

EASTWEST

LATE JULY 2014

an anarchist newspaper

ALWAYS FREE



▶ DONT BEG FOR CRUMBS ◀ TAKE THE WHOLE CAKE

On July 15th, 2014, the Oakland City Council held a meeting where the public was allowed to comment on the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP) and the future of the neighborhood. As would be expected, gentrifiers and white business interests took the mic to extoll the virtues of the WOSP and encourage the council to vote yes during **the final vote on July 29th**. But mixed within these gentrifiers and developers were black people from West Oakland who also wanted the WOSP to pass, but for entirely different and far more depressing reasons.

A black old-timer from West Oakland took the podium before the Council. He first turned and addressed the black West Oakland diaspora in the audience, thanking them for coming all the way out from "the valley."

He began by saying he had read a lot of words condemning the plan, but he believed some of the WOSP was useful. He explained that black people in West Oakland had been fighting a long time to get better services, better roads, better schools, grocery stores, and all of the things people in Rockridge have. They have been fighting for this for 40 years, and now that the WOSP was here, the black community finally had its chance to get something from the city.

In one sad moment, the old-timer explained his position clearly. He said, "*We gotta build a San Francisco Embar-*

cadero East, build a large project, because we know when the unions descend, and the developers and unions get in the room, they're going to cut us out. SO WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CRUMBS ARE BIG CRUMBS. We want to make sure that the pieces are big enough so that we can build some substantial stuff in West Oakland once and for all."

This person has been reduced to begging for crumbs from the Council, believing it to be the only way they will listen and finally build the services West Oakland has lacked. The City Council never felt it necessary to build a sound wall along the BART tracks in West Oakland, but now that gentrifiers might move in, they are finally going to build one to block the screeching noise poor black people have had to live with for decades (*see picture above*).

West Oakland has been ravaged by the city's ruling class for the past 60 years. Now that it has been heavily damaged, the vultures are ready to swoop in. The WOSP will not fix West Oakland. It will bring service positions and temporary construction jobs and thousands of rich people. The new infrastructure will be for the rich invaders, not the black community. We don't need the Council or their developer friends to fix our neighborhoods. We can do it ourselves. **Go to the last City Council meeting on July 29th and tell them they can keep their miserable crumbs.**

THE LITTLE HOUSE

A STUDY IN URBAN LAND STRUGGLE

So then, take the lands. The law says that you can't take them, that they're private property; but that law was written by those who hold you in slavery. It is not a social necessity if it requires the force of arms to uphold it.

-Ricardo Flores Magón, 1910

The little house was an attempt to seize land in a working class neighborhood of Oakland. The house was made of six wood pieces, twelve cinder blocks, and several dozen screws. The six pieces of the house (a floor, four walls, and a roof) were all assembled at a different location and then brought to the land. Six people were able to comfortably carry one wall. Four people were able to carry one wall with a few breaks. Three people assembled the house in forty minutes. The house was 8 feet by 8 feet, given that these are the dimensions of commercial plywood. The house had two sliding glass windows and a locking door. A proper corrugated roof would be installed later in the season.

A piece of land for the house had already been selected. We told all but two of the close neighbors that we were going to build housing and a garden. All of them said they were okay with it. With this consent of the immediate neighborhood, we began leveling the land for the house, clearing all of the dry overgrowth, laying down mulch, and installing garden terraces. The land consisted of one flat stretch above a slope, overlooking another flat stretch. We planned to terrace the entire slope, build five houses on the flat areas, and buy a goat, among other things.

The land on which the little house was built belongs to no one. But in this world of owners and property, it did have a name attached to it. He was a small business man from Oakland who had lost his house in a landslide. The land where the house used to be is now slowly being taken away from him by the bank. We decided to call him

and ask if we could build a community garden and a garden shed. This was not the entire truth, given that we had every intention of creating housing. He said yes to our modified intentions and we proceeded to carry the first pieces of the house to the land. We laid the foundation, put the floor in place, and were ready to return to a nearby house when the three OPD officers arrived. They said we could have our garden but we should not build anything. They admitted they had no authority, but their presence was a warning. And then they left.

When we came back the next morning, unknown vigilantes had thrown the pieces down the slope and left a note saying they would call the police. Luckily they did not damage the floor or the wall piece. Three of us pulled them back up from the slope, put the floor where it had been, and left a note explaining we had permission, told them to leave us alone, and reminded them that we do not call the cops and can settle everything face to face. There were no more attempts to damage the house, but for the next three mornings strange notes were tied to the fence adjacent to the land, telling us to leave for various reasons, the strangest of which was because



we were “zombie children.”

