

Oakland: Dark Star in an Expanding Universe

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“Somebody, please, give me a reason to stop saying what I am saying.”
--Oakland rapper, Paris¹

Oakland is a great American city. But like so many ordinary, workaday places across the country it is disdained and dismissed. Oakland has always played Other to San Francisco, ugly duckling in a bay of swans, sow among pearls, a humdrum and workaday city squatting enviously across from the Golden Gate. In the kind of boastful projection of east coast urbanity typical of the 19th century, the undistinguished settlements across San Antonio slough from little Oakland came to be known as Brooklyn. The appellation might better have been given to Oakland itself, forever just out of reach of the Pacific Coast Manhattan, and following a similar trajectory from ferryboat suburb to brawling industrial giant to present-day catchment for the world's migrants. Oakland is everything San Francisco is not: never glorious, never glorified, never gloating. Yet Oakland has a story, too, and one that has as many lessons as its cousin across the bay and a geographic landscape replete with both stunning success and sordid failure.

Oakland's subordination has not been as complete as San Franciscans might have hoped, however. After the turn of the century Oakland and the East Bay became the principal arena of growth and the industrial dynamo of the region, a second orb of the metropolis challenging the primacy of the old core. Oakland, unlike Brooklyn, never submitted to incorporation into Greater San Francisco. As a result, Oakland and the East Bay have a history and character quite their own, which belies any effort to paint the Bay Area metropolis with a broad brush. Microgeography matters in big cities, and the rivalry with Oakland has often haunted San Francisco's haughty burghers as much as that with Los Angeles. The symbols of competition are still very much with us in the intensity of feelings around contests between football and baseball teams, as are the signs of disaster such as in the earthquake riven Bay Bridge World Series between the Giants and Athletics in 1989.

Oakland seems to violate every principle set down about San Francisco. Oakland at full stride was a heavy industry town, self-proclaimed as the “the Glasgow of the US, the Marseilles of the Pacific and the Detroit of the West” by civic boosters of the 1920s. It is proletarian to its black-and-silver heart, like the Raiders' jackets still much favored by local workers and toughs. No bohemians or hippies here, but the Hell's Angels, Dykes-on-Bikes, and memories of Okies and the Klan.² Most glaring of all, Oakland became a black mirror to San Francisco's imperial whiteness.

Oakland stands in stark contrast to San Francisco's continuing vibrancy in its present decadence and futility. The low road to upward mobility has been long and rocky in what the people call Bump City and Oaktown, more so than elsewhere in the Bay Area. Oakland remained staunchly Republican and politically unyielding long after working class insurgencies loosened the business class grip on San Francisco. The kind of political voice heard against the rule of capital in San Francisco a century earlier had to await the awakening of Black Power on this side of the water. Unlike San Francisco, cries of

¹ Said in response to criticism of the anger in his album *Bush Killa*. Gregory Lewis, “xxxxx Blues”, SFX Image, February 21, 1993, 10.

² The Hell's Angels started in Fontana (Davis 1990), but have been widely identified with Oakland since Sonny Barger -- a man of classic white trash extraction -- established a chapter here in 1957. They became notorious by attacking anti-war demonstrators in the Sixties and for stabbing a man at the ill-fated Altamont rock concert after being invited to stand guard by the Rolling Stones. Roland De Wolk, “Leader of the Pack”, EBX, May 6, 1994, 1-19. One of the stranger moments in East Bay history was the gathering of 2000 bikers to greet Barger on his release from prison in 1992.

Manhattanization have never held back the effort to make over Oakland Downtown into a shining sea of skyscrapers.

Downtown has long played as the only show in town, to the neglect of desolate neighborhoods. For half a century, Oakland's power brokers, white and black, have sought to revive a dying business district. They have sunk millions of public dollars into redevelopment schemes, few of which have seen the day, fewer still made money, while driving out housing, shops and entertainment for the poor scratching out a living in a checkerboard of empty lots and high-rises. This futility echoes Gertrude Stein's famous lament, "There was no there, there", penned after a return to her childhood home. Oakland been cursed by those fateful words.³

The people of Oakland, particularly those occupying the working class flatlands, remain overwhelmingly poor. There is a remarkable constancy to this dreary reality over the last half century. Oakland is the black hole in the midst of economic prosperity all around the metropolis. Yet Oakland is also a city of hope, vibrant with personal exploration, political experimentation and cultural expression by people of many colors and many nations. While Oaklanders have been beat down, locked up and left out so many times, they have carved out a small space to breath in white America, conservative California, the bilious Bay Area. Like the galactic bodies, the urban black hole is where the greatest energy is straining to escape.

Key City of the 1900s

Oakland grew mightily in the first thirty years of the century. It was one of three fastest growing cities in the US from 1900 to 1930, jumping sharply from 67,000 in 1900 to 150,000 in 1910, and to 284,000 in 1930, and Alameda County as a whole grew as well [add figures]. The industrial and population boom triggered a vast 30-year wave of property development, during which time the great bulk of the city was laid down: its streets and subdivisions, residential neighborhoods, commercial strips and Downtown buildings.⁴

The sprawling city spread out like a fan, the spokes of which were streetcar lines converging on Downtown. Oakland and the inner East Bay boasted one of the great trolley networks in the country, which was quickly consolidated under the Southern Pacific and the Key System. The latter was put together from 1893-1903 by Francis Marion Smith, backed by millions in Borax extracted from Death Valley's alkali flats.⁵ SP had run steam trains for years before the challenge from the Key Route propelled it to electrify and expand its trackage. Oakland grew in a lopsided fashion leaning toward the west, but over the course of the great boom it filled out and even came to tilt slightly to the east. On its western flank, the city shot northward and Berkeley filled out as well; at the center it fanned out into the foothills from Rockridge to Mills Seminary, and to the southeast it filled in Brooklyn, then

³ Vance (1964) rightly argues for East Bay independence from San Francisco, but overstates the case.

⁴ On the physical expansion of Oakland, see Dykstra 1967 and Bagwell 1982. On cycles of real estate development, see Maverick 1932. The peak of real estate activity came in 1910, not the 1920s as in the rest of the US. See also chapter 4. [check Baker, Joseph. ed. 1914. Past and Present of Alameda County, California. Chicago: SJ Clarke].

⁵ See Smythe, Dallas. 1928. An Economic History of Transportation in the East Bay with Reference to the Properties by F. M. Smith. Doctoral dissertation, Economics, University of California, Berkeley. Smith and Havens were the local equivalents of Whitney in Boston and Lick? in Chicago. See also Chapter 3. (check - how many miles? Key was 100+)

swept across the flatlands through humble districts such as Melrose and Elmhurst to 110th Street.

Middle class housing tracts burst across the hills, carrying toney monikers like Crocker Highlands, Claremont, Oceanview, and Lakeshore Highlands. Most of these were built by the Realty Syndicate owned by Borax Smith and his realtor partner, Frank Havens, who used the Key Route as the foundation for one of the largest property empire in the country - 13,000 acres in 1900 and almost 100 tracts complete by 1911. Wickham Havens, WJ Laymance and Mason-McDuffie were other big developers. Most workers still traveled to work by foot or jitney, so the flatlands became a sea of small homes. Oakland home ownership was high for the time, about 50%, second only to Los Angeles on West Coast.⁶ Cheap trolleys and good wages allowed for considerable working class mobility; so many families drifted eastward to rub up against upper class redoubts in the foothills.

**Map of Oakland with
Trolley system
(from Dykstra, in file; see also
Realty Syndicate map in Bagwell, p 203)**

Land speculation, subdivision and home-building erased most of the earlier landscape of outlying Oakland, which had been a sunny suburb to San Francisco. Great Victorian estates, surrounded by horticultural delights of the warm side of the Bay, dotted the hills and flatlands. One of the first was writer J. Ross Browne's Pagoda Hill overlooking Temescal Canyon. Gertrude Stein's father, a San Francisco lawyer, built a country seat in up in the hills of Brooklyn (now known as China Hill). When the great development wave hit, it bulldozed these and many more. Stein's lament that "there was no there there" did not refer to Oakland's subaltern status, but to a child's world lost to relentless change and real estate investment. Francis Smith's mansion nearby suffered the same fate in the 1920s, and only a line of palm trees remains to mark the spot.

**Photo
Brooklyn Victorian and small houses on hill
or spot where Stein or Smith houses stood**

Rapid growth and the trolley system were the foundation for the brief glory of Oakland's Downtown in the first half of the century, when a host of high-rises leapt upward to proclaim the city's arrival. Many were notable architectural monuments: the Tribune Tower, Burnham Flatiron and Cathedral Building. The new City Hall, erected in the heady days of 1911, made a statement by rudely turning its backside to the rival across the Bay and shunning the Beaux Arts pretenses of post-quake San Francisco in favor of a tarted-up skyscraper.⁷ A bevy of department stores (Kahn, Capwell, I. Magnin) and movie palaces (Fox, Paramount, Grand Lake) vied for the attention of the civic throng, along with grand hotels, dancehalls and other entertainments. A burgeoning middle class rode the rails

⁶ Realty Syndicate figures cited in the *Oakland Tribune Year Book*, 1926, 32.

⁷ Cf. Judd Kahn on SF.

Downtown to work, shop and play. Oakland partook freely of the golden age of American urbanism.⁸

All the same, Oakland was a sprawling city by comparison with San Francisco, and not terribly dense even at its core -- an indication of changes afoot in American city form.⁹ Behind the bustle of street traffic, Oakland already looked a great deal like an automobile city with its broad streets, low-rise topography, and bungalows planted in rows, mile after mile, like a tree farm. One can still see the illusion of grandeur Downtown in the sharp drop-off from the few skyscrapers of the era huddled along Broadway; nothing filled in around such landmarks as the Oakland Hotel, the Leamington Hotel, or the Paramount Theater. Many of the pitifully empty lots all around today's Downtown are not remnants of clearance but were there from the beginning, waiting for the deal that never came.

Oakland and the East Bay also came into their own at the time when American cities were losing their grip on urban space, unable to retain political control over burgeoning suburbs.¹⁰ Oakland spun off a gaggle of satellites: Piedmont, Emeryville, Berkeley, Alameda, San Leandro, Albany and Orinda over the hills. The central city pursued annexation aggressively, bringing Brooklyn and Fruit Vale under its wing in 1872, North Oakland in 1897, and East Oakland in 1908. But it was not enough, and Oakland's share of county population by 1940 was only xx%.

Piedmont was the archetype. A late 19th century outgrowth of San Francisco, it began as a hotel and spa at the end of a streetcar line. It had a certain bohemian cast, in preview of Carmel and Mill Valley; Benjamin Worcester built the first shingle-style house there and poet George Sterling settled for a while beside his uncle, Frank Havens, and brought in Jack London and the turn of the century art circle.¹¹ Piedmont became chiefly an attraction for the wealthy and a lever for high-end real estate development. This formula would be repeated by the Realty Syndicate in the Claremont District and elsewhere along the hills. Piedmont drove the suburban stake into the heart of Oakland by refusing to submit to annexation in 1907, even though completely surrounded by the mother urb, in order to protect its huddled masses of Crockers, Bechtels, and Havens.

Berkeley, too, held a place apart. The basis of its splendid autonomy is the University of California's premier campus, which it gained when the fledging state college fled the evils of urbanism in Oakland for a City on the Hill in 1873.¹² The campus community is only one of three different settlements within the city, however. West Berkeley was settled in the Gold Rush era, and has always been odd working class bedfellow to the upscale hills thrown into a marriage of convenience in 1878 to fend off annexation by Oakland. South Berkeley is a natural extension of West Oakland's streetcar commuter districts, and the southwest portion has since World War II been a largely African-American enclave with little intercourse with the campus and the hills.

The city of Alameda occupies an island in the Bay west of Oakland.¹³ It might as well be in another galaxy. With broad, shady streets and dead flat topography -- rare for the Bay

⁸ Cf. Chapter 5, Groth 1994 and Johns 1999..

⁹ For comparisons see Jackson, LA, Chicago books.

¹⁰ Markusen 1978, Teaford 1979, Hoch 19xx. A similar dispersion was taking place in the West Bay -- but farther out from the core of San Francisco. Scott 1959.

¹¹ The rustic poet Joaquin Miller lived farther up in the Oakland hills. (I forget the circle of painters....)

¹² On the origins of the University, see Wollenberg 1984, Brechin 1998.

¹³ Originally a peninsula, but the Navy cut a channel to allow easier navigation and to cleanse a squalid estuary. [book on Alameda needed]

Area -- Alameda feels like a piece of the Midwest misplaced. Resplendent with past glory are the Gold Coast estates, Victorian mansions of San Francisco businessmen who commuted by ferry to escape the city and the fog. The twentieth century converted the island into a residential Altogether, Alameda has an air of time suspended.

Nonetheless, Oakland sprawls around Piedmont all the way to the crest of the East Bay hills, taking in a physical and social topography of surprising variety. Its hilly northeast rises gently upward over rolling terrain, across the neighborhoods of Trestle Glen, Oceanview and Dimond Heights, until it sweeps dramatically onto the thousand foot overlooks of distant Montclair. Like the Berkeley hills, Oakland's eastern slope is replete with urban hideaways tucked into wooded canyons and clinging to precipitous slopes, a world away from the hurly-burly of the streetcar city and the disturbing citizenry of urban America.

Base map of East Bay cities (drawn)

Detroit of the West

During the First World War the East Bay became the leading industrial employment center of the metropolis -- a position it maintained for the next half century. These were the glory years of Oakland as an industrial powerhouse. Factories, workshops and warehouses stretched in an L-shape along the waterfront and the railroad tracks entering from north and south. Industrialization drove the city's expansion to a greater degree than San Francisco, with its great commercial and financial sectors. Oakland was an industrial town, pure and simple. But it was more than a faceless huddle of factories; like Pittsburgh or Cleveland, Oakland sprouted a handful of revolutionary companies with a place in the pantheon of American business: Del Monte, Kaiser, Bechtel, Caterpillar and Safeway.¹⁴ This is all forgotten today and, along with it, lessons about the volatility and geographic inconstancy of capitalist urbanism.

The entry of competing rail lines in the first decade of the century made Oakland into a fecund transshipment and supply center for the American west and gave the East Bay the same mule-kick that Los Angeles felt from the arrival of a two rail lines a generation earlier. The Santa Fe came down through Richmond; the Western Pacific came up from Niles Canyon (a favorite venue for early silent-movie Westerns and Charlie Chaplin films). Oakland's port grew mightily after its liberation from the clutches of San Francisco, with considerable help from the Federal government. The Army Engineers began clearing up the estuary and embankments, making Oakland's harbor only slightly less artificial than San Pedro. Meanwhile, Oakland and LA joined forces to block San Francisco from recovering control of its own waterfront from the state.

The heart of manufacturing in the East Bay was canning and food processing, drawing initially on local farms, then the south county, and ultimately the whole Central Valley. The agro-industrial axis was pivotal to the Bay Area's forward march up to World War II. Oakland's J. Lusk was the world's largest cannery by 1890, and other local firms prospered, including Durkee, Hunt Brothers, and Virden. The Octopus of canning was Oakland's California Fruit Cannery Association (later CalPak then Del Monte), the first

¹⁴ And a wealth of smaller companies important in their day but now gone: Marchand, Borax, J Lusk, etc. For more on industry, including the second East Bay node in Contra Costa County, see chapter 4 and Hinkel & McCann 1939.

global agribusiness company. In 1943 Oakland had 44 canneries (with 10 in Berkeley and 18 elsewhere in the East Bay).¹⁵

Food merchandizing was in ferment with the introduction of the chain stores, brand names and advertising, with Oakland playing a substantial role. Del Monte was the first name brand food and the first to advertise widely. Safeway moved to Oakland in 1926 (sic), from where it built up a grocery empire second only to A&P in size (reaching the top in the 1960s) and second to none in efficiency. Lucky Stores eventually grabbed the number three spot. Safeway pioneered in the direct contracting of produce and processed goods, just as Del Monte and the canners were inventing the modern system of subcontracting from farmers. Montgomery Wards located its west coast warehousing center in East Oakland in the 1920s, when Wards was still an innovative catalogue marketer. Clorox bleach (descended from Smith's Boraxo) grew up in the same milieu of making and handling humble household products for the expanding mass consumer base of California.¹⁶

Oakland inherited the machining tradition of San Francisco, becoming an important center of metal-working, machinery and vehicles. Everything from airplane parts to pumps was made in Oakland, which briefly entertained delusions of being the Detroit of the West. The East Bay had many home-grown companies and products in this area, such as Caterpillar (originally Henry Holt) tractor, Judson steel, Jacuzzi pumps, Hall-Scott motors, Jensen creamery machinery, and Marchand calculators. It also gained enormously from an influx of branch plants owned by the biggest names in American industry: Westinghouse, General Motors, Victor, and the like. Business boosters saw the arrival of outside corporations as good, bearing witness to a long sense of marginality in the national economy.¹⁷ History did not always bear out these high hopes.

As in the case of residential development, industry was not to be confined to the city limits of Oakland and spilled over to neighboring towns and unincorporated areas. Richmond and Emeryville were the chief nodes to rival Oakland, each harboring scores of factories. Both came into existence as calculated moves by industrialists to control their political destinies and keep free of electoral machinations in Oakland. Berkeley, Alameda and San Leandro were lesser orbs in the industrial firmament. Emeryville is one of those wondrous curiosities of American local government: a city of industry without citizens, a perfect jurisdictional island cut off from the metropolis, its prying populace and trenchant taxmen. It shows that suburban fragmentation of the East Bay was as much an industrial product as a residential one.

**Map of Industrial belt
from Tribune Year Book 1926
(western half only?)**

Oakland's industrial eminence came to be personified by Henry Kaiser, whose empire of companies put him on a par with the Krupps, Fords and Rockefellers. Kaiser did not start off as an industrialist, but in heavy construction. He began building railroads in Cuba, then moved to California to join in the precocious rail and road construction boom taking place

¹⁵ On canning see Cardellino 1982. On Del Monte, see Braznell 1982; Burbach & Flynn 1980.

