

***“TAKE THE CITY BY STORM,  
AND THE DEVELOPERS  
BY THE THROAT!”***

# EASTWEST

*FROM THE CITY TO THE TOWN*



## OUT PAST DARK

***THE STATE RESPONDS TO REVOLT  
WITH CURFEW AND SURVEILLANCE***

JAMES TRACY ON  
FIGHTING EVICTIONS

WATER FOR THE RICH,  
HIKES FOR THE POOR

WILL THE WEED BUBBLE  
BE WORSE THAN TECH?

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# OUT PAST DARK

## THE STATE RESPONDS TO REVOLT WITH CURFEWS AND SURVEILLANCE

The new Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf has drawn scorn from liberals and civil-libertarians for her implementation of a “protest curfew” in Downtown Oakland. The curfew comes after the mayor bowed to pressure from Downtown businesses and developers after several months of riots. But the curfew is only part of a new wave of repression: from more FBI agents coming to town, the continuation of the Domain Awareness Center (DAC), to the increasing policing of everyday life. While those on the “Right” howl for blood as young people continue to take the streets in the face of evictions, low-paying jobs, and continued racist police terror, those on the “Left” are just as quick to divide the “good protesters” from “the bad ones.”

### The Fires of November

As the autumn of 2014 went on, the reign of social peace went generally unbroken in the streets of Oakland. Social peace is not an actual peace. Social peace is everything happening the way its supposed to, according to the logic of capital and white supremacy. But as November came, tension began to fill the air. A grand jury had been convened in Missouri to decide whether or not to indict Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson for the murder of Mike Brown. No one knew when the decision would be announced, but everyone knew that something would happen when it did. As the days passed, flyers were passed out, stickers placed on every street pole, posters wheatpasted to walls and benches, murmurs shared between friends and acquaintances: everyone knew where to be when it happened.

And when it did, it certainly lived up to people’s expectations: thousands converged in downtown, blocking highways, attacking banks, looting a grocery store, and fighting with the police. And people instinctively expected to return the next night, and the next, and so on. Some people utilized social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to spread the word of where people would meet the next day (if it changed) and provide live updates to those joining after things got moving.

The reliance on social media as a tool of outreach has been emphasized since at least the Arab Spring in 2011, if not earlier. And during moments of revolt like the one experienced

the Bay Area in November, 2014, it can certainly be a powerful tool of spreading information quickly when there is no time to print and circulate propaganda.

Fast forward a few months, in the last week of April, when lots of plans had been announced for May 1st, International Workers Day. But only days before, an image began circulation on Instagram advertising a night demonstration in solidarity with Baltimore. In fifteen minutes, it had been shared just as many times, which only multiplied as days passed. And we all know the end result: several hundred took the streets, ending the night with demolished banks and luxury car dealerships, and a long trail of graffiti.



### FBI to Work with OPD

Just weeks afterwards, it was quietly announced that the FBI would be seeking to establish a joint workspace in OPD’s headquarters on 7th St. This workspace would involve installing new computers and DSL cables, which includes access to the FBI’s intranet, and advanced encryption capabilities. The creation of the workspace

is pitched as part of the Safe Streets initiative, a campaign that has seen the FBI team up with local officers in raids across the East Bay for the past few years, all in the name of fighting violent crime. However, in this particular project, the FBI will be bringing their social network analysis skills to track people they might deem to be threats.

Many people have previously denounced the participation of large tech companies like Facebook, Google, or Yahoo in the facilitation of displacement and development, but this usually focuses on their employees entering the housing market of particular neighborhoods. On the other hand, as more and more people connect themselves to social media, often owned by these same companies (Instagram is owned by Facebook, YouTube by Google, Tumblr by Yahoo, etc.) it allows law enforcement to carry out policing operations far more easily, which also paves the way for the gentrification that we see all around us in the Bay Area. Not only does your Facebook friend list represent a catalog of your connections, there are algorithms in place to figure out who you interact with most often and who you are merely acquaintances with. Google has integrated email, file-sharing,

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this is a libertarian experiment, a dabbling in free market capitalist ideology. For us, this is our lives, our way to make money, our medicine, our passion, and our calling. We do this work at great personal risk, for which they’d like to compensate us very little, until they can take it away altogether, at no great risk to themselves.

The nature of this fight around legalization of cannabis in California portends a larger dialogue and looming conflict that we as individuals must reckon with. We must never fall prey to the logic of laws and governments, the legal and the illegal, the dichotic othering that is essential to maintaining this fascist prison society we live in. We do not need the poison of something like heroin in our community, but we also do not need the policing of those who would fall prey to it. While certainly understandable, the direct action that groups like the Black Liberation Army (BLA) and others took in the 1970’s against such people ultimately lacks complexity, because the cartels and the state simply view those they ensnare in their capitalist drug game as disposable and replaceable pawns.

There should be no war on those in our own communities who have fallen prey to their machinations, instead we must do everything in our power to fight the root cause of all our problems. Our lives do not exist or quantify in some binary, discrete opposition as the technocrats of Silicon Valley would have you believe. The only way forward for us is to make neither choice; there is no legal framework that could ever properly deal with the extreme nuance and intricacies of human biochemistry. All substances must be examined individually for their effects and roles in shaping preexisting experience, or creating new ones entirely. Capitalism as an oppressive control system warps our ability to do this clearly, honestly or accurately, to say the least.

Illegality instead of legalization means to reject any and all attempts to bring drugs, no matter what their utility, into this capitalist market place of violence, wage-slavery, gentrification, exploitation and control. It asks us to instead to make an effort to function within the fluidity of the situation and do our damndest to keep the things that seem healthy and nurturing to us out of the hands of those who think everything has a price. The legal dispensary and the corner dealer are two sides of the same racist



system that endlessly perpetuates militarized hierarchy. Every drug could be legalized tomorrow and it wouldn’t matter, we would still be under the same terrible police state with a prison and military industrial complex waging war against the planet to feed itself. If anything, we can expect the softening of more drug laws in the near future as a way of softening the reality of every-day life through liberal reforms.

Engaging with or promoting legalization is a form of surrender, a trap. If there is one thing we should know by now, it’s that as something is brought into the realm of the legally acceptable, the capitalist state must and will attempt to create new excluded illegal groups and classes. We don’t play this game. There is no legal or illegal, and we should never let our enemies define the terms of our survival as they have in this particular debate. Even if it still requires some interface with capital, better our communities do what they can where they can to remain as autonomous as possible, and grow. Only then can we finally remove the barriers that mediate our ability to determine how we will use or not use this strange, terrible and beautiful chemistry we find ourselves awash in.

