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Undergraduate

‘ALAMEDA IS OUR HOME’:  
African Americans and the Struggle for Housing in Alameda, California, 1860-Present  
by  
Reginald L. James  
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**‘ALAMEDA IS OUR HOME’:**  
African Americans and the Struggle for Housing in Alameda, California, 1860-Present

Reginald L. James



**“Your island cannot live in a social vacuum devoid of contact with minority peoples.**

Russell V. Lombardo, *The Alameda Sun*, December 16, 1965

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## **DEDICATION**

For Mabel Tatum, Vickie R. Smith, Clayton and Delores Guyton, Modessa Henderson, Lorraine Lilley and all who've fought for fair housing, affordable and low-income housing, and for Black people to have a home in Alameda

In Memory of Jodie Randolph

In Honor of Deborah James



## INTRODUCTION

The story I tell is the journey of African peoples who call and have called the City of Alameda their home. During and after World War II, tens of thousands of African Americans migrated to the Bay Area and the island city. Segregated in wartime projects and later large apartment complexes, these Black Alamedans raised their families, established kinship networks and created community. With a small exception, many of these families and neighborhoods have been destroyed physically. In other instances, hundreds of people were forced from neighborhoods and the entire island. Most African Americans still reside on the north and west sides of the island. But with ongoing redevelopment, many still wonder how long it will be until further mass displacement.

Black people have called Alameda home since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, yet the island's Black population is not as known or studied as its neighbors in the nearby and larger city of Oakland. Initially migrating west to work as servants and domestics, Black pioneers slowly began to move to California to seek opportunity and escape the Jim Crow South. California has the second largest population of Black people in the country, with experiences that both mirror and differ from Black people elsewhere in the country, as well as the other racial groups in the state. Between 1850 and 1965, Black people in East Bay cities, including Alameda developed "parallel communities" with institutions that mirrored those of the dominant white societies of those same cities. Residential segregation was the primary reason for these separate communities.<sup>1</sup>

World War II represented a "watershed" moment in California history. Hundreds of thousands of people moved to the state in what the *San Francisco Chronicle* called the

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence B. De Graaf, Keith Mulford, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California History*, Seattle: Washington, 2001. Delores Nason McBroome, *Parallel Communities: African Americans in California's East Bay, 1850-1963*, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993.

“Second Gold Rush.” Black residents became increasingly segregated in older, inner-core areas of the East Bay. Meanwhile federally subsidized loans allowed whites-only suburban expansion. The Black population of other nearby cities like Oakland, Berkeley and Richmond has grown, while Alameda’s has ebbed and flowed. Although located within the center of the Bay Area, the island of Alameda maintained a predominantly white population until 2000. Whites are still the city’s largest group.<sup>2</sup>

How has housing discrimination impacted African Americans on the island? How have federal, local and state laws, policies and practices impacted African Americans seeking housing in Alameda? How did Black migration to Alameda impact the island’s geography? What has been the role of government in causing and alleviating housing discrimination? What role have homeowners, landlords, realtors, and financiers played excluding Black Alamedans from housing opportunities? Previous scholars have written about housing discrimination and segregation, Black migration to the American West, but no one has told the story of African Americans in Alameda.

### **‘Keep this Neighborhood White’: Housing Discrimination in the U.S.**

The concept of “home” is central to the American Dream. It is a place, an ideal, “where the heart is,” a status symbol, a place to live, as well as most American’s largest investment. Home is the center of family and community life. Home is can be a house, but also an apartment. Home is “where the heart is,” wherever one calls “home.”

Housing policies and residential conflict provide a lens of understanding race relations in America. Conflict over residential space demonstrates the centrality of the home and its role in the production of race in American culture. In *Forbidden Neighbors:*

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<sup>2</sup> Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990; Marilyn S. Johnson *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*, Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Princeton Press 2004.

*A Study of Prejudice in Housing*, Charles Abrams wrote after the Second World War, “The racial issue was becoming centered around the home, the most emotional possession of the American family and mass interest in bias was being generated as millions of homeowners were falling easy prey to opportunism or bigotry.” With major federal subsidies increasing American homeownership opportunities for whites in suburbs, the home became recognized as families’ largest investment. Yet the history of housing discrimination nationwide predates WWII.<sup>3</sup>

Various explanations for housing discrimination exist. Many narratives focus on the role of the government and officials, and the finance, real estate and rental industries. These focus on the role of the federal government in subsidizing suburban expansion. Racial segregation is the *de jure* and *de facto* residential separation of races. The dominant narrative suggests racial segregation it resulted from government and industry practices; however, others argue segregation emerged from whites’ racial prejudices. Government and industry solely capitalized and further perpetuated deep-seated racism. Jim Crow cities existed in the urban north and west<sup>4</sup>

Multiple explanations exist to explain the persistence of racial segregation in America. Two theoretical models explaining racial residential segregation are: spatial assimilation and place stratification. Spatial assimilation assumes people of similar Socio-Economic Status (SES) live together. Thus, if whites have the same SES, they will choose similar quality housing. This model assumes an impartial housing market, without

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors: A Study of Prejudice in Housing*, 8; Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors*, and Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* adopt the position of government sponsored racial segregation. Stephen Meyer argues white prejudice lead to racial segregation, Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don’t Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods*, Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.

bias or discrimination. However, research suggests that this model does not apply to African Americans, as two distinct housing markets exist. African Americans often become penalized for owning their own homes, living in both segregated neighborhoods or near whites of lower SES. According to the place stratification model, SES groups people. However, African Americans segregated due to whites' disdain for Black neighbors, and discrimination in rental and lending markets.<sup>5</sup> While spatial assimilation suggests a more organic separation based largely on socioeconomics, place stratification accounts for the persistence of segregation at all income levels. These tools for analyzing residential patterns are important. Just as important is understanding the tools used to create and maintain residential segregation.

Efforts to exclude certain populations of residents have changed over time. Prior to the 1930s, prior to major federal intervention into the market, the private housing market determined who could live where. Zoning, the state police power in which jurisdictions regulate land use, did not emerge until the early twentieth century. After initial usage in the nineteenth century for public health purposes, zoning ordinances eventually became a tool for municipalities to segregate residents. With subdivisions, or grouped parcels, entire plots became zoned, or classified, for specific usage, such as industrial use or single-family residential usage. With segregation ordinances being declared unconstitutional, the use of racial restrictive covenants increased. Restrictive covenants, as adopted by homeowners' associations, allowed private citizens to legally prevent certain people, like African Americans, from purchasing or leasing properties.

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<sup>5</sup> These theoretical frameworks provide a tool of analysis when looking at residential patterns in Alameda over time.

Charles, Camille Zubrinsky, "The Dynamics of Racial Residential Segregation," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 29 (2003), 168.

The U.S. Supreme Court declared racial restrictive covenants unenforceable by courts in 1948, although the practice—and other discriminatory policies—continued until 1968.<sup>6</sup>

Massive, segregated public housing emerged before, during and after WWII. The federal government allowed local Housing Authorities to choose its residential patterns. Local groups could choose whether or not to segregate. Racial occupancy patterns included completely segregated projects; projects separated by areas or by buildings, partially and completely integrated projects.<sup>7</sup>

Racial segregation structured, maintained and perpetuated Black impoverishment while maintaining white social status. Racial residential segregation demonstrates how race and class not only intersect, but how the “culture of (racial segregation) created the Black underclass. White Americans could amass wealth due through government subsidies in the housing market before and after WWII.<sup>8</sup>

### *Vanilla Suburbs and Chocolate Cities*

Whites benefited from federally subsidized suburban expansion, while Black people suffered the burdens of living in older housing stock without financing for renovations or basic repairs. As George Clinton narrated in “Chocolate City,” America’s chocolate cities—predominantly Black urban centers—were surrounded and dominated by

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Rolf Pendall, “Residential Growth Controls and Racial and Ethnic Diversity: Making and Breaking the Chain of Exclusion,” (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Berkeley); Wilson, Hutson, and Mujahid, “How Planning and Zoning Contribute to Inequitable Development,” *Environmental Justice*, 2008; Lee Edward Owens, *Shelley v. Kraemer and its impact on racial residential segregation*, thesis, political science, UC Berkeley, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> Helen Alanraig writes, groups could choose: completely segregated- project black only or whites only, segregated by area, certain areas for groups, segregation by buildings, reserved by occupancy, partially integrated, certain areas would be integrated, completely integrated, Helen Smith Alanraig, "A Study of Non-Segregated Public Housing, (Master's Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1953), 71-72.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*; Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*.

vanilla suburbs—predominantly white enclaves. A more common metaphor, that emerged in the 1960s to this racial-spatial distribution as the “white noose of suburbia.”<sup>9</sup>

Postwar suburbs regularly restricted African American migrants from entering. Understanding postwar conflict over residential space within suburbs, and metropolitan segregation, furthers our understanding of metropolitan areas and regional power struggles over land, taxes, and social status. Homebuilders accumulated millions of dollars in wealth while developing homes for the war generation. White homeowners both developed equity and postwar wealth, but also a sense of a white identity connected to homeownership right.<sup>10</sup>

*The Rumford Fair Housing Act and Prop. 14*

After World War II, civil rights groups focused on eliminating residential segregation and housing discrimination. In California, the decades long struggle by labor and civil rights advocates came to fruition in the 1960s. Berkeley Assemblyman W. Byron Rumford led efforts in the State Legislature with the 1963 Fair Housing Act. The act strengthened existing legislation that outlawed segregation in public housing, prevented financing of discriminatory urban renewal developments, and stifled private real estate market prejudice when possible.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Parliament, “Chocolate City”, *Chocolate City*, Casablanca, 1975. The “white noose” quoted in Robert Self, *American Babylon*, 256. On integration in Cleveland suburbs, see W. Dennis Keating, “The Suburban Racial Dilemma: Housing and Neighborhoods,” Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Abrams, 8; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Self, *American Babylon*; Reginald James, “Black Tides: The Life and Times of the Estuary Housing Projects, Alameda, California, 1943-1971”. Research presented at the St. Claire Drake Symposium, Department of African American Studies, University of California, Berkeley, May 2013. On whiteness, see George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. Also, Daniel HoSang Martinez, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*, University of California Press, 14-20.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence P. Crouchett, *William Byron Rumford, The Life and Public Services of a California Legislator*, El Cerrito: Downey Place Pub. House, 1984.

One year later, California's white-majority electorate passed Proposition 14. Proposition 14 overturned the Rumford Act and essentially legalized housing discrimination. The reactionary proposition enabled white homeowners to couch their prejudice and desire to maintain privilege within notions of freedom, victimization, and "political whiteness." Alameda County voters overwhelmingly passed the measure. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed an appeal. In 1967, the state's Supreme Court deemed Prop. 14 unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court in a close 5-4 ruling. One Justice stated, "Proposition 14 is a form of sophisticated discrimination whereby the people of California harness the energies of private groups to do indirectly what cannot under our decisions allow their government to do." Prop. 14 represented the collective will of the (white) people to maintain residential segregation and retain the lily-white character of *their* neighborhoods, although legal changes usurped some local customs and laws enabling segregation. Still, "whiteness" became conflated with "homeowners rights."<sup>12</sup>

### ***Fair Housing Act of 1968***

In the days after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King and urban rebellions nation wide, Congress took action against housing discrimination. This legislation has been a key tool for housing advocates to show the disparate impact of housing discrimination, even if no intent could be proven. The Fair Housing Act of 1968

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel HoSang Martinez, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*, 14-20. Eighty percent of San Leandro voters and 74 percent of Castro Valley voters approved Proposition 14, while Alameda and Hayward tied with 73 percent approval. Self, *American Babylon*, 262. Quote from, HoSang, *Racial Propositions*, 87.

ended legalized housing discrimination, helping increase Black suburbanization in most metropolitan areas, but new methods arose to discourage Black suburbanization.<sup>13</sup>

### **Exclusionary Zoning**

Local growth controls, or exclusionary zoning, continues past practices of racial exclusion, albeit, often less directly. After California's Proposition 20 in 1972, an initiative to limit development of the state's coastline, private citizens went to the ballot and altered local growth controls. Suburban municipalities with higher socioeconomic status residents and higher homeownership rates most actively supported growth controls. Three political models seek to explain growth control in suburbs. First, the regional political economy clubs views suburbs as exclusive homeowners "clubs" that need to be inexpensive, minimally taxed, and high quality, or homeowners' mobility will lead them to nearby municipalities. The growth machine model suggests builders and developers are in conflict with homeowners and small business over land values and profits and "intrinsic" values of places. The exclusionary framework suggests suburbs exclude the poor and racial minority, explicitly or implicitly.<sup>14</sup>

With increased Black suburbanization came the use of exclusionary zoning and legal challenges. Exclusionary zoning is "the illegal practice of excluding low-income and minority residents under guise of zoning use classification." Housing advocates have used the courts to challenge exclusionary zoning.<sup>15</sup>

California's 1969 Housing Element law requires every political jurisdiction to adopt a plan for housing within their General Plan. All jurisdictions must plan for a "fair share" of the regional need for new housing, at all income levels. A regional body

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<sup>13</sup> Pendall, "Residential Growth Controls and Racial and Ethnic Diversity."

<sup>14</sup> Pendall, 18-19, 32, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, Hutson, and Mujahid, "Inequitable Development."



estimates the need, and then assigns cities a proportion of the total need. Jurisdictions must allow affordable housing. A state agency with punitive powers reviews plans and decides if jurisdictions comply, although by 1990, only 16 percent of all affordable housing need was met. Fair share housing laws fail due to a failure to effectively enforce laws and a lack of access to litigation. Courts are reluctant to enforce statutes, despite powers to suspend local land use controls. Meaning, courts could influence cities by taking their power to make local planning decision, but courts hesitate to use this influential tool.<sup>16</sup>

The history of Blacks in California is not longer a solely urban tale. From 1960, Black suburbanization increased drastically. Forty percent of Blacks lived in suburbs in 2000, although at a lower rate than other groups. While Black history has focused primarily on cities, the expansion of Black suburbanization in California requires us to study suburbs also.<sup>17</sup> A brief understanding of Alameda and its legacy of housing discrimination against Black people provides necessary context. This larger history of housing discrimination overlaps with the history of African Americans in California.

### **Blacks in California**

Although Africans lived in California before the presence of Anglos, Black migration from other parts of the United States began during the Gold Rush. Scholars note the state's colored population fought discrimination, built institutions like schools, churches and newspapers, and demanded equality.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> California Government Code 65584; Pendall, 48-51; Ben Field, "Why Our Fair Share Housing Laws Fail," *Santa Clara Law Review*, 34 (2), 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence B. De Graaf, "African American Suburbanization in California, 1960 through 1990," in *Seeking El Dorado, Charles*, "The Dynamics of Racial Residential Segregation," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 29, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> On early Black California, see: Lawrence B. De Graaf and Quintard Taylor, "Introduction: African Americans in California History, California in African American History," in *Seeking El Dorado*, eds.

During WWII, the “spatial and social relationships” of these communities drastically changed. The federal government funded the creation of large public housing projects. These projects segregated African Americans. The isolated migrants developed their own subculture that eventually impacted the larger community, which often opposed public housing. Operated by business interests who preferred to use the land for other purposes, these local housing authorities later demolished housing—both public and private—for “urban renewal” projects. These projects often disproportionately impacted non-white people, thus the phrase: Urban renewal is Negro removal.” Yet Alameda is barely mentioned, or rarely the focus of wartime and postwar narratives.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Alameda History***

Local narratives on Alameda history primarily focus on the island’s architectural heritage. Monographs on preservation, physical geography and government institutions and buildings dominate the local literature. A small industry has developed telling the story of Alameda, a story focused on the architectural history and heritage of Alameda.

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Lawrence B. De Graaf, Keith Mulford, and Quintard Taylor, Seattle: Washington, 2001; On early Black migrants, see: Daniels, Douglas Henry, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, B. Gordon Wheeler, *Black California: The History of African-Americans in the Golden State* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1993), and Odell A. Thurman, *The Negro in California Before 1890*, 1945. Thesis. College of the Pacific. San Francisco: R and E Research Associations, 1973. On the East Bay: Delores Nason McBroome, *Parallel Communities: African Americans in California’s East Bay, 1850-1963*, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993; Lawrence P. Crouchett, Lonnie G. Bunch, III, and Martha Kendall Winnaker, *Visions Toward Tomorrow: The History of the East Bay Afro-American Community 1852-1977*; Gwendolyn Captain, “Social Religious, and Leisure Pursuits of Northern California’s African American Population: The Discovery of Gold Through World War II,” Masters of Arts Thesis, Human Biodynamics, University of California, Berkeley, 1995; Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, “To Place our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963,” Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> See Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. See also, Self, *American Babylon*. For the experience of Black migrant women, see Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996 and Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage, *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women’s West*, includes “Not in Somebody’s Kitchen’: African American Women Workers in Richmond, California, and the Impact of World War II.” On the rise of Black radicalism in the Bay Area, see Daniel Edward Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969*, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 2000.

With the exception of Hall of Fame Baseball player and Alameda narrative Willie Stargell, Black Alamedans have been ignored.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1939 monograph, *History of Alameda*, high school teacher Paul Vigness wrote, “If one would understand the conservatism of Alameda, read its history.”<sup>21</sup> To better understand the experiences of African Americans in Alameda, one must understand Alameda’s history, past discriminatory housing practices, and the historical context of the East Bay.<sup>22</sup>

ALAMEDA is an island city located on the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay Area region. Running parallel with the industrial port city of Oakland, the island has an east-west orientation. An Estuary separates Alameda from Oakland. The island is accessible by four bridges, two one-way underwater tunnels spanning the Estuary, and ferry service. The city also includes Bay Farm Island, a peninsula connected to Oakland, west of the Oakland International Airport. With a Mediterranean climate and bay breeze, the

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<sup>20</sup> One exception is Paul Vigness, *History of Alameda*, Alameda: Arthur H. Cawson, 1939 Alameda Free Library. This book makes no mention of Black people. Imelda Merlin, *Alameda: A Geographical History*, Alameda, California: Friends of the Alameda Free Library, 1977 (Originally published as Master’s Thesis, Geography, University of California, Berkeley, June 1964). Willie Stargell and Tom Bird, “Willie Stargell: An Autobiography,” New York: Harper & Row, Publishes, 1984. Sample novelty books include, Greta Dutcher and Stephen Rowlan, “Alameda,” San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2009, Grant Ute and Bruce Singer, “Alameda by Rail,” San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2007. Woodruff Minor, “Alameda at Play: A Century of Public Parks and Recreation in Alameda from the Victorian Era to the Present Day,” *Friends of the Alameda Parks*, 2001. In the conclusion, I critique the work of these publications do. Primarily focusing on architectural history, with accompanying tours, this preservationist-focused version of Alameda marginalizes the presence and importance of Alameda’s African American population. Often funded by the institutions responsible for displacing Alameda’s African American residents, these histories generate a “historical whiteness” in the geographical imagination. More simply stated: these historians whitewash Alameda’s history to paint a narrative palatable to white supremacist assumption and consumption.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Vigness, *History of Alameda*, Alameda: Arthur H. Cawson, 1939, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid for quote. My thinking to this topic has been profoundly impacted by the work of urban historians, geographers and political scientists. Key readings include, Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, Robert Self, *American Babylon*, Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, New York: Vintage Books, reprint, 1992, James A. Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

temperature is often cooler than surrounding cities. The city is primarily residential with few industrial areas. There are no freeways and no BART Stations. Most streets are limited by a 25-mile-per-hour speed limit.

The City of Alameda describes itself as “a sophisticated Bay Area island community with a small town vibe known for tree-lined streets and Victorian charm.” Alameda was originally a peninsula named by the Spaniards as a “grove of trees” or “tree-lined avenues.” After Anglo-settlement and displacement of the indigenous people, three townships formed as a suburb for capitalist class of San Francisco. After populist squatting, settlement, and boosterism, the cities merged in 1872. Thirty years later, the Estuary separating Oakland and Alameda was dredged in 1902 to increase commercial business opportunities along the two competing cities’ waterfronts. The “Island City” gained a reputation as “The City of Beaches and Homes,” due to its Victorian and Edwardian homes and its beaches, with one being called a “Coney Island of the West.”<sup>23</sup>

The commission of the Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) changed Alameda forever. In 1938, the federal government’s purchased of one-third of the island’s West End, for one dollar, with plans to build a facility on reclaimed land, or landfill. The Navy called on local city leaders to provide housing and encourage the conversion of homes into apartments to provide housing for workers. The acute housing shortage in 1940 led to the creation of a local Housing Authority, otherwise, the federal government would have built housing for war workers itself. Over the next ten years, Alameda’s population

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<sup>23</sup> Imelda Merlin, *Alameda: A Geographical History*. Quote from City of Alameda website, <<http://alameda.ca.gov>>.

nearly doubled from 36,256 people in 1940 to 64,430 by 1950. Tens of thousands flocked to the region to labor in shipyards and other industries.<sup>24</sup>

The Black population remained small until WWII. In fact, few African Americans lived in Alameda compared to Oakland. The influx of wartime workers and migrants exacerbated a pre-existing housing shortage. The critical shortage led to conversion of houses and basements into housing units and the Federal government constructing thousands of temporary wartime public housing projects, primarily on the island's West End. After the war, nearly all of Alameda's Negro population lived in "temporary" wartime housing located on the island's West End, former tidelands deeded to the U.S. Navy to commission to Alameda Naval Air Station. These racially segregated housing projects increasingly became predominantly African American as other non-Black residents moved move out into other housing, often in the suburbs. Racism contained African Americans to the projects or forced them to seek housing outside of Alameda. In the 1950s and 1960s, city leaders demolished the temporary wartime projects, displacing thousands of African Americans. Meanwhile, the national government federal government withdrew its involvement from constructing and managing low-income housing and instead subsidized the white exodus to the lily-white suburbs of southern Alameda County and subsidized private rental developments.<sup>25</sup>

In 1973, the city's majority white voters enacted a city ordinance than banned construction of apartment buildings. This policy, Measure A, restricted the development

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<sup>24</sup> Reginald James, "Black Tides," Imelda Merlin, *Alameda: A Geographical History*.

<sup>25</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, Merlin, *Alameda: A Geographical History*. The treatment of immigrants moving into new areas, the "politicized places" hypothesis, could be applied retroactively to the experiences of Black migrants moving into formerly white enclaves and cities. See, Daniel Hopkins, "Politicized Places: Explaining where and when immigrants provoke local opposition," *American Political Science Review*, 104(1)(February): 40-60.

of affordable housing for four decades and has dramatically shaped the physical island and its local politics.

Housing discrimination has defined the collective Black experience in Alameda. From the 19th century to present, developers, homeowners, landlords, policy-makers, and realtors have discriminated against African Americans seeking housing in Alameda. In response, Black people consistently wage battles for more affordable housing and inclusionary policies in Alameda. Prejudice realtors and developers restricted Black renters and homeowners to the specific areas of the island prior to the Second World War. During and after the war, housing discrimination limited the majority of African Americans to temporary housing projects. Policies to redevelop project lands and direct the island's future development intentionally exclude low-income renters and people of color. African Americans contest residential exclusion, build community by creating organizations and institutions, forge interracial alliances for open housing, and challenge exclusionary policies and practices.

Recent efforts allegedly seeking to disperse poverty mask attempts to destabilize African American solidarity and claims for equality. The literature on African American migration to California and the East Bay typically focuses on larger municipalities like Berkeley, Oakland and Richmond, while neglecting smaller, inner suburban cities like Alameda.

Using historical analysis, archival research and oral history of the residential experiences of African Americans in Alameda, this thesis begins to reconstruct communities that no longer exist. It is the beginning of a counter-narrative, which seeks to upset the geographical imagination, created by the city by demonstrating the historic

presence and participation of non-white settlers and migrants. Finally, understanding historical patterns of displacement provides a context in which to understand current events and trends in the housing market.

*Alameda is our Home* proceeds in three parts. The first part focuses on the first “colored” settlers to Alameda. Chapter one looks at the early settlers of African descent. Most lived as servants and domestics, but many sought their own residential independence. Many did so by living with other people of African descent. Chapter two reviews the lives of Blacks who built their own homes and used their residential space as a place to empower their families and their larger community. Next, in chapter three, I look at the pattern of residential segregation that emerges through restrictive covenants and HOLC Security Maps and confines Negroes to the north side of the island.

Part two focuses primarily on wartime housing projects and the experiences of Black migrants. Chapter four is a limited study of wartime housing conditions for Negroes during WWII. Chapter five focuses on the unfair treatment Negroes experienced from the Alameda Housing Authority. The AHA segregated Negro residents and ultimately neglected the property before forcing the tenants to move in the name of urban renewal. Chapter 6 focuses on housing discrimination in Alameda’s private market, focusing on white landlords, realtors and, ultimately, white homeowners. Chapter 7 looks at efforts by Black residents to adapt to project life and do-for-self.

Part three looks at the post Measure A-era and some of the impacts of the 1973 city ordinance banning apartment construction. Chapter 8 places the 1973 white-voter decision into historical context and examines many of the impacts. Chapter 8 focuses on a 1987 lawsuit by low-income tenants challenging Measure A and fighting displacement.

Chapter 10 focuses on efforts to redevelop Alameda Point, the former NAS, and the decision of the city to build upper-middle class homes opposed to renovating existing homes for working class families. In Chapter 11, we see the immediate impact of the previous policy decision to redevelop: nearly 400 low-income and predominantly Black families are forced from Alameda when an out-of-state property owner seeks to renovate the apartment. Finally, chapter 12 documents the recent saga of a Black homeowner facing foreclosure and the activists who defended her home.

One observation from the various newspaper articles, letters, government documents, photographers, and interviews that provide the basis of this case study of African Americans in Alameda: Black people continue to resist ongoing housing discrimination. There is a common experience—from Estuary to Harbor Island—of low-income and Black renters being exploited, then evicted.<sup>26</sup>

I conclude with a discussion of ongoing housing discrimination in Alameda, recurring displacement, and the marginalization of the historical experiences of African Americans. While the government has been used to discriminate against African Americans, the city's majority white population bears the brunt of responsibility. Through their own self-interest, most remain complicit with the exploitation of Black Alamedans.

In *As Long as they Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods*, Stephen Meyers argues racial segregation persists in America because whites refuse to accept Black people as social equals. Black people should have some rights, but they cannot move next door.

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<sup>26</sup> Editorial, "Exploited, then evicted," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 19, 2004, <<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/editorials/article/Exploited-then-evicted-2732551.php>>, accessed April 22, 2013.



Legislation and public policy did not create (segregation), and they alone cannot rectify it. Until whites outside the South honestly and openly confront their own history of prejudice, violence, and discrimination, race relations in the United States will continue to be a source of instability and potential calamity.<sup>27</sup>

Although this study found no specific instances of violence over integration like other cities, displacement is a violent process. In addition to economic and social stress, gentrification and displacement causes emotional, psychological and mental trauma.

As Asians move towards becoming the island's majority, it is to be seen if they will replicate the patterns of exclusion practiced by whites and discriminate against African Americans. Also, it is to be seen if any fulfillment to generations of African Americans for housing will be fulfilled. Hopefully, this history will be a spark of inspiration to continue the march towards justice.

By no means is this the definitive story of Alameda or housing of even African Americans in Alameda, but it offers a starting point for an island that has not reconciled its history of ill-treatment of Black people nor have housing been opportunities equally here. Although filled with tragedy, is not a tale of sorrow. There are many moments of triumph, but there is no happy ending. This is the ongoing tale of African Americans fighting racial discrimination in the housing market. Despite the ongoing efforts to displace African Americans, Alameda is our home; and the struggle continues.

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<sup>27</sup> Meyers, *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door*, 1-2.

## **PART 1: COLORED COLONIES OF ALAMEDA**

**“If one would understand the conservatism of Alameda, read its history.”**

Paul Vigness, History of Alameda, 1939

## 1: EARLY BLACK SETTLERS IN ALAMEDA

Early colored residents in Alameda worked as domestics. Over time, as colored migration to the Alameda increased, these pioneers slowly marched towards independence. They helped other colored migrants and build community by taking in boarders and widows. A pattern of prejudice does not appear to emerge, with many living next to and with immigrants from Europe. However, few lived with “native” Europeans, unless working in a domestic capacity.

Few African Americans lived in California before the end of the Civil War. In 1860, African Americans comprised just one percent of the state’s total population. Of the 4,086 black Californians, a plurality lived in major cities. In the Bay Area, 1,176 lived in San Francisco, 18 lived in Oakland and just three in Alameda. Still, over time, small numbers did not stop black Californians from building “Parallel Communities” through their own institutions and organizations, and seeking political participation and social and economic equality for a better life for themselves and their children.<sup>28</sup>

The first black residents of Alameda initially owed their residency to their occupations, laboring for white people. Like other early migrants, these men came from throughout the Americas, including the American south, north, and the West Indies also. The first three African Americans residing in Alameda in 1860 were Oney Douglass, Thomas Warren, and Parker West. These three men worked for white families, helping them accumulate wealth. Warren and West worked for the family of James Tarlton, a Canadian raised in the northern state of New Hampshire. Warren, 32, worked as a “Servant.” Born on the island of Jamaica in 1828, he was likely born into slavery.

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<sup>28</sup> De Graaf, *Seeking El Dorado*,” Table 1: African American Population in California and Its Major Cities, 1860-1910,” 15; on black organizational efforts, De Graaf, *Seeking El Dorado*, 46; McBroome, *Parallel Communities*; Alameda census information, 1860 Census of Population.

Considering the abolition of the slave trade twenty years prior to his birth, it is likely that Tarlton purchased his labor while traveling by sea from east to west. West, 27, worked as “Laborer” on Tarlton’s property. The 27-year-old Mulatto was born in Virginia. Unlike Warren, West could not read nor write. The Census enumerator distinguished color between the two men, listing Warren as “Black” and West as “Mulatto.” Considering the two men’s occupations connote different statuses, “Servant” and “Laborer,” there appears to be an association with color and occupational possibilities. Yet, Warren’s ability to read and write gave him skills inaccessible to West. Regardless, neither Tarlton, Warren nor West is listed in Alameda by next census ten years later.<sup>29</sup>

Douglass was a 55-year-old “Laborer. Born in the slave state of Kentucky in 1805, Douglass later lived in Connecticut before moving west. He presumably traveled west with John D. Brower, a gardener and the head of the family in which Douglass worked. Although Douglass married a woman within the last year, she did not live with him in Alameda. Brower’s wife did not live with him either, although he also married within the last year. However, two of Brower’s children lived with him, along with two other gardeners and a cook, all white. Douglass left the Brower property by 1870. Brower’s farm was valued at \$50,000, thanks to the labor of Douglass. Douglass stayed in Alameda. On July 31, 1871, Douglass used his residency and citizenship to registered to vote. That Douglass, whose last name mirrors that famous abolitionist, was likely born into slavery and may have escaped to freedom in Connecticut. His marriage also demonstrates a commitment to family, at a time when such unions were not respected in other parts of the Union. His journey west may have been economic gain to benefit his

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<sup>29</sup> 1860 Census, Alameda, Roll M653\_55, p. 74, image 74, Family History Library Film 803055; Tarlton, *New Hampshire, Births and Christenings Index, 1714-1904*, Ancestry.com.

family. By registering to vote, he declared his citizenship and staked a claim as a resident of Alameda. Although his labor enriched another family, he sought the political independence to empower himself and his own family, a pattern that continued among black migrants in subsequent decades.<sup>30</sup>

By 1870, eight African Americans moved to Alameda, the majority of foreign birth (See Table 2: “African Diaspora Population in Alameda, California, 1870, by Age, Birthplace and Occupation”). This group of men, aged between 30 and 50, came to Alameda from throughout the African Diaspora: two migrated from the “West Indies,” two from “Africa,” two from Mexico, and one from Kentucky and South Carolina each. One lived with the white family he worked for, others lived with whites, while other African Americans lived together, residentially independent of white families.<sup>31</sup>

While prominent whites may have worked to build the early municipality of Alameda, blacks worked to maintain their homes. Alfred Harris, a 37-year-old cook from Kentucky worked in the home of Dr. W.P. Gibbons.<sup>32</sup> Gibbons migrated to Alameda in 1861. An early white settler of Alameda, Gibbons helped establish the Alameda Free Library and served as one of the founding directors of the local school system. Yet it was a black man who prepared the foods that fed Gibbons and his family.<sup>33</sup> Harris may have had a room in the house, or a separate quarters in back of the house, the attic, or the basement. Not all black Alamedans lived with whites they worked for.

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<sup>30</sup> 1860 Census Alameda, Roll M652\_55, p. 71, image 71, Family History Film 803005, AncestryLibrary.com; John D. Brower, 1870 U.S. Census, Alameda, California, Roll M593\_68, p. 68, image 39, Library Film 545567, AncestryLibrary.com; Oney Douglass Voter Registration, California State Library, California History Section; Great Registers, 1866-1898; Collection Number: 4 - 2A; CSL Roll Number: 1; FHL Roll # 976446.

<sup>31</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Population.

<sup>32</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Alameda, Alameda, California, Roll M593\_68, Page 6A, image 15, Family History Library Film 545567.

<sup>33</sup> Editorial: Dr. W.P. Gibbons, *Pacific Medical Journal*, Volume 40, No. 1: 383. January 1887; *Alameda County: the eden flower of California*, Tribune Publishing Co., 1898, 82.

Two laborers, Alex Lishander, 35, and J. Antonn, 50, were born on “West India Island.” Another man, a Mulatto named John Aston, 30, was born in Mexico. The three men worked as Laborers and lived with an Irishman, John Lewis, and his family.<sup>34</sup> One laborer, J. Kelley, 50, of Ohio, lived with a white male laborer named O. Douglas.<sup>35</sup> Their residency together demonstrates a lack of prejudice between different groups, or the marginal position given to some Europeans. This proximity of interracial residency, on more equitable terms, sharply contrasts with later constructions of residential space in Alameda.

Next door to Lishander, Antonn, and Lewis in 1870 resided three other black Laborers: Jo and Sam Meworth, and John Merva. Jo was born about 1823 in “Africa,” like the younger Sam, born about 1836. Likely Sam’s older brother, Jo’s personal estate was listed as worth \$100. Living with the two men was another man, John Merva, a 44-year-old Laborer from Mexico. That this group of men lived together demonstrates family ties, racial solidarity, and that some level of racial prejudice existed in Alameda at this time, despite a small but concentrated presence of blacks.<sup>36</sup>

Alameda’s population grew immensely in the 1870s and 1880s. The city’s population increased from 1,557 in 1870 to over 5,708 in 1880 thanks to municipal incorporation, transportation improvements and increased squatting by Anglo settlers. In 1869, the township briefly became the western terminus of the Transcontinental Railroad; however, months later this titled transferred to Oakland. In 1871, a bridge connecting Bay

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<sup>34</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Alameda, Alameda, California, Roll M593\_68, p. 14A, image 31, Family History Library Film: 545567.

<sup>35</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Alameda, Alameda, California, Roll M593\_68, p. 18A, image 39, Family History Library Film: 545567.

<sup>36</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Alameda, Alameda, California, Roll M593\_68, p. 14A, image 31, Family History Library Film: 545567, a bracket appears around all the black Alameda residents in this census. It is unclear if an enumerator, another Census official, or people who scanned the file created this, but a clear demarcation the small but concentrated presence of blacks was made.

Farm Island to the main Peninsula was erected. In 1872, after a campaign by the city's first newspaper editor, A.K. Krauth, city leaders incorporated the three townships of Alameda, Encinal and Woodstock into one city: Alameda. Alameda began to transform into a suburb for the capitalist class of San Francisco seeking an escape from city life.<sup>37</sup> One of those settlers was Amos Mecartney.

### **Was Amos Mecartney a Mulatto?**

Mecartney was born in Pennsylvania in 1828. After working in mines during Gold Rush, he later settled in San Francisco. After generating wealth in land speculation, he moved to Bay Farm Island in 1873 with his wife, Mary (Dollie). They raised five daughters in “one of the great mansions of Alameda, a two story octagonal house with bell tower, surrounded by gardens.”<sup>38</sup> Today, Mecartney has a major street on Bay Farm Island named after him. Yet in praising his financial acumen, his role as an Alameda settler, and his home's architectural greatness, historians have neglected to mention Mecartney may have been Black.<sup>39</sup>

Mecartney was “Mulatto,” according to the 1880 manuscript census. Mecartney's wife and children, however, are listed as white. That the enumerator made these racial distinctions suggests either Mecartney, his wife, or the enumerator identified him Mulatto. His neighbors, enumerated prior to his household, are listed as Chinese. The enumerator made clear racial distinctions while conducting the census. On a subsequent

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<sup>37</sup> Merlin, “Geography of Alameda.”

<sup>38</sup> Amos Mecartney, from book, Woody Minor, *Bay Farm Island: A History*.  
<<http://genforum.genealogy.com/ca/alameda/messages/567.html>>, [Accessed April 17, 2012].

<sup>39</sup> According to Marjorie R. Bardeen, director of Library Services for the Historical Society of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Amos' parents were John and Maria Bachman. “Maria was definitely of German heritage and most likely John was Scottish or Scots-Irish. The marking of Amos as mulatto was definitely a mistake,” correspondence with author, May 9, 2013. However, I include this possibility in my discussion.

census of 1900, Mecartney is listed as white on a subsequent census. It may be possible that Mecartney was “passing” at white when he first moved to Alameda.<sup>40</sup>

The practice of passing occurs when a person of a lighter skin color assimilates into the white majority culture by pretending to be white. Race, or color, was determined phenotypically. With this dependence on appearance, a person of lighter hue could be mistaken for being white or could intentionally use their appearance to “pass” for white, or rather, gain acceptance as a member of the Anglo society.<sup>41</sup> Considering the legacy of discrimination in California against African Americans, it is conceivable that many African Americans could migrate to California and use their lighter skin color to access privileges denied to them otherwise. In 1852, and later in 1873, California enacted statutes prohibiting interracial marriage. “All marriages of white persons with Negroes, Mongolians, members of the Malay race, or mulattoes are illegal and void.”<sup>42</sup> As a Mulatto, Amos’ marriage to Dollie would have been criminally punishable, or a possible cause for extra-legal violence in the form of lynching.<sup>43</sup> The American racial order positioned whites over blacks, and a person’s classifications impacted the availability of opportunities.<sup>44</sup> Mecartney’s passing for white would have been necessary, for his gains as a “capitalist” may have been obstructed and his interracial relationship null and void.

Mecartney may have been the most prominent Mulatto in Alameda and even San

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<sup>40</sup> 1880 U.S. Census, Alameda, California, District 29, Roll 62, Family History Film 1254062, p. 626C; 1900 U.S. Census,

<sup>41</sup> For a political and legal discussion of passing, specifically in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, see, Golub, M. (2005), *Plessy as “Passing”*: Judicial Responses to Ambiguously Raced Bodies in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. *Law & Society Review*, 39: 563–600; for a fictional account, see James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Sherman, French and Company

<sup>42</sup> Irving G. Tragen, *Statutory Prohibitions against Interracial Marriage*, 32 CAL. L. REV. 269 (1944), 272.

<sup>43</sup> Although lynching common during this era in southern states, Mexicans more likely to be lynching in California than African Americans, Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West: 1850-1935*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Hochschild JL, Powell BM. Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half-Breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race. *Studies in American Political Development*. 2008;22(1):59-96.



Francisco,<sup>45</sup> but he would not have been the only African American calling the East Bay peninsula home.

### **Colored domestics and laborers move to Alameda**

In 1880, the black population of Alameda increased from 8 to 39.<sup>46</sup> Most blacks worked as laborers and rented apartments. Many colored people lived together with families or with people from their native country.

John and Maria Albert migrated from Georgia. The married couple rented their home. John worked as a laborer while Maria's occupation listed as "keeping house." Their children, John Jr., Susan, and Peter lived with them. John Jr. attended school while the family lived on Oak Street. Frank Cutter, a married laborer, lived alone on Oak Street. Three other colored people lived on Oak Street: Rebecca Harris, Annie Monroe, and James Brown. Harris and Monroe were both widows. Harris, the head of the house, worked as a servant elsewhere while Monroe's occupation listed as keeping house. In the 1881 City Directory; however, Monroe is listed as a seamstress.<sup>47</sup> Brown, a widower, worked as a bootblack and lodged with two women. Libbie (Lydia) Butler lived on Broadway with two boarders: Melinda Noel and Sara Weeks. Born in Africa, Butler, 60,

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<sup>45</sup> Mecartney may not have been Mulatto and the enumerator may have made a mistake. Mecartney is not listed in other histories of Black San Francisco, which may suggest he was white or that he successfully passed. See Douglas Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980; Albert Broussard, *In Search of the Promised Land: African American Migration to San Francisco, 1900-1945*, in De Graaf, *Seeking El Dorado*. According to library staff at the Lancaster History Museum, the census enumerator was mistaken. "I was able to find out a bit about the family of Amos Mecartney. His father was John Mecartney and his mother was Maria Bachman Mecartney. Maria was definitely of German heritage and most likely John was Scottish or Scots-Irish. The marking of Amos as mulatto was definitely a mistake. I believe John was an Innkeeper in Conestoga Township from about 1830-1850. He was the county auditor at one time and involved in the insurance industry." Correspondence with Marjorie R. Bardeen, director of library services, Lancaster History, May 9, 2013, with author.

<sup>46</sup> 1880 Census of Population.

<sup>47</sup> Bishop's Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1881-82. San Francisco: Directory Publishing Co., 1881.

was a widow. Noel, 14, and Weeks, 50, listed no occupations.<sup>48</sup> The three lived next door to three Chinese men that worked as launderers. All of these early colored pioneers in Alameda rented their homes. Most appear to live near Railroad Ave in Alameda's burgeoning downtown.<sup>49</sup>

Cape Verdean Antonio Lopez worked as a coachman while his Mexican wife, Susan, kept the house. The census enumerator distinguished the Lopez' as black, although their next door neighbors, also Mexican, listed as white. John Williams also migrated from Cape de Verde. Williams, a "Mulatto," lived with two other Cape Verdeans: Steven and Joseph Forts. The three single men worked as woodchoppers. Khabral [sic?] and Argust Dominques migrated from Cape de Verde. The two lived next door to German, Portuguese, and Irish immigrant laborers. Joseph Frank and Flem Miudo of Portugal were also listed as Mulattos. These two men lived with a Canadian immigrant. Manuel Fernandes and Lewis Gomes, two laborers, also migrated from Portugal.<sup>50</sup>

A woman lived by herself. Maria Smith, a widow, lived with her four children. Her occupation was listed as "keeping home," while she lived on Encinal Ave. Ignatia Degawar of Mexico worked as a washerwoman while living next door to German laborers.<sup>51</sup>

The pattern of colored people living with the families they worked for continued. Lewis Joplin, 85, lived and worked as a servant for the Gentry family. Born in 1795 in

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<sup>48</sup> 1880 Manuscript Census.

<sup>49</sup> 1880 Manuscript Census.

<sup>50</sup> 1880 Manuscript Census.

<sup>51</sup> 1880 Manuscript Census.

the slave state of Kentucky, both of the widower's parents also born in that state.<sup>52</sup>

Gomes is also listed in the city directory as working as a gardener for a family on the West End.

The residential pattern of early blacks is not clear. Many colored families disappear from the *Oakland City Directory* by 1884. The directories do not list race or ethnicity. A search for names between 1880-1891 suggest Butler left Alameda in 1884-85, Joplin left (or died) in 1884-85, although they may not have been included in the subsequent years. The Directories show Harris and Monroe continued to live together until 1889, and James A. Hackett appears for the first time in the 1887 directory at a residence at 1524 Oak, approximately north of Railroad Ave.<sup>53</sup>

However, a clear pattern of black residents striving for independence does become clear. Colored Alameda residents rent their own apartments and share their homes with other people of the African Diaspora. Some may have lived with other immigrants, but most appear to cluster together. We might imagine that these early colored migrants shared meals, stories, and social activities together. Many also worked cooperatively in their occupations and likely in other endeavors. This pattern of independence continues as a black migration to Alameda increases and some blacks purchase and build their own homes.

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<sup>52</sup> 1880 Manuscript Census.

<sup>53</sup> Bishop's Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1881-82. San Francisco: Directory Publishing Co., 1881; McKenney's Oakland City Directory: Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1883-84. San Francisco: L. M. McKenney & CO, 1883; McKenney's Oakland City Directory: Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1884-85. San Francisco: L. M. McKenney & CO, 1884; Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1886-87. Oakland: McKenney Directory Company, October 1887; Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1888-89. Oakland: McKenney Directory Company, October 1888; Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1891. San Francisco: F.M. Husted, January 1, 1891.



## **2: PIONEERING BLACK HOMEOWNERS: THE HACKETT FAMILY AND THE FIRST NEGROES TO OWN THEIR ISLAND HOMES**

One of Sadie Emma Hackett's earliest memories was moving into their new house on Union Street. Born in Roaring River, North Carolina in January 1885, Sadie's father, James Alexander Hackett, moved to San Francisco the same year with his cousin Bishop Charles Calvin Petty, an evangelist with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) church. J. A. Hackett moved to Alameda in 1886. Two years later, Sadie and her mother, Alice, joined James in their Oak Street apartment. In 1890, the family became the first Negro homeowners on the Alameda peninsula. "I can remember as a little girl that he sent my mother and me down to the new house from the rented one," Sadie recalled in a 1978 interview. "And I know that when the express man came with some of the furniture, that I went to the door to open it up for the furniture."<sup>54</sup> That Sadie's earliest memory was moving into her home illustrates the significance of black homeownership and its historical centrality to the experience of African Americans in Alameda.

### **James A. and Alice Hackett**

James' father, Orange Hackett, was born into slavery in about 1824 in Wilkes County, North Carolina. Orange married an enslaved woman named Matilda, owned by a Colonel Petty. Matilda gave birth to eight sons and two daughters. Three of their sons migrated to California at the end of the century: Charles C., Sylvester H., and James.<sup>55</sup> The elder Hackett brother migrated to California in the early 1880s. Bishop Petty

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<sup>54</sup> Sadie Calbert (Hackett), interview by Jesse J. Warr, III, "Interview with Mrs. Sadie Calbert," *Oral History Project, Afro-Americans in San Francisco Prior to World War II*, San Francisco: San Francisco African-American Historical and Cultural Society, 1978, from here on "Calbert interview." Specifics about James Hackett from family history at African American Museum and Library of Oakland (AAMLO), Ruth Lasartemay (Hackett), "Hackett, James Alexander," MS25 Hackett Family Papers, Hackett Family Collection, AAMLO.

<sup>55</sup> Ruth Lasartemay (Hackett), "Orange Hackett Family", MS25 Hackett Family Papers, Hackett Family Collection, AAMLO.

pastored at the Starr King Zion church in San Francisco. “California was considered a lucrative field of employment and educational advantages for Negroes as the Chinese were being excluded from California under [the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882]” The first Negro to have his home built in Alameda, his immediate descendants lived in the home at 1608 Union Street until its sale and demolition in 1976.<sup>56</sup>

By 1890, only 57 blacks called Alameda home amidst a population of 11,165 people.<sup>57</sup> A 1921 fire destroyed most of the manuscript census of 1890, creating a great challenge in charting the black population of Alameda at the turn of the century.<sup>58</sup> However, by focusing on the activities of the Hackett family and other black pioneer families, we understand the efforts to build community and how the intimate network of Blacks in the East Bay built racial solidarity among black migrants. Early black pioneers in Alameda used their homes as places of racial, social, and cultural empowerment, despite a level of isolation from the white population and an emerging pattern of residential segregation.

James moved to Alameda to escape the metropolis of San Francisco and provide a better environment for his family. “He thought it was a quiet residential town.” While in their rented home on Oak Street, north of Railroad Ave, two more children had joined the family: Nora and Myrtle. After saving his earnings as a porter, James built the Union Street home to provide the family with more space.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ruth Lasartemay (Hackett), “Hackett, James Alexander,” Hackett Family Papers, Hackett Family Collection, AAMLO.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Census, 1890, *Census of the United States*.

<sup>58</sup> “The 1890 Census,” National Archives, <<http://www.archives.gov/research/census/1890/1890.html>> (Accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Lasartemay, “Hackett, James Alexander,”; Sadie Calbert interview.

Although the only black family on the block, Sadie recalls playing with other children in each other's backyards. Although some whites viewed themselves as "too good" to associate with Negroes, most of the neighbors were friendly. "There were so few Black people that these racial conflicts didn't come up too much," Sadie recalled. Occasionally, a "White kid would call you 'nigger', and then there were fisticuffs," because black children would not accept being called derogatory names. "Anytime anybody would call me 'nigger', I'd slap them."<sup>60</sup> Calbert's tenacity for commanding respect came from a strict household that stressed education. The children not only learned discipline but to be proud of their ancestry.

As the family grew, so did the home. The City of Alameda Planning Department records show numerous permits for home improvements at the Hackett's Union Street home between 1900 and 1920.<sup>61</sup> Over time, additional bedrooms and a dining room were constructed in the home. The children helped with the chores and were expected to excel in school. Tyra's diploma from his 1908 graduation from Haight School is included in the Hackett Family Collection at AAMLO.<sup>62</sup> Books dotted the Hackett home. Calbert studied Latin in school and also received private French lessons from a Haitian professor as a child.<sup>63</sup> Not only did their residence serve as a center for learning, but also the children were encouraged to do well in school.

Alice would grow vegetables in their backyard. At one point, the owner of a vacant lot behind their home let the family use that land as a garden. Alice created a huge

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<sup>60</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>61</sup> Print-out of Permit Applications for 1608 Union St, Alameda, City of Alameda Planning Department, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Hackett family Collection, AAMLO; Vickie Smith, "Early African American Pioneers of Alameda," presentation, undated.

<sup>63</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

vegetable garden and raised “Alameda Sweet Corn,” string beans, potatoes, beets, carrots and “the loveliest beefsteak tomatoes.” Alice would also grow flowers in the front yard, and until James began using the driveway for his drayage business, she grew violets alongside their home. Keeping up the home was a family affair. The children would help scrub their wooden floors and clean the windows. The family washed clothes with a washboard and boiling water. Calbert described her mother as “a loving, domestic person who lived with her family.”<sup>64</sup> In many ways, the Hackett family represented gender roles common at the turn of the century, with men occupying more public spheres and women in domestic spheres. However, the ability to run a growing household with 12 children is no easy feat, especially with the home serving as a center of community activity.

James co-founded Oakland’s Cooper A.M.E. Zion Church in 1898, later serving as the chairman of the church’s Board of Trustees.<sup>65</sup> “Since there was no Negro church in Alameda, he organized a Sunday school that met on Sunday afternoon in his home on Union Street after he returned home from services in his church.” Providing a place for religious education and expression in absence of a Black church in Alameda, the Hackett home served the spiritual needs of the growing black population of Alameda. “The Sunday School was nondenominational as children of different faiths attended it.”<sup>66</sup>

The home also hosted large social and political gatherings. On Sundays, nearby relatives and other black families would join the Hackett’s on Union Street for dinners. Nearly thirty people would be seated at two long tables in their dining hall. Family members would play music on an organ James purchased. Sadie’s brother liked to play

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<sup>64</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>65</sup> “James A. Hackett” document on letterhead; *San Francisco Pacific Coast Appeal*, October 29, 1904; 4, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Lasartemay, “Hackett, James Alexander,” 2.



popular songs while Mr. Hackett preferred hymnals on Sundays. Friends and guests would stop by after church. “They’d just come ring the bell, take their things off and come sit down.” Few white families would visit, although a few came for meals when Sadie was very young.<sup>67</sup> Considering Hackett’s involvement with the Alameda County Branch of the Afro-American League, along with Black Alamedan Frank Butler and Oakland activists R. C. Coleman, George E. Watkins, publisher of the *Oakland Sunshine*, and Oakland’s first Black city employee John A. Wilds.<sup>68</sup> Thus the first Hackett’s home served as a center for spirituality, socializing, and likely political organizing.

