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## Oakland's Manufactured Housing Crisis

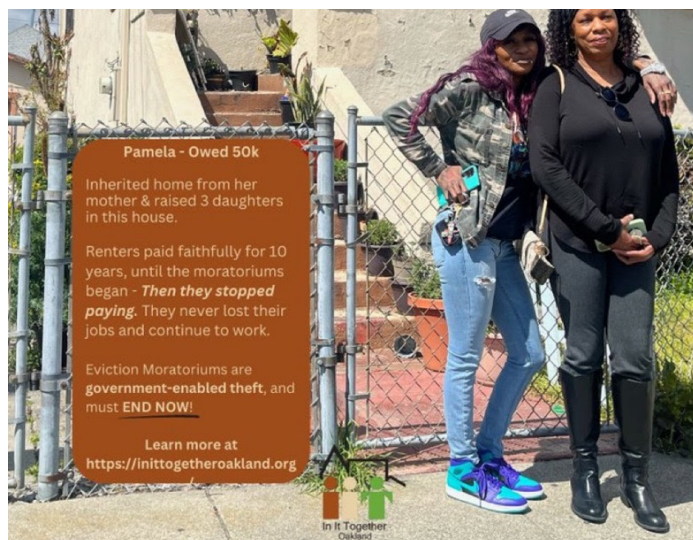
1 message

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**Neighbors Together Oakland** <info@neighborstogetheroakland.org>  
Reply-To: Neighbors Together Oakland <info@neighborstogetheroakland.org>  
To: [REDACTED] My personal email

[REDACTED]





Neighbors,

In this email we will be covering:

- Seneca discusses how fallout from Oakland's 3 year+ eviction moratorium is hurting renters, small time property owners and Oakland's housing market writ large
- Help Neighbors spread their demands for a safe, livable Oakland via our lawn sign campaign

In August 2021, billboards in California promised relief for struggling renters, pledging

to cover 100% of rent and utilities due to hardships caused by COVID-19. Three years later, the aftermath of eviction moratoriums has revealed a foreclosure crisis and a massive backlog of eviction filings. The toll? Over \$700 million in back rent owed to Alameda County owners, with thousands of renters facing evictions or financial ruin, disproportionately impacting minorities and immigrant housing security.

As a renter seeking financial relief, I attempted to navigate the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). However, the reality set in when consulting my property owner, a 75-year-old Black man also residing on the premises. ERAP funds proved limited, leaving owners waiting for reimbursements. The lack of hardship proof for

renters further strained the system, as some chose not to pay, worsening the financial burden on property owners.

Amidst this, a peculiar phenomenon emerged among progressive renters influenced by movements like Black Lives Matter and local tenant advocacy groups. Proclamations of “Cancel Rent” and “Rent Strike Today” resonated, leading some, even those financially able, to cease payments in solidarity with the cause.

For many renters, a brief respite from financial strain offered a fleeting escape from poverty. Various COVID-19 entitlement programs, including “super” unemployment, PPP loans, stimulus checks, child tax credits, and student loan forgiveness, granted a taste of liberation from poverty’s shackles.

Yet, this conscientious objection had far-reaching consequences. Property owners, from large corporations to small-scale minority and immigrant housing providers, found themselves grappling with financial strain. Over half of Oakland’s rental units belong to small housing providers, underscoring the crisis’ impact on the community’s fabric.

This emancipation, however, was a fleeting illusion. The sunset of these programs now leaves us grappling with a resurgent inflation, compounded by the Bay Area’s tumultuous landscape marked by substantial tech layoffs, the ushering in of A.I., and the precipitous decline of the Bay Area economy, largely attributable to an alarming surge in crime. And as the final layer of tribulation, after three years, the rent is finally due.

On November 15th, 132 eviction cases are scheduled in Alameda County Superior Court, a consequence of moratoriums. The lone adjudicator faces logistical impossibility, leading to considerable delays. Notably, evictions can’t be pursued for pre-moratorium arrears, raising questions about the sudden surge in cases.

Renters' rights activists deflect blame onto owners, labeling it an "eviction tsunami"

However, over 90% of evictions stem from renters' inability or unwillingness to meet rent obligations. Property owners, already burdened with substantial arrears, navigate legal fees compounded by aggressive organizations like ACCE and buyout by their allies in the city.

These potentially illegal and unconstitutional moratoriums prompted a significant

lawsuit by the Housing Providers of America and the Pacific Legal Fund that is currently making its way through the court system.

