



A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950 (Historical Studies of Urban America)

Marta Gutman

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American cities are constantly being built and rebuilt, resulting in ever-changing skylines and neighborhoods. While the dynamic urban landscapes of New York, Boston, and Chicago have been widely studied, there is much to be gleaned from west coast cities, especially in California, where the migration boom at the end of the nineteenth century permanently changed the urban fabric of these newly diverse, plural metropolises.

In *A City for Children*, Marta Gutman focuses on the use and adaptive reuse of everyday buildings in Oakland, California, to make the city a better place for children. She introduces us to the women who were determined to mitigate the burdens placed on working-class families by an indifferent industrial capitalist economy. Often without the financial means to build from scratch, women did not tend to conceive of urban land as a blank slate to be wiped clean for development. Instead, Gutman shows how, over and over, women turned private houses in Oakland into orphanages, kindergartens, settlement houses, and day care centers, and in the process built the charitable landscape—a network of places that was critical for the betterment of children, families, and public life. The industrial landscape of Oakland, riddled with the effects of social inequalities and racial prejudices, is not a neutral backdrop in Gutman's story but an active player. Spanning one hundred years of history, *A City for Children* provides a compelling model for building urban institutions and demonstrates that children, women, charity, and incremental construction, renovations, alterations, additions, and repurposed structures are central to the understanding of modern cities.

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