

# FORGOTTEN VOICES



## A YOUTH VISION FOR OAKLAND





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## ABOUT US

**COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR RESTORATIVE YOUTH JUSTICE (CURYJ -** PRONOUNCED "COURAGE") WORKS WITH YOUTH AND FAMILIES DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY THE JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS TO INTERRUPT CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AND POVERTY. CURYJ CREATES A PLACE FOR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES TO COME TOGETHER, HEAL FROM PAST EXPERIENCES, DREAM AND ACHIEVE THEIR VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH NONVIOLENCE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TRAINING, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, LEGAL AND POLICY ADVOCACY, SOCIAL ACTION RESEARCH, EDUCATION, CULTURAL AWARENESS AND WELLNESS.

THE **PACIFIC INSTITUTE** IS AN INDEPENDENT NONPROFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE BASED IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. OUR COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE PROGRAM PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS TO BUILD POWER THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AND POPULAR EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

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# PREFACE

In a recent article entitled *We Need More Scale, Not More Innovation*, Dr. Robert Ross, the president and CEO of The California Endowment, states, "The greatest impediment to solving [social] problems is not a lack of innovation. Rather, it is our inability to scale up solutions that we know work." Dr. Ross is absolutely correct. The innovative solutions that work already exist, but many have not been fully supported or funded. The opportunity to fundamentally transform our city into a national model for social change and justice that builds healthy communities is staring city leaders right in the face. *Forgotten Voices* is the first phase in one of these innovative youth-led solutions: the **Youth and Family Empowerment Zones**.

Through asset-mapping and an empowerment approach we are developing a community peace plan from the ground up. The stories in the photo-novella are created by youth members of the Fruitvale-based organization, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ). In the context of gang and immigrant profiling the youth share their experiences with being criminalized at school, home, and their community. These experiences intersected with themes they shared about rampant displacement and gentrification spilling into Oakland from SF and the Silicon Valley. What has become clear is that there is no safe space where youth are free from harassment and able to just be and behave like youth.

In the past 40 years, the United States has shifted its approach to youth in the juvenile justice system toward punishment and warehousing, away from treatment and rehabilitation.

California in particular has been the "learning laboratory" to test out and pilot new "tough on crime" policies and gang-profiling that target youth and families of color. It became politically profitable for elected officials, policy makers, and systems leaders to build their careers by targeting youth, in particular young men of color. Mass media reporting of youth crime and violence increased and the characterization of youth as "super-predators" and "sociopaths" became a part of popular culture. However, the facts and data dispute this picture and show that youth crime has steadily declined in California since the 1970s.

In Oakland we are at an intersection when it comes to the future of our city. We can continue these financially and effectively unsound policies like "stop and frisk," "gang injunctions," and "lock them up and throw away the key." Or, we can turn to the innovation and creative genius that exists on the ground in communities of Oakland to develop solutions that empower youth.

We invite you to lift up the practices that work by joining us in the campaign for Youth and Community Empowerment Zones. We are not looking for a quick fix; instead, we are building bit by bit. In the second phase that follows *Forgotten Voices*, we will meet with community members most impacted by these issues. Over the next year we will map and identify the assets and peace and empowerment practices in these communities through youth-led focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and economic analysis. This research will lead to the design of the Youth and Community Empowerment Zones. Together and united we can create an Oakland that serves all of its people and invests in our youth for generations to come.

In community,  
George Galvis

Executive Director, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)  
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# FORGOTTEN VOICES

1ST PERIOD MONDAY MORNING AFTER THEIR FRIEND GOT MURDERED OVER THE WEEKEND ...

DAMN, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...

THE HOMIE JOSÉ GOT BLASTED

IF I FIND OUT WHO IT WAS, IT'S OVER!

WHY ARE YOU GUYS NOT DOING YOUR WORK?

WE HAD A ROUGH WEEKEND

MS. GARCIA--NOT IN TUNE WITH THE DAILY LIVES OF THE STUDENTS--NOTICES THEIR DISTRACTION. SHE IS UPSET AND SENDS THEM TO THE VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.

I'M DONE WITH YOUR EXCUSES. GO HOME!

IF THIS MR. MCGOO-LOOKING FOOL ONLY KNEW ...