**PICK UP EASTWEST AT:**  
MODERN TIMES (SF)  
2919 24TH STREET  
QILOMBO (OAKLAND)  
2313 SAN PABLO AVE  
OMNI COMMONS (OAKLAND)  
4799 SHATTUCK AVE  
BOUND TOGETHER BOOKS (SF)  
1369 HAIGHT STREET  
LONG HAUL INFOSHOP (BERKELEY)  
3124 SHATTUCK AVE

between weed and tech in the Bay Area that goes beyond broad capitalist principles. A class of largely white, wealthy male libertarians dominate both sectors. Insulated from any serious risk, they treat California like a colony for their business experiments. In much the same way that Silicon Valley seeks to commodify our every day lived experience and then sell it back to us as “information,” the players in high tech legal weed want to take an organism that has had a symbiotic relationship with humans for thousands of years, sever our ties to it, and sell it back in discrete chunks on an industrial scale.

Because many have now banked on the assumption of inevitable legalization, money is flooding into companies that literally don't function. Built on flashy branding, often catering to psychedelic or “conscious” tastes, actual product quality and even availability, often seem like an afterthought. We see the promotion of a “celebrity stoner” culture, from Snoop Dogg investing in a cannabis delivery app, to dispensaries selling wax branded and endorsed by porn stars. As the money rolls in the price a grower can expect per pound has plummeted.

Cannabis companies admit that rapid growth has caused instability, but call it inevitable, even healthy. They claim over abundant supply from green rushing gardeners has caused the flux and that the market will level itself out. We contest their weak economic defenses: a surplus of weed has not been the force causing wholesale prices to drop. The companies purchasing pounds, for eventual retail sale as flowers, hash, or edibles, have collectively set the going rates. The underground industry has been forced to fall in line, producing more lower quality product in order to stay afloat. This disruption is happening from the top down, not the bottom up, and when an industry claims endless growth, there is no hope it will “level itself out.” So much noise has been made, and there has been so much spectacle, that the on the ground reality has been lost in the process.

What will legalization mean to those working in the legal weed industry? To those who adapt from the community approach into the new model, and to those who replace the underground producers? Talk to any dispensary worker and they will tell you about the massive gap between the holistic image the industry promotes and what occurs behind the scenes. Many have worked on the black market and now have a “legitimate” job with a legal cannabis business will also tell you only one thing matters to the industry: money. And, just like in any business, the bosses have one goal: getting the cost of labor as low as possible. This means that the new, glorious legalization liberals promote is actually just replicating all of the problems that

already exist in the service and agricultural industries.

Beyond labor abuses, other corners get cut when the biggest concern is the bottom line. Medical cannabis companies frequently cover up dangerous mold contamination, and doctor or omit lab safety and potency testing. In the push to lower production costs, numerous grow and extract (hash) facilities are built in ecologically destructive and dangerous ways, and often in economically vulnerable communities. Many urban cannabis companies place their production facilities in remote rural areas of the state to keep worker wages far below the averages seen in urban environments. This is especially striking in the face of local and national campaigns around raising wages like Fight For 15, as many in the cannabis industry in California have traditionally made significantly more per hour than those in most working-class jobs. Legalization will act as an axe that large corporations will use to cut down the wages of those working in the weed industry.

Production of cannabis requires specialized skills, training and experience, but the cannabis business class pushes a mentality that little knowledge is required. Business owners downplay the level of skill and knowledge their employees need to do their jobs as a trick to keep base wages low. The ensuing workplace dysfunctionality allows employers to keep each employee relationship in a precarious position. When employees are frequently blamed for company problems bosses give very few wage increases, both because workplace problems are used as an excuse to deny raises, and because employee turn over remains high. Colonizing industrialists force ill fitting models from other cannibalized crops and marketplaces onto production and distribution alike. They refuse to adopt practices and cultures that have been developed by the cannabis community, rejecting a rich knowledge base. By devaluing the knowledge and qualifications of cannabis workers, and installing their own “authority” canna-business is set to superimpose an unfortunately familiar artifice of efficiency and low cost labor. The push is clearly being made by industry leaders to drive wages much lower than they already are, and in this race to the bottom, everyone loses.

State level legalization guarantees that California will continue to have constant, unpredictable problems with federal and state law enforcement. This precarious, uncertain situation for those who chose to work with cannabis is either downplayed, ignored, or outright lied about, often by both so-called “industry leaders” and “activists.” The truth is that all the growth could be washed away at any second and the last people to be in harm's way from legal action or financial ruin would be the cannabis business class fighting for legalization in California. For them,

internet searches, in addition to an entire web browser, to say nothing of YouTube or its other assets. Put simply: while certainly OPD had dedicated some personnel to social networking beforehand, this will bolster their ability to track people in an age where we make it so easy for them to do so.

### The DAC That Wouldn't Die

In Spring 2014, hundreds rallied against the expansion of the Domain Awareness Center, which aimed to centralize the city's surveillance infrastructure in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security. While a number of disruptions, both inside City Hall chambers as well as in the streets, prevented most of this expansion, the DAC remains in operation at the Port of Oakland as well as connecting the city's highway cameras. One year later, certain privacy activists have collaborated with the city in order to create a privacy policy, which is being voted on at the same time as this FBI buildout. This privacy policy will massage the consciousness of citizens while the DAC remains in operation and expands in the future.

While the DAC was billed as an anti-terrorism project, officials repeatedly stated their intention to use it against demonstrations. And while the so-called privacy policy is supposed to prevent peaceful protests from being monitored, demonstrations that disrupt the flows of capital will still fall under the jurisdiction of the DAC, assuming it follows its own rules. It would be predictable that the new joint workspace with the FBI will follow the same trajectory: presented as a crack-down on violent crime, it can just as easily be utilized against those

rebelling in the streets. In fact, the FBI has used such pretenses to surveil revolts as far back as 2009 after Oscar Grant was shot, and again during the Occupy movement. More recently, this past winter, law enforcement operated out of fusion centers (centers for the collaboration between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies) to monitor and repress Black Lives Matter actions. This was primarily done through social media.

As with the Domain Awareness Center, activists and other concerned citizens will likely protest the use of this new workspace against what would be considered lawful first amendment activities. But all this serves to do is provide further legitimacy for using it against unlawful activities, which is the core of any rebellion. Even against violent crimes like homicides—which we surely wish to stop—it will only funnel more people into the prison industrial complex. In short, more state repression won't solve the social ills brought on by a racist, capitalist society.

Opposition to the latest developments of repression can be as varied as the repression itself, but we would like to offer

some simple remedies. In a world that is increasingly engulfed by the digital realm, and as law enforcement increasingly relies on that, we should be working to break away from social media. Actions and demonstrations should not be organized through the internet, in fact we should be very careful using social media at all if we don't wish to do away with it all together. Ultimately, our project is the destruction of the social order: the death of capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and the state. The social order is sure to resist this project, let us not make it easy.

