
JOHN GEORGE DEMOCRATIC CLUB

NEWSLETTER--December, 2014

Post Holiday Party:

Get Ready for the Republican Congress

January 7, 2015

5:30 – 7:00 PM

**2731 Ashby Place,
Berkeley**

(Laurie Soman's home)

Hands Up, Don't Shoot, and I Can't Breathe

Abusive Cop Picked to Head Police Reform Commission

*article by Steven Rosenfeld, submitted for
newsletter by Walter Riley*

In the wake of the Ferguson and New York protests about police violence, President Obama has formed a commission to demilitarize local police. Unfortunately he has appointed Philadelphia Police Chief Charles Ramsey as co-chair of the commission. Ramsey was known for leading repeated bloody and abusive crackdowns on protesters when he was Washington, D.C.'s chief a decade ago,

according to Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, Executive Director of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund.

She said, "If the president's idea of reforming policing practices includes mass false arrests, brutality, and the eviscerating of civil rights, then Ramsey's his man. That's Charles Ramsey's legacy in D.C. . . . Obama should immediately rescind his appointment of Commissioner Ramsey, who is a mass violator of civil rights and civil liberties."

According to the President, the commission will make recommendations about creating transparency and trust between the police and the communities they should be serving. Obama's focus on militarized policing is sparked by the overly aggressive response by St. Louis area departments to the protests in Ferguson, Missouri. Those protests were broken up by police SWAT teams in battle dress, the use of tear gas, and other outsized and disproportionate surplus military weaponry that is distributed across America through a mix of Pentagon and Department of Justice programs.

Some examples of Ramsey's record in Washington DC with the MPD include:

- First major mass arrest (World Bank/IMF protests) "Chief Ramsey, personally on the scene, oversaw the mass false arrest of over 700 persons on April 15, 2000 who were protesting peacefully and lawfully (and also journalists, tourists, passersby), using illegal trap and detain tactics. He then had them hog tied wrist to opposing ankle in stress and duress positions where they were left on the floor of police gym and in cells for 24 hours or more. He did the

same thing again in September 2002 illegally trapping and arresting nearly 400 people (protesters, legal observers, tourists, passersby) in a public park, again with no order or opportunity to disburse.”

- Going after videographers taping the police:

“A young man taking photographs of police misconduct was attacked by an undercover plainclothes officer while MPD officers stood by and did nothing to stop him. He pulled out an asp baton clubbed him in his head and attempted to smash the camera. The victim was dragged, bleeding, to a corner. CNN caught this incident. Ramsey was on the scene. There was no investigation or discipline of the MPD officers who stood by and did nothing. It took us years to identify the perpetrator.”

- Pepper-spraying demonstrators and other abusive tactics.

“Ramsey deployed mass indiscriminate use of pepper spray against protesters, using those fire extinguisher-like canisters to soak through groups of peaceful people with burning OC spray.”

- Police seeking and inciting confrontation.

“January 2001 (protests at the Inauguration of GW Bush) Two DC MPD officers acting as agents provocateur attacked a group of demonstrators standing peacefully and lawfully along the parade route. They were both undercover, in plain clothes, and they pushed through the crowd punching and pepper spraying. The MPD, again under Ramsey's command, denied that these were their officers until the PCJF was able to prove it in litigation – even with there being video and photographic evidence of their identities. Chief Ramsey and the MPD never disciplined these officers.”

- Going after Iraq War Protesters.

“April 2003, Iraq war protest. Peaceful, lawful protest, with a permit for a planned street march, attacked by

the police under Ramsey's command – and he was on the scene – repeatedly throughout the march using clubs, fists and even their motorcycles. In one of these attacks, officers held down our client, who was taking photographs, and repeatedly clubbed him in the head. No discipline, years of litigation. Also caught on camera.”

The Partnership for Civil Justice Fund sued and won over \$20 million for protesters in these and other police misconduct cases. Even more importantly, the lawsuits established new police procedures to de-escalate the culture of policing that treats the public as enemies.

The reforms made a big difference in the way MPD police handled the D.C. Ferguson protests of the last several months. Peaceful, but militant, demonstrators have gone out to demonstrate shutting down intersections in key business and entertainment areas at night, in particular on Saturday nights.. “The MPD has not deployed police to line, or confront the demonstrations or to interfere. The MPD has not been deployed in riot gear. They have at points simply blocked traffic themselves to allow for the orderly re-routing of cars as necessary. This would not have happened under Ramsey.”