### **Sylvester R. and Marie Hackett**

In 1895, Sylvester R. Hackett and his wife Marie moved to 1828 Grand Street. The Hackett home, just blocks from the Estuary, sat in the center of what was formerly the Encinal Township. S.R. Hackett’s family became the second black family to own their own home in Alameda. Like his brother’s family’s home, the Grand Street home would become a social place for black Alamedans to meet and enjoy each others company. When Eugene Pasqual Lasartemay married Ruth Alice-Elena Hackett, the ceremony took place on April 7, 1929, within the same home she was born in.<sup>69</sup>

When holidays came around, black Alamedans would celebrate together. Eventually, the three Hackett brothers in California all lived in Alameda. Families would go from house to house, gathering at each other’s Christmas tree.

“And so they would go from house to house. Then there was the Sloan family, too. So, between the four ... Everybody would have a great big Christmas tree. You’d have that almost hit the ceiling. You wouldn’t have to pay more than fifty or seventy-five cents. Those were the days when you lit it with candles. And

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<sup>67</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>68</sup> “Preparing for Election: Oakland Colored Men are Organizing Committees Appointed to See that Voters are Properly Registered,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1896.

<sup>69</sup> MS25 Hackett Family College, photographs list S.R. Hackett as second black homeowner in city;

everybody had a big Christmas tree. And we'd go from house to house, you know. It would be one night that all of the families... sometimes during the week... that they would gather at each other's Christmas tree.<sup>70</sup>

The families would have a gift exchange followed by a big dinner. Alice would cook the meals with the assistance of the children.<sup>71</sup> At a time when electricity could be scarce, the colored families of Alameda regularly joined together for meals and spiritual nourishment. Their homes provided a central place that, absence a black church in the city, they would not have otherwise without a commute by train or ferry to Oakland or San Francisco. Black homes in Alameda provided a haven for community building.

Alameda's black population nearly tripled in the last decade of the nineteenth century from 57 to 144. While most rented their homes or lives as lodgers, a small group began to own their own homes. John D. Almaida, who worked as a bootblack, or shoeshine man, rented a home on Ninth Street in what later became the West End. He lived next door to Mary Cruz and her granddaughter Mary Barnard. Cruz owned her home and may have sublet the next-door apartment to Almaida. Both listed as being born in Asia. John and Florence Hansen owned their home at 1109 Pacific Ave. Nettie, Florence's daughter, lived with the married couple and worked as a domestic servant. A widower, William H. Butler, owned his home at 1316 Oak St and worked as a coachman.<sup>72</sup> The Clinton family lived on Clinton Ave. Lee Clinton worked as a hotel steward, while his wife, Rachael, kept the house. Rachael came to California on the same train as Alice Hackett. Also nearby the Hackett's and Clintons lived the Sloan family at 1814 Grand St. Davis and Lizzie owned their home without a mortgage. The family had five daughters and one son. These early pioneering black homeowners primarily lived in

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<sup>70</sup> MS25 Hackett Family College; Collection 95: Folder, "Eugene Lasartemay," Lasartemay Papers.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> 1900 Manuscript Census.

the area where the Encinal township stood before the peninsula incorporated into the city of Alameda in 1872.<sup>73</sup>

Many of the black renters came from throughout the African Diaspora and lived primarily on the north side of town. A number of black Alamedans came from Cape Verde, including Manuel M. Perry and his wife, Stella. He worked as a “Mate on Whaler.” The two rented a home with their son Bennie. George Cuthbert migrated from Jamaica while his wife Maria E. was born in China. Their son Clarence and niece lived with the family. Frank Lopas, a day laborer, came from Brazil. His wife of 21 years, Victorian, was born in California in 1854. Their oldest son, Frank, Jr. worked as a day laborer also, while their other three daughters and son lived with them, but did not attend school. Jesse M. Robinson, a barber, lived with his wife Ellen K. at 1205 Buena Vista Ave. Ida May worked as a servant but lived at 1525 Bay St, south of Railroad Ave.<sup>74</sup>

### **Colored borders and lodgers in Alameda**

Boarders, lodgers, and hostlers lived throughout Alameda. Many frequently lived with white ethnic immigrants. Minnie Taylor and her daughter Susie lived with a boarder, Lillian Carter at 1729 Buena Vista. Carter was born in Mexico, while Taylor, a laundress, migrated from Kentucky, the birthplace of her parents. Carter and the Taylor’s lived next door to Richard and Grace Johnson. The Johnson couple both worked in laundry. Walter Anderson lived in a hostel on St. Charles along with Irish immigrants. James H.E. and Laura Francis were “lodgers” in the home of Tillie Burnell on Park Street. Myra V. Simmons was a boarder at 1162 Broadway Street and worked as a servant the previous

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<sup>73</sup> 1900 Manuscript Census; Calbert, interview, 1978; property records at the Alameda County Assessor-Recorders office frequently reference the Hackett properties as being originally located on the Encinal township maps.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

year while Julia Sprigg, a day laborer, was a lodger at 1616 Park Street. Geo W. Waters, a day laborer, lodged at 1614 Park Street. Thomas Williams, a milk wagon driver, boarded at 2051 Pacific Ave. William Williams, a West Indies native, boarded with British Guyana-born Charles Luna. Williams worked as a servant at 483 Santa Clara Ave. Many lived near railroad stations, desirable locations due to transit access. Most lived in the most dense areas. These black Alamedans lived throughout Alameda in 1900, suggesting that residential mobility was not restricted; however, few lived in the large, country-style estates, unless due to their occupations.

Many black Alamedans still lived with their employers. Lillian Chapman lived with the Beck family at 2117 Railroad Ave. The 18-year-old worked as a servant for the Becks. Bertha Dorety lived with the Shannon family at 1610 Central Ave. Florence Goodman lived with the Lombard family. Ben Lombard worked as the City Clerk. Charlotte Jones worked as a servant for the Brown family at 2126 Clement Ave. Emma Nixon worked as a servant in the home of Sanford Bennett at 2311 Buena Vista Ave. These individuals did not live with their own families. They lived with the whites they worked for. They worked in areas with few other colored residents. Their residency rested on their domestic occupations.

Although many blacks worked in low-wage jobs, many maintained a sense of independence with their own homes and apartments. Most black homeowners appear to live on the peninsula's north side. Two years later, the northern side of Alameda would become the inner harbor of the island of Alameda. The estuary between Alameda and Oakland was dredged to make the harbor more competitive for the region. This also led to the industrialization of the northern side of town, while other areas kept their

residential charm. Those few blacks that lived in other areas on the island's East End and in the Gold Coast area—near Alameda's beaches—worked in domestic capacities.

Although some exceptions to this spatial separation existed, these patterns appear not to be intentionally proscribed. Due to the limitations of this study, the focus on black residents in early twentieth century will focus primarily on the experiences of the Hackett family. Most black Alamedans have been renters; however, focusing on this early home-owning family lives inform illustrates the challenges and opportunities of black Alameda.

In 1900, James and Alice lived with seven of their children in their home at 1608 Union Street, including Sadie Emma, Nora, Myrtle, Luther, Arthur, Latrecia and Charles S. A baby, Reuben, had passed away before the census. The family owned the home free with no mortgage. Ten years later, Sadie moved from the home. She previously worked as a governess for a family, but it is not clear if she lived with that family or moved out when she married. Myrtle and Nora also moved from the home, and it appears Charles, who would've been 11, passed away. Besides James and Alice's other children, Latrecia, Paul, Alice E., Grace, and Josephine, James' younger brother Charles also lived with the family along with their nephew Winston.<sup>75</sup>

James' brother, Sylvester, lived at 1828 Grand Street, about two blocks away. The family owned their home, but had a mortgage. With his wife Myra (Marie), and four children, lived a boarder, a widow named Margaret Gaul.<sup>76</sup> By 1910, living with Sylvester and Marie were their children: Tyra D., Bert D., Roy H., Reuben, sons; and

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<sup>75</sup> 1900 Census, 1910 Census, "Hackett Winston, H.," MS25 Hackett Family Collection, AAMLO. Orange Hackett had another son named Winston, James and Sylvester's brother who migrated to Texas. Presumably, Winston is his son.

<sup>76</sup> 1900 Census.

Ruth E., Deborah E., and Esther, daughters. Gaul, now 94, continued living with the family, along with two boarders, John H. Parks and William Bell.<sup>77</sup>

By 1910, Alameda's black population increased to 211, still less than 1 percent.<sup>78</sup> That year, Oakland had just surpassed San Francisco as the largest settlement of blacks in northern California. With less expensive housing, after the 1906 earthquake, many blacks migrated to the East Bay.<sup>79</sup>

Two years earlier, a formerly enslaved black man turned military colonel, Allen Allensworth, co-founded the all-black town of Allensworth in Tulare County. The town sought "to enable colored people to live on an equity with whites and encourage industry and thrift in the race."<sup>80</sup> In about 1912, James Hackett built a home in Allensworth. A supporter of Booker T. Washington, "He figured that if this was going to be a Negro establishment, why he wanted to be involved with it, because he was a great 'race man'."<sup>81</sup> James subscribed to the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine for years prior to moving to Allensworth.<sup>82</sup> The Hackett's Allensworth home served as the first school until the townspeople erected a permanent building. The home served as a place for religious services also, until the church was built.<sup>83</sup> Again, the Hackett family sacrificed any notion of privacy in their Allensworth home for the benefit of the 'race'.

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<sup>77</sup> 1910 Manuscript Census.

<sup>78</sup> 1910 Census of Population.

<sup>79</sup> Lawrence B. De Graaf and Quintard Taylor, "Introduction: African Americans in California History, California in African American History," in *Seeking El Dorado*, eds. Lawrence B. De Graaf, Keith Mulford, and Quintard Taylor, Seattle: Washington, 2001, 18.

<sup>80</sup> Delores Nason McBroome, "Harvests of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment in Allensworth and Little Liberia," 149-180, in *Seeking El Dorado*, eds. Lawrence B. De Graaf, Keith Mulford, and Quintard Taylor, Seattle: Washington, 2001, 154.

<sup>81</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978; James Hackett also listed as local representative for Booker T. Washington's Negro Business League, "Report of the annual convention of the National Negro Business League." National Negro Business League: 1914, 1919, 1921.

<sup>82</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>83</sup> Lasartemay, "Hackett, James Alexander."

The *Colored directory of the leading Citizens of Northern California* lists most of the Hackett family at 1608 Union. About thirty Alameda families are listed in the directory, including the Clinton's and Sloan's. Many other residents are listed at the one of the Hackett homes, with the Hackett's being the largest family listed. The directory also includes residents of Berkeley and Oakland.<sup>84</sup>

### **Hackett's move to Allensworth**

Most of the family remained in Alameda until about 1915. James, Alice and four of the children moved to Allensworth.<sup>85</sup> In 1920, Myrtle, Nora, Terecia, and James A. Jr. occupied the Hackett home on Union Street. In Allensworth, James, Alice, Paul, Alice E., Grace and Josephine lived on a farm on Stowe Street.<sup>86</sup> The town ultimately declined due to a lack of irrigated water, drought, and contamination in their water.<sup>87</sup> The family grew and sold vegetables—a profession James engaged in for many years in the Bay Area—and remained in Allensworth until 1932. An Allensworth branch of the NAACP was founded in 1921, and the town also supported a chapter of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.<sup>88</sup> James died in 1924. Alice died in 1932, less than two weeks before their home burned down. "So then we came back up to the family home in Alameda," Calbert said.<sup>89</sup> The husband and wife are buried in Allensworth.<sup>90</sup> Considering that the family moved to Allensworth after the death of the town's father shows the Hackett's commitment to black improvement. Also, considering that many colored

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<sup>84</sup> *Colored Directory of the Leading Citizens of Northern California*, Oakland, CA: Tilghman Printing Co., 1916-1917, 69.

<sup>85</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>86</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>87</sup> McBroome, "Harvests," 2001, 157.

<sup>88</sup> McBroome, "Harvests," 156-157.

<sup>89</sup> Calbert, interview, 1978.

<sup>90</sup> The author visited Allensworth and the Hackett home, July 2011.

people dislike agricultural labor, the willingness of James, 53, and Alice, 47, to work on farms shows both their agricultural roots and tenacity.

### ***Alameda's Diverse Black Diaspora***

Despite growth in Alameda's overall population in the decade of World War I and slight black migration to the Bay Area, few colored families migrated into Alameda in the 1910s. However, the early in-migration set the stage for the creation of a black community in Alameda. Black families shared their homes to other migrants, opened their doors to widows and orphans, and boarders. Black migrants used their homes to sustain chain migrations, helping other family members and friends settle in the region. Often times, families would live with people from their same country or state, but often times, colored people from throughout the Diaspora lived together. This merging of multiple cultures created a diverse black population that worked together to sustain community. Many of these early colored families joined black churches and organizations, and the women likely joined the budding colored women's club movement of the West Coast. The emergence of the NAACP in the Bay Area involved some, while some of the Hackett family left Alameda to help establish the Allensworth Colony.

Meanwhile, a pattern of prejudice appears to emerge. Most black homeowners moved to the northern side of Alameda. As this area became an island, it became the densest, most industrial part of the island. While it is not clear if realtors intentionally steered black renters and homebuyers to this part of town initially, other areas of Alameda did seek some level of exclusivity. Merlin notes: "As late as 1913, Alamedans were striving for a certain amount of exclusiveness as can be seen in the advertisements for the Waterside Terrace along Fernside Boulevard, and for other avenues such as Bayo



Vista and Fairview.<sup>91</sup> This “exclusiveness” may have been economic or racially motivated; however, Merlin does not explain. The next section focuses on the spatial restrictions on black residency in Alameda, the fate of Sylvester and Myra Hackett’s home on Grand Street, and the federal codification of discrimination in Alameda’s housing market in the form of redlining.

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<sup>91</sup> Merlin, “Alameda,” 59.

### **3: PATTERN OF PREJUDICE: REDLINING, RACIAL RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS AND THE ORIGINS OF RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION IN ALAMEDA**

Overt and covert racial segregation did not emerge in Alameda until the early 20th century. While the overall island population increased and nearby cities' colored populations increased, Alameda's colored population remained stagnant. The colored population of Alameda increased by 6 people between 1910 and 1920. The household of S.R. Hackett shrank from 12 to 8 as his children and boarders moved out, and Gaul—who would have been 104—passed away. The family even adopted an orphan. His brother James moved to Allensworth with his wife and four of their children. Some of the young men may have been drafted to fight in Europe. Despite increased migration during World War I and the city's population growth from 16,464 to 23,383, few colored people moved into Alameda.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, patterns of prejudice to restrict colored residential mobility. In addition to racial restrictive covenants emerging, discrimination against nonwhites became codified in the HOLC's "Residential Security Maps." Finally, the site of the Hackett's home on Grand Street became the site of a Depression-era emergency public works project to build a new energy substation in 1936. In addition to the employment challenges of the Great Depression, discrimination against colored renters and homebuyers confined blacks to the north side of the island and prevented wealth accumulation for nonwhites in the decades prior to World War 2.

#### **Negroes on the North side**

In 1920, a similar pattern of colored renters, homeowners, and servants continued in Alameda. While colored renters and homeowners primarily lived on the island's north side, a few servants lived with the families they worked for on the East End.

Albert Vanderberg, his wife Louranie, their three sons, and his brother- and mother-in-law lived at 1928 Lafayette Street. Vanderberg worked at a shipyard while Louranie's brother, Edward Collins, worked as a truck driver. Edward and Louranie's mother worked as a servant for a private family, but lived with her children.

A widow named "Lula" worked for the family of Albert V. Clark at 700 Paru St. her four month-old daughter, Mary, lived with her while she cooked for the Clark's. Pauline Ford lived as a servant for the family of Henry E. Stow at 1617 Central Ave. Mary Whittacker worked as a live-in cook for the Higgins family. Melvina Williams cooked at the Emmons home at 891 Union Street<sup>92</sup> These colored women all lived in the Gold Coast area of Alameda, known for its large Victorian Mansions. Yet their residency rested solely upon their place as domestic servants. Still, these laborers likely waged silent battles for independence, despite living in homes they would otherwise be restricted from entering, especially on a strictly social basis.

Colored renters lived throughout Alameda, albeit mainly on the north end of town. Nelson and Willie Scott rented a home at 763 Buena Vista. John Wheat, Nelson's father in law, was a retired soldier, while Nelson worked as a messenger at a sugar refinery. Wilford and Armenia Strickland lived at 1532. The Jamaica native worked as a shipping clerk for an insurance company. James Chandler and his wife rented a space at 1617 Park St and operated a second hand store together. Walter and Marie Kisack rented their home at 1922 Lafayette Street, the northern most point on that street in Alameda.

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<sup>92</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

Walter worked as a mechanic. Jephthah [sic?] Reese, his wife Minnie, and their son rented a home at 2310 “Bank Alley,” a location that appears to be near modern-day park Street. On the same street, William Bell and three children lived with them. Christopher and Amanda Young rented a home at 1726 Buena Vista Ave. William and Hallie Wundus rented their home at 1612 Webster.<sup>93</sup> The couple is listed in Tilghman’s *Colored Directory*.<sup>94</sup> Although colored renters lived throughout the city, a sample shows most were concentrated north of Railroad (Lincoln) Ave.<sup>95</sup> Even Leah Lopez, a black woman living with a white Portuguese husband lived at 2316 Lincoln Ave.<sup>96</sup>

A number of colored men and women owned their homes. Rachael Clinton kept their home at 1525 Morton St after her husband died. With her two sons, she also adopted a ward of the state, a child named Betty that attended school. J. Monroe and Ellen Samuels owned their home at 1732 Buena Vista, although both were unemployed. Joseph Baptiste and his wife Julia owned their home at 1010 Lincoln Ave. He worked as a shipmate. The family migrated from Portugal. William Hoover owned their family home at 2019 Encinal, near Chestnut Station. These homes provided a place for families to live and grow together, and gave their children access to schools.

Housing in Alameda also provided colored residents a refuge from the Jim Crow south and a place of opportunity. The Kimbrough family fled Ku Klux Klan violence and settled in Alameda. Samuel and Martha Kimbrough owned their home at 1714 Lincoln Ave. Samuel worked as a blacksmith<sup>97</sup> while his son Jack later worked as an elevator

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<sup>93</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>94</sup> Tilghman, “Colored Directory,” 69.

<sup>95</sup> A mapping with BatchGeo.com of addresses of “blacks” and “Mulattos” on the 1920 census with the last names A-K shows a pattern of colored residents living above Lincoln Ave.

<sup>96</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>97</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

man while attending University of California, Berkeley. The family later moved to Berkeley in the 1930s. Jack later moved to Los Angeles and San Diego, where he became that city's first black dentist, co-founded the Urban League and served as President of the NAACP.<sup>98</sup>

William Smith appears to be one exception among colored homeowners. He owned his home at 3214 on the far east end of Alameda. A widow, Smith lived alone. He also worked out of his home, as a launderer, on his own account.<sup>99</sup> His residency is unique because he was 78-years-old, lived alone with no boarders, and ran his business out of his home in an area with few, if any, other colored people. Operating a business was not unique among colored residents of Alameda.<sup>100</sup> Eugene and Gertrude Gray owned their own home at 2429 Buena Vista Ave. Eugene worked as a real estate agent. Davis Sloan, also listed in the *Colored Directory*, lived at 1819 Grand, near the Hackett's, and owned his own painting business.<sup>101</sup> His wife also ran a business from home.<sup>102</sup> The Sloan family previously rented a home at 1629 Eagle Ave, one block over.<sup>103</sup> Myrtle Hackett owned the family home at 1608 Union Street. James Jr. took over

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<sup>98</sup> "Dr. Jack Kimbrough", website for Dr. Jack Kimbrough Elementary School, <<http://www.sandi.net/Page/6466>> [Accessed April 8, 2013]; "Dr. Jack Kimbrough," Presidents: Biographical Sketches of the Presidents of the San Diego NAACP," <<http://www.sandiegonaacp.org/about/Past%20Presidents%20Bios/NAACP%20Presidents%20Bios%20pdf%20Final.pdf>>, [Accessed April 9, 2013]; Robert Fikes, Jr., "The Struggle for Equality in 'America's Finest City': A History of the San Diego NAACP," 2012, <<http://www.sandiegonaacp.org/about/History%20of%20SDNAACP%202012/NAACP%20Struggle%20-%20Fourth%20Revision.pdf>>; [Accessed April 9, 2013]; Robert Fikes, Jr., "Remarkable Healers on the Pacific Coast: A History of San Diego's Black Medical Community," *Journal of San Diego History*, 57(3), Summer 2011, <<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/v57-3/v57-3fikes.pdf>>, [Accessed April 10, 2013]; John H. Lee, "Activist Jack Kimbrough," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1992, <[http://articles.latimes.com/1992-04-17/local/me-441\\_1\\_john-kimbrough](http://articles.latimes.com/1992-04-17/local/me-441_1_john-kimbrough)> [Accessed April 8, 2013]. Polk's Oakland Berkeley Alameda City Directory, 1926, 981.

<sup>99</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Coleman Francis, *A Survey of Negro Business in the San Francisco Bay Region*, Masters of Arts, Economics, University of California, Berkeley, 1928.

<sup>101</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, "Early African American Pioneers of Alameda."

<sup>103</sup> Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1895. San Francisco: F.M. Husted, January 1, 1895.

his father's express wagon business. Sylvester Hackett ran a successful drayage company from he and Marie's home. Five of their children lived with them, including two-year-old Merl, his adopted son.<sup>104</sup> Despite the successful business, the children seemed to encounter some challenges while seeking to maintain a home for their children.

### **The Hackett's vs. the Bureau of Electricity**

Alameda County property records show the family took out a mortgage on their Grand Street property in 1925. The \$1,000 loan from A.V and F.J. Long was paid off by the Hackett's in July 1928. Strangely, A.V. Long filed a request for a default on August 2, 1928; however, the property remained with the family. It appears that the Long's attempted to confiscate the Hackett home.

On March 22, 1929, Sylvester deeded a Berkeley property to his daughter Ruth Lasartemay (Hackett) as a gift. Sylvester had purchased various lots on Grand Street and a property in South Berkeley. After Sylvester's death in the late 1920s,<sup>105</sup> the family began working through property and legal filings. In 1931, the Hackett children granted the 1828 Grand Street properties to Marie Hackett for \$10.<sup>106</sup>

Many of the Hackett children moved from the Grand Street home by the end of the Roaring Twenties. In 1930, the census lists only Marie, her son Reuben, and three grand children at 1828 Grand Street.<sup>107</sup> Half of the Hackett's left Alameda.

In 1936, Alameda's Bureau of Public Utilities erected its Central Substation at the location of 1828 Grand Street. According to Alameda architectural writer Woodruff Minor, "The B.P.U. had already previously purchased eight residential lots on the south

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<sup>104</sup> 1920 Manuscript Census.

<sup>105</sup> Lasartemay, "Orange Hackett."

<sup>106</sup> Alameda County Assessor-Records Office.

<sup>107</sup> 1930 Manuscript Census

side of Eagle Avenue between Grand and Minturn for the site of the new Central Substation.”<sup>108</sup> However, no record of the purchase appears to exist at the Alameda County Recorder-Assessor’s Office.<sup>109</sup> Marie lived at the property to at least 1931 and appears to have moved by 1933, according to City Directories.<sup>110</sup>

Also of note, the City Manager, B. Ray Fritz, who pushed the Central Substation project through was later jailed in San Quentin with two other Alameda City Councilmen. Given Minor’s undocumented assertion that the property was sold, we might also speculate a few alternative possibilities. As a widow living in a large home, without her children, Marie Hackett may have felt lonely and wanted to move from the house that held many memories. She may have also needed the money she would gain from the sale. Considering the illegal activities of Fritz, she may have received less money than she could have received. It is also conceivable that the land was acquired by public action, or as a family member told me, the property was seized through eminent domain.<sup>111</sup> This displacement would mean that an Alameda Negro family’s property was sacrificed for the sake of providing energy to others. Considering the history of black labor working to accumulate white wealth, this would not be a far off assertion. Nonetheless, by 1940, Marie Hackett lived near the old property at 1816 Grand Street with her granddaughter.<sup>112</sup> While it is unclear if the Hackett’s were forced from the Grand Street home, it is clear that white prejudice kept blacks from living in certain neighborhoods in Alameda.

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<sup>108</sup> Woodruff Minor, “Central Substation: Alameda Historical Monument Nomination Report.” Alameda: Alameda Historical Advisory Commission, November 1987, on file with author.

<sup>109</sup> Alameda County Assessor-Records office books of Official Records do not list the Hackett’s as a grantee or seller between 1934-1936.

<sup>110</sup> Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1931. San Francisco: F.M. Husted, January 1, 1931, 653, lists Marie Hackett as a widow at 1828 Grand Street. Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley Directory. 1933. San Francisco: Polk’s Publishing, 1933, 358, lists Marie as a widow at 1816 Grand Street.

<sup>111</sup> Valdez Lasartemay to Reginald James, Alameda Family Reunion, Washington Park, Alameda, CA, June 8, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> 1940 Manuscript Census.

## The “Fernside Pact”: Racial Restrictive Covenants

In the 1920s, the Fernside subdivision went on the housing market. Formerly the 65-acre estate of attorney A. A. Cohen. The England-born attorney gained his wealth during major legal conflicts over land during the first decades of statehood. As battles raged over squatters and proper land titles, lawyers like Cohen came out with significant land claims. The opening of the “Cohen Estate,” led “to an end of the open, park-like atmosphere” of Alameda.<sup>113</sup>

Realtor Fred Wood capitalized on the desires of whites to have an exclusive, garden-like suburban neighborhood of single-family homes. A promotional brochure for the new subdivision, *In Alameda: Fernside*, described the Cohen estate’s proximity to transportation, affordability, quite park-like atmosphere, and the high demand for the property.

It is not often that an entire city shows the spontaneous response that Alameda has given to the subdivision of Fernside. Leaders in all walks of life, city officials, and bank officials, leading merchants, attorneys, physicians and many others will purchase home sites in Fernside. It has been demonstrated that the people of Alameda have only been waiting for the opportunity to buy in this beautiful, centrally located subdivision.<sup>114</sup>

With the plans to build an underwater Tube connecting Alameda and Oakland, the Fernside homes “are certain to be material increases in values,” Wood wrote. Yet, the enforcement of restrictive covenants prevented nonwhites from sharing the wealth.

In addition to promoting the subdivisions proximity to schools and parks, the *In Alameda: Fernside* also announced its plans to rigorously enforce restrictive covenants. In addition to architectural restrictions, the development would also include racial restrictive covenants. “Buildback and race restrictions will be strictly enforced. Fred T.

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<sup>113</sup> Merlin, “Alameda,” 59.

<sup>114</sup> Fred T. Wood, *In Alameda, Fernside*, Oakland: Fred T. Wood, 1925?



Wood has built his reputation by rigidly restricting all properties he has sold, thus protecting in every way the buyers in his subdivisions.” Like the previous subdivisions sold by Wood in the Oakland since 1919, “The most rigid restrictions will prevail as to race and color.”<sup>115</sup> Restrictive covenants instituted by the realtor restricted black residential mobility. The restrictions also marked black residents as being less socially valuable.

As black bodies became associated with neighborhood instability and lower property values, Wood upheld the “Code of Ethics” adopted by realtors throughout the country. The National Association of Real Estate Board’s Code of Ethics discouraged racial integration and associated the presence of nonwhites with deteriorating property values. Article 34 stated:

A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing to a neighborhood ... members of any race or nationality or individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.<sup>116</sup>

Upon moving in, white homeowners formed the Fernside Home Owners Association (Fernside HOA). This homeowners association adopted not only the building restrictions, but racial restrictive covenants also. On June 15, 1925, the HOA adopted the *Declaration of Conditions, Covenants, Restrictions and Charges Affecting the Real Property known as ‘Fernside.’*<sup>117</sup> The original Clause 16 states:

“No person or persons other than of the Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy said property or any part thereof, or to live upon said property or any part thereof, except in the capacity of domestic servants of the occupant thereof.

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<sup>115</sup> Quote from Fred T. Wood Co, “Lakemont,” Oakland, 192-; other brochures for subdivisions include “Lakemore Terrace”, 1920, and “Fernwood,” 1920. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>116</sup> National Association of Real Estate Boards, *Code of Ethics*, Article 34, 1922.

<sup>117</sup> *Declaration of Conditions, Covenants, Restrictions and Charges Affecting the Real Property known as ‘Fernside,’* June 15, 1925, Fernside Homeowners Association, Alameda, California. <<http://www.fernsidehomeowners.com/FHAccrgif/ccr1.htm>> [Accessed December 20, 2012].

The covenant also explicitly states:

No person of African, Japanese, Chinese or of any Mongolian descent shall be allowed to purchase, own or lease said property or any part thereof.<sup>118</sup>

The “Fernside Pact” thus effectively restricted colored people from living in the last subdivision of Alameda, unless working in a subservient position. Even those who could afford to move into Fernside were restricted. While encouraged initially by prejudiced realtors, white homeowners bought into the status and ideals of an exclusive white enclave. This white utopia could only be breached by colored people coming as servants of white Fernsiders. Residents reaffirmed these covenants, and other building restrictions in 1948. Interestingly, the *Alameda Times Star* does not mention race restrictions in its article about the Fernside HOA filing for an extension. The article only references a minimum requirement of new homes to cost \$8,500.<sup>119</sup> This extension was also filed after *Shelley v. Kramer*, the Supreme Court decision declaring restrictive covenants lawful but not legally enforceable. The racial restrictions within the Fernside subdivision were eventually eliminated in 1969.<sup>120</sup> For over 45 years, black homebuyers could not partake in the acquisition of wealth, particularly after World War 2, when millions of Americans purchased homes. The devaluing of black residents also preserved white social and economic status, by transferring government-backed funding into the homes of whites as the expense of blacks. The federal government’s involvement in reinforcing segregation and restricting black residential and social mobility stemmed from the prejudice of self-interested, local realtors.

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<sup>118</sup> Fernside Homeowner’s Association, 1925. Original clause deleted in 1969, thanks and acknowledgment to former Social Service and Human Relations Board member Jonathan Soglin, a Fernside resident, February 12, 2013, for providing documents and articles.

<sup>119</sup> “Homeowners in Fernside Extend Bans,” *Alameda Times Star*, December 30, 1949.

<sup>120</sup> “50% approval of Covenants, Early Fernside voting,” *Alameda Times Star*, October 24, 1969.

## **Redlined in Alameda**

Local realtors discrimination, as exemplified by Wood, became the written rule for home mortgages during the Depression. The Federal Housing Authority came to discourage integration, warning of the “infiltration of inharmonious racial or national groups.”<sup>121</sup> This underwriting of federal discrimination continued with the publishing of the HOLC’s “Residential Security Maps.” The Residential Security Map for Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda created red zones out of the flatlands of East Bay occupied by nonwhites. Appraisers rated all of West Oakland with a Security Grade “red.” In Alameda, the entire northern waterfront was “redlined.” As previously noted:

“Red areas represent those neighborhoods...characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population or infiltration of it. Low percentage of home ownership, very poor maintenance and often vandalism prevail.”<sup>122</sup>

The area description for Area D-20 lists both the neighborhoods “favorable” and “detrimental” influences. The appraiser applauded the area for its convenient location near transit, shopping, schools, and single-family residential zoning, except near business districts. Yet, the proximity to the harbor and its old housing stock gave the area a red grade. The area ... “Borders the industrial district of Alameda,” and includes, “Old type houses, many of which are converted into housekeeping apartments and rooming houses.” Concerns of “infiltration” appeared to focus more on “Lower classes, Orientals, etc.,” although the form notes the three percent Negro population. In fact, the questionnaire includes a particular line solely about Negro inhabitants. The document concluded

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<sup>121</sup> *FHA Underwriting Manual*, section 309, Federal Housing Administration, 1935.

<sup>122</sup> T-Races: Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California’s Exclusionary Spaces, University of <<http://salt.unc.edu/T-RACES/colormap.html>>. [Accessed May 1, 2013].

the area was “not a slum area. It is however, the oldest section of ALAMEDA and nearest to the industries, thereby being mainly occupied by wage earning families. The Orientals in this area are of a good working class, such as gardeners and often keep their homes and surroundings in attractive condition.”<sup>123</sup>

The appraisal predicted future desirability for housing in the area would be “static to downward,” while noting the availability of mortgage funds as “limited” and new home building funding as “very limited.”

The east end of Alameda, near the Bay Farm Island bridge, received a Low Yellow security grade due to its “heterogeneous mixture of old, cheap cottages, and semi-modern bungalows; also the presence of *inharmonious human elements*” (emphasis added). Three Negro families moved into the area. According to the clarifying remarks, “This part of the area is classed as LOW YELLOW because of infiltration of colored families.”<sup>124</sup> Areas receiving yellow grade include Central Alameda, an area with a low yellow grade due to some run down apartments and multiple unit dwellings. Although no Negroes lived in the area, there was “threat, however.”<sup>125</sup> Also receiving a Yellow grade was the area west of the Gold Coast.<sup>126</sup>

The area east of Fernside, called Waterside Terrace received a blue rating.<sup>127</sup> The Fernside District received a high blue security grade. With no Negroes, no concentration of foreign born, and no relief families, only Fernside’s proximity to the industrial

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<sup>123</sup> Residential Security Map Area Description, Alameda, California, Area D-20.

<sup>124</sup> Residential Security Map, Area Description, Alameda, California, Area C-41, Home Owner’s Loan Corporation.

<sup>125</sup> Residential Security Map, Area Description, Alameda, California, Area C-38, Home Owner’s Loan Corporation.

<sup>126</sup> Alameda, Area C-39.

<sup>127</sup> Residential Security Map, Area Description, Alameda, California, Area B-46, Waterside Terrace. Home Owner’s Loan Corporation.

waterfront prevented a Green security grade rating.<sup>128</sup> The Gold Coast, east of Grand Street, full of “retired capitalists, business men and executives,” and “the most valuable homes in Alameda” received a security grade of high blue. No Negroes lived in this area of town.<sup>129</sup>

These Residential Security Maps demonstrate the devaluation of colored residents, and the artificial inflation of whites residents, used to maintain a status hierarchy. The mere presence, or threat, of Negro families made it difficult for whites to secure mortgages. This further enshrined the association of Negroes and declining property values. In Alameda, this encouraged and required spatial separation and segregation in order to maintain a racialized social order.

### **The Origins of Alameda segregation**

As Negroes migrated to Alameda in larger numbers, they found themselves increasingly confined to the northern part of the island. On the Northside, housing was denser and older, and securing mortgages for homes became difficult, if not impossible. The Hackett’s, Sloans, Clintons, and other colored families able to purchase homes primarily moved to the Northern Waterfront. This area sat between Railroad Ave and the Southern Pacific line to the south, and the industrial waterfront of Oakland-Alameda to the north.

By 1940, the first time Census Tract level data is available in Alameda County, the Redlining map mirrors the spatial distribution of the nonwhite and white populations of the East Bay cities of Alameda, Berkeley, and Oakland. In Alameda, Census Tract AC10, the northern waterfront has a total population of 6,746 people. The tract’s black

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<sup>128</sup> Residential Security Map, Area Description, Alameda, California, Area B-45. Home Owner’s Loan Corporation.

<sup>129</sup> Area B-43, Gold Coast, towards Park Street.

population totals 189, or 2.8 percent of that area. The city's total population is 36,256, with a total black population of 249. Over three-fourths of the island's black population lived in the northern part of Alameda.<sup>130</sup> During the 1920s, although the black population increased from 217 to 294, but 1940, only 249 remained on the island. 1940 Census records show many black families that lived in Alameda in 1935 in other areas, although the census does not list reasons why.<sup>131</sup> In addition to the lack of employment opportunities, we may gather that pressure to remove colored residents also played a part in this out-migration.

Like in earlier decades, colored residents worked together to create conducive residential spaces. Renters and homeowners, despite living in crowded conditions, looked out for each other. Families took in widows and orphans, providing a much needed family support network. Colored residents also demonstrated their resiliency and political acumen by joining the NAACP and forming other organizations. Women formed the Alameda Colored Women's Civic Study Club. In the early 1930s, the group hosted tea parties and received some attention from the Alameda political establishment.<sup>132</sup>

Despite whatever patronage the small colored population received, they did not reduce prejudice against their presence, nor did the Hackett's Grand Street home survive. Prejudice realtors used restrictive covenants to prevent Blacks from "invading" their neighborhoods. White homeowners expressed these prejudices by blatantly excluding nonwhite residents from specific neighborhoods. These local prejudices became codified within federally subsidized mortgages through the HOLC. Not only did prejudice keep

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<sup>130</sup> 1940 Census Tract – Percentage Black Population, Census Tract AC10, Alameda, Alameda County, by race, black population, using Social Explorer.com. [Accessed April 1, 2013].

<sup>131</sup> 1940 Manuscript Census.

<sup>132</sup> Delilah L. Beasley, "Activities Among Negroes," *Oakland Tribune*, September 4, 1932; Delilah L. Beasley, "Activities Among Negroes," *Oakland Tribune*, March 19, 1933.

colored residents from specific communities, but also allowed white to accumulate considerable wealth for multiple generations.

The pattern of prejudice that emerged during the interwar years only became exacerbated with the coming of World War 2. Alameda's business elite lobbied the federal government to use Alameda tidelands for military use.<sup>133</sup> In 1940, the Alameda Naval Air Station was commissioned. With the subsequent entry of America into World War 2, and the federal government's intervention into the housing market, Alameda would be forever transformed. Yet, old patterns of spatial segregation and exclusion remained in Alameda for years to come.

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<sup>133</sup> In the 1920s, the city began marketing Alameda's waterfront for industrial development. One 1920s brochure calls Alameda "a recreation Mecca for the West." "Port Development Ideal," 1920s brochure, Alameda Clipping File History.

## **PART 2: WORLD WAR II AND THE WAR ON RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION**

**“At the edge of Alameda’s bridges and tubes are Oakland’s 90,000 Negro families, some of whom came originally from Alameda.** The city has long tried to make Alameda a pure white community by doing nothing to provide its Negro residents with adequate low cost housing while at the same time gradually phasing out the predominantly Negro projects now in existence. It has done his skillfully, cautiously, under over, to avoid attracting the type of publicity its neighboring cities Oakland and Richmond Now share. The Estuary camp-in, however, threatened to place Alameda, for the public eye, squarely in the Oakland camp.  
*The Flatlands*, July 1967<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> “Tight little island cracks,” *TF*, July 1966.



#### **4. ISLAND HOME FRONT: ALAMEDA HOUSING DURING WORLD WAR II**

World War II led to a massive internal migration within the United States. San Francisco Chronicle to called WWII and migration to the region the “Second Gold Rush.” Negroes escaped the Jim Crow south in search of opportunities in employment, education and housing. WWII led to a massive influx of African Americans into the city of Alameda and primarily into wartime housing projects.

This short chapter focuses on Black migration to the Bay Area, Alameda specifically and the housing situation African Americans faced. How did World War II and mass migration impact housing opportunities for Negroes in Alameda? Issues with housing discrimination and the Alameda Housing Authority are addressed in separate chapters, Chapter 5: Housing Authority Unfair and Chapter 6: Jim Crow Alameda, respectively.

Boosters convinced the federal government to build the Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) in the 1930s. In 1936, the city deeded over 2,000 acres of marsh to Government.<sup>135</sup> The Housing Act of 1937 created the United States Housing Authority (USHA). The USHA was created as part of the New Deal to clear slums and build low cost housing. A Housing Committee including *Oakland Tribune* publisher Joseph R. Knowland had been formed in July 1918, but it was short-lived, with no housing being built once World War I ended.<sup>136</sup>

##### **Beginnings of AHA**

City officials established the Alameda Housing Authority as a means to have some control over local land use, not to provide affordable housing. NAS Commander

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<sup>135</sup> Johnson, Second Gold Rush, 32; Woody Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” Part 1, *Alameda Journal*, March 15, 1991.

<sup>136</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” Part 1, *Alameda Journal*, March 15, 1991.

H.T. Stanley wrote the city council in 1940 to urge them to establish a housing authority underneath the United States Housing Authority. “Recommendations to this effect have already been sent to the navy department and the machinery is already being set in motion for the navy to do the work if a local housing authority cannot or will not be organized to cooperate in filling our needs,” he wrote.<sup>137</sup> If the City had not established the AHA, Alameda would lack power in its relationship to regulating Navy-owned land.

On August 8, the City Council established the Alameda Housing Authority. Cities were ran by business elite who consolidated power after the progressive era by adopting nonpartisan governments, effectively cutting off ethnic groups electoral power and patronage opportunities. Likewise, an elite business elite ran the island. Alameda Mayor’s appointed five white males to the five-member housing commission: an attorney, bankers and businessmen. Banker James E. Hall chaired the commission initially, followed by banker Thomas A. Greig. Local salesman Curtis Anderson was appointed to lead the commission as executive director, resigning from his position on the city council to do so.<sup>138</sup>

### **Building Alameda’s Projects**

As war workers migrated to Alameda, the need for housing became evident. The Navy had been negotiating a price with the University of California for reclaimed marshland occupied by the San Francisco Bay Airdome airport, built in 1930. The Navy condemned the property and offered the University for half of their asking price. Minor writes the AHA and City felt “betrayed” by the Navy and raised concerns about housing

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> On business elite ruling East Bay cities, see Johnson, “Second Gold Rush,” 18, also Self, *American Babylon*, or Edward Hayes, “Corporate Structure and Urban Policy: Who Rules Oakland?” McGraw-Hill, 1971; City council minutes, August 8, 1940, Resolution No. 2507, City Clerk’s Office, City of Alameda; Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” Part 1, *Alameda Journal*, March 15, 1991.

projects becoming a “slum.” The Navy built 600 units of housing for married enlisted men on 70 acres located north of Atlantic Avenue between Main and Webster Street—including land that is now the College of Alameda.<sup>139</sup>

### **EO 8802 and Black Migration**

The United States military continued its policy of segregation during and after World War II. By the onset of World War II, white labor unions and employers continued to exclude Negroes from defense industry jobs. It was not until June 25, 1941 that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, ending formal discrimination in defense industry contracts. Thus, the primary beneficiaries of labor opportunities during WW2 before and after Pearl Harbor were white males. It was not until after EO 8802 that Negroes could gain employment, although still in segregated union ships.<sup>140</sup>

By the time FDR signed EO 8802, construction already began on Alameda’s first housing project: the Woodstock Defense Housing Project. The 22 acres of Woodstock projects were located south of Atlantic near Third Street and the east-west tree-inspired streets of Brush, Cypress and Spruce. AHA supervised the construction of the 200-units. When the September 20 dedication took place near Pacific Ave and Second Street, over half of the units had been completed. Langdon Post of the USHA called Woodstock “one of the finest projects of its kind ever located in the region.”<sup>141</sup>

Minor concludes this piece with a departing comment:

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<sup>139</sup> Minor writes the issue revealed the “character of the AHA. It took its responsibilities seriously and had no desire to be merely a political tool for the Navy. I disagree with this analysis and argue the AHA cared primarily about increasing funds on the local tax rolls and not providing housing, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” Part 1, *Alameda Journal*, March 15, 1991.

<sup>140</sup> Cleveland Valrey, *Black Labor and Race: San Francisco Bay Area Shipbuilding in World War II*, San Francisco State University; EE 8802, < <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/thelaw/ee-8802.html>>, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Alameda's initial impetus for building federally funded housing was for national defense, not for "slum clearance" or for meeting the needs of low-income persons (as was the case in the first projects in Oakland and San Francisco). Several residents of Woodstock have been quick to make this point.<sup>142</sup>

Considering Minor concluded this entry in his series on this point is telling. He is arguing the AHA status quo position. The AHA and writers always emphasize the temporary nature of the housing projects. Minor makes exception with his descriptions of Woodstock, as an exception, a "model project" in comparison to the other wartime projects in Alameda.

After WW2 ended, residents began meeting with the Public Housing Administration to purchase homes individually. In 1948, tenants formed the Alameda Mutual Homes Corporation and purchased Woodstock from the Government. Instead of paying rent to the federal "government, tenants will pay from \$35 to \$45 a month to purchase their own apartments." This was the first transaction like this in the Bay Area, according to Jesse Epstein, regional director of the PHA. This Woodstock Housing still exists to this day. Incidentally, AHA built Woodstock during the period of military segregation and to date this author has not been able to identify any African Americans who've ever lived in Woodstock.<sup>143</sup>

The majority of Alameda's wartime projects were built during and after 1943. The AHA sited each of these projects on the West End, with the exception of one, located on the north side of town. Chipman, located between Buena Vista and Atlantic, west of Webster—the current site of the Summerhouse Apartments (formerly Buena Vista/Harbor Island Apartments)—and Encinal, located near the Bethlehem shipyard. Minor writes,

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> "Housing Boom Not Reached." *ATS?* 27 August 1948; "Tenants Buy Homes." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 19 February 1948, "Tenants Take Over." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 1 April 1948,

“These projects bore no resemblance to Woodstock, either in appearance or construction methods. The buildings were frankly temporary and built to standardized FHFA designs.”<sup>144</sup> The distinction between housing available for white and non-white migrants becomes clear when observing the early AHA housing and the later AHA wartime housing built. I develop this point in Chapter 6: Housing Authority Unfair, focusing on housing discrimination by AHA, but I will briefly outline some issues here.

### **AHA Housing Discrimination**

On of the tactics the AHA appeared to use to restrict project residency through inspection and eligibility criteria. When announcing the 20,000 war workers coming in 1943, Curtis Anderson, executive director of the AHA told the Kiwanis Club of Alameda, “The new projects will house 8,775 people. We will fill them with workers in the local war industries. Probably, local shipyards will be asked to certify workers employed here and without homes. These are the persons who will be given preference when the units are ready for occupancy.”<sup>145</sup>

When the 96-unit Pacific Projects were opened between Buena Vista and Pacific, between Benton and Sherman—the current site of Littlejohn Park, formerly Buena Vista Park—families would have to be inspected and determined if they were eligible. Families selected must have been residents of Alameda for a year and unable to have found suitable homes. Also, must have been certified by shipyard as worker.<sup>146</sup>

Considering the twins of Jim Crow residential exclusion—see Chapter 6: Jim Crow Alameda—and employment discrimination, this created a barrier for Negroes seeking

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<sup>144</sup> Kostura and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority: A Fifty Year History,” Alameda Housing Authority, 1990.

<sup>145</sup> “20,000 New War Workers in Alameda by June,” ATS, January 23-29, 1943.

<sup>146</sup> “Local War Housing Project will be opened Monday,” 1943, Alameda Housing Clipping Files, Alameda Free Library.

housing. Since homeowners would not open up their homes to rent to Negroes, it could be near to impossible to establish Alameda residency for a year. Additionally, employment discrimination by employers or unions could also bar Negroes from the labor force. As illustrated in Chapter 5: Housing Authority Unfair, the AHA also segregated Negroes to specific projects and specific blocks.

### **Alameda's Demographics**

As Johnson writes, "WW2 transformed the urban geography of the East Bay."<sup>147</sup> Workers flooded Alameda. Alameda's population increased from just 36,256 in 1940 to 43,909 in 1944. The massive influx was only outdone by a postwar influx that brought the cities population to 64,430. Thousands came to work at one of the many shipyards of Alameda, like Bethlehem Steel-Alameda, United Engineering, General Engineering and Dry Dock, Pacific Bridge and more. The growth of Alameda's Negro community was more dramatic. Just 249 Negroes called Alameda home in 1940, but the number surged to 4,802 by the end of World War II.<sup>148</sup> These demographic changes had impacts on Alameda. The black population in the Bay Area grew from just 19,759 in 1940 to 64,680 five years later, with the majority coming on their own accord—not through labor recruiters—from Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. During the war, Negroes became the largest minority of the region, replacing Asians as targets for local bigotry.<sup>149</sup>

Negroes found it difficult to find housing in Alameda. The feds opened a local "War Housing office" in 1942 to assist the expected 22,000 additional workers headed to Alameda shipyards. Alamedans were asked to convert vacant rooms, apartments and flats

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<sup>147</sup> "Shipyard Ghettos", Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 83.

<sup>148</sup> Kostura and Minor write "During the war, Alameda's population exploded from about 35,000 to 90,000; Johnson, citing multiple census figures and federal estimates, *Second Gold Rush*. I use Johnson's numbers as she lists original sources, Minor does not cite his sources specifically.

<sup>149</sup> Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 52.

and make them available. The National Housing Authority would lease apartments, improve them, and return them to owners after contract. According to federal authorities, there was a “general reluctance upon the part of long-time residents of Alameda to open their homes to war workers.” (See Chapter #: Jim Crow Alameda for more on private market discrimination). Families being forced from the Fillmore also sought housing in Alameda. Negroes migrating to Alameda could mostly moved into wartime projects on the north side, the inner harbor, and West End, all adjacent to shipyards and the NAS.<sup>150</sup>

### **Conclusion**

During WW2, the population of Alameda rapidly increased. The Negro population saw a 1,830 percent growth within about a two-year period. Due to widespread housing discrimination—within the AHA and in the larger market—the population primarily moved into substandard, temporary wartime housing projects. This section is a very limited study of housing during WWII. Further research needs to be developed focusing on the experiences of African Americans. Building on Woody Minor’s series on “The Alameda Housing Authority,” in which five parts of the series focus on WWII, potential sources include records at the NARA, the *Alameda Times-Star* between 1940-1945, with emphasis on the last two years, minutes and records of the AHA, City Council and Planning Board, as well as police reports at the Alameda Library. Additionally, oral history interviews with individuals still living could provide valuable insight into the housing experience of Negroes in Alameda during the war years.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 89; Landon Post, regional director of US PHA declared new wartime housing projects in Alameda, as well as Richmond, would be available for families crammed into the Fillmore, in “Fight Edict Moving Frisco War Families,” *Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1943, 3.

## **5. 'HOUSING AUTHORITY UNFAIR': NEGROES AND THE ALAMEDA HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The Alameda Housing Authority demonstrated minimal concern for the housing needs of Negroes. Formed in 1940 to prevent federal take over of land and ensure Alameda land used by feds for housing was temporary, the elite, white male capitalists who controlled the AHA segregated, neglected, and repeatedly expelled Negro residents.

