



**IN THE HANDS OF
COMMUNITY**

life-sustaining resources & poems

HOW NOT TO CALL THE COPS IN OAKLAND SCHOOLS

Find out what
alternative resources
are here for you and
your family, and why.

POEMS BY FIVE OAKLAND YOUNG PEOPLE

What sanctuary for all
means to them.

OUSD'S COMMITMENT TO THE GEORGE FLOYD RESOLUTION

And why it's something
to celebrate this school
year.

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INTRODUCTION



The release of this chapbook at a community art jam at Lake Merritt represents us banding together to celebrate how far we've come in our struggle for police-free schools and sanctuary for all on school grounds and in our cities, and also to follow up on our wins and make them real.

Thanks to the hard work of the Black Organizing Project and allies, the Oakland Unified School District last year committed to the George Floyd Resolution to keep police officers out of Oakland public schools.

We dedicate this publication to the joy of turning towards art, thriving schools, and community healing, rather than over-policing.

- Editorial team, summer 2021

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

BLACK ORGANIZING PROJECT

blackorganizingproject.org

ANTI POLICE-TERROR PROJECT

antipoliceterrorproject.org

BAY RISING

bayrising.org

ARTIST ADVISORS

AYODELE NZINGA

Oakland Poet Laureate, producing director, playwright, poet, dramaturg, actress, performance consultant, arts educator, community advocate, and culture bearing anchor.

ayodelenzinga.com

ZOUHAIR MUSSA

Sudanese-American student from Oakland. Poet, rapper, and spoken word performance artist.

IN THE HANDS OF COMMUNITY

By Eden Meseret

Hands labour until they are too tired to continue
feet march until their purpose melds into the steps of their own fatigue
The eye wells up until its vision is drowned in the collection of its own tears
And the broken body curls its knees into its chest
tucks in its head and
Fetal positions itself all in hopes of somehow finding rest

Sickness plagues our bodies and poisonous our justice systems
we witness life and death dance to rhythms that sing so similar
When distance has overstayed its welcome
Yet stands and uninvited guest creating this atmosphere of disconnect
we're left to make something of a world that seemed to leave us with nothing
left to redefine what it means to connect
to commune
or to just even share space

When communities cry rivers to wash away bloodshed of families
who lost lives to the hands of injustice
When brown and black bodied spines distort under the weight of a fight to justice
When the meaning of community scatters itself across death tolls and statistics
And we begin to curl our knees into our chest
Tuck in our heads
And fetal position ourselves into a search for rest