¹⁶ [there's no extant history of Safeway] where was Lucky HQ? [is there a history of Chlorox? did it really follow from Borax?] Consumer base of California-- anything there?

¹⁷ See e.g. the Tribune Year Book. On Los Angeles see Hise 1997 and Davis 1997.

in the Teens and Twenties. There he met fellow road-builder, Walter Bechtel, and formed a bond that was to serve them well. Kaiser leapt to national attention in the late Twenties by putting together the Six Companies consortium (with Bechtel, Utah Construction, Morrison-Knudsen, Parsons and xxx) that built the revolutionary high arch dam in Boulder Canyon. Kaiser followed that feat with Grand Coulee, world's largest dam for the next thirty years, and the Bay Bridge, the world's longest span. Bechtel built the Golden Gate bridge and moved into engineering oil refineries for California's booming petroleum industry. In order to supply his construction empire, Kaiser ran his own cement works, gravel pits, gypsum quarries and medical system in the region, to which he added, during the war, the Fontana steel mill, aluminum smelters, and chemical works around the west. His greatest feat, perhaps, was the Richmond shipyard, put together in a few months to construct Liberty Ships during the Second World War (Bechtel did the same in Sausalito), followed by other shipyards up and down the Pacific Coast. Kaiser and Bechtel got the contracts because they were not bound by standard practices in the industry, could build on a dime, and had close relations with the Roosevelt Administration (Kaiser married Interior Secretary Harold Ickes' daughter). Henry Kaiser employed something close to half a million workers at the height of his wartime empire.¹⁸

Power in the Tower

Politically, Oakland has been a bastion of conservatism, with a record of business-run government and disenfranchisement of the general citizenry that rivals any big city in America. Nothing here compares with the turbulent history of working class and petty bourgeois upheaval in San Francisco: no Workingmen's Party, no Union Labor Party, no radical heroes on the order of Burnett Haskell or Tom Mooney. The heroics would come after the long boom, maybe too late to save the city.

In the 19th century, Oakland was nothing more than a projection of San Francisco Argonauts, capital and land-fever.¹⁹ As Oakland's fortunes turned up at the turn of the century, a new generation of businessmen took the reins in order to promote their fast-growing city and break free of San Francisco. The best known is Francis Marion Smith, whose lurch to civic leadership was closely tied to his real estate interests and utility franchises -- the fulcrum of urban politics in that era. Because water is crucial to urban growth, Smith and Havens gained control of the city's supply through their People's Water Company. Smith then became a fierce interlocutor in the water and power wars with San Francisco, which was making aggressive moves on regional streams and Sierra rivers. In 1910 he joined the United Properties Company scheme to monopolize water, power, real estate and traction in the East Bay, which collapsed within three years; like Billy Ralston half a century before, Smith went broke speculating in watershed lands (the Alameda Creek drainage in the south county).²⁰

Smith was a shooting star in the political firmament. More significant was the covey of businessmen who came together in 1905 as the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Board of Realtors, Board of Trade, Rotary Club and Athens Club. These were the doyens of Downtown and development: bankers, realtors, builders, merchants and newspaper publishers such as Frank Bilger, Frederick Kahn, HC Capwell, WJ Laymance,

¹⁸ Foster 1985, which touches only lightly on the business history of the industrial empire Henry constructed. Bechtel's history is even less documented. [check Robert Ingram 1968 on Bechtel and find that other book on Bechtel]

¹⁹ See chapter 4.

²⁰ Havens continued to work on water supply, until he, too, went bankrupt as the real estate boom ran out in the 1920s. See also Brechin 1998; possibly Williams 1997.

WE Dargie, Wickham Havens, and RJ Montgomery. Their leader was Frank Mott, merchant and land developer, whom they helped elect Mayor in 1905. For the next decade, Mott pursued a classic Progressive program of civic improvements, including sewers, parks, schools, street lighting, museums and libraries.²¹ He annexed great swaths of territory to the city, tried to bring Berkeley into his “Greater Oakland”, and settled with Southern Pacific over the waterfront. He introduced the civil service and replaced the city council with a Commission form of government. He built the new city hall and called in renown city planners Charles Mulford Robinson and Werner Hegemann to spruce up the city. This being unglamorous Oakland, the City Beautiful didn’t get beyond the shores of Lake Merritt and a timid Civic Center.²²

Labor's role in Oakland politics was modest in comparison to San Francisco. Workers got their first comeuppance when Mayor Pardee and Councilman Mott led a pickaxe brigade that drove Coxe’s Army of the poor out of town in 1894. San Francisco's powerful trade unions had little influence in the East Bay. Although membership grew apace, local AFL leaders were mostly accommodationists happy to work within the Republican party in what had become a one-party state, even if they preferred franchise-patronage ‘machine’ politics to Mott and his brand of ‘tax and spend’ city-building.²³ Party schisms, a downturn in real estate, and growing labor organization during World War I made it impossible for the Downtown bourgeoisie to hold onto power. Mott lost the mayoralty to John Davie in 1915, who held it for the next sixteen years. Davie ran an old fashioned franchise machine in tandem with Alameda County Republican boss Mike Kelly (an ally of Progressive Governor Hiram Johnson), which incorporated the working class into politics without giving them any real power.

Radical politics did not get very far in the East Bay. An effort by Oakland workers to organize their own Union Labor Party went nowhere. Berkeley elected a Socialist Mayor in 1911, but he was hemmed in by an unfriendly city council. A few utopians such as the founder of Atascadero came out of Oakland.²⁴ The wartime surge in jobs and unionization allowed for efforts to break down racial and skill barriers in the labor movement, but postwar closure of shipyards had a devastating effect, as elsewhere on the west coast.²⁵ The Chamber of Commerce moved in for the kill, and declared the Open Shop in Oakland by 1923. The working class fell back on what they could get out of the local party bosses. Some white workers joined a tax-fearing, nativist, Protestant middle class in support of the Ku Klux Klan in the late Twenties, electing Klansmen as city commissioners and county sheriff. The Klan tried to beat ethnic machine politics at its own game, but turned out to be easily corrupted and quickly fell from grace. The strength of the Klan was, however, an

²¹ Bagwell 1984; Rhomberg 1998; Blautza 1978; Hinkel and McCann 1939. There was a second wing of Progressive businessmen who clashed with Mott on occasion. The key to infrastructure provision was the shift to bonds and taxes, in place of the utility franchise system on which Smith and Havens grew fat. Rhomberg 1998. On Progressive city government in the United States, see Teaford, Schiesl, etc.

²² On planning in Oakland see Scott 1959. Earlier plans by FL Olmsted and others were never implemented either.

²³ Union membership was as high as 10,000 in 1910. (Robert) Knight 1960, Rhomberg 1998. The AFL and American labor has been notoriously in favor of low taxes and no social contract of the sort which European unions have backed in this century. Einhorn book on taxes.

²⁴ [check Hine] Allensworth was a sort of black utopian settlement. [check Organ]

²⁵ Oakland’s unionized workers, like those in San Francisco, were overwhelmingly white and male. But there was an effort during the war to incorporate immigrant, Mexican and Negro workers under the Factory, Mill and Warehouse Employees Union created by the Alameda Central Labor Council and under the aegis of the more radical Shipyard Laborers’ Union, for which ending race barriers was a major principle. The IWW were not a factor in Oakland. Knight 358-61; Rhomberg 1998. For a comparison with Seattle, see Frank 1994.

indicator of the distance between Oakland and San Francisco, whose ethnic and Catholic middle class was bound more securely to working class politics and a liberal Democratic culture.²⁶

The Davie-Kelly machine left the business elite unsatisfied on several counts: the wrong class allegiances, poor performance in providing infrastructure, and increased corruption among city commissioners.²⁷ So, on the two most important development issues of the day, water supply and the harbor, they bypassed city government to install independent special districts -- another way of dismantling city government then just coming into vogue, especially in California.²⁸ Oakland and the East Bay suburbs came together under the aegis of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) in 1923, finishing out the saga of competition for water with San Francisco. Ironically, the EBMUD system was completed first.²⁹ EBMUD directors are elected, but in an arrangement that assured that they appointed their own successors for the next fifty years. Similarly, the port of Oakland was safely detached from city politics and placed under a business-led Port Authority in 1927. This body answers to no one but the gods of commerce, though legally part of city government; the Mayor appoints the Board of Directors, but cannot remove them.³⁰ The whole shoreline from the Bay Bridge to San Leandro, encompassing the harbor, airport (built in 1926), and prime waterfront property, is under their jurisdiction.

Big business took back city government in 1931, with Joseph R. Knowland atop the new civic regime. This JR's reign would last forty years. Knowland had a long career in politics serving six terms in Congress, where he vigorously promoted the interests of the East Bay while rising to prominence in the state Republican party. In 1915 he bought the *Oakland Tribune* to be the mouth organ of business boosterism and conservatism, and was the major domo of Downtown thereafter. The malfeasance of machine politics in the late Twenties gave Knowland and the Downtown clique their opening. They ousted Mayor Davie and pushed through a Charter reform switching to a city manager form of government. The new city manager, banker John Hassler, ran the city single-handedly for the next twenty years. Close ally AH Breed (and his son Arthur) had a hammerlock on the local assembly and senate seats. A young county District Attorney tied to Knowland, Earl Warren, made his name going after political corruption in Oakland. Meanwhile, Joe's son, William, entered the State Assembly in 1933 and the US Senate in 1946, where he became a national power in the Republican Party. The Knowlands were a force to be reckoned with, who helped make Governors of their protégées Earl Warren and Goodwin Knight (from Los Angeles). The Knowland regime kept Oakland and Alameda county politicians on a short, conservative leash.³¹

The Thirties and the power of the New Deal in the West had little effect on the East Bay.³² It brought a surge in union organizing, a mass walkout in support of the San Francisco General Strike, and the entry of the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). But the bosses were equally well organized as the United Employers (led by the canners) and

²⁶ On the Klan in Oakland, see Rhomberg 1998. On the Klan in the 1920s, see xxxx. On San Francisco see Issel & Cherny 1985 and Issel 19xx.

²⁷ Kelly and Davie were also weakened when their allies in Sacramento were defeated in 1922(?) by the conservative wing of the GOP, in which Knowland was a major figure.

²⁸ Teaford? Walsh. Bollens. Chicago guy.

²⁹ [history of EBMUD]

³⁰ Jones 1934. Cf. Walsh 1978.

³¹ Rhomberg 1998; Cray 1997 on Warren. [check in Cray, oral histories, anything on Breeds?]

³² Unlike the rest of the West which shifted into the Democratic column for decades. Jackson xxx; White essay on Wierdness in the West.

the Retail Merchants Association. The working class never broke the Republican grip on Oakland and Alameda County government. Indeed, some labor leaders, particularly Charles Real, fell in with the Knowland machine. Real's Teamster's local, acting under orders from the national union, tried to halt the longshoremen's organizing drive in warehouses in the East Bay in 1937, triggering a violent clash between CIO and AFL partisans. The AFL kicked the CIO unions of the Alameda County Central Labor Council, causing an irreparable schism among Bay Area unions. Real went on to purge his radical local, destroy the Retail Clerks, and rise to the head of the Central Labor Council and the California Federation of Labor.³³

A curiosity of this period is the failure of the Kaiser family to challenge the Knowland regime in its prime. Greater by far in economic power than the local newspaper magnates, the Kaisers were Democratic Party stalwarts since the early New Deal when Henry was one of the renegade western capitalists, along with AP Giannini and Henry Morgenthau, to throw in his lot with Roosevelt. He was amply rewarded with construction contracts from the Federal Government; indeed, one might say that Kaiser was the model for the modern Federal contract capitalist, even before the aircraft builders. Perhaps Henry's empire so quickly and thoroughly exceeded the puny boundaries of Oakland, leaving it to the newspaper publishers, bankers and realtors, as is the case in most US cities.³⁴

Flush with success at creating the regional water district, Oakland business leaders bruited anew their plans for Greater Oakland, by a merger of city and county after the manner of San Francisco. But, ironically, Joe Knowland opposed it, effectively killing the idea. Meanwhile, Oakland's burghers continued to opt out of San Francisco-born ideas for regional cooperation under Frederick Dohrmann's Regional Plan Association (1925-1928). And locally, Oakland's suburbs went their own ways; Emeryville and Piedmont were means by which the East Bay bourgeoisie opted out of collective responsibility for regional governance and promotion. So the hegemony of Knowland and his cronies was relatively ineffective in promoting Oakland and the East Bay to the degree achieved by the more united and expansive burghers of regional rival, Los Angeles.³⁵

Exodus to the West Coast

Africans in America trickled westward to the California goldfields, where they partook of the relative freedom of the wide-open city of San Francisco. While California gave birth to its own version of the White Republic, the color line has always cut a bit differently here, giving the black experience a particular twist. Black pioneers were, like their Anglo contemporaries, urban, cosmopolitan, and literate; a select few even prospered. Negroes were such a tiny minority that they posed no threat to white dominance; the gross violence of race riots or lynchings against blacks was absent, falling instead on the heads of beleaguered Asians and Mexicans. From the time of the first statewide Colored Convention in 1855, followed by the expulsion of slavery from California, a politically vigorous network of black men and women kept up agitation for civil liberties such as the right to testify in

³³ Real appears to have cut a deal with DA Warren to escape prosecution for the murder of a scab in 1934. Richard Jay, *A Case Study in Retail Unionism: The Retail Clerks in East Bay* Diss. UCB, 1953; Rhomberg.

³⁴ Kaiser's managers and family did come to play a role in redevelopment politics in the 1950s, Democratic Party maneuvers against Knowland in the 1960s, and in the fund-raising efforts for the Oakland Museum and Symphony in the 1960s and 70s. See below. [check Foster]. What about the Safeway, Judson, Chlorox types? see Judson Pacific . 1946. *A Romance of Steel in California*. . On local power elites, see Logan and Molotch 1982.

³⁵ Thanks to Chris Rhomberg for the Oakland city and county story -- missing from Scott 1959.

courts or to send their children to public schools; as a consequence, Jim Crow practices such as riding in the back of the bus were never prevalent, and black Bay Area residents could feel a bit sense of breathing room within the larger prison of racism.³⁶ Still, the lack of a mass migration to California is indicative of limits to black employment by white business and labor. In the mining era, Chinese were recruited for the kinds of construction and domestic work Africans might have undertaken. Later, the strength of white labor, combined with the strategy of racial exclusion, forced blacks out of many jobs. So the black population of San Francisco stagnated at less than 2000 toward the end of the century, even as other western cities added thousands of new migrants.³⁷

Oakland's burgeoning industries were somewhat more open to hiring negro laborers, so the East Bay's black populace passed up San Francisco's by the time of the great quake. The center of Afro-American life and politics in Northern California shifted along with it. West Oakland's budding African-American community gravitated around the 7th street rail and streetcar lines, hard by the rail yards where a third of all black wage-earners lived.³⁸ The first African Methodist Episcopal church and schoolhouse were located on 7th and a commercial strip grew up there that served as the heart of black Oakland life through the Second World War. By that time, black settlement extended into southwest Berkeley, which became a prestige address for "middle class" African-Americans.³⁹

The anchor of black employment were the men hired as Pullman Car porters on the transcontinental line, and the militant Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, founded in 1925 (recognized by the company in 1937) and led locally by C.L. Dellums, provided a strong working class counterweight to the traditional middle class leadership of teachers, civil service workers, and small businessmen. The latter founded the local AME Church, Afro-American Council, NAACP branch, *Sunshine* newspaper, black YWCA, and other key community institutions. Both Booker T. Washington's Negro Business League and Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association were vigorous in Oakland, and the local community was not yet riven by class and political differences as in the east. The 1930s opened further collaboration between the leaders of the Porter's Union and middle class civil rights activists (as well as between white and black reformers), as in the struggle to get the first black school teacher hired in Berkeley or to protest University housing discrimination. This echoed a larger integrationist collaboration in the Bay Area in the trade union movement (especially the Longshoremen), the Communist Party, and New Deal liberal circles.⁴⁰

Mass migration finally hit the Bay Area in World War II, when Henry Kaiser began recruiting southern workers to fill his shipyards. Tens of thousands of African-Americans - mostly from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas -- answered the call. They filled up West Oakland, southwest Berkeley and south Richmond (as well as the Fillmore and Bayview districts of San Francisco, east Palo Alto, Vallejo and Marin City). Oakland's black population tripled, reaching almost 10% of the city's residents. Between the wartime

³⁶ For the early history of Afro-Americans in the Bay Area, see Daniels 1990 and Broussard 19xx. A fine but briefer tale of the East Bay is Crouchett et al. 1989. See also Almaguer 1995 and Matthews 1997.

³⁷ On employment restrictions, see Daniels, 1990, and, from the union side, Kazin 1986. See also Saxton 1966.

³⁸ 1929 figure. Crouchett et al., 1989, 37. A handful of wealthy men built estates on the westside before working class settlement drove them east. West Oakland then filled in from west to east toward the downtown.

³⁹ The term middle class is contentious among blacks, but I will use it given its broad currency.