The people responsible for these acts were American libertarian men in the house across the street. They used the land as a dumping ground for waste and did not want to lose it. One man associated with this space expressed extremely racist and bigoted opinions about black people (he was also black). After the incident, we confronted these men and received only the assurance that if we minded our business, they would mind theirs. This turned out not to be the case.

We kept watch over the land the night after the first incident, sitting in the shadows and gazing at the view of Oakland in the distance and the valley below us. The next day, five of us drove the remaining pieces to the land in

THE SIEGE OF HIGHLAND AVENUE

On the morning of July 8th, 2014, dozens of OPD officers locked down the entire block between E. 24th and E. 25th Street. They were looking for two car-jacking subjects who had fled from a stolen car and barricaded themselves inside different buildings. The media referred to this neighborhood as Highland Park, demonstrating their ignorance of local geography. The neighborhood is called the Dubbs or the 20's, and refers to every street from E. 20th to the 580 freeway, with 23rd Avenue acting as its heart. But on the TV and internet broadcasts, it suddenly became Highland Park.

The night before, a 59 year old man was on his phone on the hill above Grand Lake Theater, relaxing in his nice car, when a 16 and a 17 year old suddenly were standing beside his window, pointing pistols at him. The two young men relieved the old man of his Mercedes and drove off into the night. It is unknown what these two did that evening, but at 10:30 the next morning, they were spot-



ted by an OPD cruiser. The two took off in the Mercedes, stopping along E. 24th Street and then bolting in different directions. The officer called for back up, and soon 20 cruisers had created a three block perimeter around the car.

An OPD helicopter began circling at a low altitude over the neighborhood. Fontana Hill, 17, had barricaded himself into an apartment complex on E. 24th. Quinn Edwards, 16, was crawling through the bushes, undetected by the police. Around noon, the SWAT team arrived in an armored personnel carrier and surrounded the apartment complex. A SWAT sniper team commandeered the roof of a two story house on E. 25th Street, giving them a view of the entire valley. Hill waited them out for hours while the neighborhood began gathering at the different perimeter blockades. An ABC7 news helicopter soon joined the OPD in circling the air. On the ground, the press congregated

near various police blockades, taking pictures and waiting with their video cameras for something sensational.



After four hours of holding out, a shirtless Fontana Hill surrendered to the heavily armed military force and was taken to a nearby cruiser and taken downtown. The SWAT team, dressed in camouflage fatigues and wielding assault rifles, then began to march down the street. There were fourteen of these men, accompanied by two police dogs. They went wherever they pleased, barging into backyard after backyard, disregarding the feelings of everyone on the block. The media reported that nearby homes were evacuated, but this author saw only occupied homes being surrounded and searched. In several cases, residents frantically pleaded with the police to move on. All the while,



the SWAT snipers above them pointed their rifles at every open window and bush that the ground team approached. But after nearly an hour of searching a dozen houses, the SWAT team gave up their search.

It is unclear what happened next, but eventually Quinn Edwards was apprehended. The media claims he surrendered, although there are conflicting accounts as to where he did this. The Mercury claims he was found in the same apartment complex Hill was in. Both were ultimately taken downtown and before being shipped to Santa Rita. On July 16th, both young men were charged with armed carjacking and armed second-degree robbery. Both will be

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one car. Two people left, leaving three of us to put it up the little house. We accomplished this with only one ladder, a stool, our hands, and one drill with an impact driver. That night, one person slept in the house and woke up the next morning on the land, unharmed, undisturbed. This person saved \$500 to purchase the materials for the house washing dishes in San Francisco. He has been homeless for the past four years. His intention was to build a house for himself on the land.

There were approximately eleven people who participated throughout the entire project, and none of them were ever together in the same place at the same time. All contributed to every aspect of the project in some manner or other. But after the construction was over, there was no more than three people actually holding the land. The majority of the time, there were only two. At night, there would only be one person there, sleeping on their bed.



The major conflict began when a lawyer from across the street began giving us the evil eye. Although she knew about our garden and had initially supported it, we did not tell her that someone would be living there. We knew the neighborhood hated her. A few of us already knew the neighbors from a previous squatted house. A family from Michoacán that we knew was evicted a month prior thanks to her “activism.” When we first met her, she said she had helped get a family of drug dealers off the block and identified herself as a community activist. This was entirely repulsive to us, so we did not tell her someone would be living in the house. When she became aware of the resident, her evil eye emerged.

