are supporting an institution that seeks to preserve our past.

\*MEMBERSHIP  
CATEGORIES

Student.....	\$25
Individual.....	\$55
Family.....	\$75
Friend.....	\$100
Institution.....	\$250
Supporting.....	\$500
Benefactor.....	\$1,000

\*denotes yearly membership fee

*The Studio Store*  
available online at  
[www.socalstudio.org](http://www.socalstudio.org)

Come to the Studio, mail in your order with a check, or visit our website to make your purchase. Note: shipped items have a \$6 shipping & handling charge added.

- Studio Memberships;
- LA History Playing Cards (\$8.99/deck)
- T-Shirts (\$12)
- 2009 Guide to LA History (\$9)

The Studio for Southern  
California History  
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\*Hours: W-Sunday  
10 am - 6 pm  
and by appointment

\*Be sure to call ahead as our hours are irregular due to off-site projects.

**CORRECTION:** In the last issue of proofs, we incorrectly identified Ozie Gonzaque's husband Roy as being an LAPD officer. Roy Gonzaque worked for Hughes Aircraft and in so doing, gave Ozie the ability to be a full time volunteer for Watts.