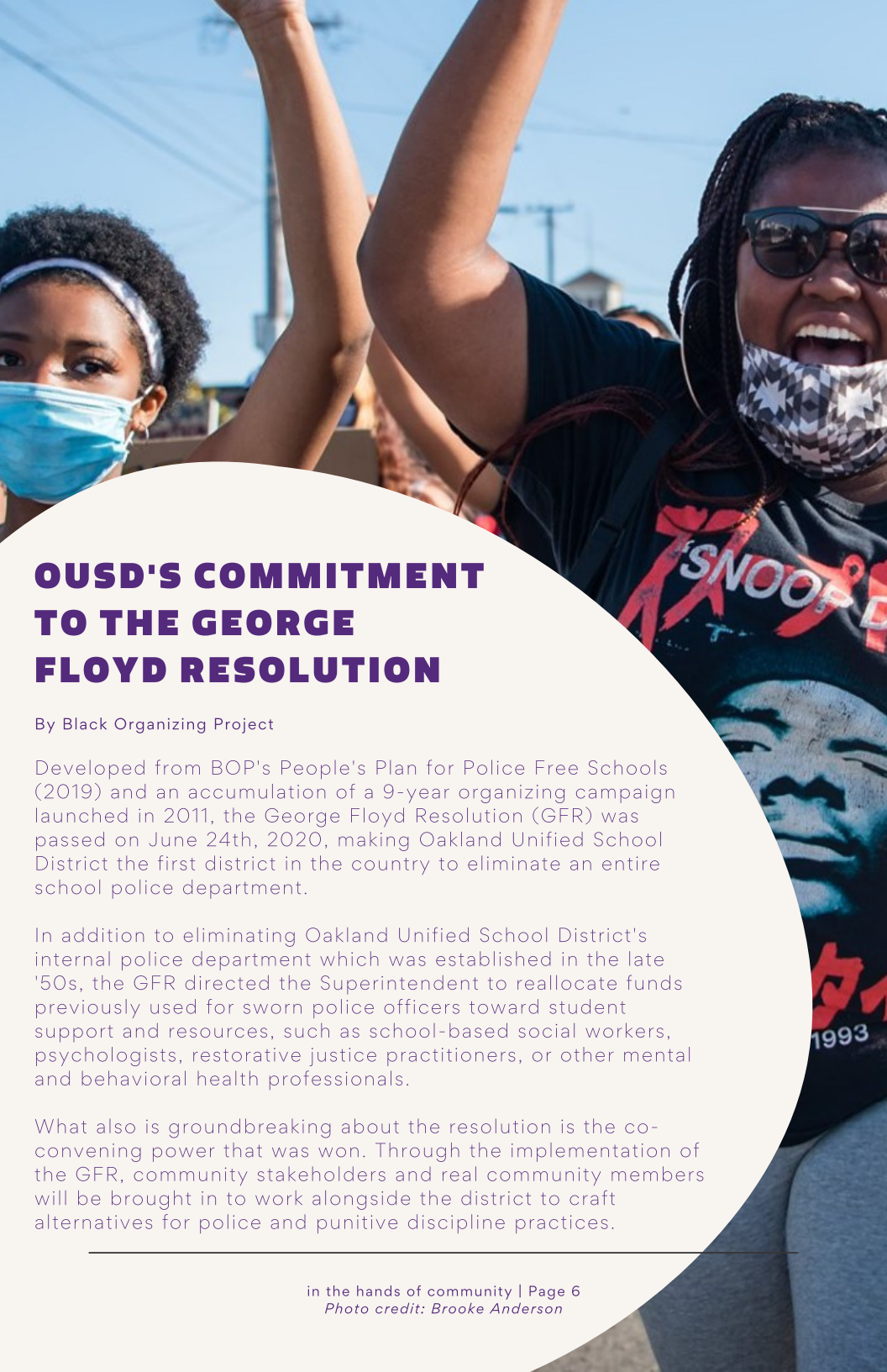


We fall back into the hands of community
Where rest is found and battered bodies restored
We fall back into the hands of community
Where songs of strength are sung
soothing the hurt of a body with no fight left
We fall back into the hands of community
which surpasses confinements of blood relations
builds itself a bridge amongst nations
And creates family from the ability of human connection

So when we begin to curl our knees into our chest
tuck in our heads
And fetal position ourselves into a search for rest
When our feet have no walk left and our hands carry no strength
When our tears shed in need of a saviour
In need of rest
When our hands are nailed to crosses
and our sides have been pierced with blades of injustice
When vulnerabilities are left exposed
and our hearts are left a feast for vultures

when we begin to curl our knees into our chest
tuck in our heads
And fetal position ourselves into a search for rest
We fall back into the hands of community
Who withstand the hardships of pandemics
And distortion of its definition
We fall back into the hands of community
Where songs of strength are sung
soothing the hurt of a body with no fight left
We fall back into the hands of community
which surpasses confinements of blood relations
builds itself a bridge amongst nations
And creates family from the ability of human connection
We fall back into the hands of community
Where we can finally find rest
A place to regain strength
be surrounded in safety
We fall back into the hands of community
Where we have finally found home





OUSD'S COMMITMENT TO THE GEORGE FLOYD RESOLUTION

By Black Organizing Project

Developed from BOP's People's Plan for Police Free Schools (2019) and an accumulation of a 9-year organizing campaign launched in 2011, the George Floyd Resolution (GFR) was passed on June 24th, 2020, making Oakland Unified School District the first district in the country to eliminate an entire school police department.

In addition to eliminating Oakland Unified School District's internal police department which was established in the late '50s, the GFR directed the Superintendent to reallocate funds previously used for sworn police officers toward student support and resources, such as school-based social workers, psychologists, restorative justice practitioners, or other mental and behavioral health professionals.

What also is groundbreaking about the resolution is the co-convening power that was won. Through the implementation of the GFR, community stakeholders and real community members will be brought in to work alongside the district to craft alternatives for police and punitive discipline practices.