Verheyden-Hilliard said that the stakes in Obama's commission on militarized policing are very high and extend far beyond the Ferguson Missouri Police Department. “The only successes in affecting and restraining illegal and repressive police conduct have come as a result of popular uprising and opposition and uncompromising litigation which push back and restrict police conduct,” she said. “No police force has ever ‘reformed’ itself. And Chief Ramsey is among the least capable people of changing the reality of, or even meaningfully altering, militarized policing in America. He was among those who implemented it.”

Bomb Trains in Oakland?

by Jack Lucero Fleck

We all know gas is getting cheaper, which is a relief. But why is this happening and is it really such a good thing?

Why the drop in price?

1. Demand has fallen—as the price rose above \$4.00 per gallon over the past few years, more people bought fuel efficient cars or just drove less.
2. Supply is up—although conventional sources of oil are declining, the U.S. is having a boom in shale oil, and is on the verge of becoming the largest oil producer in the world.

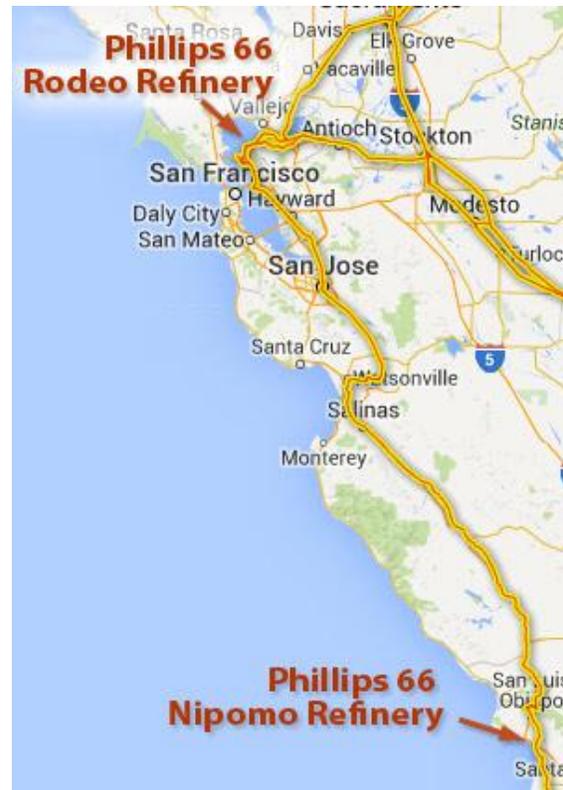
What does this mean for us in the East Bay?

The problem with the new unconventional sources of oil is that they are in Bakken shale of North Dakota or in the tar sands of Alberta, Canada. In either case the crude oil has to be shipped by rail to the five Bay Area refineries in Richmond, Martinez, Rodeo, and Benicia. Unfortunately, the Bakken Shale oil is very flammable, more like gasoline than conventional crude oil. So if it spills, it is very likely to explode. On the other hand, the tar sands oil is very toxic and very heavy, so it is hard to clean up if it spills. And spills have been happening with increasing regularity; in fact, more crude spilled from trains in 2013 than spilled during the past four decades.

A particularly troubling proposal comes from Phillips 66, who wants to route mile-long oil trains through the East Bay to its refinery in Santa Maria (near San Luis Obispo) and then send partially refined oil by pipeline to its Rodeo Refinery for upgrading into finished petroleum products. This explosive, toxic crude oil will threaten all the towns from Pittsburg to El Cerrito in Contra Costa County, and Albany to Fremont in Alameda County, putting tens of thousands of people who live, work, and go

to school near the tracks at risk from accidents and spills.

Community groups such as Citizens for a Better Environment, 350 Bay Area, Sunflower Alliance, and others are fighting against the "bomb trains". The City of Berkeley passed a resolution opposing shipping crude by rail through the city. You can find out more about this effort by checking out the Sunflower Alliance [Crude by Rail campaign](#).



What does this mean beyond the East Bay?

Of course shipping crude by rail is not just bad for us in the East Bay—all the cities on rail lines: Sacramento, Roseville, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and hundreds of towns in between: any of these places could be the site of the next oil train disaster. The Sierra Club is addressing this nationally in the [Beyond Oil campaign](#).

But the really bad news about all this new cheap oil is that it is encouraging people to use more gas,

drive more, and thereby create more CO2, the heat trapping gas that is causing global warming. The United Nations warns that we must leave about 80% of all oil, gas, and coal reserves in the ground if we want to avoid catastrophic climate change. Mining these new unconventional oil sources is not only a danger to the communities next to the railroads, but is a disaster in the making for everyone on the planet.

Community Activist Betty Berry, 81 December 21, 1932 – October 26, 2014

Betty Berry, a bay area treasure for over 50 years, passed away Saturday, Oct. 26th from Alzheimer's-related causes. She was 81. Betty leaves to celebrate her life Alona Clifton, daughter and Ajuah Helton, granddaughter both currently residents of Atlanta, GA. Deborah Smith, Betty's youngest passed away in 2008.