### Always Reforming, Never Reformed

On Thursday, May 21st, police pushed a Black Lives Matter demonstration at 14th and Broadway onto the sidewalk and threatened participants with arrest. After being moved onto the sidewalk, the march continued toward the Oakland Police Department and then returned to the plaza. The next day, the Mayor's Office released documents that showed that a nighttime protest curfew on demonstrations was in effect. The East Bay Express wrote: “*In an interview today, Mayor Libby Schaaf*

*acknowledged that she ordered the prohibition on nighttime street marches in Oakland. However, she argued that it was a not new city law, but rather a reinterpretation of an existing one.... Under the mayor's new tactic, OPD will block demonstrators from marching in the streets after dark, and marchers will only be allowed on sidewalks.*” According to an article in the San Francisco Chronicle, the push for restricting street demonstrations came from large downtown Oakland businesses, which were angry

after rioters attacked property on May Day as night fell. For the rich, the halls of power were always open. For the poor, angry over foreclosures, failing schools, polluted air and water, low paying jobs, and a brutal police force: “**let them eat cake.**”

Liberals declared the move illegal, including Rachel Lederman, who helped write Oakland's current ordinances on crowd control, which was drafted in the wake of violent attacks by police on anti-war picketers at the Port of Oakland. The assault led to protesters and Longshore union members being hospitalized after being shot with projectiles. In the fallout, the city agreed to have a more hands off approach when it came to policing demonstrations and were not allowed to use projectile weapons against protesters. However, time and time again, Oakland police have unsurprisingly broken these rules, such as during protests after the police murder of Oscar Grant and during the Occupy movement. Lawsuits from these arrests and brutality cases have resulted in tens of millions in payouts.

In October 2011, an Iraq war veteran Scott Olsen was shot and almost killed by a tear-gas canister during a protest



against the police raid of Occupy Oakland (which in itself was bolstered by attacks through the media). The attack helped push for the massive general strike in Oakland on November 2nd, 2011, while Oakland police continued to draw criticism for their heavy handed response to large demonstrations. Only several months later, Oakland police arrested hundreds of people in the Downtown, as a large crowd attempted to take over an abandoned building. The resulting lawsuits cost the city millions. Over the next two years, the city also attempted to push for a youth curfew on the streets of Oakland as well as ban on transit strikes. At the same time, California Highway Patrol (CHP) took a much more active role in pursuing suspects, leading to high-speed chases and numerous police killings. The times may have changed, but the brutal tactics used by OPD over the years remained the same – as repression only grew and proliferated throughout the Town.

As the Ferguson inspired revolt in the Bay Area took off, Oakland police drew accolades from the East Bay Express for their “reserved nature” and “restraint” during the riots. At the same time, the Express condemned the Berkeley police for their heavy handed attacks on students as the riots spread out of Oakland. In the eyes of the mainstream and “progressive” media, the Oakland police had become a reformed department, able to handle protests and rowdy crowds with extreme restraint.

This narrative is as laughable as it is sad. When the riots started, Oakland police called in mutual aid. In November and December 2014, it was now out of town pigs shooting projectile weapons (a tactic generally used to clear intersections and drive people off the street) instead of Oakland cops, while CHP officers were seen sniping at people from freeway on-ramps with rubber bullets. Repression and police violence was outsourced; to Hayward, Pleasanton, Alameda, to various CHP units, and beyond. Nothing had changed, while the media sang the praises of the cops in hopes of dampening the fires of the uprisings.

This coordination, which has been documented to have taken place along with help from the FBI, (who was closely monitoring the protests across the US), allowed the Oakland Police to look calm when in reality the government was using its vast resources to drive off the streets thousands of young people. Also, while the media drew attention to police in Berkeley, in reality, during the first night of the riots spreading to near the UC campus, there were just as many Oakland police out on the streets (if not more) than Berkeley officers. The continuing liberal view of the police as an “institution of the people” beholden to the public and subject to accountability is a complete and total fallacy. Oakland police tactics and formations may change, but in the end, the goal is the same: repression by any means necessary.



**Protest Curfew**

According to the Mayor, the protest curfew is an attempt to stop “violence” and “vandalism.” While these buzzwords often attract the sympathies of people flipping on the nightly news for 5 minutes, in reality the crackdown has nothing to do with ending any sort of violence, (that of racist police, prisons, evictions, homelessness, poverty, and displacement), but everything to do with making Oakland safe for development. After months of massive riots, freeway shutdowns, school walkouts, looting of stores, attacks on banks, and demonstrations that shut down everything for hours – corporations that are looking to make billions in Oakland are putting pressure on those in power to reign in those on the streets. The government also sees the waves of black and brown youth on the streets, along with those of various racial backgrounds, and grows afraid.

The protest curfew has not been at all popular; and has been met with numerous protests and more are planned. But after the first night of marching, police had changed their strategy. They now simply marched with those in the street; a “mobile kettle,” as some called it. Police also deployed the use of CS gas in an attempt to clear demonstrators. Through loud speakers the police proclaimed that as long as people were “non-violent” (as they in turn used violence against them) they could stay in the street. In the end, all of these actions attempt to pacify people in the streets, turn demonstrations into simple parades that contain and manage anger, and moreover, divide the “good” protesters from the “bad” ones.

In many ways, the crackdown against the Black Lives Matter protests in Oakland are similar to the crack-down against the Occupy movement – in that it is being coordinated with the help of the FBI and Homeland Security. For instance, the national “sweeping of the camps” was organized by DHS and the Obama Administration, and coordinated through the FBI and local law enforcement. We can be sure that similar strategies are being employed now as well. These networks of repression are also nothing new. In the past months, it has also come forward that police and FBI worked closely during the initial wave of protests following the murder of Oscar Grant. Similar documents have also shown a similar situation during the Occupy movement, with FBI and local police using a network of informants.

The move to enact the curfew also mirrors attempts made by other cities to clamp down on unrest, such as Ferguson and Baltimore, who have also brought in National Guard troops to try and contain those taking the streets. Liberals see the curfew as only a “bad law” that is illegal; in reality it is part of a nationwide crackdown against all potential insurgency against the State.

This crackdown in Oakland is also not limited to the protest curfew, but also into other aspects of everyday life. From

heightened gentrification and lower wages for those who currently work in the cannabis industry.

Things were not always this way. While there is currently a growing cannabis industry ranging from dispensaries to hydroponic stores, in the 60s, an outlaw and illegalist community began to grow out of the mass rejection of the dominant culture. Some involved in this were anarchists, but many rejected all labels and sought simply to find a way out of the darkness of a suicidal industrial civilization. Northern California, and the counties of Humboldt, Mendocino, and Trinity (collectively sometimes called the ‘Emerald Triangle’) specifically emerged as a powerful vortex of weed production.

A fierce mixture of independent, survivalist, militant, ecological, and anarchist minded politics grew into being by the 1980s. The people of this community were able to live off the grid and develop alternative life freely through the farming of cannabis on a massive scale, often with deep reverence for the environment and little or no violence or exploitation occurring. Resources and labor were pooled and shared, which was especially vital in such a remote region. Disputes and issue of security were addressed often without law enforcement involvement; when the cannabis farming itself was targeted, the community would band together to protect its own.

These pot communities have always been under attack, but the newest and most insidious form of assault comes in the guise of full legalization. The legalization movement has built steam since the “success” of California’s medical cannabis laws. Medical cannabis has largely become a smokescreen for the same capitalist forces pushing for full recreational availability, but many of the largest potential industrial interests are playing it safe under the medical system. Currently, most dispensaries operate as “nonprofits” and “patient collectives.” While these entities make plenty of money, large corporations are hungry for more economic freedom and legal protection. Entire sections of the state are in the position of having not just a trade, but a way of life, a calling, and a culture ripped from them so that venture capitalists can safely invest in a legal, government protected commodity.