We saw her plotting with the libertarians the next day, conspiring against us. It was clear we had little time and that something was going to happen. Through the entirety of these five days, six bean plants were planted in the first terraces, the soil was replenished below an avocado tree

that was falling down, and an EZLN star was painted on the side of the little house. This was in solidarity with Galeano, the fallen comrade of the EZLN, killed by paramilitaries in his autonomous community in Chiapas, a place where the land is held in common and respected by the indigenous inhabitants.

Our comrade spent his final night in the little house. The next morning, the supposed owner of the land arrived in a truck with his employee. He told us we had gone too far, that the lawyer had sicked the City, the OPD, and the OFD on him, that we had created too many waves, and that we had to go. He then went up the hill into the lawyers house. Hidden away, looking down at us, she told them whatever lies she wanted to tell. We smoked a cigarette with the owners employee, waiting in the company truck. He told us we were doing a good thing, we just shouldn't go too far, as in we should not have built the little house. When the owner emerged from the lawyers big house on the hill, he asked if we understood that we were no longer welcome. We asked him if we could continue the garden, and he replied that if we got the lawyer off his back, we would be good to go.

After this encounter, the OPD arrived in four cruisers. They completely blocked off the one way alley and brought the entire neighborhood to the streets. They informed us that the little house would have to be removed by the next morning. Without the owners permission, which we now officially did not have, we would be arrested. They remained in the alley for half an hour to try and intimidate everyone, then they left. The immediate neighbors adjacent to the land, all of them from Mexico, were firmly on our side. The Chinese group up the street was also on our side. The old black family at the top of the street simply wanted us to stay out of jail and out of trouble. Everyone in the neighborhood had seen us work the land for long hours in the sun. By our counting, around 85% of the long one way street was on our side. However, our comrade did not want to lose \$500 worth of his labor, so we agreed to leave.

The next morning, five people disassembled and moved the house in less than an hour using only one car. After that, we put up fliers explaining the situation in depth to the neighborhood and stated we would be back on a specific date. This was counter-information in order to preoccupy the lawyer with something that would not happen. Most of the neighborhood already knew what was going on, siding with us against the libertarians and the lawyer. Maybe in another country, these people would be the paramilitaries, more concerned with losing their free trash dump than freeing the land, saving the avocado tree, creating free housing, and growing food.



In 1911, Ricardo Flores Magón wrote, *“If the land is divided and each family has a plot, besides the grave danger of falling again into the capitalist system, [the family] will have to work more or less like it does today under the system of private property in order to obtain the same mean result. But if the land is held and worked in common, the workers will labor less and produce more. Of course there will be no lack of land for everyone to have their own house, as well as a good plot to put to use however they want.”* While he wrote this, different indigenous Mayan tribes in the south of Mexico and the Yaqui tribe in the north were fighting against the Mexican state, aligned with Magóns PLM movement. That same year, the PLM took over the entirety of northern Baja, from Mexicali to Tijuana. This anarchist movement fought under the banner of Land and Freedom.

The struggle for land is still as important and possible as it was in those days, when anarchists and radicals from across California volunteered to invade Baja. Their movement only grew because of the poverty of the workers, the opulence of the rulers, and the oppression of the state. It was clear who the enemy was, just as the solutions were clear, a situation not unlike today. We need to take land, and we need to take it as quickly as possible. Nothing has changed.

If you take anything from this account, let it be this: if 100 people had been involved in this experiment, it would have triggered something. What we did was completely replicable and will be repeated numerous times in the future. We have no doubt that it will catch on and inspire those who learn of it. We were not strong enough to break all of the laws for long, but we succeeded for five days with a mere two of us guarding the land at night without guns. We hope we are only stating the obvious.

**FOR WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS, FENCES,
OR PROPERTY!**

LONG LIVE ANARCHY!

charged as adults.

In the case of this robbery, the stolen Mercedes was returned to the owner and no one was physically injured. Nevertheless, the state is going to seek heavy retribution and will attempt to make an example of these two. Rather than allow them to enter juvenile hall after sentencing, the state wants to throw them into prison and try them as adults. In the week between June 2nd and June 8th, the OPD reported 91 car thefts within the city limits. It would seem that Fontana Hill and Quinn Edwards are some of the few to be caught. Their next court date is July 22nd, before this issue goes to print.

