

# The Impacts of Gentrification on Oakland's Black Community

By Ayat Jalal

I am Ayat Jalal, a 46 year old Black Seminole, son of Black Panthers. Because of them I've been president of a nonprofit corporation, and have had two businesses. I am a father-of-six, a founding member of "First They Came For The Homeless", member of The Village, carpenter, published poet, artist and organizer, who is currently couch surfing in Oakland.

Homeless, like the victims of unfair housing practices introduced to Oakland when Jerry Brown became Mayor, that denied public housing to families who had a member who was a felon. I am part of the 70 percent homeless Black population in Oakland, unable to find peace between the rent hikes and camp closures.

For the past 20 years, Blacks in Oakland have lost their homes to abatement laws and fines to the courts and bail bondsman. Generations and families that have only known Oakland as home, have lost the only anchor in the only communities they have known before Gentrification hit Oakland.

However, gentrification is nothing new. It's just a different name for the same colonial racism. The same systematic displacement and shaming of targeted populations. We minorities, who make up the majority of the population, have had our families and lives torn apart by unjust laws. Gang injunctions made our youth targets for wearing the same gear or same hats. Schools in Oakland are closed down and our children are harassed, cited and arrested by police. Given criminal charges. For not being in school. Our families lose strength and we're made unwhole and broken.

Our schools are still being closed, and housing blocked as an inhumane tactic of social and economic oppression of Oaklanders. And police are used like assassins, and pawns in this war to maintain poverty.

Our schools are still being closed, while police receive new equipment to hunt us down in the street like prey.

Affordable housing continues to be denied, while private industry builds prisons and above market rate housing.

Oaklanders still want decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings. And if the government and landlords will not give decent housing to the Red, Black, and Brown communities, then as my parents and the other Panther taught us, housing and the land needs to be made into cooperatives so that our communities, with the people's aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

The Civil Rights struggle has helped inspire the fight for human rights almost everywhere in the world. Black people once led that struggle. The assassination of our leaders, the flooding of our streets with drugs, the lack of adequate jobs and education, the inaccessibility of adequate housing, the decimation of the Black economic base - all destroyed our communities. And its cost us decades of cultural and generational attacks on Red, Yellow, Brown and Black people.

That struggle continues still. Still to this day, no matter the jury, no matter the administration, we're not judged by peers nor given proper government representation. The struggle continues. The silencing of protestors, the crystal meth and heroin epidemic currently flooding our communities, the closure of schools, the lack of access to jobs, the lack of adequate housing. Libby Shaft and Joe Devrey have repeated history. They have no compassion, nor the capacity to be humane. They have proven this in their actions during this emergency

crisis on homelessness. The current administration don't care about the culture or people of the Real Oakland - the Black, Red, Brown, working class and poor. And we need to do something about that. We insist The City Council turn the Housing Justice Village demands into policies that are implemented and enforced. We insist that the people of Oakland move forward forever. The government is obviously not for us or with us in this struggle.