⁴⁰ Crouchett et al., 1989. The UNIA's Liberty Hall still stands at 8th and Chester. The black presence in the CP remained strong after the war despite red-baiting and the NAACP's ejection of Communists in the early 1950s. See Horne, 19xx. Also may be a book on Garveyism in Oakland by Tod Vincent.

housing crunch and the color bar, the modern West Oakland ghetto was born. While the resident community felt a bit overwhelmed, the new migrants were more like them than not, being mostly skilled and married, eager to organize for voting rights and social betterment, and ready to purchase homes and settle. As with white California, the poorest immigrants were culled by distance and expense. The legacy of alliances built up before the war helped strengthen black solidarity against the fault lines of internal class division.⁴¹

MAP **African-American distribution in Bay Area, 1990**

The newcomers brought a vitality that bubbled up on the dance floors of Sweet's Ballroom, the California Hotel, and clubs like Slim Jenkins' along 7th street. From that time onward, Oakland has supported a vibrant musical scene based in blues, R&B and gospel.⁴² Gospel choirs held forth in East Bay churches, the best known of which were the Hawkins Family Singers, who broadcast weekly from Bishop EE Cleveland's Ephesian Church of Berkeley. Mahalia Jackson frequented the choirs of Mount Zion Spiritual Temple, run by one of Oakland's most bizarre and charismatic characters, minister "King" Louis Narcisse -- whose empire of churches and mansions stretched all the way to Detroit.⁴³ East Texas blues hung on for decades in clubs such as Eli's Mile High Club and the Fifth Amendment. East Bay rhythm and blues collided with white rock to produce the explosion at the Fillmore Auditorium in the 1960s, with Tower of Power, Sly and the Family Stone, and white crossover band Credence Clearwater (Big Brother and the Holding Company got their blues straight from Texas). For decades the community was served by radio stations such as KDIA, KSOL, KBLX, and KJAZ. Postwar African-Oaklanders were prominent in other fields of opportunity for blacks, as well. Professional sports featured many local sons, such as Frank Robinson, Vada Pinson, Curt Flood, Bill Russell and Don Barksdale.

Wartime prosperity was undone by mass layoffs from the shipyards and other wartime employment, which devastated black workers, unionized or not (only one-eighth of skilled black workers found civilian jobs). Yet despite the despair and personal tragedies suffered by so many families, migration from the south continued, pushing the African-American population of the Bay Area to 150,000 by 1950, over half of those in the East Bay. California still drew in migrants because, all things considered -- wages, housing and segregation -- life was better here.⁴⁴

After the war, the African-American community was a force to be reckoned with. One line of struggle was for electoral representation, an effort launched with the formation of the East Bay Democratic Club under Byron Rumford, CL Dellums and D.G Gilson (and including a young Lionel Wilson). This succeeded in getting the first black faces on city councils by the late Forties -- most notably Byron Rumford's election to the Berkeley city council in

⁴¹ The class divide within the black community seems to have been less than in eastern cities, as incoming migrants were as skilled as pioneer residents -- contrary to the popular image of southern bumpkins. Over half bought houses after the war. Daniels, 1991, 167, Lemke-Santangelo 199x. [check Lemke and Johnson. also Moore diss.]. On the concentration in West Oakland, see JM Regal, 1967. Oakland's partnership for Change. .

⁴² [ref to Ricky (tod?) Vincent at SFS or Lee Hildebrand's work].

⁴³ Narcisse fleeced his immense flock both for fancy cars and to feed the poor. OT, March 10, 1991. A1,8. Both Narcisse and Cleveland did weekly radio broadcasts that anticipated the televangelists of the 1980s.

⁴⁴ Oakland's black population steadily increased from 12% (50,000) in 1950 to 22% in 1960, 34% in 1970 and 47% in 1980. On the optimism of the black community, see Lemke, Moore, Johnston.

1948 following which he became the Bay Area's first black assemblyman in 1952 (sic). A second line was job discrimination. During the war the target was restrictive union practices in the shipyards, which were opened up by Presidential decree in 1943 (sic) and dismantled by the state Supreme Court in 1945.⁴⁵ After the war, the black leadership made several unsuccessful attempts to legislate against discriminatory hiring in the late 1940s, and finally won a statewide Fair Employment Practices Act in 1959, authored by Rumford. The third line of attack was against restrictions on housing. Dellums saw to it that the first public housing projects in West Oakland, Campbell and Peralta Villages, were integrated. An Open Housing bill was introduced several times by Rumford and approved, at long last, in 1963.

Thus, when the southern Civil Rights movement arrived on the coast, in the early 1960s in the form of Congress on Racial Equality boycotts against Bay Area merchants who refused to employ blacks, the region already had long parallel history of civil rights struggles.⁴⁶ Official politics in Oakland continued in blissful ignorance of the revolt against racism, however, and a white offensive against the enlarged African-American community was unleashed during the Fifties. The postwar storm clouds were gathering for all-out conflict on the home front.

Deindustrialization before deindustrialization

The deindustrialization of America in the 1980s is well known, and California was no exception. But the deindustrialization of Oakland was well advanced by then. It began even before World War II, as the Great Depression laid Oakland low. Despite the claims of local boosters that Oakland was one of three US cities least affected by the Depression, census data show a falloff in employment and population in the 1930s. Oakland saw its fair share of Hoovervilles and hobo camps that were the contemporary signifiers of capitalism's great sickness. Once prosperous companies such as Virden and Durant hit the skids. The war offered economic redemption, including huge federal contracts for shipbuilding at Moore, Bethlehem and Kaiser yards and the arrival of Oakland Army and Navy bases and Alameda Naval Air station as supply points for the Pacific theater. Employment and population peaked at xxxx and xxxxx.⁴⁷ World War II transformed the East Bay, but the case for a Second Gold Rush has been oversold. On the one hand, Oakland had already been revolutionized several times before, as with the arrival of the railroad and the great earthquake. On the other, the economic revolution was short-lived. A sudden and decisive shrinkage of Oakland's manufacturing base back to pre-war levels occurred with the dismantling of the war machine, above all the shipyards. Oakland never recovered.

Deindustrialization continued in fits and starts through the Fifties and Sixties. Oakland's manufacturing base stagnated at xxxxx employed from 1950 to 1970. We have already seen the process of geographical industrialization at work, and the passing of the torch to the new industrial suburbs of southern Alameda County and, more importantly, to the new electronics cluster of Silicon Valley. Suburbanization of industry was epitomized by the relocation of the General Motors and Richmond Ford plants in 1956 and 1960 (the East Oakland Chevy plant was replaced by Eastmont Mall, a never too successful shopping center for black East Oakland). San Leandro and Hayward grew prodigiously, followed by

⁴⁵ Wollenberg, Marinship.

⁴⁶ The Civil Rights struggle in the Bay Area has not found its biographer, as yet; so its relation to the national movement is hard to ascertain.

⁴⁷ anything on Hoovervilles? On the war boom, see Johnson 1995. For a critical view, see Paul Rhode paper.

the newly-formed towns of Fremont, Union City and Milpitas -- instant cities of a new wave of metropolitan expansion. In a sense, Oakland's time had passed.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, it is worth pausing to consider the decline in more detail.

This was not a dramatic collapse. Most factories and warehouses from the past kept up profitable operations for years after the war. There were even a few new entrants right after the war, such as the new Gerbers or Granny Goose plants. More common were buyouts by outside companies, such as Marchand calculators by Smith Corona in 19xx, Peet's soap and cosmetics by Colgate, Pacific Coast Shredded Wheat by Nabisco.⁴⁹ But over time, industry folded up bit by bit. Why was this?

Suspicion has to be aroused by the relatively large number of branch plants in Oakland, compared to San Francisco or Los Angeles. The East Bay saw a marked increase in outside control by the 1920s and 1940s, accounting for 33% of employment in 1948, double that of San Francisco and LA (16% and 14%, respectively).⁵⁰ While buyouts did not necessarily mean plant closure, it is likely that outside corporations increasingly favored Los Angeles as their main site of west coast manufacture, for the simple reason that its market was twice the size of the Bay Area's by 1930. Oakland did not become the Detroit of the West, LA did. Some East Bay operations were also gradually shifted eastward, as in the case of Caterpillar after it relocated its headquarters to Peoria, Illinois, in the Twenties; by the time of its closure, the San Leandro plant was reduced to making starter motors.

But ownership patterns do not explain enough. East Bay plant closures often came only as the parent company (and sector) began to feel the squeeze of overinvestment, competition, and declining profits, and began to retrench. Industrial restructuring of this sort bears little relation to the conditions at the local factory, contrary to talk of high costs in inner city locations.⁵¹ It has everything to do with shifts in products, management techniques, and investment on a economy-wide, even global, scale. Berkeley's Colgate plant, for example, was up to date and profitable, but Colgate, faced with declining market share, fell back on factories closer to headquarters.⁵² Canning illustrates the problem, as well. Two things befell East Bay canneries: a locational shift of growers to the Central Valley and a decline in demand for canned goods. The former had to do with the displacement of California agriculture toward the interior, the latter with the rise of frozen, freeze-dried and processed foods.⁵³

The fate of Kaiser Industries was critical to Oakland's decline. One of the top handful of industrial empires in 1950, Kaiser was gone thirty years later. It is one of the great stories of industrial failure in American business history, alongside Sinclair Oil or the Pennsylvania Railroad. The first misstep was for Henry Kaiser, whose forte was construction and materials, to challenge the titans of Midwestern mass production at their own game, moving

⁴⁸ get figures, including Emeryville. See chapter 4. Oakland thus fits the oft-told tale of inner-city decay, but with cautions; cf. Beauregard 1995. (Johns?)

⁴⁹ [again, need the postwar history of buyouts, etc.] check Amazing metrop. Oakland 1945 F868.A3.M32.

⁵⁰ Overall California was not conquered by eastern corporations as many people think, e.g., Calkins & Hoadley 1941. The 800 branch plants in the state in 1948, added up to no more than 4% of the state's factories, 20% of its production jobs -- close to the national average -- and 80% of these were seeking for market position in a rapidly growing region (Trice 1955). [watch for redundancy with Ch. 4]

⁵¹ On restructuring versus localities, see Massey 1978 and 1984.

⁵² On the core location strategy of many corporations, see Watt 1982.

⁵³ Cite something on this...While Del Monte set up its first canneries outside the Pacific basin in the 1950s and 60s, it is not clear that these replaced California operations (Braznell 1982; Burbach and Flynn 1980, pp. 164-219).

into automobiles and household appliances at the end of the war. He bought up a Ford bomber factory at Willow Run in order to build the Kaiser, an American Volkswagen. It was a colossal mistake, and Henry was forced to retreat to his California base of engineering and basic materials.⁵⁴ Kaiser industries spread out internationally, but evidently missed the chance to focus on international construction and turnkey plant design that gave Bechtel a leg up in the global market. Worse, Kaiser seemed unable to institutionalize his success in an impersonal corporation. Still ranked 25th in the Fortune 500 in 1967, the Kaiser empire unwound gradually after Henry died that year. Kaiser should have stayed with his California strengths, but fell an early victim to the delusions of Fordism. Bechtel stuck with construction, becoming the world's largest such firm in the 1970s. Bechtel rode the wave of petrodollars that turned the Middle East into the world's hottest construction zone, and became one of a handful of truly global engineering and building contractors.⁵⁵ But Bechtel had moved to San Francisco in the meantime.

Oakland's port is an exception to this dismal picture. It made an early move into a new technology, containerization. Here it struck pay-dirt, besting San Francisco and becoming during the 1960s the premier container port on the Pacific Rim (second largest to New York in the world). Its lofty cranes were the inspiration for George Lucas for the war machines of *The Empire Strikes Back*. It could not sustain this lofty position in the face of better situated ports at LA and Seattle, but still remains the fourth largest container port in the United States.⁵⁶ Its two main sources of traffic are agriculture and electronics, both regional. Its success has taken place in relative isolation from the city and its poor, moreover; the port is so heavily mechanized as to create little employment and the revenues recirculate largely into new investment in cranes, docks and roads and airport terminals.

The newly darkened countenance of Oakland (and Richmond) no doubt sped the chariots of industry on their way.⁵⁷ While industrial decentralization is to be expected, one needs to ask why there hasn't been more reinvestment in Oakland since San Francisco has fared much better as an old core city. The chief reason is the latter's role as a financial center and headquarters city. But some unpleasant facts of location stand out. When back offices began decentralizing from San Francisco in a big way in the 1980s, they skipped right over Oakland and went to the 680 corridor over the hills.⁵⁸ Another clear pattern is how Silicon Valley has not reconquered the East Bay as it has the Peninsula up to San Francisco; the unspoken rule for years was never to step beyond Fremont into the morass of organized labor, Democratic politics and racial minorities from Hayward north. Then, too, why did Safeway follow Lucky Stores out to the 680 corridor when it has never had any problem at its modest headquarters near the waterfront?⁵⁹

Whatever the causes, the combination of deindustrialization, in-migration, and racial exclusion meant that Oakland's citizenry grew increasingly poor by 1960. Unemployment stood at 8%, twice the national average, while a more systematic calculus of unemployment

⁵⁴ On this rise of Kaiser see Foster 1989, Kaiser 1968. On the demise, see Davis 1990. [what else?] Kaiser Steel went to a Brazilian company, Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical divisions were bought by financial speculator Maxxam Corp. Kaiser Engineers was sold but resurfaced in Oakland through an LBO as an independent company.

⁵⁵ Strassman & Wells, 1982. when did Bechtel move?

⁵⁶ SFX, October 1, 1995, D1,D3. The Port will acquire 400 acres from the decommissioned Oakland Navy Base c 1999. [recent history of the port? Jones?]

⁵⁷ Cite on race and location, early Bennett Harrison? B. Berger?

⁵⁸ See Nelson and Chapter 9.

⁵⁹ Safeway went from #1 chain in sales in 1985 to near-disappearance in the buyout mania of the 1980s, but used an LBO orchestrated by SF's Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts to restructure and then swallow Von's of LA. SFC December 17, 1996, C1.

plus "subemployment" (less than continuous, full-time work) came to almost 50% in the flatlands. Some 25% of the city's families were below the official government poverty line. Worse, just under half fell below a \$6,000 per year "deprivation" level; two-thirds of all non-white families fell into the latter category.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, Oakland was one of the first cities chosen for the War on Poverty begun in 1964.

The Tower and the Wall

A political breakthrough seemed imminent at the end of the Second World War. Oakland's wartime boom had opened up the city, loosening the grip of the Knowland regime. Its unions were flush with new members and the city had been revitalized by an infusion of new migrants. In a bold move reminiscent of Seattle after the First World War, the Alameda Central Labor Council called a General Strike on December 3, 1946, calling out 142 unions and 100,000 union members. The strike was triggered by a walkout of women sales clerks at Kahn's downtown store, as part of a Retail Clerks organizing drive in what was the core of the female working class by war's end and the commercial heart of the city. They received key rank and file support from the Teamsters. It lasted three days, garnered thunderous popular support, and rocked the city fathers back on their heels. Just as the rival CIO unions were about to join the strike and victory seemed within reach, it came to a sorry end with the craven withdrawal of support by national Teamster West Coast VP Dave Beck and labor council head Charles Real, backed by the all-male leadership of the state AFL.⁶¹ It would be the last General Strike in America in the 20th century.

An electoral echo of the General Strike, organized by Communist Party activists under the banner of the Oakland Voters League and backed by the unions, was to run labor-left candidates for the Oakland city council. Their slate won four out of five open seats and nearly a majority on the council in 1947, despite a vicious red-baiting campaign by the Knowland forces. But the uprising was squelched by the *Tribune* and its allies in short order, leaving the city's citizenry once again supine. Unlike San Francisco in 1934, the workers were unable to reclaim a seat at the table of city politics.⁶² The memory of that brief revolt lingered on, however, and the slogan invented by the Negro Labor Committee, "Take the Power from the Tower", was resuscitated a generation later by the Black Panthers.

All through the Fifties and Sixties, Oakland remained in the political hammerlock of the Knowlands and their Downtown business allies, still knit together by the Chamber of Commerce, Traders Club, Oakland Athletic Club and Athens Club. While Earl Warren went on to a remarkable career as a Supreme Court liberal, authoring the decision in *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954, Oakland and the Knowlands tilted farther to the right. Mayors Joseph Smith, John Houlihan and John Reading presided over the last twenty years of white businessmen's rule over an increasingly black and restive city, while the brutal and racist Oakland Police Department held the line on the streets.⁶³ Oakland was bypassed by

⁶⁰ Figures from Hayes 1972, Regal 1967 and Rhomberg 1988.

⁶¹ Hayes, 1972; Rhomberg 1995, 1998; Johnson 1995; Fred Glass, where?. Real was, happily, thrown out of office on embezzlement charges in 1950. Johnson gets the story wrong by giving the CIO primacy and not the AFL. [check Johnson on strike and labor vision for Oakland] Cornford recs Mike Rose, a graduate student of David Brody at UC Davis. As a grad. student he wrote a paper called "Collaboration with a Dual Union Oakland AFL Political Practice, 1943-47." ; ms on General Strike by Richard Boyden, d. 1981

⁶² Cf. Issel 19xx

⁶³ On life under the Oakland police, see Seale? Marine? Hilliard? May, *Struggle for Authority*. cited in Rhomberg. Jerry Skolnick book? Oakland's PD never approached the kind of autonomy and political power enjoyed by the LAPD, however (cf. Davis, 1990).

the liberal shifts in white politics taking place in San Francisco or Berkeley in the late Fifties and early Sixties. Ed Meese, Reagan's Attorney General, began as a Knowland ally and Alameda County District Attorney who cut his teeth on Berkeley student protestors. It would be up to black power to bring political renewal to the city.

Nothing could have been worse for Oakland than this political stagnation. Here was a city in trouble economically and badly in need of new ideas. Moreover, the political grip of central cities was slipping away rapidly, in part because of the federalization of power, in part because of the shift toward suburban, Republican voter bases.⁶⁴ Yet the Knowland regime was implacable, and Oakland's city government had little to offer its African-American citizenry except hostility and slum clearance in a futile effort to be rid of them. Knowland was also preoccupied with the larger theater of Republican party politics and king-making. Bill Knowland served as GOP minority and majority leader for a decade in the US Senate, and was poised for a run on the Presidency. He intended to use the Governor's office as a stepping stone to the White House, partly to deny the office to Goodwin Knight, who the Knowlands felt had betrayed them with undue liberality after his election in 1954. Knowland did not count on the resurgence of California's Democratic Party under San Francisco's Edmund Brown, who defeated him in 1958 (a fiasco repeated in 1962 with Nixon's defeat by Brown). After that, the Knowland regime unwound.

