

Who is "Stand For Oakland"? What do they really want?

An info brief for Occupy Oakland

On Monday, February 6 a small group of protesters calling themselves "Stand For Oakland" gathered at 11:45 in front of City Hall. A single publicity notice for the protest was widely circulated on local blogs and neighborhood email lists at least several days prior. Verbatim, it reads;

"Come take a "Stand for Oakland" with Residents, Merchants and Downtown Businesses who have been the silent majority.

"On Monday, residents of Oakland will make a peaceful, visual statement opposing the vandalizing and terrorizing of our city - costing millions of dollars in security and lost revenue and causing a forced re-prioritization of citizen calls, on an already strapped police force, due to downtown chaos and violence.

"Oakland is worth Standing up for. Look for the arm bands, and come get one: stand in solidarity with Oakland."¹

This call, obviously, but not by name, targeting Occupy Oakland as a source of "terror" and "violence," invokes multiple other tropes that have been used by business lobbyists and political authorities in attempts to undermine support for the local Occupy movement. It calls on "residents" to oppose "vandalism" and "terrorism," implying subtly that these acts are committed by non-resident outsiders. The call also invokes the loss of security to "citizens" because of "downtown chaos and violence," which in turn invokes various racial images in a city like Oakland where many residents are in fact non-citizen immigrants. Downtown Oakland has for decades been a synonym for black and immigrant poverty in the eyes of residents of the Oakland hills and surrounding, more affluent and whiter cities and suburbs.

No contact information, sponsorships, authorship, or any other identifier appeared on the "Stand For Oakland" invitation. It is difficult to tell who is actually behind the event. Further confusion is sown due to the fact that the anti-recall effort supporting Jean Quan is called "Stand With Oakland."

Based on background research into some of the persons who appeared at the "Stand For Oakland" protest, and who spoke to the press on the group's behalf, and upon emails sent through neighborhood lists, it is our tentative conclusion that "Stand For Oakland" is likely the production of a handful of relative conservative Oakland political activists, and several members of the Oakland business lobby. They have, however, tapped a genuine frustration among many centrist liberals who for a variety of reasons feel alienated from Occupy Oakland, and who have been swayed by the now predominant framing —spread now incessantly by most major newspapers and TV stations— of the movement as causing "violence."

¹<http://oaklandlocal.com/posts/2012/02/stand-oakland-community-event-called-downtown-monday-feb-6>

The conservatives

Two prominent voices at the "Stand For Oakland" rally quoted by news media were Marilyn Singleton and Nancy Sidebotham.² According to the the San Jose Mercury News, Singleton and Sidebotham "support the original message of Occupy Oakland but are now concerned that the movement has been taken over by a fringe group that advocates violence."

Marilyn Singleton is as a 64 year-old Oakland resident, but no other information is given by the news media about whether she actually has supported the "original message" of Occupy Oakland. A web search for information on Singleton cast serious doubt on this claim.

Singleton is a candidate for Congress running against Barbara Lee. She is a conservative black Republican. A Youtube video posted by the Solano Tea Party Patriots features Singleton as their "special guest speaker" at a BBQ last September. A caption in the video identifies her as a "Tea Party Candidate."³

A screenshot of a Facebook profile for Marilyn Singleton for Congress. The profile picture shows a woman with dark hair wearing a blue blazer. The page header includes the Facebook logo and a search bar. Below the profile picture are tabs for Wall, Info, Friend Activity, and Photos. The 'Info' tab is selected, showing details such as Location (P.O. Box 2767, Oakland, CA 94602), Currently Running For (Office: Congress, State: California, District: 13th (formerly 9th), Party: Nonpartisan), About (I am running for Congress in the 13th (formerly 9th) District (West Alameda...)), Description (I am a concerned citizen who wants to put Washington on a diet...), Biography (I have been a physician (anesthesiologist) since 1973...), and Political Views (Conservative). There are 58 likes and 2 comments visible on the page.

Marilyn Sigleton's Facebook Page, Accessed Feb. 7, 2021.

Singleton is a member of "Republicans for Black Empowerment," a social networking site established to connect conservative black political activists. According to the group's web site, Republicans for Black Empowerment "believe misinformation rather than adequate 'return on investment' cements black allegiance to the Democratic Party."⁴

Singleton appears to agree with this tenet. On another member's wall she wrote last year: "I am in Oakland, another place where black folks are in serious need of education about how the Democratic Party has merely used them for votes, but given nothing in return."⁵

On her Facebook page Singleton describes herself as a "nonpartisan" "conservative." Along with her background in medicine —she has been an anesthesiologist since 1973— Singleton describes herself as "a concerned citizen who wants to put Washington on a diet." She says that if elected to Congress, she would "promote policies that renew our spirit of personal responsibility, create a business-friendly environment, encourage community and market-based solutions to social problems, and foster a free society guided by a moral compass." Her platform is, in to sum it up, one of austerity and punishment similar to that of the national Republican Party.