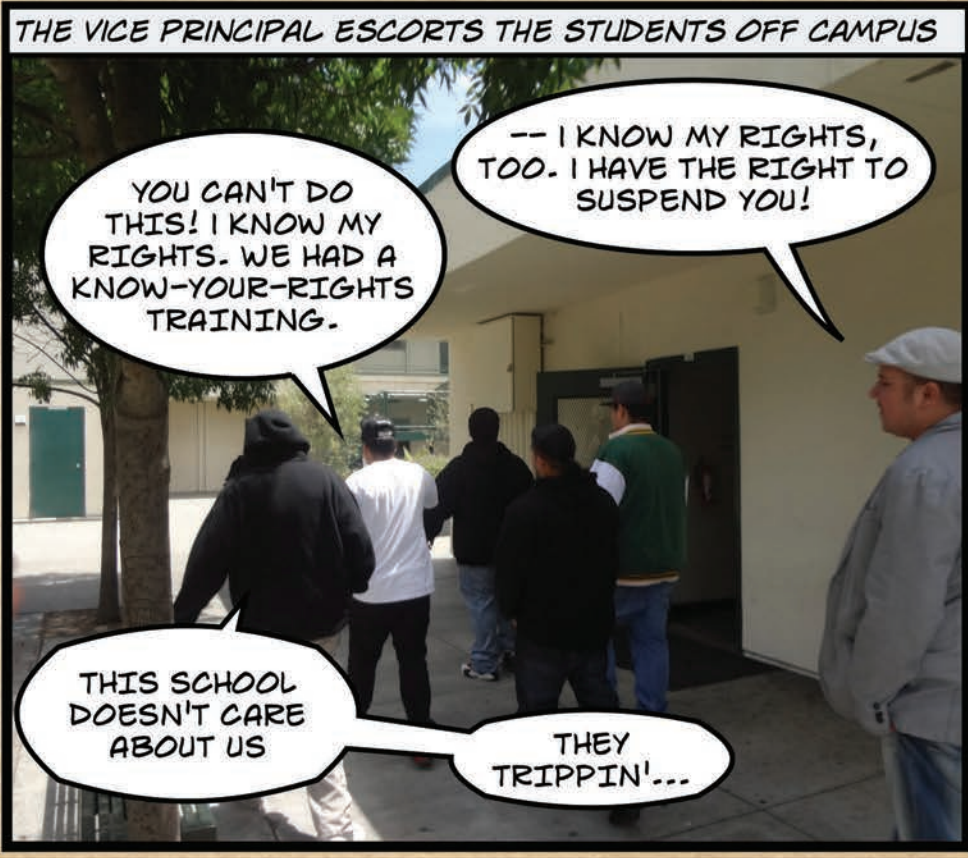
THE NEXT DAY THE HARASSMENT ESCALATES ...





IS THERE ANYTHING IN HERE I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

DO YOU HAVE ANY PROBABLE CAUSE OR A WARRANT?



THE VICE PRINCIPAL ESCORTS THE STUDENTS OFF CAMPUS

YOU CAN'T DO THIS! I KNOW MY RIGHTS. WE HAD A KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS TRAINING.

-- I KNOW MY RIGHTS, TOO. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SUSPEND YOU!

THIS SCHOOL DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US

THEY TRIPPIN'...

# FACT:

OVER-POLICING IN SCHOOLS IS MAKING THEM LOOK AND FEEL MORE LIKE PRISONS. OAKLAND SCHOOLS EMPLOY 115 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS VERSUS 20 COUNSELORS. THAT IS ALMOST SIX TIMES MORE LAW ENFORCEMENT STAFF THAN COUNSELORS, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO CREATING A SCHOOL-TO-JAILHOUSE PIPELINE. <sup>1</sup>



IF YOU DON'T GET IT TOGETHER, YOU'RE GOING TO END UP LIKE JOSÉ!

OH THAT'S HELLA OUT OF POCKET!

...MAN, FORGET THIS FOOL!

SO, WHERE CAN WE HANG OUT?



# IN DA HOOD...

AFTER GETTING KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL, THE HOMIES GO KICK IT IN FRONT OF ONE OF THEIR HOMES TO REMINISCE ABOUT THEIR FRIEND WHO PASSED AWAY ...







COPS ARRIVE AND HARASS THE YOUNG MEN...



A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF BLACK AND LATINO YOUTH ARE RACIALLY PROFILED AND TARGETED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT IN OAKLAND.