Meanwhile, a hardening of race lines was taking place throughout the country as the demand for equality from African-Americans grew more vocal. In Oakland the race divide was no doubt sharpened by the new influx of blacks into the area, the near-southern ("Okie") origins of another one-fifth of wartime migrants, and the failure of the white working class to break through into political power (a repeat of the KKK era of Twenties, in a sense). Whites of all classes began their historic withdrawal from the older city to the suburbs as new jobs and housing opened up in the postwar boom -- more so in California than probably anywhere else in the nation. The elites went over the hills, but the working and middling classes fled south to the sanctuaries of San Leandro, Hayward, Fremont, and unincorporated San Lorenzo, Union City, and Castro Valley. To the north, they abandoned Richmond for Pinole, El Cerrito, San Pablo, and unincorporated El Sobrante. Over 100,000 whites left Oakland, putting up the barricades behind them. The suburbs remained virtually 100% white through the 1960s, as restrictive covenants mushroomed and bankers and realtors carefully steered the housing market.⁶⁵ Back in Oakland, a city groggy from the blows to its economic base woke up to see a hostile wall of white all around.

Faced with growing white segregation of the Bay Area, the Civil Rights coalition was finally rewarded with victory in Sacramento (thanks to key Democrats such as Governor Brown, Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh and Philip Burton) with passage of the Rumford Fair Housing Act in 1963, following a path breaking ordinance in Berkeley the same year. This ban on discrimination in housing touched a deep nerve in the body of white privilege, producing the first anti-integration backlash up and down the state. An initiative to repeal the Rumford Act was immediately put on the ballot and passed the next year by resounding popular vote (though fair housing was upheld in the end by the California Supreme Court). In 1966, Ronald Reagan would ride into the Governor's mansion on the white horse of reaction to open housing, lacking only a hood and robe for dramatic effect.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ what to cite on this?? Phillips? City Trenches? ask KJ.

⁶⁵ For housing figures and discussion of exclusionary mechanisms, see Hunter, 1964 and Hayes, 1972. On housing segregation throughout the US at this time, see xxxxxx. (Duncans?)

⁶⁶ new Wollenberg article. Berkeley's ordinance was similarly overturned within the year.

In the Name of Renewal

Oakland's Downtown began dying after the war, and the corpse has stood decaying for the last half century. The streetcar system that brought people Downtown to shop atrophied, then died out.⁶⁷ The automobile was lord of suburb and city -- much more here than in higher density San Francisco, and it changed shopping patterns completely. Kahn's, the Fox and the Paramount closed in the Fifties. Oakland never contained a rich agglomeration of industrial headquarters and financial institutions, despite its few high-profile companies, and in the 1950s(?) the Key System died, Bechtel fled to San Francisco, Lucky Stores to the suburbs. On the uptown flank, Kaiser Industries moved to 20th Street near the lake, splitting Downtown in two.⁶⁸ Toward the waterfront, Safeway Stores and the Port Authority lurked in warehouses. The only new skyscraper built in the heart of the Downtown was the Great Western Finance building. Meanwhile, Downtown residential hotels became seedier as their tenants became poorer, and shops came to reflect their customers' fallen state; Swan's and Housewives Markets thrived by selling chitlins and second-hand dresses. Chinatown shrank away to a handful of stores, while pawn shops along lower Broadway did a brisk business.

Urban renewal was meant to rescue this declining core. The idea of urban renewal was first imagined as a way of improving housing for the poor, but by the time of the 1949 Federal Housing Act had been tipped toward business aims, slum clearance and Downtown redevelopment.⁶⁹ Pushed by the real estate board, Downtown leaders created the Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR) in 1954. Membership drew on the banks, property owners' association, chamber of commerce and government; at its head sat an executive of Kaiser Industries. OCCUR began to agitate for public action for private ends, and became the chief ganglion of capitalist planning for Oakland with its weekly meetings at the Athens Athletic Club for the next twenty years.⁷⁰ Their first output was the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan of 1957, which focused on housing 'blight'.⁷¹ A Redevelopment Agency was established in 1958, and was headed by Thomas Bell, white former head of redevelopment in Richmond. The City Council approved the first General Neighborhood Renewal Plan for West Oakland in 1959. By 1962, attention shifted back toward Downtown and the "corridor" slated for clearance between it and West Oakland. The first Central District Plan was drawn up in 1965 and revised several times thereafter.⁷² But there was more to the strategy of Downtown and housing renewal than ever appeared in a single planning document.

⁶⁷ Like all trolley systems, the Key Route had been run into the ground for decades before National City Lines (owned by the notorious highway cartel of General Motors, Greyhound, Goodyear and Amoco) came along to buy it out and shut it down in 1958. With the whole country moving to freeways, there was no room for streetcars in the federal budget or national fantasy of the time. Adler 19xx. KMJ?

⁶⁸ After purchasing the site from Holy Names College, which fled to the hills. Did Kaiser moved uptown as a snub to the rival Knowlands, or simply to secure a large parcel at a low price. [get this picture of 1950s right]

⁶⁹ Weiss, Gelfand.

⁷⁰ Hayes, 1972, p. 111 ff. It took considerable effort for OCCUR to overcome the initial reluctance of much of Oakland's small business and liberal housing activists; indeed, the first Planning Commission report on 'The Blight in Our City' was rejected by the liberal city council in 1949.

⁷¹ On the history of the bogus idea of blight, see Beaugregard, Fischler, Walker. For a comparison with LA, see Davis 1990?? [look for that document]

⁷² Rhomberg, 1998. Plans were revised with every new developer: Dillingham in 1969, Taubman in 1970 with offices, adding department stores in 1974. It would be rewritten again in 1982 by Bramalea and in the 1990s after Bramalea.

The initial impulse was to wall off Downtown from offending influences of poverty and race that had become fixtures of postwar Oakland, and to sweep away the old debris so that a shining New City could emerge from the rubble. The key link in this plan was the new freeway program that got underway in the Fifties and hit stride in the Sixties. Although built by the state, the freeways needed local approval; and unlike the freeway wars in San Francisco, Oakland city fathers welcomed the highways with open arms.⁷³ The Nimitz sealed off the waterfront c.1952 and the Cypress and Grove-Shafter cut off the Westside in 1954 and 1968.⁷⁴ A new police station and hulking city jail anchored the foot of Broadway frowning down on the old 7th Street SP station, disembarkation point for the city for a century. On the eastern flank, guarding the passage across Lake Merritt, a new fortress of learning, Laney College, was installed in 1969; it was designed with the administration building as a guard tower over a narrow entrance to the inner quad -- a suitable monument to student unrest in the 1960s. Just up from Laney the Oakland Museum went in, styled as a sunken garden of brutalist concrete, winner of many architectural awards in anticipation of the bunker mentality of LA's Charles Gehry twenty years later.⁷⁵

Within this ring of battlements, space could be carved out for investors to joust. In the draft Central District Plan, the Redevelopment Agency talked of bulldozing 70 blocks, but this was too much for the Downtown Property Owners' Association, and had to be scaled back to only 12 blocks between 9th and 14th Streets on the Westside of Broadway. Below this from 8th to 12th (the heart of Oakland retailing in the 19th century), several Skid Row hotels were emptied by code enforcement under Operation Padlock, and pawn shops and the Moulin Rouge were shut down.⁷⁶ West of this newly renamed Historic District, a swath of cheap housing was cleared for parking lots and future luxury apartments.⁷⁷ East of Broadway, four blocks of Chinatown were cleared, and many other condemned structures fell to the wrecker's ball. At the foot of Broadway, the Port Authority cleared out the old waterfront leaving a naked plaza flanked by a handful of seafood restaurants. On every front, buildings fell, parking lots multiplied, and street life slowed to a trickle. The miracle is that anything survived the slash and burn, but a few treasures like 1180 Broadway and the Oakland Flower Mart escaped.⁷⁸

⁷³ The relation between the California Dept. of Highways and the Redevelopment groups has never been firmly established, but the close harmony of results would appear not to be an accident. RW Breuner and Sherwood Swan, department store owners, and Edgar Buttner, a contractor, played leading roles in creating the Oakland Central Business District Association in 1950 to promote highways and transit for the Downtown and in the formation of the BART system and AC Transit. State Senator Arthur Breed introduced the BART enabling legislation in 1956. Adler.

⁷⁴ Grove-Shafter was fought to a standstill for many years, but the route was cleared by 19xx, creating a DMZ between West Oakland from Downtown. On completion it was renamed the John Williams Freeway.

⁷⁵ Laney and the Museum were part of the new Civic Center plan (when?). Laney became the inner city campus of the Peralta Community College system, which added new campuses in Alameda and the Oakland hills to serve the more lightly completed; the old Merritt campus on Grove (now MLK) and 60th was left to crumble into ruin, while the promised replacement, Vista Collage, still works out of temporary space. On Gehry see Davis, 1990.

⁷⁶ The pawnbrokers created an amusing flap by insisting they be relocated together, to preserve the external economies of proximity. The much-beloved delicatessen, Ratto's, was threatened by demolition before citizen protest saved it.

⁷⁷ The 1957 renewal plan called for upgrading the ring around Downtown for higher-income tenants, in support of commercial life -- the same upscale fantasy driving San Francisco's clearance of the Western Addition and Yerba Buena.

⁷⁸ On the nightmare of architecture preservation in Oakland see, e.g., OT, March 15, 1992, B1 and SFC November 14, 1997, EB1,3. It must be said, however, that some of the new additions, such as City Centre, APL and the GSA buildings are architecturally splendid.

The third step of redevelopment was to hold the center. BART was seen as the link to replace the Key system, so Oakland's leaders fought to have the planned route diverted through Downtown; the system was authorized in 1956 and begun in 1966. "City Center" emerged as a combination office and department store complex centered on the 12th Street BART station, and linked directly to freeway off ramps so that suburban shoppers would never have to touch the besotted streets of the inner city. Above the planned mall (which never secured anchor tenants), the Redevelopment Agency built two slap-up, low cost high-rises to house the Clorox company, Wells Fargo, and the Bay Area's biggest realty firm, Grubb and Ellis. Below the mall, a convention center and hotel created a wall to keep the skid row bums at bay.⁷⁹ The Historic District became Old Oakland and three blocks west houses salvaged from West Oakland were moved into a clump designated Victorian Row.

At the same time as Downtown was receiving CPR, a renewal program for residential areas was in train, aimed chiefly at the West Oakland ghetto.⁸⁰ An opening salvo had been fired before the war with the first public housing projects.⁸¹ At war's end, over one thousand units of temporary wartime housing were pulled down. In 1958, in accord with the Neighborhood Renewal Plan, the city passed a housing code that led to the demolition of scores of hotels and houses, containing hundreds of units. After that, broad scale clearance began in 1962 across 50-blocks called the Acorn Project. This took out another thousand houses in West Oakland -- hundreds were not even substandard by the agency's own definitions -- and uprooted 9,000 people. Replacement housing was delayed for a decade.⁸² Just to finish things off, financial institutions red-lined the rest of West Oakland, leading to unchecked deterioration of the Victorian-era housing stock.

Housing policies were not the only tactic in the assault on West Oakland. Transportation corridors garroted the ghetto: the Grove-Shafter corridor split it off from Downtown, the MacArthur Freeway cut it off at 35th Street, BART took out 7th street, and the Cypress freeway cut diagonally through the heart of the area. A gigantic post office distribution center devoured more territory below 7th. Later, street improvements callously removed all the trees and made the neighborhoods look barren. Altogether over 7,000 housing units were lost between 1960 and 1966 and 14,000 people displaced.⁸³ This triggered the opening of the second ghetto in East Oakland. West Oakland's population plummeted from a wartime high of around 40,000 toward its present semi-rural density nearer to 8,000. By 1970, long before the mean season of Reaganism, urban renewal had shaken loose about a thousand homeless people onto the streets.

Map of West Oakland projects

The Acorn Project was finally completed in 1972. Designed to be the antithesis of high rise blocks like Pruitt-Igoe or wartime barracks like Peralta Village, it, too, slipped into gradual

⁷⁹ The redevelopment agency later came to regret this move, which splits City Centre plaza from Old Oakland.

⁸⁰ For detailed accounts of West Oakland renewal, see Hayes, 1972, May 19xx, and Rhomberg 1998.

⁸¹ Peralta and Campbell Villages. Other wartime public housing projects were Lockwood Gardens and Brookfield Village in East Oakland.

⁸² Some sites in the clearance area were also given to industry - Mack Truck, Ford, and US Plywood -- and a large shopping center, complete with Safeway supermarket, was included.

⁸³ Government figures show 7,250 housing units lost: 1400 wartime housing; 300 post office; 600 Grove-Shafter freeway; 450 BART; 1800 Acorn; 2200 housing code enforcement; 500 McArthur freeway. Hayes, 1982, 78. Surprisingly, about 20% of those displaced from West Oakland were Chicanos. Cf. Hirsch on Chicago [check pop. figs)

decline, thanks to the continuing poverty and neglect -- which no amount of fiddling with the housing stock and sidewalks can overcome. By the late 1980s Acorn residents were complaining bitterly of lack of maintenance and predatory security guards, both the responsibility of a private management company under contract to the Oakland Housing Authority.⁸⁴

Richmond and Berkeley offer minor variations on the postwar dirge of urban renewal. As soon as the war ended, panicked city officials in Richmond saw to it that thousands of wartime housing units were torn down to force out black occupants.⁸⁵ The newly cleared land was turned over to business, including Safeway's regional warehouse. With industry and the white working class moving out, retail was not far behind. In the 1950s the El Cerrito Mall to the east stole the business from Downtown Richmond, then in the 1970s Hilltop Mall to the north delivered the coup de grace. Hilltop was built by Chevron Development Company and annexed to Richmond. In effect, Chevron picked up the core of Richmond and moved it five miles north, where it could be reconstructed as the effective Downtown of West Contra Costa county and a handsome rent generator. Poor, desperate Richmond, the tormented Moor blinded by the bright lights of the new malls, proceeded to tear out its own heart with a miserable renewal plan -- leaving a desert where the center used to be.⁸⁶

Berkeley tried its hand at urban renewal, but didn't get as far as its neighbors thanks to a more prosperous and politically active populace. It, too, ripped down wartime housing in Cordonices Village (Albany Village stills stands, serving as low cost housing for students). An attempt was made to clear a portion of West Berkeley at its historic center on Delaware Street, but this was fought by a coalition of working class, Latino families, preservationists and campus radicals. The debacle ended the short life of the Berkeley Redevelopment Agency, and the City Council was able to catch the next wave of Federal urban funds for preservation and public housing. The long-delayed historic district is a typically cadaverous group of old homes and storefronts laid out stiffly in the lipstick colors of the embalmer's art (on which a local tagger once sprayed "Yuppies go home"), but the neighborhood survived.

Urban renewal was more than a government program gone wrong. It was a systematic plan of the urban bourgeoisie to make over American cities, chiefly in the interest of Downtown business and landowners. As Oakland and the rest of the inner East Bay were eclipsed after the war by the suburbs and South Bay, the establishment mobilized to save the Downtown in the only way it understood: top down, wholesale reconstruction. The effort was futile, unable to check the decline and, in fact, made it worse. The main strategy was to reclaim a past -- the white-face landscape of the streetcar-department store era -- beyond recapture. Thoroughly ignored were the wider job loss throughout the city, the outflow of capital, and the particularly harsh conditions facing the black citizenry. The white ruling class was blind to the real problems or refused to address those touching so deeply on the root evils of race

⁸⁴ The Housing Authority, created in 1938, is a independent agency like the Port Authority. Its policemen have been drawn from Oakland's Somoan immigrants, a classic case of racially constructed divisions. By 1992, the guards were under indictment for thievery and harrassment and the Federal Department of Housing and Health Services stepped in to administer the newly-blighted Acorn complex. East Oakland projects had similar complaints. SFX, April 7, 1991, B1,4; EBX, April 19, 1991, 2; OT November 29, 1992, A1,12-14.

⁸⁵ check Johnston, Moore, Lemke, Crouchett

⁸⁶ Redevelopment in Richmond was, not surprisingly, supported by Chevron and the contract for a dismal park was given to the firm owned by the head of the Redevelopment Agency (this, too, is now gone). Ironically, Downtown Richmond had earlier been stolen away by Glenn MacDonald from Point Richmond, the first area of settlement. Thanks to Ron Weil for these insights.

and class, such as income distribution and control of private investment. San Francisco almost suffered the same fate, but found salvation in reservoirs of urban allegiance and oppositional power.⁸⁷ No such coalition came to the rescue of Oakland, which had its guts torn out, and the stench of that era of civic misanthropy still wafts over the neighborhoods. This is the baseline for continued failure, minority politics, and immigrant renewal to follow.

Black Power to the Rescue

What white labor failed to do in the General Strike and the white business class failed to achieve through urban renewal was left to the African-Americans who inherited the city of Oakland. Black power and black politics stepped into the vacuum to oust the Knowland machine in order to salvage the city they were bound to live in, as whites were not. But they inherited a bankrupt economy and a set of hapless ideas, an obstacle which no amount of righteous anger or political mobilization could easily surmount.

Black popular mobilization in Oakland entered a new stage in the 1960s with the fight against slum clearance and the coming of the War on Poverty. It hit stride with the battle to stop the Oak Center Project around DeFremery Park, covering another thousand homes. Oak Center residents got up in arms after the experience of Acorn, and halted redevelopment in its tracks. They were led by Lillian Love and the Oak Center Neighborhood Association, representing an older, homeownership black middle class. Oak Center resistance stopped the bulldozers, won low interest loans and grants to fix up existing housing, and cost redevelopment director Thomas Bell his job, allowing a black man, John Williams -- a protégé of San Francisco's Justin Herman -- to take the reins. Predictably, Oak Center remains a pleasant, intact residential neighborhood, while the projects went to pot and Crack.