Some are calling it a “green rush,” and there is truth

in the phrase, as capitalist forces rush to buy up property in areas that seem ripe to reap the benefits of legalization. If one wants to imagine what the impact would be in major California cities, one can look to areas of Denver which are currently a flood in weed money. As one article on VICE wrote:

*...Denver’s pot gold rush started drawing countless “ganjapreneurs” to the area: marijuana businesses hoping to cash in on Colorado’s legalization of weed and Denver’s friendliness to housing pot growers and retail dispensaries.*

*“Our building was being sold in order to build a luxury apartment complex,” P&L [anarchist print shop] co-owner David Strano told VICE News. “The new owner gave us a time frame of when to move. With the commercial real estate situation, it started this epic quest to find a new location we could afford.”*

*The Jefferson Park warehouse building that was home to P&L for three decades first went on the market in 2008 for about \$1 million, with almost no offers. Last year, it sold for \$3.8 million.*

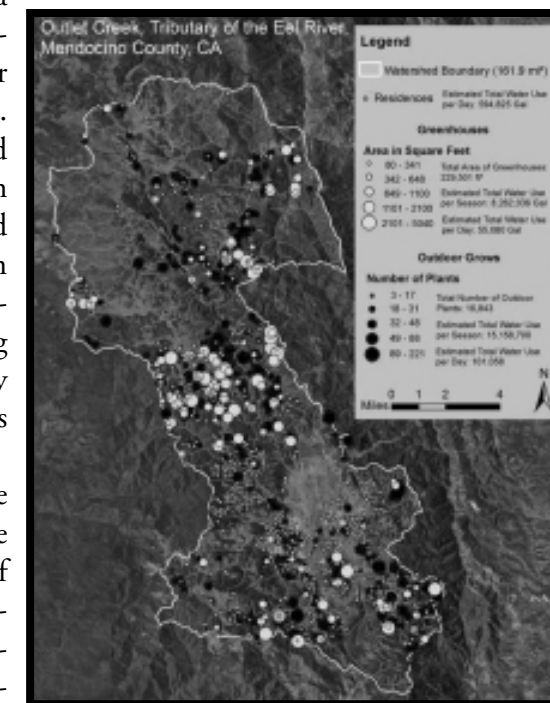
*Across from P&L’s new location in northeast Denver is a marijuana grow operation, and downstairs there’s a grow supply store that sells hydroponic equipment and lighting.*

*As cannabis legalization is poised to spread to other cities, governments are looking to Colorado as the model for successful policy. A Brookings Institution report on the legalization rollout found that the state’s “early implementation efforts have been impressive.”*

*Denver is booming — that is, depending on who you ask.*

What is happening in Denver is much like what is happening in the Bay Area with the rapidly growing tech industry. If and when cannabis becomes legalized at the state level, our already gentrifying cities will have no choice but to make space as weed companies buy up warehouses and industrial space in order to cash in on a booming growth market. Investors who have previously been hesitant because of limited markets and legal ambiguity are busy creating a new culture of industrial confidence around California legalization. In this reality, the reigning cannabis industry pushes a vision of endless growth that can also be seen in the tech industry, and is mirrored throughout industrial capitalism.

There is cultural overlap and functional similarity



# WILL THE WEED BUBBLE BE WORSE THAN TECH?

by some guerrilla growers

The war waged on the American populace by the ultra rich has many facets, but few perhaps as notorious and widely known as “the war on drugs.” The racist and anti-working-class nature of this campaign has spread to every corner of American society. The current prison gulags are filled with people of color, so-called “immigrants,” LGBTQ individuals, the poor, and many others. Out of these millions, a huge number have been locked up through the use of selectively enforced federal and state drug laws. It has also been repeatedly documented that the military, several intelligence agencies, and local police departments fuel the prison industrial complex intentionally by assisting in or outright distributing drugs themselves. The recent film “Kill The Messenger,” documents these activities as brought to light by pioneering journalist Gary Webb. Webb exposed how the CIA was funneling drugs into black communities as a means to pay for their proxy war against Communist guerrillas in Nicaragua. Examples continue to be found in the numerous CIA connections to Mexican drug cartels and reports of military units protecting opium crops in Afghanistan. Our government is perfectly willing to play both sides against the middle for their own ends. All this is undertaken to further their powerful role in American society, and to fund their operations and apparatus of control.

Historically, the drugs used as “fund-raisers” by the US government are the most profitable, easiest to smuggle, and most importantly, produce psychological effects desirable to a society like the United States. Stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine produce the sharp, aggressive, atomizing “focus” that militaries have found useful since at least the late 19th century. Agents like Heroin,

related natural/synthetic opioids and so many other sedatives numb the mind to the psychological horrors of the violence that daily life in a capitalist society requires. One only needs to walk the streets of any Bay Area city to see the devastating effects these substances have on already dire situations for so many people.

It is easy to moralize and point the finger at the corner dealer, but much like any wage-slave, they are simply the tip of a massive iceberg that is gaining power and profiting from forcing the poor into conflict with each other and cannibalizing their own communities. Follow the hierarchy upwards and you quickly and easily find an interlocking network of international drug cartels, American and European banks, and American military operations. In the

face of such power, it may seem logical that decriminalization or legalization of any popular recreational substance would be a step forward, potentially even putting a dent in the State’s war on poor communities.

We completely disagree. People have to think beyond the legal/illegal framing of liberal, statist discourse and move towards building an independent understanding of the ways these substances effect and move through our communities. The biggest and perhaps most obvious example of the failure of liberal and mainstream drug war critiques can be seen currently

in the drive to legalize recreational pot in California.

All across the state but particularly in the north, there is a drive to normalize and prepare the “pot industry” for full state level recreational legalization in a manner similar to Colorado. An often quoted trade motto is “out of the shadows and into the light,” implying a cohesive industry which seeks legitimacy. This couldn’t be further from the truth. In reality, California business interests wish to create another marketplace under their control. Venture capital groups with investors ranging from fast food to industrial agriculture are anxiously awaiting the moment when our (already capitalist) medical cannabis system transitions into a legal system they can corporatize. In doing so, in the Bay Area will follow places like Denver, CO, on a path to



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bans on BBQs at Lake Merritt to the police checking of IDs and bags at City Council meetings in the wake of protests against gentrification that shut down the proceedings, the city is attempting to control and monitor crowds of people in as many ways as possible. Several days before the #SayHerName protests in Oakland in which the protest curfew was unveiled, a massive police build up was seen around 14th and Broadway on Malcolm X’s birthday. Circling a vacant plaza was undercover cars, police vans, and motorcycle cops. We believe that due to police receiving old reports of planned marches in the Downtown, they were in fact ready to start the curfew then and there – just no one showed up. It appears, that such a plan had been in the works some time.