BLACK YOUTH MAKE UP ON AVERAGE 73.5% OF ALL JUVENILE ARRESTS BY THE OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT EACH YEAR, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAKE UP JUST 29.3% OF OAKLAND'S YOUTH POPULATION. 2

IN OAKLAND, BLACK YOUTH MADE UP 78% OF THE ARRESTED BUT NOT CHARGED CASES, WHILE LATINO YOUTH WERE THE NEXT LARGEST GROUP MAKING UP 16% OF THOSE CASES. 3

**FACTS:**

OAKLAND SCHOOL POLICE ARRESTED ZERO WHITE STUDENTS FROM 2010-2012.4



# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS FRUITVALE, OAKLAND, CA



WE HONOR OUR LOVED ONES WHO HAVE MADE THEIR JOURNEY TO THE SPIRIT WORLD



WE'RE GATHERED AROUND THE ALTAR FOR OUR FRIEND JOSÉ WHO HAS PASSED AWAY. MAY WE HAVE A MOMENT OF SILENCE?

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS (DAY OF THE DEAD) IS A CELEBRATION ROOTED IN INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS FROM MEXICO THAT HONORS LOVED ONES WHO HAVE RETURNED TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. ON THIS DAY IN MEXICO AND MEXICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S., THE STREETS NEAR CEMETERIES ARE FILLED WITH ALTARS, FLOWERS, CANDY SKULLS, PROCESSIONS, AND OTHER OFFERINGS. IN THIS TRADITION, THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD TRAVEL BACK FROM THE SPIRIT WORLD TO VISIT THEIR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES ON NOVEMBER 2.

# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



PHOTO CREDIT: JESUS BARRAZA

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS HAS RECENTLY GAINED POPULARITY. SADLY THIS SACRED CELEBRATION IS BEING APPROPRIATED BY CULTURE VULTURES WHO PROFIT FROM IT AS A HALLOWEEN THEME OR TREAT IT AS AN EXCUSE TO PARTY.

## FACT:

LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN OAKLAND'S FRUITVALE DISTRICT ARE AT HIGH RISK OF BEING DISPLACED DUE TO RISING RENTS AND FORECLOSURES AS WELL AS THE AREA'S CONVENIENT LOCATION FOR COMMUTERS. 5 FROM 2000 TO 2010, THE ANNUAL INCOME OF A TYPICAL FAMILY LIVING IN ZIP CODE 94601 ROSE FROM \$37,609 TO \$51,683, WHILE THE AMOUNT OF RENTERS IN THE AREA DECREASED FROM 66% TO 58.9%. 6



THE STUDENTS HAVE GATHERED TO REMEMBER THEIR FALLEN FRIEND. AGAIN, COPS STOP THEM FOR LOOKING SUSPICIOUS.

# FACTS!



AS OF 2002, IN CALIFORNIA, LATINO YOUTH REPRESENTED 36% OF THE STATE'S YOUTH POPULATION. HOWEVER, THEY MADE UP CLOSE TO 60% OF THE STATE'S JUVENILE DETAINEES. 7

BLACK YOUTH MADE UP ROUGHLY 7.8% OF THE STATE'S POPULATION, YET THEY COMPRISED ALMOST 30% OF JUVENILE DETAINEES. 8



I'M TIRED OF THIS! EVERYWHERE WE GO WE GET HARASSED!

WHY AREN'T THEY MESSING WITH THOSE HIPSTERS ACROSS THE STREET? THERE'S MORE THAN THREE OF THEM!

WE NEED A SPACE OF OUR OWN!

CAN I ASK WHY WE ARE BEING STOPPED?

EVERYWHERE WE GO WE GET WHO-RIDED BY THE COPS!

YOU GUYS ARE IN A GROUP OF MORE THAN 3, SO YOU LOOK LIKE A GANG.

GANG INJUNCTIONS ARE GROUP RESTRAINING ORDERS USED TO JUSTIFY MORE AGGRESSIVE POLICING OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR.

OF THOSE LISTED IN CALIFORNIA'S GANG DATABASE, 20% ARE BLACK, 66% ARE LATINO, AND 94% ARE MALE. 9



# YOUNG WARRIOR'S CIRCLE

DAYS LATER AT SCHOOL THE STUDENTS CIRCLE UP IN THEIR LIFE SKILLS CLASS



WHAT'S YOUR IDEAL CAREER INTERNSHIP?