### **Business elite controlled AHA**

After boosters campaigned for the Navy to locate to Alameda, business elites influenced the formation and function of the Alameda Housing Authority in order to maintain local control of the island's development (See Chapter 4: Island Home front). The white bankers, lawyers and businessmen represented an elite ruling coalition in Alameda. The Alameda Chamber of Commerce encouraged the City Council and Planning Board to develop a "Housing Authority" in order to solve "Alameda's imminent housing needs." Commander Stanley, in charge of NAS construction, noted that either the local government, the USHA or the military would provide housing.<sup>151</sup> Faced with the possibility of federal government taking over additional land, officials attempted to maintain local power.

The housing constructed for white war workers was drastically different from that of later Black migrants. The latter housing was developed primarily by the USHA opposed to the AHA, which had local building standards.

### **Segregated project construction**

The AHA built seven housing projects in 1943 and two additional during 1944-45, including: Estuary (1472 units), Encinal (1,250 units), Chipman (760 units), Pacific

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<sup>151</sup> City Council minutes, July 16, 1940, letter from Alameda Chamber of Commerce.



(96 units), Webster (400 units), the Atlantic Trailer Park (206 units), Webster No. 2, or ‘Gibbs Project’ (460 units), Estuary (1,368 units) Western (168 units), and Makassar Strait (340 units). See Housing Projects of Alameda Housing Authority, 1941-1945, Table 16 for timeline and map. The AHA built specific projects solely for white people. Not much is known about Alameda’s housing projects during WWII (See Chapter 4: The Island Home front); however, we can surmise that the AHA segregated the projects at their inception. About a quarter of the project population of over 20,000 identified as Black,<sup>152</sup> and based on oral history interviews, census records, and news articles, it appears no Negroes lived in Western, Chipman, or the Atlantic Trailer Park. Within Encinal, Estuary, Gibbs and Webster, Negroes lived within specific blocks. I develop the point of project segregation later in this chapter.<sup>153</sup>

### **‘Reds Aggravate Housing Problem’**

Despite previous accounts to the contrary about the “red scare”, communism did find inroads among Negro workers and project residents. Woody Minor and William Kostura, in their 1990 publication—funded by the AHA—*The Alameda Housing Authority: A Fifty Year History*, argue that “since project conditions were good, the communists had

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<sup>152</sup> Kostura and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority: A Fifty Year History,” Alameda Housing Authority, 1990.

<sup>153</sup> Construction information from Kostura and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority: A Fifty Year History,” Alameda Housing Authority, 1990, with additional numbers throughout *Alameda Times-Star*, often times different projected construction numbers emerge. On project segregation, I have yet to find the silver-bullet documentation or written policy that lists how projects segregated and how. Interview with Author, Estuary Project Resident Vickie Smith, 2012, “Table 1 – Characteristic of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1950 San Francisco – Oakland and adjacent Area” and “Alameda, California, by Census Tracts and Blocks: 1950”, 1950 Census of Housing, Akron to Baltimore, both in *1950 U.S. Census Population: 1950, Volume III Census Tract Statistics*, 1952. Finally, in 1966 Mabel Tatum statement in “What Kind of Country is This?” *The Movement*, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee of California, July 1966.

little opportunity to stir things up” along racial lines, but these writers have overlooked additional data which speaks to Negro and communist organizing.<sup>154</sup>

In 1950, residents showed up to a city council meeting to fight planned demolition of the projects in 1950, due to the 1949 Housing Act. Encinal resident (Charles) David Blodgett, reporter for the *Daily People's World*, led the Committee to Save the Housing Projects, a group with over 100 members. One news article, titled “Reds Aggravate Housing Problem” in the *Alameda Times-Star* stated “Communism, which usually prospers among the gripes and moans of life in public housing projects, has found slim pickings in Alameda...The communist agitation have [sic] been brushed off with a cold shoulder.” Alameda writers may have downplayed or underestimated communist influence, especially in the projects.<sup>155</sup>

### ***House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)***

Blodgett later turned stoolpigeon and testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) about communism in Alameda. Blodgett joined the Encinal Club of the Alameda Communist Party. There were four clubs within the city, including one in the Estuary Projects that split from the original Encinal Club. When asked by HUAC about the formation of the Encinal Club, Blodgett said:

Mr. Blodgett: ... Al Brown was chairman of the club prior to my becoming chairman of the Encinal Club. He later dropped out.

Mr. Jackson. What was his occupation, if you know?

Mr. Blodgett. I do not recall, sir. I know that he worked in the Bethlehem Shipyards. The Encinal Club of the Communist Party grew out of a strike at the Bethlehem Shipyards. I do not have direct, firsthand knowledge of that, so I am not trying to cover something that I am not too familiar with, but Mr. Lehman, in

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<sup>154</sup> Kostura and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” 11, the title of this section comes from an *ATS* headline in 1949, Waldear, Gordon. “Reds Aggravate Housing Problem,” *Alameda Times-Star*, October 19, 1949.

<sup>155</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 12, *Alameda Journal*, May 27, 1991.

giving me brief history of the growth in the city of Alameda of the party, indicated that this club grew out of a strike at the Bethlehem Shipyards in Alameda and was composed mostly of Negroes who were employed at the shipyard.<sup>156</sup>

Negroes led and formed Alameda's communist party. Black labor organizing led to geographic specific political formations among project residents. Ostensibly based on labor issues, housing likely figured to be an issue for Negro project residents as well, or they may not have organized themselves into project-specific clubs.

Blodgett gave names and other activities of Alameda communist membership. He told HUAC the city had about 100 members with the largest club being in the Encinal projects.<sup>157</sup> Negro project residents appear to comprise most of the organization's membership, which may account for why little has been documented about the presence of the CP in Alameda.

### ***'Racial controversy'***

Kostura and Minor write that the AHA's first "racial controversy" occurred in 1948. Project residents routinely organized collective activities for self-sufficiency, like a Community Chest. A group sought to use a project meeting space to organize and collect assistance for a Black family—the Ingrams—the group was denied access. In response, the group formed the Alameda Civil Rights Congress (CRC). The Alameda CRC met at Alameda High, in the Little Theater, and held a discussion titled, "Shall there be free assembly in Alameda?" Minor writers Assembly member Randall F. Dickey was listed as a speaker, but criticized the group, "I have not been invited and I would not attend if I

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<sup>156</sup> Investigation of Communist Activities in San Francisco Area, Part 3, Hearing before the Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), 83rd Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, December 3, 1953.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

was.” Dickey would be willing to do so “with any reputable organization at any time.”<sup>158</sup> During the “red scare,” critics accused the CRC of being a “Communist Front.” Rooted in Black protest and organizing, labor defense, and civil liberties advocacy, the CRC combined mass picketing and organizing tactics like leafleting with litigation for equal rights.<sup>159</sup>

Suggesting the group was not reputable is a coded reference to its alleged communist affiliation, while it could be read as a racially motivated remark absent and understanding of the political associations of the CRC. Still, what is most important to remember from this episode is that the AHA refused to allow project residents use public space. Considering the benefit was for an orphaned family of six children, AHA’s treatment was even more egregious. This disregard for Black life is repeated throughout AHA’s history.

Considering the history of a labor strike in Alameda, communist party chapters within two projects, and the formation of an Alameda chapter of the CRC, postwar racial strife in Alameda projects appears to have been downplayed. The Black communist influence may have been underestimated due to ignorance of the island’s Negro community, or intentional marginalization by the powers-that-were to prevent increased membership. Regardless, racist practices existed within the Alameda’s housing projects, despite the first known “racial controversy” becoming known to whites outside the projects in 1948.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Gerald Horne, *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1988.

<sup>160</sup> Kostura and Minor may not have know of Blodgett’s 1953 HUAC testimony when writing in 1991, Kostura and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority”; On housing turnover impacting project organizing capacity, see Johnson, “The Second Gold Rush,” 215.

## **Alameda apartheid: Project residents segregated**

The AHA segregated Negroes. The Negro population reached its zenith on the island in 1950. According to census figures, Negroes totaled 5,312 and comprised 8.2 percent of Alameda's population. Most pre-war Negroes owned their own homes in Alameda. The postwar Negro population primarily lived as tenants in AHA projects. Negroes were by far the largest minority group in Alameda.<sup>161</sup>

While visual maps of 1950 census tracts are not available through Social Explorer, using other census documents, I've concluded that Alameda hyper-segregated its Negro population. Again, Massey and Denton argue that "hyper-segregation" occurs when Blacks segregated among four of the five dimensions, which include:

- unevenness - the over- or under-representation of blacks in areas
- isolation - extreme spatial separation from whites
- clustering - Black neighborhoods are often clustered together to form a large enclave
- concentration - Concentration refers to black settlement within a small area
- centralization - Centralization locates blacks in the urban core opposed to the periphery<sup>162</sup>

### ***Hyper-Segregation***

Over 95 percent of all non-whites in Alameda lived in two census tracts: AC10 (Alameda County #10), located on the northern part of the island, and AC11, on the western part of the island. AC10 comprised the northern waterfront census tract where the Hackett families' homes were, along with the Encinal and Makassar Strait projects (roughly the location of Marina Village today). AC 11 included Estuary, Webster No. 2 (Gibbs) and

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<sup>161</sup> Alameda's total population was 64,430, with 5,312 (8.2%) Negroes and 1,014 (1.6%) "other races" and 1,329 "white persons of Spanish surname" (2.1%), City of Alameda, 1950, Bay Area Census, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), < <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda50.htm>>, Accessed December 11, 2012.

<sup>162</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 74.

the Webster Projects. Non-white does not necessarily mean Negro; however, Negroes comprised the majority of the “non-white” island population. Thirty-eight percent of all non-whites lived in AC 10, while 58 percent lived in AC 11. The majority of all residents of AC 10 and 11 were renters, 61 and 79 percent, respectively.<sup>163</sup>

The AHA segregated Negroes to specific housing projects. AC 10 listed a total of 559 non-white occupants (presumably, representing a household). As zip code and tract level data can mask inequality and segregation, we will examine block level data to understand what I refer to as “Alameda apartheid.” AC 10 had 93 total census block groupings. Seventy-five percent, or 418 households of AC 10, lived on just four blocks. These blocks represent both Encinal and Makassar Strait projects. No non-white occupants lived within the Pacific Projects, block 59.<sup>164</sup>

In AC 10, 69 percent of non-white occupied units were in three blocks of the Encinal projects: block 4, north of Stalker Way (36%), block 5, east of Lucas, between Stalker and Thau (11%), and block 13, south of Thau Way (23%). By the numbers, 201 lived in block #4, 60 in block #5, and 126 in block #13. Thus two-thirds of non-whites lived within just three blocks of a 93-block census tract. This represents unevenness, isolation and concentration. AHA also clustered Negroes within the projects, with 84 percent of all non-whites living in blocks 4 and 13. Considering the Encinal projects

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<sup>163</sup> City of Alameda, 1950, Bay Area Census, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), <<http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda50.htm>>, Accessed December 11, 2012; for block level data, see Alameda, California, by Census Tracts and Blocks: 1950, *1950 Census of Housing, Akron to Baltimore*, Housing Block Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, or tract level with Table 1—Characteristics of Housing for the City: 1950, Alameda and Table 2—Characteristics of Housing by Census Tracts, 1950, both in *1950 U.S. Census of Housing, Volume 17, Akron-Baltimore*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

<sup>164</sup> Alameda, California, by Census Tracts and Blocks: 1950, *1950 Census of Housing, Akron to Baltimore*, Housing Block Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau.

proximity to the Bethlehem Shipyard on the industrial waterfront, this could also be considered a form of centralization.<sup>165</sup>

AC 11, located west of Webster, held 72 census block groups. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of all non-whites lived within six census blocks. Stated another way, nearly all non-whites were concentrated within just eight percent of the census tract area, north of Atlantic—the site of the Belt Line Railroad. Few Negroes lived on the other side of the tracks, where Chipman, Woodstock, and other homes were located. Census blocks 35-40 of AC 11, where Woodstock was located, show only two non-white families. No indication exists that these non-white families were Negro. In between these set of projects, Navy housing for 600 enlisted members and their families provided a buffer between the white projects and those where Negroes lived.<sup>166</sup>

In AC 10, 67 percent of non-whites lived within the Estuary projects, or within two census blocks: block 2 and block 4. In block 2, 456 non-white families lived, while 125 non-white occupied units were in block 4. Considering only one way in and one way out existed from Main Street–Mosley Ave—the Estuary Projects were isolated from all other housing projects, although adjacent to the waterfront shipyard where residents worked. Thirty percent of non-whites lived in the two Webster projects. Non-whites occupied a quarter of the 360 Gibbs (Webster No. 2) units (51 total). Twenty-four percent on non-white AC 11 residents lived in the Webster Projects on blocks 6 (94 units), 8 (47 units) and 9 (69 units). Considering Webster held 400 units, nearly half of the projects were non-white. Negroes were isolated, concentrated and clustered within just eight percent of the census tract, within the three projects. With Estuary in particular,

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, also: Table 3—Characteristics of Housing for Census Tracts, by Blocks, 1940

considering its location adjacent to the Main entrance to the NAS and its waterfront location, Negroes experienced high levels of isolation.<sup>167</sup>

The hyper-segregation of Negroes in Alameda did not occur accidentally, but resulted from the policies and practices of the AHA. With the future demolition of the projects in the 1950s and 1960s, demolishing the projects meant removing Negroes.

### **Urban Renewal and Negro Removal**

Throughout the United States, postwar urban renewal efforts became colloquially known as “Negro removal,” as redevelopment efforts routinely displaced Negro residents. This same pattern of postwar displacement occurred in Alameda as city leaders battled the federal Government over land use issues. During the local and federal postwar battles over redevelopment, many so-called “city fathers” were driven by the capitalist motivation to make the land the most productive in order to generate tax revenue.<sup>168</sup>

The use of Alameda land by the federal represented a loss of local tax dollars. City Manager Don C. McMillian said in a September 1946 report, “Continued governmental occupation of more than half of the entire upland area of the city poses what is perhaps our gravest problem ... No taxes are levied or collected on the lands upon which our government has made its numerous installations. There are 20,000 persons living in the government housing facilities within the city, most of whom contribute

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid; *ibid*.

<sup>168</sup> Articles in the *Alameda Times-Star* throughout the 1950s, within the Housing clipping file at the Alameda Free Library, demonstrate this local-federal conflict. In an annual pamphlet in 1954, City Manager Carl Froerer writes, “Your City Council already has filed an application with the Federal Public Housing Administration for the city to direct an orderly clearance of temporary war housing structures and reinstatement of those large tracts of property to city tax rolls. Now your Council has requested the Administration to transfer this application to the Alameda City Housing Authority. In line with these potential duties, for which the Housing Authority is highly qualified, the Authority is investigating the feasibility of its acceptance of this important task...”  
Carl Froerer. Memos on your city. Office of Carl Froerer, City Manager. March-April, 1954. Pamphlet, Folder III, Alameda Vertical Files, Alameda Free Library.



nothing in the way of taxes to support the city government.”<sup>169</sup> Meanwhile, project residents used local services like fire and police, thus costing the city money while not contributing to the local coffers. While the AHA collected rents—over \$2 million annually—about half of the money went towards the FPHA, making AHA what Minor called a “reluctant landlord.”<sup>170</sup>

Neither the AHA nor the FPHA wanted Alameda’s projects. On multiple occasions, the federal government offered the land and buildings back to the city, under provisions of the 1949 and 1950 housing act, but the City and AHA avoided any responsibility for developing permanent low-cost housing. The City missed deadlines to purchase the projects on profitable terms in 1953. Banker and housing chief Thomas A. Greig resigned to pursue “personal plans.” It was not until January 1954, when the federal government threatened to demolish the housing projects sell off all the land as parcels that the city acted. PHA’s regional director J.G. Melville told the city council, “It’s time that the city made a firm commitment to the Government on whether it wants to properties.”<sup>171</sup>

The city bought two projects in 1955, Makassar Straights and Webster, and later acquired Chipman, Webster No. 2 and part of Estuary. Part of Estuary was also leased from the UC and others. The feds closed four projects, the Atlantic Trailer Park (1954), Pacific (1954), Webster (1956) and finally, Encinal (1956).

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<sup>169</sup> Quoted in minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 12, *AJ*, May 27, 1991.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, “Reluctant landlord” from title of part 13 from Minor’s *AJ* series, June 10, 1991.

<sup>171</sup> “U.S. Demands Decision on City Projects.” *ATS*. 27 Jan., 1954. , Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 14, June 17, 1991, “Alameda opposes Navy move to take over housing units,” *Oakland Tribune*, March 1954, quote in “Take War Housing Sites or Lose Out, Alameda is Told.” *ATS*. 27 Jan., 1954; “Navy Land Grab Fears ‘Dispelled’; Alameda Alert.” *ATS*. 7 march, 1954, “Alameda Opposes Navy Move to Take Over Housing Units.” *OT*. 4 March, 1954.

Negroes bore the brunt of redevelopment efforts. These project closures burdened Negro residents of Alameda. Considering Negroes comprised 52 percent of Webster and 31 percent of Encinal—much higher than the citywide 8 percent Negro population—this had a disparate impact. The 1950s saw the largest removal of Negroes from Alameda. Although many moved into other projects, and many may have been transferred to other military bases, most Negroes left or were forced from Alameda entirely. A total of 2,185 Negroes left Alameda during the 1950s. By 1960, just 3,127 Negroes called Alameda home, a 41 percent decrease from a decade before. Negroes represented about 4.9 percent of the island’s population. By contrast, the total Alameda population decreased by just 575 people. In fact, no other racialized group shows any population loss. The white, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, white with Spanish surname population all grew.<sup>172</sup>

### **Bigoted Alameda Housing Authority Officials**

In addition to the evidence of hyper-segregation of Negro residents in and within the AHA projects and the massive exodus of the 1950s, AHA officials openly expressed bigoted views towards Negroes.

#### ***David Christie, Executive Director, 1947-1965***

The racial attitudes of officials and bureaucrats influenced public policy. AHA’s Executive Director David Christie openly embraced segregation. Employed at AHA since 1943, and director since 1947, he viewed integration as a burden on whites.

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<sup>172</sup> Minor writes, “Although the closing of the projects was eased by military transfers, and while some tenants adapted by moving into other projects, the majority of evicted tenants simply left Alameda. There was certainly hardship, yet this massive phasing out of public housing occurred without apparent controversy,” in Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 14, June 17, 1991. I use the term forced, as widespread housing discrimination (See Jim Crow Alameda) meant Negroes could not relocate elsewhere within Alameda; on 1950-1960 demographics, whites increased from 53,609 to 58,843, Chinese from 409 to 457, Indian from 37 to 87, Japanese from 267 to 457, and Filipinos counted for the first time in 1960 Census and may have been within “other races” in 1950 Census, Bay Area Census, <<http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda50.htm>>.

“They’re okay in buildings, but as for integration, you can’t tell me that will work. After all, people have a right to choose who they want to live with and mixing them together, I think, is a form of discrimination against the whites.”<sup>173</sup>

Despite upholding a system of racial segregation within the AHA housing projects, Christie still frames housing as an issue of choice for whites. This sentiment pre-dates Proposition 14 and the recasting of “Fair Housing” legislation as “Forced Housing.” When asked if he the AHA commission would change the housing pattern, Christie responded, “As long as we run it, it will be that way.”<sup>174</sup> This die-hard attitude from the George Wallace playbook—“Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever”—seems unconscionable today, but reflected the attitudes of public officials in 1953. Christie continued to lead the AHA until 1965, until he resigned amidst controversy over demolition of the Estuary Projects.

#### ***Frederich Zecher, AHA Commissioner***

Fred Zecher, chair of the AHA commission, epitomized the capitalist contempt displayed by members of white, urban regimes in the postwar years. The manager of the local Wells Fargo Bank—which held \$3 million in AHA reserves from rents collected—showed no sympathy for Negro residents of the projects, partially because he became a target of criticism for the role as banker and commissioner presiding over evictions.

In a conversation with a white reporter on November 23, 1965, Zecher responded to inquiries about the accumulated rental income with anger. “You guys go scrapping for the niggers. You’re going to be getting into a lot of trouble,” Zecher told a reporter from

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<sup>173</sup> Helen Smith Alancraig, “Cordornices Village: A Study of Non-Segregated Public Housing in the San Francisco Bay Area,” MA, political science, UC Berkeley, January 1953.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

*The Alameda Sun*. “And you better be careful that you don’t print any of this.”<sup>175</sup> The newspaper also criticized the lack of record keeping for proceedings of both the school district and the AHA.

During the November 17 meeting of the AHA, Zecher expressed no remorse for the plight of residents. He repeatedly emphasized the need to evict residents and that the AHA held no obligation to help relocate tenants. “My feeling is that we should start sending out (eviction) notices to tenants, and get bids for demolition of the Estuary buildings without delay,” Zecher said.

Clarence Gilmore, brother of Carter Gilmore and then chair of the Alameda NAACP, noted that other AHA did not allow other projects become blighted like the Estuary. “The Western Project was built at the same time, yet nothing is ever said about demolishing those buildings.” Gilmore continued, “...the Estuary buildings are dilapidated because the Housing Authority allowed them to become that way.” Board members responded that the housing was temporary and “you people” misunderstood. Alameda would not provide low-rent housing.<sup>176</sup> *The Alameda Sun* printed some dialogue between Gilmore and the board:

“Since it seems that your chairman is in such a hurry to evict people, have you any plans to help these people to relocate?”

“This isn’t our duty to relocate,” Mr. Zecher answered, “we don’t have to relocate anybody. We are not authorized to find housing for people.”

“You have housing,” Mr. Gilmore state, referring to the other projects under the Authority. “We don’t mean that you should go looking around Alameda, and since you want this particular project closed, we are asking you if you have considered any type of relocation?”

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<sup>175</sup> Russell V. Lombardo, “Will the people be heard? Your city is in great trouble!”, *TAS*, December 16, 1965.

<sup>176</sup> Dennis Gimble, “The Housing Authority Nov. 17 meeting,” *TAS*, December 16, 1965.

The board shifted responsibility to potential developers and declined to answer the motivation for the hurried nature of the evictions.<sup>177</sup>

When Gilmore was appointed to the AHA commission in 1966—the first Negro on the commission—he unsuccessfully attempted for weeks to obtain the AHA’s bylaws.<sup>178</sup>

(At least Zecher did not refer to the Gilmore brothers as “boys” as did school board president C. Dean Ramsden.)<sup>179</sup>

Zecher reserved his most hateful contempt for Mrs. Mabel Tatum, Estuary Project tenant leader. In March 1964, tenants picketed the Webster bank of housing commissioner Frederick W. Zecher, manager of the Webster Street Wells-Fargo Bank. Led by Mabel Tatum holding a “Low Rented Needed” sign, pickets held signs like, “Forced out,” “Evicted why?” “Help! Save our Homes,” “Estuary Being Closed,” “Housing Authority Unfair,” and “Alameda is our Home.” The group marched to the AHA offices.<sup>180</sup>

At multiple AHA meetings in 1966 Zecher asked Tatum, “Where is your husband?” The comment not only implies that she, as a woman, should not be speaking to Zecher, but also suggests that she is a single mother. (Her husband was serving in Vietnam). Coupled with his other comments suggesting Negroes did not take social or economic responsibility for themselves, Zecher held very prejudiced views.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> “Officials air housing ideas,” *TAS*, December 14, 1966.

<sup>179</sup> Lombardo, “Will the people be heard?” *TAS*.

<sup>180</sup> Photos by S. Snaer of the S.F Examiner of demonstration included as figures. Housing beef on demolition of low cost housing. 1964-03-16, Alameda housing project eviction pickets, BANC PIC 2006.029—NEG, BOX 1412, SLEEVE 13836M\_02, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (Fang Family Photos)

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., also noted in Mabel Tatum, “What kind of Country is this?” a speech reprinted in *The Movement*, July 1966, Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee of California.

Alamedans with HOPE, an inter-racial fair housing organization joined the chorus calling for Zecher to resign. In a statement sent to *The Alameda Sun*, HOPE chair Mary L.

Johnson wrote,

Among those members who have attended two of the Housing Authority meetings, there is a feeling that the chairman of that group, Mr. Fred Zecher, be asked to resign. It is appalling that a man who appears to be so biased and prejudiced should head a committee to solve the problems of our minority citizens.<sup>182</sup>

The State Fair Employment Commission investigated charges against the AHA for discrimination against 34 Negroes in 1966.<sup>183</sup>

With *The Alameda Sun* and Alamedans with HOPE supporting Estuary tenants, more of the island's majority population noticed the disregard expressed by the AHA towards Negroes.

Zecher did not resign until demolition of the Estuary Projects went forward in 1967 and residents were relocated.

By 1970, the Black population of Alameda had declined to just 1,869. For the 1960s, this represented a 40 percent decrease, down from 5,312. Between 1950 and 1970 however, the drop from 5,213 represented a 65 percent decrease in Blacks on the island.<sup>184</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The blatant disregard shown towards Black housing project residents manifested not only in the attitudes of public officials of the AHA, but the institution's public policies and practices. The AHA segregated Black residents within housing projects. Over time, as other non-Black residents were able to find housing elsewhere on the island, Alameda's

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<sup>182</sup> Mary L. Johnsen, Statement from Alamedans with HOPE re: Estuary Housing," *The Alameda Sun*, December 16, 1965

<sup>183</sup> "Alameda Authority Faces Bias Quiz," *OT*, May 25, 1966.

<sup>184</sup> Bay Area Census, 1940-60, 1970-90, < <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda50.htm>> and < <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda70.htm>>, December 2012.

Black population declined by 3,443 over 20 years. Although the 1960s saw a rise in Black housing activism, the 1950s was the most devastating, in number, for Alameda's Negroes. The AHA again displaced large numbers of African Americans in the 1970s and 1980s with the demolition of Makassar Straits, Alameda's last wartime housing project.

The AHA came into existence for the purpose of power. Controlled and chaired by bankers like James E. Hall, Thomas Greig and Fred Zecher who privileged property over poor people, the AHA functioned solely for local control by business elites and not for the housing of people.<sup>185</sup>

Commissioners continually disregarding Black activists. The treatment of Tatum and Gilmore, later a commissioner, echoes the treatment later experienced by housing activist Clayton Guyton. During the 1980s, other commissioners attempted to evoke a "conflict of interest" issues as Guyton was a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit against the city for its housing policies (See Chapter 9, Tenants vs. Alameda).

Over time, as non-Black residents moved from the Alameda housing projects, and Blacks became concentrated within deteriorating AHA housing conditions, many began to associate Blacks with "slum" like conditions. This perpetuated the white homeowner, landlord and realtor discrimination in the private market, which in turn made finding non-public housing in Alameda next to impossible for Black peoples.

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<sup>185</sup> James E. Hall, founding commission chair was a banker, other founding housing commissioners included: chairman T.A. Greig, manager of the Bank of America; realtor Earl D. Garber, and attorney A. Hubbard Moffitt, Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," March 15, 1991; In 1949, others appointed included Jack McLaverty Jr., branch manager of American Trust Co, "Greig Heads City Housing Commission." *Alameda Times Star*. 25 February 25 1949.

## **6. JIM CROW ALAMEDA: RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN ALAMEDA'S PRIVATE HOUSING MARKET, 1940-1970**

In 1947, East Alameda came out to city council to protest the construction of a million dollar apartment building near Krusi Park. The *Oakland Tribune* reported, "East Alamedans protest against Housing project." Over 500 people signed a petition stating that the "housing project" would reduce property values. The petition asked the Council to overrule the planning board's decision to up-zone the area to allow multiple-dwelling units.<sup>186</sup>

By the end of the 1940s, one-third of all Alameda residents lived in wartime housing. The AHA became the primary landlord for Negro residents during and after WWII not only because it constructed and managed over 20,000 units, but due to widespread housing discrimination in the private market. Discrimination forced Blacks into projects, within specific blocks, creating an island wide "Jim Crow Alameda." The East End residents' fears of a "housing project" reflect the earlier concerns about "infiltration," and encouraged segregated housing (See Chapter 3: Pattern of Prejudice).

Alameda's white homeowners, landlords, and realtors, with assistance from the federal government, collaborated to prevent African Americans from residing in non-public housing on the island. Early tactics used included "redlining" and racial restrictive covenants. Landlords also refused to rent to Negroes. White homeowners also protested to prevent the development of any multiple dwelling apartments in their neighborhoods, often conflated with "projects." Minimal housing-related protest appears to have occurred among African Americans during and immediately after the war. In the 1960s, Negro

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<sup>186</sup> "East Alamedans protest against Housing project." *OT*. April 16, 1947, 13



residents utilized state and federal mechanisms like the state FEPC to fight housing discrimination. Interracial fair housing organizations also helped Negroes find housing.

### **Exclusionary Spaces: Redlining and Restrictive Covenants**

The federal government reinforced segregation through whites-only development. Two early tactics used included “redlining” and racial restrictive covenants. These restricted Negro homeowners and renters to the north side of Alameda and excluded non-whites from other areas of the island.

#### ***HOLC Security Maps***

The HOLC map for the Krusi Park area, C-41, classified the area as “LOW YELLOW because of infiltration of colored families.”<sup>187</sup> Thus the white residents fears about their investments were not irrational; however, they had been forged by prejudiced and self-serving real estate interests, in collaboration with city planners, and supported by the federal government. The value of white homeowners investment became conflated with their ability to exclude Negroes from their vicinity. See Chapter 3: Pattern of Prejudice for more detail on Alameda’s “Redlining” maps. See Image 3 for black/white version of map.<sup>188</sup>

#### ***Restrictive Covenants***

White homeowners also took collective action to exclude Negro homeowners. Using racial restrictive covenants, legal agreements that enabled homeowners to sue to prevent Negroes from moving in the white neighborhoods. Fernside’s deeds read, “No person of

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<sup>187</sup> Residential Security Map, Area Description, Alameda, California, Area C-41, Home Owner’s Loan Corporation, RG 195, Entry 39, Folder “Oakland-Berkeley, California Master File,” Box 145, RG 195, NARA II.

<sup>188</sup> This paper includes black/white version of map. For full color, visit-Races, Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California’s Exclusionary Spaces <<http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/mosaic.html>>, accessed May 10, 2013.

African, Japanese, Chinese or of any Mongolian descent shall be allowed to purchase, own or lease said property or any part thereof.” Fernside’s covenants came with the subdivision. Even the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1948 decision in *Shelley v. Kramer* to deem covenants unenforceable did not stop Fernside residents from extending the ban in 1949. Fernside did not remove the covenants until 20 years later. By this time, much of Alameda’s Negroes had moved from the island.<sup>189</sup>

Realtors and developers created the “redlining” maps and covenants. White homeowners reinforced the prejudice.<sup>190</sup> It is not clear how many other homes in Alameda had—and still have to this day—racial restrictive covenants on their deeds. An Alameda-focused project exploring covenants in Alameda, and the East Bay, could yield important knowledge about the history of segregation on the island and the region.<sup>191</sup>

### ***Congressional Committee on Housing Visits Bay Area***

Opposition by white homeowners prevented postwar construction of housing. This impacted all migrants and had an increased impact on non-whites. Just months after white East Alameda residents protested the construction of new apartments in the Krusi Park neighborhood, a Joint Congressional Committee on Housing convened in San Francisco on November 13-14. Charles L. Warren, a representative of the Alameda County Branch of the NAACP, spoke before the committee on the causes of housing shortages and the urgent need to meet the shortage. “While significant increases have occurred in

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<sup>189</sup> The cost to file the petition in 1949 cost more than two months worth of rent for many Alamedans, Fernside Home Owners Association Bylaws. “Homeowners in Fernside Extend Bans,” *Alameda Times Star*, December 30, 1949; “50% approval of Covenants, Early Fernside voting,” *Alameda Times Star*, October 24, 1969.

<sup>190</sup> Merlin writes that white Alamedans sought to restrict settlement in “Old Alameda” and “preserve a certain amount of exclusiveness,” with advertisements for Waterside Terrace and Bayo Vista and Fairview, Merlin, “The Geography of Alameda,” 59,67.

<sup>191</sup> “Racial restrictive covenants,” Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project, University of Washington, <<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>>, accessed

population in Alameda County since 1940, the increase in dwelling units has not kept pace,” Warren said. He focused his remarks on Alameda, Albany, Berkeley and Oakland. “Between 1940 and 1944 there was an 88% increase in population in Alameda, California. During the same period, the number of dwelling units increased 52.9%.” Although more people moved to Alameda, not enough housing was developed.<sup>192</sup>

Warren continued, focusing on how this impacted the non-white population. “Additional significance is attached to the data showing the lag between increase in population and increase in dwelling units when comparison is made with the increase in non-white population in the same four cities. The non-white population of the City of Alameda increased from approximately 2,000 in 1940 to 13,250 in 1946.” Overall, there was a 33 percent increase in non-whites in Alameda County, he said. No data at the time indicated how many non-white dwellings existed within the city or county of Alameda. Despite the lack of data, Warren said, housing discrimination was common knowledge. “It can be inferred from the practices prevailing in the housing market that a very limited number of dwelling units have been made available to the greatly increased non-white population.” Census data shows Black hyper-segregation within Alameda, detailed in Chapter 5: Housing Authority Unfair. Warren concluded:

Race restrictive covenants cover most residential property outside arbitrarily defined zones established for non-white residence. Extension of dwelling units for the non-white population has meant the dividing and redividing of the single family and small apartment homes already allocated to them into smaller and smaller cubby homes for larger and larger families.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Charles L. Warren, Alameda County Branch of NAACP, before Joint Congressional Committee on Housing, November 13-14, San Francisco, CA, Part 5, Reel 18, frame 400, Papers of the NAACP, Microfilm Collection, Doe Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

White exclusionary tactics successfully crowded Negroes into crowded projects and older housing stock on the north side of the island. However, East Alameda homeowners did not hold a monopoly on racist real estate practices and protests.

### **West End opposition**

Although the AHA sited no housing projects on the East End due to opposition by white homeowners, West End homeowners also opposed apartment construction. Their concerns echoed the concerns of East End homeowners.

In 1944, Merritt Building Co. build 80 small houses on former farmland south of the Woodstock projects. The neighborhood lies north of Encinal High School today and is bound by Central Ave, Main Street, Pacific Ave and Third Street.<sup>194</sup> Many residents from this neighborhood and further east towards Webster owned beachfront property as Central Ave faced the southern shore of the island.

A 1950 plan to build a shopping center on 30 acres of tidal fill drew opposition from West End residents. The West End Association passed a resolution opposing the project. The group said the project would decrease real estate values. Two years earlier, resident opposition defeated a proposal for housing. Officials raised concerns about funding. A petition to change the zoning from single family to allow both multifamily and a shopping center drew gasps in the audience. In fact, only a grocery store had been proposed. Over 350 people signed a petition. C. A. Dailey of the West End Association read the petition, “We, of the West End Association, are emphatically opposed to this

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<sup>194</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 10, May 10, 1991.

petition for, if adopted, it will mean the end of the last bit of bay property on the island available for home building.”<sup>195</sup>

Many wanted the fill property to have single-family housing, but some argued the land was too costly to build such units. As the Council stalled rezoning, residents continued to press for the demolition of existing projects in order for the city to generate revenue. Mrs. Irene Moressi, 119 Santa Clara, said the city should acquire current war housing, like the Chipman project to be bought at cost and sold to Congress Co. “If were to do this it would give the city a chance to make some money and would rectify many of our present difficulties. If it of special importance because we could avoid using the waterfront which should go for showplaces.”<sup>196</sup>

The “white-haired Warren Sawyer”, property owner of 404 Central Ave said, “When the cat comes out of the bag, we’ll find its just another government venture. It will just be tenements. We feel the West End, and especially the water side is entitled to buildings like in the East End,” and not “Some more tenements.”<sup>197</sup>

Ultimately, the city council voted down the proposed rezoning in only a few minutes.<sup>198</sup>

White West End residents favored “homebuilding” and opposed the possibility of “tenements.” Considering that the majority of wartime housing had been sited on the West End, Sawyer’s comments about Alameda’s geography illustrate perceptions of the island’s division. Sawyer said residents wanted homes like those on the East End opposed

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<sup>195</sup> “Council Grants Okay for Tidal Fill of 30 Acres.” *Alameda Times Star*. April 5, 1950; “Westenders Oppose Plan.” *ATS*, May 19, 1950; “\$6 million Home Project Opposed by Westenders.” *ATS*, May 11, 1950.

<sup>196</sup> “Realtors Urge City Action on Housing,” *Alameda Times Star*, June 21, 1950:1.

<sup>197</sup> “Action Delayed on Housing Bid in the Westend,” *Alameda Times Star*, July 19, 1950; “Tidelands Apartment Plans Studied by City Council.” *Oakland Tribune*, July 19, 1950.

<sup>198</sup> “Council Votes Down Housing Plan, 4 to 1.” *Alameda Times Star*, August 1, 1950.

to additional projects, associated with Negroes and lower property values, like those on the north-western side of the island.

### ***Alameda Times-Star and Redevelopment***

The local newspaper, the *Alameda Times Star* supported redevelopment efforts. The Alameda Times-Star published an editorial in favor of the proposed rezoning of tidelands. The *Times-Star* opined:

It has been and is strenuously opposed by many persons in the West End on several grounds—that the project would result in a decrease of property values, that it would introduce an undesirable element into the population of the West End, that it would probably result in increased expenditures by city government for maintenance costs, and that possibly the Navy would take over the property thus boosting the city’s already substantial percentage of land that has been withdrawn from the tax rolls.

In World War II we learned at first-hand there of the tribulations that people have to undergo in any war-swollen city without adequate housing. We also saw the wretched housing that was thrown up hastily as a matter of necessity. Indeed, we still see it—unfortunately.

The editorial continued:

If we are to avoid having more jerry-built, ramshackle housing constructed here when the next war really gets underway, and thus avoid having more eyesores left in Alameda after the next war has gone, we must take time by the forelock. **That means we must go ahead now and permit the construction of a suitable housing project on land that heretofore has been so useless that most of it still remains under water.**” [Original bold emphasis]<sup>199</sup>

Echoing the concerns of West End residents, the Times Star encouraged the city to build the type of housing Alamedans wanted. Concerns of decreased property values and the introduction of “an undesirable element into the population of the West End” evokes the 1937 “Redlining” maps. The editorial also suggests it was unfortunate that the “wretched housing” projects still existed, “ramshackle” “eyesores” for the city. The tidelands—the beach—could be made useful as a site for “suitable housing.”

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<sup>199</sup> “The Proposed Rezoning of West End Tidelands,” Editorial, *Alameda Times Star*. August 1, 1950.

After multiple delays, the city council ultimately green lit the project. A separate proposal to develop apartment homes near the planned new high school, Encinal, was approved.<sup>200201</sup>

### *Alameda Negroes Outside Public Housing*

Few Negroes lived outside AHA's wartime housing projects in 1950 and census tracts AC10 and AC11. Just two Negroes lived in AC9—the Fernside area. From west to east, the census tract figures show few Negroes outside AC12 (8), AC 13 (14), AC 14 (10), AC15 (11) and AC16 (14). Meaning only 59 Negroes, or 1 percent, of the island's 5,312 total Negro population lived outside of the island's two northern and western census tracts.<sup>202</sup>

Using the segregation measures of Massey and Denton, Negroes were over-represented in two census tracts and under represented in all others. This uneven distribution of Negroes represents the opposite side of the spectrum. While segregation isolated Negroes within projects from whites, whites insulated themselves from Negroes. Whites-only projects at Chipman, Western and in Woodstock Homes segregated white, West End homeowners from Negro project dwellers. The three wartime projects

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<sup>200</sup> "Council Holds Up Action on Project Fill," *Alameda Times Star*, August 16, 1950, "Council Delays Permit for Congress Co," *Alameda Times Star*, September 6, 1950, "South Shore Tract Studied by FHA as Site for Project." *Alameda Times Star*, October 5, 1950; "Yacht Harbor in Plans for Huge Development," *Alameda Times Star*, December 28, 1950. The former project became what is now known as South Shore, which includes the South Shore mall, multiple apartment complexes along Shoreline Drive, including South Shore Beach and Tennis Club, as well as single-family homes on both sides of Otis Dr. The later project became what is now Ballena Bay, including the Ballena Village apartments and condos

<sup>201</sup> The debates over these developments bring up two unanswered questions. Both areas have historically had low Black populations in proportion to the citywide population. What real estate and rental practices have prevented or discouraged African Americans from moving into the South Shore and Ballena Bay Areas? In the 2000s, the population in South Shore census tracts increased? What led to this increase and how does the aging of those properties factor into Black entry into those apartments? This project does not investigate the South Shore development in detail. The development is part of earlier preservation efforts in Alameda, as noted in Woody Minor, "Why Preserve? Origins of a movement," *AJ*, February 26, 1990.

<sup>202</sup> Table 1 – Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts, 1950 San Francisco – Oakland and Adjacent Area,

separated the Merritt Building Co. development from the Estuary, Webster and Gibbs projects. Prejudice beliefs and institutional policies and practices isolated Negroes into the “ghetto” of Alameda.<sup>203</sup>

It should not be surprising that Negroes became associated with public housing. Thus, public housing could also be understood as coded language or a proxy for Negro housing. Or more accurately, “ghetto” became synonymous with Black.<sup>204</sup> The spatial isolation of Negroes and separation of whites and non-whites solidified a collective white identity that manifested in the electoral process.

### **Proposition 14 and Alameda’s White Electorate**

While most of the nation focused on the 1964 electoral contest between Lyndon B. Johnson and Barry Goldwater, Californians faced a decision of greater significance. *Time* magazine, less than two months before the November election, wrote that Proposition 14, a California ballot initiative, was “the most bitterly fought issue in the nation’s most populous state,” of far more importance than “such relatively piddling contests as the one between Johnson and Goldwater.”<sup>205</sup>

As written on the ballot, Prop. 14 did not appear discriminatory. Crafted by the California Real Estate Association (CREA), Prop. 14 aimed to overturn fair housing legislation passed the previous year and exempt landlords and homeowners from anti-

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<sup>203</sup> “The spatial isolation of black Americans was achieved by a conjunction of racist attitudes, private behaviors, and institutional practices that disenfranchised blacks from urban housing markets and led to the creation of the ghetto, Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 93; In 1920, the black newspaper the *Western Outlook* complained the white daily press unfairly referred to West Oakland as a “black” place that was crime ridden, despite a diverse population and low crime. Brown in *Class Aspects of Residential Development and Choice in the Oakland Black Community* notes a similar designation of West Oakland as a “ghetto,” despite not meeting definitions or slum standards. In Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, the geographer discusses notions of representational space, or how people conceptualize spaces.

<sup>204</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 18.

<sup>205</sup> “California: Proposition 14,” *TIME Magazine*, September 25, 1964, <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,876158,00.html>> [Accessed April 5, 2013]. This section adapts a research paper for PS 116: Politics of Displacement by the author, written spring 2013.



discrimination laws approved by the State Legislature. The Fair Housing Act of 1963, authored by Berkeley Assembly Member Byron Rumford, emerged out of a decades long fight by civil rights advocates to combat housing segregation in California. Rumford's legislation strengthened previous legislation outlawing segregation in public housing, restricting public financing of discriminatory urban renewal projects, and attempts to stifle prejudice in the private housing market.<sup>206</sup>

Proposition 14 stated, in part:

*Neither the State nor any subdivision or agency thereof shall deny, limit or abridge, directly or indirectly, the right of any person, who is willing or desires to sell, lease or rent any part or all of his real property, to decline to sell, lease or rent such property to such person or persons as he, in his absolute discretion, chooses.*<sup>207</sup>

### ***Political whiteness and the Pro-Proposition 14 Campaign***

Proposition 14 proponents evoked rhetoric of “freedom” of choice and “constitutional protection” from “tyranny” in their patriotic campaign to eliminate Fair Housing.

A mailer on file at the Alameda Free Library produced by the Committee for Yes on

Proposition 14 read, “Your ‘Yes’ on Proposition 14 will:

restore your freedom to sell or rent your property to anyone you choose; Stop police state practices; promote friendly community relations; restore constitutional protection to homeowners; eliminate tyranny of a Bureaucratic Commission; Remove Risk of Heavy Economic Loses.”<sup>208</sup>

Proposition 14, according to proponents would:

- “**restore** to California property owners the right to choose the person or persons to whom they wish to sell or rent their residential property”; (original emphasis)

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<sup>206</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 260.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas W. Cass evens, *Politics, housing, and race relations: California's Rumford act and Proposition 14*, 1967, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California.

<sup>208</sup> Committee for Yes on Proposition 14, “Your ‘YES’ on Proposition 14 will” brochure, 1963 Elections Folder, Elections Vertical File, Alameda Main Library, Alameda, CA.

- “**abolish** provisions of the Rumford Forced Housing Act of 1963 which took from Californians their freedom of choice in selling or renting their residential property”;
- “**amend** our California Constitution so that the only way future legislation could take away the freedom of choice in selling or renting of residential property would be by vote of the people”;
- “**halt** the State Fair Employment Practices Commission’s harassing and intimidating the public and property owners in the exercising of their freedom of choice”
- “**end** State police power over the selling or renting of privately owned residential property”;
- “**restore** rights basics to our freedom—rights that permit all persons to decide for themselves what to do with their property”<sup>209</sup>

Proponents framed their arguments in a “political whiteness”<sup>210</sup> that cast white private property-holding homeowners as victims. Prop. 14 would “restore” the “freedom” to discriminate and stop “police state practices” in the private market. Opposed to promoting integration, the ballot measure suggested “friendly community relations” through spatial isolation of racial groups. Again, the concerns about economic losses harken back the HOLC residential security maps that associated race and property values.

The patriotic red white and blue brochure produced by so-called Committee for Yes on Proposition #14 mocked fair housing advocate and lawmaker Byron Rumford, stating it would Abolish the Rumford “Forced” Housing Act.<sup>211</sup>

The majority of whites supported Prop. 14. When the campaign against Prop. 14 produced a flier that read, “Shall tax dollars be spent for Jim Crow housing? Shall de

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Daniel Martinez HoSang argues ballot measures like Proposition 14 do not represent a “white backlash,” as many argue. The “backlash thesis” ignores white notions of alienation and feelings of powerlessness. Post-war “racial liberalism” masked racial inequality embedded into the hierarchy of *political whiteness*—“a political subjectivity rooted in white identity, a gaze on politics constituted by whiteness.” Daniel Martinez HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*, 20.

<sup>211</sup> The brochure included iconography of reversed type Statue of Liberty with white outline and blue background; center: “Californians should have freedom of Choice” with white background, blue bold letters, and red stars, and red background with white reverse type California Bear Flag with a spear and arrowhead for a flagpole, Committee for Yes on Proposition 14, “Your ‘YES’ on Proposition 14 will” brochure, 1963 Elections Folder, Elections Vertical File, Alameda Main Library, Alameda, CA.

facto segregation in schools be constitutionalized?” white Democrats feared the materials would not connect with white voters. The “putatively race-neutral civil rights language” appeased white homeowner fears and concerns of property values, “affirming the basic privileges white homeowners had come to expect as natural and unassailable.”<sup>212</sup>

### ***Prop. 14 Passes***

In November 1964, throughout the suburbs of Alameda County, and the state of California, California voters made a seemingly paradoxical electoral decision: “They voted in overwhelming numbers for the figurehead of mid-1960s liberalism, President Lyndon B. Johnson, while casting ballots in equal proportion against one of California liberalism’s signature achievements, fair housing”.<sup>213</sup> Although votes appeared to contradict in terms of race and equity, the rights of white homeownership trumped civil rights issues.

Civil rights activist and labor leader C. L. Dellums understood the dangers of relying on the white majority electorate after years of fighting for union integration, seeing first hand the white working class’ investment in white privilege over class interests. Explaining why he opposed putting the state Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) on the ballot in 1946, Dellums stated he did not want to create a precedent of a vote. Putting civil rights issues on the ballot would recognize a right to vote on measures of equality. “White people have been using their majority and their

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<sup>212</sup> On race-neutral language, Self, *American Babylon*, 264; On white affirmation, HoSang, *Racial Propositions*, 81-83.

<sup>213</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 260.

control of law enforcing agencies and firearms to prevent us from exercising our God given rights,” Dellums reflected.<sup>214</sup>

On the island of Alameda, 73 percent of the electorate voted in favor of Prop. 14. Over 90 percent of Alameda’s population identified as white. The white majority supported the proposition. It is notable that 27 percent of the population opposed Prop. 14. Even if all non-whites voted against the proposition, the majority of the island’s dominant group voted against fair housing and in favor of discrimination. Only the staunch segregationist city San Leandro and unincorporated Castro Valley had higher percentages of pro-Prop. 14 votes. The island’s white majority, whether explicitly or incidentally, supported segregation.<sup>215</sup>

The state Supreme Court ultimately overturned Prop. 14 in 1967, but the measure impacted FEPC cases active since 1964. Less than three years after Alameda’s white majority voted against Fair Housing and to restrict the FEPC, a case of discrimination at a West End apartment complex would make it to the FEPC.<sup>216</sup>

### **Mrs. Cathryn Tate vs. the Atlantic Apartments**

Black Alamedans protested racial segregation in the AHA, but never mounted protests against Jim Crow in the private market. This changed in 1967 with the case of Cathryn

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<sup>214</sup> Cottrell L Dellums. **interview by Joyce Henderson, ROHO, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1973.**

<sup>215</sup> Prop. 14 returns by city in Map 7.1 in Self, *American Babylon*, 262. Whites used their majority to maintain a hegemonic spatial arrangement that targeted African Americans and, subsequently, deprived others of educational and employment opportunities. Lacking access to these venues of social mobility, this Proposition continued the trajectory of white wealth accumulation and black impoverishment and isolation.

<sup>216</sup> For more on Proposition 14, see Raymond E. Wolfinger and Fred I. Greenstein, "The Repeal of Fair Housing in California: An Analysis of Referendum Voting," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (September 1968), pp. 753-769.

Tate. Fair housing advocates picketed the apartments while her family's case went before the state FEPC for housing bias.