The politics of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and its anti-poverty programs came to Oakland at just this time. These had a national target of quelling black anger and recovering the urban vote for the Democrats. But its arrival in Oakland had as much to do with the high profile of William Knowland; given his stature in state and national Republican circles, the Democratic Party was eager to undermine his local power base.⁸⁸ Conversely, Henry Kaiser's son, Edgar, became a high level Democratic advisor on housing policy. Whatever the reasoning, the War on Poverty (1964) and Model Cities program (1966) unquestionably helped black mobilization in city politics. This fed into two streams of organizing, one among the professional middle class and the other among neighborhood activists working with working class and poor people.⁸⁹

The black middle class were making a bid for entry into electoral and administrative power through such organs as the citywide Oakland Black Caucus. They were deeply involved in urban renewal in West Oakland from early on, supporting clearance but pressing for public housing against white business opposition. The coming of the War on Poverty (Office of Economic Opportunity) gave these people an even better point of leverage outside city hall, which they used to gain command over the Oakland Economic Development Council set up to distribute OEO funds. Judge Lionel Wilson became chair of the council, sitting cheek by

⁸⁷ See chapter 5.

⁸⁸ On Democratic Party strategy nationally see xxxxxx; locally, see Hayes 1972. For an attempt to give the Feds credit for keeping Oakland from exploding, see Bradford 1968. [what about Kaisers in this?] The love affair of the Democrats with Oakland continued into the Jerry Brown administration of the 1970s.

⁸⁹ On black political mobilization and city politics at this time, see Rhomberg, chapter xx; also Hayes.

jowl with the representative of Kaiser Industries; such men were a model of accommodation and integration.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, community activists used the OEO neighborhood advisory committees to gain an independent voice in city affairs, accrue resources, and train cadre in organizational skills. They quarreled with the Development Council until they were allowed onto its board, pushing it leftward; a more radical executive director, Percy Moore, was hired. After that the council turned its guns on the Mayor and City Council, pulling out of city government to become an independent entity in 1967 in frustration over failure of the city to move on police reform and fair housing. At the same time, the Model Cities program came along and Moore created the West Oakland Planning Council out of neighborhood groups as a vehicle for future federal grants, hiring young activist Paul Cobb as staffer. The new body almost grabbed the entire Downtown and waterfront plans before such matters were hastily excised by the city authorities.

The black power movement turned up the heat in 1967, two years after the formation of the Black Panther Party by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The Black Panthers were the most symbolically-charged players in the political theater of a rebellious time, and they spread rapidly to the rest of the country. But they were thoroughly steeped in West Oakland, “with its unique blend of southern black, militant trade union, and western American cultures”, according to former Minister of Education David Hilliard.⁹¹ While the image burned into the minds of media America is of gun-toting black youths on the steps of the State Capitol, early pictures show the Panthers as thin young men in black berets, looking for all the world the college students most of them were. Newton and Seale met at Merritt College where the first struggle for black studies was being led by Sidney Walton. Most of the early Panthers lived near the campus on Grove Street in northwest Oakland. That brush fire spread quickly to San Francisco State and UC Berkeley, before igniting campuses on the east coast.⁹²

Hilliard says of the Panthers, “We were first and foremost a political organization”.⁹³ The black berets echoed Sartre and Che, whose socialist notions of revolution inflected principles of black nationalism drawn from the martyred Malcolm X and Garveyite notions of African cultural resurrection. Black Panthers appeared regularly on UC's Sproul Plaza selling Mao's Little Red Book and arguing about principles. Out of that ferment came the Party's 10-point program, with its distinctly economic slant (written in 1967 in the office of West Oakland Planning Council). Racist paranoia strikes deep, however, and the Panthers were the White Man's nightmare. Whatever their sins -- and they were many, given the cult of masculinity and violence⁹⁴ -- the Panthers didn't stand a chance against the armed might

⁹⁰ Other liberal middle class leaders were Dr. Norvel Smith, Evilio Grillo, Allen Broussard, and David McCallum. There were also conservative Republicans such as George Vaughns. Rumford and SF's Carleton Goodlett were the developers of Acorn Project public housing.

⁹¹ Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, p. ?

⁹² Walton later got a degree from the UC Berkeley Geography department. Thanks to David Organ, who insists that Black Studies did not start at Cornell.

⁹³ SFX, January 10, 1993, D3. On the Panthers see Newton's *To Die for the People*, Seale, Marine, Hilliard, Brown, Angela Davis' *Autobiography*.

⁹⁴ Brown and Davis show up the sexism and violence that sullied the Panthers. See also Ellen DuBois, “Sisters and brothers” *The Nation*, September 6/13, 1993, 251-53. Revisionism about the Panthers from David Horowitz and xxxxx now argues it was all a terrible mistake. Of course there were thugs among the Panthers (Eldredge Cleaver was a convicted rapist), but were there not thugs among the white city fathers of Oakland, too? Not to be obscured is the genuine idealism and courage that inflected the movement at its origins, and the deep vein of righteous anger over racism, political repression and economic squalor it tapped into among ghetto youth.

of the American state. They were cut down quickly and mercilessly by Chief Charlie Gain's Oakland police and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI.⁹⁵

All the same, the white man's grip on Oakland began to slip under the combined force of economic decline, party competition, and black pressure. The Knowlands' national influence waned after Bill's ill-fated run for the Governorship and JR's death in 1963. Bill hunkered down in the Tower as managing editor of the fading *Tribune*. Depressed by declining fortunes, he committed dynastic suicide by blowing his brains out in 1974. The *Tribune* passed into the hands of the ascendant African-American community with Robert Maynard's rise to editor in 1979 and owner in 1983.

Black politics in Oakland played a key part in the denouement of Knowland. Elected officials of African stock began appearing regularly on city councils in Richmond, Berkeley and Oakland by the early Sixties. Oakland's Black Caucus and Berkeley's white radicals teamed up to get Berkeley councilmember Ron Dellums elected to Congress in 1970, where he became unbeatable. John George was elevated to County Supervisor. By the late Sixties, black activists of every class and persuasion in Oakland were campaigning to take the power from the tower. The Panthers, bloodied but unbowed, ran Bobby Seale for Mayor and Elaine Brown for city council in 1973. All this paved the way for Lionel Wilson's Mayoralty victory in 1977.⁹⁶

An Afro-American elite took the reigns of Oakland's electoral politics under the Wilson regime. Lionel Wilson turned the mayoralty into a regency, serving four terms. As in Tom Bradley's Los Angeles and Coleman Young's Detroit, Wilson forged an alliance with big business to create a political machine of limited social vision. Wilson drew heavily from a rising African-American middle class and aspiring black bourgeoisie, who were moving into the professions and office jobs in unprecedented numbers, moving up to hillside homes beyond Highway 580, and gathering at Downtown watering holes such as Gregory's (which, in a telling move, later took over the premises of the old Athenian Club). Wilson was also well liked and trusted by the white elite.⁹⁷

The regime was characterized by a hands-off Mayor and a senescent city council lorded over by swaggering Vice-Mayor, Leo Bazile. The real power resided in the civil administration and its key African-American leaders. Foremost stood Henry Gardner, the brilliant city manager. The redevelopment agency, transformed into the Office of Economic Development and Employment, was headed by George Williams. Their efforts were backed by Paul Cobb, now head of OCCUR. Harold Davis took charge of the Housing Authority. The School District was led by Superintendents Marcus Foster and Ruth Love.⁹⁸ The Peralta Colleges President was xxxxxxxxx. Wilson named his friends to the Port Commission, who graciously name a new airport terminal after him (Wilson named himself

⁹⁵ The Los Angeles-Bay Area rivalry infects black politics as well. Relations between the northern and southern California branches of the Panthers were worsened by COINTELPRO operations, implicated in the frame-up of Geronimo Pratt (finally released from prison after 25 years). Ron Karenga's US Party was the LA-based rival of the Panthers; ironically, Karenga (né Everett) is from the Bay Area, where he and Don Warren created the idea of Kwanza as an African-American holiday.

⁹⁶ Elaine Brown's book, Hayes, Rhomberg. Express on John George? election of Dellums?

⁹⁷ Paul Rauber, "The New Deal", EBX, November 13, 1992, 1-25; interview with Ed Blakely. On Bradley, see Davis, 1990.

⁹⁸ The city council acted as the Redevelopment board from 1974 on. Marcus Foster was assassinated by the Symbionese Liberation Army in 1973 out of a preposterous belief that he was a traitor to the revolution. The SLA were then assassinated by the LAPD out of the preposterous belief that they were a real threat to government power.

to the board on his way out). Characteristically, Wilson's wife was a real estate dealer and many of his close allies were developers and businesspeople on the make.

Moving in counterflow to Wilson's machine, the Oakland black left had champions in Ron Dellums, John George, and Wilson Riles, Jr. Dellums was for years the only avowed socialist in Congress and an invaluable thorn in the side of the military establishment (witness Ed Meese's attempt to smear him on a false charge of possession of cocaine); but he was never as effective in conducting a local political organization as in serving a national left constituency.⁹⁹ John George was a brilliant gadfly, but always isolated on the Board of Supervisors; successor Keith Carson has the same role. Assemblyman Elihu Harris, an ally of Willie Brown, was a confirmed fence-sitter. Riles was the lone voice of conscience on the Oakland city council, but his campaigns to unseat Mayor Wilson and to create an Oakland equivalent to Berkeley Citizens Action came to naught. That left no alternative to business as usual. Things looked even bleaker by the end of the decade, with the coronary of John George and the slaying of Huey Newton by a pusher bent on enhancing his street reputation, .

The Souring of Black Power

The new lords of redevelopment would be better than the old ones at resuscitating Oakland's Downtown, but could not staunch the loss of tenants taking place faster than they could drop in new buildings. The first burst of renewal activity came to a halt in the early 1980s, and things looked grimmer than ever for Downtown. Kaiser Industries hit the skids, Fidelity Savings and Loan was seized by Federal regulators, the Oakland Symphony folded, Bechtel cancelled plans for two back office buildings, I. Magnin and Liberty House closed their doors. Grubb and Ellis -- a major force behind redevelopment -- gave up and moved to San Francisco. The office segment of City Centre was half-finished and the retail portion moribund. The convention center and hotel were completed, but vacant. Only one of four blocks in Chinatown was filled. Old Oakland was mostly empty and Victorian Row still a boneyard. By the middle Eighties, Cadillac-Fairview, active around Kaiser Center, had gone bottom up, as had Myron Zimmerman, developer of the Rotunda. All the while, multi-block holes in the urban fabric sat for years like gaping wounds.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the city's remaining manufacturing base took new hits from the wave of plant closures sweeping through American heavy industries, decimating Alameda county as thoroughly as any Midwestern factory town. This wave of shutdowns was typical of the blows that fell on hapless local economies in the rout of US heavy industry. A once-great industrial base shrank by nearly 10,000 jobs and over 100 factories, including many of the hallmark plants of Oakland's past: American Can, Westinghouse and Del Monte's original factory were shuttered; Caterpillar in San Leandro, Dodge in Hayward and Peterbilt in xxx also closed their doors. Montgomery Ward's west coast catalogue warehouse staggered and died. The loss of food processing was felt sharply in the African-American community, which depended heavily on those jobs.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Kelley 1989 (must be from NLR paper) Rauber, EBX, November 20, 1997, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Grubb and Ellis moved again to Chicago in 1996, when it ranked third in national commercial sales. SFC, 12/5/96, p D1. In an amusing denouement to a careening decline into a reactionary stupor, Eldredge Cleaver was caught stealing hardware from the derelict Victorians.

¹⁰¹ Estimate. Confirm figure? Manufacturing and warehouse jobs fell from 39,000 to 31,000 1980-90. On plant closures of the early 1980s see Phil Shipira diss and the files of the Plant Closures Project Plant registry kept by the Plant Closures Project and the Data Center, both in Oakland. (check!) Pacific Intermountain Express of Emeryville folded, as would Willig Trucking of Pleasanton a decade later.

Fortunately for the Downtown doyens, the tide of real estate rushed back in with the speculative fever of the 1980s.¹⁰² Even Oakland's leaky boat was raised. In light of the dizzying decentralization of San Francisco offices, prospects for capturing a piece of the action seemed better than ever. To help things along, Downtown at last found the circus barker it needed to rally investors behind a vision of grandeur: Glenn Isaacson. Isaacson entered the scene as Regional Director for Bramalea Pacific, took over the stalled City Center project and turned its mall into a scaled-down postmodern block of shops and multileveled plazas. He lured the General Services Administration's regional offices away from San Francisco into two towers on Bramalea land west of City Center. He then built a headquarters building for American President Lines on Broadway. All were architecturally splendid. Isaacson's hand could be felt everywhere. Bramalea took over management of the unfinished Victorian Row (now Preservation Park) and brought it to completion. He picked up part ownership in the Old Oakland project when the Storek brothers, careful restorers of the charming Nicholl Block, were having financial difficulties. Isaacson and Port director Nolan Gimpel persuaded the Port Commissioners to let them remake Jack London's waterfront desert into a handsome postmodern hotel and retail complex. Isaacson also coaxed the Rouse Company, most famous of all historic mall developers, into taking on the long-desired department store complex for the derelict triangle between San Pablo Avenue and Broadway, to be called "Oakland-East Bay Galleria".

As Isaacson put it: "Oakland perceives itself as a second-class citizen, living too much in the shadow of San Francisco. This is demoralizing to the citizens. Oakland needs to develop a clear vision of its own destiny". But was Isaacson's Downtown vision the answer to the city's plight? In his offices atop the APL building, the consummate salesman installed a theater to pitch his woo to investors: after the slide show the screen fell away to reveal a glowing scale model of Downtown, and following perusal of the model, panels along the whole western wall snapped open to reveal a panoramic view of west Oakland and the Bay. The vision-thing worked; but Oakland did not.¹⁰³

Downtown Oakland lacks sufficient density and coherence, with too little activity spread over too large an area (less than 10 million square feet of office space compared to over 50 million in SF).¹⁰⁴ Its six sub districts do not merge and complement each other, but pull in opposing directions, stretching the urban tissue to the breaking point. The principal node is uptown at 20th Street around Kaiser Center, where a financial and corporate offices occupy several fine buildings built in the 1970s and 80s. Private capital repositioned itself at the edge of Downtown (as it did in the 1900s and 1920s) to evade higher land values and obsolete buildings. At the crossroads of 14th and Broadway, lie City Hall and the City Centre complex. Kaiser center and City Center work at the cost of having drawn most of the remaining offices and retail business in between, leaving the barren streets to blowing newspapers and pigeon shit. On the eastern flank of Downtown, several deserted blocks away, there is a third node, the Civic Center, consisting of the Museum, Laney College, BART and AC Transit headquarters, as well as the old library, courthouse, county offices and civic auditorium. On the west side, long an abyss of demolished hotels, one finds tiny enclaves of historicism around Preservation Park and Old Oakland; this barely constitutes a fourth node. Many blocks down Broadway, across another freeway, lies the fifth node that includes Jack London Waterfront, made over to a trendy Postmodern assemblage of hotel, seaport shops, and ferry terminal. The real bright spot, and sixth node, is the revived

¹⁰² See Smith and Walker ms.

¹⁰³ Isaacson quoted in North California Real Estate Journal, January 19-February 5, 1987, 5. Curiously, Bramalea's promotional slide show featured few black faces in its pitch that "Oakland means people".

¹⁰⁴ Despite all the new construction over the last thirty years, total office space has not grown because so many old buildings have gone off the market.

Chinatown east of Broadway -- which, like Kaiser Center, owes little to formal urban renewal.

MAP **Schematic of Downtown zones**

The awful truth facing Downtown is that regional shopping patterns have changed, and the city's wealthy residents frequent the boutique strips along Piedmont and College Avenues. Tourists and conventioners will not flock to workaday Oaktown when glamorous San Francisco lies just across the water. Dreams of wooing companies away from the metropolitan core have come to little; San Francisco has spun off many offices to the East Bay, but they jumped to the far side of the hills, where labor is whiter, better schooled and more docile. Oakland's promoters know exactly what the score is, referring again and again to Oakland's "image problem", but they refuse to put a name on it. The black hole implodes even as the metropolitan galaxy expands at a furious pace.

Redevelopment dreams have cost the public dearly. Without massive public expenditure and the presence of government offices, Downtown Oakland would practically disappear. Public investment dominates private at City Centre, the Civic Center, the waterfront, and the historic district. Millions have been coughed up by the city, the federal government, and the port as grants, low interest loans, bonds and tax holidays on buildings actually erected: City Centre (\$40 million in grants and taxes), the hotel-convention center (\$35 million in grants, \$55 million in loans and bonds) Jack London Square (\$50 million in loans and bonds), and Preservation Park (\$18 million).¹⁰⁵ Millions more have been sunk into schemes that came to naught. The city picked up large bills on Housewives' Market, the Rotunda, and Oakland Galleria in failed promotions, and ended up having to lay out millions to buy buildings such as the Fox Theater and Kahn's (the Rotunda) to save them. Before it bailed, Rouse corporation was demanding about \$235 million in public investment for \$128 million in private funds for its Galleria project in Downtown.¹⁰⁶ Scamming's finest moment was the promised 68-story Hong Kong USA tower of the 1970s, touted as the tallest building west of the Mississippi. Promoter xxxxx, backed by Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos as a shadow investor, lost his shirt in the Hong Kong real estate crash of 19xx, was indicted for fraud, then murdered the British investigator sent to look into the family accounts.¹⁰⁷

PHOTO **Picture of homeless men in Lafayette Park**

By the end of the Eighties, the bloom was off the era of Wilsonian democracy. The problem was not that Wilson was corrupt, forgot his African-American roots, or he was a

¹⁰⁵ Figures for City Center and Conventional Center through 1985. OEDE Project Development and Mangement Division, Fact Sheets on Assistance for Major Development, c1986. Before 1965, \$35 million had been given in subsidies via land purchase and sales in the various renewal zones in the city -- Hayes, p. 121. .

¹⁰⁶ A 1990 estimate for civic outlays for redevelopment over the next six years came to \$375 million -- shocking many city council members. OT, October 25, 1990, A1,14.

