

# Gavel *to* Gavel

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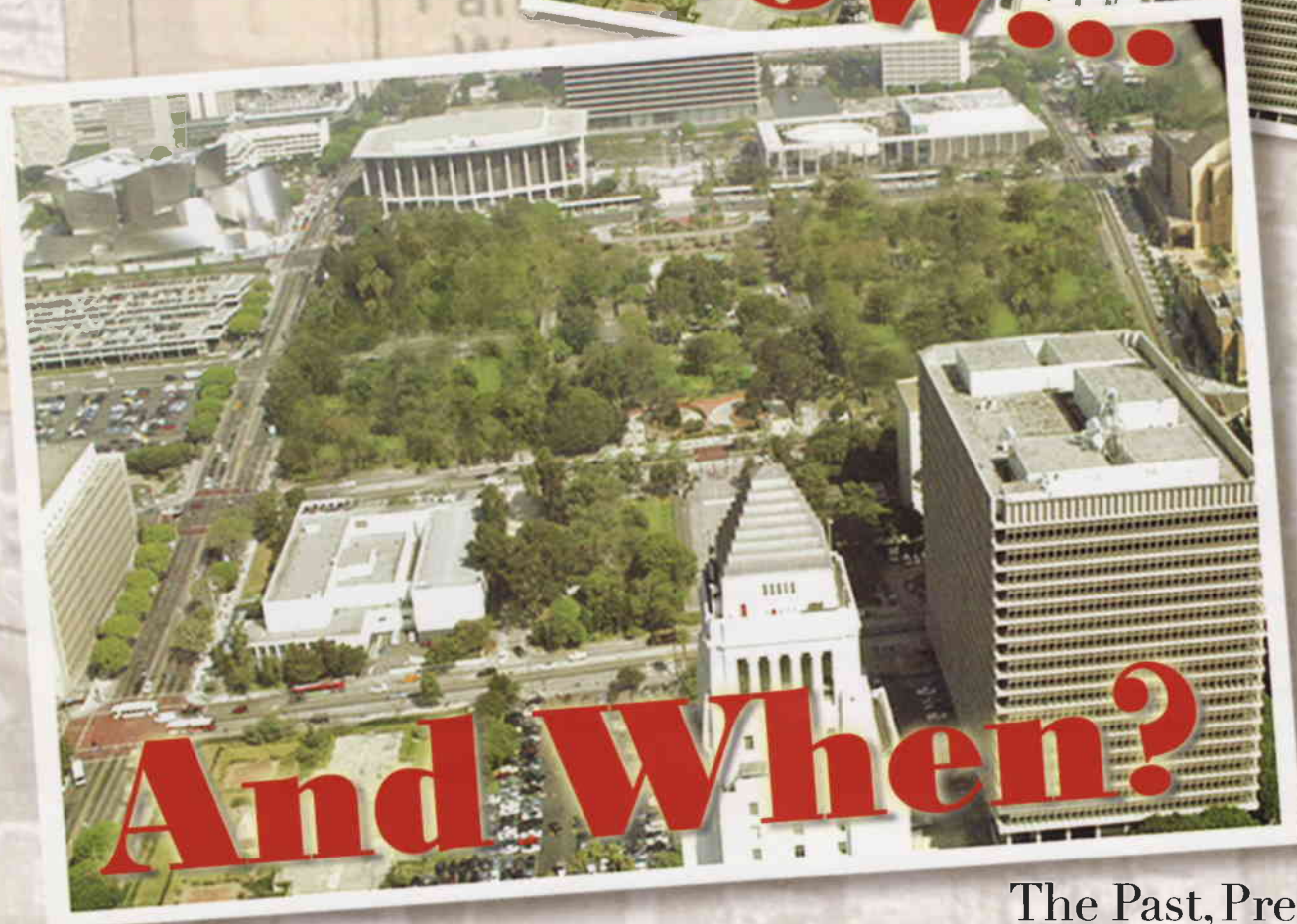
Stanley Mosk  
Courthouse

Parcel  
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**Now...**



**And When?**

The Past, Present  
And Future Of  
Our Courthouses

MAIN STREET

**THE COVER** DEPICTS THE MASTER PLAN FOR THE GRAND AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES THAT MAY ULTIMATELY INCLUDE RAZING THE STANLEY MOSK COURTHOUSE AND KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION. THE CURRENT SITES OF THESE TWO BUILDINGS WOULD BE USED TO EXPAND A PROPOSED OPEN GREEN SPACE TO STRETCH FROM THE MUSIC CENTER TO CITY HALL. THE COVER PRESENTS IMAGES OF HOW THESE TWO BUILDINGS LOOK FROM THE AIR TODAY (TOP) AND A DIGITAL MANIPULATION OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE EXPANDED URBAN PARK, WITH THE COURTHOUSE AND HALL OF ADMINISTRATION NO LONGER EXTANT (BOTTOM). IN THE BACKGROUND BEHIND THESE IMAGES IS A SEGMENT OF THE ACTUAL GRAND AVENUE PLAN.