What do we mean when we say Black Sanctuary?

We coined the term Black Sanctuary in 2018 after launching our Black Sanctuary Pledge where we asked teachers and school staff to pledge not to call police or ICE on Black and Brown students for non-violent issues— after learning of an overwhelming amount of over 6k calls to police on students (in just two school years).

Ironically, in a time where the national conversation of Sanctuary was in many households, we had to reckon with the harsh reality that schools and communities have never been a sanctuary for Black students, who have been disproportionately policed and criminalized here in Oakland and abroad.

Schools should feel like safe community spaces; our students should be praised for their strength and cultivated to be powerful. Sanctuary schools are places where leaders are developed and their curiosity and expressions aren't seen as a threat. Places where all our children learn about who they are, through understanding their history and community. For us, **Black Sanctuary means sanctuary for ALL.**

What opportunities do we have in this moment?

Right now in this moment, Oakland has the opportunity to lead the nation in groundbreaking progress towards police abolition and decriminalization of Black youth and communities. At BOP we are making history in this process for creating Black Sanctuary and implementing Police-Free Schools. But our work is only as powerful as the people behind it! That is why this level of transformation is going to take all of us contributing our efforts to upholding the new culture and climate in OUSD.

**WE NEED
PARENTS,
STUDENTS,
TEACHERS, AND
ALL INVOLVED
IN THIS FIGHT!**

To become a Black Sanctuary Ambassador and contribute to this work, reach out to:

Jessica@BlackOrganizingProject.org

TOYS

By Zouhair Mussa



It's 2 PM on a friday
I just got off the Bus from school
As I walk past the dice game on chestnut
through the door to get my hoop gear
I'm reminded of the events that made me who I
am today

I was 4 years old when I had my first shootout
Me n my cousins was strapped up with BB-
GUNS in my aunty back yard

Moms shut it down when she saw the bullet
imprint on the side of my head

I was 7 the day I spoon fed my homie dirt
Put my finger to his mouth
Let 6 rounds loose

He fell back into the grass
My smile grew big as his body
Hit the floor

Resentment stained his face
Lifeless but starstruck
His eyes rolled back til I could only see white I
stood over him

Trying to convince him that I just shot him with
my hands

*Quit playin wit me I jus kilt you
How you gon tell me
You still alive
like I ain't just send you to heaven*

Official transcript says
*Two juvenile delinquents opened fire
on school grounds*



I say,
We were two Children having fun
The only way we saw fit
Rules was simple
Select your gun
No nukes, thats cheating

Lock on to yo target
Press the trigger until the person in front you
Was no longer standing

We seen so much death
Our lives began to mimic it
I'm from a 3rd world city
Not a 1st world country

My cousin came home from the store shivering
in the middle of July
His hunger for now n laters
Had him check out with 50 cents less
and a bag full of tears
Said, dude pulled out a gun
And
I giggled
A 5 year old who thought gunplay was funny

Big bro was 15 when pops handed him his first glock
Them late night bus rides gettin chased down the block
had him contemplate an easier way to get rid of the stress
He ain't gotta look over his shoulder if he aiming for heads

My cousin was 17
Cops came knockin on that door
I was 5
Seen them blue suits through the window
Fear shot up my veins
I knew they was finna take him away

My homie was 16 when he used his first glock
Seen the opposition pushin up
Couldn't get caught lackin
Wasn't ready for a headstone so he started blastin

I was 15 big bruh on chestnut told me
Stay in school
Keep hooping
U gon make it out

12 yrs old moms made sure I went from the gym straight to the books
She ain't want me on the streets

3 years later

Im at practice
word got back that bruh got shot at the dice game
Coach always says we gotta see the bigger picture
Have you question if the money really worth yo life

Growing up in Oakland you only got three options

Take this ball
Shoot to Score

Take this Gun
Shoot to Kill

Take THIS dice
Shoot to gamble for yo life

Its 8pm on a Friday
I'm on my way home from a basketball game
Police lights flashing past my left shoulder
I look at my phone they say my neighbor got popped
Im reminded that the hood is a breeding ground for young shooters
I'm reminded of every decision lost to these do or die politics
I'm reminded that a life could be Saved..