¹⁰⁷ Get a source and the facts straight.....

tool of the white bourgeoisie. But the regime was tainted by charges of corruption and featherbedding in the Schools, AC Transit and the Peralta Colleges and a City Council in bed with developers and schemers. Developers Lucas & William Dallas of Housewives' Market and Willie Cook and Charles Thomas of old Merritt College gave generously to incumbent campaign coffers and were rewarded with favorable deals -- until repeated failures to perform led to the revelation of their cozy relationship with city powers.¹⁰⁸ Wilson's fading powers also spoke to the stagnating position of the black middle class after years of growth, their increasing distance from the black underclass, and their inability to deliver much to the people of Oakland despite a boom decade.¹⁰⁹ More debilitating than anything was the Wilson regime's vision of the city. They bought into the big project mentality and focus on Downtown, lock, stock and barrel. This came out of a mix of personal memories of the vitality of the old city, the corrosive influence of fast-talking developers, and being steeped in the redevelopment ethos. They had, after all, been instrumental in supporting the Acorn Project and slum clearance in the early 1960s. In 1969 the Black Caucus under Wilson had OCCUR reconstituted to include African-Americans, who then took up the cause of Downtown redevelopment with the same enthusiasm as their predecessors. As Paul Cobb (?) put it when questioned about lining pockets through Downtown building, "What's wrong with a few black millionaires?"¹¹⁰

Shakeout

The catastrophic 1989 earthquake, followed by economic depression from 1990 to 1995, were a reality check for a city where reality comes harder than most. When Loma Prieta mountain groaned upward in 1989, then hunkered down a few feet, the shock waves followed a parabolic course deep under the earth, resurfacing fifty miles north in the Oakland flatlands. Built on loose alluvium, Downtown shook like an old dog with chills, then sagged and cracked. The collapse of the Cypress Freeway brought West Oakland into the blinking eye of the national press, surprising many by the failure of engineering involved in double-deck freeways as well as by the heroism of a poor, black community rescuing trapped motorists long before police and firefighters arrived. (Typically, one man working feverishly to clear the wreckage was immediately arrested by tardy police officers on suspicion of looting). In the aftermath, the removal of the embarrassing rubble opened up a wide avenue, which the residents renamed Mandela Parkway, reuniting a long-sundered neighborhood. The community then set to work fighting off CalTrans' efforts to ram a new arterial down the same route, forcing it around the edge of the residential area.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ William Dallas, co-developer of the Housewives Market, was hit with the largest political fine in US history to date by the State Fair Political Practices Commission. SFX, October 13, 1993, A15. [Slater's Emeryville article and in OT, January 6, 1991, A1,13., but there should be an Express on it....] Conversely, minority investors and contractors never, in fact, realized a substantial piece of the action in City Centre and other Downtown projects. OT, April 22, 1991, A1, 6-7. [anything on the school or college corruption cases?]

¹⁰⁹ On the internal class schism among African-Americans, see WJ Wilson, 19xx. On the rise and fall of the black middle class, see Carnoy, Faded Dreams.

¹¹⁰ Source of quote? On Wilson's cronyism, see xxxx NEED A SOURCE. See article by Mike McGrath in the Express? cited in Visions. For a list of civic leaders in Downtown renewal, see OT, January 23, 1991, D1. Thanks to Ed Blakely for insights into the Wilson regime.

¹¹¹ Local opponents hoped to stop any replacement at all, and were not altogether pleased that a few more homes will be taken from the southwestern tip of the district. One good result was a TV documentary and research on the old housing of West Oakland. Dobkin film, Groth paper.

Downtown fared badly, with over \$100 million in damage.¹¹² Cracked walls and weakened towers cost it some classic buildings such as the old Kaiser headquarters. The Daniel Burnham-designed Broadway Building was left purposefully unlocked so that vandals might easily desecrate the interior, in hopes of forcing permission for demolition (the city finally stepped in to buy it).¹¹³ Meantime, the property bubble burst in 1990 hard on the heels of the Savings and Loan debacle and collapse of Michael Milken's junk bond empire. New construction and leasing screeched to a halt. Downtown developers Storek and Storek went belly up, Rouse corporation withdrew, and Jack London Waterfront was a ghost town. Glenn Isaacson and the Port Director were dismissed. Bramalea went into reorganization in 1992 with \$4 billion in debts, whereupon the courts revealed that the company was a well-disguised part of the Olympia and York real estate empire.¹¹⁴ Sears and Emporium closed the last of the old department stores. Oakland fell into a sinkhole of despair, with most of the small businesses disappearing all the way up to the Berkeley line. One of the last great shops, Holmes Book Company, gave up the ghost after 101 years.¹¹⁵

The recession swept away just about the trace of the old factories, as well, including Nabisco, Pacific Drydock, Phoenix Iron Works and Carnation in West Oakland, Sunshine Biscuits, Del Monte, Granny Goose, and Delaval Ship Engines in East Oakland, and Golden Grains and Kellog in San Leandro. One million square feet of industrial space stood vacant in West Oakland in 1994. Soon thereafter, Pentagon cutbacks slashed payrolls in the East Bay as obsolete military installations were phased out. Manufacturing in Oakland was cut to the nubbin -- less than one-sixth of the city's jobs by century's end. Of nearly 200,000 jobs in Oakland, one-third are in the public sector, another third are in services. The biggest remaining private employer is Kaiser-Permanente Medical group. A list of the top manufacturers shows most to be located in Fremont and Pleasanton; Oakland retains only Clorox.¹¹⁶

Oakland politics were jolted following the P-waves of the property bust and S-waves of the souring of City Hall. The City Council fell to quarreling, AC Transit was on the verge of collapse, and the school district was put into receivership. Bob Maynard grew ill and sold the dying *Tribune* to the conservative Alameda Newspaper Group.¹¹⁷ County Supervisor Don Perata seemed to be putting together a black-white progressive machine centered on East Oakland to challenge Downtown's power brokers.¹¹⁸ The Wilson regime was on its way out.

¹¹² SFX, October 11, 1991, A7.

¹¹³ OT, October 17, 1990, D1-2 and November 29, 1990, A1,17. The Key building and old West Oakland railway station are still in jeopardy as of this writing. The Catholic Church was a worse vandal, tearing down the Oakland Cathedral and Sacred Heart Church over the protests of its own parishioners and preservationists.

¹¹⁴ OT, May xx, 1992, C1, 3; May xx? A1,x; July 11, 1992, D1,4. O&Y also had ties to Santa Fe land. Ironically, City Centre and adjoining office buildings (1 million square feet) were bought up by San Francisco real estate mogul Walter Shorenstein for \$300 million in 1997 from Bramalea's creditors.

¹¹⁵ SFC, May 15, 1995, p A11. Macy's and Penneys, due to anchor the Galleria Project, careened towards bankruptcy. Plans for a basketball arena also fizzled out.

¹¹⁶ List in *East Bay Business Journal* 1996. For employment figures, see - Vic Rubin has a report. The military bases closed were: Alameda Naval Air Station, the Oakland Naval Supply Depot, Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, Treasure Island Navy Base and Vallejo Naval Shipyard. Figures on vacancy in West Oakland, SFX, November 19, 1995, p. A14.

¹¹⁷ Whereupon it was moved out of the Tribune Tower and became a knock-off of the chain's other papers. Roger Rapoport, "Fighting for its life", SFX Sunday Magazine, November 3, 1991, 8-17; SFC, October 16, 1992, A20; OT November 30, 1992, A3.

¹¹⁸ On Perata see Dashka Slater, "The happy warrior", EBX, June 9, 1995, 1--16.

Mayor Wilson was humbled in the 1990 primary by Assemblyman Elihu Harris, former ally turned upstart.¹¹⁹ The City Council was completely upended, replaced by a liberal-left majority including union official Ignacio de la Fuente in Fruitvale, Nate Miley in East Oakland, and Sheila Jordan, a black progressive, in white Rockridge and Montclair. City Manager Gardner later retired. The new mayor talked of strengthening the mayor's office and bringing the Port Authority to heel because of its failure to pay the city millions in arrears during the recession. "Oakland is on the edge of rebirth", declared the head of the Office of Economic Development in 1993, singing the liturgy of new Downtown proposals rising from the ashes. And, along with it all, the Black Panther Party was resurrected, in the wake of Huey's murder. In a town rife with despair, there were signs of hope.

But the political landscape has changed little in the Nineties. A city charter reform was defeated at the polls and the city manager system is still in place. Downtown business formed the Oakland Business Political Action Committee after the City Council had the temerity to raise the real estate transfer tax.¹²⁰ The council has failed to unite around any coherent progressive program, however. After a brief skirmish, Mayor Harris and the Port Commission settled down to friendly accommodation.¹²¹ The Mayor convened an Economic Task Force that recommended the usual business anodyne of streamlining regulations, tax cuts and attraction of big retail projects.¹²² Meanwhile, the Mayor delicately tiptoed around what he called "perception issues" causing the city's painfully slow recovery from economic depression. The Tribune Tower lay empty and plans for another hotel died. More sorrowful giveaways have taken place, such as a Downtown ice-skating rink built with \$11 million in public backing, which went bust within two years. Oakland won back the beloved Raiders from Los Angeles by guaranteeing up to \$50 million for seats the team could not fill. The latest desperate turn is \$3 million in support of a themed faux-Egyptian games arcade to be built by a Japanese company. The council did, at least, turn down a fantastic proposal for a Pan-Pacific World's Fair on the old Army Base.

On the bright side, public funds have again pumped some life into Downtown. City Hall was refurbished with \$85 million in federal emergency funds. The state put up a twin high-rise complex. The city added a \$100 million investment package for the City Hall neighborhood, including renovation of the Broadway, Rotunda and Plaza buildings and the addition of a new city office building. Typically enough, these displaced a covey of artist lofts and rare book dealers in the demolished Pardee and Dalziel buildings and took dispersed city offices off the market.¹²³ The University of California is building a new headquarters nearby (UC would have fled for whiter, brighter Irvine, but was stopped by regional interests). The new freeway has been completed around West Oakland. As far as private investment, the city can boast a couple Big Box malls occupying old factory sites, upgrades of its sports complex, and a shiny new Enterprise Zone, but not much else.¹²⁴ In

¹¹⁹ Rauber, "The undertaker's son vs. the lonely warrior", EBX, November 2, 1990, 5-20; Rauber, 1992 op cit.;

¹²⁰ SFBG, January 19, 1994, 15.

¹²¹ The Port rallied its shippers and workers in a spasm of outrage against the city retaking control. See newspaper reports for the week of February 22-28, 1992. On the Task Force, see SFX, March 10, 1993, A2.

¹²²

¹²³ EBX, April 2, 1993, 2. SFC, March 15, 1995, p. A1,18.

¹²⁴ Virtually every industrial city in California has been named an Enterprise Zone under a 1987 state law. The net result one more tax break among many in California. See Walker 1985.

the recovery of the 1990s, when office vacancy rates plunged to 6% in San Francisco and below 1% in Palo Alto, Oakland could do no better than 13%.¹²⁵

As ever, the muffled cries of despair have barely been heard over the cheers for Downtown renewal. On returning to Oakland after years in exile, former Panther leader Elaine Brown's acerbic view of the new Downtown was, "It doesn't look like nothing. Not a goddamn dime has gone into the black community. I had intended for some of it, at least, to go there."¹²⁶ Rather than raise hell over racism and the war on the poor, Oakland's political leadership falls in step with real estate promoters. A good example of the prevailing mentality is the effort to shoo the (largely black) homeless populace out of the historic district. Most recently, two upscale condo complexes are going in at Old Town Square and Swan's Market, and there is a \$1 million renovation of Lafayette Park in the works. The Salvation Army soup kitchen is moving to East Oakland; its director said, "What I think they'd like to see here is Yuppiesville.. How would we fit into all of that?"¹²⁷ Another delightful idea of the Mayor's office was to move all the bus stops off Broadway because they attract the 'wrong kind of people'. The Mayor's view of displacing the poor through Downtown gentrification is this: "Those who are disinterested in progress are those who are disinterested with improving the quality of life".¹²⁸ Mayor Harris has played poor man's Bush -- or Clinton -- to Lionel Wilson's Reagan.

Landscapes for Sale

Oakland's Downtown dilemmas cannot be understood without reference to the way the inner East Bay has been made over to fit a new epoch of capitalism on show in the late 20th century. The Age of Heavy Industry is past, its great brick and corrugated halls now shuttered and disappearing from the face of the city. In their place have come the Big Box Malls and Postmodern Palaces beloved of retail kings and property princes, as well as boutique shopping and software factories. The Consumer City, spawn of class redistribution and real estate speculation bubbling in the bourgeois champagne years of the 1980s, is now deeply imprinted on the landscape.¹²⁹

Urban land use can be perverse. After decades of effort to reconstitute Oakland's failing commercial center, the new Downtown-designate of the East Bay is Emeryville. We have met this enclave before as manufacturing center. Now Emeryville has positioned itself as the retail heart of the region by installing three new shopping centers: Powell Street Plaza, East Baybridge Mall, and Gateway Center. These are replete with discount stores, such as Wal-Mart and Circuit City, the retail leaders of the late 20th century, offering their curious spectacle of thrift and bare-bones plenitude.¹³⁰ All occupy former industrial or railroad sites on the Southside of the one-square mile town. The northside is occupied by new

¹²⁵ It was almost 20% in 1989 before the recession, but fell to 13% after the earthquake -- due entirely to removal of space by the Great Landlord himself. *Bay Area Business Journal, Real Estate Quarterly*, Sept 12-18, 1997, 10A.

¹²⁶ SFX, February 14, 1993, D1. Brown notes that she won the release of funds to complete the Grove-Shafter Freeway from the reluctant Jerry Brown administration in 1977, on the theory it would help elect Lionel Wilson.

¹²⁷ Oakland Tribune, March 13, 1989 and SFC, August 26, 1997, p A1. Quote on A17.

¹²⁸ Quoted in SFC, March 18, 1997, p. C1 and SFC, 8/26/97, p. A17. Bus stop story from Matthew Williams, AC Transit Board member.

¹²⁹ On consumption spaces in American cities of this era, see Sorkin, Zukin, etc.

¹³⁰ The Big Box stores were late in coming to the wealthy and trendy Bay Area; Emeryville has been a major entry point. Local pioneer of discount retailing is Costco, which merged with San Diego's Price Club (other way round?).

offices and upscale apartments. The remaining industrial base consists of high tech enterprises, Sybase, a software company and Chiron, a biotech giant, occupying shiny new offices (the latter by Mexican architect Ricardo Lagoretto).¹³¹ Most of the old factories -- Westinghouse, Judson, Del Monte -- have been torn down (often for nothing). The card rooms for which Emeryville was best known by ordinary citizens are about to disappear.¹³²

The route to reconstruction followed by Emeryville is typically sordid urban politics, but revealing for all that. The town was ruled politically by industry, fronted by Al LaCoste and his son, John, for fifty years. But as times changed they tipped toward a new master, housing developer Tom Wenaas, builder of the Watergate complex and investor in Pacific Park Plaza, a 30-story monster out of scale with everything else (only the first of several planned towers). The industrialists rebelled, with the aid of Watergate yuppies and hill dwellers aghast at spoiled views, and threw out LaCoste and his cronies in 1984. It made no difference, as the new city government began chasing after developer David Martin like a bitch in heat. Martin brought in the next wave of Powell Street Plaza, Emery Bay apartments, and Emery Bay public market before he, too, was cut off by electoral upheavals. Still, nothing changed, and the latest stage of the transformation of Emeryville into the Downtown of the East Bay came under smooth professional Kofi Brenner as Redevelopment Director. As in Oakland, a change in the race of the players made no difference in the logic of property markets or the business of politics. Ironically, Brenner went on to head Oakland's Office of Economic Development. In fairness, he sought more compact development, but lost. Rare is the city that achieves more urbane cityscapes in this day and age; the norm is to remake the inner city in the image of the suburbs, with vast boulevards, intersections and parking lots.¹³³

Other successful commercial districts have further squeezed the life out of the old Downtowns of the East Bay. The most striking is the retail strip along the base of the Oakland-Berkeley hills, where affluent homeowners flow downhill until they hit the economic Fall Line at Shattuck, College and Piedmont Avenues. Here can be found the finest fruit of boutique shopping pioneered in the 1980s, the antithesis of K-Mart colossi.¹³⁴ College Avenue is now 20 blocks of solid gentrification from South Berkeley to North Broadway. Oaklanders regard the Rockridge neighborhood with a certain suspicion, seeing it as an extension of Berkeley -- and rightly so; College Avenue illustrates the explosive combination of Berkeley's cosmopolitan tastes with Oakland's freewheeling land market.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, the old shopping districts of Telegraph Avenue and Downtown Berkeley lost the up-market trade. Telegraph specializes in campus shops, including the largest concentration of book and record stores on the West Coast. Downtown staggers along as a lowbrow transit node shunned by the well-to-do except for movie-going and computer sales.

¹³¹ Chiron is one of several stars in the booming biotechnology industry of the Bay Area, into which extraordinary amounts of capital have been injected by venture capitalists, initial stock offerings and partial buyouts by pharmaceutical giants. E.g. SFC, August 14, 1995, D1-2.

¹³² San Pablo (near Richmond) now houses the biggest casino in the East Bay. SFC, September 9, 1995, A1, 4-5. The casinos and malls of today are likely candidates for tomorrow's junkyards of dreams.

¹³³ Dashka Slater, "A tale of two cities: Emeryville, Oakland, and the swiftly changing face of East Bay commerce" *East Bay Express*, 16/32, May 20, 1994, 1, 13-24. For a more positive view of Emeryville, see SFX, April 3, 1991, B1,5.

¹³⁴ In fact, the upper classes benefit more from discount retailers than working people. Hollander 1986.

¹³⁵ Many of the new middle class have not been able to find housing in Berkeley, as old-timers hang onto to rent-controlled apartments and cherished houses, and commercial capital was long kept at bay along Berkeley's portion of College Avenue by strong commercial rent control. Berkeley's commercial rent control was ended by state fiat in 1990? and housing rent control was gutted by the state in 1995.