² http://www.mercurynews.com/occupy/ci_19903621

³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgnTG_nw7SE&feature=player_embedded#!

⁴ <http://blackgop.ning.com/>

⁵ http://blackgop.ning.com/group/rbecalifornia?groupUrl=rbecalifornia&xg_source=activity&id=2623483%3AGroup%3A3943&page=2#comments

Her Facebook wall is filled with links to various ultra-conservative web sites. For example, on January 6 of this year she linked an article detailing claims by a Heritage Foundation fellow that "voter fraud is all too common in America today," and that "voter ID prevents election fraud." Singleton takes various anti-immigrant positions on her campaign web site. For example, among the five major issues she presents is "illegal immigration."

Following the link provided Singleton explains, "illegal immigration is not about ethnicity; it is about our safety and security. We cannot have drug dealers, human traffickers, terrorists, and weapons freely crossing our borders – North and South."⁶

These references to "terrorists" and "security" somewhat echo the "Stand For Oakland" rally's invitation in referencing "citizen" and "violence" and "chaos." Singleton expresses dissatisfaction with current policies allowing ICE access to local jails and police departments where the agency can identify and deport undocumented persons. According to Singleton, "more needs to be done." Singleton expresses dissatisfaction at "illegal workers" who "use our medical, social, and educational services without contributing." She expresses support for the anti-immigrant policies of the Vernon K. Krieble Foundation.⁷

On education issues she says she would, "introduce legislation to eliminate the Department of Education," as would former GOP presidential primary candidate Rick Perry ("Oops!"). She promotes charter schools as the solution to educational inequality; "we must remove restrictive barriers to opening new charter schools, private schools, and home schooling co-ops, especially in the minority and economically depressed communities."⁸

On taxes and the economy Singleton expresses a pro-corporate and pro-wealth attitude, saying, "excessive corporate taxation destroys jobs, entrepreneurship, and innovation," and calls for budget cutting measures at the federal level. "The ultimate cure is to stop the out-of-control spending and stop the waste and duplication of agencies and services."⁹

As part of her campaign against Rep. Barbara Lee, Singleton attempted to link Rep. Lee with Occupy Oakland in a letter to the Oakland Tribune on January 31;

"One group of protesters invaded the YMCA. Some threw rocks and bottles and tore down fencing outside the Kaiser Convention Center. Many broke into City Hall (which was closed for the weekend), where they burned flags, broke an electrical box and damaged several art



Marilyn Singleton addressing a Tea Party rally, Sept. 2011.

⁶ http://singletonforcongress.org/index.html?ifrm_2=illegalimmigration.html

⁷ <http://www.krieble.org/>

⁸ http://singletonforcongress.org/index.html?ifrm_2=education.html

⁹ http://singletonforcongress.org/index.html?ifrm_2=economy.html

structures, including a children's recycled art exhibit.

Yet our congressional representative, Barbara Lee, has supported the protesters, believing they should be allowed to "occupy whatever spaces they are occupying," including overnight stays in public areas.

Despite the protesters' purposefully provoking the police, she has asserted that the police "overreacted" to this "nonviolent movement."

Despite her support for the Occupy Oakland demonstrations, Lee has said that she had not gone, nor planned to go, to the site of the Oakland protests.

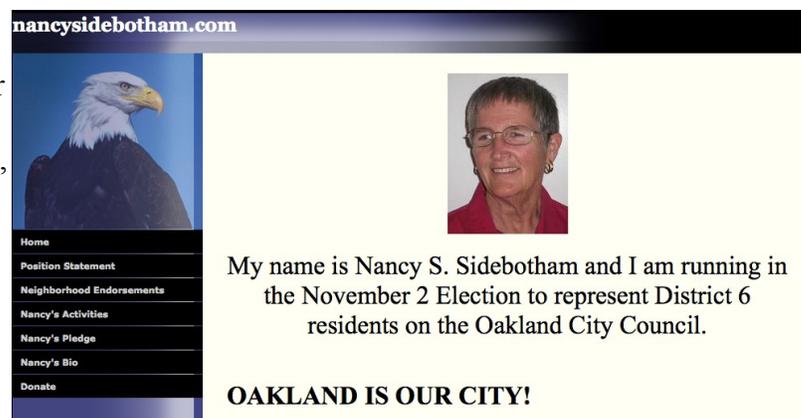
Our police now are being monitored by federal overseers, but who is providing guidance and encouragement for peaceful protests? It certainly is not our federal representative."¹⁰