## The Protest of Politics

Before the curfew was in effect, right-wing columnists in the San Francisco Chronicle were calling for bans on night-time protests. This was the voice of the rich; those that owned property and who wanted the poor and the rabble to return to their slums and be driven off of the streets. After the curfew was passed however, Robert Gammon, editor and chief of the East Bay Express, decried the curfew as an attack on the free speech and assembly against the people of Oakland. However, Gammon went on to make one key point: “In this case, Schaaf’s ban is designed to stop acts of vandalism perpetrated by small groups during large protests at night in Oakland. But the problem is:

The protest ban — like curfews, stop-and-frisk, and surveillance — also tramples on the civil rights of far more people than it targets.” Gammon goes on to further pin-point who “the target” is. In The Politics of Protests, Gammon writes, “[I]n Oakland, at least, much of the vandalism in the past several years has been perpetrated by white so-called anarchists who are in no way victims of oppression.” Those taking militant action in the street have been black, brown, white, Asian, and a collection of other identities. Gammon seeks to play on racial tensions and fear of the revolutionary anarchist as a way to further his politics. One thing is clear: he wants to stop people – especially black and brown people – from taking militant action in the Bay Area.

For liberals like Gammon, the curfew went too far; but only because it appeared to trample the ‘democratic rights’ of everyday Americans. But for Gammon, the target of repression is the same as those on the right and in the government: they want to smash everyone who is causing disruption in the streets.



Gammon tries to obscure the dialog by labeling all of these people “white anarchists,” which falls in line with what is being said by cops and non-profits. What is most ironic about all of Gammon’s comments is that ultimately those most susceptible to this line of thinking are upper-middle class white liberals themselves. Anyone that has been on the streets during the riots knows that those fighting the police, looting corporate stores, and blocking freeways have been a diverse group of largely young people. Whether liberal commentators like Gammon realize this is beside the point; his goal is to drive a wedge in the resistance; to defang the revolt and remove people from the streets. Gammon, and others like him believe that there are structural problems within capitalism, but that the system itself should be saved and the angry mobs be moved from the streets into the voting booth.

We completely disagree. The political, economic, and ecological contradictions in this system are so huge; we see the only solution is its complete destruction and the creation of a new way life. Across the Bay Area, people are working more hours than ever for less and less money. Meanwhile, the cost of rent and housing continues to go up while wages stagnate. Homelessness rises, public housing is destroyed and privatized, and tens of thousands are driven from their homes. In the streets, police continue to shoot people dead

with impunity, while more people are incarcerated than ever before, and the government tracks our every move through email, surveillance, and cell phones. At the same time, the ecological situation grows worse and worse and propels us all towards disaster. And while these attacks are directed against the poor and the working-class more broadly, people of color by and large are hit the hardest.

In the face of the collapse of capitalist civilization, over the last few years in the Bay Area resistance has been brewing. From occupied universities to blocked freeways, and from massive assemblies in plazas to wildcat strikes and blocked ports. It is not only the riots that those in power want to smash, but also the collective confidence that grows from within a generation of young people who are faced with no future and have begun to get organized and strike back.

# ACTION AND REPRESSION NEWS

**APRIL 25TH:** During the Mac Dre Art Show in Downtown Oakland, police arrived to disperse a crowd that had spilled out into the street. Those in attendance responded with a volley of bottles and set fire to a mattress.

**APRIL 27TH:** About a hundred people march from Downtown to West Oakland and back in solidarity with the Baltimore rebellion. After dark, the windows of the Uptown (a business district created in an attempt to further accelerate gentrification) bar Dogwood are broken.

**APRIL 29TH:** Several undercover OPD officers were shot at in East Oakland.

**APRIL 30TH:** A banner is dropped from a Downtown Oakland skyscraper ahead of the annual May Day demonstration encouraging people to take part in upcoming actions.

**MAY 1ST:** The morning commute of tech workers is disrupted, as a crew of people blockaded Google and other tech shuttles at both MacArthur BART Station and the West Oakland Park & Ride. Later that day, members of the ILWU took the day off from working at the Port, shutting it down completely, and along with about a thousand people marched to City Hall. In the evening, hundreds took the streets in solidarity with Baltimore and attacked banks, the former Sears building (which is scheduled to become a

new center for tech companies), and several car dealerships on Auto Row.

**MAY 2ND:** Native Americans hold a rally in front of Mission Dolores in San Francisco against the Pope's decision to name Junipero Serra a saint. Indigenous people decried the murderous role that the Mission system



played in the genocide of Native peoples. A banner was also dropped from the church.

**MAY 4TH:** A banner is dropped in West Oakland with the words "Oakland to Baltimore, Kill Cops Before They Kill You."

**MAY 5TH:** Several activists chained themselves together at Oakland City Hall and shut down the City Council meeting before they could vote on selling a plot of land on E 12th St. to a developer for luxury condos.

In the Mission, people also stage a similar shut down of City Hall as they push for a building moratorium on luxury housing.

**MAY 8TH:** Around fifty people rallied at Vallejo City Hall against police brutality.

**MAY 14TH:** Activists rally outside the Rotunda building in Oakland against the export of coal through the Oakland Army Base, which was bought by Oakland mega-developer Phil Tagami. If plans go through, coal transport could begin as early as 2017.

**MAY 19TH:** City Hall introduces new security rules for attending City Council meetings, including identification, bag searches, and blocking access to the galleries, as a way to prevent future disruptions. Outside of City Hall, a massive police build up is amassed in fear of demonstrations taking place on Malcolm X's birthday.

**MAY 21ST:** Black Lives Matter ac-

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demonize people who don't agree with you tactically, and to communicate in terms of common goals and strategies. Then it becomes a question of when is it appropriate to do whatever type of action, instead of self-righteously demanding purity from your collaborators.

**FW:** *During resistance to the dot.com boom, groups like MAC often disrupted and shut down meetings by the Planning Commission. In what ways could current struggles use these same tactics, and who would they direct them at?*

**JT:** Current movements are using these same tactics! Over 800 people occupied San Francisco City Hall last month and Eviction Free San Francisco held an eviction blockade. There's a return to the grassroots disruptive politics that is really healthy and positive. As these movements generate electoral initiatives, it's really important to make sure that this form of struggle is not abandoned.

**FW:** *Can you tell us about the organizing that went into the defense of 'Los Siete de la Raza'? Why was this a very important moment in Mission History?*

**JT:** The defense of Los Siete De La Raza (seven men accused of shooting police) furthered the tradition of Latino organizing and resistance in the Mission District. Like many campaigns of that era, it tried to make links between the Third World liberation struggles and local ones. I encourage people who are interested in this to check out the work of Jason Ferreria especially his chapter on this subject in the Ten Years That Shook the City.