Betty lived a long and purpose-filled life. She was a life-long community activist who received numerous accolades for her leadership and community service in the city of Oakland.



Betty

Betty was a JG member as were both her daughters. "While she progressed into the disease, I [Alona] continued to bring mom to JG steering committee meetings, where upon I [Alona] could always count

on my most willing helpmate, Jack Lucero Fleck to assist me with mom. Betty's favorite thing to do with Jack was to say 'I like you'. Mom also enjoyed a lasting friendship with Walter Riley; her favorite thing to do with Walter was to give him either a pinch or pat on the cheek."

Betty also enjoyed long ties to Ronald V. Dellums, both as a devoted fundraiser for the congressman and supporter during his stint as mayor of Oakland.

In fact, she was the consummate fundraiser. She was known for her annual "100 Men Cooking for a Taste of Freedom" event, with proceeds benefitting The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and United Negro College Fund (UNCF).

Additionally, she was employed by the Oakland Chapter of National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). She was a committed and effective advocate on behalf of workers.

A celebration of Betty's life will be held on her birthday, Sunday, December 21, 2014, 4-5:30 pm at Geoffrey's Inner Circle, 410 14th Street, Oakland.

Please RSVP by 12/17 to alonaclifton@gmail.com

by Alona Clifton, Immediate past co-chair and founding member, JGDC (Alona's new title: "Co-chair Emeritus")!

Gentrification in Oakland

By Jack Lucero Fleck, based on Causa Justa report

The market for tech jobs in the Bay Area is booming. This means rents are going up in San Francisco and Oakland. Even with the new \$12.25 minimum wage in Oakland, a minimum wage worker would have to work nearly full time just to pay that rent—i.e. 100% of their money would go to rent. Clearly that is not affordable.

Without some strong public policy, market forces will drive people out of Oakland. This displacement is called gentrification. Is there a way to address gentrification? Can Oakland accommodate the newcomers without driving out its existing residents?

One attempt to explain this and combat it is Causa Justa's excellent and thoroughly researched report [Development Without Displacement—Resisting Gentrification in the Bay Area](#). The report lists dozens of policy suggestions to combat gentrification.

The report explains, "In a full-circle reversal, the White populations that fled urban centers in the Postwar Era have returned to city centers that now drive Internet and communications technology development rather than manufacturing. Conversely, communities of color are being evicted to the suburbs, many as far as the Central Valley."

The report also states, "The emergence of 'smart growth' planning principles has encouraged urban planners to locate new development, including housing, in high-density areas that are close to transit and job centers in order to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and increase the opportunities for walking, biking, and public transportation. . . . While these trends have brought sorely needed resources to neighborhoods that have suffered from decades of disinvestment, . . . even the most well-intentioned projects can lead to gentrification and displacement. Without protections to ensure that existing residents can stay and benefit from neighborhood change, the same communities who suffered from disinvestment and displacement in the past may be displaced yet again."

The report talks about two waves of gentrification in San Francisco and Oakland. In the first wave, the dot com boom between 1998 and 2002, the

number of "no fault" evictions tripled in Oakland at the same time that rents increased 100 percent." More recently, foreclosures resulted in 35,000 homes lost in Oakland between 2007 and 2012. The report quotes from the Wall Street Journal (July 16, 2013), "San Francisco led the top-50 U.S. metropolitan areas in average rent growth during the second quarter, jumping 7.8 percent to \$2,498, while Oakland was No. 2 at a 6.9 percent increase...The 6.8 percent increase for the combined San Francisco Bay area was more than double the nation's 3.1 percent increase..."

What can be done?

The key is to reign in market forces. The report states, ". . .almost all development decisions and regulations are set at the local level. With organized working-class communities pushing for alternative forms of development a lot can be done. With a bold local public agency leading the way — without undue influence by political donations from developers, real estate interests, corporate lobbyists and landlords — much harm can be prevented."

As the title of the report suggests, development without displacement is possible. Some of the policies to achieve this are discussed in depth in the report; these include:

- **Tenant protections** such as
 - rent control,
 - just cause evictions,
 - just compensation in cases of displacement,
 - right to return if temporary relocation is necessary, and
 - access to information about rights and opportunities.
- **Condominium conversion regulations** that incorporate relocation benefits as compensation for residents who are displaced as a result of their unit's conversion.