The entire siege of Highland Avenue was undertaken in order to return a car to its owner and capture two young men bold enough to steal from the rich. The forty armed men and women assigned to capture them were mobilized for one cause: private property. Unfortunately, such military lockdowns are common in Oakland and most long time residents have seen them play out year after year, growing numb to their occurrence. To become resigned to such a reality is to become resigned to military occupation, a state we must not fall into. To fight the OPD occupations of our neighborhoods, we offer three simple steps for a basic resistance to these lockdowns.

1 - SURROUND THE PERIMETER

If the police succeed in establishing a perimeter in your neighborhood, get all of your friends and neighbors to surround that perimeter. Do not let anything enter and leave the scene, and create a scene of disorder at the margins of the occupation.

2 - FILM-TEXT-CALL

If you are caught within the perimeter or are nearby a police assault, film everything you can. If you are able to seen live Tweets or internet updates of the situation, do so as much possible. Call your friends and tell them to spread the words and images as far as possible.

3 - TELL THEM TO LEAVE

From every direction, tell the police they must leave, regardless of the situation. Do not let them feel welcome. Be as loud as possible. If enough people want the police tanks and snipers out of their neighborhood, they will get them out. We can only encourage this. Stay safe, stay free.

BOOTS TO OUR NECKS GUNS TO OUR HEADS

People took to the streets across the Bay Area against Israel's now month long onslaught against the impoverished and densely populated Gaza Strip. Israeli troops and armored columns continued pushing into the territory in an invasion that bombarded the area from air, land, and sea. As of this writing, the death toll has risen over 600, while the number of wounded is in the thousands. What is unfolding in Gaza is a calculated and savage act of collective punishment and war against a largely defenseless population carried out with the full and open support of Washington and elites and governments across the globe.

In Turkey, demonstrators occupied and set fire to the Israeli consulate and in Paris, France, pro-Palestinian protests have been banned by the government and in response people have clashed with police and also disrupted rail-lines. Across the world, people marched and rallied as they attempted to expand the struggle of the Palestinian people to end the occupation.

But while people are hitting the streets in the Bay Area to protest Israel, many are unaware of the connection between the Israeli government and the city of Oakland. William "Bill" Bratton, is a former police chief and commissar that has worked extensively in New York, LA, Boston, and now Oakland.

In the wake of the Occupy revolts, Bratton was hired as a consultant for the city of Oakland in January of 2013. Likewise, Bratton has also consulted police departments in the UK in the wake of massive riots in response to a police murder. In recent years, Bratton has also worked with the Israeli Police (Mishteret Yisrael). Through Bratton, Israel and American police forces have traded notes on what they have in common – putting a boot to the throat of a large population of poor and oppressed people.

As **Electronic Intifada** wrote: "[Bratton and the] LAPD attended the Big Data Intelligence Conference in Herzliya, where officers salivated at the prospect of using invasive,

abuse-prone Israeli surveillance products (used to control Palestinians) on the people of Los Angeles (the brown, black and politically active ones, of course)." It's no surprise that OPD are now pushing for the use of drones and that the Department of Homeland Security is flooding the city with money towards mass surveillance projects such as the Domain Awareness Center, whose main goal was the monitoring of protests and social struggles. All the while, poverty and the stratification between rich and poor continues to skyrocket.

Bratton's recent comments at a security conference in Israel are very telling: "As my country moved into the 1980s there were several additional societal trends that began to have a significant negative impact on our ability to keep our streets safe. The growth of a drug market and a drug culture, particularly the more problematic drugs of

heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine. The increasing number of young people coming out of a society that was no longer educating them, no longer controlling them, a dissolution of many of the families in our society, particularly among the poor and in the minority communities."

Of course what Bratton doesn't mention is that these social problems were by and large brought on by rising unemployment, US wars such as Vietnam, and also the government pumping crack cocaine into the black community as a means to destabilize it and raise money

for the Contras (anti-communist forces) in Nicaragua. In the Bay Area, under Reagan's reign as governor, funds for higher education were also cut. Reagan "*didn't want people to go to school to protest*" in the wake of the Berkeley riots that Reagan personally had suppressed, leading to deaths and injuries.

Looking at Bratton's career, we see a pattern emerge. From the UK to Los Angeles, Bratton is brought in as a consultant in the wake of riots. In New York, his policies lead to the practice of 'stop and frisk' and paved the way for the



**CITY COUNCIL WOMAN LIBBY
SCHAFF AND BILL BRATTON**

mass incarceration of vast amounts of people as well as attacks on the squatting and guerrilla gardening movement in the 1990's.