**FW:** *In the last two years, we've seen a huge growth of sentiment and action against gentrification and the tech invasion. From blocked Google buses to broken Google glass, and from protests of evictions, to pickets outside of landlord offices – the current struggle has taken many forms. Yet, mass collective action has been small, such as the defense of the Lee's home from the sheriffs evicting it. What forms of self-organized struggle and tactics do you hope people take up in their*



*own communities to stop evictions and defend their homes? How can people come together and act en mass?*

**JT:** The main thing is building up a big enough alliance of people to be effective in the long-term. You need thousands of people to make an impact. But the system literally counts on us to fight each other for crumbs it is one of the key ingredients to their success. This also doesn't mean ignoring the very real ways that displacement is racialized. Real alliance building is the biggest threat. One's decision to vote or not makes zero difference to those who control the economy of your city. What does scare them is those moments where the separated become part of the same team. That's just a historical fact. When Martin Luther King tried to build a multiracial movement against poverty he became a threat.

Outside of this, I think that when movements sacrifice independent action for a 100% electoral strategy they dig their own grave. I have no problem with voting and it's silly to not defend Rent Control or expand housing rights at the ballot box if that's where the particular fight is. But as long as urban movements give up the power of unpredictable direct action, we're done for.

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*whelming of color, through gentrification as housing was snapped up into the hands of several companies. These houses were then flipped and rented out at high rates, only further accelerating gentrification across the Bay. In a city like Vallejo, Oakland, or other places, what strategies do you see as successful that attack against foreclosures?*

**JT:** The foreclosure defense work which incorporated community based direct action was particularly inspiring. Where banks have backed off from foreclosures, it's usually been in large part due to direct action campaigns. Look at the supposed "settlement" between the big banks and the State Attorney Generals: little actual benefit to victims of foreclosures, minimal change in habits from the banks. It's foolish to ignore legal and political realities, but it's even more foolish to get stuck in the illusion that liberal elected officials are going to do the right thing.

That said the foreclosure crisis happened because of the deregulation of the Real Estate industry, under both Republican and Democratic administrations. So part of the solution is re-regulation. But the most effective solution is to take as much housing out of the speculative market altogether and into various models of community ownership such as Community Land Trusts.

**FW:** *You write, "[B]y cutting funding and abolishing the requirement that demolished public housing units be replaced on a one-for-one basis, Congress has effectively given the federal government an exit strategy from the public housing business." Can you explain how this has played out in the Bay Area?*

**JT:** Yes, when public housing was torn down in the 1990s, it was generally rebuilt with far less homes than in the original developments. In Oakland, Chestnut Court on West Grand was one of these places. Layered on top of this was a host of other regulations that made it easier to evict and slash support of local housing authorities. The privatization and abandonment strategy for public housing has taken decades; it wasn't as quick as Margaret Thatcher's assault on Council Housing in the UK. This plays out predictably: a few families land on their feet, most move out into far less secure housing, and some become homeless.

**FW:** *Homes Not Jails (HNJ) used a variety of actions aimed at not only getting people into vacant homes, but also raising awareness to the plight of the homeless. Do you think such actions and groups are still viable today?*

**JT:** Yes, I think they are viable in many cases. Homes Not Jails was most effective when it chose to collaborate in a real way with homeless families and build broad alliances instead of furthering the isolating model of punk-rock squatter culture. When they did this, they were able to be a part of forcing the San Francisco Housing Authority to open up 250 apartments to homeless families. It was a brilliant example of what people can do when they step back and take the time to work out differences in a respectful way.

**FW:** *In the chapter, 'Slow Burn,' you discuss the ways in which victims of large hotel fires used direct action to find housing. Can you talk about what people have done in the past against these fires and what tactics people could possibly be using now?*

**JT:** In this case, the Direct Action Case Work model was so effective. The process was simple: help people traumatized by fire navigate the city's relief system, and then take direct action every few weeks to insist that those who hadn't found permanent housing be given it – or at least an extension on their voucher. It worked as most people found new residential hotels and many returned to their hotels after they were rebuilt.

I think that DACW model is a fantastic way to confront these kinds of crises. When the hotel fires happened, we were convinced that it was arson. However, it was something much worse: the cumulative impact of neglect. The City didn't inspect residential hotels well, or even at the time require sprinklers in the buildings.

**FW:** *Can you talk about the 'Hotel Hollers,' organized by groups like Mission Agenda, and what they tried to accomplish in the 16th and Mission BART plazas?*

**JT:** The intersection of 16th and Mission is a living room for people who do not have living rooms. The Hollers were a way of showing up and encouraging people to speak up about the conditions they were facing, and inviting people to be part of the organizing campaigns. They were always fun. People started writing in advance what they would say at the next holler, singing songs, doing skits about bedbugs and rats.

This is exactly the site where a luxury developer wants to build the "Monster in the Mission" today. It's fascinating how the developer has been pretty brazen about selling his project not on the housing aspects but that he would "Clean Up the Plaza." That's not a code word: it is a declaration in intent on his part.

**FW:** *In the 2000s, there were calls for moratoriums on the building of luxury housing such as there are now. Why did such an effort fail the first time around? In what ways can people be victorious now?*

**JT:** Moratoriums are tricky as State law really curtails what can be done with them, so there's not a lot of political appetite on the part of policy makers for them. Basically, I see moratoriums best used as a delay tactic, to slow down the cannibalization of a neighborhood while other strategies are developed.

**FW:** *When you discuss the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition, you talk about how the push towards more disruptive actions (occupation of offices, going to landlord's homes) often caused splits in the group. In what ways were people able to get over these tactical divisions?*

**JT:** We dealt with those divisions through some terribly long meetings! Basically, we came up with strategies that allowed for many different forms of participation. It requires one to not

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tivists stage a topless demonstration that disrupts traffic on Market St in San Francisco. Later in the evening, a demonstration in solidarity with Black women killed by the police is attacked by cops who declare that nighttime protests are no longer allowed without a permit.

**MAY 23RD:** Several dozen protesters march against the "protest curfew." The police stop the march near Jack London square where they release CS gas and arrest several marchers.

**MAY 24TH:** Protests continue against the curfew and grow larger.

**MAY 30TH:** Occupy the Farm activists held demonstrations at two different Sprouts locations, one in Fremont, the other in Mountain View, against the construction of a new Sprouts store on the Gill Tract farmland

**JUNE 2ND:** The San Francisco City Council voted down a temporary moratorium on luxury housing. The Oakland City Council approved a new joint workspace for the FBI & OPD.

**JUNE 3RD:** An early morning fire in the Mission displaces five tenants from their home.

**JUNE 5TH:** Protesters march through First Friday against protest curfew. Massive police presence.

**JUNE 7TH:** Oakland police kill 30 year old, Demouria Hogg, who was asleep in his car near Lake Merritt. Police used bean bags to break out Hogg's windows, then shot Hogg when he was non-responsive. We-Copwatch.org has more info.