ARCHITECT

MECHANICAL ENGINEER



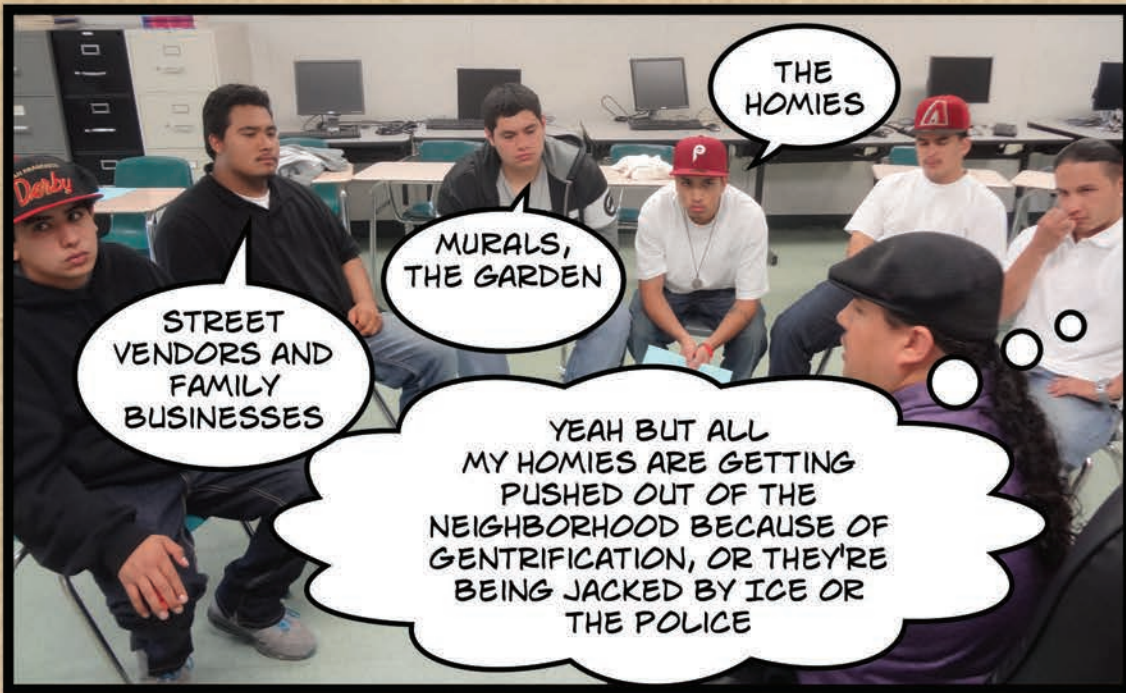
WHAT AM I GONNA DO AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

WHAT ABOUT SUMMER JOB PROGRAMS?



SUMMER JOB PROGRAMS NEVER COME THROUGH

WELL, WHAT ARE SOME OF OUR COMMUNITY'S TREASURES?



STREET VENDORS AND FAMILY BUSINESSES

MURALS, THE GARDEN

THE HOMIES

YEAH BUT ALL MY HOMIES ARE GETTING PUSHED OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD BECAUSE OF GENTRIFICATION, OR THEY'RE BEING JACKED BY ICE OR THE POLICE

## FACT:

IMMIGRANTS OR THOSE PERCEIVED TO BE IMMIGRANTS ARE BEING TARGETED AS CRIMINALS BY LOCAL POLICE AND IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE) OFFICIALS. YET NEARLY HALF (45.6%) OF YOUTH DETAINED WITH ICE HOLDS HAVE NO DOCUMENTED CRIMINAL HISTORY. 10



THESE ARE SOME OF OUR MOST PRIZED OLD-SCHOOL MURALS. THEY SHOW OUR CULTURE, PRIDE, AND HISTORY IN THIS CITY.



STREET VENDORS KEEP OUR LOCAL ECONOMY ALIVE.



# COMMUNITY TREASURES

LONG-STANDING SMALL BUSINESSES



AND OUR COMMUNITY GARDEN!



THE STUDENTS GATHER ENOUGH INFORMATION TO WORK ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY



# FACT:

BY FEBRUARY 2011, THE COST OF PURSUING TWO GANG INJUNCTIONS IN OAKLAND GREW TO \$760,000. 11



... AND SO THE STUDENTS BEGIN TO ORGANIZE!



## ORGANIZING FOR A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ZONE

WE CONTINUE TO TRY AND RESTORE JUSTICE THROUGH DEFICIT MAPPING AND OTHER DEFICIT-BASED FORMS OF "JUSTICE." YET WE HAVEN'T TALKED TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT THEY SEE AS EMPOWERING SOLUTIONS THAT CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO THRIVE. THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ZONE IS FRAMED FROM THE YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVE, WHO ORGANIZE AROUND THEIR VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY.