Singleton appears to be a resident of the Oakland hills due to the fact that her son attended the more exclusive Skyline High School.¹¹

As for her political philosophy (perhaps it would be more accurate to say consciousness?), among other things she explains that: "...the existence of bigotry should never be used to skirt the rule of law, excuse bad behavior, or to fuel class and race warfare," and that she sees: "no value in bashing 'the rich'." Politicians would like you to equate 'the rich' with private jets and those who 'shop till you drop.' The 'rich' are mostly people of modest means who have moved up the ladder of success."

Nancy Sidebotham is a pro-Oakland Police Department activists who has run for city council on several occasions. Her pro-police advocacy has been so intense, she explains on a past campaign web site, "that I have been the target of a drive-by shooting because I stood on the side of the police."¹²

Sidebotham's political activism spans other issues, from fighting to obtain streetlights in dark sections of her neighborhood, to forming merchants groups, opposing the construction of big box stores in East Oakland, and fighting PG&E utility surtaxes. She has put most energy into pro-police activities, however. Sidebotham chairs a Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council, neighborhood groups that cooperate and which are funded by the police, and which use police officer staff resources.¹³



Nancy Sidebotham's 2010 campaign web site for City council, accessed via the Wayback Machine..

Sidebotham's last web postings for her campaign for City Council in 2010 was headlined "OAKLAND IS OUR CITY!" It explains her opposition to any budget cuts affecting the police department, and opposition to policies such as Quan's 100 block plan that would have focused police resources in areas experiencing the highest levels of violent crime:

"I am a very strong advocate of hiring qualified individuals to become Oakland Police Officers

¹⁰ http://www.insidebayarea.com/opinion/ci_19861663

¹¹ http://singletonforcongress.org/index.html?ifrm_2=bio.html

¹² <http://web.archive.org/web/20010419073358/http://www.nancysidebotham.com/page361394.htm>

¹³ <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/CityAdministration/d/NSD/DOWD005094>

and fully staffing the Department to the level that represents the population of this wonderful city. Micro-management of OPD by politics and the politicians has got to stop. The laws are very clear; OPD's function is to uphold them and to serve and protect the citizen's of Oakland. The crime in Oakland is citywide not just in one or two neighborhoods. Once OPD is allowed to function as a full department vs. one of maintenance, we will start to see positive change, which in turn will bring down crime. Through the great programs of Neighborhood Watch (NW), Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council's (NCPC) and the philosophy of Community Policing, until recently, these have been a driving force that has brought partnering to a new level between the community and OPD."¹⁴

Sidebotham's political philosophy seems to be a mixed kind of anti-corporate populism with strong support for the police state. She does not seem to understand that broad swaths of Oakland's communities do not identify with or trust the police due to past and current patterns and practices of racial profiling, brutality, and other abuses.

Sidebotham, like others who attended the "Stand For Oakland" rally, is a supporter of the recall effort targeting Mayor Jean Quan.¹⁵



Pro-police activist Angela Haller

Joining Sidebotham at the "Stand For Oakland" rally was Angela Haller, another East Oakland foothills resident who is the Crime & Safety Team Chair for Beat 22X Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council. Haller has also advocated for increasing the police department's budget and is a long-time pro-police activist.¹⁶

The Business Lobby

The Public Policy Director of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce Paul Junge participated in and helped publicize the "Stand For Oakland" rally. Prior to joining the Chamber, Junge's LinkedIn account¹⁷ shows that he was an "options trader" at the Cutler Group, LP, a financial corporation



Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Director Paul Junge's Facebook page, including recent activity such as liking "Jobs Not Tents," and answering "no" to a poll asking "do you support the Occupy Wall Street Movement."

¹⁴ <http://web.archive.org/web/20110211042856/http://nancysidebotham.com/>

¹⁵ <http://oaklandnorth.net/2011/10/26/group-seeks-to-recall-oakland-mayor-jean-quan/>

¹⁶ <http://macarthurmetro.org/201004/news/3835>

¹⁷ <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/paul-junge/12/805/44>

headquartered on Montgomery Street in San Francisco that trades in equity derivatives.¹⁸ Prior to this Junge was a television news anchor.

Junge has never pretended to identify with the goals of Occupy. His Facebook page in fact reveals that he voted "no" in response to a poll asking "do you support the Occupy Wall Street Movement?" Junge and the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce appear to be behind the Facebook group "Jobs Not Tents," which in spite of its meager following of just 54 Facebook users, has attempted to publicize various anti-Occupy Oakland articles and press releases, mostly other Chamber propaganda.