Seeing the problem of insurgency among the poor as a problem of 'broken windows,' (that larger crimes and rebellion grow from smaller ones), police sought to clamp down hard on small and petty disturbances. As Bratton stated at the Israeli conference, "[*New York in the 1980s and 1990s was a very frightening experience to walk the streets — the aggressive beggars, the prostitutes, the gangs, the filth, the graffiti. It is a city today that is vibrant, it is alive, it is safe. On the subway system, the graffiti is gone, the beggars are gone, the vandalism is gone.*]" But of course, Bratton isn't talking about an improved quality of life in American society, especially in poor and working class communities. Instead, he's describing a perspective that sees everyone as a potential insurgent and every petty offense as a possible outbreak of rebellion.

The current police strategy uses the carrot as much the as the stick. Since the 1970s, US law enforcement began a program of 'community policing' in which departments sought to 'win the hearts and minds' of the population they were in turn harassing, arresting, and incarcerating. This combined effort of zero tolerance and community policing has come to be known as 'counter-insurgency,' the ultimate goal of which is the quelling of potential rebellion so that future uprisings and riots do not threaten the established order.

Like in New York, Bratton's approach to policing also helped facilitate gentrification. The massive stop and frisk searches, the climbing rate of incarceration, the sweeping up of homeless people, and the destruction of squats and autonomous zones – all helped pave the way for a rapidly gentrifying city. This is a process that is repeating itself in Oakland just as it did in New York and LA.

This year, from September 4-8, various local and regional police departments will converge in Oakland for the Urban Shield conference, which will help train police in various counter-insurgency techniques. Several years ago, police trained at Urban Shield to take out protesters carrying banners that read "We are the 99%!" and "No War For Oil!" This clearly shows who they are training to suppress.

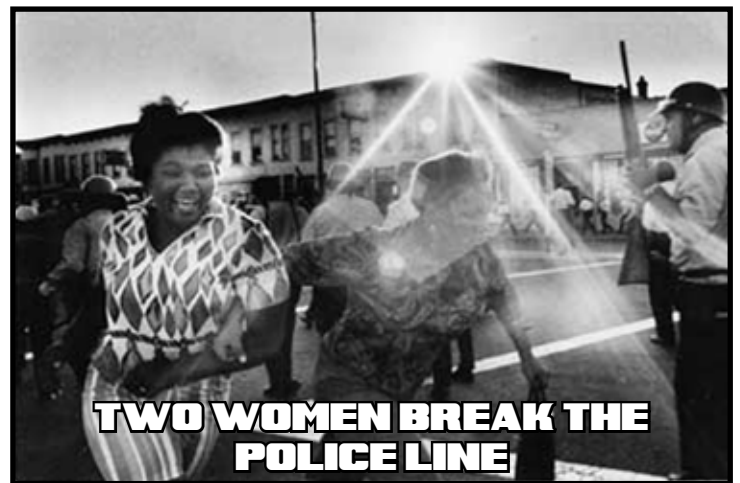
While the events happening in Gaza seem horrific and far away, there are clear connections between the government which oppresses and rules over us and the government that occupies Palestine. If those that rule over us are trading notes on how to contain our resistance, we too must link up with each other and expand our struggles

THE HUNTERS POINT RIOT OF 1966

On September 27th, 1966, several young black men were driving through Hunter's Point in a stolen car. Suddenly, an SFPD cruiser pulled them over, causing the young men to scatter in different directions. One officer pulled out his gun and shot Matthew Johnson in the back. Johnson was left in his own blood for an hour. He slowly died in front of hundreds of people.

The crowd that assembled around the murder scene could not be controlled. The police appointed mediators could not calm them, so an NAACP lawyer was sent in to contain the anger. The crowd threw rocks at the lawyer before chasing him away. Throughout the night, crowds burned and looted different buildings. The next day, the SFPD surrounded the Bayview Community Center and fired 100 rounds into it. Several terrified children were later found inside, none of them armed.

The National Guard and Highway Patrol were called in over the next four days as the riots spread to the Mission, Potrero Hill, and the Fillmore. Crowds threw rocks at the authorities, looted mostly white businesses,



and burnt or damaged over 30 SFPD cars from September 27th to October 1st, when the rebellion subsided. 146 people were arrested and 10 people suffered gunshot wounds from the police.