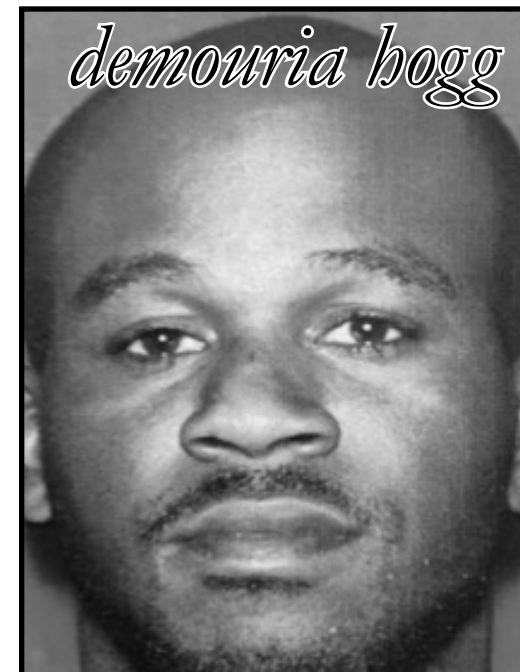
**JUNE 8TH:** A video is leaked of Salinas police savagely beating a Latino

man in the street. Protests soon followed.

**JUNE 8TH:** Tensions grow between UC Berkeley and those at People's Park, as the UC continues to cut trees and sought to deny people the ability to work on the stage.

**JUNE 10TH:** Close to 75 people rallied throughout the early morning, holding banners and gave speeches against eviction of disabled woman by Google lawyer Jack Halprin. Sheriffs did not arrive. A month later, Halprin dies of cancer.

**JUNE 10TH:** People marched through the streets of Downtown



Oakland to protest the curfew imposed by Mayor. Over 100 people marched from 14th and Broadway to Lake Merritt and back, blocking buses and traffic and holding banners.

**JUNE 11TH:** A billboard is repainted in Oakland in solidarity with the June 11th Day of Action with long-term anarchist prisoners.

**JUNE 13TH:** Several hundred peo-

ple take over an intersection near Lake Merritt where Demouria Hogg was killed by OPD. By nightfall the group became mobile and marched throughout the downtown.

**JUNE 16TH:** Warriors victory celebrations spill into streets of downtown. Police largely hands off but when sideshows and rioting break out in East Oakland, respond with helicopters and riot cops.

**JUNE 17TH:** The Oakland City Council gives the green light to a luxury condo project near Lake Merritt near East 12th Street. The project has been highly controversial, with residents mobilizing to condemn the plan. Past protests have shut down City Council meetings.

**JUNE 23RD:** Residents rally in San Francisco neighborhood of Bernal-Hill against eviction.

**JUNE 27TH:** People rally and march in Richmond against the police murder of "Pedie" Perez.

**JUNE 27TH:** Dyke march takes to street during pride. Standoff with cops takes place in the evening.

**JUNE 28TH:** Rally in San Francisco against eviction by Fergus O'Sullivan at open house.

**JUNE 30TH:** Redwood City residents rally against mass eviction.

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# DISPLACEMENT AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF MASS ACTION:

*an interview with author James Tracy*

While the blockading of Google buses and riots against the police have grabbed headlines in San Francisco, action and organizing against displacement and evictions is nothing new. Wanting to know more about this history and how current Bay Area residents can learn from it, we sat down with James Tracy, author of the new book, 'Dispatches Against Displacement,' published by AK Press in Oakland. Tracy, a Bay Area native, was active in a variety of groups including the Eviction Defense Network and the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC).

**FW:** In your book, *Dispatches Against Displacement*, you talk about your involvement in the group, *Eviction Defense Network*, (EDN). Can you give us a brief introduction on how you came to become involved in such a group and what it did?

**JT:** The EDN went through several stages in its nine year life. I was a co-founder, along with people who had some previous activism experience in a broad range of causes and organizations. The first meeting in late 1992 drew over sixty people. Ironically, I didn't make it to that founding meeting because I was in jail after been scooped up by the cops at a Food Not Bombs feeding. We used what would later become known as Direct Action Case Work. We would help people learn and exercise their legal rights, then take direct action against their landlord when the legal rights were exhausted. We also worked with a great network of movement lawyers who would use us to put pressure on landlords just before cases went to trial.

Later on, when former Black Panther Party member Malik Rahim [who would go on to organize the Common Ground relief clinic after the Katrina disaster] and former gang leader Jeff Branner was set up on trespassing charges by the San Francisco Housing Authority, we became part of their defense committee. This (and a few other actions) created a set of relationships and contacts resulting in us being asked to work with residents of public housing who were fighting for the right to return to their homes during the HOPE VI process. It was a big shift turning away from relatively easy to implement direct action against a landlord to the complexities of challenging an agenda with multiple bad actors at millions of dollars of federal

funding. I'm not sure we understood that at the time.

**FW:** Throughout the book, you talk about several organizations and coalitions, some based around specific fights and neighborhoods, others organized more broadly. These include groups such as EDN, *Homes Not Jails*, *Mission Agenda*, and the *Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition* (MAC). All of these groups were different, and many used a variety of tactics, but can you talk about some of their common strategies for confronting displacement?

**JT:** These organizations were extremely different from each other in many ways. What unified them was the simple value that housing was a human right that trumped private property. *Homes Not Jails* went through several phases. At times it was more of a punk squatter project, then a survival mechanism for homeless people, but also a vehicle to put pressure on the government to repurpose vacant buildings for the use of people living in poverty. I didn't cover this adequately in the book, but HNJ also played an important role in the campaigns to open up the Presidio's vacant units to homeless people. *Mission Agenda* really tried to build a base in residential hotels. They did their finest work in challenging San Francisco's response to the rash of fires in the hotels. MAC was different in that it was a coalition, a real collection of many different forces who wanted to confront gentrification.

As far as strategy goes, MAC went the farthest in actually implementing one. We basically wanted to reform the City Planning process and make it respond to the needs of working-class communities. This made sense in a lot of way The Planning Department basically facilitates the neoliberal model of urban development. Their job is to make sure that cities are planned for maximum profit. While it's a legitimate area of struggle, we should have won support articulated a vision of what de-commodification of housing might look like. MAC's gains were meaningful, but curtailed because of this.

**FW:** In *Dispatches*, so often people get organized in response to this or that attack. Whether it was Clinton kicking people out of public housing for having a strike on their record, the *Costa-Hawkins Act*, or the *Ellis Act*, what are the ways in which people have fought and

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Council, every County Council, every State Senate, and every Federal Court. The mayors, governors, council members, and politicians hold positions of authority based on lies, theft, and deviousness. They deserve no recognition, nor will they receive any in the future.

For example, the Chevron refinery was originally built in 1901 by John D. Rockefeller on a piece of land that was not his to buy. Nevertheless, he paid money to a legal owner and acquired a pristine stretch of marshland that surrounded tall tree-covered hills. In this place of beauty he built a giant factory that would produce environmentally destructive petroleum to be burnt in cars and released into the air. A city quickly emerged around the factory and was eventually incorporated as Richmond. From its inception, the residents of this city have been subjected to the various poisons that hover around the refinery. Cancers, leukemia, asthma, and other serious ailments can be found at higher levels in those who live around the refinery. An explosion at the refinery in 2012 sent 15,000 people the hospital and released a toxic black cloud into the air. Further fires have only reminded us of its potential danger. As was mentioned earlier, the refinery uses more water per year than the 1.3 million people served by EBMUD. It should be obvious that the refinery needs to be decommissioned as quickly as possible.