Joining Junge at the "Stand For Oakland" protest was local real estate developer Phil Tagami.¹⁹ Tagami achieved notoriety during earlier protests when he patrolled the Rotunda Building, which he owns, with a shotgun, threatening to murder protesters. Tagami appears in CBS video footage of the "Stand For Oakland" protest as another anti-Occupy activists ties an armband on him.²⁰



Real estate developer and anti-Occupy business leader Phil Tagami gets an armband from Angela Haller at the "Stand For Oakland" rally.

Another "Stand For Oakland" participant, Daud Abdullah, said of Phil Tagami when he was appointed to the State Lottery Panel in January of this year by current Governor, and former Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown (a friend of Tagami's); "Truly a really good person has been put in this position."²¹ Tagami is a key player in the downtown Oakland business lobby. In the early 2000s he occupied a seat on the Port of Oakland's board. He has exerted intense pressure on city politicians to eradicate Occupy Oakland, which like Junge he has never pretended to support.

The "Citizens" and "Residents"

The above mentioned Daud Abdullah who has expressed admiration for Tagami appears to be a centrist, Democratic-Party leaning Oakland resident and civic activist. Abdullah was quoted in multiple news articles about the "Stand For Oakland" rally. He has been rewarded by conservative members of the City Council for unknown "services." Libby Schaaf—currently co-sponsoring legislation targeting Occupy that calls for the city to "use whatever lawful tools we have [...] to prevent future shutdowns or disruptions of any port operations"—gifted Abdullah two Oakland A's tickets last summer for "service to the City of Oakland."²²

Another Oakland "resident," Ken Woolfe, is pictured in a San Francisco Chronicle article that describes him as "exasperated" after talking to Occupy Oakland activists at the "Stand For Oakland" event.²³ Woolfe, according to public records, appears to be a home owner in the Dimond neighborhood. He is a semi-retired employee of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He made small campaign

¹⁸ <http://www.cutlergroup.com/index.html>

¹⁹ http://www.insidebayarea.com/top-stories/ci_19903622

²⁰ <http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2012/02/06/occupy-oakland-protesters-counter-protesters-gather-at-city-hall/>

²¹ <http://www.ibabuzz.com/politics/2012/01/11/brown-names-oaklands-tagami-to-lottery-panel/>

²² <http://www.oaklandnet.com/form802/Default.asp?id=5031>

²³ <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/02/06/BA0M1N3L93.DTL>

contributions to Barack Obama in 2008.

Email messages sent via the Dimond Neighborhood listserv and other email lists connecting homeowners, mostly in the middle class foothill areas of the city, but also in some pockets of the flatlands, show mixed levels of support for the "Stand For Oakland" rally. Dialog over the web indicates that the rally was more than just the product of pro-police and conservative activists and Chamber of Commerce representatives. One "neighbor" posting on an Oakland list is representative of the mood;

"[the press] took picture of my sign "Occupy Wall St. not Oakland". Some who stood by us were from OO and were dismayed about the violence but felt ineffective in stopping it. If we did any good - it may have been to have OO notice the violence is destructive to the movement and how they are losing support of the community. I think that concerns them - we were invited to come to their meeting. Maybe we should - but people are feeling that they would be shouted down - maybe we should anyway. BTW everyone mentioned that they still support the original concept of OO."

Another "neighbor" from East Oakland communicates a more complex position than the leaders and spokespersons of the "Stand For Oakland" rally over a neighborhood list;

"Stand for Oakland is a reaction to the mayhem. It's not about the corruption of government, the abuse of power, the grand theft of our resources and the destruction of the middle class. I understand how it happened and why it's there. But it's a reaction to a reaction to a reaction... I am far more interested in your second point; which is our citizens figuring out ways to take back our Occupy and behave appropriately. Making it inhospitable for those who cannot abide by non-violent civil disobedience is exactly what has to happen and any of us being an armchair quarterback or joining some other group isn't going to help."

Whether one agrees or not with these characterizations of Occupy Oakland and its internal dynamics, what is apparent is that the pro-police, conservative, and business lobbyists at the forefront of Monday's "Stand For Oakland" rally do not speak for, nor do they even understand the alienation and miscommunication that is affecting Occupy Oakland's relationship to many Oaklanders today. They are attempting to capitalize upon it, however.

Occupy's organizers, especially those who were central to planning the January 28 actions that were subject to intense police violence and media disinformation, should attempt to better understand this popular dissatisfaction lest more reactionary, anti-democratic voices take the lead as they did on Monday.