Alameda's housing discrimination began to face more external scrutiny. In 1967, HUD studied housing in Alameda. The white Alameda resident who later crafted the exclusionary ballot measure, Measure A, Inez Kapellas, said HUD was "snooping in Alameda." Mabel Tatum perceived the presence of Byron C. Walters as concern for the low-cost housing issue. With the Estuary controversy, Alameda's housing discrimination gained more attention.<sup>217</sup>

### ***Alamedans with HOPE picket Atlantic Apartments***

Sympathetic whites, many which had participated in the Franklin Park tent-in, also participated in other housing discrimination protests. On January 22, Alamedans with HOPE (Housing Opportunities Program Exchange) picketed the Atlantic Apartments on Poggi St. Located on the West End. The owners of the private apartment complex were accused of refusing to rent to Mrs. Cathryn Tate and her husband, Navy machinist Donald W. Tate the previous fall. HOPE's demands included: making an apartment available to the Tate's, the building owners actively soliciting Negro applicants; an open housing sign be posted in the lobby of the apartments, and a member of the FEPC and/or three HOPE members reviewing the apartments' admissions policies.<sup>218</sup>

HOPE members attempted to find influencers who could persuade the owners to rent to the Tate's, but were unsuccessful. "We have written and contacted public officials, Navy people, and other organizations we felt might have any influence and could get the owner to let Mrs. Tate have the apartment," said Mrs. R.J. Cole, president of Alamedans

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<sup>217</sup> HUD Intern explains his Alameda study, *TAS*, January 25, 1967

<sup>218</sup> Pickets charge housing bias," *TAS*, January 25, 1967

with HOPE. “There efforts have been to no avail, so now we are going to resort to peaceful picketing.” Alamedans with hope pledged to picket every Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. until the owners met the groups’ demands.<sup>219</sup>

“We feel now that this isn’t just a matter of getting this apartment for Mrs. Tate who has waited so long, but that discrimination can no longer be tolerated,” Cole said. “Stalling tactics have been used in the Buena Vista Park Apartments just across the street from the Atlantic and this action may influence their policy.”<sup>220</sup>

The Atlantic Apartments were located south of Atlantic Ave on Poggi St, directly west of the Buena Vista Park Apartments. Both properties occupy land that was formerly Chipman Housing Project, near the Clark Pottery factory. The AHA closed Chipman in 1958 and sold the land to private developers.<sup>221</sup>

Alamedans with HOPE hoped to use private influence and public pressure to influence the Hanson’s—the owners of private apartment complexes that discriminated against Negroes. The Race Relations Committee of the Alameda Council of Churches later endorsed HOPE’s demands.<sup>222</sup>

Incidentally, the Buena Vistas became the center of two Black housing controversies in the 1980s and the mid-2000s. See Chapter 9: Tenants vs. Alameda and Chapter 11: Can’t Move, Won’t Move for those episodes.

### ***Victory at Atlantic Apartments***

Like many other Negroes and Fair Housing advocates, Tate hoped the FEPC would help in the fight against housing discrimination. Although the FEPC received about 460

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> On sale of Chipman property, see Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” *AJ*, June 17, 1991.

<sup>222</sup> “Church council backs picket of apartment,” *TAS*, February 15, 1967

complaints since 1963, by 1963, only two housing cases came forward—presumably due to Proposition 14. The state’s second housing case—and the first Northern California public hearing—occurred in San Jose in January. The state’s third housing case occurred in LA in February.<sup>223</sup> In San Jose, the FEPC found racial discrimination existed. Previous attempts through the city’s Human Relations Commission had been unsuccessful.<sup>224</sup>

Apartment owners and realtors still lacked education on the “realities of the open market,” said Clive Graham, a Long Beach realtor and chair of the FEPC’s Housing Advisory Committee. “Some landlords and realtors still choose to believe that the value of property falls when it is sold to a minority buyer or that movements by other tenants occur if an apartment is rented to a minority family.” The *California Voice* reported that the committee said informing the realty and apartment industry was vital, not just for non-white families, but “for the good of an expanding housing industry as well.”<sup>225</sup>

In the FEPC case of Cathryn Tate, claimed that Hanson and Hanson Builders, Inc., the owners of the apartments, refused to accept her rental application due to her race. FEPC Chairman Dellums filed the accusation. An investigation found probable cause existed and attempts at private conciliation failed. The complaint also named Roy L. and Ann Anderson, Len and Fieda Anders, and Louise Jenson.<sup>226</sup>

At the March 20 hearing at the State Annex building in San Francisco, Raymond E. Hanson, capitulated. Under questioning by FEPC associate council Nancy Biggins, he said he would rent to Tate—if she met other financial requirements. Tate applied for an

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<sup>223</sup> “Housing bias charges heard in San Jose,” *California Voice*, January 20, 1967, 1; “FEPC hears housing bias case in Los Angeles,” *California Voice*, February 3, 1967, 2.

<sup>224</sup> “Racial bias found in apartment case in San Jose,” *California Voice*, February 3, 1967, 1. San Francisco had a Human Rights Commission that held hearings on fair housing and called on the state to strengthen fair housing laws, see “Public hearing on fair housing looms in S.F.,” *California Voice*, January 20, 1967, 1 and “Support for Fair Housing Laws called for in S.F.,” *California Voice*, February 17, 1967, 1.

<sup>225</sup> “Open Housing on FEPC Slate,” *California Voice*, February 24, 1967, 1.

<sup>226</sup> “Hearing set for Alameda Housing Bias Charge,” *California Voice*, March 3, 1967, 1.

apartment in September 1966. While she believed it had been due to her race, Hanson claimed at the FEPC hearing that he objected to her use of profanity, specifically the word “hell.” He also thought she would “cause problems” with her attitude. By the time of Tate’s formal complaint, commissioners learned, three Negro families had moved into the Atlantic Apartments. Hanson agreed to rent to Tate, then a resident of Berkeley. She accepted. The FEPC panel asked the owners to adopt a policy of non-discrimination and to advertise their apartments as “equal opportunity housing.”<sup>227</sup>

Another Alameda-related FEPC case occurred in 1971. Alameda based South Shore Realty Company and the owners of an Oakland apartment-building management company were ordered to pay \$500 damages to a Black law student, Carolyn Collins. After a public hearing, the FEPC found the refusal rent to Collins was on the basis of her race. Commissioner C .L. Dellums filed the complaint.<sup>228</sup> Although this complaint occurred in Oakland, the company’s headquarters resided in Alameda.

Through a combination of legal and civil rights advocacy, with support of direct action protests, fair housing advocates pressured white apartment owners into renting to Negro families. The victory at the Atlantic Apartments may have been the first in Alameda. Advocates hoped the victory would open the housing market to minorities. Still, many whites denied widespread housing discrimination existed in Alameda.<sup>229</sup>

### **Commission on Civil Rights**

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<sup>227</sup> "Alameda Apt. House Owner Reverses Stand," *California Voice*, March 31, 1967.

<sup>228</sup> "\$500 damages ordered in housing bias case", *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 6, 1971.

<sup>229</sup> On significance of the Atlantic Apartments case, interview with Lois Pryor, former HOPE president, Lois Pryor, "Room for Hope." *Alameda Stories*. California of the Past: The Digital Storytelling Project at the Alameda Free Library, <[http://www.alamedastories.org/stories\\_pryor.html](http://www.alamedastories.org/stories_pryor.html)>, Accessed October 11, 2012.



Racial residential segregation also had the consequence of increasing racial solidarity among Negroes. In May 1967, the United States Commission on Civil Rights held hearings in San Francisco and Oakland to gather information about civil rights issues in the Bay Area. At the May 1 hearing at the Federal Building in San Francisco, Vice Chairman Eugene Patterson explained that the hearings would deal primarily with housing and employment concerns, focusing on Negroes, Mexican Americans, and other minorities in central cities of the region. The commission subpoenaed most of the 75 witnesses testifying, yet the commission could only gather facts and lacked adjudication powers. After months of staff investigation, the commission's staff discovered great concern about the lack of equal educational opportunities for all Bay Area children, as well issues housing discrimination. Concerns about redevelopment, lax code enforcement and displacement also surfaced. In opening remarks, the chairman said, "An understanding of the forces which tend to intensify or reduce racial isolation in our society is essential if American is to develop an open society free antagonisms."<sup>230</sup>

Dr. Carlton Goodlett, former San Francisco NAACP branch president and gubernatorial candidate, testified about a dramatic rhetorical emphasis of law and order by public officials, despite an abundance of injustice. "I think an error is made in that we haven't created an umbrella of justice before we can demand law and order, and as long as American Negroes and other minorities are ghettoized and equal housing opportunities are denied to them, there can be no law and order in the area of housing, in equality, in the area of education, in the area of fair employment practices and even in the area of police brutality." When asked if he preferred programs that would disperse the black

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<sup>230</sup> Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Hearing held in San Francisco, California, May 1-3, 1967 and Oakland, California, May 4-6, 1967. United States Commission on Civil Rights. Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office. 1967.

population throughout communities with whites, Goodlett responded, “I am in favor of a program of equal housing opportunity that gives every American the right to live where he desires, and if a man decides to live in contiguity with people of the same race or who have the same languages, this is their business. I think for political power that living in congregated areas certainly encourages representation in government, but this is a problem for the electorate to decide.”<sup>231</sup>

The dialogue between general counsel Howard A. Glickstein and Dr. Goodlett about residential choice is informative.

MR. GLICKSTEIN. I take it that you believe that Negroes don’t live in ghetto areas out of choice?

DR. GOODLETT. No, they are there because of the fact that the decision-makers, along with the real estate industry, has decided that this is the place that they should live with a minimum amount of difficulty.

MR. GLICKSTEIN. In your experience is housing generally available in all parts of San Francisco to Negroes and in the Bay Area?

DR. GOODLETT. No, housing is not generally available even though we have the real estate operators claiming there is no discrimination in housing. There certainly is collusion by the lending institutions in that in some areas they will not make first mortgages to racial minorities who move outside of prescribed areas, and an individual is not able to get first mortgages or any other type of financing, and this in the main circumscribes their living mobility.

MR. GLICKSTEIN. Is it an economic problem, do you think? Are Negroes able to afford the housing that is available on an open basis?

DR. GOODLETT. Yes, there are Negroes who can afford any house that is constructed and for sale to persons of their economic class. It is a situation imposed upon them in that this housing, for reasons best known to those who operate in the industry, place certain barriers, and I think the basic difficulties must be centered around race prejudice and discrimination.”<sup>232</sup>

Echoing the comments by Alameda County NAACP representative Warren 20 years later, Goodlett explains that both public officials and capitalists in the real estate industry

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

segregate Negroes. He also centers race in his analysis, noting residential exclusion was not a matter of class.<sup>233</sup>

The next morning after Goodlett's testimony, James Lamar Childers, a white Alameda resident and business representative of the Alameda County Building and Construction Trades Council, testified before the commission. Affiliated with over 40 unions and 20,000 workers, Childers denied the contemporary existence of discrimination and Negroes and Spanish speaking citizens and other minorities in unions and apprenticeship programs. Discrimination forty years ago may have existed, but not recently, he said. Just two months prior, the FEPC heard claims of racism in unions.<sup>234</sup>

### **Conclusion: Negroes 'Pushed Out'**

Racial residential segregation, although very common, is a less known aspect of California history and the state's identity.<sup>235</sup> With the exception of the Hackett family, and the small Cape Verdean colony on Sherman Street, few Negroes lived outside Alameda's projects before the 1980s.<sup>236</sup>

Private housing market discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s led to a mass exodus of Negroes within Alameda projects and off the island. A 1971 memo to the planning board, city staff explains the dramatic demographic loss, as the sole population shift in regards to race:

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid. For more on the debate on race and class in Thomas S. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, supranotes 4-6, referencing

<sup>234</sup> 317; "FEPC hears claim of race bias by union", *California Voice*, February 10, 1967, 1, "Legislators urged to make race bias a felony", *California Voice*, February 10, 1967, 1

<sup>235</sup> For more on Jim Crow California and housing discrimination in the Bay Area, see: Frank Mankiewicz, "Jim Crow Housing on the West Coast", *The New Leader*, May 3, 1954; A Study of Racial Attitudes in Neighborhoods Infiltrated by Non-Whites: San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley, California, January 1, 1955, School of Welfare, University of California.

<sup>236</sup> Nick Cabral, "Mayor of the West End," Alameda Stories, California of the Past: The Digital Storytelling Project at the Alameda Free Library, <[http://www.alamedastories.org/stories\\_cabral.html](http://www.alamedastories.org/stories_cabral.html)>, Accessed October 11, 2012.

“The only significant change in Alameda’s ethnic make-up appears in the decline in the number of Blacks from 3,127 in 1960 to 1,869 in 1970. This reduction - almost entirely in Tract 4274, bounded by Webster Street, Atlantic Avenue, Main Street and the estuary – was caused by the elimination of wartime housing projects during the 1960s, and the inability of the project residents to relocate in Alameda.<sup>237</sup>

Discriminatory housing policies in the private market forced Negroes out of Alameda.

Nearly half of Alameda’s Black population was pushed out of the island during the 1960s. The AHA demolished hundreds of postwar housing units and expelled thousands of Negroes during the two decades after WWII. The white-majority electorate of Alameda that voted to overturn fair housing laws turned towards a local initiative to preserve the island for themselves and exclude low-income and Black residents.

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<sup>237</sup> Inter department Memorandum dated June 7, 1971 to Planning Board, from Bruce Apsinall, associate planner and Bernie Carter, assistant planner for the City of Alameda. Attached with “Summary of Selected 1970 Census Data” summarizes data from April 1, 1970 Census Day. Population increased 11.5 percent from 1960, from 63,855 to 70,968. Vertical Files, Alameda: Housing, 1970s. Alameda Free Library.

## 7. BLACK LIFE IN THE ALAMEDA PROJECTS

“We’ll stay in the park til hell freezes over”

“It’s better living here than in the projects.”

- *The FLATLANDS*, July 1967

As a child growing up in the Alameda housing projects, Wilver Stargell’s parents tasked him with watching his little sister Sandrus. One day, when “Willie” was supposed to watch his sister, Stargell instead ran across the street to play baseball with his friends, “leaving my responsibilities and Sandrus behind.” One of his project neighbors watched Sandrus while Stargell played ball. His parents got home late that night, about 2 o’ clock in the morning; the neighbor reported what happened to his parents. His stepfather, Percy, got an electrical cord and “began whipping some sense into me.” Stargell called the punishment the “worst whipping” of his life.<sup>238</sup>

In the long-term, the countless hours of playing baseball in the projects paid off for Stargell. He grew up to be a Major League Baseball Hall of Famer. The story above from the autobiography of Stargell, the Alameda housing project’s most famous resident, illustrates the importance of family. His parents required him to take care of his sister in their absence. A neighbor looked out for her when Stargell ran off to play. When Gladys, Stargell’s mother, and Percy returned, the child was disciplined to emphasize the importance of responsibility. Stargell’s life and the life of other project residents offer a window into what life was like for Black project dwellers. This chapter discusses some of

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<sup>238</sup> Willie Stargell and Tom Bird, “Willie Stargell: An Autobiography,” New York: Harper & Row, Publishes, 1984, 36.

project resident's activities, the institutions they organized and, ultimately, how they banded together to fight the AHA from forcing them from the island.<sup>239</sup>

***Willie Stargell: Alameda's Most Famous Project Resident***

In his autobiography, Wilver Stargell recounts his experience from his native Oklahoma to growing up in the Alameda projects. He gives a personal narrative to his family's experience in project housing, his mom and stepfather's labor history, his childhood activities, interracial harmony and the misperception of crime in the projects.

Citing Negro and Seminole ancestry, Stargell was born fatherless on March 7, 1941 near Earlsboro, Oklahoma in the home of his grandfather, Wil Stargell. His mother Gladys, moved to nearby Shawnee, Oklahoma. She worked as a domestic. While cleaning homes in downtown Shawnee, she met and later married Lesley Bush, a soldier. Like others from Shawnee, the family would migrate to the Bay Area. Lesley's father found work in Alameda as a dockworker. In 1944, Stargell and his mother boarded packed train headed for California. Since seats were given to military personnel first, Stargell's mother was forced to stand. Stargell wrote:<sup>240</sup>

Besides being extremely uncomfortable, the conditions soon became dangerous. In the dark of night, Mom and I were once even pushed out of the car. There we stood in the cold night air as the train sped along the tracks. We stayed outside on the narrow strip connected with the car trailing ours for hours. I don't remember, but Mom said she wrapped me in her coat and laid me along the cold steel floor. She feared for my safety as sparks flew off the spinning wheels. Luckily for me, I sleep through the entire experience. I awoke back inside the crowded car. Somehow maneuvered us back inside. She told me later that we had been out in the cold night air for three hours.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> This chapter adopts the author's previous presentation, Reginald James, "Black Tides: The Life and Times of the Estuary Housing Projects, Alameda, California, 1943-1971". Research presented at the St. Claire Drake Symposium, Department of African American Studies, University of California, Berkeley, May 2013.

<sup>240</sup> Willie Stargell and Tom Bird, "Willie Stargell: An Autobiography," New York: Harper & Row, Publishes, 1984.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid..

Stargell's difficult journey west mirrors that of other Negro migrants to California.<sup>242</sup>

California was not as sunny as Stargell's family expected. The family initially moved to West Oakland on Campbell Street. After Gladys second marriage soured in 1945, the family moved into Alameda projects with his step-aunt Ozzie. "My mother loved project living," Stargell wrote. "The people of the projects were real people—friendly, open-hearted, good neighbors—exactly what my mom needed. The projects became the answer to Mom's homesick blues."<sup>243</sup>

Gladys worked as a cleaning lady inside a men's dormitory. She soon met a sailor named Percy Russell. After the war ended, Gladys lost her job at post office. Percy married Gladys in 1946. The family got their own apartment in the projects. Discharged from navy service, he began working as a truck driver, but the pay was low.<sup>244</sup>

After Gladys older Lucy visited the family for a month, she offered to take Willie back to Florida to ease the newly married family's burden. Stopping to see his grandfather in Oklahoma for the last time, he stayed in a Florida shack lacking electricity and refrigeration with his strict aunt for six years. After Lucy essentially refused to bring Willie home for a few years, until Gladys boarded a train with Willie's new half-sister Sandrus to bring him home.

### **Housing Projects of Alameda**

While Stargell lived in Florida, the Negro population in Alameda's projects swelled.

Over a third of Alameda residents lived in projects and a quarter of the projects residents

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<sup>242</sup> Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of other suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, Random House: 2010.

<sup>243</sup> Stargell, 11.

<sup>244</sup> Stargell, *Autobiography*, 11-12.

were Negro. Ninety-nine percent of Negroes lived on two census tracts in Alameda.<sup>245</sup>

Widespread housing discrimination in the private market and biased public policy concentrated Negroes into the Estuary, Encinal and Webster projects. Just as his family moved in with in-laws, other Negro families invited relatives to live with them. The process of inviting family members for temporary residents is known as “chain migration.”<sup>246</sup>

During WWII, segregated baseball teams battled each other in leagues played on parks on the island. Children played baseball in the Police League on multiple project fields in the Encinal, Estuary, Webster and Chipman projects, as well as Washington Park. A Boys Club was organized in the Estuary in 1948, and soon formed a baseball team to compete against teams throughout the city. In 1952, the Estuary project players beat Lincoln Park’s team, the third time the Estuary Team won the championship. The Estuary Yankee’s all-Black team won again in 1959. (See image 10: Estuary Yankees 1959).<sup>247</sup> In 1952, the AHA appointed Don Grant as an Estuary project recreation leader. Grant mentored Stargell and dozens, if not hundreds, of other Black children in Alameda. He also taught at Encinal High School.<sup>248</sup>

The Alameda Housing News<sup>249</sup> lists numerous activities between 1948 and 1953. Both Boys and Girls Scouts troops were formed in the projects. It’s likely these troops were

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<sup>245</sup> 1950, Table 1 – Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts, 1950, San Francisco- Oakland and Adjacent, *1950 Census of Housing*.

<sup>246</sup> Census data also shows many families within tracts AC10 and AC11 had more than 1.5 people per room. Considering the larger family sizes of many Black families, we can infer that not only children, but relatives and even fictive kin lived together, Table 1 – Characteristics of Housing for the City: 1950, *1950 U.S. Census of Housing*, Vol. 17: Akron-Baltimore.

<sup>247</sup> CSC, April 1, 1948; *AHN*, June 1, 1951; *AHN*, September 1, 1952.

<sup>248</sup> “Shipyard Squad Defeats Colored Boilermakers, 9-6” *ATS*, September 14-17, 1943. *AHN*, September 1, 1952. As an Encinal High School freshman, I met “Coach Grant,” however, I did not his history. Encinal’s High School Track and Field is named after Grant and a former Estuary project resident recently started the Don Grant Alameda Point Track Club.



segregated, or Negroes simply excluded. In 1951, the Estuary Community and Christian Fellowship churches agreed to tentatively sponsor a joint troop for pre-teen boys.<sup>250</sup> The projects had multiple churches. The Estuary projects alone had two Christian churches: one white and the other Black. The Estuary Christian Fellowship and the Estuary Community Church had their own vacation bible schools. Images from the *Alameda Housing News* show all-white congregations and children at the Christian Fellowship.<sup>251</sup> Alameda's first Black church was the Estuary Community Church. The founding pastor was Rev J. L. Richard.<sup>252</sup> Dr. Ross D. Garrison, Sr. of Louisiana led the church from 1947 to 1950.<sup>253</sup> When Estuary Community Church held a tribute to the late Edwin Sanford, former executive director of AHA, Alameda mayor W. J. Branschied, chairman Thomas Greig and even David Christie attended. Rev. Garrison presided.<sup>254</sup>

Rev. Herbert Guice, D.D. was called to pastor Estuary Community Church on June 12, 1950. He later organized the church as Bethel Missionary Baptist Church on March 4, 1953 and led the church in Alameda until he moved to East Oakland, its current site.<sup>255</sup> In September 1950, Estuary Community Church began publishing news in the

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<sup>249</sup> The *Alameda Housing News* published by the AHA was previously published as the Alameda Community Services Calendar and Project Services. The Alameda Community Services Calendar, published by Alameda Housing Authority collection at the Alameda Library begins with Volume V, no 3. Other issues were published between 1943 and 1948 but are not on microfilm reel at the Alameda Library. In 1949, newsletter changed to Alameda Housing News. Series from 1948 to 1953. One issue notes the publication first issued in 1943 as *Project Services* with circulation of 500.

<sup>250</sup> Troops 21 and 31 both exist in projects, as well as Cub Scout pack No. 21 and Encinal's Cub Scout Pack organized April 19, 1948. It's unclear if these were segregated, CSC April 1, 1948. October 1950 photo of Brownies Troop. No. 84 in the Webster Projects had no Black girls, *AHN*, October 1, 1950. On integrated troop, see "New Scout Troop for Estuary," *AHN*, May 1, 1951.

<sup>251</sup> *CSC*, August 1, 1948.

<sup>252</sup> The obituary of Barnett Bolton, Sr., a former Bethlehem Shipyard machinist and charter member of Estuary Community Church lists the name of J.L. Richard.

<sup>253</sup> Dr. Ross D. Garrison, Sr., Good Samaritan Church, <<http://www.goodsamaritanchurch.org/drgarrison3.htm>>, accessed March 24, 2013.

<sup>254</sup> "Estuary Community Church Pays Tribute to the Late Mr. Sanford." *CSC*, March 1, 1948, p. 3

<sup>255</sup> 50-year anniversary souvenir booklet, Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, in possession of author, courtesy of Mable Williams.

AHA publication. In October, Mrs. Annie Brown wrote, “I am happy to report that the Estuary Community Church is still carrying on its activities most successfully under the leadership of Rev. Herbert Guice.” Brown wrote that Estuary organized two auxiliaries: The Brotherhood and Sisterhood. Also, notes the Usher’s Choir sings well. Also, a representative of *Chicago Defender* recently visited church. Sunday evening services now offered at night. By 1951, the church listed multiple services and activities in its schedule: morning worship, Sunday school and a youth fellowship, Sisterhood and Brotherhood meetings, two usher board meetings, prayer meeting, youth choir and a teachers meeting on Saturday evenings. Only Friday evenings had no evening activities at the church.<sup>256</sup> The Estuary Community Church appeared to be a center for Negro life in the Alameda projects.

The do-for-self and do-for-each other attitude that spurred families to organize aid for the Ingram orphans back in 1948 also encouraged residents to be active with the Community Chest. In October 1949, the Community Chest Agencies of Alameda supported the “Camp Fire Girls.” Estuary’s group included two Black girls, Lanzetta Banton and Claudia Biles.<sup>257</sup>

### ***Willie Stargell Returns***

Stargell returned to Alameda just a few days before Christmas in 1951. In his autobiography published three decades after he moved into the Encinal projects, despite its unappealing physical conditions, Stargell called Alameda home:<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> *AHN*, May 1, 1951.

<sup>257</sup> *AHN*, October 1, 1949 and *AHN*, October 1, 1950.

<sup>258</sup> All following excerpts from Stargell, *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*, 30. For interview with Woody Minor, see Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” part 16, *AJ*, July 8, 1991.

In Alameda, and the projects, I found a home. Originally constructed as makeshift housing for persons working for the government during the Second World War, the projects weren't stylish or pretty. They were plain, unattractive, long, rectangular buildings housing apartments of no more than two bedrooms. Each building was characterized by four subdivisions of four apartments each, two on the ground, two on the second, which shared the same the same entranceway.

The exterior of the projects was covered with some sort of sheetrock that could be forced to break away into chunks. The projects were always constructed near playgrounds, conveniently located for the use of the tenants' children. A few buildings had driveways, but the majority of the tenants were forced to park their cars in the streets.

After the war ended, the projects were retitled low-income housing units. They were perfect living quarters for my parents and other young couples like them, who needed a place to live while saving for a house.

The projects became a comfortable holding bin. They weren't attractive but they were comfortable. We lived at 965-A Thau Way in a one-bedroom apartment. Percy, Gladys and Sandrus all slept in the apartment's one bedroom while I slept on a rollaway bed in the living room. I, more than anyone else, was inconvenienced by the small apartment. My sleeping schedule revolved around the stay of each evening's guest and the arrival of mother's first customer each Saturday morning.

By this time, Gladys held a job at a cannery. On the side, she transformed apartment into a salon and worked as beautician. The salon was kitchen.

***'Project families watched out for each other'***

Despite increased wartime policing,<sup>259</sup> Stargell wrote that he felt safe in the projects:

The projects were often wrongly associated with crime and corruption. Unfortunately, poor people are often misread as criminals. But there were no criminals in the projects. We never locked our doors or windows at night. We always felt safe. Project families watched out for each other. I loved living in the projects. I thought that it was the perfect environment in which to be raised.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, a county grand jury investigated after nationwide increase in crime, vice and juvenile delinquency, Everett Johannes, "Alameda given clean bill of health after jury's crime probe." ATS, April 19-22, 1943

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.. 31.

Perhaps the only trouble—besides being whooped for not watching his little sister—experienced was the danger of playing in neglected living conditions and surrounded by military-industry sites.

Children played on the railroad tracks, often throwing rocks, or as a shortcut to get to Washington Elementary school at Eighth and Santa Clara. His friend, David Hughes, lost his leg crawling beneath a train, leading to city ordinance banning this, Stargell wrote. The Alameda Housing News wrote, “Last month a little boy had his foot severed by a railroad car in the switch yard adjacent to Encinal Project. It was fortunate that he was not killed, but this little chap is called upon at the tender age of nine to make a physical and mental adjustment that a person three times his age would find infinitely difficult.” This didn’t stop young people from sneaking over to the railroad tracks. “Even Hughes still crawled under trains, wooden leg and all,” Stargell wrote.<sup>261</sup>

Project residents reported no major racial tensions within the housing projects. A sense of interracial solidarity existed in the projects, Stargell said. Gladys called the projects “the family,” illustrating a sense of closeness between different peoples. “I made friends of all races and colors—red, black, yellow, brown and white.”<sup>262</sup>

Stargell played baseball at Washington Park and also the Boys Club. He later joined the Encinal Project team. The team lacked uniforms, snacks and sponsors. “We were there to play ball and that’s all,” Stargell wrote. “No frills, only thrills and chills, for all our games were exciting as any.

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 35. Also, *AHN*, October 1, 1950 and Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” *AJ*, July 8, 1991.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 31. Minor asked him about racial tension in the projects, Stargell said, “There were blacks, whites, Mexicans, Orientals. And the thing about it was , everybody was about on the same economic level. I had friends from all different races and backgrounds; we played together and went to school together.” In Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” *AJ*, July 8, 1991.

Outside of baseball, Stargell's projects friends patrolled their territory fought youth from other neighborhoods. "We never hurt anyone. We just acted mean and wrestled around with kids from opposing neighborhoods."

The Estuary projects were considered a natural trap. It was known as Tin Pan Alley and it had a one-road-in-and-the-same-road-out arrangement. It was a natural ambush. Chills of fear hurried up my spine each time I thought of entering Estuary alone after dark.<sup>263</sup>

Webster had strong fighters too. His home projects, Encinal, he wrote, was "known for good looking women and poor baseball field."<sup>264</sup>

One of the good-looking women from the Estuary projects was Ruth Lyons.

### **Ruth Lyons of the Edwin Hawkins Singers**

Born in St. Louis, Ruth Lyons moved to the Alameda projects when she was 9 years old. Her father wanted her to be closer to her grandmother and auntie in Oakland. He first worked at the Hunter's Point Shipyard and later found employment at Alameda's Navy supply depot. The Lyons moved into the Estuary Housing projects at 207-A Singleton Avenue. She attended John Muir School, located within the projects, and later graduated from Encinal. Lyons graduated from the city's second high school in 1962.

Lyons recalled baby-sitting for other families and playing with other children. "We never worried for our safety. The adults looked out for our safety. People looked out for each other. The adults would always ask us, 'Does your mother know where you are?'"

She recalled Estuary's baseball team. "All the other teams in Alameda hated Estuary because we always walked away with all the trophies," Lyons told Minor as she laughed.

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<sup>263</sup> Stargell, 40-41.

<sup>264</sup> Stargell, 41-42.

But life in Estuary and Alameda's housing projects was not all laughs. She recalled the antagonism from the AHA. "The housing authority determined how people lived within the projects. Referring to the segregation, she added, "They kept blacks separate. ... It was segregated within certain areas that were white areas, and there were certain areas that were black." The AHA grouped Negroes in western portion of Estuary, she said.<sup>265</sup>

***'The projects were no joke'***

Woody Minor includes the project experience story of a white woman named Phyllis Diller in his *Alameda Journal* series on the AHA. Diller moved into the Encinal projects in the mid-1940s and lived right on Stalker Ave right near the Alameda-Oakland Estuary. Speaking to Minor 50 years later, she complained about the conditions, cockroaches, and the lack of grass. "The buildings faced a concrete area where you hung your laundry. It was *not* gracious living. Women like beauty and comfort and ease and luxury," she said. With an inheritance her family received, Diller bought a home in Fernside—1841 Fremont Drive—in 1950. Diller's experiences and ability to move into Fernside reflect her privilege as a white woman in Alameda. Even with money, restrictive covenants and realtor prejudice would have restricted Negro families from moving into Fernside and many other areas of Alameda outside of the projects.<sup>266</sup>

The issue of segregation and housing discrimination became a lightning rod in the 1960s, but appeared to attract minimal attention in the 1940s and 1950s.

**Project Segregation and the Alameda NAACP**

As Alameda's Negro population grew, shifted, and concentrated within the projects, they continued to organize politically.

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<sup>265</sup> Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, July 22, 1991.

<sup>266</sup> Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, July 15, 1991.

In the early 1940s, the Alameda County NAACP appears to have remained a socially oriented group. Membership in the first three years consisted of families in Central and East Alameda, including the Hackett's, Sloans, Clintons, Kimbroughs, the Hoover and Van Wrights. It's not until October 28 that membership reports show the list member addresses of Alameda housing projects.<sup>267</sup>

Still, Alamedans came to form a critical part of the County branch membership. Alameda's project residents subscribed to *The Crisis* magazine. In the late 1940s?, the address of the *Alameda County Branch: NAACP Bulletin* was published using the Alameda housing project address of Earl Swisher.<sup>268</sup>

In 1953, the 35-year-old Alameda County NAACP announced plans to split into three branches. NAACP West Coast Field Secretary and pioneering news broadcaster Tarea Hall Pittman said in a press release published by the *California Voice* that Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda could sustain their own chapters. After an October member at Progressive Baptist Church in South Berkeley, the split went forward, with each city creating its own branch.<sup>269</sup>

The Alameda Branch of the NAACP was chartered in 1954. Rev. Guice, the third pastor of the Estuary Community Church, was founding president. During the installation, Hall Pittman gave the keynote address and install officers.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Alameda County Membership Box II: C248 NAACP Membership Reports 1940-55, Folder 1: California: Alameda-Long Beach, NAACP Papers; Membership Report. Alameda (Youth) February 1942, Box II: E101, Folder 7, NAACP youth file. Membership reports. California, Alameda-Riverside, 1942, NAACP Papers; also, of 883 memberships in Alameda County, 118 from Alameda, "Membership Campaign Slow." *NAACP Bulletin*. Alameda Co. Branch. Volume 1, Number 3, June 1948.

<sup>268</sup> "Crisis subscriptions" August 8, 1946; Box II: C12, Folder 3, NAACP Papers; Earl Swisher listed as managing editor in second issue, 851-A Stalker Way, Alameda, Calif.

<sup>269</sup> "Alameda Co. NAACP to Vote on Split." *California Voice*. 9 October, 1953.

<sup>270</sup> The Branch was a part of a fourth split, or reorganization of the NAACP in California. Earlier formations included a state branch, a Northern California branch, and the Alameda County Branch. "Application for Charter of Alameda Branch of the National Association of Colored People." Received at

Employment discrimination appeared to be the primary issue the Alameda NAACP focused on until the mid 1960s. When delegates from 21 branches of the NAACP convened in Alameda, they heard reports on violence in the south, the sit-in movement, and discussed efforts to target employers discriminating against Negroes. Potential actions included boycotts and “economic pressures” against discriminating employers. Carter Gilmore, president of the Alameda NAACP, discussed the recent protests over discrimination at the Alameda Naval Air Station.<sup>271</sup>

Much of the correspondence to the national consisted solely of membership and social activity reports.<sup>272</sup>

High postwar housing turnover impacted organizing among project residents.<sup>273</sup> The membership of Black Alamedans in the NAACP demonstrates their concern for civil rights issues, like employment discrimination, and their identification with issues impacting colored people. Their membership in the countywide branch also put Alameda’s colored residents in community with the Black communities of Oakland, Berkeley, and likely San Francisco, Richmond and beyond. Considering the role of labor and civil rights leader C. L. Dellums in the local branch, that relationship and history

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National Offices March 30, 1954, Box II: C12, Folder 6, NAACP Papers; an NAACP publication states, “Not to be confused with the former Alameda County Branch, the Alameda City branch is now a sister chapter to the Berkeley and Oakland Branches”, in Alameda City Branch Elects Permanent Officers.” NAACP News – West Coast, May 24, 1954, Box II: C12, Folder 6, NAACP Papers.

<sup>271</sup> NAACP Conducts Regional Meeting, *Oakland Tribune*, September 11, 1960, NAACP Papers; NAACP Meet Slated at Encinal High, Carter Gilmore president of Alameda NAACP, discussed recent protests; “NAACP sets drive to seek new members”, in Annual Branch Report, NAACP Papers; Awards Banquet, photo of Alameda Branch members with award in *Oakland Tribune*, undated, Annual Branch Report, Alameda, NAACP Papers.

<sup>272</sup> For membership focused correspondence, see Box II: C12, Folder 4 or Box III: C5, Folder 1, Branches, Geographical File: Alameda, 1956-1963, NAACP Papers. By the mid-1970s, the only correspondence between the Alameda NAACP and nationally related to membership reports, financial contributions, and convention attendance. Box VI: C74, Folder 21: Alameda Branch, 1974-76, NAACP Papers.

<sup>273</sup> Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 215.



likely became more beneficial during his tenure at the Fair Employment Practices Commission in the 1960s (See Chapter 6: Jim Crow Alameda).

Their membership in the NAACP demonstrates their concern for civil rights issues, like employment discrimination, and their identification with issues impacting colored people. Their membership in the countywide branch also put Alameda's colored residents in community with the Black communities of Oakland, Berkeley, and likely San Francisco, Richmond and beyond.

Although the NAACP was nationally at forefront of desegregation efforts nationally, five years after *Brown v. Board*, the Alameda Branch NAACP did not appear to actively attack Jim Crow segregated housing in Alameda yet.

#### **'Housing authority enforcing racial segregation in the Estuary project'**

The Alameda Housing Authority not only racially segregated residents to specific projects, but the AHA even segregated residents within the projects to specific blocks and buildings. See Chapter 5: Housing Authority Unfair for more detail.

A 1959 letter from Estuary Project resident James E. Johnson requests National NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins investigate segregation in Alameda's largest housing project and raises issues with employment discrimination.

Dear Mr. Wilkin,

Will you please investigate the housing authority enforcing racial segregation in the Estuary Housing Project. Mr. Wilkin, white and colored people are not allowed to live together in the Estuary Project in Alameda. All of the interracial [sic] couple are assigned to the Negro section of the project.

Mr. Wilkin, a colored girl can't see a hairpin behind a store counter in Alameda. These white people in Alameda won't hire any Negro to work in the store in Alameda.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Johnson's address listed as 2463 Wells St, Alameda, Calif. Letter from James E. Johnson to Roy Wilkins, January 11, 1959. Box III: C5, Folder 1, Branches, Geographical File: Alameda, 1956-1963, NAACP Papers.

It is not clear if Wilkins responded. It is also unclear if Johnson approached the local branch regarding the issue of segregation. The local NAACP certainly knew about the issue of segregation, however. Members of the Alameda County NAACP lived within the projects since the 1940s and Rev. Guice, pastor of Estuary Community Church and later Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, founded the branch while he lived in Estuary. NAACP records do not show the organization addressing the housing issue until 1962.<sup>275</sup>

### **‘Forced out’: The 1960s Struggle Against Displacement**

When the AHA issued eviction notices to the 360 families in Gibbs in June 1963, and later voted unanimously not to renew the lease for the buildings at Estuary, the NAACP helped protest the closures. The AHA owned the land and buildings at Gibbs but only the buildings at Estuary. The NAACP’s housing committee secretary and project tenant Albert DeWitt said the closures would negatively impact low-income tenants. “Such blanket closing methods will cause undue hardship to low income families. It is the responsibility of the city government to serve all of its citizens, including those of low income.” Of the 50-60 Negro families that already moved from the projects, only two found housing in Alameda.<sup>276</sup>

### ***Citizen’s Committee for Low-Cost Housing***

The AHA began freezing entry into the Estuary after Gibbs (Webster No. 2) closed. Estuary tenants later received notices that the project would be demolished in June 1964. The AHA did not offer replacement housing or relocation assistance. Estuary

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<sup>275</sup> In the Alameda Branch’s 1962 annual report, Jefferson Raymond, chair of the housing committee, reported he “checked on apartment buildings in Alameda,” Annual Report on Branch Activities, 1962, Box III: C5, Folder 1, NAACP Papers. The 1965 annual report reports the NAACP “Held protest at City Hall in city of Alameda, California on February 14, 1964, although the purpose of the protest is not listed, Branch Activity Report, Alameda, 1965.

<sup>276</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority”, *AJ*, part 15 ‘Black activism: the 1960s,’ July 1, 1991.

residents organized the Citizen's Committee for Low-Rent Housing within the Alameda Branch NAACP.<sup>277</sup>

The Citizen's Committee produced a six-page history of the tenants' plight called, "The Estuary Housing Project Fight for Survival."<sup>278</sup> The document listed the ways the AHA attempted to encourage tenants to move:

Various harassing techniques were undertaken by the Alameda Housing Authority to cause as many tenants in Estuary as possible to move out. Mailboxes were removed. Garbage disposal units were taken out. The laundry services were discontinued. The store within the project was vacated. Bus service into and through the project was discontinued. All of these measures tended to work unnecessary hardships on the remaining tenants, and a continuous evacuation of families from the project into neighboring Bay Area cities began, and, to a greater or lesser degree as continued ever since.<sup>279</sup>

The Committee and the NAACP launched a campaign to make Alameda residents aware of the Estuary tenants problem. On March 16, 1964, Mabel Tatum led a picket of the Wells Fargo offices of AHA Commission Chairman Fred Zecher. Signs included, "Help! Save our homes," "June 30," "Estuary Being Closed," and "Alameda is our home."<sup>280</sup> The televised marches climaxed with a three-day boycott of local schools and a sit-in at the AHA, resulting in a one-year extension of the demolition deadline. Tenants began a letter-writing campaign and lobbied state legislators. The state granted a 20-year extension contingent on project renovations. A series of land deals caused confusion over

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<sup>277</sup> "The Estuary Housing Project Fight for Survival," Citizen's Committee for Low-Cost Housing, 1966, in possession of author. Herein "Fight for Survival," Citizens Committee.

<sup>278</sup> Former Estuary project resident Vickie R. Smith provided the author a copy of this document but declined to identify the author because they feared retaliation and requested anonymity. Based on the narrative, it appears to have been written in 1966 before the June. According to the *FLATLANDS* newspaper, the Committee produced the document, "Tight Little Island Cracks," *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>279</sup> "Fight for Survival," Citizens Committee.

<sup>280</sup> Photos by S. Snaer of the S.F Examiner of demonstration included as figures. Housing beef on demolition of low cost housing. 1964-03-16, Alameda housing project eviction pickets, BANC PIC 2006.029—NEG, BOX 1412, SLEEVE 13836M\_02, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (Fang Family Photos)

who owned the buildings, land and title. Eventually, the Navy traded all but five acres of the Estuary projects to Moscini and Cristoffi for its Savo Island Project in Berkeley.<sup>281</sup>

### **‘Tight little Island Cracks: The Camping in Tactic’**

On Monday June 20, the AHA planned to begin bulldozing 36 acres of the Estuary projects. Forty of the 100 families still living in Estuary had been ordered to evacuate.

About 100 tenants—men, women and children—and supporters pitched tents in the middle of Franklin Park. Franklin Park sits in the middle of the Gold Coast, the old money section of Alameda and home of Alameda Mayor Bill Godfrey.<sup>282</sup>

Additionally, Fred C. Stolte of Stolte, Inc. lived at 1405 San Antonio. Stolte received multi-million dollar contracts in the 1940s to construct the 2,000 AHA units that became the Encinal Housing project.<sup>283</sup>

By the time of the tent-in, the FLATLANDS estimated that 99 percent of Estuary projects residents were Negro.<sup>284</sup>

The “tent city in Alameda’s white district” had a festive atmosphere. SNCC’s California publication, *The Movement*, reported,

During the days the park was like a summer camp for the children, who had a real playground: swings, ping pong tables, a ball field, and a swimming pool. There was only make-shift stuff back in the project. By Monday morning the kids felt at home and began to rove the neighborhood as if it were theirs - - it was.<sup>285</sup>

Upon arriving the Alameda Fire Department soaked the grass of the park and the public pool was closed at 2:45 pm until the camp-in ended. Besides a couple cherry

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<sup>281</sup> “Fight for Survival,” Citizens Committee.

<sup>282</sup> “Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>283</sup> Contracts for nearly \$4M awarded F.C. Stolte, Inc, local realtors to construct 2000 temporary units. Stolte, Inc. headed by Fred C. Stolte of 1405 San Antonio Ave, “2 Contracts Awarded for 2000 Homes Here,” *ATS*, January 3, 1943.

<sup>284</sup> “They call it the removal of temporary war housing but you and I know it by another name...Negro removal, wrote Bill Goetz, “Housing over the Bridge,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>285</sup> “Tent city in Alameda’s white district,” *The Movement*, July 1966.” For images, *OT*, June 20, 1966, 16E.

bombs being exploded Saturday night, the protest faced no repression. Police cars cruised the neighborhood and patrolled the park, but despite overnight camping being banned, no attempt to remove demonstrators or their tents occurred.<sup>286</sup>

“We don’t intend to be moved or kicked around without a fight,” Tatum said at the camp-in. “We are going to stay until we get some sort of recognition from the city of Alameda .. all we want is decent housing to live in and a decent neighborhood.”<sup>287</sup>

An interfaith service was held on Sunday at the park. Most of the participating churches were white and from Alameda. In 1959, Alameda’s only Black church moved to East Oakland. Gene Drew from Oakland’s chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) spoke last, connecting the Estuary struggle to postwar battles over redevelopment elsewhere in the Bay Area. He said Mayor Godfrey was a BART board representative. The failure to relocate Estuary tenants mirrored BART’s failure to relocate homeowners and tenants in the way of BART construction. That afternoon, Over 200 people marched through the Gold Coast to Mayor. Godfrey was not home.<sup>288</sup>

### ***Citizen’s Committee Demands for Low Cost Housing***

On Monday, over 90 protesters marched to City Council. Tenants presented their demands. Alameda NAACP President Clarence Gilmore spoke during public comment.

On June 8 ... we told you that unless an agreeable proposal were made by you concerning the people in Estuary housing we would have no recourse but to do everything possible to dramatize our cause. This we are doing. The issues are clear. Our demands are just. Our cause is right. If there are any doubts as to why we are there, sleeping in the park .. we are seeking a solution.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> “Tent city in Alameda’s white district,” *The Movement*, July 1966“, Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>287</sup> Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>288</sup> “Tent city in Alameda’s white district,” *The Movement*, July 1966“, Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>289</sup> Mayor Godfrey Stands Firm,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

“To set the record straight,” Gilmore continued, “these are our demands”:

1. An acceptable program for the relocation of the citizens of Estuary Housing in the city of Alameda
2. A rental scale based upon a family’s ability to pay.
3. The removal of the present chairman of the Alameda Housing Authority for the following reasons:
  - a. He has shown himself to be working adversely to the best interest of the people of Estuary.
  - b. He has used his office to promote his own personal business interests.
  - c. Segregation is a policy of the Housing Authority under his leadership.
4. A replacement to the above position shall come from a member of the Citizens’ Committee for Low Cost Housing.
5. The recognition of the fact that low cost housing is a goal for the future which the city MUST recognize as their responsibility for all people.”<sup>290</sup>

He criticized the city for sending last minute surveys to tenants on the Navy property and encouraged the council to act, and not make protesters wait four hours as they had on June 8. He concluded, “They people are going to live in decent housing or in tents or in jails – you will decide which.”<sup>291</sup>

Tatum criticized the AHA for accumulating \$3 million reserves from rents collected from project tenants and Commissioner Zecher for the \$1 million in Wells Fargo accounts. “How the head of the Housing Authority can have one million of that three million located in his ban .. these people’s misery is someone else’s personal financial gain.”

The Mayor agreed to most of their demands, including delaying the eviction of 41 families and requesting recreation equipment be sent to the Estuary. Fifteen Estuary families were also “relocated into the predominantly white projects of Makassar (Strait) and Western,” the *Flatlands* reported.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966.

The Franklin Park Tent-in or Camp-in protest may have represented white homeowners long held fear of a Negro neighborhood invasion. The pressure to remove Negroes from the white, upper class park may have been greater than the pressure provide low-cost housing.

### *The Closure of the Estuary Projects*

The saga of uncertainty for the 370 residents who lived in the decaying Estuary projects for three years. Estuary tenants knew as early as 1965 that plans had been hatched to site a second Oakland-Alameda tube on project land. In 1968, plans were announced that the Webster Street tube would be built on Estuary land and 370 tenants would be forced to move. A new AHA Commission promised to give Estuary project residents first priority for vacancies in Makassar and Western. Amidst the deteriorating conditions, a Superior Court Judge ordered the Estuary projects closed.<sup>293</sup>

In 1966, Lyons' family moved from Estuary to the Western housing project. Western was torn down in 1971 to make way for Alameda's first postwar, permanent low-income housing: Esperanza. Lyons was moved again to Parrot Street in the Makassar Straight Village. She finally moved into her own Alameda apartment in 1975. In the early 1990s, Lyons moved to Oakland.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> "Span plan dooms Estuary Housing," *ATS*, April 20, 1968; "Housing board acts," *ATS*, May 30, 1968; *ATS*, October 1, 1968.

<sup>294</sup> Lyons told Minor, "They kept tearing down the old projects and didn't build anything to replace them. Black families kept being pushed out of the city." She continued, "When you have a city, you've got to have some low-income housing. On the Ed Win Hawkin's 1971 album, Lyons sings a solo on the song, "Joy," Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," July 22, 1991 The Makassar Straits were demolished in four phases beginning in 1974 and ending in 1981, Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, August 19, 1991.

The family of Alameda's famous ballplayer, Willie Stargell, moved from Alameda to East Oakland. His family attempted to rent from the Atlantic Apartments, but faced discrimination.<sup>295</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Black residents in Alameda's public housing made this best of a bad situation. Segregated and concentrated in dilapidated housing, residents created activities for themselves and advocated for equal access to resources. They started their own organizations like the Alameda Civil Rights Congress, the Estuary Community Church, and the Alameda Branch NAACP. Willie Stargell grew up in Alameda projects. Other Black pro-baseball players also grew up in Alameda housing projects. Robert L. Davis and Curt Motton lived in the Estuary and Tommy Harper lived in Webster.<sup>296</sup> By all accounts of project life by Negro residents, besides antagonism from the AHA, life was good. Still, discrimination by the AHA and private landlords forced most Negroes from Alameda.

By 1966, the integration-focused and passive advocacy of the NAACP continued to lose influence in the Bay Area, perhaps most exemplified by the rise of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland.<sup>297</sup> Still, the group worked with the Citizens Committee and Alamedans with HOPE to fight widespread housing discrimination.

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<sup>295</sup> Interview with Lois Pryor, former HOPE president, Lois Pryor, "Room for Hope." *Alameda Stories*. California of the Past: The Digital Storytelling Project at the Alameda Free Library, <[http://www.alamedastories.org/stories\\_pryor.html](http://www.alamedastories.org/stories_pryor.html)>, Accessed October 11, 2012. See more about Atlantic Apartments in Chapter 6: Jim Crow Alameda.

<sup>296</sup> Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, July 8, 1991, Kin Robles, "Headed for Home: Curt Motton 1940-2010," *Playball! Alameda's Sandlot Blog*, January 26, 2010, <<http://playball94501.wordpress.com/2010/01/26/safe-at-home-curt-motton/>>, accessed October 10, 2012.

<sup>297</sup> NAACP officials fretted their loss of influence locally, as its membership had dropped to just 284 in 1996, down from 708 a decade earlier. "The continued decline in NAACP memberships in Oakland, California indicates a corresponding decline in the NAACP influence and ability to do an effective job in advancing equal rights and opportunities for Negro citizens of your community. I am alarmed and hope this feeling is shared by the Executive Committee members and general membership of the Oakland Branch. Never before have Negro citizens been so desperately in need of responsible community spokesmen and



Living together they developed a sense of racial solidarity. After the 1968 assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Encinal High School students who lived in the Estuary walked out. They marched, followed by police, back to their neighborhood.<sup>298</sup>

While white women like Diller hated project life, Black migrant women appreciated the communal experience. While hanging out their bed sheets on outdoor clothing lines, they exchanged recipes and employment information. Ethel Phillips recalled sending for her son and daughter after she found housing in Alameda. “I liked life in the projects. It was communal. No one ever took anything, stole anything. People left their doors open.”<sup>299</sup> The Alameda projects provided a community-building space and residents developed major networks.

Among former Estuary projects residents include former Oakland City Councilman Leo Bazille and Oakland activist and *Oakland Post* publisher Paul Cobb. Carter Gilmore went on to become the first Negro elected to the Oakland City Council. Considering the accomplishments of these men—and other unknown men and women—we can only imagine what they may have contributed to Alameda, had they been able to find housing elsewhere on the island. Many Alameda projects residents are still alive and are waiting for someone to help them tell their stories.<sup>300</sup>

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leadership as today,” Letter from Leonard Carter, Director Region I NAACP to Clinton White, Oakland NAACP branch President, November 7, 1966, Part IV, Box IV: C2, NAACP Papers.

<sup>298</sup> Interview with Vickie R. Smith, by author. 2012.

<sup>299</sup> Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 6, 68.

