

## Foreword

**I**N MY CAREER, I have read many books relating to California. *Global California* is among the best. In fact, from the perspective of its usefulness as a clarion call to California, it is perhaps the best book I have read in three decades.

In *Global California*, Abe Lowenthal, with clarity, precision, enormous erudition and a certain kind of effective modesty—a refusal, that is, to claim too much—deals with the fundamental nature and functioning of California as a twenty-first century nation-state. Lowenthal has produced an impressive work of scholarship that is openly a manifesto, a program and a call to action.

*Global California* could not come at a better time. It does not take rocket science to ascertain that California as a public entity is having difficulty these days envisioning its future. The current budget crisis, in which the state is experiencing a shortfall of \$20 billion, is the result of a chronic inability on the part of state government, via the political process, to set the size of government at an acceptable level, to set revenues at a level sufficient to fund these services and—as Governor Schwarzenegger is urging—to set aside excess revenues to be used in future years when revenues may fall short.

This is common sense. Yet the fact that California's state government cannot embrace such a commonsensical solution suggests an underlying crisis, for which *Global California* establishes a partial solution: partial only because its focus is on the international scene.

California has trouble thinking itself through. By this, I do not mean California as a society, as private life and culture, as business, finance, investment and other modes of entrepreneurship. I am not referring to literature, the arts or motion pictures. In realm after realm, in fact, California bespeaks the vitality with which Abe Lowenthal opens his narrative.

The problem is, rather, public policy perspective and suggested programs as a prelude to political action.

Over the past few years, the political science departments of many California universities, the Public Policy Institute of California, the California Research Bureau, numerous foundations and a number of prescient individuals have come to the fore to assist California in this very necessary endeavor of rethinking itself through. Stanford University, for example, has established the Bill Lane Center for the Study of the North American West, under the direction of Professors David Kennedy and Richard White, specifically to play a role in this developing field of California-oriented futurist studies. Professor Steve Erie of UC San Diego and former *Los Angeles Times* columnist James Flanigan, among others, have published and continue to publish influential works in this field.

*Global California*, then, emerges from an academic and intellectual environment in which it is becoming increasingly obvious to Californians that they must join in this effort to assist their state in thinking through its challenges, options and destiny.

No one has done this better in one single volume, in my opinion, than Abe Lowenthal. Anchoring himself in an exhaustive command of relevant sources, statistics and commentary, Professor Lowenthal examines from numerous perspectives the fundamental nature of California as an international enterprise; past, present and future.

Yet this is not a history book, although it contains history. It is not a political science or international relations study, although it is rich in such themes. It is not a work of contemporary journalistic investigation, although it is solidly in touch with the present.

It is, rather, all these things combined and moved forward into the future as platform and matrix for the proposals with which Lowenthal concludes this volume. In the beginning of the book, he notes that California is not an independent nation; it is a state with the dimensions but not the sovereignty of a nation, and is hence prohibited by law—and some recent court decisions, which he cites—from conducting foreign affairs.

The proposals that Professor Lowenthal makes, therefore, are animated by this limitation but are by no means weakened by it; for there is plenty that California can do—in trade, commerce and culture; in immigration policy and academic life (I love his call for a California-Mexico Rhodes scholarship); in chambers of commerce and related private and/or foundation sectors—to position, to orient California toward what Lowenthal thoroughly documents as a process already under way: the globalization of the California economy.

*Global California* is a manifesto, a call for action as well as an academic treatise. As such, it should be reviewed and discussed—not only in the public policy seminar that Professor Lowenthal advocates for Sacramento—but also in the popular press, in business and labor circles and in community organizations and educational centers, for it deals with an issue that is crucial for California's future.

*Kevin Starr*  
*University of Southern California*  
*September 2008*