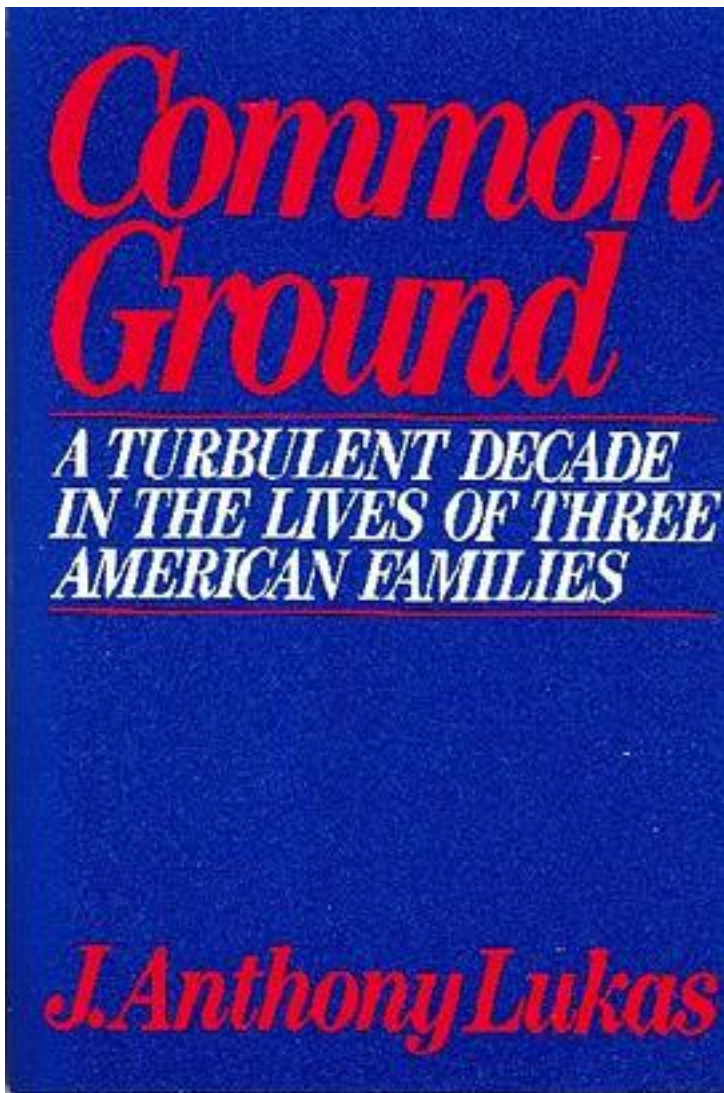


Common Ground



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The subject of An American Field Guide is physical America—the places of daily life. I approach it in the belief that American space—American light—the things of this country—come together to form a voice that shapes how we think and feel—much as our parents’ voices shaped us in childhood. Whatever we think of this voice—however we react to it—we can no more escape its influence than we can eradicate our childhood. The field guide is about other matters as well—photography—landscape—the eye—the mind—the art—and work—but whatever ideas we may map on its surface—it has as its structure the specific and tangible things that surround us—whether we notice them or not. In my work as a photographer I have learned to make images of my everyday landscape that help me see and value elements of it often invisible in their commonness. I am organizing these photographs and some discursive essays into a series of four books that are guides to anywhere although they are specifically about America as I see it. The series is really about bringing the eye to a state of health and about testing what we see and know against ourselves in the world rather than against reports of that world. Sometimes when I step out my front door I wonder where I am. I ask myself how I got there and where else I might be. At other times I will be in a place entirely new to me and feel that I’ve been there before. And frequently enough to be noticeable I find myself in a blank stare—oblivious—somewhere else. In these moments I experience a sense of dislocation that I think most of us would recognize. It may be a difference between us—though—that I delight in this dislocation and have pursued it. I like it—I think—because I enjoy traveling and feel that to be dislocated like this is not to be lost—not to feel displaced—but simply to occupy two places at the same time.

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