North Berkeley has its famous (if visually unimpressive) North Shattuck strip, home to Chez Panisse, the fount of California cuisine, the Cheese Board, Berkeley's answer to Mondragon, the Nature Company, first retailer of environmentally-friendly products, and Peet's Coffee, the spiritual parent of today's cafe culture. This strip continues down Solano Avenue into Albany, home of Supercuts' first haircut emporium.¹³⁶ Berkeley was a major center of consumer innovation in the Seventies, as the radical notions of the Sixties hit the mainstream and became commodified. As the counterculture went over the counter, the revolution lost its steam, as can be seen in West Berkeley's wildly successful Fourth Street, the big news in upscale retailing in the Nineties. Like Emeryville it lies in the midst of old warehouses and factories, hard by the tracks and the freeway. Begun as an escape to a low rent, mixed use district by cultural expatriates, it has become an epigone of corseted urbanism only a step removed from Universal's City Walk.¹³⁷ Here one can find the Nature Company's big store selling genuine natural commodities and Peets looking like the spiritual parent of Starbucks it is. It is hard to see Berkeley's heralded oppositional culture or capitalism *manqué* in this showy eruption of the Nineties.¹³⁸

To the degree that Berkeley has not gone over wholly to the sirens of speculation and consumerism, it is by virtue of a political culture in which citizens are more than sharecroppers on the industrial plantation. This awkward stance evokes endless cries the Berkeley is anti-business.¹³⁹ Two developmental struggles illustrate the limits on capital in this curious pocket of resistance. One was over a grandiose plan by the Santa Fe-Southern Pacific Land Company for all its eastshore tidelands. The push came from a buyout of Southern Pacific and restructuring of Santa Fe into a land developer instead of a railway, in keeping with the financial hotlinks of the Eighties. Berkeley might have seized Emeryville's thunder in high-rises and malls, if Santa Fe Land (now Catellus) had had its way. All of South and West Berkeley had been designated a "redevelopment zone" in popular tax-dodge of the time, making approval much easier. The project was popular in the African-American neighborhoods, which saw it as a job generator. White environmentalists, by contrast, opposed it in no uncertain terms, seeking instead to have the bayshore declared part of the East Bay Regional Parks system. It looked to be a classic standoff. But African-American leaders fell out with Santa Fe and came to sympathize with the environmental point of view, especially Carl Anthony, who went on to head a new environmental justice group, Urban Habitat.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ All three date from the late 1960s and early 1970s. On Chez Panisse, see Ken Kelley, "First Foodie" EBX, September 2, 1994, 1, 11-25. Peets (now headquartered in Emeryville) decided to go national in 1997, after resisting the trend set by its former owners at Starbucks. SFC, April 30, 1997, B1. Nature Company became a chain after selling out in 1983 to CML of Boston. Supercuts, founded in 1975, had its 500 store chain bought out by financial operator Larry Lipson of Chicago in 1987 and driven into the ground. SFC, March 6, 1995, D1,3.(is there a book on hip retailing?). Some once-expansive retailers such as Cocolat and Gelato simply went bust.

¹³⁷ Fourth Street is rated one of the top five "Streets to Shop" by *Metropolitan Home* in 1996. SFC, April 22, 1996, B1. On City Walk see Sorkin.

¹³⁸ Others that have fallen far from their original principles are Whole Earth Access and North Face. Michael Coffino, "The descent of the North Face", EBX, January 3, 1997, 1-13; SFC, May, 1996, B1. Aptly enough, North Face relocated to San Leandro, world headquarters of Otis Spunkmeyer cookies, after being bought out by Hong Kong's Odessey International in 1988. Need I say anything about Jan Wenner's Rolling Stone magazine, long gone to New York? Other pioneers such as Cody's Books, REI (also on the Berkeley-Seattle axis), Sierra Design and Chez Panisse have held up better in their combination of idealism and commercialism. As for Berkeley's strictly non-commercial innovations, such national beacons as the Center for Independent Living, the Over-60 Health Center, and the Free Clinic are still going strong.

¹³⁹ As the homeowner contingent has come to dominate over the political left in the city, however, it has become actually more anti-development, often in extraordinarily perverse ways.

¹⁴⁰ [I know there was an Express article on this]

A subsequent conflict in West Berkeley was over the future of Cutter Labs, past producer of mosquito repellent. This showed that white environmentalists, for their part, could learn from experience. Bought out by Miles Laboratories, a subsidiary of Germany pharmaceutical giant Bayer AG, the Cutter plant offered a prime site for biotech. Miles-Cutter was willing to pay to stay, quite the reverse of the bellyaching of companies on the downside of history. The City saw this as an opportunity to create industrial jobs and alter its image. A deal was cut by which Miles-Cutter could expand in return for paying for road repairs, school improvements, and bus service in West Berkeley.¹⁴¹

To the north, poor Richmond hangs, twisting in the wind, a noose of prosperity around its neck. Of the great Kaiser shipyards that employed 120,000 people in World War II, nothing remains. Chevron's refinery still holds the high ground to the west, Stauffer Chemical the bayshore to the south. Both have considerably enlarged their research facilities, drawing on the abundant technical labor of the East Bay -- none of whom live in Richmond if they can avoid it. The Santa Fe rail yards are gone and Safeway's warehouse complex left for the exurban fringe. A few distribution and manufacturing operations have backfilled the old industrial district (UPS, San Francisco Newspaper Agency, 800-Software). The only employers in the heart of Richmond are a Kaiser-Permanente medical center (the first modern HMO was created here) and the windowless Social Security Western Regional Center, so poorly maintained that two employees died of Legionnaire's disease breeding in the filthy cooling system.

On its southern flank, Richmond is cordoned off by a new freeway connecting Marin to the East Bay via the San Rafael Bridge. Behind this wall, Santa Fe and Murchison of Dallas created a vast housing development around the former launching basin of the Kaiser shipyards. This was meant to replicate Brickyard Cove, an outlier of bohemian Point Richmond, on a gigantic scale. Except for the occasional whiff of x-butylene and other toxic fragrances from Chevron, Point Richmond is a delightful turn of the century relic. What is long forgotten becomes quaint, if it escapes fire, flood and the wrecker's ball. Conversely, Marina Village drove its developers to ruin by being brought to market too soon, before the image of burly, black Richmond had been fully erased from collective memory.¹⁴² Hilltop Mall suffered a similar fate by being too ambitious for its working class clientele, so Chevron Land switched gears and developed a huge swath of housing and an office-*cum*-industrial park. Further out, Hercules Chemical turned the same trick by making its little company town into a suburban enclave for Asian-Americans.

Turning back to Oakland's southern flank, we confront the changeless isle of Alameda. Alameda is not afraid of change when the money's right, however. It sold out the Gold Coast to Utah International in the 1960s for a suburban shoreline development, complete with ranch houses, cul-de-sacs, and an artificial beach. This was matched along the Oakland estuary in the 1990s with yet another Marina Village (originality is not the strong suit of American land developers). Lost was any trace of the once great Alaska Cannery fish packing operations, largest on the coast. At its southern end, Alameda annexed Bay Farm Island, stealing it from Oakland in a chummy deal to ease the permitting process for Harbor Bay Isle -- one of several immense landfills that triggered the Save-the-Bay movement in the 1960s.¹⁴³ Developer Ron Cowan tried to lure San Francisco commuters with the catch-

¹⁴¹ [express again]

¹⁴² OT, May 24, 1992, E1.

¹⁴³ Not that Oakland is above playing such games to its own advantage. Witness the way the Claremont Hotel seceded from Berkeley for Oakland in a dispute over building additional swimming pools and tennis courts that would project into a nearby creek. Yet the social distance across the grand canyon of Oakland makes this a somewhat hallow victory, as pointed up by the Claremont's hasty cancellation of its lounge

phrase "only twenty minutes from Downtown as the crow flies" -- easy for him to say, as he helicoptered in from Marin. Turning his charms toward industry, he attracted a couple Silicon Valley firms to a new business park equipped with an instantly-obsolete teleport, now a corroding monument to high-tech hype. When biotechnology became the rage, Cowan cut a secret deal with Willy Brown, Assembly Speaker, to create a new University of California Biotechnology Research Park. Word of the cozy deal became public just before the bill was to be voted on.¹⁴⁴ Cowan finally overreached himself and went into bankruptcy in the crash of the early 1990s.

Throughout the transfigured East Bay, as in Oakland, the last generation brought more than earthquakes, economic ups and downs, and retooled retailing. It saw the area's vaunted radicalism die down (though not without a scuffle) and business regain the clout necessary to refashion the urban landscape in its own image. One overarching sign of this at the county level was the formation of the Economic Development Advisory Board, an elite group spawned by the Alameda Board of Supervisors at the instigation of Don Perata. This board became a key player in almost every major development scheme of the Nineties, and represents one more angle on finding a suitable successor to the kind of backroom deal-making once carried out by Oakland's Downtown circle or Emeryville's little boss system - - and still possible at the Port Authority.¹⁴⁵ Joe Knowland and John LaCoste would appreciate the irony.

Beyond the Pale

One thing that has not changed is the encirclement of black Oakland (and Richmond) by a white-majority suburbia, however much more diversity of peoples now exists. Contra Costa county is notoriously pallid in its enthusiasm for integration.¹⁴⁶ But even within the inner East Bay, the level of segregation is still striking (see map). While other races have had some success in penetrating the suburban wall, Africans have had little, even in this liberal metropolis.

Richmond is a majority black city flanked by suburbs that pale by comparison. Neighboring Pinole, which fell from four-fifths to two-thirds white in the 1980s, hit a crisis point in race relations in 1991 when the Mayor had to resign for using racial slurs and refusing to close city offices on Martin Luther King's birthday.¹⁴⁷ Within the city limits, Richmond's white populace is largely confined to peripheral enclaves. The northside ghetto is probably the worst in the Bay Area for misery and violence, and the heavy hand of the Richmond police is widely felt. Toxic pollution is the heaviest in the region. Richmond politics were long under the control of an unreconstructed white political regime centered on the firefighters union, backed by the white power structure of eastern Contra Costa County. Oddly enough, it took a century before redistricting finally married Richmond's political fortunes to the central East Bay rather than the fair-haired electors over the hills.¹⁴⁸

contract with Oakland jazz patriarch, Ed Moore?, when too black a crowd began to gather behind its white facade.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Grabowicz and Carolyn Newburgh, "Pals: the speaker and the developer", OT, December 16, 1990, A1, 12-14.

¹⁴⁵ Steve Stallone, "The powers that be", Bay Guardian, June 9, 1993, 16-18.

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter 9.

¹⁴⁷ OT April 21, 1991, C1.

¹⁴⁸ Not much to go on here....how much politics to get into? Need a good source. Very little written on Richmond. On toxics, see Andrew Leonard and Jason Fine, "Poison in the neighborhood", Bay Guardian, August 4, 1993, 18-21.

Berkeley, for all its fine reputation, is a divided city whose black folk are confined almost entirely to the southwest quadrant. After a period of left dominance of civic leadership in the 1980s, Berkeley politics turned increasingly conservative, due partly to statewide reaction to the success of an organized left under the BCA and partly to a decline in renters and blacks as the town gentrified. Backed by ascendant homeowner groups, the new regime has opposed public housing in all its forms and slapped anti-panhandling laws onto the homeless. Berkeley High School famously reproduces the apartheid line in its lunchtime hangouts for students of different races (though many students would protest the simplistic portrait drawn by outside commentators). The University campus has few students of African or Latin origin, despite a deceptively high level of non-white enrollments -- made up almost entirely of sons and daughters of bourgeois Asians and Asian-Americans. Elimination of Affirmative Action by the UC Regents is squeezing out the precious few disadvantaged people of color who made it through the slanted door of affirmative action.¹⁴⁹

Alameda takes the idea of protection against the black tide seriously, indeed. No need for walled compounds and armed response when you live on an island. Only 7% of its people are African-American (though a large, quiet Filipino community grew up beside the naval air base). This kind of time-space compression requires a strong hand on the pressure valve, willingly provided by the Alameda Police. In the early 1990s, several officers were caught exchanging racial jokes over their computer link and two black music clubs closed up due to run-ins with the cops. The City Council considered making the High Street Bridge to East Oakland one way (outbound) on the argument that this would make it easier for undesirables to wander into Alameda's safe streets. The tenor of city politics is captured by such highlights as defying a court order to build low-income housing and refusing to make an innocent declaration in favor of Gay Pride Week. One resident received a standing ovation for telling the city council that accepting low-income housing would only produce "an East Alameda like East Oakland or create roving bands of anarchist gypsies which vandalize storefronts as they do in Berkeley."¹⁵⁰

South County is the most faceless corner of the metropolis in the eyes of the outside world. Much has changed since the era of white flight, and now all the towns are well peopled with working and middle class Latinos and Asians. Fremont has a large Indian-American community and Hayward is heavily Chicano, for example. South County is still growing, thanks to the massive spillover of Silicon Valley. Fremont, edging toward 200,000 people, is the giant of the new urban realm, and has a spanking new Civic Center to show for it, but relates more to San Jose than Oakland. Hayward has its own aspirations, its own set of county offices, and its own Democratic Party machine led by Bill Lockyer -- who succeeded Willie Brown as the major domo of the California legislature in the mid-Nineties.¹⁵¹ South County thus often overshadows the north in political clout, but remains stolidly middle of the working class road. It was in Hayward that a BART cop shot Herrold Hall in the back for no good reason and Cal State Hayward was the birthplace of anti-affirmative action Proposition 209.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ On the BCA see Newport in Davis et al., Rauber op.cit., what else?? On the war on beggars, see Mitchell, Antipode article. The anti-begging laws were lifted when the left won a bare majority back in 1996. On Berkeley High, the offending PSB special is School Colors (1995). On the struggle over open admissions at Berkeley, see Representations special issue. article by Glenna's friend.

¹⁵⁰ Quote from OT, March 11, 1992, A1. On the cops, see xxxxx. On the bridge, SFC, January 16, 1993, B1. On gay pride declaration Express article, Spring 1997.

¹⁵¹ John Jacobs, "The most powerful Democrat in California", *California Monthly* February 1996, 17-19.

¹⁵² need a Bay Guardian story....Prop 209 was authored by Professor Glenn Custred.

MAP
racial distribution in the East Bay
(from race atlas materials)

San Leandro is another study in spatial control. It has erected its own version of the Pearly Gates, just beyond the Oakland boundary to announce that you are no longer in ghetto land. Beyond the gate lies an earnestly renewed Downtown shopping districts. Nearby, the town has swept away the reminders of its pre-Postindustrial past. It evicted the last red-blooded truck stop in the Bay Area. Behind the impeccable tranquility of San Leandro's new suburban diversity lies an implacable notion of order, backed up by police checks of any black male or gaggle of Mexican youths taking too literally their automobile-fueled freedoms. San Leandro's main claim to fame for years has been Traders' Sports, the largest gun dealer in the West -- to police and criminals alike.¹⁵³

Despite the middle class diaspora to the Oakland hills, few African-Americans have made it out of Oakland and the black belt. One who did was the high-stepping Hip-Hop artist of the Eighties, (M.C.) Hammer, whose \$20 million, 11,000 square foot house on the flanks of Mission Peak made him Fremont's most famous -- and richest -- citizen. But his fame and fortune were fleeting, and Hammer had to sell his dream house and retreat to the humble confines of Oakland a decade later.

Indeed, not many people of color have made it into beyond the Oakland foothills to the lofty ridges behind. The hills above Highway 13 are 68% white and 18% black, with a median income four times that of West Oakland. From high in Montclair, all along the eastern escarpment of this physically breathtaking city, it is hard to see the color of the flatlands; one might as well be peering down from the north rim of the Grand Canyon at an invisible river of humanity below. On these aeries perch most of Oakland's remaining white middle class, like condors whose breeding grounds have been hemmed in. It nearly disappeared altogether under the force of nature on Black Sunday, 1991.

MAP of districts by income
(after Oakland tribune clip on file)
or
photo from Skyline

In a few hours the Firestorm of October 23d annihilated the core of the Oakland rim lands, burning the northern half of Montclair and the eastern portion of Oceanview, and coming within shouting distance of that fabulous white elephant, the Claremont Hotel. It was the most devastating wildfire in California history. No wrecker's ball nor bulldozer can yet match nature's furies in leveling an entire mountainside in an afternoon. In addition to the lessons on the physical hazards of the urban forest style of suburbia, the Firestorm revealed a good deal about the social divide between hills and flatlands. There were many heartless voices heard on flatland rooftops yelling "burn, baby, burn". And whatever the personal virtues of so many burnt-out hill dwellers, such as radical housing theorist Richard LeGates, novelist Maxine Hong Kingston, or architectural historian Randolph Langenbach, we cannot forget the forces that rend the body politick on the rack of class and property markets. When homeless people turned up at post-fire relief centers to partake of bedding and

¹⁵³ EBX, November 21, 1997, 4-5.

supplies donated by the public, they were castigated as freeloaders -- even though most fire victims were of a class that had no use for boxes of castoff clothing and canned goods. The class vision of the hills came out most clearly in the statements of the Phoenix Association, formed by a group of those who lost their homes to the fire. They churlishly instigated a lawsuit blaming the city for the fire, as if Diablo winds and tinder-dry vegetation were subject to city edict.¹⁵⁴ With this came fevered complaints that Montclair residents get too few services for their taxes, and a threat to secede from the city altogether. Piedmont (like Slovenia) had the right idea, a position validated by the gods who halted the firestorm just outside the Piedmont city limits.