<sup>300</sup> Former Estuary Project residents created a Facebook Group named after Don Grant. The group has over 50 members as of July 2013. < <https://www.facebook.com/groups/503596809665816/> > , accessed July 14, 2013.

### **PART 3: MEASURE A AND MASS BLACK DISPLACEMENT**

**By creating an artificial scarcity, [Measure A] would increase the cost of housing and deny to people of modest income the opportunity to live or to remain in Alameda.”**

Terry La Croix, Jr. in opposition to Measure A, 1973<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Arguments for and against Measure A, 1973 Ballot Measure, Alameda Free Library.

## **8. ISLAND'S WHITE NOOSE: HOW ALAMEDA'S MEASURE A EXCLUDES AFRICAN AMERICAN RENTERS<sup>302</sup>**

The island of the early 1970s looked vastly different from pre-WWII Alameda. The Alameda NAS comprised one-third of the island, on land that barely existed prior. The AHA demolished most of the wartime projects that made the island a boomtown. By 1973, the AHA owned and operated just 460 units, down from over 5,000 wartime units.<sup>303</sup>

The island's population reached over 70,000, the highest in its history until 1990. With the postwar expulsion of over 3,000 Negro project residents, Spanish (see Latinos) Filipinos comprised the largest racial minorities on the island, 3.2 and 6.7 percent, respectively. Negroes represented just 2.6 percent of island residents.<sup>304</sup>

One factor remained the same among Alameda's demographics: whites dominated the island's population. With a white population of 64,093, or 90.3 percent, the total white people in Alameda in 1970 nearly surpassed the island's total population after WWII.<sup>305</sup>

Other changes occurred in Alameda besides demographics and the reformation of AHA's housing stock. Many of the island's over 6,000 new residents lived on the newer South Shore development.<sup>306</sup> The AHA also shuttered the Western Projects, home to

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<sup>302</sup> This chapter adapts previous paper for AAS 107: Race and Public Policy and shares a similar title, Reginald James, *Island's White Noose: How Alameda's Measure A Excludes African American Renters*, Spring 2013, in possession of author. That paper adopted a historical approach, analyzing the impact of a policy over time. This study seeks to answer the questions: Is Measure A racist? Does Measure A exclude poor, African Americans from living in Alameda?

<sup>303</sup> Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, August 5, 1991.

<sup>304</sup> City of Alameda, 1950-1970, Bay Area Census, <<http://bayareacensus.ca.gov>>.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> The South Shore development agreement had to be upheld by a referendum. On May 25, 1955, voters approved a city council agreement with Utah Construction Co with a vote of 6,963 to 5,360, Minor, "Why preserve?" *AJ*, March 5, 1990.

many former Estuary project residents. On the same land, in 1973, the AHA opened its first permanent postwar housing project, the 120-unit Esperanza, Spanish for “hope.”<sup>307</sup>

In this context, another group of Alamedans hoped to stall development and preserve Alameda as a place for white people. In 1973, Alameda voters enacted a municipal ordinance, Measure A that prohibited the construction of apartment buildings on the island. The four decades old policy has adversely impacted Alameda’s rental market. Looking at the impact on African American residents over time, Measure A should be viewed as a detrimental, presumably “color-blind” public policy. Measure A created housing market conditions that encourage the exclusion, containment and expulsion of African Americans. Measure A leads to a “chain of exclusion” preventing African Americans from residing in Alameda, containing them within outdated and neglected housing stock. Profit seekers then cite these housing conditions, and exaggerate crime concerns, to redevelop and expel African Americans from the island.

### **Harbor Bay and the Measure A Backlash**

The year 1972 was full of complex and competing political land use actions by the AHA, fair housing advocates, and white homeowners, and much of it centered around a new development on Bay Farm Island. The AHA won its case against Ralph Gomez over title for Estuary projects land in June. In August, the Legal Aid Society of Alameda County called for low-income housing within the Harbor Bay development slated for fill around Bay Farm Island, a peninsula connected to Oakland, east of Alameda’s own East End. Alamedans with HOPE (the acronym now “Housing Opportunities Provided Equally”) requested the city study housing needs and adopt a housing element in accordance with the 1969 state Housing Element Law. In the greatest backlash against the Bay Farm

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<sup>307</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” *AJ*, August 5, 1991

Island project, a group of residents started a successful petition drive to put Measure A up for a referendum vote.<sup>308</sup>

In September, the “Committee of Concerned Citizens” filed an initiative to ban the construction of multiple dwellings. The Bay Farm Island project proposed housing for 22,000 people. Although just 3,000 signatures were required, the “Concerned Citizens” filed 4,270 signatures. “We’ve had such massive construction over the past ten years that it’s just gotten ... too congested here,” said Lee Ann Lane, a member of the group. The rezoning approved by the city’s planning board would have allowed the Doric Development Company to rezone 908 acres of Bay Farm fill for 9,555 units. Although filed too late for the November elections, a special election could be called or the measure could come up for a vote during the March municipal elections.<sup>309</sup>

City officials objected to the use of the ballot, calling it “extremely dangerous for lay people to start drawing up charter amendments.” White homeowners viewed the initiative process as their right. Gold Coast resident Robert Zimmerman viewed the charter amendment as part of the legacy of the Progressive movement, “intended to give the people a voice in their government when their elective and appointive officials appeared unwilling or unable to reflect the will of the people.” In a letter to the *Alameda Times-Star*, Zimmerman wrote:

The situation appears to exist in Alameda today. A small group of wealthy and aggressive people appear to have the ear of our elective and appointive officials. This small group is determined to use Alameda as a source of making more

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<sup>308</sup> “A decision by default: Authority wins lawsuit,” *Alameda Times Star*, June 28, 1972; “New Harbor Bay Controversy: Legal Aid Wants Low-Income Housing,” *Alameda Times Star*, August 8, 1972; “Legal Aid Society Letter Tipped Local Group’s Hand,” *Alameda Times Star*, August 9, 1972; “Planners say City Housing Study up to City Council,” *Alameda Times Star*, September 26, 1972. Also see HOPE’s president op-ed, Dorothy C. Allen, “Cost vs. Income,” letter to editor, *Alameda Times Star*, August 12, 1972.

<sup>309</sup> “Alameda: Petition move to ban building,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 1, 1972, 6; “Harbor Bay Isle Election: Petition Count Begins,” *Alameda Times Star*, September 7, 1972, Stephen Brown, “Election on Multiples—City must decide,” *Alameda Times Star*, September 13, 1972.

money for themselves through apartment house construction, tax write-offs, and all other devices of high finance.

The homeowner in Alameda will be required to pay for this “progress” in an enforced change in his life style as his suburban world is changed into a dense, congested city. Many homeowners will even be required to give up their homes to accommodate the wider streets and other needs of the added traffic.<sup>310</sup>

Citing the early 1900s movement that disenfranchised white ethnics and installed professional bureaucrats in municipal leadership, Zimmerman takes aim developers profiting from construction in Alameda. He adds that Alameda homeowners would lose their “suburban world” as it “changed into a dense and congested city.” He added the homeowners’ properties would be seized. This populist rhetoric echoed the anti-statist messaging of Alameda’s business elite in their wartime and postwar battles with the federal government, as well as that of proponents of Prop. 14, the pro-housing discrimination initiative Alamedans overwhelmingly supported nearly a decade earlier.

Fair housing advocates hoped amidst the controversy of Harbor Bay Isle that the city would adopt a housing element. Alamedans with HOPE requested the city conduct a study on housing needs. The Planning board agreed, but suggested the city council would have to decide. HOPE also requested large-scale developments in Alameda be halted, but the planning board did not address this request. Alameda’s city attorney said the housing plan within the city’s General Plan met state legal requirements, but HOPE disagreed.

In a letter to city officials, HOPE president Dorothy Allen wrote, “Recent popular concern and opposition to new building development shows the urgent need for a city-wide housing plan.” She continued, “Now, before any further development plans are

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<sup>310</sup> Robert W. Zimmerman, “Faith in Processes,” *Alameda Times Star*, September 6, 1972.

presented, is the time to direct the planning department to begin preparation of the housing element.” The city has repeatedly neglected this legal requirement<sup>311</sup>

### **Arguments for and Against Measure A**

To better understand Measure A, the arguments made for and against the measure should be read and understood within their historical and socio-political context.

Measure A amended the City of Alameda’s Charter to adopt two sections in a new

Article XXVI: Multiple Dwelling Units:

Section 26-1: There shall be no multiple dwelling units built in the City of Alameda.

Section 26-2: Exception being the Alameda Housing Authority replacement of existing low cost housing units and the proposed Senior Citizens low cost housing complex, pursuant to Article XXV Charter of the City of Alameda.<sup>312</sup>

Measure A banned construction of new apartments, but allowed AHA to replace existing low cost units and continue building the 65-unit Park-Otis Senior Complex, later renamed after Anne B. Diament, the AHA first female commission.<sup>313</sup> The arguments for the seemingly straightforward and color-blind charter amendment are instructive.

### ***Argument for Measure A***

Measure A proponents then and now would deny they are racists, and would probably take offense to the suggestion or accusation. Inez Kapellas, chair of the Concerned Citizens, spoke on favorably on behalf of Estuary tenants in 1966.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> “Planners say City Housing Study up to City Council”, *Alameda Times Star*, September 26, 1972. Threatened legal action has been the primary motivator for the City to adopt Housing Elements from 1972-2012.

<sup>312</sup> Arguments for and Against Measure A,” Alameda Clipping Files, Housing, Alameda Free Library; Alameda Municipal Code, Article XXVI, City of Alameda.

<sup>313</sup> Minor, “The Alameda Housing Authority,” *AJ*, August 12, 1991.

<sup>314</sup> “Tight little island cracks,” *Flatlands*, July 15, 1966; City Council Meeting Minutes, June 20, 1966. On current Measure A defenders, see < <http://www.saveourcityalameda.org/>>.

In the argument for Measure A, Kapellas, on behalf of the Committee of Concerned Citizens, urged voters to vote “Yes” on Measure “A” in order to “protect the environment of the City of Alameda.”

Large slices of private property will be confiscated, in the futile effort to handle the traffic flow caused by overbuilding in Alameda, which has already reached an alarming level, without the impact of hundreds of multiple dwelling units, proposed and/or authorized, but not completed.

Construction of townhouses, condominiums and apartment complexes if allowed to continue, Alameda will be facing a massive TAX INCREASE to pay for public services, the Southern Crossing offshore freeway, more tube crossings and three new bridges.

Massive development on the South Shore has not lowered taxes, and land speculation concerning future property taxes cannot be held valid because of new State and Federal property tax relief laws.

The quiet residential quality of Alameda is rapidly disappearing. Measure “A”, initiated by the people, will preserve and protect the very things that make this city a desirable place in which to live.

Measure “A” will give the people a voice in the future of Alameda, you the VOTER can determine progressively the environmental character of YOUR city.”<sup>315</sup>

Proponents, represented by Kapellas’ statement, expressed concerns echoed elsewhere in the East Bay and California during the postwar “tax revolt.” Proponents feared the loss of property, and increased taxes and traffic. Considering that postwar redevelopment efforts like slum clearance and infrastructure projects like BART and freeway construction primarily impacted Negroes, the concern appears somewhat misplaced.<sup>316</sup> The congestion caused by additional people would erode the island’s small town charm. Her remarks

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<sup>315</sup> Arguments for and Against Measure A,” Alameda Clipping Files, Housing, Alameda Free Library; Alameda Municipal Code, Article XXVI, City of Alameda.

<sup>316</sup> For more on the postwar tax revolt, see Self, *American Babylon*, 317-319. On redevelopment and the impact on Blacks in the Bay Area, see Self, 139-145, and 198-204. On urban freeways going through the “site of least resistance,” see Joseph F.C. DiMento and Cliff Ellis, *Changing Lanes: Visions and Histories of Urban Freeways*, MIT Press, 2012.



mirror the HOLC “redlining” maps assessments, of excluding undesirable influences and peoples. She concludes with populist rhetoric of empowering the “people”—those who vote—to reclaim their city. Only the words “TAX INCREASE,” “VOTER” and “YOUR” in the phrase “YOUR city” were capitalized. These rhetorical strategies all appealed to the self-interests of white homeowners, who as individuals, the VOTER, comprised 90 percent of the “electorate” of Alameda.

### *Argument Against Measure A*

Measure A opponents, represented by Mayor Terry La Croix, Jr., made similar appeals to voters (see white homeowners). La Croix, seen as sympathetic to the plight of Estuary tenants half a decade ago, criticized the measure as short-sighted, vague and said it would not accomplish its stated goals

The proposed Charter amendment would have damaging effects on our City far beyond what may have been intended by its supporters. it would not only discourage orderly growth, it would stop it. By prohibiting new and replacement construction, it would raise taxes on all existing properties. By creating an artificial scarcity, it would increase the cost of housing and deny to people of modest income the opportunity to live or to remain in Alameda.<sup>317</sup>

He continued that property owners with up-zoned property would have their investments diminished in an “inverse condemnation,” causing legal issues. “Bootleg” or unauthorized subdivisions would be encouraged. All the while, traffic would not be reduced, nor would more parks or open space be provided. “It will not insure better building design or help in the rehabilitation of older housing. All of these goals can be

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<sup>317</sup> Arguments for and Against Measure A,” Alameda Clipping Files, Housing, Alameda Free Library; Alameda Municipal Code, Article XXVI, City of Alameda.

met, but they cannot be accomplished by destroying property rights, placing additional burdens on the taxpayer and setting in motion the process of municipal decay.”<sup>318</sup>

As Measure A opponents argued, housing costs in Alameda have doubled and Blacks continue to struggle to find and keep housing within the city.

After covering some of Measure A’s adoption, I turn to measure its impact. To measure the impact of Measure A on the Black population of the island, the next section measures the levels of Black and white homeownership on the island after Measure A and the racially coded rhetoric used by Measure A supporters. A brief analysis of ongoing mass Black displacement is also included (This point developed further in Conclusion: ‘Pushed Out’). To understand the most significant legal challenge to Measure A, see Chapter 9: Tenants vs. Alameda. Measure A creates a context that discriminates against African Americans, especially lower-income residents. African Americans are less likely to own homes in Alameda compared to other ethnic groups, or other Blacks in nearby cities, despite increasing rates of homeownership on the island. African Americans have been increasingly crowded in denser apartment complexes allowed to deteriorate. Presumably, whites previously occupied these aging apartments. Finally, recurring racially coded rhetoric reveals Measure A’s deeper intentions.

### **Not just economics: Few Black people own homes in Alameda**

In November 2012, Occupy Oakland’s Foreclosure Defense Group came to Alameda to defend Jodie Randolph, an African American small business owner and cancer survivor. An Alameda resident for over two decades, Randolph bought her home on Alameda’s east end after renting apartments on the West End with her daughter. She

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<sup>318</sup> Arguments for and Against Measure A,” Alameda Clipping Files, Housing, Alameda Free Library; Alameda Municipal Code, Article XXVI, City of Alameda.

continues to fight foreclosure to this date.<sup>319</sup> Randolph represents one of a few African American homeowners on the island, a status difficult to achieve due to the housing market conditions encouraged by Measure A. Despite an increase in the percentage of owner-occupied units in Alameda since the passage of Measure A, African Americans have the lowest rate of homeownership on the island. Prior to World War II, the majority of African Americans in Alameda were homeowners. This changed drastically with the building of wartime public housing. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of Black homeowners increased from 54 to 173. Although a decent increase, the number of Black tenants dwarfs this amount. The number of Black renting households increased from 304 to 1,252 between 1970 and 1990 (Table 7). The proportion of Black renters in Alameda exceeds the proportion of Black homeowners by far. Thus, the story of African American's tenure in Alameda is largely related to rental housing. For more on the origins of housing market discrimination against African Americans in Alameda, see Chapter 3: Pattern of Prejudice.

#### ***White homeowners increase with Measure A***

By contrast, since Measure A's passage, the percentage of whites as homeowners has increased, despite the white proportion of the population decreasing by a large margin. Simply put, even though less white people live in Alameda, more and more are likely to own their homes. In 1970, whites comprised 90.3 percent of Alameda's population. This proportion has decreased to 79.2 in 1980, to 70.0 in 1990, to 56.9 in 2000, to just 50.8 percent by 2010. Alameda's population, as a whole, has only increased about 3,000 between 1970 and 2010 (Table 1). Massive development on Bay Farm

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<sup>319</sup> The author has known Randolph since the early 1990s, and participated in Occupy Oakland's Home Foreclosure Defense actions throughout the academic year.

Island, all single-family homes, and demobilization with the closure of the Alameda Naval Air Station, have impacted overall population growth. Additionally, many immigrants came to Alameda after the 1965 removal of migration quotas. Nonetheless, while Measure A may have limited total population growth, it also favors an increase in both the city's percentage of homeowners, but specifically whites as homeowners. This also means that whites of lower SES are less likely to live in Alameda.

When comparing homeownership rates to other cities, the metropolitan inequality becomes more prevalent. The proportion of Black homeowners as a percentage of the Black population of the city of Alameda pales in comparison to that of other nearby cities. In 1970, only 54 African Americans owned homes in Alameda, or 15.1 percent. Countywide, nearly 40 percent of African Americans owned their homes. By 1980, the county total decreased from 39.7 percent to 38 percent, while Alameda's percentage of Black homeowners, as a proportion of all residents, decreased to 9.4 percent. By 1990, just 34.5 percent of Blacks in the County owned their homes, while 12.1 percent in Alameda did so. Blacks in Alameda are less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to own their homes. By contrast, the percentage of Blacks renting continually surpasses that of counterparts within the County (Table 8).

On the surface, the increased ethnic diversity of Alameda appears to support Measure A proponents counter claims that the charter amendment is not racially restrictive. Table 7 illustrates the changing composition of Alameda. Since 1970, over 26,633 whites have left the city of Alameda. Considering the declining white population, this diversity is more likely a result of "white flight," not inclusive attitudes and policies in the city. People of color likely reside in older housing stock previously occupied by

white people. Additionally, less affordable housing is being constructed in Alameda (Table 17), thus median rents on the island regularly increase to levels above the County average (Table 15).

While SES certainly factors into one's ability to afford housing, housing discrimination, at all levels, prevents African Americans from housing tenure in some locations. In Alameda, Measure A creates conditions that increase the difficulty of African Americans buying housing. Since Measure A restricts the development of rental housing—by banning apartment buildings—Black residents continue to be excluded from the island, or contained to dense, often dilapidated areas.

### **Recurring Mass Black Housing Displacement**

African Americans have been repeatedly displaced from housing in Alameda. In fact, recurring redevelopment in Alameda displaces African American residents.<sup>320</sup> While other factors have contributed to these dislocations, Measure A encourages this displacement. Measure A prevents construction of more affordable housing in the form of apartments. Once redevelopment occurs, African Americans often find themselves with nowhere else to go.

Two years after rents were scheduled to increase in the Buena Vista Apartments, two African American tenants sued the city for discriminatory housing policies. In addition to Measure A, which prevented construction of apartments, the city's Combined Land Use Plan (CLUP) required the city's proportion of affordable housing to be below that provided by other jurisdictions in the region. Alameda not only banned construction of affordable housing, but also discouraged its provision, requiring less to be provided on

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<sup>320</sup> Reginald James, "Forced Out: Redevelopment and the Recurring Displacement of African Americans from Alameda," paper for City and Regional Planning 118: The Urban Community, June 15, 2013, (unpublished) in possession of author.

the island. Measure A provided for the replacement of public housing under the jurisdiction of the Alameda Housing Authority. Since the Authority demolished thousands of units in the 1950s and 1960s, less housing would need to be replaced. Measure A also allowed for the construction of senior citizens' housing. Limiting public housing—often associated with Blacks—and allowing senior housing—predominantly white<sup>321</sup>—Measure A privileged the aging white population at the expense of low-income, African American families.

In a preliminary ruling, an Alameda County judge ruled that Alameda's land use policies discriminated against the poor in 1989. He suspended the city's land use controls until the city gained compliance with the state housing element law, requiring all permit requests to go before a Legal Aid attorney representing the plaintiffs. Before a judgment could be reached on whether Measure A was racially discriminatory, the city and the plaintiffs settled. The lawsuit allowed for an exemption to Measure A. Or as the *Alameda Times Star* wrote, "By Making Loophole in Law, Alameda may have saved it."<sup>322</sup> Numerous residents had been displaced. Measure A remained. See Chapter 8: Tenants vs. Alameda for detail.

In 2003, Alameda housing advocates began agitating for the city to adopt a housing element. The city had not adopted a compliant housing element since the 1990s. Alameda's 2003 Housing Element relied solely on the former Alameda Point to provide for lower-income housing needed for the region. In July 2004, over 400 families received

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<sup>321</sup> S.J. Popkins, "Race and Public Housing Transformation in the United States"; housing activist Lois Pryor suggests building senior housing more politically popular in Alameda than affordable housing, Lois Pryor, "Room for HOPE," *Alameda Free Library Digital Storytelling*, 2010, <[http://www.alamedastories.org/stories\\_pryor.html](http://www.alamedastories.org/stories_pryor.html)>, [Accessed April 24, 2011].

<sup>322</sup> Karen Matthews, "By Making Loophole in Law, Alameda may have saved it", *Alameda Times Star*, April 26, 1990, 2.

notices to vacate the Harbor Island Apartments (formerly the Buena Vista Apartments). Over 70 percent of the residents were African American. Residents pleaded for the city to help. Eventually, the city filed a suit on behalf of tenants. A federal judge called the suit “politically motivated.” Soon after a report by a fair housing organizing showed massive bias against African Americans, the former residents again began targeting Measure A.

Tenants attempts to have a public debate and study of Measure A stifled by opposition by the real estate industry and homeowners. (See Chapter 11: Can’t Move, Won’t Move). Although the discussions before council often appeared black and white—black renters and housing advocates of multiple ethnic groups, opponents to reconsideration of Measure A appeared predominantly white—more covert ways of upholding exclusionary zoning in Alameda often occur.

### **Repeated Racist Rhetoric**

In Woodruff Minor’s narrative of the pre-Measure A climate, the Alameda preservationist and columnist cites the construction of South Shore and Bay Farm Island as two infill projects that increased development and led to grassroots activism. “The resulting explosion in the collective will was Measure A, a grassroots charter amendment passed overwhelmingly in the municipal election of March 1973”<sup>323</sup> These themes of a “collective will” and “grassroots” activism reoccur throughout the struggle over the policy of Measure A, as predominantly white homeowners position themselves as victims whose way of life continues to be encroached upon. Referring to one of numerous “revitalization” projects to for commercial districts, Minor writes, “The cornerstone of

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<sup>323</sup> Woodruff Minor, “Heritage,” *Alameda Journal*, August 13, 1987, 6.

this burgeoning political structure is Measure A.”<sup>324</sup> (See Chapter 13: Alameda’s Historical Imagination for a brief critique of Alameda’s historiography).

Alameda’s realtor and populist homeowner alliance rules the island. This political structure repeatedly opposes construction of affordable housing, often employing coded, racist language when defending their economic interests. Barely a decade after Alameda’s majority white voters rejected a measure to provide affordable housing,<sup>325</sup> white homeowners objected to replacement housing for units “lost” during Buena Vista conversion being sited in *their* neighborhood. Despite noncompliance with state law and threats of litigation, East End residents associated apartments congestion, lowered property values, and criminality, using Oakland as a proxy. Receiving a standing ovation, one man said low-income housing would transform “East Alameda like East Oakland...”<sup>326</sup> Comparing the demographics of Alameda and Oakland, specifically the eastern portion of each city demonstrates drastic differences, even segregation within the metropolitan context, as East Oakland was predominantly Black and Latino, while East Alameda remained majority white, with an increasing Asian minority.

Less than two years after Fifteen Group forced most residents out of the Harbor Island Apartments in 2004, Alameda debates over redevelopment evoked racially coded rhetoric again. In 2006, the *East Bay Express*, describing the Victorian politics of small-town Alameda wrote, “Alameda is steeped in history, insofar as its racist legacy still defines its public language.” A “reform” slate of three older white residents and Measure stalwarts arose to oppose redevelopment at Alameda Point. Shortly after Councilman

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<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> “Alameda rejects housing measure,” *Oakland Tribune*, March 7, 1979, 12.

<sup>326</sup> Brett Mahoney, “Alameda fails to apply for housing funds,” *OT*, March 11, 1992, A3.



Doug deHaan's controversy over referring to a challenging issue a "tar baby,"<sup>327</sup> Council candidate Pat Bail was quoted in online video stating, "I have a problem with low-cost housing and homeless housing. I have a serious problem. Now, moderate-cost housing is one thing. Homeless, and the dregs of society coming from every portion of the Bay Area, is quite another issue... You don't want to have to arm yourself or put barbed wire around your backyard because the parolees are in town, or the drug addicts are here."<sup>328</sup> Despite making a distinction between low-cost housing and housing for "the dregs of society", although she opposes both, she evokes fear of redistribution within context of inequality. Bail's language evokes Willie Horton-esque images of Black convicts, nearly suggesting white homeowners would have to form militias to defend themselves. Considering the widespread misinformation associating Black residents with criminality, one can presume this fear is widespread within Alameda.

In 2012, when housing advocates forced the city council to adopt the multifamily overlay zone to prevent litigation and punishment from the state for failure to adopt a compliant housing element, the coded rhetoric emerged again. At the council's first reading of the housing element, Councilman deHaan objected to consideration of the proposal because "the community" had not been informed about potential changes to Measure A. City Manager John Russo lashed back at deHaan, defending efforts of city staff to inform Alameda residents. In inquiring about the overlay, deHaan also inquired about the "Harbor Bay Isle" apartments "on Buena Vista", asking if the complex was

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<sup>327</sup> Jonathan B. Opet, "Mayoral candidates speak out against racism," *Alameda Sun*, October 27, 2006, <<http://alamedasun.com/local-and-hometown/610-mayoral-candidates-speak-out-against-racism>>, [Accessed May 2, 2013].

<sup>328</sup> "Greetings from Alameda", *East Bay Express*, November 1, 2006, <<http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/greetings-from-alameda/Content?oid=1082129&showFullText=true>>, [Accessed May 2, 2013].

four stories. Although deHaan misidentified the three-story, former Harbor Island Apartments, and the planner mistakenly agreed, his inquiry should also be viewed as racially coded.<sup>329</sup> First elected on the City Council on the day Harbor Island residents forced to move, evoking an exaggerated image of the apartments, one story higher than reality, serves as a proxy for overcrowded, congested, people of color-infested housing in the geographical imagination of Alameda homeowners. Although other apartment complexes in Alameda are taller, he specifically associated his opposition to changes to Measure A with the Buena Vistas, signaling a coded racial-spatial association. His association of “the community” did not include non-homeowners, but specifically referred to Measure A proponents, presumably homeowners, likely, white homeowners.

Picking up the white populist, homeowner rage was former city councilperson, Karin Lucas. She accused the council of undermining Measure A. “We worked hard to uphold Measure A. We were able to uphold it for 40 years. You are the first council that proposes to undermine it.” The three-term councilmember continued, “If you want to change it, put it on the ballot and let us vote on it.”<sup>330</sup> Presumably, the “we” Lucas refers to represents the Alameda electorate. However, her comments reflect the political whiteness that deHaan expresses. “We” is an exclusive pronoun for homeowners, presumably the entire electorate. And “us” – those who should be allowed to make the decision about Measure A—would not include tenants like those in the Buena Vistas. Although Measure A defenders claim racial discrimination does not motivate their

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<sup>329</sup> Michelle Ellson, “Council okays plan allowing multifamily housing,” *The Alamedan*, July 18, 2012, <<http://thealamedan.org/news/council-okays-plan-allowing-multifamily-housing> > [Accessed April 26, 2013]; Alameda City Council meeting, July 3, City Council Chambers, Alameda, CA.

<sup>330</sup> Ellson, “Council okays plan allowing multifamily housing.”

championing exclusionary zoning, many have made public statements reflecting racial biased sentiments.

### **Is Measure A racist?**

In conclusion, Measure A represents a racially motivated, albeit colorblind, public policy instituted by a white majority in 1973, homeowner electorate, and maintained in 2013 by an organized group of white homeowners. Without the threat of litigation by Renewed HOPE (Housing Opportunities Provided Equally) and the public interest law firm Public Advocates, Alameda's housing element would not be in compliance with state law.<sup>331</sup> This public policy serves private interests: homeowners and the real estate industry. African American homeowners are few and far in between in Alameda. Beyond market bias and SES, Measure A created the context of exclusion. African American renters have been frequently exiled from the island, and regularly occupy rental housing originally constructed for whites, but now essentially abandoned. These rental units are often neglected by slumlords, while the city does not enforce housing standards. Later, these conditions are used to justify mass displacement. Gauging intent of racial discrimination can often be difficult; however, disparate impact is revealing. Racially coded rhetoric reveals the true intentions of Measure A, to "keep Alameda a White community."<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> "Alameda Ends 39-year ban on apartment buildings," *Public Advocates*, July 2012, <<http://www.publicadvocates.org/alameda-housing-element-compliance>> [Accessed June 9, 2013.]

<sup>332</sup> "The Real Estate Business in Alameda has a reputation in this area, as a business which intends to keep Alameda a White community," in "*Real Estate in Alameda*", Alamedans with HOPE?, Clipping Files, Alameda Free Library, 196x.

## **9: TENANTS v. ALAMEDA: HOW LOW-INCOME TENANTS CHALLENGED ALAMEDA'S DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING POLICIES, 1987-1992<sup>333</sup>**

On September 1, 1987, over 300 low-income tenants of the Buena Vista Apartments packed a community meeting in Alameda, California. Gersten Management Co., owner of the 615-unit apartments planned to hike tenants rents. For over 20 years, the apartments provided subsidized rentals, in exchange for a low-interest federal loan to construct the apartments. After 20 years, the landlord reserved the option to pay off the mortgage and return the complex's rental costs to market rate. After using the rents collected over the years to pay off the mortgage, Gersten planned to double rents. The plan frightened the apartments' predominantly Black residents, who began moving into the apartments in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Patricia Meyers, a disabled mother of three said, "I'd be forced to split up my family." She added, "I'd have to put my children in foster homes and go find a little sleeping room for myself somewhere." Another woman, a retiree dependent on her pension, Yvonne Keel, said the rent hike would exile her from Alameda. "I'd be driven out of the city. I've got nowhere to go. I'd end up on the streets on in a grave."<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> I conducted the bulk of research for this paper for PS 150: The American Legal System during spring 2011. I wish to acknowledge my classmate who worked with me on our research paper on the Guyton lawsuit. I led the research and writing on the case description, but many of her edits in our original legalistic analysis likely remain embedded in this chapter. Most of the news articles used for this project are on the Internet, < <http://tenantsvsalameda.blogspot.com>>. Given that a private landlord owned the Buena Vista Park apartments, why did tenants challenge the city's housing policies through the legal system opposed to seeking specific action towards the apartment owner? Considering that a judge ruled Measure A as discriminatory towards poor residents, why did parties agree to a settlement and not go to trial? Is adjudication through fair share housing laws an effective strategy for affordable housing advocates and low-income tenants? Reginald James, "Tenants vs. Alameda, "How low-income tenants challenged housing discrimination in Alameda, 1987-1992, Legal Studies Symposium, University of California, Berkeley, April 2013.

<sup>334</sup> Rachel Gordon, "Buena Vista tenants mobilize to keep rent low," *Alameda Times Star*, September 3, 1987, 1.

Facing a grave situation, tenants fought back. After appealing to the city council<sup>335</sup>, and the landlord, Gersten<sup>336</sup>, the Buena Vistas acquired a number of Section 8 housing vouchers, Gersten's original intention.<sup>337</sup> However, the city did not acquire enough vouchers, as 325 residents did not qualify. After the city defunded its fair housing organization<sup>338</sup>, and rent hikes forced low-income tenants off the island,<sup>339</sup> tenants and affordable housing advocates accused the city of Alameda of discriminating against low-income and African American tenants and criticized city policies for blocking the development of affordable housing.<sup>340</sup> The primary policy targeted: Measure A, the 1973 city ordinance banning apartment construction. (See Chapter 9: Island's White Noose). A judge ruled that the city failed to comply with the state Housing Element law and suspended the city's local land use powers. The parties settled the lawsuit out of court. The settlement granted an exception to Measure A allowing for the replacement the units "lost" due to the conversion. The settlement also required developers contribute to an Affordable Housing Fund. Unable to find a political solution in a municipality with a history of excluding low-income and African American residents, low-income tenants found empowerment through the state legal system. Yet, the judicial enforcement of fair show housing has limited potential to encourage cities to provide housing to low-income residents. What follows is the story of how low-income, African American tenants in the Buena Vista Apartments challenged the Alameda's discriminatory housing policies.

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<sup>335</sup> Carolyn Newbergh, "Low-income tenants plead for help from Alameda council," *Oakland Tribune*, September 5, 1987, A-11.

<sup>336</sup> Carolyn Newbergh, "Alameda tenants fight liberal owner," *Oakland Tribune*, September 9, 1987, A1.

<sup>337</sup> Rachel Gordon, "Buena Vista complex rents to double," *Alameda Times Star*, September 4, 1987, 1.

<sup>338</sup> C.J. Clemmons, "Housing counselors bow out in Alameda," *The Tribune* (Oakland), June 24, 1988, B-4.

<sup>339</sup> C.J. Clemmons, "Sudden switch to market rates strains lower-income tenants," *Oakland Tribune*, July 14, 1988, A-13.

<sup>340</sup> C.J. Clemmons, "Critics rip city's 15-year ban on new apartment projects," *Oakland Tribune*, July 14, 1988, A-13; C.J. Clemmons, "Alameda growth laws blocking low-income housing, suit says," *Oakland Tribune*, January 6, 1989, morning ed., B-1;

## **Government Subsidies for Private Apartments**

Beginning in 1959, HUD began incentivizing private developers to provide low-cost housing. The government would provide financing while private interests would manage the housing. Property owners could receive low-interest, FHA-insured mortgages to developers or owners of low-income, multi-family housing and rentals. This activity peaked between 1962 and 1968. Property owners agreed to limit rent hikes for 40-years, but reserved an option to “opt-out” after the program after either 20 years of subsidizing by paying off the mortgage.<sup>341</sup>

In 1964 and 1965, Beverly Hills-based Gersten Management Company constructed the 615-unit Buena Vista Park Apartments on Alameda’s West End, south of Webster St, bounded by between Buena Vista Ave, Poggi St and Atlantic Avenue, across the street from the Atlantic Apartments. The Buena Vistas sit on the former site of the Chipman Projects.

Gersten received multiple federal subsidies to construct the apartments. In exchange for a three percent interest 40-year mortgage, Gersten entered into a regulatory agreement with the Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD) to provide housing to low-income tenants at restricted rental costs for no less than 20 years. This gave Gersten the option to prepay his mortgage and “opt-out” of this agreement to maintain rent restrictions.<sup>342</sup> Despite the construction of the Buena Vistas, the number of rental

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<sup>341</sup> California. Senate Office of Research. Housing Alert: estimates of Low Income Rental Units in California Subject to termination of rent and/or mortgage subsidies, 1988-2008,” Sacramento, CA: California State Senate, December 1987.

<sup>342</sup> Thomas J. Lueck, *NYT*, April 1, 1990, 10.

units available in Alameda decreased, especially for low-income households and African Americans. By 1970, Alameda's black population decreased to less than 3 percent.<sup>343</sup>

Citing concerns increased taxes for public services, traffic congestion, the loss of private property to large developers, and the need to preserve Alameda's residential character and environmental quality, Alameda's majority white-electorate enacted Measure A. The ordinance restricted the development of housing larger than duplexes. The ordinance granted an exemption to replace existing units managed by the Alameda Housing Authority or the proposed Senior Housing Complex. The rationale at the time included the development of South Shore Mall on reclaimed land, the construction of multiple apartment complexes, and the consideration of a freeway off the shore of Alameda's prized beach. Measure A proponents claimed private developers could confiscate private property for large development. Alameda's pro-growth Mayor, Terry La Croix, Jr. argued that Measure A would create "an artificial scarcity" of housing and "would increase the cost of housing and deny people of modest income the opportunity to live or remain in Alameda. Perhaps symbolic of the divisiveness of the initiative, Croix authored the ballot argument against the measure while his wife and children were active campaigning on behalf of Measure A. In the March 13, 1973 election, Alameda majority-white electorate adopted Measure A and elected Chuck Corica as the city's Mayor. Corica later appointed Measure A's campaign manager, Joe Camicia to the city's planning commission.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> California. Senate Office of Research. Housing Alert: estimates of Low Income Rental Units in California Subject to termination of rent and/or mortgage subsidies, 1988-2008," Sacramento, CA: California State Senate, December 1987. Census data, Bay Area Census, <<http://bayareacensus.ca.gov>>.

<sup>344</sup> Measure A ballot, Arguments for and Against Measure A," Alameda Clipping Files, Housing, Alameda Free Library; Alameda Municipal Code, Article XXVI, City of Alameda; interview with Joe Camicia by Taylor Kohles and Reginald James, March 25, 2011.

Alameda's black population slowly increased throughout next two decades, but not on account of Measure A. In 1971, AHA built its first permanent housing projects in 30 years, the 120-unit Esperanza housing Complex, opened in 1973. Unlike AHA's first permanent project Woodstock, located across the street, Esperanza's did not exclude African Americans. Esperanza contained less units than Western, the wartime projects the development replaced, yet Esperanza providing a place for African Americans to live. Also, building on housing authority victories from the late 1960s, interracial fair housing group called "HOPE", or Housing Opportunities Provided Equally, began contracting with the city to discourage housing discrimination in the private market. Due to Fair Housing efforts and increased white flight from the island to nearby suburbs, an increasing number of African Americans moved to Alameda in the late-1970s.<sup>345</sup>

Despite more Blacks moving to Alameda during the 1980s, housing discrimination persisted. The Black population nearly doubled during the decade. In 1983, a property manager filed a lawsuit against the Buena Vista Apartments for housing discrimination. The lawsuit and attention likely opened up the apartments for African Americans. Among those Blacks moving into the Buena Vista Apartments in the late 1970s were Clayton Guyton and Modessa Henderson. In the summer of 1977 summer, Guyton, a transportation dispatcher at the Presidio, moved into a two-bedroom apartment with his wife, Delores, and their oldest son. Delores gave birth to two more children while living in the Buena Vistas, including a daughter who was born in the living room of their apartment. Henderson moved into the Buena Vistas with her child in 1977. Despite the changing demographics, Alameda still maintained its reputation as the island that

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<sup>345</sup> Minor, "The Alameda Housing Authority," *AJ*, August 5, 1991; The census states 3,262 Black people moved to Oakland between 1970 and 1990. Alameda's Black population increased by 794 in the 1970s and by 2,468 in the 1980s, Bay Area Census, <<http://bayareacensus.ca.gov>>.



differed from the more urban (see Black) city of Oakland. The Tribune called Alameda “simultaneously a Navy town, a small middle-America city and an island of suburbia with 70,000 people in the Eastbay’s urban core.” The *Tribune* also noted the island’s largely white and more affluent population<sup>346</sup>

In September 1987, tenants in the Buena Vistas received “bad news”: Gersten Management Company prepaid its \$9 million mortgage. The payment released the company from rental restrictions. Gersten announced he planned to hike the tenants’ rents. Without rent control in Alameda, converting the apartments from subsidized housing to private market rates would allow Gersten to raise rents as much as the company wanted. With a two-bedroom apartment renting for \$270 per month, half the cost of a comparable market unit in Alameda, low-income tenants would be unable to afford their homes. “We’re going to be pushed out of these apartments and out of Alameda,” said Guyton, fearing tenants could not find affordable and accessible rentals elsewhere on the island. “The rents are the lowest in the city and when the rents are increased, we won’t have anywhere else to go. A lot of us are just making it on the rents we’re paying now.” At the time, the Buena Vista Apartments were the largest private, for-profit apartment complex for low-income residents in the Alameda.<sup>347</sup>

Although about 40 percent of tenants qualified for other housing assistance programs provided by the federal government, like Section 8, those programs were already at capacity, with waiting lists as long as two years. The city fearing the increase

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<sup>346</sup> “Housing discrimination lawsuit filed (Buena Vista Apartments),” *OT*, April 29, 1983, A9; Interview with Clayton Guyton, by author, January 2013; C.J. Clemmons, *OT*, July 14, 1988.

<sup>347</sup> C.J. Clemmons, *OT*, July 14, 1988; Rachel Gordon, “Buena Vista rent ceiling may topple,” *ATS*, September 2, 1987. Rent control had been imposed on Alameda as a part of a critical Defense Area during and after WWII, . Additional attempts to create rent control also occurred in the late 1970s, “Alameda to draft rent control ordinance,” *OT*, August 23, 1979, C1.

would flood the rental market sought to negotiate with the owners. “It would really be a heck of a blow to price these people out,” said Mayor Chuck Corica. “The city has to somehow try to convince [Gersten] to go easy on the rent increase.” According a Gersten representative, the owner hoped to secure Section 8 and vouchers for low-income tenants. Approximately 250, or 40 percent of, tenants would be eligible for federal subsidies. Tenants in Alameda were not the only ones facing conversion. Earlier that year also Gersten converted a smaller apartment complex in Vallejo, successfully receiving low-income subsidies for 66 low-income households out of the 174-unit complex. Opposed to notifying tenants; however, the owners simply filed the paperwork to announce they would double rents.<sup>348</sup>

One city leader did know of the plan, however. Three weeks prior to announcing the rent increases, Councilmember Joe Camicia briefly met with the Gersten representative, a former political ally. Camicia shared the information with the city manager. He then passed the information to executive director of the embattled housing authority, Tom Matthews. The city manager, Rob Wonder, outlined the issue in an inter-office memo between himself and Matthews. He shared the information with Camicia, but forgot to share the information with others. Camicia denied that he hid information, saying the information he received was not “concrete” and he wanted to handle the matter in a “business-like manner.” He asked Wonder what Alameda could do if Gersten decided to hike rents. He said he did not want to “politicize” the issue or scare owners into “playing hardball.” Guyton felt the decision “the residents at a real unfair disadvantage.” During the three weeks, residents could have made their own

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<sup>348</sup> Rachel Gordon, “Buena Vista rent ceiling may topple,” *ATS*, September 2, 1987.

preparations. “We’ve lost a lot of time where we could have been negotiating with the owner and considering our legal options before the fact,” Guyton said.<sup>349</sup>

Upon learning of Gersten’s plans, residents began organizing to keep their homes. Clayton Guyton and his wife Delores formed the Buena Vista Community Association. Clayton Guyton became chair of the tenant’s organization. Over 300 anxious but optimistic residents packed a community meeting to find solutions to the crisis. Tenants discussed negotiating with the owner, rent control, and even working with the city to transfer the apartments to residents. Despite reaching out to volunteer public-interest attorneys working on the issue, residents hoped to find a political solution working with the city. “If they have the guts, the city can do a number of things to keep the low-income housing project in Alameda,” attorney Polly Marshall told the *Alameda Times Star*. Options included rent control, a measure the city opposed in the past. At an outdoor meeting called by the city council, the city manager said the city would consider a “special rent control” just for the Buena Vista Apartments. Despite fears of immediate displacement and time lost due to city leaders failure to inform residents, residents would not be immediately force out nor could Gersten immediately raise rents. Also, since many residents previously complained about “habitability issues”—broken elevators in the three story buildings, as well other unsanitary conditions, like rats and roach infestations—if rents were raised or residents evicted, “that could be considered a retaliatory eviction.” This would give residents more time to organize or find other solutions. But residents feared the worse, especially women and single-mothers and fixed incomes.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Rachel Gordon, “Buena Vista complex rents to double,” *ATS*, September 4, 1987; Interview with Joe Camicia, 2011.

<sup>350</sup> Rachel Gordon, “Buena Vista tenants mobile to keep rent low,” *ATS*, September 3, 1987.

Patricia Meyers, a single mother with a disability receiving government assistance, said she would have no choice but to “split up my family.” Half of her monthly government assistance went towards her rent. “I’d have to put my children in foster homes and go find a sleeping room for myself somewhere,” Meyers said. With no relatives, she had nowhere to turn for help. She lived at the apartments for nearly a decade. Another resident, Yvonne Keel, was retired. Receiving a \$639 per month pension, she feared a rent hike would force her out of Alameda, or worse. “I’d be driven out of the city. I’ve got nowhere to go. I’d end up on the streets or in a grave,” Keel lamented.” Still tenants remained optimistic that city leaders would help them. Tenants gathered and planned to plead their case to the city council.<sup>351</sup>

In their first action, the BVCA’s packed a September 4 Alameda City Council meeting. The *Oakland Tribune* described the Wednesday night meeting as “explosive.” City leaders bickered while tenants implored them to help. Otherwise, Guyton explained, “Women will have to put their children in foster homes and they will have to live in cheap hotels.” Mayor Corica announced he scheduled a meeting with the Buena Vista’s owner—Beverly Hills resident Albert Gersten. He planned to ask Gersten to hold off raising rents until federal subsidies could be found for residents. Despite arguing with each other, the council committed to helping tenants. Councilman Camicia told tenants, “I give a darn for you and I’m not going to let somebody roll over you.” Gersten spokeswoman Linda Sheppard told the *Oakland Tribune*, “Our intent is not to evict or run anybody out. Our intent is to convert the apartments to market rate. Some tenants will be hit more hard than others.” The company hoped to schedule rent increases overtime and obtain rental subsidies for low-income tenants. During the 1980s, the Reagan

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

administration nearly eliminated all Federal housing construction programs for low-income tenants nationwide. Understanding that not all residents could afford rental increases, Shepard said, “We understand we have a moral obligation to those people.” Despite the lip service, Gersten Co. continued with their plan to raise rents.<sup>352</sup>

The City and tenants sought to negotiate with the owners. After meeting with Guyton and Corica, Gersten Management Co.’s President Marty Collier announced the owners paid the mortgage and would increase rents 75 percent beginning in November. A two-bedroom apartment would increase from \$271 to \$474. Collier agreed to visit Washington with Mayor Corica to lobby for assistance for the very low-income tenants. “We trying to be as compassionate as we can be,” Collier said. Guyton however had other plans to prevent mass displacement. After learning that the Beverly Hills owner was a major contributor to the Democratic Party, Guyton and others sought to appeal to the owner’s “progressive” politics. Considering his visibility and the national salience of federal subsidy conversions, Guyton hoped Gersten would be “an example for the whole nation right now.” Residents asked Gersten for phased rent control, a commitment to tenant organizing, and an “upward mobility” program that would provide residents training leading to better jobs and a means to move from the apartments.<sup>353</sup>

Although the owners delayed the rent increase until January, some tenants would get relief. By October, HUD would grant as many as 260 rental subsidies for very low-income residents. Many residents did not qualify for the low-income vouchers, however and would be unable to afford 75 percent increase beginning in 1988 or the doubling of

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<sup>352</sup> *OT*, September 5, 1987; Reagan era housing statistics from California. Senate Office of Research. *Housing Alert: estimates of Low Income Rental Units in California Subject to termination of rent and/or mortgage subsidies, 1988-2008*,” Sacramento, CA: California State Senate, December 1987.

<sup>353</sup> Carolyn Newbergh, *OT*, September 9, 1987.

rent by 1989 .All along, Gersten hoped to secure additional Section 8 vouchers for Buena Vista residents, as the company did in Vallejo. By paying off the loans, the company could charge higher rents and receive additional revenue through new subsidized vouchers. While this presented a win-win for the owners, not all tenants could benefit.<sup>354</sup>

Some tenants were too poor to afford rents but not poor enough to qualify for vouchers. When Tony and Angie Bradford moved into the Buena Vistas in 1982, their two-bedroom apartment cost \$185 per month. In addition to their 7-year old Shareshee, the couple also had a two-year old son, Anthony II. By 1988, the Bradford's were paying \$510 a month for rent in the Bridgeport Apartments—the name adopted by the owners after converting to market rate rents. In 1989, the Bradford's rent would increase to \$600. Angie worked at the Alameda Naval Air Station. Her husband Tony was laid off from East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) that January. The family could not afford another rent hike. “We’ve had to sacrifice our car, clothes, everything to pay this rent,” Tony said. Other residents moved in with friends and family or found additional jobs. Tony looked for work, but with his unemployment assistance placing the family above income qualifications for housing vouchers, the next rental increases would wipe out their money for a baby sitter. Tony could no longer look for work and would need to stay at home with his son. The family got on a waiting list for housing closer to Angie’s job, but they would need to wait two years for an opening.<sup>355</sup>

Tenants began weighing their legal options. Guyton sought the services of the Legal Aid Society of Alameda County. The agency assisted Bay Area residents and previously worked in Alameda on wrongful eviction and housing discrimination cases. In

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<sup>354</sup> “Alameda council promises renters help fighting 75-percent rent hikes,” *OT*, October 7, 1987; Rachel Gordon, “Buena Vista tenants mobile to keep rent low,” *ATS*, September 3, 1987..

<sup>355</sup> C. J. Clemmons, “Sudden switch to market rate strains lower-income tenants,” *OT*, July 14, 1988.

order to qualify for Legal Aid, clients must meet low-income qualifications and complete an intake process to qualify for assistance. The low-income tenants of the Buena Vistas qualified and enlisted Legal Aid attorney Mike Rawson in their struggle. Rawson joined Legal Aid because the agency was committed to helping Bay Area residents through the civil justice system. Before law school, Rawson worked as a community organizer and tenant activist in Southern California. During law school, he interned at the State's Housing Department. With his knowledge of applicable housing laws Rawson, Clayton Guyton and residents of the Buena Vistas considered other options to maintain affordable housing in Alameda.<sup>356</sup>

Alameda's city leaders cared more about landlords than tenants. When Rawson and others suggested a limited rent control that would apply to larger apartment, Mayor Corica objected on the grounds that such a measure would negatively impact the relationship built between the city and Gersten Co. while working to get rental subsidies. Corica claimed previous attempts to get rent control complexes failed due to the inability to gather enough signatures on place the proposal on the ballot, suggesting the city lacked support for rent control. Still, tenants like the Bradford's who did not qualify saw hope in establishing rent controls for the apartments.<sup>357</sup>

Despite opposition from city leaders and property owners, Buena Vista tenants launched a drive for rent control. Launching the campaign in April, the group collected nearly 3,000 signatures by mid-summer. To qualify for the spring election in March 1989, residents would need to collect 400 more signatures. While working full-time and caring for a family, residents like Angie Bradford would "come home and type letters for

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<sup>356</sup> Interview with Mike Rawson, Taylor Kohles and Reginald James, March 25, 2011.