In this chaos, meet Carolyn from West Oakland. She inherited a duplex only to find

herself ensnared in a moratorium nightmare. Her renters, finally evicted for illicit

activities after three years of nonpayment, have broken back in four times, damaging

her property further. Carolyn, a Black homeowner, rented to them due to shared identity, now faces the dilemma of maintaining her mother's home or succumbing to market forces. She has no money left over sue for the \$50,000.00 she's still owed in back rent in small claims court.

Carolyn remarks, "all the help is for renters, they get free lawyers from the city while I

have to pay tens of thousands of dollars. They destroyed my house, sold drugs and

stored stolen goods. Even after the eviction, they have returned four times to break back into the proper

"The Sheriff told me to call 911, but they didn't answer. What am I supposed to do?" She says she has reached out to her councilperson, Carroll Fife, who has ignored her and refuses to help. Sadly, this story is very common among Black owners in West Oakland I have spoken with.

Last month Centro De La Raza received another million dollars to fight evictions in

Oakland, meaning that owners like Carolyn are having their own taxpayer dollars used against them in court. Carolyn's struggle epitomizes a broader narrative—home and heritage teeter on the precipice. The fabric of community cohesion risks unraveling amid systemic challenges. These flawed policies carry significant consequences, placing the cost of societal welfare on private citizens like Carolyn, jeopardizing her home and community foundations.

Now, thousands of renters face evictions and credit-damaging lawsuits, while owners

endure expensive legal battles as the rental housing market takes a historic downturn. Rents for one-bedroom units in Oakland dropped 7.2% in September—the most significant decline among the top 100 U.S. cities. Once solid relationships between many owners and renters have divulged into nasty legal fights, as we all race each other to the bottom.

Legislators must have seen this coming; talk of what would happen after the

moratoriums ended were frequent on both sides of the divide. Horror stories of well-to-do renters stiffing poor and middle-class minority and immigrant owners finally started to get exposure as moratoriums neared their end – but now it appears that lawmakers have conveniently forgotten the abuse suffered by the housing provider community.

Being used as a welfare piggy bank for negligent lawmakers to the tune of over \$700

million in Alameda County has caused real harm to thousands of minority and

immigrant households. I mention these two groups not because White owners don't

deserve due process, but because groups like ACCE and elected officials like Fife often use minority groups as faces for their nefarious schemes. But these schemes don't help renters either; all they do is line the pockets of organizations like ACCE to pay the high salaries of their leaders.

So, what is the solution? Alameda County currently sits on over \$6 billion in reserves,

meaning that they could make owners whole if they wanted. Why are owners, after 3

plus years of forced private welfare, now facing even more hardships in evicting renters who still cannot pay? Are they supposed to let them live for free? Is this same logic extended to local restaurants as well? After all, food is more of a need than housing. Oakland City Councilmember Carroll Fife and her allies in ACCE are on dangerous ground. Their attacks on minority and immigrant homeowners will have dire consequences. Renters will see ruined credit and evictions on record, making it harder to rent or own in the future. Owners will see an avalanche of foreclosures, and guess who is lurking, ready to buy these newly distressed assets – Major corporations, nonprofits, and the government. Homeownership and real estate assets are the surest way for the middle class to enjoy economic mobility; attacking this wealth creation mechanism under the false guise of ideology is not only dangerous, it's morally wrong. It's time for Alameda County to make all owners whole; the financial health of our entire region is at stake.

-Seneca Scott





Update On Our Lawn Sign Campaign

At the end of Spring, we launched our “We Believe In The Power Of Neighbors To Create Safe Livable Cities” lawn sign campaign, which grabbed the attention of the entire city, drawing so many wonderful people to our burgeoning movement to help build the Oakland we deserve.

Thanks to the generous donations of neighbors, we have been able to hand out over 500 signs in the last few months. We are now out of signs and will be relaunching deliveries in the beginning of 2024. To continue the campaign, we are looking to your support to raise \$5000 dollars over the next month.

We are at a critical juncture to capitalize on our momentum, and it is crucial that we receive the funding required to continue our work. Please consider contributing to our efforts so that we can continue our programming to help ensure the restoration of representative democracy in Oakland.

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Support Our Organizing Efforts

Additionally, if you would like to organize an educational NTO event in your community, please reach out to [Andrew@neighborstogetheroakland.org](mailto:Andrew@neighborstogetheroakland.org).

These events serve as an opportunity for our members and other community leaders come to your neighborhood to provide information on how you can organize on behalf of your community's safety and well-being.

Volunteer with NTO

*NTO has been granted 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and is recognized as a charitable organization by the IRS. Donations are tax deductible.*

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Neighbors Together Oakland  
[1114 Peralta St](#)  
Oakland, [CA 94607](#)

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