...Or Lost

Depending on what someone is taught to do with their hands





OUSD FAMILIES, KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

By Black Organizing Project

After a decade long organizing campaign led by the Black Organizing Project, and through the power of organized students, parents, and community members—the Oakland Board of Education unanimously passed the George Floyd Resolution on June 24th 2020 to eliminate the Oakland Police Department from OUSD schools. Because of this incredible work, Oakland school campuses are now police-free and new protocols have been put in place to make sure community centered, trauma informed alternatives are in place.

Black Sanctuary Updates: What We've Won

Mental Health Support

Site therapist, psychologist, social worker or network behavioral health program manager should be called to "screen" for mental health incidents.

If a qualified screener thinks the student meets criteria, they must contact parents to request transport for student assessment.

In the event they are unable to reach the parent, schools must contact Alameda Mobile Crisis to come to site to conduct the assessment (previously OSPD would be called).

Black Sanctuary Updates: What We've Won

School Culture & Climate

The Culture and Climate Ambassador Department will operate within the spirit of Black Sanctuary. These positions will be stationed on school sites and act as student support personnel rather than police, that will be utilized by school admin to address the overwhelming amount of incidents that were wrongfully being handled by school police per previous school policies.

Culture & Climate Ambassadors:

- Total of 12 positions approved
- 7 for large high schools (Castlemont, Madison, Skyline, Fremont High, McClymonds, Oakland Tech)
- 5 centrally located

Coordinator of Safety:

- Will supervise Culture & Climate Ambassadors (CCA's)
- Act as liaison between OUSD and OPD
- Will oversee Student Safety Plan

Schools Should NOT Be Calling Police For:

- School fights
- Any student disciplinary issues
- Non life threatening incidents
- Students running away from campus (elopement)
- Unwelcome outsiders entering campus
- Any situation requiring deescalation/intervention



**These calls should be referred to the
OUSD deescalation support line.**

- To dispose of a firearm or illegal substance
- If a serious crime is believed to have taken place
(but not currently in progress)



**These calls should be referred to the
OPD NON-EMERGENCY support
line.**

**If you feel your school site is violating this
guidance, please contact BOP by emailing**

**Desiree@BlackOrganizingProject.org &
Jessica@BlackOrganizingProject.org**

For mental health crises:

- MH First Oakland, a project of Anti Police-Terror Project:
Call/text (510) 999-9MH1 · DM @MHFirstOak
[Fri. & Sat. nights from 8pm-8am]
- Alameda Mobile Mental Health Crisis Line: (510) 891-5600

ABOLITION, DO YOU HEAR US?

By Alex Lalama

Abolition, do you hear us?
I saw the world set on fire.
Fire, full of destruction and light.
I had resisted the fire within me.
What if the land has everything we need?
The land planted seeds of abolition.
Like this earth, we are self sustaining.
Self creating.
Self loving.
The waters heard our ancestors cry.
Resist, I heard, through the whispers of the wind.
Freedom, the earth gave us.
Land.
Warmth.
Water.
Joy.
Shelter.
Safety.
Food.
Nurture.
Abolition rained on us.
I held myself.
The revolution carried violence.
Communities rejoiced.
I healed myself.
Radical empathy saved us.

UNTITLED

By leila nachel

i got three eyes; right, wrong, and neutral.

the way i vision, neutral ain't no movement.
they right, made us wrong, even when our right ain't wrong.
we steady suffering trying to right how they wrong.

hella blame going on; not much accountability.
trends stopped , they ain't got no agility.

red eyes from a green life,
speeding trying to get through it.
and until them folks park they wrong on my right then, shit, i still say that neutral
just ain't finna do it.

-never trust a sucka who split the fencelall power to the people.





IN THE WILD

By Tina Meeks



I believe you will always be someone new,
you will always be you
simply by wherever you're taken
The calm after the storm
You are the aftermath
The avalanche
The evidence of a committed crime
You are the pupil of this world
The terrene I wish to be
A collaboration of sites worth reaching
and whatever precipice you're up against
has nothing on resiliency.



Ryan Sin Photography

**Tell the Oakland Unified School District board
you're watching to make sure they fully
implement the #GeorgeFloydResolution:**