<sup>357</sup> C. J. Clemmons, "Sudden switch to market rate strains lower-income tenants," *OT*, July 14, 1988.

the rent control drive.” Angie said, “We’re all pitching in and working together. Something has to be done.” Despite these efforts by local residents, city leaders in the best position to help tenants instead thwarted efforts for affordable housing.<sup>358</sup>

In the midst of a Buena Vista crisis, the city of Alameda defunded the Fair Housing organization providing state-mandated landlord-tenant mediation services. In June 1988, Alameda’s city council reduced the funding allocation for Alamedans with HOPE (Housing Opportunities Provided Equally). The two-decades old organization started in the mid-1960s in the wake of Proposition 14—the state ballot measure restoring the right to discriminate in housing. In the 1980s, HOPE worked with the Legal Aid to sue the city for discriminating against non-whites and low-income peoples. Already underfunded, HOPE claimed it could not “run a good program that will take care of the housing problems we have,” Lois Pryor said. With federal funding; however, HOPE could run an effective program with less local money, according to the city’s Community development director. With federal housing funding drastically reduced during the 1980s, this was unlikely. Guyton accused the city of “turning their backs on the problem.” According to Pryor, as tenants faced rent hikes and increased competition for housing from military personnel at Alameda Naval Air Station, housing counseling was imperative. City councilwoman Rita Haugher expressed concerns that racism and limited affordable housing necessitated affordable housing. With HOPE bowing out, residents would not have Fair Housing assistance for at least two months that summer. With opposition to resident’s efforts at rent control and the defunding of Alameda’s Fair

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid.



Housing organization, tenants and their legal representatives began to criticize the local housing authority and examine the city's local land use policies.<sup>359</sup>

Nearly 1,000 families were listed on the Alameda Housing Authority's waiting list and, according to AHA executive director Tom Matthews, they had no chance of finding homes. The City Council also served as the Housing Authority, but for only 10 minutes every three months. The council considered reviving its housing commission, an independent body taken over by the council in 1981. Due to a moratorium on public housing and after fiscal and management problems with the authority, the city missed over two million dollars in housing funding. An advisory committee had been temporarily set-up in the early 1980s, but disbanded in 1983. The process frustrated tenants. The city needed more funding to construct more housing. Despite a sympathetic director, tenants felt they lacked assistance from the housing authority. Tenants then focused on Alameda's most taboo subject: Measure A.<sup>360</sup>

Rawson argued Measure A required the city to build the units 'lost' during the Buena Vista's conversion. The city responded that only units owned or managed by the Housing authority at the time of Measure A's adoption qualified for the exception. Rawson and tenants threatened to sue the city.<sup>361</sup>

Officials owing their political ascendancy to Measure A would not allow its dismantling. Speaking as a representative of one Alameda political faction, Mayor Chuck

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<sup>359</sup> OT, July 13, 1980; "Housing counselors bow out in Alameda," *OT*, June 24, 1988, B4; "Alameda Low-Income Housing Hassle Continuing with no solution in sight," *OT*, July 13, 1980, B3; California. Senate Office of Research, *Housing Alert*.

<sup>360</sup> "Alameda groups seeks subsidized housing ban," *OT*, July 1, 1982, "Suit filed against Alameda's 5-year public housing moratorium," *OT*, April 12, 1983; "Alameda housing Authority assailed for doing too little," *OT*, January 13, 1988, B1.

<sup>361</sup> "Guyton v. City of Alameda," Case No. 646480 (1989), Alameda County Superior Court House, Records Management; C. J. Clemmons, "Critics rip city's 15-year ban on new apartment projects," *OT*, July 14, 1988.

Corica said, “The residents of Alameda don’t want Measure A tampered with.” Noting that voters defeated a proposal to build apartments at a new development in 1984, Corica declared, “There will be no more apartment complexes built in this city.”<sup>362</sup>

Corica thought tenants were disgraceful for not appreciating his efforts to secure vouchers for residents. “It got those certificates and it’s still not enough for them,” Corica said, adding Alameda provided some of the highest rates of subsidized housing in Alameda County, although Tom Matthews, the housing authority chief, disagreed. With over 1,200 families on a three to eight year waiting list, only 1,319 low-income or subsidized units were available. Alameda’s housing crisis representing a nationwide crisis. “Housing is certainly a problem in Alameda, but it’s not specifically an Alameda problem,” Matthews said. “It’s a national problem.”<sup>363</sup>

Despite the housing crisis being a national issue and California’s shortage being acute, affordable housing advocates believed Alameda’s local land use policies excluded housing for low-income residents.

Rawson also asked the council if Measure A conflicted with the state Housing Element law. Yet, Alameda’s political leadership was entrenched. Former residents moving into their cars, no rent-control concessions from Gersten or guarantees that property owners would accept housing vouchers in the future, and no concrete support from city leaders, residents sued. The Buena Vista Community Association (BVCA) took legal action against the city, according to Rawson, “in order to get some leverage.”<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> C. J. Clemmons, “Critics rip city’s 15-year ban on new apartment projects,” *OT*, July 14, 1988.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> “*Guyton v. City of Alameda*,” Case No. 646480 (1989), Alameda County Superior Court House, Records Management. C. J. Clemmons, “Critics rip city’s 15-year ban on new apartment projects,” *OT*, July 14, 1988.

On January 9, 1989, just nine days after tenants' rents increased, Rawson filed suit in Alameda County Superior Court against the city of Alameda on behalf of Guyton and Henderson. In *Guyton v. City of Alameda*, plaintiffs sought declaratory and injunctive relief and a petition of *writ of mandate*. Rawson sought a court order declaring whether Measure A complied with the state housing element law. If not, he requested the court suspend the city's local land use authorities. "By filing the suit, Guyton and Henderson hope to eliminate all city policies that limit the ability of the city to fulfill its obligations to provide housing for low-income families," Rawson told the *Oakland Tribune*. "They also hope to educate and go at least part of the way toward changing the attitudes of some city residents who would see Alameda as the exclusive province of middle- and upper-income homeowners." The suit sought to eliminate prejudice against apartment tenants and compel the city to comply with state laws requiring all cities provide low-cost housing.<sup>365</sup>

Although land-use policies are typically created and enforced by local municipalities, state law supersedes those governing bodies and policies, encouraging compatibility within metropolitan regions.

In 1969, the state Legislature adopted the Housing Element law, requiring every locality to adopt a plan for housing within its General Plan, a comprehensive policy of land uses within its jurisdiction. One of seven mandatory elements of the General Plan, the Housing Element mandates local governments plan, adequately, to meet current and future housing needs for residents of all incomes. In order for the private market to

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<sup>365</sup> C. J. Clemmons, "Critics rip city's 15-year ban on new apartment projects," *OT*, July 14, 1988. C. J. Clemmons, "Alameda growth laws blocking low-income housing, suit says," *OT*, January 6, 1989. See also, Bill O'Brien, "The Fight to Keep Low-Income Housing in Alameda," *Express*, January 20, 1989, 3, and "Cityside," *Express*, December 25, 1987.

adequately address housing needs and demands, local governments must adopt land use plans that encourage and do not constrain affordable housing development.<sup>366</sup>

The Housing Element required the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to review local housing elements every five years to ensure compliance. The state assigns Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA) to each region in California and a regional government, called "Council of Government" (COG). The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) served as the Bay Area's coalition of cities focused on regional issues of land use, housing, environmental quality and economic development. In turn, each locality would provide its "Fair share" of the regional housing need, including housing for low- and very low-income households. Plaintiffs argued the conversion of the Buena Vistas to market rate apartments caused the city to fall below its designated fair share housing allocation. Plaintiffs also asked the court to order the city to revise its Housing Element and amend its 1979 Combined Land Use Plan (CLUP), the local plan for land use, open space and transportation. The city's CLUP stated "the number of publicly supported low- and moderate-cost housing units in the City should not exceed the same percentage of the total housing stock as that supplied by other East Bay cities." Despite state laws requiring cities to provide housing for all segments, Alameda's land use policies intentionally excluded low-income housing.<sup>367</sup>

Plaintiffs argued Alameda's housing policies discriminated against African Americans. Alameda excluded "a disproportionate amount of blacks and other families from residing in the city" through Measure A, the CLUP, and the Housing Element,

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<sup>366</sup> Housing Elements and Regional Housing Need Allocation, Department of Housing and Community Developer, State of California, <<http://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing-policy-development/housing-resource-center/plan/he/>>, accessed March 2011.

<sup>367</sup> "Guyton v. City of Alameda," Case No. 646480 (1989), Alameda County Superior Court House, Records Management.

according to the suit. When Measure A adopted, Alameda's Black population was just three percent, compared to 36 percent in Oakland. By the time of the lawsuit, 15 years later, only four percent of Alameda residents were Black while Oakland's black population increased to 46 percent, a plurality. Alameda's land use policies, the suit alleged, prevented "the development of very low-income housing which would be largely occupied by blacks and other minorities in a community that is almost exclusively non-black."<sup>368</sup>

To force compliance, plaintiffs asked the judge to enact a portion of the housing element law that would allow the court to suspend the city's authority to issue building permits for single-family residences and duplexes, as well as subdivision maps until the city complied with the Housing Element law. The city disputed the plaintiff's claim that it lacked compliance. Additionally, the defendants argued the plaintiffs had no complaint against the city and had no standing to file suit. The defendants also claimed that tenants had not brought charges within 120 days, as required by laws relating to amending zoning laws and other ordinances. After thwarting tenants' political efforts, the city sought to escape civil charges targeting its land use policies and local authority.<sup>369</sup>

Developers observing the case sought to intervene on behalf of the city and themselves. The possibility of the city losing authority over its land use controls could undermine their developments. Although embroiled in their own conflicts with the city over a massive planned community on Bay Farm Island—a large residential development west of the Oakland Airport located within Alameda municipal boundaries—lawyers representing Harbor Bay Isle attempted to intervene in opposition to tenants. "With a

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

“substantial interest in the outcome” of the case, the interveners claimed that plaintiffs were not wronged and that the city had made “adequate provision for the housing needs of “all economic segments of the city.” At the time, however, Harbor Bay Isle did not include low-income housing. Soon after, lawyers for another large developer, Marina Village—a shopping center erected in the early 1980s on the site of former wartime housing—intervened with similar claims. Developers who did not provide low-income housing sought to stifle legal claims by low-income tenants seeking affordable housing.<sup>370</sup>

On June 5, 1989, Alameda County Superior Court Judge Michael Ballachey ruled that Alameda’s land use policies discriminated against the poor. The court’s tentative ruling ordered the city to rescind the exclusionary portion of the CLUP restricting publicly supported housing to amounts less than other nearby cities. The court order the city to revise its housing element. Both issues needed to be addressed within 120 days. Until then, the court suspended the city’s land use authority. The city could not accept or grant applications for zoning changes, variances or subdivision map approvals. The interveners; however, received exemptions. The court also reserved the right to settle any matters regarding attorney’s fees in the case. Tenants and affordable housing advocates received a ruling that the city’s policies discriminated against the poor. The remaining legal matter was Alameda’s “anti-housing commandment”: Measure A. The courts provided tenants a forum to challenge Measure A, otherwise impossible in the island’s political climate.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> “Guyton v. City of Alameda,” Case No. 646480 (1989), Alameda County Superior Court House, Records Management; “Judge: Land policies biased against poor,” *OT*, March 8, 1989, B1; *OT*, July 14, 1988.

Removing Measure A would be politically impossible. Measure A resonated with many relatively affluent homeowners in Alameda concerned about taxes for public services and property values negatively associated with apartment complexes. Mayor Corica rose to political prominence on the coattails of Measure A. Although not considered apart of Alameda's council majority, the "Gang of Three," Councilmember Camicia also supported Measure A. The tenant's most sympathetic councilmember had recently resigned due to conflict with Mayor Corica. Without sympathetic voices on the Council, or advocates for their need, the legal system provided the best opportunity to dismantle the discriminatory Measure A.<sup>372</sup>

Guyton, Henderson and Rawson decided to try their luck in a preliminary hearing. With the displacement of 325 families from the Buena Vistas, the city of Alameda violated the regulations of ABAG's allocation of RHNP and would need to grant an exception to Measure A to construct the replacement units. Judge Ballachey ruled in the preliminary hearing that the burden of proof lay on the defendants. The city of Alameda would need to prove the ordinance did not prevent the fulfillment of Fair Share housing obligations. Although the city received lawsuits regularly, with few cases culminating with full trials, the tentative ruling encouraged city leaders to treat the suit seriously. To assist the new City Attorney, Carole Korade, the city hired a well-known land-use attorney, Daniel Curtin, Jr., along with urban housing policy experts, Maria Revera and Tom Jacobson. The lawsuit put the city on defense: in the courtroom and at City Hall.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Also of note, Black activists in West Alameda attempted to create council districts for elections and initiated a campaign to recall the mayor. Clayton Guyton also became first African American to run for city council. Rev. Lawrence Vanhook became first to run for the school board. Bill O'Brien, "Racial politics in Alameda: minority activists mobilize for district elections, mayoral recall," *Express*, February 14, 1992, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>373</sup> Interview with Joe Camicia, 2011; Interview with Michael Rawson, 2011.

By suspending the city's authority to grant applications for zoning and subdivision map approvals, the judicial enforcement pressured city leaders into action. Although the decision did not impact the major developers that opposed Corica since he assumed office, the court order impacted his political base: homeowners. In the past, a homeowner seeking to renovate their home could go to the city's Planning Department seeking the necessary permits. Under the court order, residents seeking approvals needed to request approval from Rawson and the judge on a case-by-case-basis, angering many homeowners. This external pressure brought crucial publicity to the cause and created a significant incentive for the city to settle as soon as possible. The backlash from homeowners enhanced the court's enforcement mechanism. Disgruntled homeowners appeared to exert more influence than low-income tenants living in fear of homelessness, leading the city to settle the lawsuit out of court.<sup>374</sup>

The settlement also required other measures to build new affordable housing and end land use restrictions. Fearing the court would declare the city's low-density law illegal, the defendants settled with residents prior to trial. Without admitting guilt, the city would work closely with Legal Aid to develop a contract that requires Alameda to utilize local, state and federal funds to provide at least 325 additional affordable housing units to replace those lost during the conversion. The displaced tenants of the Buena Vistas would have first priority to the new units. The settlement created an exception to Measure A. City Attorney Korade described the exception as "an interpretation of [Measure A] which

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<sup>374</sup> Mike Rawson interview, 2011.



allows the Alameda Housing Authority to replace lost low-cost homes built with federal funds.”<sup>375</sup>

The city also agreed to provide funding through an Affordable Housing Unit/Fee program where developers would make contributions. Developers could either provide low-income housing or 59 years or contribute a fee. The city would also need to apply for state funding for at least 85 units of multi-family rental housing and programs supporting home ownership. The plaintiffs agreed not to challenge the city’s Housing Element or density reductions. The city council would amend the CLUP to permit replacing the lost units. Progress reports would need to be sent to Legal Aid, whose legal expenses would be paid by the city.<sup>376</sup>

Housing advocates viewed the “Guyton settlement” as a victory that could be replicated elsewhere to encourage the construction of affordable housing. The lawsuit showed, “Cities must making a maximum effort to encourage construction of low-income housing,” Rawson told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The case received national headlines, but enforcement remained a challenge.<sup>377</sup>

### **Aftermath of Guyton Settlement**

Alameda made minimal efforts to build low-cost housing. In March 1992, despite facing a court order, the Alameda city council voted against submitting an application to the state to build low-income housing on the island. A crowd of 500 cheered the city council’s decision when Korade said, “We have made a good faith effort to meet the deadline, so we are still in compliance with the court order.” As part of the settlement, the

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<sup>375</sup> Janet Joson, “Alameda settles suit to add low-cost homes,” *OT*, April 30, 1990, Steve Massey, “Lawsuits a tool for building homes,” *SFC*, June 18, 1990.

<sup>376</sup> “Guyton v. City of Alameda,” Case No. 646480 (1989), Alameda County Superior Court House, Records Management.

<sup>377</sup> Steve Massey, “Lawsuits a tool for building homes,” *SFC*, June 18, 1990.

city was to apply for Proposition 84 Rental Housing Construction funds for 85 new housing units. Housing officials said they made a “Herculean effort”, the *Tribune* reported, but could not find viable sites for low-income housing. Of the 11 sites listed by the AHA for low-income and affordable housing, the city did not own and could not gain control of them prior to the March 20 deadline. The council said it would inform the Legal Aid Society it could not meet the deadline but would attempt to provide low-income housing.<sup>378</sup>

Resident opposition also helped thwart any attempts to provide sites for low-income housing. Thirty-five Alameda residents spoke out at the council meeting and said low-income housing would lower property values, cause traffic congestion, and make the streets of Alameda dangerous. When a resident said low-income housing would lead to the creation of “an East Alameda like East Oakland or create a roving bands of anarchists gypsies which vandalize storefronts as they do in Berkeley,” they received a standing ovation. Previously, the council rejected two of the three sites under city control due to neighborhood association opposition.<sup>379</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The tenants of Alameda had their own “herculean” challenge: fighting back against the white noose of the island city. Using the legal system, low-income residents of the Buena Vista Apartments challenged the city of Alameda’s discriminatory housing policies. Without the courts, Black renters had no political solutions to the housing crisis. Elected officials owed their allegiance to Measure A, and the white homeowners who backed it. The same electorate who crafted and backed Measure A also used the political system to

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<sup>378</sup> Brett Mahoney, “Alameda fails to apply for housing funds,” *OT*, March 11, 1992, A3

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

place city officials into power who would support their will to exclude low-income and Black residents. When low-income, Black residents attempted to use the political system, white residents thwarted their efforts. The lack of support by the city's political leadership both encouraged indigenous leadership, like that of Guyton and Henderson<sup>380</sup>, and enabled tenants to collaborate with Legal Aid to use the courts. The judicial mechanism encouraged the city to adopt different local land use controls. Unfortunately, ABAG lacked enforcement mechanisms to compel compliance. The courts had the power but were reluctant to apply the law.

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<sup>380</sup> Guyton and Henderson co-founded both the Buena Vista Tenants Association, along with Delores Guyton, and later the Buena Vista Community Association. The BVCA later established a community center and after-school program as both a strategy of self-reliance and to keep tenants active. Interview, Guyton, 2013.

## PART 4: Behind These Gates

## **10. RENEWED HOPE FOR HOUSING: East Housing, Bayport, and Redevelopment at Alameda Point (the former Alameda Naval Air Station)**

“We really think East Housing has to be saved.”

Tom Mathews, chairman of Renewed Hope

On April 24, 2000, housing advocates, “hit the streets” of Alameda in a demonstration for affordable housing on former Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) property being transitioned to the city. Stationed at Atlantic Ave and Webster St—near the Webster Tube exit and cater-corner from College of Alameda—15 members of “Renewed HOPE” held their third rally of a “public witness campaign.” They held a banner that read, “Housing for all,” and smaller signs like, “Housing for the Work Force,” “Justice vs. Economics,” and “Honk for Affordable Housing.” Lester Dixon, an AC Transit bus driver and resident of the Harbor Island Apartments, stood atop a white van chanting. “We want housing for the working class.” These housing activists hoped to sway public support for the rehabilitation of 390 units on what was known as East Housing.<sup>381</sup>

Since 1988, the U.S. Military has closed nearly 100 military bases through the Base Realignment and Closure process, commonly called BRAC. Seven Bay Area facilities closed in the third of five rounds of BRAC. The BRAC Commission slated Alameda NAS property for closure in 1993. The base official closed April 30, 1997. Alameda Point represents one of the last areas of land within the regions inner core. Redevelopment of Alameda Point’s 918 upland acres and 166 submerged acres owned by the Navy has been a complex issue. Issues of environmental cleanup, property transfer, land use, and competing local interests have impacted redevelopment efforts.

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<sup>381</sup> Susan Fuller, “Housing activists hit the streets,” *ATS*, 2000, in possession of author.

Three redevelopment plans have failed.<sup>382</sup>

Inquiry into the battle to “Save East Housing,” redevelop Alameda Point, and the economic and racial contrasts between the Bayport—the former East Housing site—and Alameda Point—the former NAS redeveloped for the formerly homeless, provide insight into issues of race and class in Alameda at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Alameda and Base Realignment and Closure**

The 1990s base closures had devastating consequences for the Bay Area. Like many military-industrial-complex sites, communities’ economic growth was tied to its relationship of providing goods and services to military installations and the men and women who served in military and civilian capacities. In the Bay Area, Congressman Ronald Dellums created the East Bay Conversion and Reinvestment Commission to bring together regional stakeholders for solutions to closure issues. Local elected officials, social justice groups, labor unions, academics and large corporates all came to the table with often competing interests.

Homeless advocates did have a win from the East Bay commission. In 1997, the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act made serving the homeless a priority use for all surplus federal properties. With the BRAC, this acts impacted base reuse. Base Closure and Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistant Act of 1994 required multiple groups to enter into an agreement to combine the interests of base reuse and homelessness. A united group of shelter providers—the Alameda Point Collaborative,

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<sup>382</sup> For case study of redevelopment of Alameda Point, see Nicholas Stephen Kosla, “Over a Decade of Failure: Why Military Base Reuse at Naval Air Station, Alameda (Alameda Point), has been unsuccessful” (Master’s thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2010).

Operation Dignity and Building Futures with Women and Children—rehabbed 186 units and support facilities on the former NAS, now called Alameda Point.<sup>383</sup>

### **Save East Housing**

Alameda housing advocates viewed East Housing as critical to maintaining racial and economic diversity in Alameda. East Housing was a cul-de-sac collection of military-style housing with winding streets, multiple-dwellings, including three- and four-bedroom apartments, along with small parks and recreation areas and baseball and soccer fields. East Housing rested between the Coast Guard’s Marina Village Family Housing (formerly Estuary Projects’ land) and the Lower West End: east of Alameda Point, north of Atlantic Ave, and west of the College of Alameda. Six-foot walls surrounded the complex to the south and west sides, with a few entrances near Poggi, across from Third Street, and off main closer to Midway. To the north lay the Fleet Industrial Supply Center, transferred to the city in spring 2000.<sup>384</sup>

The developer chosen by the city, Catellus Development Corporation, wanted to develop a commercial business park, a school, park and up to 500 homes. The development would require razing the existing 590 units. State law required Catellus to build 15 percent as low- and very-low income housing.<sup>385</sup> “We really see East Housing as a place the public has already spent its money to build and (the units) can be fixed up,”

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<sup>383</sup> HUD’s Homeless Assistance Programs: Guidebook on Military Base Reuse and Homeless Assistance,” Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, July 2006, < <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/MilitaryBaseReuse.pdf> >, accessed December 1, 2012; Kosla, “A Decade of Failure,” 18-19.

<sup>384</sup> Description of area based on author’s own observations as West End resident since 1989. The battle to “Save East Housing” appears to have begun in 1998, see “Advocates fight to save East Housing,” *OT*, December 23, 1998, Local 1, also see documentary, “Behind These Gates,” in possession of Vickie Smith, production information unattributed; however, Smith was member of Renewed Hope.

<sup>385</sup> Jonna Palmer, “Low-cost housing effort struggles in Alameda,” *OT*, December 2, 1999, Local 3.

Tom Matthews said. The former AHA executive director now led Renewed HOPE, successor to the postwar fair housing organization.<sup>386</sup>

Renewed HOPE opposed destruction of all of East Housing's buildings. Instead, they wanted some saved for residents with incomes between \$30,000 and \$60,000. Although the abandoned homes had been vacant and had lead paint and asbestos, among other problems, rehabilitation would cost less than building new homes, Matthews said. He'd met with Mayor Ralph Appezato and Councilmember Beverly Johnson in October to discuss a potential compromise: allocating an additional 25 low-income homes. Fifteen percent was insufficient for housing advocates concerned about teachers and other low-income residents being forced from Alameda due to the lack of affordable housing. Appezato was "open and heard what we had to say," Matthews said, but the organization was not satisfied with the low numbers.<sup>387</sup>

City officials hoped to pass on costs, like increased services, building a school and parks, to the developer. Catellus' Vice President Marti Buxton said keeping the existing units would require refurbishment and not provide money towards building a new school. The city charged new developments a per-square-foot impact fee that would go towards the school district. "We have actually asked Renewed HOPE to work (with us), Buxton told the *Oakland Tribune*. "We don't think they have the right solution though."<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. The city adopted a policy of "fiscal neutrality," meaning any municipal services for Alameda Point residents would have to be paid for by revenues of redevelopment projects, Kosla, "A Decade of Failure," 27. Cash-strapped cities operating in a capitalist framework seek to minimize expenses and generate revenues, thus privileging developments that prioritize attracting higher income residents and businesses.



Advocates for affordable housing hoped to convince city leaders and developers to include more low-income housing. In January 2000, housing advocates packed City Council chambers to comment on the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the “Catellus Project.” Speakers said saving East Housing would help with preserving affordable housing on the island. “We really think East Housing has to be saved,” Mathews said.

City officials did not see maintaining East Housing as economically viable. Councilmember Barbara Kerr said maintenance would cost too much to have affordable units and money for affordable housing elsewhere in the city, along with the new schools, could not be generated. Councilman Tony Daysog recognized the island had a housing crisis, but did not think maintaining East Housing would help. “Alameda, like any other city in this region, has a tremendous housing crisis,” Daysog said. “(The question is) how can we address both the social justice issues and economic development?” he wanted 200 units of the West Housing development on the base for affordable housing, instead. Daysog also expressed concern with Catellus’ project, including proposed 10-foot high sound wall. “I’m not going to vote for a 10-foot wall.”<sup>389</sup>

Despite growing calls for affordable housing, the Planning Board and the City Council approved the EIR for the Catellus project, as well as the former Fleet Industrial Supply Center. Business representatives criticized some critics who wished to preserve the building. Alameda’s Chamber of Commerce president-elect Moira Fossum called on the council to approve the EIR “without change or challenge.” She added, “People who

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<sup>389</sup> Jonna Palmer, “Alameda protesters call for affordable housing,” *OT*, January 30, 2000, Local 1.

claim to be environmentalists are really preservationists,” referring to “people who come (before the council with complaints.”<sup>390</sup>

Advocates again called for more affordable housing and to discuss alternative plans to combine the need for revenue and housing for low-income peoples. Residents pleaded for help to stop people being pushed out of Alameda. “This has to not be about profit. It’s about people,” Lester Dixon said.<sup>391</sup>

Housing advocates sued the city that spring. Renewed Hope Housing Advocates and Arc Ecology challenged the adequacy of the EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and ultimately both parties settled. The settlement requires a quarter of new housing construction be designated affordable housing. At the time, home prices were listed in the \$400,000 range.

The City, Catellus and the housing advocates claimed victory. Mayor Appezato said, “With the settlement of the lawsuit, the City of Alameda is now able to move forward with the comprehensive plans it has developed with Catellus for reuse of this valuable waterfront property.”<sup>392</sup>

Mathews, the former AHA executive director, noted the victory would also benefit working class families who don’t qualify for affordability programs:

We are particularly pleased that this agreement will ensure housing for working families whose needs are ignored by existing government programs. Teachers, nurses, police officers, office workers, people in the trades are examples of people who earn too much to qualify for low-income programs and too little to afford market-rate housing.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Susan Fuller, “Final base impact report gets City Council’s approval,” *AJ*, March 24, 2000.

<sup>391</sup> Josh Indar, “Environmental report OK’d for base housing,” *OT*, May 14, 2000, Local 1. The city also approved rezoning in the West End in 2001. “Alameda OK’s rezoning West End,” *OT*, September 7, 2000, Local 1.

<sup>392</sup> Katherine Conrade, “”, *San Francisco Business Times*, March 25, 2001, <<http://www.bizjournals.com/eastbay/stories/2001/03/26/story6.html>>, accessed December 2012.

<sup>393</sup> Kristin Bender, “Affordable housing advocates get Alameda win,” *OT*, March 21, 2001, News 9.

The agreement also required additional affordable housing units. The 60 additional units would be permanently affordable housing, including 50 percent rentals. The council approved the deal 4-1, with Barbara Kerr opposing, claiming no safeguards existed to prevent future litigation or guarantee affordable housing would be built. With a \$395,000 median home price, the agreement helped families of moderate income. The settlement also required public involvement in the toxic clean up and sampling for Alameda Point. “Our organizations want to see environmentally responsible redevelopment of this military base,” Eve Bach, Arc Ecology member said.<sup>394</sup>

Litigation forced the city to develop more affordable housing, when the only low-income housing planned had been the federally required housing for the formerly homeless on Alameda Point.

### **On Point: Black life at Alameda Point**

Allen Beene did not want to move to Alameda. As a teenager, he recalled being harassed by the police when riding his bicycle with friends from Oakland over the bridge to the island. “It was like we wasn’t supposed to be here,” he said. When his family was displaced from East Oakland, they found low-income housing on Alameda Point. Beene was one of the first residents to move into the former NAS. He described the base as a “desert.”<sup>395</sup>

Alameda Point can resemble a ghost town. Dozens of former military buildings are abandoned. Grass often grows wild. Jackrabbits, raccoons, possum and other creatures traverse the hundreds of abandoned and underdeveloped acres. A food desert

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid. Settlement agreement available, < <https://alamedamgr.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/settlement-agreement-renewed-hope-and-arc-ecology.pdf>>, accessed December 3, 2012.

<sup>395</sup> “We would ride bikes, had the helmets, was legit, but we always seemed to get pulled over due to whatever reason the police pulled us over for,” Beene said. His experience as a Black man of Alameda Police harassment is a common narrative. Allen Beene, interview with author, December 2012.

also exists, with the closest grocery store miles away, and the closest source of food being a local Donut shop located off the base.<sup>396</sup>

Alameda Point is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area and has one of the largest proportions of African Americans on the island. The Alameda Point Collaborative is the largest housing provider of homeless families in the county. APC, according to its website, “is a supportive housing community that uses all its resources to help families and individuals break the cycle of homelessness and poverty.” Residents like Jerrard Green often participate in workforce training programs like the Growing Youth Project and the Cycle of Change Bicycle shop where they learn employable skills.<sup>397</sup>

Alameda Point also includes Bessie Coleman Court. Named for the pioneering Black woman pilot, Coleman is transitional housing for women survivors of domestic violence. On any given night, in 2002 when the apartments opened, over 3,000 women in children in Alameda County were homeless due to domestic violence.<sup>398</sup>

Like Beene, many of Alameda Point’s residents are African American and fear what will happen to them when redevelopment efforts go through. Doug Biggs, executive director of the Alameda Point Collaborative, said that each prospective Alameda Point developer has sought to remove them from their lease, unsuccessfully.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> APC developed the Growing Youth Project in 2006-2007 to transform the Point’s food desert. Alameda Point Collaborative, “2006 Food Security Findings and Recommendations,” <[http://www.apcollaborative.org/images/APC\\_GrowingYouth.pdf](http://www.apcollaborative.org/images/APC_GrowingYouth.pdf)>, accessed January 2012.

<sup>397</sup> About Alameda Point Collaborative, <<http://apcollaborative.org/sample-page/>>, accessed December 1, 2012. See also, “Rethinking poverty in Alameda Point,” KALW, <<http://kalw.org/post/rethinking-poverty-alameda-point/>>, accessed December 2012; Author interview with Jerrard Greene, December 2012.

<sup>398</sup> Kristen Bender, “Alameda Point project flies: Complex is launching pad for women,” *OT*, March 14, 2002, Local 1. Statistic from Alameda County Public Health Department study.

<sup>399</sup> Beene interview; Author interview with Doug Biggs, December 2012; “Alameda Point among poorest Bay Area neighborhoods,” *Alameda Sun*, <<http://alamedasun.com/local-and-hometown/9342-point-among-the-poorest-bay-area-neighborhoods/>>, November 11, 2011.

The last developer, Suncal, attempted to overcome Measure A—the 1973 ban on apartment building construction—through a ballot initiative. Opposed to solely placing Measure A on the ballot, Suncal essentially put its entire development plan on the initiative. Over 85 percent of voters found something to object to and defeated the proposal. The city later ended its Exclusive Negotiating Agreement for redevelopment with Suncal, leading to a lawsuit and \$4.1 million settlement.<sup>400</sup>

As the Navy prepares to transfer Alameda Point back to the city, housing advocates want the city to consider the construction of more affordable housing. Renewed HOPE again is leading the charge for multifamily units. With their recent victory overturning Measure A, it remains to see if the city will fulfill its promises for affordable housing and how this will impact African Americans.<sup>401</sup>

### **Masking Poverty: Census Tract 4287**

Inequality hides throughout the West End. The Catellus project rose in stark contrast to the West End neighborhoods across Atlantic Ave, particularly the Harbor Island Apartments (now Summerhouse Apartments), but also the Atlantic Apartments and the Esperanza Housing. Yet the starkest contrast today is that of the affluent new homes

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<sup>400</sup> Michele Ellson and Zusha Elinson, “SunCal’s arrogance sunk project at Alameda Point,” *Bay Citizen*, < <https://www.baycitizen.org/news/development/suncals-arrogance-sunk-project-alameda/>>, August 3, 2010; Henry K. Lee, “Alameda, Suncal settle for \$4.1 million,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, < <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Alameda-SunCal-settle-for-4-1-million-4133384.php>>, December 19, 2012; Biggs interview, author, 2012.

<sup>401</sup> For Alameda Point explainer see Michele Ellson, “Alameda Point Explained: You had questions, we’ve got answers,” *TA*, May 2, 2013, < <http://thealamedan.org/news/alameda-point-explained-you-had-questions-weve-got-answers>>, accessed May 4, 2013. Also, Alameda Point Info, < <http://alamedapointinfo.com/>>, Alameda Point studies, plans and policies, < <http://www.alameda-point.com/reuse.html>>, and the City’s website for background and documents, maps, etc., < <http://alamedaca.gov/alameda-point/background-documents>>. Michele Ellson, “Advocates want city to consider more housing on point,” *The Alamedan*, January 29, 2013, < <http://thealamedan.org/news/alameda-point-explained-you-had-questions-weve-got-answers>>, accessed May 4, 2013. Kosla’s “A Decade of Failure” provides narrative history.

where East Housing stood and the formerly homeless and veteran's families, and formerly battered women of Alameda Point.

Rebranded as Bayport, the homes of the Catellus project opened in 2004. The first former NAS property included million dollar homes. The same month families began moving into Bayport, nearly 400 low-income and working class families—predominantly African American—were forced out of the Harbor Island Apartments across the street (See Chapter 11: Can't Move, Won't Move). Yet major contrasts exist within Bayport and the Census tract it now resides in.

In 2010, two West End census tracts merged. The combined Census Tract of 4287 includes much of the old pre-1960 AC 11. Of the 3,252 residents, 17.3 percent live in poverty—the highest on the island. One hundred residents live in extreme poverty. Yet the larger reorganization of the tract masks this inequality. African Americans represent 14 percent of the census tract population. Whites are 35 percent, Asians 30 percent and Latinos 12 percent. The largest growth was Asians, totaling 1,437 percent growth since 2000. The vast majority likely lives in Bayport, echoing the larger Alameda demographic trend of a larger Asian population.<sup>402</sup>

Considering there are million dollar homes in Bayport, block level census data would likely reveal higher concentrated poverty on Alameda Point.<sup>403</sup> The former NAS listed as one of the five poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area.

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<sup>402</sup> Reginald James, "On Point," *Life at Alameda Point, former Alameda Naval Air Station, 1999-present*, using U.S. Census data from Social Explorer, Census tract 4287. See also, Aaron Glantz, "Bay Area's Rich, Poor Live Side by Side," *Bay Citizen*, <<https://www.baycitizen.org/news/poverty/map-bay-areas-rich-poor-live-side-side/>>, December 8, 2011.

<sup>403</sup> "Alameda Point among poorest Bay Area neighborhoods," *Alameda Sun*, <<http://alamedasun.com/local-and-hometown/9342-point-among-the-poorest-bay-area-neighborhoods>>, November 11, 2011.

The poor are even segregated within the Bayport. The Breakers, 52-units includes two- and three-bedroom apartments. The units sit on the far east of Bayport, bound by Fifth Street to the west and Neptune Gardens Ave to the south. The other low-income apartments are not far away. In 2009, the Shinsei Gardens opened up north of Stargell Ave. The 39-units of supportive housing serve formerly homeless veterans and people with special needs. These apartments sit outside of the main Bayport property, which is south of Stargell, west of Fifth Street, north of Atlantic Ave, and east of Main Street.<sup>404</sup>

However, without block level census data, levels of segregation—racial and/or economically within the Bayport, cannot easily be ascertained for this “mixed-use” development. Future housing is slated north of Stargell, between the former Estuary projects—now Coast Guard—and the Alameda Landing mall—under-construction.

### **Demolished Affordable Housing**

The redevelopment of Alameda Point remains a contentious issue in Alameda. Decision reflects concern with housing for rich than working class families, partially driven by capitalist economics. Struggles over redevelopment of East Housing provide insight into the politics of redevelopment. The battle over redevelopment of East Housing reinvigorated housing advocacy and led to legal challenges to exclusionary housing in Alameda. This development created the context for future redevelopment issues on the West End of Alameda. Although race is rarely mentioned in redevelopment context, the associations between race, class and housing inextricably link affordable housing, redevelopment and the African American struggle for housing in Alameda.

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<sup>404</sup> Shinsei Gardens opens, < <http://blog.sfgate.com/inalameda/2009/10/14/shinsei-gardens-opens/>>, October 14, 2009, In Alameda blog, *San Francisco Chronicle*, accessed December 2012.

East housing was first battle for redevelopment on the West End that dramatically altered the lives of hundreds of families. In a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Renewed Hope member Irene Dieter predicted East Housing demolition would impact others in the future. Affirming a *Chronicle* editorial about not repeating “the mistakes of Silicon Valley,” she writes, “If we demolish East Housing, the future ability of average workers to live in Alameda in threatened.”<sup>405</sup>

The decision by policymakers to build Bayport held dire consequences for residents across the street in the city’s largest apartment complex: the Harbor Island Apartments.

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<sup>405</sup> Irene Dieter, Letters to the Editor, “Save East Housing,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 4, 2000, <<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/letterstoeditor/article/LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR-2782252.php>>, accessed November 18, 2012.



## **11. CAN'T MOVE, WON'T MOVE: LOW-INCOME TENANTS AND THE BATTLE OF HARBOR ISLAND, 2004-2005**

“...there was an organized effort to remove our community from Alameda ...”  
Reginald James, *Indybay*, 2005

On Thursday, July 22, I returned to my home on the first floor of 453 Buena Vista from the College of Alameda to change clothes before opening up the gymnasium at Chipman Middle School. For nearly two years, I worked at the West Alameda Teen Club and organized recreational activities every Tuesday and Thursday evening.

Walking down the hallway of the Harbor Island Apartments' Building 13, I saw what appeared to be an eviction notice on the door of a neighbor. It wasn't the first time I'd seen notices on doors in their apartment complex. My mother moved into the apartments in 1989. We saw many people come and go, often by way of eviction, but never for long-term tenants like the families next door.

When I arrived to my door, a single letter-sized flier was on our door too. The **“SIXTY DAY NOTICE TO QUIT”** was addressed to my mother and I from the Fifteen Asset Management, LLC. Group. “Your tenancy is hereby terminated...”

We had sixty days to move. “What?” I thought. I called my mother who was at work to tell her about the notification. After our conversation, I entered the house, took the flier down, and sat it on small table near the door. I walked down the hallway, out of the building, outside the blue iron gates, and crossed Poggi St to open up the gym. Many of the youth who came to the gym also lived in the apartments (we affectionately called

the “B.V.s”, short for Buena Vistas). Few people at the gym knew what was going on. But our lives and the very fabric of our neighborhood would be soon changed forever.<sup>406</sup>

The mass displacement of Buena Vista residents finished what the AHA started in the 1950s and what Gersten Company continued in the 1980s: the removal of African Americans from Alameda. This chapter examines the factors that led to the displacement of hundreds of Black and low-income families in Alameda, how tenants resisted displacement and criticized Alameda’s exclusionary land use policies and this episode’s impact on the Alameda’s schools, neighborhoods, and the island’s Black community.

### **From Bridgeport to Harbor Island**

The Harbor Island Apartments have lived multiple lives. Initially constructed as the Buena Vista Park Apartments in 1964 and 1965, the apartments were formerly the site of the Chipman Housing projects. After ongoing complaints and a lawsuit for housing discrimination, the Buena Vista Apartments became a source of controversy when the Gersten Company converted the apartments from subsidized to market rate rents. (See Chapter 9: Tenants vs. Alameda). In 1996, the Gersten Company filed for bankruptcy. Bank of American later sold the property to the Florida-based 15 Group.

The new owners made a few initial changes to the apartments. They painted the blue buildings an orangish-beige and changed the name from Bridgeport to Harbor Island, although still a maritime theme. In 2000, the owners erected metal gates and bars around the complex. Over the next eight years, the out-of-state slumlords would allow the property to deteriorate. The public health department closed the pool in 2001. Vacancies had averaged less than 10 percent from 1999 and began to rise in 2002. Benches and play

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<sup>406</sup> As a resident of the Buena Vista Apartments, I choose to incorporate my own personal experience in this chapter for additional historical authenticity.

structures were slowly removed or allowed to decay without replacement. Soon, the formerly green grass began to resemble the dilapidated beige buildings. With the closure of the city's LinOaks Motel in early 2004, due to systematic neglect by the Fifteen Group, the B.V.s (Harbor Island) became known as Alameda's "ghetto."<sup>407</sup>

Suspensions about redevelopment and the impact on the existing community continued to grow. Early in 2004, the city's Community and Economic Development Department surveyed the neighborhood and held a charrette at Woodstock Park to get residents' suggestions for improving the neighborhood. The city worked with the Alameda Boys and Girls Club to hire teenagers to go door-to-door surveying their neighbors. Many residents in the Buena Vistas and other larger apartment complex were skeptical about the survey, especially the first question: "Does living in a racially, socially and economically mixed community create problems for residents?" Although Renewed HOPE had also initiated a survey earlier this year, this city funded one culminated with the charrette and a report on physical improvements for the West End.<sup>408</sup>

### **Alameda's 2004 Section 8 Crisis**

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<sup>407</sup> The final tenants at the LinOaks Motel—a 1960s era 50-unit motel—moved out in January to make room for the new Main Library. Susan Fuller, "LinOaks Motel tenants make way for library," *AJ*, January 12, 2004, online at Alamedainfo.com, < [http://alamedainfo.com/linoaks\\_motel\\_news\\_story.htm](http://alamedainfo.com/linoaks_motel_news_story.htm)>, accessed April 2013. Vacancy rate from *City of Alameda v. FG Managing Member, Inc.*, No. C 04-04010 WHA, United States District Court, Northern District California, October 26, 2004.

<sup>408</sup> From October 2002-August 2007, I was employed by the Alameda Boys and Girls Club. I supervised the teenagers who did neighborhood outreach and canvassing. Also, "West Alameda Improvement Survey" 2004, CD in possession of author, City of Alameda. I also joined Renewed HOPE in 2003 and briefly served as a board member.

Alameda faced numerous challenges on the housing front in 2004. In January, after years of complaints about raw sewage, leaky roofs, broken elevators and other fire hazards, the AHA announced it would not allow Section 8 tenants to rent at Harbor Island.<sup>409</sup>

Yet the Section 8 crisis would go far beyond Harbor Island. President Bush proposed cutting \$1 billion in funding. Nearly 200 housing authorities in 35 states experienced issues due to Congressional cuts. Housing activists said the funds had been diverted from HUD to the Department of Homeland for Security.” In Alameda, 14 percent of Section 8 clients—over 250 families—would lose their vouchers. Protesters packed AHA and City Council meetings and later hit the streets.<sup>410</sup>

On June 25, Section 8 tenants and supporters gathered at Jackson Park at Encinal and Park Ave on the East End of Alameda for a march to city hall. Protesters held signs reading, “Save our families!” “Who has the money or the means to move to Eureka or Fresno!” and “Save our families” and marched on Park Street. Banging pots and pans with wooden spoons, the group chanted, “We don’t need the hate, we want the Section 8” and “No Justice No Peace/No Housing No Peace.” (For photo, see Image 17).<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Susan Fuller, “Violation-plagued complex loses section 8 status,” *AJ*, January 10, 2004; Kristin Bender, “Alameda agency bars rental complex,” *OT*, February 15, 2004, excerpt online, <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-6978036.html>>.

<sup>410</sup> On national impact of Section 8 cuts, see Susan McDonough, “Island not alone in fight to house poor,” *OT*, July 17, 2004. “Section 8, Affordable Housing Under Attack,” *Mahtin’s Blog*, <<http://mahtin.blogspot.com/2004/07/section-8-affordable-housing-under.html>>, July 25, 2004, Tiny, “San Francisco Families protest Bush’s Section 8 defunding,” *Poor News Network, Indybay*, July 18, 2004, <<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/07/18/16891801.php>>, “HUD Secretary denies policies cause evictions”, June 25, 2004, <<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/06/25/16867961.php>>. Also, Lynda Carson, “Stealing from the poor, the Section 8 Scandal,” *Indybay*, July 10, 2004, <<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/07/10/16884421.php>>, also published in *Street Spirit*, <<http://www.thestreetspirit.org/August/carson.htm>>, accessed April 13, 2013. Note: Lynda Carson is long-time journalist and affordable housing advocate.

<sup>411</sup> I attended this protest with my childhood friend and fellow 453 Buena Vista resident Matthew Richard, as well as College of Alameda BSU member Josh Clemmons. Richards and I can be seen wearing “510 Alameda The Island City” t-shirts while marching in Image 17. I am holding the bullhorn. See also “No peace in the streets,” *Poor Magazine*, August 14, 2004, <<http://www.poormagazine.org/node/1596>>, accessed April 13, 2013.

The group later protested at City Hall and even the homes of Alameda Mayor Beverly Johnson and AHA Executive Director Michael Pucci.

Initially, Pucci told residents nothing could be done to help them. After pressure from tenants and advocates, Pucci later traveled to Washington, DC and, on July 13, spoke before a Congressional Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity. He shared the story of Malika Nasirudin—also one of the protest leaders—who told the city council about the challenges her son faced in school due to stress of losing their housing assistance:

She said, “I don’t want to port out to another county that is getting ready to endure the same hardships...the uncertainty is physically and mentally draining for me and my family. My son’s social behavior is declining. He hesitates to make new friends in Alameda. He likes it so much, it’s hard to lose good friends and that moving around is not fund.”

In addition to sharing a flier made by protests, Pucci also shared the story of Anthony, a single father of a teenage son who would not only lose his housing if he lost his Section 8 voucher, but also the custody of his son. With 106 other families at risk, he pleaded for an increase in housing assistance. He added that Alameda may have been first to have the issue, but would not be the last.<sup>412</sup>

On July 20, tenants gathered on City Hall steps to protest on behalf of the other 100 families who had not received funding assistance. Instead, Pucci came with a media release and announced the AHA reinstated every voucher. After reviewing their books with HUD while in the nation’s Capitol, it turned out AHA had been shorted \$650,000. In addition to extra funds from the feds, the City and the AHA diverted other funding

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<sup>412</sup> Michael Pucci, “Testimony of Michael T. Pucci, Executive Director of Housing Authority of the City of Alameda,” Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, July 13, 2004, Washington, D.C., transcript by Alameda Housing Authority, in possession of author, with appendix, flier, “How do I tell my children they’re going to be homeless?” by Campaign for Renters Rights and Section 8 Tenants’ Union.

towards the vouchers. While the group celebrated that victory, another housing crisis would occur days later.<sup>413</sup>

### ***Harbor Island Tenants Fight Back***

Harbor Island tenants received notices of 30, 60 and 90 days to move, depending on how long they'd lived in the apartments or if they received Section 8. After receiving notices to move, tenants mobilized. On a chilly Saturday morning, July 31, tenants gathered near the BBQ pit and benches near south of the pool between buildings 13, 14 and 18. The overcast day reflected the fear and uncertainty of residents. The meeting moved to Chipman Middle School's gymnasium. A microphone was setup at half court on the north side of the gym, near the wooden stage, with chairs set-up in a semi-circle. Over 125 people gathered. Although the crowd was predominantly African American, and included many Filipinos, Latinos, Arabs and residents of other nationalities attended. Local politicians including Councilman Tony Daysog and Beresford Bingham, the first Black school board member, came and pledged their support. Local housing attorneys attended as well. The group resolved to turn out to the August 2 City Council meeting to seek assistance.<sup>414</sup>

Harbor Island residents packed the August 2 meeting demanding officials take action. Residents complained about code violations and health hazards. Many blamed the city council and city staff for failing to enforce city codes. Residents also complained that

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<sup>413</sup> Pucci, "Testimony of Michael T. Pucci," Alameda, Calif: Tenants win battle to keep Section 8," *Workers World*, August 5, 2004, <<http://www.workers.org/ww/2004/alameda0805.php>>, Susan McDonough, "Island not alone in fight to house poor," *OT*, July 17, 2004.

<sup>414</sup> The alternative website *Alameda Report* referred to Bayport's sound wall as "the apartheid wall surrounding Bayport, a wall designed to shield upscale owners from traffic noise and a view of Harbor Island's obvious poverty." The publication quotes one renter as saying, "You got \$800,000 houses across the street. Who wants to look over here, every other night the police is here, the ambulance, fire trucks? They pay too much money to look at 'ghetto'." In "Harbor Island evicts its tenants," *Alameda Report*, July 31, 2004, < <http://www.alamedareport.org/justicetopics.html>>.

a “Harbor Island Task Force” had been set up by the city to address code violations, but not residents had been aware or involved. One tenant had moved in July 1 and had 30 days to move, per California law. Assistant City Manager Paul Benoit said the city was working with the property owners for a more “humanistic” solution. “We’d like to see the facility upgraded, but at the same time ... there’s got to be a better way.” Councilman Daysog called the evictions gentrification “with an ugly face.” Said Daysog, “This is an exercise in greed at the expense of all those families there.” Residents held up signs that read, “Can’t Move, Won’t Move: Stop the Evictions.”<sup>415</sup>

Pressure led the owners to meet with residents. The showdown between 15 Group owners and tenants occurred on August 10, when hundreds of tenants packed the Woodstock Elementary School cafeteria to confront the owners. Mark and Ian Sanders, along with their legal representative Mark Hartney, shared their plans for the property at a forum moderated by local consultant Barbara Price. “These are old buildings and they’re at the point in their lifecycle where they need a very comprehensive renovation plan,” Ian Sanders said.<sup>416</sup>

The Sanders did offer some concession. After a meeting with city officials and three tenants the previous week, the Sanders brothers offered additional relocation assistance for residents, originally \$250 plus tenants deposits. “As a result of some of the feedback we’ve already received, we’re ready to take concrete steps to help with the transition,” Mark Sanders said. “We will be paying a \$750 per unit moving stipend.” Many audience members erupted in laughter. “What you’re offering, in terms of \$700,

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<sup>415</sup> Susan McDonough, “Hundreds of poor Island families kicked out,” *OT*, July 31, 2004.

<sup>416</sup> “The Battle of Harbor Island,” excerpt 1 from *Civic Unity: Five Years in the West End of Alameda*, Luna Productions, <<https://vimeo.com/12085156>>, accessed April 3, 2013. The Harbor Island Tenants Association selected the author to attend the meeting along with Modessa Henderson and Delores Guyton.

it's an insult, MUNI bus driver and resident Victor Grayson, Sr., said. "Because \$700 doesn't buy you anything!" Another woman, an elderly European senior citizen with disabilities said she'd just spent money to improve her apartment. "That's my home. I can't move, she said. "And my deposit when I moved here was \$90. I cannot move."

Residents attempted to appeal to the owner's sense of humanity, and shared their fears of being homeless, the challenges of moving while having health complications, and concerns for children in the neighborhood and their schooling being disrupted.