While the fire zone has come back from the cinders, Oakland's flatlands smolder every day. Amazingly, Oakland has never witnessed a major riot. This is a puzzle worth considering. Perhaps the Black Panthers gave people hope enough despite the murder of Dr. King in 1968. Or the Wilson regime offered sufficient sense of local power to avoid the Rodney King riots in 1992.¹⁵⁵ Or it might be the lighter hand of the Oakland police department under Chief George Hart, which became a fully integrated force with modest staffing levels and a lower tolerance for police brutality.¹⁵⁶ Maybe it's the innovative East Bay Empowerment Zone created to funnel crime-busting funds into social programs. Nevertheless, the fact remains, as Hilliard observes, "Since the destruction of the Black Panthers there has been no real voice for the oppressed, for the disenfranchised, for all the people."¹⁵⁷

Conditions for the poor and the outcast have hardly improved since the Civil Rights era or the Black Panthers' Ten-Point program; indeed, they may be worse. Oakland is a city steeped in poverty amid a world of plenty. Average income is xxxx, and only xxxxx for African-origin people. Unemployment runs about 3% higher than Alameda county as a whole and stood at over 12% in the trough of 1982-83 and 10% in 1992-93. Black youth unemployment is a despairing xx%. In West Oakland the figures are 22% unemployment, 33% in poverty, and 90% of schoolchildren on AFDC.¹⁵⁸ Housing conditions for the poor are scandalous.¹⁵⁹

Crack swept through Oakland like the Black Plague, wasting a whole generation. Incarceration rates are horrendous, as throughout California, where some 40% of young African-American men are in jail, on parole or on probation -- mostly for drug-related offenses.¹⁶⁰ Gang wars among petty dealers grew fearsome in the Eighties -- thanks in part to the loss of control after drug king Felix Mitchell was jailed (this helps explain the curious spectacle of 10,000 mourners turning out for Mitchell's funeral after he was stabbed in jail). By the early 1990s Oakland had the highest crime rate in California and an

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Davis on Malibu.

¹⁵⁵ While San Francisco and Berkeley had large protests and ugly police riots, Oakland remained calm and old ladies guarded storefronts. Source Ed Blakely.

¹⁵⁶ OT, November 26, 1992, A1,12. (check again book on Oakland police by Jerome Skolnick) Not that the police are free of racism and brutality; ask the black plainclothes officer who was run down and beaten by two white cops who mistook him for a drug dealer. See, e.g., EBX, December 27, 1991, 3.

¹⁵⁷ SFX, January 10, 1993, D3.

¹⁵⁸ SFX, November 19, 1995, A14. Two-thirds of black families are headed by single women (many of them grandmothers), roughly the inverse of other racial groups. OT, January 5, 1992, A1,4.

¹⁵⁹ OT, November 28, 1992, A1, 10-11. One hesitates to confirm stereotypes that equate cities and blackness with poverty and welfare -- when the majority of California's poor are white and rural. Walker 1995.

¹⁶⁰ Vincent Schiraldi, Sue Keyper and Sharen Hewitt, "Young African Americans and the Criminal Justice System in California" Report from the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, San Francisco, February 1996.

astronomical murder rate of one every other day.¹⁶¹ It featured the worst infant mortality in the developed world for a time, a rate of xx per thousand (a truly Third World figure) -- no less a form of social murder than fusillades between drug gangs.

The school system struggles on a shoestring to prepare children of fifty nations and a thousand humiliations for the information age utopia, while prison funding climbs through the roof.¹⁶² Two of every three black males in Oakland's high schools drop out. In this it reflects the sorry decline of California from the best provider of public education to one of the worst in a half century. Many Bay Area school districts went bankrupt in the early Nineties, including Oakland, Berkeley and Richmond, and now depend on private philanthropy from the Annenberg and Hewlett Foundations to fund any new teaching initiatives.¹⁶³

The worst off are the homeless, made numerous by economic decline, dismantling single-room occupancy housing, and Reagan era welfare cuts. This while over one thousand structures are vacant and boarded up in West Oakland alone.¹⁶⁴ The number of homeless people in the East Bay was conservatively estimated at two thousand in the mid-Eighties. The earthquake struck hard at low-rent hotels, probably doubling that number. The contrast is striking between the general indifference to the victims of Loma Prieta, who were poor flatlanders, and the outpouring of generosity for the hillside victims of the Firestorm. A foretaste of welfare politics in Clintonian America, to be sure. Nature's ineffable forces do not select their victims with such care as society's indifferent powers.

The Brownest Eye

This bleak portrait of poverty and encirclement must be balanced by the achievement of the people inside the ring, by the sheer irrepressible energy and creativity of the human spirit however haggard the flesh and threadbare the suit. Oakland refuses to hit the canvas. Indeed, it can still throw punches in the grinning face of Right White America. It still generates new pugilists willing to take their turn in the ring. The hope of Oakland is its people, not capital, corporations or the ruling class.

This vitality from below is nothing new. Oakland has a big stake in whatever cultural and intellectual achievements the Bay Area can claim for itself. It was, at the turn of the last century, home to three of the greatest artistic rebels of the Modern Era: Jack London, the most widely read novelist of his age and the first working class voice with a mass audience; Isadora Duncan, the breakthrough artist of post-Victorian sensibility, modern dance and women's liberation; and Gertrude Stein, the one pre-World War II American revolutionary of the written word and the Ulysses of lesbianism.¹⁶⁵ It can make a claim, as well, to the cultural life of the nation over the last quarter century.

¹⁶¹ Comparable to other inner cities such as Cleveland. Gary Rivlin, "Our year of living dangerously", EBX, December 18, 1992, 1, 47-55. Crime and murder peaked in the recession and fell off sharply -- in all likelihood because of the gang truce started in LA (Davis).

¹⁶² Express?

¹⁶³ SFC, May 18, 1995, A1. On California schools decline, see Cal Tomorrow?. On Richmond, Berkeley, see Express?

¹⁶⁴ SFX, November 19, 1995, A14.

¹⁶⁵ Mention should also be made of 19th century naturalist poet Joaquin Miller, the School of Arts and Crafts of the 1910s, the Modernist Society of Six of the 1920s, the Berkeley axis of the Forties and Fifties in painting and Beat Era writing, and, of course, the Oakland spillover of the Berkeley upheaval of the 1960s. Ferlinghetti and xxxxx 19xx.

Oakland has been an important center of the black renaissance of the post-Civil Rights era. The East Bay from the Oakland hills to the University serves as a black cultural center that nurtures intellectuals of national repute and local bohemianism. It feeds at such oases as Mimosa Cafe, Geoffrey's, CJ's Gingerbread House, Lois the Pie Queen and Soul Brothers' Kitchen. Black art is featured at Samuel's Gallery, theater at the Black Repertory Group, and literature at Marcus Books and Cody's. An extraordinary covey of black writers has grown up or gathered here, including Alice Walker, Terry McMillan, Ismael Reed, June Jordan, Barbara Christian, Ed Bullins, Ntozake Shange, and Angela Davis. Their left-wing slant is readily apparent in contrast to San Jose's Shelby Steele or US poet laureate Maya Angelou of San Francisco. The late gay film-maker Marlon Riggs offered a wise counterpoint to New York's Spike Lee. Whoppi Goldberg brings Hollywood north to film in her home town (although her politics have not stood up as well as her popularity). An exchange between the black and white left continues to thrive in this milieu, and to stir up controversy among African-American intellectuals through Jordon's feminism, Rigg's gay freedom, or Walker's communing with nature (Ismael Reed provides an intelligent masculine, working class counterpoint to the more experimental sides of the black renaissance).¹⁶⁶

In the realm of popular music, Oakland gave birth to the Pointer Sisters, Tony!Tone!Toni! and En Vogue. In the 1980s the streets of Oaktown offered up glitzy Hip Hop by Run DMC and Hammer and the street Rap of Too Short and Paris. In Berkeley and Oakland clubs such as Ashkenaz and Caribbee, bands lay down the riffs of World Beat. All the while, Jazz has been kept alive at a string of venues over the years and a steady stream of recordings have come out of Berkeley's Fantasy Records, presided over by Orin Keepnews.¹⁶⁷ Oakland's musical renaissance had a classical side, but this was truncated by the early death of conductor Calvin Simmons and demise of the Oakland symphony.

Despite Oakland's image as a hard, working class town, many African-Americans regard it as a west coast Atlanta, an oasis in white America and a place where blacks have a prominent social presence. This presence extends from the jogging trail around Lake Merritt to City Centre plaza, from the stately homes of Trestle Glen to Downtown offices, from the airport lobby to City Hall, and from TV studios to radio stations -- in dramatic contrast to their invisibility in most of San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and Westside Los Angeles. Many middle class blacks choose to live in Oakland and commute to work elsewhere. Oakland's African-American community has a vibrant associational life that is still anchored to the protestant churches, with the Rev J. Alfred Smith the most prominent in the network of pastors and flocks. Black self-organization may be as American as apple pie or as African as gumbo, but it puts the lie to the naive theories of the relation between economic success and associational life; African-Americans trust each other to a degree that white Americans rarely do among themselves, yet economic disadvantage dogs the community all the same due to the vast discrepancy between black and white inheritance of wealth and privilege.¹⁶⁸

A good example of Oakland's sense of black independence was the 1996 proposal of the School District to recognize Ebonics as a separate language group. School District affairs are central to the city's political life because the District is both keeper of the community's aspirations for its children and because the schools had been an early site of black middle class emergence. The in-your-face sense of difference in the district's Ebonics policy

¹⁶⁶ Any sources? Barbara Christian. Mention should also be made of Jessica Mitford, Maxine Hong Kingston, etc.

¹⁶⁷ Fantasy's Saul Zaentz is also a major independent movie maker. See Derk Richardson, "Fantasy Man", SFX Magazine, March 23, 1997.

¹⁶⁸ Duster. What to cite on black churches? Ask Troy, Barbara. For the ideological cut on trust, see Fukiyama.

stirred up a firestorm of reaction from whites across the nation, and not a few African-American intellectuals.¹⁶⁹ Few of the conservatives who denounced the plan in the name of teaching Righteous English were willing to concede that black dialect had any standing or puts children in the wrong for speaking in school what they hear at home. As a strategy of teaching understanding, Ebonics makes perfect sense; white teachers and even many middle class black teachers have used English as a weapon to defeat poor African-American kids. On the other hand, Ebonics was by no means innocent of inflated pretensions (Ebonics is a dialect not a language) and less admirable intentions. One was to prise federal money away for English as a Second Language training -- putting blacks on a par with immigrants (five major languages are spoken by Oakland children, fifty smaller ones).¹⁷⁰ Another was to make a statement to the overwhelmingly Anglo teaching staff that they are bearers of white cultural bias. A previous teachers' strike had polarized the district in unpleasant ways, partly because the teachers were fighting for more resources in the classroom and fewer to district administration, top-heavy with patronage posts.¹⁷¹

But another renaissance has been underway, which threatens the hard-won electoral and cultural hegemony of black Oakland, whose proportion of the city's people peaked at 46% around 1980 (it was never a black majority city, unlike Baltimore or DC). Thais, Indians, Laotians, Tongans, Hmung and many more new peoples mingle in the Oakland of the 90s. The black-white divide is less defining than it was, and Oakland is the most integrated and ethnically diverse big city in America, measured block by block.¹⁷² It is astonishing to see some of the hardest ghetto turf in America, Lockwood and Coliseum Gardens in East Oakland -- once headquarters of drug king Felix Mitchell -- transformed into a Cambodian compound (the same makeover has happened in parts of Richmond).¹⁷³ It is no less surprising to see the Oakland *Post* putting out a sister paper, *El Mundo*.

Like many Bay Area communities, Oakland has received a massive infusion of new blood from recent Asian immigration. Old Chinatown, dating from the 1880s, has gone from an empty bowl to a commercial torrent, drawing on tributaries from the north China plains to the mountains of southeast Asia. Asians now make up one-sixth of the populace, businesses are flourishing, and the community has spread around Downtown, across Lake Merritt and into far East Oakland. Boosters now refer to Chinatown as "Asiatown", and the district has revived an annual parade, now a polyglot event of no certain religious or ceremonial function. In San Antonio (old Brooklyn), Asians are now one-third of the residents, passing up Africans. "Saigon fences" encircle many homes, lessons of wartime turned to advantage on the mean streets of America. Long moribund stretches of East 14th Street -- renamed "International Boulevard" -- show new life and feature signs in Chinese and Vietnamese cheek by jowl with those in English and Spanish. Hong Kong investors are a presence; two of HK's top twenty families are operating in Oakland, most visibly the Chans, owners of the Pacific Renaissance Plaza and the Parc Oakland Hotel.¹⁷⁴ Even with

¹⁶⁹ Including local luminaries Shelby Steele, Maya Angelou and Ismael Reed. Jesse Jackson first denounced Oakland, then changed his view. In fact, such programs were already quietly in place in LA and New York. Oakland toned down its proposal but stuck by the principle. See, e.g., SFX, 12/22/96, C-7 and SFC, 12/20/96, A-1

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¹⁷¹ Only San Francisco with seven languages spoken by more than 1% of the population and LA, New York and San Jose with six, are more diverse than Oakland. SFX, 12/8/96, C-3. A similar story can be told about the review of school textbooks by hypervigilant critics -- an eminently reasonable goal sometimes compromised by misguided attacks. Any stories? check OT.

¹⁷² source. The percentage had fallen to 43% black in 1990, and will be nearer 40% in 2000.

¹⁷³ Dashka Slater, "Miracle on 66th Avenue", EBX, October 21, 1994, 1, 10-27. These projects had been all white in the 1950s.

¹⁷⁴ OT, February 16, 1992, A1,12-13.

this revival, white capitalists tend to see Chinatown as a quaint, cluttered landscape not the principal engine of street-level Downtown renewal.¹⁷⁵

The Mexican and Central American district around Fruitvale has also grown and prospered. Latin -origin people have increased to nearly 50,000 and now make up one-sixth of Oakland's populace, most of them concentrated here. German then Portuguese, now Latino, Fruitvale's common threads were farm and cannery work and the Catholic Church. This is a long-settled province for Chicanos, with a dollop of newly arrived immigrants, knit together by church, family, unions, and a thicket of organizations (as in San Francisco's Mission District, Latinos are famously well-organized). The leading organs, dating from the Sixties, are the Spanish Speaking Unity Council and La Clinica de la Raza. Fruitvale is also a center for Native Americans in the region. Del Monte's sprawling cannery is gone now, replaced by a mall, so the major landmark of the district is Ward's derelict warehouse (1 million sq feet). A fierce fight is being waged between community leaders who regard it as an eyesore and preservationists who see it as a useful treasure. Urban clearance has won over another generation of aspiring politicians, it seems.¹⁷⁶

Politically, Asians and Latinos are becoming more assertive. An Asian-Latino redistricting plan of 1993 created, it was hoped, one home district for each group (although low citizenship gives neither a plurality of voters). The plan worked for Fruitvale, which now has a powerful voice on the city council, Ignacio de la Fuente, who wishes to be Mayor. The entry of Asians into city politics has been more problematic. Some Asian politicians have become familiar faces to the public, such as county Supervisor Wilma Chan and School Board chair Carol Quan (first Asian in such a position in the country). Alameda county is second to New York in translating all election materials into Chinese. But the new Asian business class -- aggressively seeking a political voice in line with its economic role in the city -- has made clumsy attempts to promote candidates with no political record or program, such as Ted Dang for Mayor in 1994. While the Chinese business elite is well regarded by whites, they are often distrusted by working class Asians of other national origins. Asians -- a more heterogeneous group than African or Hispanic Americans -- both gain and lose from the class and race divides within their community.¹⁷⁷

The 1998 mayoral race could be a turning point in Oakland, marking the end of the African-American regime of the last twenty years. The leading candidates are Jerry Brown, former governor, and Ignacio de la Fuente (backed by Don Perata). African-American leaders are scrambling to decide on a consensus candidate (which looks to be Mary Moore, former council member). For some it would be a calamity to lose their hard-won hegemony. Lionel Wilson warned blacks in 1994 that a vote for Ted Dang would let whites back into power, and many feel that way about either the liberal Brown or de la Fuente. Nevertheless, they are faced with a good deal of popular black feeling against the failures of the old regime to deliver the goods to the neighborhoods.

These humble turf wars matter because electoral politics in Oakland is the main channel of power in the city today. If one asks the old question, who really rules Oakland, the answer might surprise. There is no strong, organized business class at work behind the scenes because white business has so thoroughly evacuated the city. The state of politics reflects

¹⁷⁵ Asians were rightly offended by the refusal of Storek & Storek to lease to Asian businesses in their Old Oakland project and by the statement of Bramalea president Doug Salter (formerly of Grubb & Ellis) that he would only want "Oriental use in there [if it did] not look that way". OT, October 7, 1991, C3. Old Oakland's creditors were more liberal, and after bankruptcy of both Storek and Bramalea, it now contains Asian shops.

¹⁷⁶ Source on Fruitvale.

¹⁷⁷ Cite forthcoming paper by Tim Fong.

that state of economics, in that Oakland's economic base today is so dependent on government. There are, of course, petty bourgeois contenders among Chinese and African-Americans, but the Downtown business association is a hodge-podge of ethnicities and alliances. There are still some moneyed families in the hills, but nothing like the imperial Knowlands or Kaisers.

At the same time, organized labor is represented chiefly by public employee unions, like California Federation of Teachers and Service Employees International Union. The Teamsters, Retail Clerks and Longshore unions are other important actors in and around Oakland. While they are strong and able unions in many ways, able to face down the likes of Safeway and Kaiser Health, they have not been able to articulate a public vision or build bridges between the races and nations of the new Oakland. De la Fuente is former union official and outspoken friend of labor, who pushed through a Hire Oakland policy of city-sponsored construction, but is not a unifying force. Barring popular movement from below or radical restructuring of the East Bay economy, the chances are that Oakland will never shed its ragged coat of many colors for a set of political overalls.

Oakland keeps on keepin' on, but where can it go? Its resources are few, other than the energy of its people. It has been hobbled for decades by a misconceived effort to build a Downtown castle out of clouds, instead of investing its meager resources in its people and communities more directly. Oakland seems burdened forever by its satellite status: it can neither replicate San Francisco nor break free of its spell. Its politics make good theater, but lack a script, and the chorus of the people is still waiting in the wings. Oakland, great city of memory, is now the quiet, dark eye in the midst of the metropolitan hurricane driven by high technology, fabulous wealth and global change.