Later that October, Stokely Carmichael spoke at the Greek Theater in Berkeley. The event was in memory of Matthew Johnson and devoted to the discussion of black power. Carmichael and his group distributed hundreds of fliers with a picture of a black panther on it. This image of the panther, printed on a simple flier, was soon destined to take over Oakland...



EAST BERLIN - WEST OAKLAND

A trip through the East Berlin neighborhood of Friedrichshain might offer some familiar sights to those of us in the Bay Area, with graffiti covering practically every surface available. But upon closer inspection, there is a very important difference: underneath the countless tags of every color of spray paint and marker imaginable, it is not a vacant storefront. It is not a boarded up house, waiting to be renovated when the market says the time is right. Instead, what in America is largely considered the “ugly graffiti,” the tags, the throw-ups, all proliferates among what is widely considered a gentrified neighborhood.

Upscale cafes and boutique stores don't shy away from the onslaught of vandalism, and yuppies enjoy going home through a door with every inch covered in graffiti monikers. In East Berlin, and many other “alternative neighborhoods” throughout Germany, where even anarchist squats like Rote Flora (in Hamburg) or the assortment on Rigaerstrasse (in Berlin) have become tourist attractions, graffiti has been assimilated into the gentrifying culture.

Five and half thousand miles away, West Oakland is undergoing a similar gentrification process. As of this writing, the city is less than a week away from passing the West Oakland Specific Plan, or WOSP, which aims at transforming the area into extensions of Emeryville and Uptown. However, here graffiti plays a very different role. The West Oakland Specific Plan names graffiti particularly as one of a handful of obstacles that exist to carrying out their development fantasies.

But unfortunately, they aren't deterred, rather they come up with a variety of ways to combat graffiti without relying on implementing harsher punishments, something that rarely

works anyway. Instead they plan to discourage architecture with large blank walls, and use landscaping design to further impede vandals. The plan also mentions of using “security-based lighting” which will supposedly prevent potential criminals from taking advantage of low-light situations to remain unidentifiable.

On top of this, let's not forget how murals and beautiful graffiti (that is to say, street art) are used by property owners to deter vandalism. Murals are appearing rapidly all over the city, often by non-profit groups that work with city officials and business owners to stop blight. **While blight is not our goal and the murals themselves are often harmless if not fine pieces of work, it is important to recognize the role they play in gentrification.** Even illegal street art, such as wheat-pasted images are often preserved by



the property owner while erasing the tags around it. Sometimes they even attempt to restore the street art when it is tagged over.

All of this is an attempt to sterilize the neighborhood, to eliminate any trace that the law and order the bourgeoisie hold so dear isn't infallible. So why is graffiti so specifically targeted in West Oakland while East Berlin has bypassed it fairly easily? Is it because Oakland's graffiti is more dangerous while Berlin's is innocuous? Or does Oakland's graffiti present itself as an easier target?

We desire a world in which art and play are not divorced from everyday life – a reality which scares the bourgeois, the architects, and city-planners because it is not sterile and controlled. We also fight for a world where the means of existence are held in common and basic needs are met – the only way to end crime. Until then, graffiti can't stop – and won't stop.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 1ST - 6-9 PM - BLACK AUGUST CELEBRATION at Qilombo Social Space, 2313 San Pablo Ave, Oakland, CA. Featuring presentations from Ilyasah Shabazz, (Daughter of Malcolm X), Dhoruba bin Wahad, (member of NY Panther 21, Co-Founder of the BLA, former political prisoner), Ernesto Vigil, (former vice chair of Crusade for Justice).

AUGUST 2ND - 5 AM - BLOCK THE BOAT! Blockade Israeli Company ZIM in Solidarity with the People of Palestine. Meet at West Oakland BART at 5 AM where we will march to SSA Berth 57 of the Port at 5:10 SHARP!

AUGUST 2ND - 6:30 PM - WATER, LAND & CULTURAL SURVIVAL: ONGOING INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES IN CALIFORNIA. Station 40, San Francisco, 3030 B 16th Street (Near Mission Street). Speakers and short films about ongoing Chochenyo Ohlone and Winnemem Wintu struggles.\$5-\$20 donation requested at the door. No one turned away for lack of funds. There will be refreshments available and some items for sale. All money raised will go towards supporting upcoming Winnemem Wintu ceremony. There will be films and speakers to talk about the ongoing struggles.