"How long have you been in the practice of destroying communities, creating homelessness and turning children's lives upside down? Is that a pattern you are familiar with and therefore you have no emotional response to it?," asked Lorraine Lilley, a leader of the Harbor Island Tenants Association. "You can talk all day long on a legal level, but as a human being, do you operate from any sort of moral stance?"

Perhaps the most rousing speech of the day came from former Harbor Island resident Lester Dixon, then living in the Esperanza housing. His statement on the diversity and tenacity of tenants received a rousing applause:

Take a look at the people in this room. You are not ever going to find a group of people as diverse as what you have here. We have Whites, we have Blacks, we have Latins, we have Asians, we have Africans from the motherland. We have Arabs, we have Muslims, we have Jews, we have Christians. We have non-English speaking people. But I'm here because these are my neighbors, these are my friends and they're a part of me. So when you hurt one of us, you hurt all of us. This is all about our community, and that's what we're all about. So I'm just saying, look at these people. Look at the human side. Show some compassion. And work with us. If you don't work with us, we're gone fight you anyway!<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> "The Battle of Harbor Island," excerpt 1 from Civic Unity: Five Years in the West End of Alameda," Luna Productions, <<https://vimeo.com/12085156>>, accessed April 3, 2013.



The owners held a rental assistance fair, which advertised hotdogs and beverages, and stated they would help residents to relocate.<sup>418</sup>

### ***City of Alameda v. Fifteen Group***

Like previous political housing battles in Alameda, the Harbor Island case became a legal battle. Unlike Guyton and Henderson or Renewed HOPE suing the city, the City of Alameda sued Fifteen Group. On September 30, the city filed a federal suit against Fifteen Group for unfair business practices to stop the evictions. The city also claimed the displacement from Harbor island would increase homelessness in the city, thus draining city funds for services and other resources.<sup>419</sup>

On October 14, the city and attorney Mark Hartney appeared before U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup. The city presented pages of testimony from 24 tenants who feared being homeless. The city stated as many as 60 were at risk. Hartney responded that all but nine of the 24 had moved out. He claimed the owners helped with a residential assistance program, and went on to claim that others refused to respond to phone calls or letters. Hartney made disparaging remarks about one tenant, Deborah James. Her testimony led Judge Alsup failed to rule on the injunction, but order Hartney to personally oversee the tenant-assistance program all day on October 15 and October 20. Quoting the Broadway musical, *The Music Man*, Alsup told Hartney, if his claims that tenants were being treated fairly was “a bill of goods then there will be trouble in river city.”<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Author observation.

<sup>419</sup> “We want to be treated with respect,” Lilley said. Tenants called for the renovations to be phased in, allowing tenants to stay during renovations at current rents, Susan McDonough, “Island tenants protests evictions,” *OT*, October 22, 2004.

<sup>420</sup> *City of Alameda v. FG Managing Member, Inc.*, No. C 04-04010 WHA, United States District Court, Northern District California, October 26, 2004, online at, < <https://casetext.com/case/city-of-alameda-v-fg->

That trouble never came for Hartney or Fifteen Group. Most tenants did not trust their fates in the hands of one judge and had already begun to move out. Only 156 of the 386 families forced out remained just two weeks before the November 3 move out date. Alsup later ruled the city had no standing as a third party to file for an injunction against the property owners and suggested the lawsuit was solely to save face.<sup>421</sup>

Additionally, Alsup cited AHA executive director's July 30 document, "Status of Harbor Island Apartments and Section 8 Tenants", in which "Mr. Pucci expressed his approval for the defendants' planned renovation." Pucci stated "[r]enovating this complex will benefit the neighborhood and the community." And with so many Section 8 tenants being displaced by renovation, Pucci stated:

[w]ith the temporary closure of Harbor Island, Section 8 tenants will be dispersed throughout the city, thus deconcentrating poverty in this part of the city. History has proven that this will benefit the neighborhood and the Section 8 tenants.<sup>422</sup>

Alsup said the city was "long on rhetoric and short on legal support" in their arguments, and concluded, "A cynic might conclude that this lawsuit has more to do with local politics than the law" as he denied the injunction. Harbor Island tenants would have to go. Alsup called the complex's program "more generous than the law requires."<sup>423</sup>

Moving out and finding another apartment within Alameda was not as easy for African Americans as Pucci may have suggested. A week before the court date, Sentinel

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managing-member>, accessed April 3, 2013; Lynda Carson, "Mass eviction deadline nears," *Indybay*, October 21, 2004, < <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/10/21/17007631.php>>.

<sup>421</sup> *City of Alameda v. FG Managing Member, Inc.*, also Henry K. Lee, "Judge OKs evictions during renovation," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 2004 < <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/ALAMEDA-Judge-OKs-evictions-during-renovation-2678183.php>>, and Brian Higgins, "West Side Story," *Alameda Magazine*, January-February 2005, < <http://www.alamedamagazine.com/Alameda-Magazine/January-February-2005/West-Side-Story/>>, accessed April 3, 2013; Lynda Carson, "Mass eviction deadline nears," *Indybay*, October 21, 2004, < <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/10/21/17007631.php>>.

<sup>422</sup> *City of Alameda v. FG Managing Member, Inc.*

<sup>423</sup> Henry K. Lee, "Judge OKs evictions during renovation."

Fair Housing, a fair housing organization, released a survey that showed widespread racial discrimination against African Americans in Alameda. “As many of Alameda’s renters search for housing in the City following the recent mass evictions at Harbor Island Apartments, housing discrimination appears to add an additional and devastating burden to the African American home seeker.” Sentinel found racial discrimination 44 percent of the time that African American apartment applicants sought housing on the island. “The racial discrimination taking place in Alameda does not bode well for the tenants of Harbor island that want to remain in their diverse community,” Delores Willis-Guyton said. “We have diversity here on the West End of Alameda, and once it’s gone, it’s gone. There is not other spot in Alameda with such diversity, and the Sanders brothers forced relocation scheme is not good for the future of this city.” White councilwoman Barbara Kerr suggested the “obnoxious” attitude of renters could’ve been the reason renters received certain responses. Lilley, who since moved from the apartments, said “Not only are we being pushed out of this neighborhood, they want to move us completely out of the community (Alameda).”<sup>424</sup>

On November 3, the day after the “reelection” of President George Bush, Harbor Island families had to move out. Observing this coincidence, in a documentary film later made that featured the evictions, I said, “It is a bitter-ass day. I mean, Bush got re-elected ... I gotta get the heck out of here.”<sup>425</sup>

One of the last tenants to hold out and resist was Modessa Henderson. As one of the last two tenants to hold old until 2005, she share wildlife returning to the complex.

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<sup>424</sup> Quotes from Lynda Carson, “Mass eviction deadline nears,” *Indybay*, October 21, 2004, <<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2004/10/21/17007631.php>>. Additional quotes in, Susan McDonough, “Report finds bias in Alameda rentals,” *OT*, October 23, 2004.

<sup>425</sup> Alan Lopez, “Documentary shows tough times on the ‘West End’”, *OT*, February 22, 2008, <[http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci\\_8334106](http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci_8334106)>, April 3, 2013.

However, the site of bluebirds was overshadowed by the emptiness of the absence of children playing and a people displaced. With the new Bayport across the street, many residents feared the worst, she said:

But a lot of my neighbors kinda felt they didn't know how much longer they would be here. When you see the million dollar homes across the street ... Atlantic is like the borderline, the other side of the tracks. That's how we felt with the different homes being built. But we didn't think they was going to do it in such as fashion as, 'Just leave!'

Henderson, co-plaintiff in the 1989 suit against the City of Alameda, goes on to share how Harbor Island both displaced low-income housing, but also the largest population of African Americans on the island:

It's a two-fold, because this was one of the largest complexes in Alameda, but this is the only complex that rented to African Americans. So, not only did this community disappear. But the largest, Black/African American population was eliminated too. So it's more than fighting eviction for me. It's called gentrification. When you see that the area's changing... I've lived long enough, I've seen this before. I wish I only understood it as that, "Oh, I'm going to have to move." How far are they going to push poor people out? How far are they going to keep pushing? The community's been lost. The cultures are being lost. People's lives are being messed up. I won't even go into the personal stories. It's a lot of tragedy. Some people are living in overcrowded situations. Some people ... I mean, it's been tragic. But I been here before, I've seen it before, 17 years ago. We lost some people. Some people died behind it. A lot of couples broke up. You know. Families broke up. I know some families where the children are split up, they're not together. It's a lot of tragedy. For what?<sup>426</sup>

The tragedy Henderson describes took not only an economic toll, but also social and psychological toll on residents. She explains the impact on families divided because they could not afford to stay together, or divided by the street that caused relationships to be ruptured. The mass tenancy terminations were also associated with two deaths: a

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<sup>426</sup> "Modessa's Story," *Civic Unity: Five Years in the West End of Alameda*, <<http://www.alamedamagazine.com/Alameda-Magazine/January-February-2005/West-Side-Story/>>, Luna Productions. Full film in possession of author.

pregnant woman had a miscarriage, and a Filipino grandmother died of pneumonia-related sickness.<sup>427</sup>

Residents continued to fight at planning board meetings, attempting to block the Fifteen Group's renovation plans, but also by calling for other policies like rent control, just cause eviction, displacement prevention, and even for a study of Measure A. The island's landlord lobby turned out to defeat discussions of each of these propositions, while homeowners came out to discourage any study of the last.<sup>428</sup>

The Harbor Island resident removal also had dire consequences for the school district. Between 1999 and 2006, nearly 899 students left K-12 in Alameda. The resident removal of Harbor Island had nearly as great an impact on schools as the closure of the NAS. Enrollment within the area declined by 543 students. Researchers tracked students who lived in the apartments between fall 2003 and fall 2007 and found just 35 percent forced from the apartments moved elsewhere on the island and 15 percent left the island but stayed in AUSD through inter-district transfer. Thus, 65 percent of all students left Alameda. Thus the majority of these children, predominantly African American, were forced from the island, along with their families.<sup>429</sup>

The school district had already planned to close Woodstock School, across from Esperanza Housing and behind the Atlantic Apartments, and send children across Ralph Appezato (formerly Atlantic Ave) to attend a new school being built in Bayport. Due to the loss of enrollment, the district also closed two additional schools: Miller and

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<sup>427</sup> Retrieved from Indybay, Reginald James, "It's been one year since over 400 families were exiled from Alameda," *Indybay*, November 7, 2005, < <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/11/07/17818381.php> >, accessed November 1, 2012.

<sup>428</sup> Author observation, also, James, "It's been one year...".

<sup>429</sup> John Geluardi, "Alameda evictions could hurt schools," *OT*, August 3, 2004. For full report, see "Enrollment Trends and Forecast for Alameda Unified School District," June 19, 2007, Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc, for AUSD, in possession of author, via AUSD school board member Michael McMahon.

Longfellow Elementary Schools. Miller served children on Alameda Point and in Coast Guard Housing. Longfellow served children in Harbor Island and other parts of the West End not served by Paden or Washington Elementary.

### **New Negro Removal**

In 2005, a year after our family was “evacuated” from Harbor Island, I penned an op-ed published in the *Alameda Sun* and *Alameda Journal* newspapers. I sought to clear “myths and misconceptions about the owners, residents, and the city’s involvement, or lack thereof, in the so-called Harbor Island evictions.” (See Appendix C: Letter to the People of Alameda). The letter discussed the city’s knowledge of code violations and the lack of enforcement, the City’s Development Services survey, the timing of Bayport residents moving in as Harbor Island residents received expulsion notices, the sham rental assistance center provided by Fifteen Group—and the rental assistance check that bounced—as well the stereotyping of residents as criminals, widespread landlord discrimination, and the city’s failure to replace the affordable housing required by the Guyton settlement. Considering that 70 percent of Harbor Island residents identified as Black, the resident removal and banishment from the island served multiple goals.

I believe there was an organized effort to remove our community from Alameda. The fiscal damage to the school district only expedited the agenda to close a West End school within two years time. The removal of the low-income population only served the city’s goal to raise median income. Historically, Alameda housing segregation has placed 30% of Alameda’s 6% African American population in Census Tract 4276; this was a three-month reversal of said trend.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Retrieved from Indybay, Reginald James, “It’s been one year since over 400 families were exiled from Alameda,” *Indybay*, November 7, 2005, < <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/11/07/17818381.php> >, accessed November 1, 2012. I share some of my personal experience and the impact of the Buena Vista tenancy terminations on my self-identity in Reginald James, “Buena Vistas: A Good View of Blackness,” in *Evolution of a Premature Revolutionary*, in possession of author, available online at: < <http://issuu.com/reginaldjames/docs/aas100-memoir-jamesr-2012-booklet> >.

My letter articulated tenant sentiment that our removal was a plan, a plot or a conspiracy. As Henderson also stated, this effort removed affordable housing and Black people from Alameda. City officials met with Fifteen Group monthly between March and July 2004. It is likely that someone on city staff knew about the plans, but did not alert residents. Additionally, Pucci became Fifteen Group's best source of evidence against the city in its quest for an injunction to stop the expulsion. Lastly, the redevelopment of East Housing set the stage for the expulsion of Harbor Island residents. As *Alameda Magazine* wrote in a pro-gentrification article about redevelopment in West Alameda, "Though city officials are loathe to admit it, a significant hurdle in the long-term development plan of a business district ..." when residents of the "crime riddled, low-income Harbor Island apartments" removed residents.<sup>431</sup>

Not only did this "deconcentrate poverty," or rather disperse Black people, it also removed a chunk of affordable housing from the Alameda housing market. This reduction of affordable housing stock impacted other renters across the island. At the time of the so-called "mass evictions," the Harbor Island apartments had become majority Black, working class and poor, with a large segment of immigrants, people with disabilities and elders. The city allowed the apartments to deteriorate. The conditions and exaggerations of crime were then used to justify removing the people from Alameda. In 2010, although the citywide Black population figures stayed relatively stable, over 50 percent of African Americans in Census Tract 4276 had been forced out. Additionally, A

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<sup>431</sup> Brian Higgins, "West Side Story," *Alameda Magazine*, January-February 2005, <<http://www.alamedamagazine.com/Alameda-Magazine/January-February-2005/West-Side-Story/>>, accessed April 3, 2013,

two-bedroom at Harbor Island in 2004 could cost between \$950-\$1,050. As of May 2013, residents at Summerhouse paid a minimum of \$1,400 per month.<sup>432</sup>

My op-ed concluded by calling for an independent study of Measure A and the formation of a citywide tenant's alliance. With rents on the rise, it is inevitable another housing crisis will occur in Alameda. The question is only a matter of when and how will it impact African Americans. "No one in Alameda, or anywhere, should ever have to live in the conditions we did, or be put through an experience such as ours."<sup>433</sup>

Fifteen Group eventually sold the property to L.A.-based Kennedy Wilson. However, the company appears to still be in the business of displacement. As recently as this May of year, Fifteen Group has similar plans in Boyle Heights in Los Angeles. Tenants share similar concerns to Harbor Island residents.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Many people refer to the plight of Harbor Island as evictions or "mass evictions." Residents were not "evicted" in the legal sense of the word, but rather had their tenancy terminated. I instead refer to the displacement experienced by Buena Vista residents as "resident removal," or considering that half of the families likely left the island, "banishment."

<sup>433</sup> Reginald James, "It's been one year since over 400 families were exiled from Alameda," *Indybay*, November 7, 2005, < <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/11/07/17818381.php> >, accessed November 1, 2012.

<sup>434</sup> "Mixed reaction to Boyle Heights apartment complex redevelopment plan," *KPCC*, < <http://www.scpr.org/news/2013/05/03/37104/mixed-reaction-on-boyle-heights-apartment-complex/> >, May 3, 2015.



## **12. #DEFENDJODIE: JODIE RANDOLPH, OCCUPY OAKLAND, AND THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP 1624 FOLEY**

Jodie Randolph bought her home at 1624 Foley St, on Alameda's East End, in 1999. Randolph worked at Mother's Cookies in Oakland at the time and had rented on Alameda's West End for about a decade before. She lost her job when the company moved out of state in 2003. She set up her own accounting firm, but later ran into financial difficulties. She had challenges keeping up the mortgage payments, with its skyrocketing interest. She sold the home to a family member in what she referred to as a "quagmire of events." Randolph attempted to modify her loan in 2004, but the effort fell through. In 2008, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. In the midst of that battle, she approached Saxon Mortgage in 2008, then holder of her lien, but that did not work either. Since then, various "shell companies" affiliated Morgan Stanley moved her loan around, giving her the run around. FV-1 purchased her loan in 2010.

### **Foreclosure Defense on Foley Street**

In March 2012, Randolph received bad news. She would not only have to battle for her house, but her life as well. The breast-cancer survivor had been diagnosed with colon cancer. She also received notice that she no longer owned her home. In October, while out at chemotherapy, an Alameda County Sheriff's deputy and a real estate broker in and changed her locks. Instead of accepting defeat, Randolph called Occupy Oakland's (OO) "Foreclosure Defense Group" (FDG) On Election Day 2012, the group initiated 24-hour foreclosure defense, with activists guarding her house.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Narrative combines author's knowledge of Jodie Randolph—her daughter was my babysitter in the late 1980s—and various news and activist information sources, including: Peter Hegarty, "Alameda woman facing foreclosure turns to Occupy Oakland," *AJ*, November 22, 2012, <[http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_22045982/alameda-woman-facing-foreclosure-turns-occupy-oakland](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_22045982/alameda-woman-facing-foreclosure-turns-occupy-oakland)>, May 5, 2013, Ekene Ikeme, "Occupy Blocking Foley Foreclosure," *AS*, November 15, 2012.

The struggle to “Defend Jodie,” as activists named the campaign, illustrates two issues. Nationally, Randolph was one of thousands of African Americans hit hard by the foreclosure crisis, targeted with predatory loans (so-called “subprime mortgages”). Racially predatory loans aimed at segregated neighborhoods created the massive housing crisis. But in Alameda, Randolph is one of just a few Black homeowners. Although her situation may have been unique on the island, the struggle connected her with the larger mass of Black people fighting racialized capitalism. Secondly, Randolph was just one of a few Black homeowners on the island, a point I further develop in the conclusion.<sup>436</sup>

This chapter looks at the later issue by placing the 1624 Foley Street saga into the historic context and contemporary moment. Unlike past Black housing struggles, the majority of activists were not Black—like Occupy encampments nationwide. Foreclosures were not as prevalent in Alameda, as compared to neighboring Oakland, suggesting the history of racial segregation and targeted predatory loans may have had less of an impact on the island. Still, the lack of Black racial solidarity in this section points to the impact intra-racial class issues as well as the impact of the “deconcentration” of African Americans within specific neighborhoods.

### **‘Foreclosure Free Zone’**

On November 5, OOFDG, the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) along with family and friends went to Bay Area officers to present her demands for a reasonable repurchase plan, including a reduction on her principal. The next day—as

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<sup>436</sup> Nick Carey, “Racial predatory loans fueled U.S. housing crisis,” <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/10/04/us-usa-foreclosures-race-idUSTRE6930K520101004>>, accessed May 2, 2013, “Foreclosure crisis intensified among Blacks: Study,” <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/10/04/post\\_541\\_n\\_749319.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/10/04/post_541_n_749319.html)>, accessed May 2, 2013. On source study and relationship between racial segregation and foreclosures, see Jacob S. Ruch and Douglas S. Massey, “Racial Segregation and the American Foreclosure Crisis,” *American Sociological Review*, 2010, 75(5), 629-651. For Alameda County foreclosure information, see Urban Strategies, <<http://www.urbanstrategies.org/foreclosure/>>.

trucks were to arrive to take her belongings off the property—OOFDG activists arrived at Randolph’s home for foreclosure defense.

The first day was festive with music, snacks, and about two-dozen people on the front yard-seeking volunteers. Activists declared the home and the street a “Foreclosure Free Zone.” Groups also held signs like, “Your home could be next! Rise up,” and “For openings not foreclosures.” Another hand drawn sign read, “Would you steal your mother’s home? Fight Back! Housing is a right!” Organizers canvassed the neighborhood, the Marketplace store across the street, as well as other local grocery stores to raise awareness of Randolph’s situation. Activists hoped to engage more Alameda residents. “**Foreclosure home defense** is a 24/7 operation. Anyone can sign up for a shift,” read a *Defend Jodie Newsletter*, “all you have to do is be willing to keep the door locked if evictors or bank representatives come calling, while you call for backup.” The group also hosted weekly Thursday night movie screenings in the driveway and later a BBQ for home defenders.<sup>437</sup>

Activists’ media campaign included stories in the *Alameda Journal*, *Alameda Sun*, *the San Francisco Bayview Newspaper*, as well as media on Occupy Oakland’s website, Indybay, and the Daily Kos website. The group also arranged text message alerts. The @DefendJodie twitter account and hashtag #DefendJodie also raised awareness of the issue.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Ikeme, “Occupy Blocking Foley Foreclosure,”; “Defend Jodie Newsletter,” spring 2013, in possession of author. The author signed up for weekly Sunday morning shifts at 1624 Foley Street. Special thank you to Brooke and Fred for reaching out to me. I wrote much of my thesis in Randolph’s living room on Sunday mornings this spring. See also, “Jodie’s Story,” <<https://foreclosuredefensegroup.wordpress.com/successes/jodies-story/>>, Occupy Oakland Foreclosure Defense Group. Photos online at, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/danielarauz/10065060014/>>.

<sup>438</sup> Peter Hegarty, “Alameda woman facing foreclosure turns to Occupy Oakland,” *AJ*, November 22, 2012, <[http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_22045982/alameda-woman-facing-foreclosure-turns-occupy-oakland](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_22045982/alameda-woman-facing-foreclosure-turns-occupy-oakland)>, May 5, 2013, Ekene Ikeme, “Occupy Blocking Foley Foreclosure,” *AS*, November 15, 2012. “Defend Jody

Activist also targeted the banks responsible for the foreclosure crisis. The group visited Morgan Stanley on November 20. The 15 protestors holding “Defend Jodie” and “Negotiate now” signs led to a crisis scene. In fear, security shut down the entire building. “Barricades were deployed around the entire edifice, security guards locked down the building and stood ready for what they must have believed was armageddon” [sic]. Later on Day 71, when Randolph met with Morgan Stanley, the bank hired a lawyer to fly up from Southern California. This suggests their tactics had been worked. Activists encouraged the public to call John Sheldon to demand he “Accept Jodie’s offer.” With the chemotherapy and stress of uncertainty, OOFDG provided some comfort to Randolph. “You don’t know from one day to the next what’s going to happen. It’s been quiet here lately, but you don’t know,” she said. The bank came on November 7 and was surprised to see activists inside the house. “I just hope that we can have a dialogue that will come to an amicable agreement. After all, what do they want with my home?”<sup>439</sup>

### **The Death of Jodie Randolph**

Just days after Randolph won her bout against the bank; she lost her battle with cancer. On June 29, the former beauty pageant contestant, owner of J. Randolph & Associates, and Alameda homeowner passed away. On July 11, Randolph’s funeral was held at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Oakland. There, here daughter and pastor

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– November 6, 2012,” [sic], YouTube video, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLIiHx3SdOE>>, Defend Jodie Twitter, <<http://twitter.com/defendjodie>>.

<sup>439</sup> “Defend Jodie Newsletter,”; Hegarty, “Alameda woman facing foreclosure turns to Occupy Oakland.” On bank shutdown, see, jpmasar, “#DefendJodie Day 16. In which we try to deliver a letter to Morgan Stanley but shut down a skyscraper,” *Daily Kos*, <<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/11/21/1163568/--DefendJodie-Day16-In-Which-We-Try-To-Deliver-a-Letter-To-Morgan-Stanley-But-Shut-Down-a-Skyscraper>>, November 21, 2012. Randolph express skepticism with the courts, noting in one video, “The judge is in the bank’s pocket,” in “Defend Jody, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLIiHx3SdOE>>.

thanked OOFDG for their work to Defend Jodie. “I thank God for Occupy Oakland,” said one friend.<sup>440</sup>

One OOFDG wrote the following tribute:

**With Heavy Hearts...**

Our member and friend, Jodie Randolph has won one battle and lost another. As many of you know, Jodie was not only fighting for her home but fighting against cancer. Early Saturday morning that fight ended when Jodie passed away. We will announce details for the memorial service as we get them.

But in these last months, though, she knew that together we had won the fight for her home. After 8 months of defending the home and fighting Morgan-Stanley, we have won on every demand and the ink is practically dry on paperwork securing the house. The home now passes to her family, the deal stands - and indeed stands as testament to her fierce fighting spirit.

These past few months a celebration was being planned to mark the win and reunite all who had a hand in this fight, who took shifts at the house, who called and wrote, who canvassed and flyered, who shut down Morgan Stanley's offices in San Francisco and Oakland, and locked down a fifty-two story skyscraper with Jodie. At the behest of the family, in addition to the memorial, the celebration will still be held. It will be more than a celebration of resistance and a fight won; it will be a celebration of Jodie, her life and spirit.

Details to follow as we figure them out.

Rest In Power, Jodie.

Much love to the Randolph family,

In solidarity,

Foreclosure Defense Group<sup>441</sup>

The eight-month struggle to Defend Jodie highlights several issues. First, the foreclosure crisis that impacted Blacks (and Latinos) disproportionately nationwide also hit at least one island resident. Randolph. Although most of Alameda’s past housing struggles impacted multiple residents, this instant only included one. No massive Black solidarity took place and most activists were white. I suggest three primary factors contributed to this. First, the spatial separation between Alameda’s Black underclass on the West End

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<sup>440</sup> “We are sad to say Jodie Randolph died on Sat, 6/29. But not before her home was saved!” the group tweeted, <<https://twitter.com/defendjodie/status/351892394997850113>>.

<sup>441</sup> jpmassar, “We can no longer #DefendJodie. She has passed. (The evil that banks do, however...), <<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/07/02/1220524/-We-Can-No-Longer-DefendJodie-She-Has-Passed-The-Evil-That-Banks-Do-However#>>.

prevented solidarity. Additionally, there was a social class distinction between Black homeowner and renter may have allowed many to feel like it was not their issue, or that their own problems took precedence. Whereas in the past, Black residents lived near each other and had the sense of being all in the same boat—despite the fact that Randolph used to rent on Central Ave and later on Fifth Street. Thus the dispersion of Alameda’s Black population reduces opportunities to organize in unity and solidarity. Lastly, Measure A has reduced the capacity of African Americans to purchase homes in Alameda. The artificial scarcity has increased housing costs. Many who would like to move to the island likely would have to take predatory loans. It is also possible that Blacks seeking home loans to move to Alameda have been denied.<sup>442</sup>

However, there is one positive sign on race relations in Alameda. Besides the fact that Randolph lived on the East End, east of Park Street and many of her neighbors were white, many also came out to support her in protests.<sup>443</sup>

Still, Randolph’s home has been passed down to her daughter and grandson, a victory for a Black Alamedan. Still, Black homeownership rates lag behind whites and Asians on the island, due to the history of discriminatory housing policies and practices, by local and federal officials, by realtors and investors, and by white and non-Black homeowners.

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<sup>442</sup> In the fall of 2011, the author participated in Occupy Oakland as an ethnographer and photojournalist. It is also possible that the reputation of Occupy Oakland as being unclean or a “white thing” may have prevented many from participating.

<sup>443</sup> However, it should be noted that a few other Black families lived around the corner on Buena Vista, suggesting that the area may have some minute racial clustering.

## CONCLUSION:

### **‘PUSHED OUT’: THE RECURRING DISPLACEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS RESIDENTS FROM ALAMEDA AND THE ISLAND’S GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION**

On July 17, 2012, the Alameda City Council approved new zoning rules that would allow the development of multifamily housing in Alameda for the first time since 1973.

Renewed Hope housing advocates had been pushing for a look at Measure A for at least a decade. At the meeting, Councilman Doug deHaan casted the lone dissenting “no” vote in the 4-1 decision. He complained that “the community” had not been notified about the issue. The city had delayed submitted housing elements in the past, while the state’s housing officials had not approved others. City staff warned the city that failure to adopt a new housing element could lead to potential lawsuits. “If we go to court, they’ll compare Measure A and state law, and that’s the only thing the court will look at. And that’s a problem for us,” said Alameda’s African American Mayor Marie Gilmore, who casted a vote of approval. “We will lose Measure A for the entire Island forever.”<sup>444</sup>

Housing advocates viewed the vote as a victory. Alameda had not only adopted a housing element to address housing needs for the first time since 2003—although that plan was flawed—but it also ended its 39-year ban on apartment buildings. The city chose not to adopt a new housing element because Measure A conflicted with state laws. “It’s been a long fight, but we’ve finally achieved a great victory for all Alamedans,” said Laura Thomas, president of Renewed Hope. She added, “We’ll now be able to build new sustainable housing for young people and hardworking families forced out of town over

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<sup>444</sup> Michele Ellson, “Council okays plan allowing multifamily housing,” *The Alamedan*, July 18, 2012, <<http://www.thealamedan.org/news/council-okays-plan-allowing-multifamily-housing>>, “Affordable Housing Advocates Claim Victory in City of Alameda,” <<http://www.publicadvocates.org/press-releases/affordable-housing-advocates-claim-victory-in-city-of-alameda>>, July 5, 2012.

the last decade by city policies favoring construction of large-single family homes with prices too often inflated by real estate booms.” Public Advocates, which sued the city of Pleasanton in 2010, provided legal support to Renewed Hope. In November 2011, Renewed Hope send a letter demanding the city update its Housing Element and zone for affordable housing. To avoid a lawsuit, the city relented and released a new draft Housing Element in 2012. “Alameda has avoided its obligation to join its neighbors in providing for affordable housing for far too long,” said Michael Rawson, now director of the Public Interest Law Project.” Fortunately, this City Council has stepped up and taken its responsibility for its regional obligations.”<sup>445</sup>

Yet opposition was already brewing. Former city council member Karin Lucas complained that the vote would lead to more development. “I was on the council for three terms, and we worked hard to uphold Measure A. We were able to uphold it for 40 years. You are the first council that proposes to undermine it,” she said. “If you want to change it, put it on the ballot and let us vote on it.” Additionally, the East Bay Regional Parks announced this past November its plan to sue over the rezoning approved by the state. Many island residents are now mobilizing in opposition to housing at the site.<sup>446</sup>

As this controversy stirs, a recent survey also notes the presence of racial housing discrimination. According to the Social Services and Human Relations Board, survey respondents experienced widespread discrimination from landlords and property managers. Whites reported the most discrimination, 30 percent, followed by Blacks and Asians among whom 15 percent reported discrimination. However, when accounting for

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<sup>445</sup> Public Advocates, “Alameda ends 39-year ban on apartment buildings,” <<http://www.publicadvocates.org/alameda-housing-element-compliance>>.

<sup>446</sup> Michele Ellson, “Breaking: Park district sues city over housing plans,” *TA*, <<http://thealamedan.org/news/breaking-park-district-sues-city-over-housing-plans>>.



each group's proportion of the population, the disparities across racial lines are telling. Whites were half the population, according to the 2010 census. Asians were 31.2 percent. African Americans were just 6.4 percent of the population. African Americans, mixed race people and American Indians reported more discrimination than their proportion of the population. Race was the most common basis for discrimination (29%), followed by family status (15%), age (11%), color (10%), gender (8%), sexual orientation (6%), disability (5%), national origin (4%), and religion (2%)."<sup>447</sup>

Racial housing discrimination continues on the island of Alameda. African Americans continue to be pushed out of Alameda, yet the history has been marginalized.

### **Recurring Displacement of African Americans**

Redevelopment efforts in West Alameda consistently displace African Americans and other low-income residents. With exclusionary zoning prohibiting the construction of multi-family housing, a "chain of exclusion" exists that prevents both low-income and African American residents from residing within Alameda. Finally, many of those African Americans living in Alameda find themselves in older housing stock, exploited by landlords while the city fails to enforce housing standards. These substandard conditions are then used to justify the expulsion of African American residents from the city. This pattern of prejudice illustrates widespread contempt for low-income, African American renters.<sup>448</sup>

Segregation and displacement are a major part of the story of African Americans in Alameda. In addition to the racial restrictive covenants and redlining of the 1920s and

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<sup>447</sup> City of Alameda's Social Service Human Relations Board Community Needs Assessment, October 25, 2012, online at < <http://dasquarebear.tumblr.com/post/42843510256/housing-discrimination-2012-alameda>>.

<sup>448</sup> Much of this section comes from a recent essay by the author. "Pushed out": Redevelopment and the Recurring Displacements of African American residents in Alameda, California, 1964-2004.

1930s, it is likely that a Black family's property was seized to build an electrical substation on Grand Street. This event is one of many ongoing incidents of Blacks being displaced for redevelopment projects or due to so-called renewal efforts.

The first housing project built was the Woodstock Village in 1941. This project featured 200 small bungalow style homes. In 1948, when the federal government planned to sell off surplus projects, the residents purchased housing in a cooperative. The housing stands to this day. This project was built while military still segregated. To this date, few if any Blacks have lived in Woodstock Homes. The Woodstock Defense Project contrasted sharply with later housing projects. A total of nine projects built, housing over 20,000 people. The majority of African Americans were segregated into projects north of Atlantic Ave and Buena Vista. In the 1950s and 1960s, postwar demolition of wartime projects led to mass displacement of African Americans. The vast majority could not find housing elsewhere in Alameda due to widespread housing discrimination.

*Postwar Housing Swap: New buildings, less Units*

Two patterns emerged in Alameda in relation to low-cost housing in the 1970s. The first began in the 1950s: demolition of housing units with fewer replacements than originals. Esperanza replaced Western Projects, a project Ms. Tatum stated she could not move in, likely due to AHA segregation policies.<sup>449</sup> While Western had 168 units, Esperanza had 120. When a portion of Makassar Strait Village was torn down and to be replaced, nearby neighbors complained of density. Instead of 78 units, AHA constructed 50. That portion of Makassar originally had 100 units.<sup>450</sup> The second trend, AHA

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<sup>449</sup> "What kind of country is this?" excerpt from Mabel Tatum speech, *The Movement*, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee of California, July 1966.

<sup>450</sup> Kostura and Minor, "Alameda Housing Authority, 18.

preferred to construct senior citizen housing instead of low-cost housing.<sup>451</sup> Measure A allows for the construction of senior citizen housing.

### *Makassar Straits*

By 1978, Makassar Straits became the “slums of Alameda,” according to executive director Richard Marquardt. Tenants buildings decaying, rat and roach infested, but it was the only place many Black and Filipino residents could find housing. According to bureaucrats, the city lacked the resources to repair the projects. “We’re being forced to operate a slum,” Marquardt said. Since wartime housing was to be demolished in 1972, AHA refused to spend money to renovate or repair old buildings, especially those that would be demolished in the near future.<sup>452</sup>

To prevent closure, tenants formed the Makassar Straits Tenants Union. Working with the Legal Aid Society of Alameda County, residents kept the projects open through lawsuits and later state legislation through 1979. However, residents viewed the AHA’s collection of rents without improvements to their housing as exploitation, similar to what occurred in Estuary Projects.<sup>453</sup> Many Makassar residents refused to move because they could not find housing elsewhere in Alameda and did not want to be exiled for the island. According to Willoris Childs, who lived in Makassar 18 years, “You can’t find a place with a (rent subsidy) certificate. In Alameda a landlord won’t rent to you if you are poor, and black.” Additionally, AHA bureaucracy also prevented tenants from moving.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Lois Pryor, “Room for Hope,” oral history with Alameda Library. <[http://www.alamedastories.org/stories\\_pryor.html](http://www.alamedastories.org/stories_pryor.html)>, [Accessed July 1, 2013].

<sup>452</sup> Elaine Reed, “Cheap rent, but roaches go with it,” *Oakland Tribune*, October 26, 1978

<sup>453</sup> Reed, “Cheap rent,”; Brenda Payton, “Makassar: decaying refuge for poor,” *Oakland Tribune*, February 10, 1980, A1.

<sup>454</sup> Payton, “Makassar: decaying refuge for poor.”

On February 5, 1980, a five-year-old black boy named Reginald Williams was kidnapped from the projects and strangled by a white woman. The event increased scrutiny of Makassar Straits and hastened its demolition and also heightened accusations of racism within Alameda.<sup>455</sup> Williams's funeral was held in East Oakland at a church founded in Alameda that relocated to Oakland in the 1950s, as did much of its congregation.<sup>456</sup> Many residents of Makassar Straits relocated outside of Alameda, to East Oakland. Those who remained moved to Parrot Village, Eagle Village, and Esperanza Housing, existing Alameda public housing complexes, as well as a privately-owned by publicly subsidized complex: the Buena Vista Park Apartments.

#### *Buena Vista Park*

Although Black residency limited by discrimination, but mid-1980s, much of the Buena Vista Park population was African American. In 1987, Alameda tenants at the Buena Vista Park Apartments—then the largest private for-profit apartment complex in the East Bay—protested the conversion of their subsidized rental units to market rate housing. Residents negotiated with the owner to phase in the rental increases and many low-income tenants later received subsidies. Many did not. Unable to find housing elsewhere on the Island, two residents sued the City of Alameda for discriminatory housing policies. The court recognizing that the city's housing policies discriminated against the poor and the city failed to comply with state housing laws requiring the city to provide a share of

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<sup>455</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> Denise Holt and Don DeMain, "Throngs share grief at Reginald's funeral," *Oakland Tribune*, February 12, 1980, A1.

affordable housing. A settlement granting an exception to Measure A to replace low-cost housing units lost by the conversion; however, those units have not been replaced.<sup>457</sup>

### *Redeveloping West Alameda*

The closure of the Alameda Naval Air Station turned the West End of Alameda into a ghost town. The NAS consisted of one-third of the entire island, provided many jobs, and housed many workers on Navy land. The largest parcel of housing was East Housing. Instead of salvaging the 590-unit East Housing for working-class families, the city decided to build 500 market-rate homes. Two housing advocacy groups, Renewed Hope Housing Advocates and Arc Ecology sued the city. The city expected the single-family homes to sell for upwards of \$400,000. Using a developer would allow the site to be remediated and provide infrastructure and, as city councilman Tony Daysog said, “begin to raise the revenues and create a tax base to deal with these costs.”

Housing advocates warned that gentrification and displacement would occur. Tom Matthews, president of Renewed Hope and a former AHA executive director said, “We feel strongly that the city is not taking seriously concerns about gentrification on the West End, the fact that 20,000 new jobs will be created (during the next 20 years) and only 3,000 housing units built, and that housing that’s being developed is way out of the reach of working and middle-income families.” According to Renewed Hope, the city could renovate East Housing and construct townhouse to be sold for less money. The city went

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<sup>457</sup> Reginald James, “Tenants vs. Alameda: How low-income tenants challenged housing discrimination in Alameda,” (paper presented at the annual Legal Studies Undergraduate Symposium, Department of Legal Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, April 26, 2013). Also, see <http://tenantsvsalameda.blogspot.com>.

with the Catellus developer's project: Bayport.<sup>458</sup> Renewed Hope's lawsuit led to the requirement that 25 percent of housing at Bayport be affordable.<sup>459</sup>

In 2004, after years of construction, the Bayport development opened on the former site of East Housing. One month after the first residents began moving into the million-dollar homes, residents across the old railroad tracks on Atlantic Ave, in the Harbor Island Apartments, received notices to vacate. Surrounded by redevelopment at Bayport to the north, Webster Street commercial "revitalization" to the East, and Alameda Point redevelopment to the north, families told they would have to move so an out-of-state property owner, the Fifteen Group, could renovate.

Tenants protested, eventually convincing the city of Alameda to file a federal injunction to prevent homelessness. The judge called the suit "politically motivated" but did require the Fifteen Group to provide rental assistance. Although, the check received by my mother bounced.<sup>460</sup> The tenancy terminations pushed African Americans out of their neighborhood and out of Alameda. According to data gathered by the school district, over 65 percent of children left the school district, suggesting that nearly two-thirds or more of the predominantly African American and immigrant, low-income and working class

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<sup>458</sup> Janine DeFao, "Alameda Sued Over Naval Base Conversion/2 groups fighting for affordable housing," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 25, 2000, <<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Alameda-Sued-Over-Naval-Base-Conversion-2-3304434.php>>, [Accessed July 2, 2013].

<sup>459</sup> "Affordable housing week 2013 kickoff event and celebration," East Bay Housing Organization, May 10, 2013, <<http://ebho.org/eventslist/icalrepeat.detail/2013/05/10/85/-/affordable-housing-week-2013-kickoff-event-and-celebration>>, [Accessed July 1, 2013].

<sup>460</sup> I provide this first hand account, not as a narrative, but a retelling of events, not filtered through news sources and other documents. Reginald James, "'Can't Move, Won't Move', How Low-Income Tenants in Alameda, California Fought Displacement from Affordable Housing, 2004-2005," (paper presented at the annual Multicultural Community Center Research Symposium, Multicultural Community Center, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, May 2, 2013). For a direct account one year after our displacement, see Reginald James, "It's been one year since over 400 families were exiled from Alameda," published on *Indybay.org*, November 7, 2005, <<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/11/07/17818381.php>>, [Accessed July 1, 2013]. Also, "Harbor Island Apartment Evictions," <<http://www.alamedareport.org/justicetopics.html>> or "The Battle of Harbor Island," Luna Productions, 2005, <<http://vimeo.com/12085156>>, [Accessed July 3, 2013].

families were forced from Alameda. A fair housing audit conducted during the struggle revealed widespread housing discrimination against African Americans.<sup>461</sup>

## **2010 and Beyond**

The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that the over half of the Black population within Census Tract 4276, the area of Alameda containing the Harbor Island Apartments, disappeared. Although, city wide, the African American population increased by a few hundred. Nonetheless, a pattern of displacement in connection to redevelopment efforts has continued, from Estuary Projects, to Makassar Straits, to Harbor Island. While the initial displacements concentrated in public housing, led by the AHA, private property owners created later issues of displacement. However, public individuals should not view these as simple actions. A concentrated bias against low-income and African American residents in Alameda manifests itself in rhetoric that associates low-income people with crime and slums, and uses code words like “Oakland” as racial proxies. This bias becomes organized politically, through homeowners associations that oppose public housing in their neighborhoods, or through elected officials who comprise bodies like AHA, or the Planning Commission and City Council, that approves zoning and other residential and spatial configurations of Alameda.

Today, the poorest section of Alameda is Alameda Point. After the conversion of the NAS, community members formed the Alameda Point Collaborative to provide housing for the formerly homeless, veterans, and battered women and their children. This low-cost housing provides a refuge for families who often cannot find housing elsewhere. A number of the families that remained within Alameda from the Buena Vistas (Harbor

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<sup>461</sup> James, ““Can’t Move, Won’t Move””.

Island) relocated to Alameda Point.<sup>462</sup> Successive developers have sought to redevelop Alameda Point. In each instance, developers have attempted to remove Alameda Point Collaborative from their lease.<sup>463</sup> Again, low-income and predominantly Black families risk displacement just by living on land that others decide they want.

### **Black Politics in Alameda**

Political demands are often rooted in geography. In the 1990s, when Black activists mobilized for political power, they attempted to create geographical districts. These political organizers sought to utilize the history of segregation to gain political representation on Alameda's city council.<sup>464</sup> This strategy does not differ greatly from Estuary Project residents demanding a seat on the AHA commissioner for a project resident and member of Low Cost Housing Committee. But Black Alameda has been dispersed and class and intra-ethnic, interracial and multiracial identity conflicts exist.

Alameda has not had an active or effective NAACP since the 1960s. Black Student Unions have risen at Alameda and Encinal High School, as well as the College of Alameda, but these youth led group's ebb and flow. In each housing crisis, temporary organizations arise, but no permanent organization for Black people exists. Interestingly enough, Mayor Gilmore became the island's first Black elected Mayor in 2010—the decade after the removal of Harbor Island. Gilmore was appointed to the city council in 2003, following the death of Albert DeWitt, the first Black elected city councilman who briefly served as mayor following the death of Mayor Appezzato.<sup>465</sup> Now that the city has

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<sup>462</sup> Reginald James, "On Point: Life at Alameda Point, former Alameda Naval Air Station, 1999-Present," Historian's Eye Project, University of California, Berkeley, December 17, 2012, ongoing project. <<http://www.slideshare.net/ReginaldJames/histeye-12172012james-reginaldweb>> [Accessed June 30, 2013].

<sup>463</sup> Interview with Doug Biggs, December 2012, in possession of author.

<sup>464</sup> O'Brien, Bill, "Racial politics in Alameda: minority activists mobilize for district elections, mayoral recall," *Express*, February 14, 1992, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>465</sup> Of note, Mayor Gilmore is married to the son of one of the Gilmore brothers from the Estuary Projects.



a middle-class Black, woman as mayor, and the U.S. Navy recently returned a large percentage of Alameda Point to the city<sup>466</sup>, the question remains: Will the city of Alameda develop affordable housing?

### **Missing Pages of Alameda's Historiography**

Black Alamedans have not only been pushed out of the island, but the story of Blacks in Alameda has been pushed out of the history books as well. Numerous books have documented the struggles of Bay Area Black folks in San Francisco and Oakland, and have highlighted other areas like Berkeley, Marin City, Richmond, and even the now extinct Russell City, but no one has told the stories of Black Alamedans.

Alameda's local writers have marginalized and even misrepresented the experience of African Americans. Imelda Merlin's oft-cited book *Alameda: A Geographical History* primarily focuses on geographical development on the island. His section about various ethnic groups mentions Negroes as coming "in force" after WWII and being displaced later.<sup>467</sup>

Other authors ignore—or are ignorant of—Black Alamedans, and choose to focus primarily on architectural preservation. George Gunn, curator of the Alameda Historical Museum's book *Documentation of Victorian and Post Victorian Residential and Commercial Buildings, City of Alameda, 1854 to 1904*, painstakingly compiles Alameda housing records, yet does not include the lost homes of the Hackett brothers at 1608 Union and 1828 Grand St.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Carolyn Jones, "Naval Air Station land handed to Alameda," June 24, 2015. <<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Naval-Air-Station-land-handed-to-Alameda-4619927.php>> [Accessed July 3, 2013].

<sup>467</sup> Merlin, "Alameda: A Geographical History." His contempt for American Indians is also very apparent when he refers to them as "unkempt," among other terms.

<sup>468</sup> George C. Gunn, *Documentation of Victorian and Post Victorian Residential and Commercial Buildings, City of Alameda, 1854 to 1904*, 1988, self-published, on file at the Alameda Free Library.

The Alameda Museum also neglects to mention the presence of Negroes in its history. Noting the formation of the three separate townships and its diversity, the website states, “Always diverse, settlers included, Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Chinese, Japanese, Scandinavians and Germans.”<sup>469</sup>

Many Alamedans consider columnist Woody Minor to be a “renown” historian. I can appreciate the work he has contributed to the history of the city at-large. His series on the Alameda Housing Authority also sought to incorporate the voices and struggles of African Americans. Minor, former author of the “Heritage” column in the *Alameda Journal*, grappled with the contradictory perceptions of Measure A in a 1991 titled, “Why preserve?” He also shared both his position and his positionality in his explanation of why he supported Measure A.

Living in the era of Measure A has been a comfort for some and an affront to others. To preservationists, it has seemed like a godsend; to developers, a thorn in the flesh. Others have perceived it as self-serving and discriminatory – an instance of the “haves” slamming the door in the faces of the “have-nots.” As a preservationist who is also a liberal, I recognize the trade-offs inherent in Measure A. It has assured the preservation of our historic houses, but it hasn’t made them any less expensive to buy or rent. The contradictions are made manifest in my own life: I rent an apartment in Berkeley because it’s more affordable.

Minor goes on to explain, “And yet I will always be a supporter of Measure A. I see it not as a smug closing of doors but as a desperate measure taken by a community which saw itself being destroyed.”<sup>470</sup>

His own positionality as an architectural preservationist and Measure A supporter compromises his analysis. His history of the AHA danced around the issue of segregation, while his history of the Grand Street substation glossed over the

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<sup>469</sup> Alameda History, <<http://www.alamedamuseum.org/news-and-resources/history/>>, Alameda Museum.

<sup>470</sup> Woody Minor, “Why preserve? Measure A,” *AJ*, June 11, 1990.

displacement of a pioneering Black Alameda family's home. To sacrifice one's own living situation for a building is typical of European thought. This philosophy separates people from place, it privileges property over people. This object-oriented thinking, inherent in much of European philosophy, favors the corporeal over the community. The destruction of the physical buildings constitutes "community," opposed to the neighborhoods and networks destroyed by housing displacement. As one resident told the Fifteen Group owners, "The community is not buildings. People are the community." Additionally, one might argue that the "heritage" series represents the voice of a "historical whiteness:" The geographical imagination of Alameda as a place of beaches and homes for white people. While I appreciate his work and his candor about his own situation, that is a privilege many Black residents of Alameda or Berkeley lack.

*From Buena Vista to UC Berkeley*

This project began as a journey to tell the story of African Americans in Alameda. Due to time limitations, I focused on the central issue that has faced Black Alamedans: the struggle for housing. My own positionality emerges from my own experiences with housing displacement. My mother and I moved into a shelter on Constitution Way in the late 1980s. We later found a one-bedroom apartment at 724 Central Ave. We later moved into the Buena Vista/Bridgeport Apartments. Were it not for the Buena Vista Community Association's advocacy, my family would never have found Section 8 housing in Alameda. I can recall the communal nature of my apartment complex and my fictive kin. Thus I lack the bias against multiple unit dwellings some Alameda residents have and recognize the importance of affordable housing. Without housing, there would be no Black Alamedans to discuss. Housing is central to other opportunities like employment,

schools, health and environmental justice. What has proceeded is the story of African Americans in Alameda, as told through the experience with housing.

### **Stargell Ave: The political act of naming places after Black people**

The first street encountered when entering the Webster Tube on Alameda's West End is Wilver "Willie" Stargell Ave. The east-west street connects Webster and Main Street.

The street pays homage to Willie Stargell, a former resident of the Encinal Projects. The act of naming is symbolic. Naming can be viewed as an affirmation of an idea, an event, person, or a people. Multiple locations in Alameda have been named and renamed after Black Alamedans or African Americans. A brief examination of their political and geography context reveals more about Alameda politics.<sup>471</sup>

The renaming of Stargell can be viewed as political tokenism. The projects he lived in do not intersect with the street named after him. With respect to Stargell, who engaged in philanthropy and service in Pennsylvania, he did not engage in these activities in Alameda. Although recognizing him could be viewed as recognition for all former project residents, to rename a street after someone apolitical in the struggle for housing is a political act of tokenism, symbolic without substance. Why not name the street after Mabel Tatum or other Estuary project residents, since the street runs between what was the Estuary, Gibbs and Webster projects.