THEY GO DOOR-KNOCKING TO INFORM THEIR COMMUNITY ABOUT THEIR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PLAN ...



I'M PROUD OF YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY ...AIN'T NO POWER LIKE THE POWER OF THE YOUTH!

EXCUSE ME, CAN I TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE PROGRAMS WE WANT TO START IN THE COMMUNITY?



INSTEAD OF A GANG INJUNCTION ZONE, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ZONE THAT WILL HELP YOUNG PEOPLE FIND JOBS AND OTHER SUPPORT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED?

SIX MONTHS LATER, AFTER MEETING WITH THE CITY COUNCIL ...



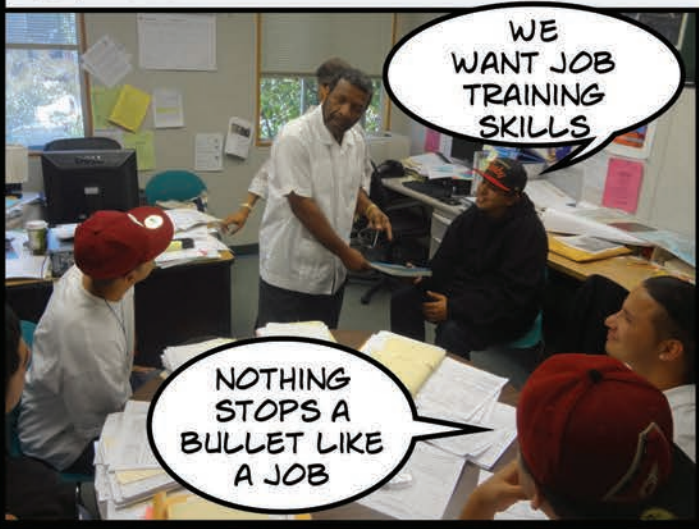
IF THEY WON'T LISTEN TO US, THEN WE ARE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO ORGANIZE UNTIL THEY DO!

WE ALSO NEED TO ADVOCATE FOR MORE COMMUNITY TREASURES!

WE ARE PRESENTING OUR PLAN TO THE CITY NEXT WEEK!

YEAH, IF THE CITY WON'T HELP US, THEN WE'LL HAVE TO DO IT OURSELVES - GRASSROOTS STYLE.

THEY EDUCATE DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT THEIR PLAN ...



WE WANT JOB TRAINING SKILLS

NOTHING STOPS A BULLET LIKE A JOB



# TIME TO ORGANIZE!

AS THE YOUTH ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, THEY ALSO ORGANIZE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO GET MORE MURALS ON THE WALLS OF BUILDINGS IN THEIR COMMUNITY.



MURALS ARE PUBLIC ART THAT TELL THE HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. INSTEAD OF HAVING THE YOUTH PICK UP TRASH OR TAKE ON OTHER MENIAL JOBS, WHY DOESN'T THE CITY PAY YOUNG PEOPLE TO BEAUTIFY THEIR COMMUNITIES WITH LOCAL ART AND HISTORY?



TO BE CONTINUED...

## ENDNOTES

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- 10 TEJI, S. "THE UNNECESSARY DETENTION OF UNDOCUMENTED YOUTH." CENTER FOR JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE. 2013.
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WHAT DO YOU THINK A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ZONE SHOULD LOOK LIKE?

LET US KNOW ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AT

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CURYJ](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CURYJ)

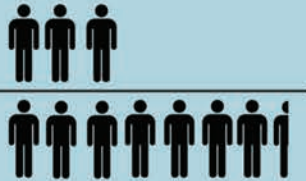
OR ON OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.CURYJ-ORG](http://WWW.CURYJ-ORG)



# The Criminalizing Policies Against Oakland Youth

## Juvenile Arrests

Black youth make up  
**30%**  
of Oakland's population but  
**~75%**  
of all juvenile arrests.



Black youth make up  
**78%**  
of all arrests that do not  
lead to charges.



Latino youth make up  
**16%**  
of all arrests that do not  
lead to charges.



White youth made up  
**0%**  
of all Oakland school  
arrests between  
2010-2012.

## Gentrification



Gentrification changes the integrity of the neighborhood by displacing youth and their families:

- Property values increase and are no longer affordable to lower income families.
- Businesses cater to higher income families while long-standing local businesses shut down.
- Police and private security exclusively protect higher income residents while criminalizing lower income residents of color.

## Crimmigration

**50%**  
of youth surveyed at  
Dewey Academy in Oakland  
have had someone from  
their family deported.





