

# Please No Kamala as Governor of California

By Roger L Simon

I started to laugh, while at the same time feeling slightly sad, when I read Kamala Harris was considering running for governor of California.



That's the last thing that benighted state needs, not just because she got her start on the seamier side of the state's politics (most of it is seamy anyway), but because she won't go near the fiscal or social policies necessary to revive what Woody Guthrie long ago called a tarnished Garden of Eden.

*"California is a Garden of Eden/A paradise to live in or see./But believe it or not,/you won't find it so hot/if you don't got the do re mi."*

And how! Could Guthrie have anticipated the state would have

half the nation's homeless, one-third the welfare recipients, 49<sup>th</sup> in home ownership, the highest rate of cost-adjusted poverty, an atrocious public school system with the state last in literacy, an aging infrastructure, and a projected budget deficit of \$68 billion, to cite just a few without even mentioning crime?

Well, maybe.

The decline, in many ways the near death, of California is an American tragedy. It is one of God's most gorgeous gifts gone to seed through bizarre neglect of its inhabitants, often its wealthiest ones.

Would you pick Kamala, of all people, to solve such a thing? From what we saw in the presidential campaign, would you want this inarticulate scatterbrain with her inappropriate affect for principal of the local grammar school, or head of anything for that matter? It's actually ridiculous.

Why do I care? Well, this Substack is called [American Refugees](#) after a book I wrote, published last January, about my migration, with my wife and daughter, from California, where I lived and worked most of my adult life, many decades actually, to Tennessee.

I can't say I have regretted the move for a minute. It will be seven years this June.

But I did spend most of my life out there and still sometimes feel something in my throat when I hear Randy Newman singing "I Love LA," even though Kobe's dead and LeBron leaves me cold. The song brings me back to another time.

When I first visited LA, on a short grad school vacation (1967), I thought I'd gone to Heaven. It was the most amazing, coolest place I'd ever been and it was in the USA yet.

Forget Paris, Rome, London and even New York, New York. This

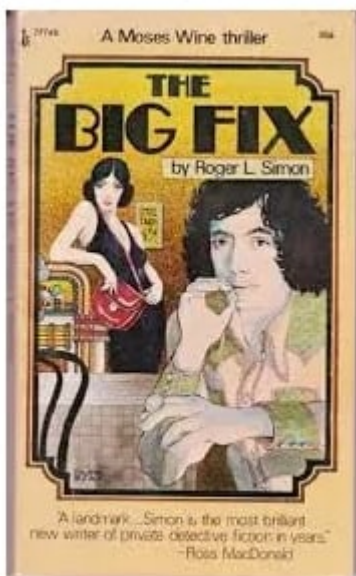
was a town where you could ski in the morning and surf in the afternoon.

Better yet, a young writer could make a living there, a good one too, in Hollywood, writing movies. Nice work if you could get it.

I decided on that first trip that I wanted, just like the late [Mama Cass](#), to be in LA. Immediately after graduation I headed West.

In the beginning, in fact for quite a while, it was fantastic. California was a dream land and L. A. the center of the world.

Of course it had it's dark side. I knew that from the novels of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Ross MacDonald, James Cain and Nathanael West.



But I embraced all that, starting an LA detective series of my own starring Moses Wine, the first hippie detective, fashioned after myself in days when I had considerably more hair and dressed the part.

It was more successful than I expected and when the first one, "The Big Fix," was made into the movie with Richard Dreyfuss, I had my Warhol anointed fifteen minutes of fame.

That came and went, as such things do, but LA remained the place to be. At least I thought so.

But then things began to change. I'm not sure exactly when. There had always been problems—the Watts Riots and so forth

that never seemed to change those neighborhoods. But I was something of a leftie activist in those days, so engaged and therefore hopeful in an admittedly misguided way.

I think the deep change, when California really began to fly apart, at least for me, was during the OJ Trial. The obviously guilty Simpson was being freed by a jury of biased black women although OJ, I knew well because I had met him at parties, hung out primarily with white people. Hypocrisy and racism were in the air and growing.

Soon enough people were adopting early versions of what became woke and DEI and all the other craziness that is only now beginning to diminish in other parts of the country. At the same time there were homeless appearing everywhere, from downtown to Beverly Hills, in the parks and under the freeways, with insane people defecating in the streets. It was how we used to think of India, only India was better now.

Not long after, I was gone.

It only got worse, I saw personally, when I returned to California to cover Larry Elder's gubernatorial campaign for The Epoch Times. I couldn't believe what had become of that Garden of Eden.

Why is Kamala Harris the worst kind of person to cure this?

I have a theory that includes a solid portion of self-blame. I am older than Kamala, by a generation at least. My peers were the ones who started it all, the Summer of Love, etc. Boy, did we think we were cool? Sex, drugs and rock and roll. We flaunted it. The younger generation, Kamala's, I think envied us, wanted to be us. But as those things go, the next go-round is always inferior—not that we were great. We were wrong. But at least we had the excuse of being original, of trying something new even though it didn't work, even though we should have known better. God or G-d was still above us, but we forgot.

Kamala is a second-hand imitator or inheritor of those bad ideas we had. They're not really hers and she doesn't quite understand them. She thinks she's supposed to believe certain things without even actually thinking about them. That's why, in part, she doesn't know what she stands for, why she made those speeches that made no sense and went around in circles, why she didn't want to talk to anybody off the cuff.

California can do better. Way better. I hope it does, but I fear it won't.

*First published in [American Refugees](#)*