Another example of this tokenism is reflected in the naming of the Bayport school. After closing three schools (euphemistically called "consolidation") and forcing children from the two poorest census tracts in the city to cross the island's only

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<sup>471</sup> Reginald James, "Recognizing Black History in Alameda through place names," *Alameda Patch*, <<http://patch.com/california/alameda/recognizing-black-history-in-alameda>>, July 15, 2013.

thoroughfares, officials named the school “Ruby Bridges.” Ruby Bridges was an elementary student in New Orleans when she integrated William Frantz Elementary School. Her act of bravery was commemorated in the Norman Rockwell painting, “The Problem we all Live With.” An optimist could view the naming as part of the aspiration for integration, for children of various groups to build a ‘beloved community,’ however, this act masks the inequality inherent in Bayport, the West End, and the island of Alameda.<sup>472</sup>

The other locations named after African Americans include: the Don Grant Track and Field and Willie Stargell (Baseball) Field at Encinal High School, the Les White Tennis Courts at Alameda High and the George Herring Tennis Courts at Alameda. The late White was a long-time tennis coach at the high school. Herring was a long-time president of the College and tennis booster. Within Alameda’s Parks, a few locations have been renamed after African Americans. Buena Vista Park was renamed Littlejohn Park, after Elector Littlejohn, a former resident of the Pacific Projects—the current site of the park. On Alameda Point, the Officers Club (O’Club) was renamed after Al Dewitt. Bessie Coleman Court, the transitional housing, is also located on Alameda Point.

With the exception of the Les White Tennis Courts and Littlejohn Park, all of the locations are named after African Americans are located on the West End. Thus the renaming of these locations subtly reinforces the history of segregation in Alameda. A number of African Americans have sat on city commissions. The current mayor formerly sat on the Parks Commission and Planning Board, for example. It may be that African Americans led these efforts. Without a thorough understanding of the politics, I cannot

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<sup>472</sup> Norman Rockwell Museum, <<http://www.nrm.org/2010/10/norman-rockwell%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cthe-problem-we-all-live-with%E2%80%9D-continues-to-resonate-as-important-symbol-for-civil-rights/>>.

conclusively state the intention of those who recommended and advocated for these changes; however, these symbols and the symbolic acts of naming places after people should be further examined to understand their political work they achieve.

### **Future studies and limitations**

Additional studies of other aspects of Alameda's Black history are important. No studies have focused on housing discrimination in Alameda, but this study uncovers the recurring pattern over 100 years. As an increasing percentage of African Americans move to and reside in suburbs, understanding racial conflict and the impacts of redevelopment efforts become salient. Finally, as cities demobilize after Base Realignment and Closure Act(s), understanding the impact of redevelopment on low-income peoples gains importance as well. Other topics related to real estate could include: a history of Alamedans with Hope and Renewed HOPE, the history of rent control in Alameda, and a study of Measure A. This research is important as it demonstrates a pattern of displacement encompassing most historic housing trends. Despite being a small unit of analysis, Alameda provides a location to examine various trends that have occurred in conflict over land and residential space.

This study was both limited by time and the author's abilities. In hindsight, I could've focused more on specific eras or issues; however, that will be for future research and future historians. The major methodological oversights in this research are the reliance on documents. Rich oral histories could also bring important nuance to the narrative of Black Alamedans and their residential experiences. Additionally, there are various government documents that could be used to better understand specific episodes.

For instance, I did not utilize City Council, Planning Board, AHA, Rent Advisory or other government agendas, minutes and plans as much as possible. Additionally, local newspaper accounts supply great background, but do not always go into depth—and can be inaccurate. Of note is the role of the real estate industry on the local economy and the press. Many newspapers in Alameda rely on real estate ads. Examining newspapers today, one could quickly notice the absence of Black realtors. This could be factored into the larger issues of low Black homeownership.

Other topics related to the history of Black Alamedans are the history of the Hackett family. Descendants still own property in Alameda and Berkeley. A story about this family could provide insight into Black history across multiple states and generations. Additionally, David Kirp's *Just Schools* tells the story of Bay Area school segregation but does not address the issue in Alameda. Monographs or small biographies about Black Alamedans could also be informative, including the Hackett's, Mabel Tatum, among others. Related, something about Black elected officials and leaders like Clarence and Carter Gilmore, Albert Dewitt, Clayton Guyton, Lawrence Vanhook and Beresford Bingham should be created and compiled. Also the contentious relationship between Alameda Police and African Americans should be documented, historically. Oral history of former project and Buena Vista tenants would also be great resources for Black history in Alameda.

Other potential topics could include the Chinese, Japanese and Filipino histories of Alameda. A Chinatown in Alameda at the turn of the 20th century has only two remaining structures left. Also, Japanese were interred with many being forced from the

north side of the island. Additionally, *Filipinos in the East Bay* references a few Filipinos of the island, but their story has not been told.<sup>473</sup>

A historical review of racially coded rhetoric in Alameda would also be informative, if not solely to help counter the ongoing association of Black people with criminality on the island. The rhetoric has become a lot more covert and implicit. A proud NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) wrote the *Alameda Journal* in 2000 in support of Measure A and to critique a letter from Renewed Hope in favor of smart growth. He writes that “affordable housing” is a “code word used by the poverty industry to inflict cities with low-income (see welfare) families.” Comparing Alameda to Piedmont and Walnut Creek, he writes:

Those cities welcome people who can afford to live in their communities. Alameda does the same. As far as diversity is concerned, we already have it in Alameda and have had it for a long time. Besides, who are these people to tell us what we need? The city of Alameda is enriched by having people of any race or culture come here based on an ability to afford the cost of living in our community. It is not the responsibility of the residents of Alameda – and many of them have sacrificed much to live in such a fine community – to make sure that others unable or not willing to make the same economic commitment get to share in the benefits of living in this wonderful town. There is no reason for Alamedans to feel guilty because some are not able to afford to live here. I’m sure that most of us can’t afford to live in Beverly Hills. However, how many feel that it is the responsibility of the Beverly Hills residents to make living there affordable to us? The ability to live in Alameda may be an achievement, but don’t we want those who are able to achieve?

...

The writer continued, asking readers what they saw when they looked at the abandoned East Housing:

Drive over and take a look at the former Navy housing at the East Housing complex. What do you see with low-income tenants living in that complex in the future? I see a housing project. Want to see what housing projects look like? Take a tour of the low-income housing we already have in West Alameda. By the way,

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<sup>473</sup> “Historical gims,” *In Alameda*, < <http://blog.sfgate.com/inalameda/2010/09/03/historical-gims/>>, accessed May 27, 2013.



don't go there at night. The belief that we can mix the haves with the have nots is not the stuff that dreams are made of. How does it benefit the haves? Drug trafficking and high crime rates are not considered as "cultural enrichments" by anybody I know.

### **Taking action for affordable housing in Alameda**

Housing advocates have criticized the City of Alameda for its empty talk about providing housing for low-income peoples. When criticizing the Catellus project EIR that later led to a lawsuit, Tom Mathews of Renewed Hope said, "There's been a lot of talk in the past about affordable housing, but nothing's ever been done." He offered to "...sit down with the city and figure out how to keep the city in the black and still have affordable housing." This conversation is long overdue. Furthermore, the conversation on keeping "the city in the black" should also include a conversation on how to keep Blacks in the city as redevelopment on Alameda Point continues to move forward.<sup>474</sup>

This study has been limited by both time and availability of data. While a large amount of census data has been compiled and analyzed to assist in this study, additional data could provide a greater understanding of the racial implications of this policy. More importantly, this data could provide insight into the city's affordable housing programs. Pendall suggests cities can maintain diversity with programs that encourage affordable housing, such as first time homebuyer programs. Data on the number of African American participants in Alameda's programs would reveal to which extent the city assists African Americans in becoming homeowners. Additional data plotting African American homeowners would reveal whether the city's housing is still segregated and if Blacks occupy homes in historically segregated areas. Finally, the settlement with the Buena Vista Community Association in 1990 required an affordable housing fee to be

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<sup>474</sup> Josh Indar, "Environmental report OK'd for base housing," *OT*, May 14, 2000, Local 1.

created. A report on the activities of that Fund would be instructive. Finally, the city should conduct its own study on the impacts of Measure A. On repeated occasions, Measure A defenders have rallied to prevent discussions of the policy, despite their own accusations that others hijack such conversations.

The city could also consider the following policy alternatives. In 1989, Buena Vista resident and Housing Authority commissioner Clayton Guyton suggested a program be created to employ residents in the maintenance of the apartment complex. He suggested that tenants could come to own their units. The city could create a large housing cooperative, particularly for African Americans. This restorative program could benefit long-term Alameda renters who've contributed rents to city coffers for decades. Considering that Alameda's first housing cooperative, the former wartime housing project, Woodstock Village, has never had any African American residents, may be reason enough. Until Alameda addresses its historic legacy of housing discrimination against African Americans, the overt and covert discrimination and accumulation of inequality will continue.<sup>475</sup>

### **Black Alamedans: Still Fighting for Survival**

In "Fight for Survival," the publication concludes discussing the "mental torture" associated with living "under a cloud of uncertainty." The experiences of Estuary tenants resonated with my own forty years later. "It is one of the costs of this ugly situation that will never be adequately estimated or compensated. But the tenants remaining in Estuary are determined to see this situation through to the end:

They are convinced that justice and honesty and integrity will, in the end, finally triumph. Public awareness will eventually bring a solution to this terrible situation. And it is the intention of the NAACP and the Citizens' Committee to

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<sup>475</sup> These policy recommendations emerged in Reginald James, "Island's White Noose."

make all Alameda, and all the East Bay, and if necessary, all the State of California aware of the Estuary situation. The Alameda Branch, NAACP, and Citizens' Committee are, on behalf of the residents of Estuary, fighting at this point, for survival itself, and the fight must and will go on.<sup>476</sup>

As a survivor of the "Battle of Harbor Island," this is my story, by again, not mine alone.

I will tell the stories of the Estuary tenants, the Black AHA residents, and my own Buena Vista family. I am grateful for the privilege to shed light on those cast into the shadows of Alameda history. For Black-African people, Alameda is our home.

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<sup>476</sup> "Fight for Survival," Citizens Committee.

## **ABBREVIATIONS IN THE NOTES**

### **Archives and Libraries**

AAMLO	African American Museum and Library of Oakland
Bancroft	The Bancroft Library
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
NARA-SF	National Archives and Records Administration–Pacific Region (San Francisco)
NARA-DC	National Archives and Records Administration-Washington, DC
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park
ROHO	Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley
RG	Records Group (Used for NARA)

### **Manuscript Collections**

C. L. Dellums Papers, African American Museum and Library of Oakland (Dellums Papers)  
Afro-Americans in San Francisco Prior to World War II Oral History Project, San Francisco Public Library (AASFWW2)  
Alameda Parks and Recreation Department, City of Alameda (ARPD)  
Fang Family S.F. Examiner Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (Fang Family Photos)  
Hackett Family Papers, African American Museum and Library of Oakland (Hackett Family Papers)  
Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (NAACP Papers)  
Eugene and Ruth Lasartemay Papers, African American Museum and Library of Oakland (Lasartemay Papers)

### **Newspaper Abbreviations**

Alameda Journal (AJ)  
Alameda Sun, original (TAS)  
Alameda Sun, post-2000 (AS)  
Alameda Times-Star (ATS)  
The Alamedan (TA)  
California Voice (CV)  
Chicago Defender (CD)  
The Flatlands (TF)  
Oakland Tribune (OT)  
San Francisco Chronicle (SFC)

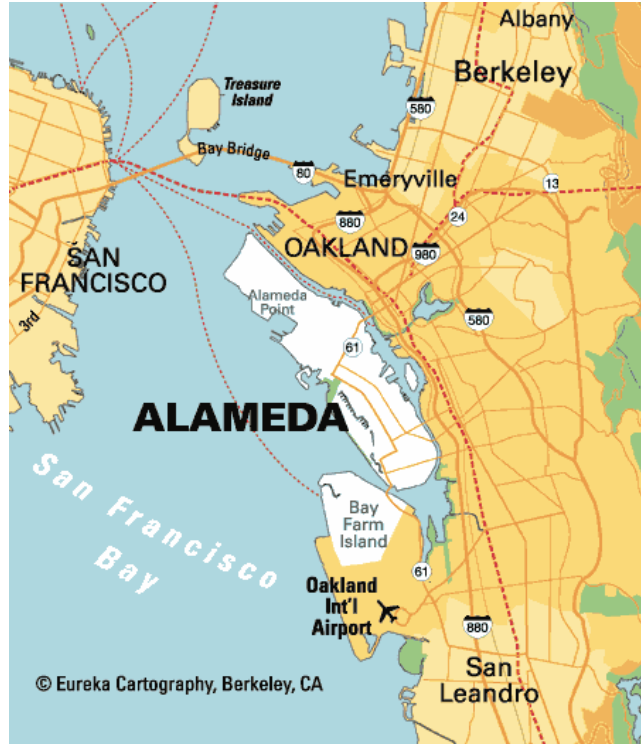
APPENDIX A:

APPENDIX A:

*Images*

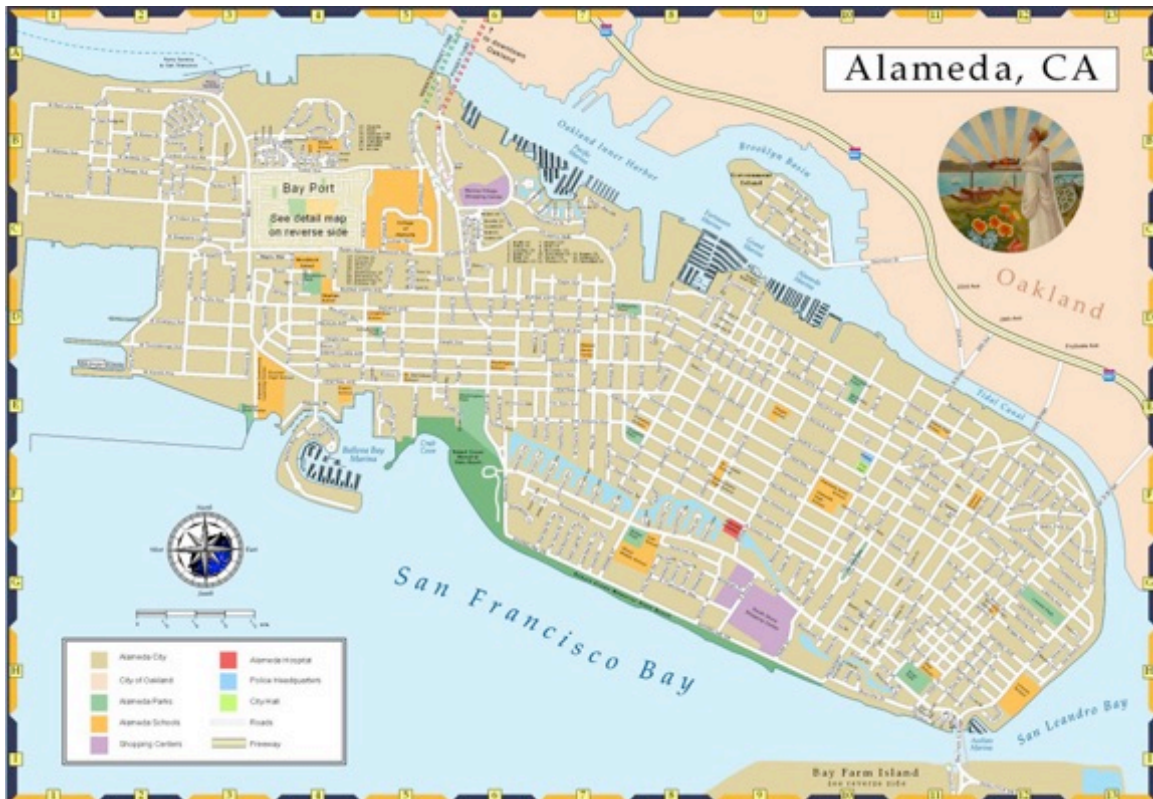
1. Map of Alameda in East Bay
2. Map of Alameda
3. HOLC Residential Security Map
4. Sketch of James A. Hackett
5. Hackett Family Home at 1608 Union St
6. Hackett Home at Allensworth, CA
7. S.R. Hackett Family in Living Room, 1928
8. Myrtle Hackett at 1828 Grand Street, 1922
9. Mother Hackett and Family at 1608 Union St, 1952
10. Estuary Rams City Champs, 1959
11. John Mural School Class Picture
12. Estuary Projects Residents Picket Local Bank, 1964
13. Estuary Projects Residents March on Webster St, 1964
14. Estuary Projects Residents Outside Housing Authority, 1964
15. Estuary Projects Residents Picket Housing Authority, 1964
16. Estuary Projects Hold "Tent-In" at Franklin Park, 1966
17. Section 8 tenants march on Park St, 2004
18. Modessa Henderson Rallies Harbor Island Tenants, 2004
19. Tenants speak at Harbor Island Tenants meeting at Chipman Gym, 2004
20. Harbor Island Tenants Rally at City Council Meeting, 2004
21. Tenants listen to speakers at Alameda City Council meeting, 2004
22. Former military housing, now dilapidated at Alameda Point, 2012
23. Transitional housing at Alameda Point, 2010
24. Alameda Point resident Allen Beene, 2010
25. Alameda Point resident Jerrard Green, 2010
26. 1624 Foley Street, home of Jodie Randolph, 2012
27. 'Occupy' Oakland activists at "Defend Jodie" protest, 2012
28. Jodie Randolph in front of her home at 1624 Foley St, 2012
29. Former Estuary Project resident Vickie R. Smith, 2012
30. Clayton Guyton and Reginald James in Baltimore, 2013
31. Deborah James at Oakland Museum, 2012

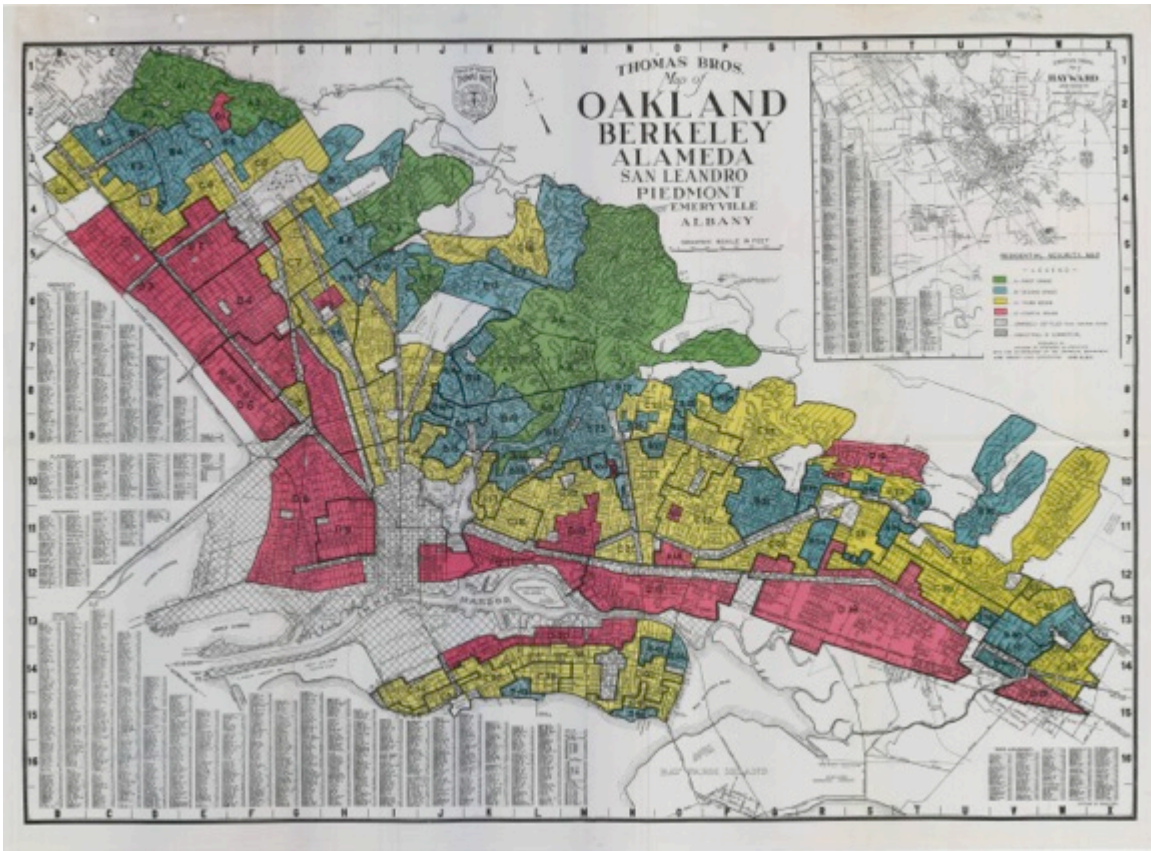
**Figure 1:** Map of Alameda in East Bay shows the island of Alameda as the geographical center of the San Francisco Bay Area. Map shows Alameda as white, how many people envision the island.



**Figure 2:** Map of Alameda on west-east alignment. Bayport housing is next to the large orange area (College of Alameda). Water in center of island is lagoon, formerly shoreline. Alameda Point at far left (west). Bay Farm Island not shown in picture.

(Both maps: alameda-info.com)





**Figure 3:** HOLC Residential Security Map for Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, San Leandro and Piedmont. Red areas depict less valuable areas, according to local realtors who created these “redlining maps.” In nearby Oakland, all the red areas are in flatlands where non-white people live. In Alameda, north side of island redlined. Map online through T-Races <<http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/>>.





**Figure 4:** Sketch of James A. Hackett, pioneering Black Alamedan, on the occasion of launch of his boating business. In *San Francisco Call*, November 22, 1896, p. 9.





**Figure 5:** Hackett home at 1608 Union St was built in 1890. The family sold the home in the 1960s, It was demolished to build a four-unit apartment building in 1967. (Hackett Papers)



**Figure 6:** The Hackett family home in Allensworth, California. James and Alice moved to the Black township in 1910, where they lived until they passed away. The home still stands in what is now the Allensworth State Historic Park. (Reginald James)



**Figure 7:** Sylvester and Marie Hackett and family at their home on 1828 Grand St. These Hackett's moved to the home in 1895. Two generations grew up in this home until the mid-1930s when the property was demolished. In its place arose a Depression Era Works Progress Administration project: the Grand St Substation for the local power company.



(Hackett Papers, African American Museum and Library)

**Figure 8:** Myrtle Hackett sits on the steps on the family home at 1828 Grand St, in 1922. Every New Years Day, family members would gather at the Hackett home for tea.

(Hackett Papers, African American Museum and Library)





**Figure 9:** “Mother Hackett” at her 87th birthday party on June 15, 1957. The family gathered in the living room at the 1608 Union Street house. A decade later, the home would be demolished.



Figure 10: The Estuary Yankees championship baseball team. Top, from left: Robert Holloway, Ronald Wayne, Nathan Scott, Edward Motton, Leandrew Jones. Bottom, unknown, Leroy Jones, unknown, unknown. Baseball was a key recreational activity for Black youth in the Alameda housing projects. The all-Black team in Estuary won multiple city championships, to the displeasure of the other segregated, whites-only teams. (Image and descriptions courtesy of [Playball94501.wordpress.com](http://Playball94501.wordpress.com))



Figure 11: The John Muir School was located in the Estuary Housing project. This image shows an integrated fourth grade class. Most of the students in the class are Black. (Courtesy of Ralph Walker, Estuary Rams Facebook Group)



**Figures 12-13:** Estuary Housing tenants picket the Wells Fargo Bank on Webster St on March 16, 1964. AHA Commission Chair Fred Zecher managed the branch and expressed bigotry towards Black Estuary tenants. The tenants had been told they would have to move by June 30. Above, Citizens Committee for Low-Cost Housing leader Mabel Tatum holds “Low Rent Needed” sign as she leads the group to the AHA officers. (Courtesy of Fang Family Collection, the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley)



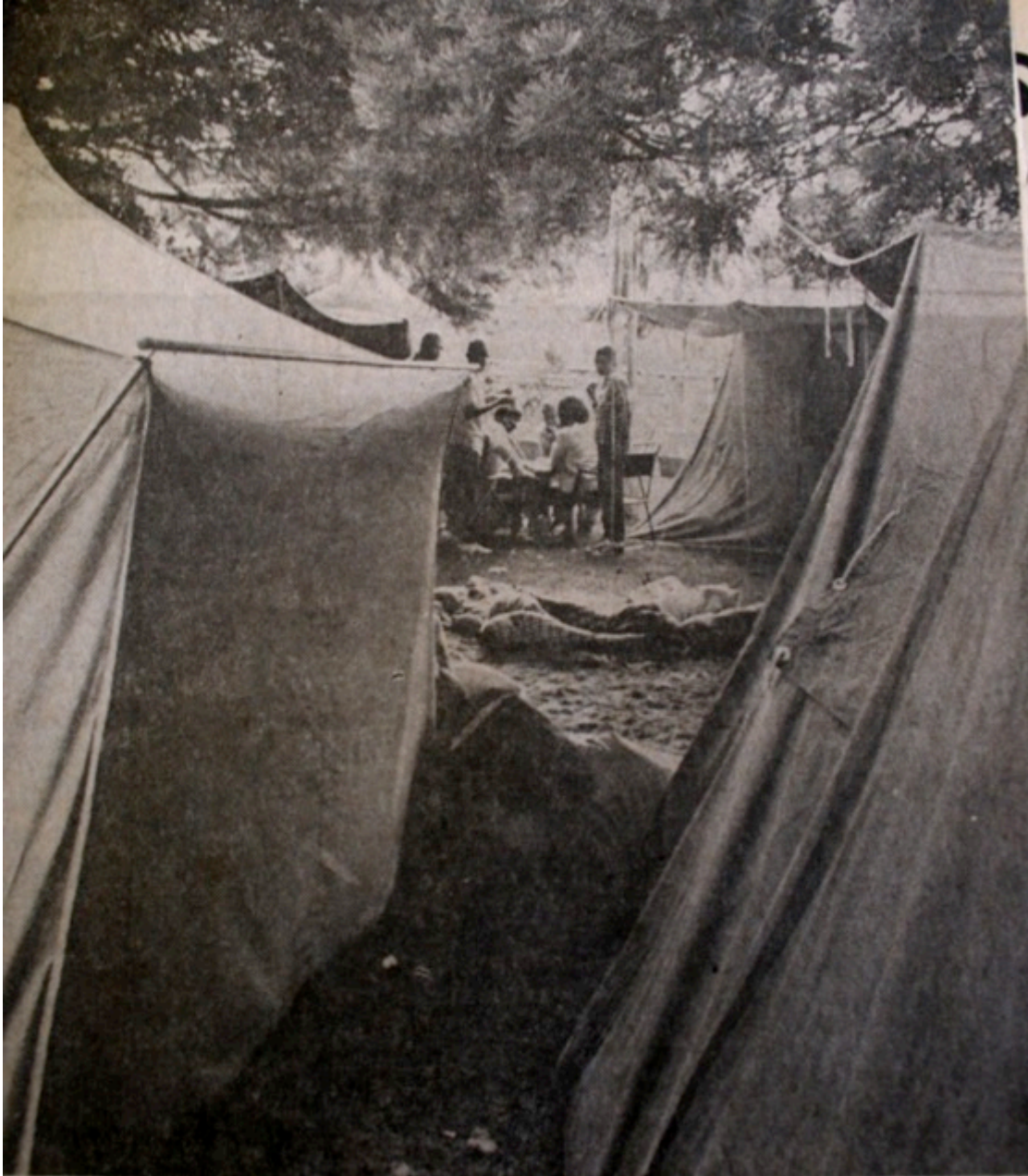


**Figure 14:** On March 16, 1964, Estuary Housing tenants picket the offices of the Alameda Housing Authority, located near Webster and Atlantic Ave. Residents led successful sit-ins in the office that led the AHA to delay demolition of the projects and the removal of Black residents. (Courtesy of Fang Family Collection, the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley)



Figure 15: Estuary Housing Project tenants picket the offices of the AHA. Mabel Tatum can be seen on the grass beneath the flagpole. Many children are pictured, as many children participated in the protests. (Courtesy of Fang Family Collection, the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley)





**Figure 16:** Beginning on June 18, 1966, Estuary Housing tenants led a three-day “Camp-In” at Franklin Park in Alameda. The park was located in the Gold Coast area of Alameda, home of the island’s then-mayor and other upper class, white families. The action led the city to delay demolition of the projects for a year. Demolition had been slated for June 20. (Oakland Tribune, June 20, 1966)



Figure 17: Protesters march on Park Street on June 25, 2004. The protest was a response to the loss of Section 8 vouchers for nearly 300 island families. The author participated in the demonstration and is holding the bullhorn. To the left, Malika Nasirudin was one of the Section 8 protest leaders who helped save vouchers for families. In addition to the march, the group protested at City Council, AHA meetings, as well as the home of Alameda's then-mayor Beverly Johnson and the Housing Authorities executive director Michael Pucci. (Photo by Joe Woodard, *Alameda Report*)



**Figure 18:** Harbor Island resident Modessa Henderson rallies tenants of the Harbor Island Apartments on July 31, 2004. Nearly 400 families received notices they would have to move for renovations. Henderson had previously sued the city for discriminatory housing policies. She was one of the last residents to leave in 2005. (Photo by Joe Woodard, *Alameda Report*)



**Figure 19:** Tenants meet in the Chipman Middle School Gymnasium on July 31, 2004. (Photo by Joe Woodard, *Alameda Report*)





Figure 20: Harbor Island tenants and supports rally at an August 2004 City Council meeting. (Photo by Joe Woodard, *Alameda Report*)



**Figure 21:** Tenants listen to speakers at an August 2004 city council meeting. A protest sign, “STOP THE EVICTIONS! ‘Can’t Move, Won’t Move’” can be seen. Tenants formed the Harbor Island Tenants Association to stop the mass displacement. (Photo by Michael Macor for the *San Francisco Chronicle*)



**Figure 22:** Alameda Point has decaying apartments that sit uninhabited. (Author)



**Figure 23:** About 200 units of supportive housing for formerly homeless, veterans, and others are on Alameda Point, run by the Collaborative. This building has been renovated and currently provides housing to low-income families.





**Figure 24:** Alameda Point resident Allen Beene has lived on the former NAS since 1999. He is a visual artist and a father.



**Figure 25:** Left, Jerrard Green is an Alameda Point resident and grew up on the former NAS. He now works at the Changing Gears Bike Shop, formerly Cycles of Change. The shop teaches youth how to fix bikes and also employs two Alameda Point residents.



**Figure 27:** The “Foreclosure Free Zone” at 1624 Foley Street. (Author)



**Figure 28:** Members of the Occupy Oakland Foreclosure Defense Group at 1624 Foley St on November 6, 2012. (Author)





**Figure 28:** Jodie Randolph on the porch of her home at 1624 Foley St. Randolph lost her home to predatory lending and called “Occupy Oakland” activists to help her. After an eight-month battle, she won her house back. Shortly after, however, she died of cancer. (Photo courtesy of JP Massar, *Daily Kos*)



**Figure 29:** Clayton Guyton and the author, right, in Baltimore, January 2013. Clayton Guyton was an island activist who sued the city of Alameda in 1989 for discriminatory housing. He relocated to his Maryland hometown in the mid-1990s. He currently runs a youth program and shelter for formerly homeless teens. (Courtesy of author)





**Figure 30:** Vickie R. Smith is a former Estuary Housing tenant. She grew up in the Alameda projects and attended John Muir and Encinal High School—where organized one of the first Black Student Unions. She formed the city’s CARE, racial equality organization in the 1990s and later joined Renewed HOPE. She currently works at the school district, serving homeless youth on the island. (Author)



**Figure 31:** Deborah James at the Oakland Museum of California. James helped Harbor Island Tenants to relocate and find housing in 2004 when nearly 400 families forced from the West End apartment complex. She is currently a student at the College of Alameda. James is also the author's mother. (Author)

## **APPENDIX B:**

### ***List of Tables***

1. Total and African American Population of Alameda, California, 1870-2010
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8. Total African Americans and African American percentage of total population for selected East Bay Cities, 1970-2010
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TABLES

<b>Table 1: Alameda, Total Population and Black Population, 1870-2010</b>		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Black</i>
1860	460	3
1870	1,557	8
1880	5,708	39
1890	11,165	57
1900	16,464	144
1910	23,383	211
1920	28,806	217
1930	35,033	294
1940	36,256	249
1944	43,909	4,082
1950	64,430	5,312
1960	63,855	3,127
1970	70,968	1,869
1980	63,852	2,663
1990	76,459	5,131
2000	72,259	4,488
2010	73,812	4,759

Sources: Compiled for Reginald James, "Alameda is Our Home," presentation at UC Berkeley Sociology Symposium, April 30, 2013. Marilyn Johnson, *Second Gold Rush. Ninth (1870), Tenth (1880), Eleventh (1890), Twelfth (1900), Thirteenth (1910), Fourteenth (1920), Fifteenth (1930), Sixteenth (1940), Seventeenth (1950) and Eighteenth (1960) Census of the United States*, U.S. Census Bureau, Doe Library, UC Berkeley

<b>Table 2: African Diaspora Population in Alameda, California, 1870, by Age, Birthplace and Occupation</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>BIRTHPLACE</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>
Alex Lishander	35	West Indies	Laborer
J. Antonn	50	West Indies	Laborer
Jo Meworth	47	Africa	Laborer
Sam Meworth	34	Africa	Laborer
John Merva	44	Mexico	Laborer
Alfred Harris	37	Kentucky	Cook
J. Kelley	50	South Carolina	Laborer
John Aston	30	Mexico	Laborer

<b>Table 3: African American Population of Alameda, 1880, by age, birthplace, gender, and occupation</b>				
<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>BIRTHPLACE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>
John Albert	39	Georgia	Male	Laborer
Maria Albert	35	Georgia	Female	Keeping house
John Jr. Albert	7	California	Male	Student
Susan Albert	5	California	Female	n/a
Peter Albert	1	California	Male	n/a
Rebecca Harris	65	Georgia	Female	Servant
Annie Monroe	34	Central America	Female	Keeping House
James Brown	44	Virginia	Male	Bootblack
Libbie Butler	60	Ohio	Female	n/a
Melinda Noel	14	Nevada	Female	Student
Sara Weeks	50	Ohio	Female	n/a
Frank Cutter	59	Vermont	Male	Laborer
Lewis Joplin	85	Kentucky	Male	Servant
Antonio Lopez	42	Cape De Verde	Male	Coachman
Susan Lopez	50	Mexico	Female	Keeping House
Thomas S. Prentice	51	Virginia	Male	Laborer
Jennie Prentice	50	Tennessee	Female	Keeping House
Willie Prentice	13	Tennessee	Male	Student
Annie Prentice	8	California	Female	Student
Maria Smith	43	Alabama	Female	Keeping Home
Annis Smith	12	California	Male	Student
Dartie Smith	10	California	Male	Student
Laurin D. Smith	8	California	Female	n/a
Louis Smith	3	California	Male	n/a
John Williams	46	Cape de Verde	Male	Woodchopper
Andrew Stevens	40	Cape de Verde	Male	Woodchopper
Joseph Fortes	37	Cape de Verde	Male	Woodchopper
Ignatia Degawar	55	Mexico	Female	Washerwoman
Kbraral Dominques	44	Cape de Verde	Male	Laborer
Argust Dominques	36	Cape de Verde	Male	Laborer
Amos Mecartney	52	Pennsylvania	Male	Capitalist
Manuel Fernandes	30	Portugal	Male	Laborer
Lewis Gomes	32	Portugal	Male	Laborer
Joseph Frank	18	Portugal	Male	Dairy
Flem Miudo	28	Portugal	Male	Dairy
Source: U.S. Census of 1880				

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Owner-occupied	11,648	20,334	8,024	9,043	10,908	13,458
Percent owner-occupied	49.5	39.1	43.8	38.2	41.1	46.3
Number of Negro owner-occupied	43	32	189	54	82	173
Number of Renter-occupied	5,885	12,374	10,308	14,587	15,609	15,620
Number of Negro-renter-occupied	35	1,248	768	304	788	1,252

Source: U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing, 1940-1990.

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Percent owner-occupied	49.5	39.1	43.8	38.3	41.1	46.3	47.9
Percent white owner-occupied(1)	49.9	41.6	45.1	38.5	42.8	48.2	55.1
Percent Black owner-occupied(2)	63.2	2.5	--	15.1	9.4	12.1	--
Percent renter-occupied	50.5	60.9	56.2	61.7	58.9	53.7	--
Percent white renter-occupied	50.1	58.4	54.9	61.4	57	51.7	44.9
Percent Negro renter-occupied	36.8	97.5	--	84.9	90.6	87.8	--

Source: 1940 Census of Population and Housing, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, 1960 Census of Population and Housing, 1970 Census of Population and Housing, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

<b>Table 6. Percentage of white owner- and rent-occupied dwelling units as percentage of racial group, 1940-2000</b>							
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Percent owner-occupied	49.5	39.1	43.8	38.3	41.1	46.3	47.9
Percent white owner-occupied(1)	49.9	41.6	45.1	38.5	42.8	48.2	55.1
Percent renter-occupied	50.5	60.9	56.2	61.7	58.9	53.7	52.1
Percent white renter-occupied	50.1	58.4	54.9	61.4	57	51.7	44.9
Source: 1940 Census of Population and Housing, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, 1960 Census of Population and Housing, 1970 Census of Population and Housing, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts and BNA's, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.							

<b>Table 7. Percentage of black owner- and rent-occupied dwelling units as percentage of racial group, 1940-1990</b>							
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Percent owner-occupied	49.5	39.1	43.8	38.3	41.1	46.3	47.9
Percent Negro owner-occupied	63.2	2.5	--	15.1	9.4	12.1	--
Percent renter-occupied	50.5	60.9	56.2	61.7	58.9	53.7	--
Percent Negro renter-occupied	36.8	97.5	--	84.9	90.6	87.8	--
Source: 1940 Census of Population and Housing, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, 1960 Census of Population and Housing, 1970 Census of Population and Housing, 1980 Census of Population and							

Housing, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

**Table 8: African American Population of Bay Area, Alameda County and Selected Cities, 1970-1990**

	1970		1980		1990	
	<i>Number of Blacks</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Population</i>	<i>Number of Blacks</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Population</i>	<i>Number of Blacks</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Population</i>
Bay Area	367,477	7.9	466,274	9.0	533,188	8.9
Alameda County	161,282	15.0	203,698	18.4	229,316	17.9
Alameda	1,869	2.6	2,663	4.2	5,131	6.7
Berkeley	27,421	23.5	20,671	20.00	19,309	18.8
Oakland	124,710	34.5	159,351	47.0	163,526	43.9
San Leandro	84	0.1	907	1.4	3,966	5.8

Source: Bay Area Census, Metropolitan Transportation Commission-Association of Bay Area Governments

Bay Area: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/bayarea70.htm>

Alameda County: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/counties/AlamedaCounty70.htm>

Alameda: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/alameda70.htm>

Berkeley: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Berkeley70.htm>;

Oakland: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Oakland70.htm>;

San Leandro: <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/SanLeandro70.htm>;

**Table 9: Ethnic composition of Alameda, California, 1970-2010, by population numbers**

Year	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Other	Two or more
1970	70,968	64,093	1,869	n/a	4,724	691	n/a
1980	63,852	50,591	2,663	8,431	5,202	1,760	n/a
1990	76,459	53,499	5,131	14,130	6,928	2,679	n/a
2000	72,259	41,148	4,488	18,894	6,725	2,380	4,431
2010	73,812	37,460	4,759	23,058	8,092	2,463	5,265

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bay Area Census, Alameda, 1970-2000, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda.htm>



Year	All	White	Black	Latino	Asian	API	First American	Other	Two or more
1970	70,968	90.3	2.6	6.7*	n/a**	n/a	0.5	n/a	n/a
1980	63,852	79.2	4.2	8.1*	n/a**	n/a	0.6	n/a	n/a
1990	76,459	70.0	6.7	9.1	18.5	n/a	0.5	3.5	n/a
2000	72,259	56.9	6.2	9.3	26.1	0.6	0.7	3.3	6.1
2010	73,812	50.8	6.4	11.0	31.2	0.5	0.6	3.3	7.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bay Area Census, Alameda, 1970-2000, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda.htm>  
 \*Spanish Origin; \*\* Asian subgroups of Japanese and Chinese counted distinctly, other subgroups not included in Census enumeration; for 1980 census, Asians *and* Pacific Islanders counted together (13.2%), while 1990 census lists Asian *or* Pacific Islander (19.3%). Of note, Filipino island presence increased from 3.2 percent in 1970, to 6.6 in 1980, to 8.7 by 1990.

Year	Total	WHITE		BLACK		ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1970	70,968	64,093	90.3	1,869	2.6	n/a	n/a
1980	63,852	50,591	79.2	2,663	4.2	8,431	13.2
1990	76,459	53,499	70.0	5,131	6.7	14,740	19.3
2000	72,259	41,148	56.9	4,488	6.2	18,894	26.1
2010	73,812	37,460	50.8	4,749	6.4	23,058	31.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bay Area Census, Alameda, 1970-2000, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda.htm>

YEAR	Alameda	Berkeley	Oakland	San Leandro
1970	2.6	23.5	34.5	0.1
1980	4.2	20.0	47.0	1.4
1990	6.7	18.8	43.9	5.8
2000	6.2	13.6	35.7	9.0
2010	6.4	10.0	28.0	12.3

Source: Bay Area Census, 1970-2010

Year	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Other	Two or more
1970	70,968	64,093	1,869	n/a	4,724	691	n/a
1980	63,852	50,591	2,663	8,431	5,202	1,760	n/a
1990	76,459	53,499	5,131	14,130	6,928	2,679	n/a
2000	72,259	41,148	4,488	18,894	6,725	2,380	4,431
2010	73,812	37,460	4,759	23,058	8,092	2,463	5,265

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bay Area Census, Alameda, 1970-2000, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Alameda.htm>

YEAR	Black Population +		Percent Owner		Percent Renters	
	County	City	County	City	County	City
1970	15%	2.6%	39.7%	15.1%	60.3%	84.9%
1980	18.4%	4.3%	38%	9.4%	62%	91%
1990	17.9%	6.7%	34.5%	12.1%	65.5%	87.9%

Sources: +<http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/counties/AlamedaCounty70.htm>; 1970 Census of Population of Housing, Census Tracts, San Francisco-Oakland, Calif. SMSA, 189. April 1972; 1980 Census of Population and Housing, 1990 Census of Population and Housing

CITY	1970	1980	1990
Alameda	140	257	632
Berkeley	137	223	391
Newark	158	315	728
Hayward	154	271	629
Oakland	116	202	485
COUNTY	132	240	570

Source: 1980 Census of Population and Housing; h-1. Occupancy, Utilization, and Financial Characteristics of Housing Units: 1980; Table 9: Occupancy, Utilization, and Financial Characteristics of Housing Units: 1990. U.S. Census Population and Housing, Census Tracts, 1970.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Project #</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Built</i>	<i>Demolished</i>
Woodstock	Cal. 4112	200	1941	n/a
Encinal	Cal. 4113	1240	1943	1957
Chipman	Cal. 4114	760	1943	1958
Pacific	Cal. 4117	96	1943	1955
Webster	Cal. 4118	400	1943	1956
Atlantic Trailer Park	Cal. 4120	206	1943	1955
Gibbs (Webster No. 2)	Cal. 4693	360	1943	1953-64
Estuary	Cal. 4721	1,472	1943-44	1966-1971
Western	Cal. 4820	168	1944	1970-71
Makassar Strait Village	Cal. 4895-N	340	1945	1975-81
Total Units		5,042		

Source: Original in William Kostura and Woody Minor, "Appendix A: Summary of Housing Projects of the Alameda Housing Authority," *Alameda Housing Authority: A Fifty Year History*, Alameda: Alameda Housing Authority, 1990.

<i>Complex</i>	<i>Year Built (acquired)</i>	<i>Total Units</i>	<i>Type</i>
Anna B. Diamant	1975	65	Seniors, very-low-income
China Clipper	(1998)	26	HCV, project
Condominiums	(1996)	7	Seniors
Eagle Village	1983	42	Very-low income
Esperanza	1973	120	Low & very-low income; HCV,
Independence Plaza	1990	186	Senior
Lincoln House	(2009)	4	HCV, very low income
Lincoln/Willow	(1996)	5	Seniors, very-low income
Parrot Gardens	(1976)	8 units	very low income
Parrott Village	1980	50	Low- and very-low income; mainly HCV
Rosefield Village	(1976)	46 units	Very-low income families; HCV
Sherman House	(2009)	9	Very-low (5) and lower (2) income, market rate (2)
Stanford House	(1996)	4	Low (2) and very-low income.
	TOTAL UNITS	828	

\*Does not include The Breakers at Bayport (52) and Shinsei Gardens (39)  
Source: Alameda Housing Authority website

## APPENDIX C

### **Letter to the People of Alameda**

Dear People of Alameda,

It has been over one year since my family was forced to evacuate the Harbor Island Apartments. There have been many myths and misconceptions about the owners, residents, and the city's involvement, or lack thereof, in the so-called, Harbor Island evictions.

The city was already aware of the complex's deteriorating conditions, but last March, when the front page of the Alameda Journal featured the "beleaguered" apartments due to the decertification of Section 8 vouchers by Housing Authority, the public was reminded of the Fifteen Group's history of mismanagement.

That same month, the infamous, "Physical Improvement Project Survey", sponsored by the City of Alameda Development Services, Community and Programs Division, was distributed in my neighborhood. We were told that the city had set aside Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for physical improvements in Census Tract 4276. Although the survey was about physical improvements, the first question asked if we, strongly agree or disagree, that "living in a racially, socially, and economically mixed community creates many problems for residents." This is hardly a question about physical improvements, but a warning of what was to come.

It appeared as if as soon as the first Bayport residents moved in across the beltline property on Atlantic in July, we were notified by the Sanders Brothers (Fifteen Group owners), we had to move out. A noticed was taped to my door indicating that, after two-thirds of my life, in my home, I would have 60 days to leave.

My neighbors rallied and spoke out at city council meetings. Soon after, I was on of three residents allowed to attend a task force meeting between the city and the owners. The Harbor Island Task Force, comprised of representatives from different city departments, had previously met over the course of three years, yet this meeting was the first time residents were invited.

We heard that the owners were planning to renovate, although the plans were not specific. We found out the rental office would be converted into a Rental Assistance Center, and they would even be sponsoring a Rental Assistance Fair for residents. At this event, food and music were to be provided to compensate for years of neglect and to disguise their intentions to relocate us as far away from Alameda as possible. One apartment listed by the owners in Vallejo was even featured later that week on the news for a shooting. Their Resident Removal Center was good for nothing; except tape, boxes and bubble wrap. (They hadn't even heard of craigslist before.)

It was also disturbing how some people wanted to justify the Fifteen Group's actions by

emphasizing alleged criminal activity in, and around, the complex. Not surprisingly, most of the illegal activity was committed by non-residents and employees of the super-Villain Sanders Bros. and Co.

There is also the perception that Harbor Island only had low-income and African American residents, but our community was very diverse. There were many hardworking, working class professionals, as well as students, elderly and disabled residents. Ethnically, we had a mini-UN, as there were also Latinos, Filipinos, Asians, Africans, Europeans and people of many other nationalities who were affected as well.

The city, hesitantly, filed a lawsuit on our behalf to have a temporary injunction to halt the tenancy terminations. After a legal move by the 15 Group to send the case to federal court, a judge ruled that the city had no standing to sue on behalf of residents. However, the judge did say if, 15 Group attorney, Mark Hartney, “was selling a bill of goods” that there would be, “trouble in river city,” but that trouble never materialized. Many felt that the lawsuit was a false hope that was too little too late, but many appreciated the gesture. Housing Authority Director, Mike Pucci, was quoted by Hartney as in favor of the move-out, as it would help with the “deconcentration of poverty.” Pucci, who originally recommended relocation benefits of \$250 to assist residents, practically made the 15 Group look like Good Samaritan with their “moving stipend” of \$1000. Not only was it not nearly enough to cover the moving costs associated with moving, but tenants had to completely vacate their residences to receive the money. On top of that, the check my mother received bounced. Had we been dependent on receiving that money to move, I don’t know what our current situation would be.

Through our search for apartments, it was discovered that many local landlords did not know of the Rental Assistance Fair, and had many vacant units. Many landlords also sympathized with residents and offered to lower deposits, waive application fees and credit checks.

I felt grossly disrespected by all the landlords who were unseen until someone whispered rent control at a city council meeting. Landlords then came out in full force to defeat proposed legislation for relocation benefits and the prevention of future mass evictions in complexes with over 40 units. One landlord even had the gall, to wait until December, a month after our Nov 3, move-out date to promote his, “How to Find an Apartment” videotape.

Former city councilwoman, Barbara Kerr on her website asks, “So what is the problem?” with mass evictions. Kerr then points out three other complexes near the Bayport-Catellus Project, the Atlantic Apts (186 units), Alameda Park Apts (64 units), and Garden Court Apts (63 units), which total about 313 units. Assuming these units are occupied by families, and factoring the 40% vacancy rate at Harbor Island last summer, there could be a potentially devastating repeat in my neighborhood with very similar demographics. That is a problem, which needs a solution.

The 15 Group caused the school district lose \$4.3 million through the loss of school aged

youth and the College of Alameda is also suffering from low enrollment. There is also the uncalculated loss to local business, especially on the West End. Finally, there is the psychological damage inflicted by such a traumatic experience.

There were also two deaths related to the forced move. One woman suffered a miscarriage due to the stress she experienced, and my friend's grandmother, whose doctor advised them not to move due to her condition, moved and soon after passed away from pneumonia. We all wondered if we were being rushed out to prevent a mass health suit, as there were unexplained signs posted earlier that year indicating we were at risk of respiratory damage in our buildings.

The last lease didn't even expire until June, had our children not been forced to interrupt their studies and adults been allowed the time to make proper arrangements, many residents would have been glad to stop paying slumlords for false promises of future improvements.

I believe there was an organized effort to remove our community from Alameda. The fiscal damage to the school district only expedited the agenda to close a West End school within two years time. The removal of the low-income population only served the city's goal to raise median income. Historically, Alameda housing segregation trends has placed 30% of Alameda's 6% African American population in census tract 4276; this was a three month reversal of said trend.

The Guyton settlement of 1993 also required the city to increase its affordable housing stock by 1995, which the city has yet to achieve. There should be an independent study of not only the effect of the tenancy terminations, but of the policy of Measure A, because this was surely a byproduct of its economic and social consequences.

There is also a need for a citywide tenant's alliance. The purpose of this organization is not to create a divide between tenants and landlords, as the relationship is interdependent, but tenants should know their rights. No one in Alameda, or anywhere, should ever have to live in the conditions we did, or be put through an experience such as ours.

*Retrieved from Indybay, Reginald James, "It's been one year since over 400 families were exiled from Alameda," Indybay, November 7, 2005, <  
<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2005/11/07/17818381.php> >, accessed November 1, 2012. I share some of my personal experience and the impact of the Buena Vista tenancy terminations on my self-identity in Reginald James, "Buena Vistas: A Good View of Blackness," in *Evolution of a Premature Revolutionary, African American Studies 100*, December 2012, in possession of author, available online at: <  
<http://issuu.com/reginaldjames/docs/aas100-memoir-jamesr-2012-booklet> >.*

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