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# In The Brilliance Of Optimism And Hope

by Referee Cynthia Loo

*“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: and you don’t give up.”*

Anne Lamott

Captain America hangs upside down from an air vent in my chambers. He is confident and optimistic. He is hopeful. He has survived on my ceiling when many a ceiling tile has fallen.

The Captain and I share the tiny chambers in the Eastlake Juvenile Courthouse. Without a window, it’s a little dark, so I brought in two lamps from Ikea and a number of plastic plants to lighten up the place. I’ve been here for a year and a half. But he, the strong silent type, refuses to tell me how long he has stood watch.

He’s really dusty, and he has an outdated outfit. I think he could be as old as when probation records note that the detention facilities were built — way back in 1912.

Department 205 is my courtroom, though there is no sign outside designating it as mine. Because the judicial officers’ names aren’t posted outside the courtrooms, our names are not well-known to visitors. Recently, I left my courtroom, and a boy in the hallway looked up in surprise and said, “Hey, Miss! Miss 205! — I like you Miss 205!”

Within the first three months of sitting in the

Eastlake Courthouse, the air conditioning was broken for a week, a cat had died in the air ducts, and the repairmen refused to fix the air conditioning until the cat’s body was removed. The smell, as you can imagine, was...noticeable. Fortunately, I have never seen any rodents in the courthouse, but I’ve been diligent in heeding the advice of Patricia, the Spanish-language interpreter, in never leaving food out.

The walls in the courthouse are paper-thin. From my bathroom I can hear what’s on the television in the lockup. Flushing the toilet can be heard in the courtroom. Fortunately, with the fan turned on high, and the cold water running, the flushing is barely audible.

Like Boy Scouts, we are prepared. I brought in two fans for when the air conditioning dies, and an extra sweater for when it’s too cold. We entertain ourselves by looking at the big thermometer my clerk, Jim, has brought in. I have a flashlight on the bench, and ample aromatherapy candles for when the power fails.

I’ve heard that Eastlake is the busiest, largest juvenile facility in the nation. It feels like it could be true. My clerk, Jim — the nicest, most even-keeled person I know — has started to snap at people. The probation officer, Makisha, and I aren’t as good as Jim is in blowing off steam; we internalize. Makisha, who is typically so calm and

1976 DAVID V. KENYON  
JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER

1976 CENTRAL ARRAIGNMENT COURTHOUSE

1976 LOS PADRINOS JUVENILE COURTHOUSE

1977 COMPTON COURTHOUSE

optimistic, has had heart palpitations. I come home mentally exhausted, feeling as if I've run a marathon.

In an article in the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, on March 7, 2000, speaking on terms of anonymity, an individual asserted that judges assigned to juvenile court were "slugs."

This compelled Second District Court of Appeal Associate Justice William A. Masterson to respond, "I will retire shortly after 22 years of service on the Superior Court and the Court of Appeal. If I reflect on the importance of what I have done, the time I served in Juvenile was by far the most important and the most rewarding judging that I ever did."

I keep the article under the yellowing plastic cover on my desk in chambers to help me remember that sometimes in this old, dark, dilapidated place, there are moments when I feel better and more alive than I am at any other time. And sometimes when things are going better for a youth, I feel that I am doing something important — when I feel that something already in a young person is something that I'm able to help them get out.

Like last Friday. Eighteen-year-old Unique Brown came into court. As soon as she walked into the courtroom, before she sat down, she told me, "I have something for you." She brought me two certificates of achievement from placement and an acceptance letter into the Atlantic Transitional Housing program. She has plans to enroll in school and get a part-time job.

"I want you to hang these up, right there!" she said, pointing at the wall behind me.

Then she paused and asked, "Will you come to my graduation?"

"Sure," I said. "When is it?"

I looked to the back of the courtroom, where a large calendar was taped on the wall.

"I'm not sure," she said. "In about four years, I guess."

We all laughed as we realized she was talking not about her high school graduation, but about her college graduation. I told her it would be my honor

as I handed the bailiff my business card to give to Unique.

I bought some frames for Unique's certificates and acceptance letter at Sav-On this morning. I hung the frames up on my wall in chambers within the Captain's gaze.

Maybe most of the time when you mention Eastlake, an old run-down courthouse comes to mind...But the Captain will tell you in the Eastlake Juvenile Courthouse, there is the brilliance of optimism and hope. The work that we do inside these walls is as important as that done in the newest, shiniest courthouses in California.

And, of course, those new courtrooms don't have Captain America looking on. ■



1978 SAN FERNANDO JUVENILE COURT

1978 INGLEWOOD COURTHOUSE

1981 EASTLAKE JUVENILE COURT

1984 SAN FERNANDO COURTHOUSE