- **Provide more affordable housing by**
 - a “No Net Loss” policy at the city level to require all affordable units lost through renovation, conversion, or demolition be replaced within the same neighborhood if possible and within the same city at a minimum.
 - preserving existing housing,
 - requiring new construction to have a share be affordable for people with low and moderate incomes (inclusionary zoning)
 - supporting cooperative land and housing arrangements
- **Fund these programs** with a Real Estate Transfer Tax on all commercial and residential property sales above a certain threshold.
- **Advocate for state and federal policy changes to support local anti-displacement efforts.** For example:
 - California state law limits the impact of rent control by reducing the types of housing that can be covered under local rent control policies and enabling rent hikes upon unit vacancy (“vacancy decontrol”).
 - California state law now prohibits Inclusionary zoning policies from being mandatory for new rental housing,

- **Develop methods for assessing a project’s potential displacement impacts and establish associated mitigation fees.**
- **Support community organizing** and involve residents in making the actual decisions that impact the neighborhood

The Just Cause :: Causa Justa report provides many ideas for activists and policy makers. Let's hope Oakland and Berkeley can put these into effect.



Club Endorsements and Election Results

This table lists the 38 races on the November 2014 ballot in which the JGDC offered recommendations. It also shows that the electorate voted consistent with the JGDC endorsement in most (82%) of the races and disagreed in only seven (18%). Races for which we did not take a position are omitted for simplicity (60% of the Club vote is required for endorsement.)

	Results	Same as JGDC Position?
<u>California State</u>		
State Assembly 15 th District: Tony Thurmond	Won	✓
State Assembly 18 th District: Rob Bonta	Won	✓
Proposition 2: State Rainy Day Fund- Budget Reserves <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Proposition 45: Health Insurance Rate Changes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Lost	X
Proposition 46: Medical Malpractice Lawsuits Cap and Alcohol/Drug Testing of Doctors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Lost	✓
Proposition 47: Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Proposition 48: Indian Gaming Compacts Referendum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Lost	✓
<u>Alameda County</u>		
Superintendent of Schools: Karen Monroe	Won	✓
Measure BB: Transportation Sales Tax <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
<u>Special Districts</u>		
AC Transit At-Large: Dolleen Jones (winner - Joel Young)	Lost	X
BART District 4: Lena Tam (winner - Robert Raburn)	Lost	X
EBMUD Ward 3: Katie Foulkes (winner - Marguerite Young)	Lost	X
Peralta Community College District Area 5: Bill Riley	Won	✓
<u>City of Berkeley</u>		
Auditor: Ann-Marie Hogan	Won	✓
Council District 1: Alejandro Soto-Vigil (winner: Linda Maio)	Lost	X
Council District 4: Jesse Arreguin	Won	✓
Council District 7: Kriss Worthington	Won	✓
Council District 8: Lori Droste	Won	✓
Rent Stabilization Board: James Chang	Won	✓
Rent Stabilization Board: Paola Laverde-Levine (Additional winners: Catherine Harr, Jesse Townley, John Selawsky)	Won	✓
School Board: Karen Hemphill	Won	✓

(Additional winners: Ty Alper and Josh Daniels)

Measure D: Soda Tax <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure F: Parks Tax <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure O: Conforming Election Rules <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure P: Overturn Citizens United Decision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure Q: Right to Part-Time Work <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure R: Change Downtown Zoning Rules <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Lost	X
Measure S: Berkeley City Council Redistricting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Won	X

City of Oakland

Auditor: Brenda Roberts	Won	✓
Council District 4: Anne Campbell Washington	Won	✓
School Board District 2: Aimee Eng	Won	✓
School Board District 6: Shanthi Gonzales	Won	✓
Measure N: OUSD College/Career Readiness Fund Parcel Tax <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure Z: Continue Measure Y Parcel Tax & Parking Tax <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure CC: Ethics Commission Authority Charter Amendment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure DD: Council & School District Redistricting Commission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure EE: Terminate Oakland Municipal Retirement System <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓
Measure FF: Oakland Minimum Wage Increase <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	Won	✓

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

Tel: (D) _____ (E) _____

Email: _____

Enclosed are my dues for:

____ \$40 (Reg)

____ \$10 (Low Income)

____ \$50 (Sustaining)

____ \$100(Sponsor)

Please make checks payable to John George Democratic Club and mail to P.O. 18802 Oakland, 94619. Contact: 510-436-7682, email: igdc@igc.org, web: www.igdc.org

<p>John George Democratic Club STEERING COMMITTEE OFFICERS Co-chairs – Walter Riley and Sandra Johnson-Simon (acting) Recorder/Newsletter Editor - Jack Lucero Fleck Treasurer – Phyllis White Ayanruoh Parliamentarian - Robert Raich COMMITTEE CHAIRS Political Action - vacant Program & Ed. - Laurie Soman, Membership – Sandra Johnson Simon</p>