In 2016, there will be two open seats for the EBMUD Board of Directors. Regardless of who wins these seats, the board won't have the power to shut off water to the refinery. A mass movement is needed to constantly apply pressure and make the situation fluid. This mass movement must also stay true to the vision of a human community living in harmony with the land. If rank-and-file EBMUD workers side with the people and not Chevron, it will be all the simpler to turn off the water to not only Chevron, but every environmentally destructive project. Such a scenario is not out of the question and victory is more than achievable. But it is safe to assume that the momentum for this effort will not come from the stale dinosaurs on the Left: the politicians, the union bureaucrats, and non-profits. It will come from people much bolder; people capable of thinking in a manner that is not yet fully colonized. It will come from the people that are running out of water and money and who see the rich and the corporations gobble up what is left

of the earth.

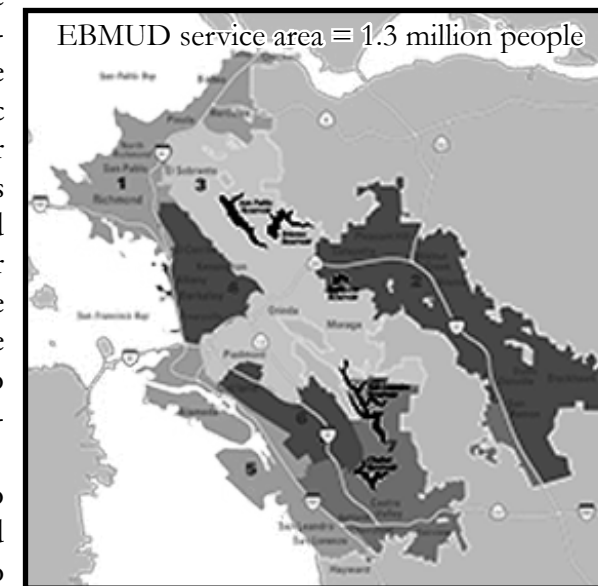
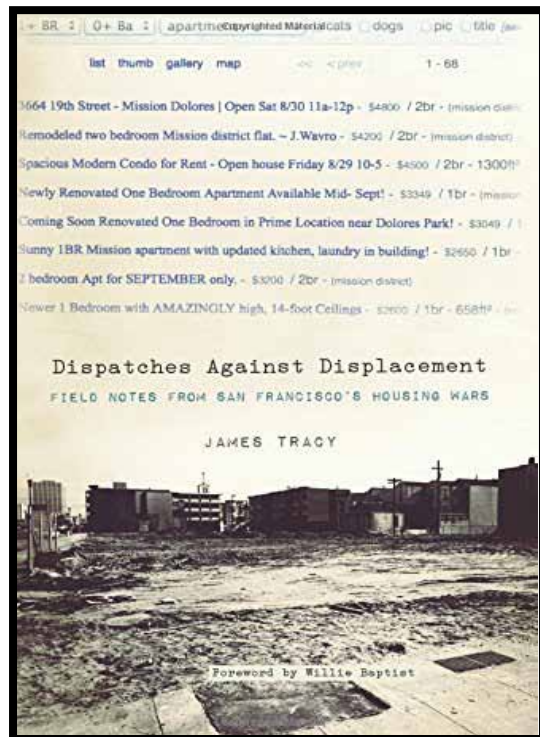
The actions and methods that will be used in the future will certainly be unpredictable. When confronted with the horrifying and undeniable facts of industrial capitalism, one can either live in constant existential defeat or actively organize a campaign of decolonization. Such a campaign is necessary, as is the organization capable of carrying it out. But more than an active campaign against Chevron and other earth destroying industries, we need to begin decolonizing the land that we live on.

With the water we still have access to from EBMUD infrastructure, we can cultivate every vacant piece of land and provide food for ourselves. It will be free and grown with our own hands. But cultivating all of the concrete lots and regenerating toxic urban soil would require the abandonment of current laws and conceptions of property. The healing of the earth goes hand in hand with illegality. We cannot do what needs to be done through a legal framework. We must specifically destroy the legal framework we live under in order to free the land and thus heal it. And in the process, we will destroy capitalism. One goes with the other. Any other conception of this struggle will fail before it begins. Nothing legal has worked thus far, and illegal action is necessary to end the obvious horrors of capitalism.

Many of us and many of you are already working on projects that aspire for an earth free from the chains of industry, property, and

money. It will require all of us to bring our desires to reality. A small group of people can be highly effective, as we have all noticed in our work. The task now is to combine our efforts into the clearly defined goal of ending the tyranny of capitalism and restoring the land to health. Environmental groups, indigenous groups, and water rights groups need to advocate their fiercest and most effective methods possible in order to win, and they have to do it together. Given that those most connected to capitalism and western civilization are the least qualified to heal the earth, any such movement will be led by the indigenous. Only they have kept alive the original ways of living with this land, here, beneath our feet. We can only hope they will teach us.

-THE AUTONOMY GROUP





Both the harvests and houses of these new towns were only possible because of the perennially flowing stream of Sausal Creek.

Besides the fresh water coming down from the hills, there were also rainbow trout and salmon that swam up Sausal Creek in search of their spawning grounds. These fish were often eaten by the indigenous, and the colonizers surely feasted on them whenever possible. But as the saw mill devastated the hills and released large amounts of silt into the creek water, the salmon and trout began to have difficulty reaching their spawning grounds, unable to swim through the thick and cloudy water. Their path was blocked even further in 1870 when Caspar Hopkins, a local insurance man, built a dam on Sausal Creek. The dam was located just below the main confluence and blocked the trout and salmon from the upper reaches of the watershed.

With this dam, Hopkins created the Sausal Water Company and piped water directly into private homes and farms. Now there was no longer a need for the small farmer to take water from Sausal Creek with their own hands. Now they could purchase it from Caspar Hopkins and the pipes he laid. The dam was located 325 feet above sea level and could hold a million gallons of water at a time. This million gallons was more than enough keep the orchards and fields irrigated and overflowing with food. But in 1872 the company collapsed after a brief drought and was purchased by a man named Anthony Chabot.

The Sausal Creek dam was folded into the existing company holdings which included the Temescal Creek dam and various artisan wells throughout the area. By 1873, it was clear that these three main water sources were insufficient for the growing population of the East Bay. Chabot built another dam high in the hills along San Leandro Creek and with this his company was able to meet the increasing demand of the city below. With three dams holding millions of gallons of water combined, the stage had been set for the Oakland we know today. With a total monopoly on East Bay waters, Anthony Chabot made a fortune. But more importantly, he separated people from their natural water source and made them dependent on his company, not the creek itself.

The famous orchards of Dimond and Fruite Vale remained until the early 1900's, but when new electric streetcars were installed the population began to spike. One by one, the small farmers sold their lots to developers and more houses rose into the air. Every passing year marked the return of a smaller number of trout and salmon than the year before. As the orchards and farms vanished, new industrial factories were built that used Sausal Creek to fill

their boilers. The children who grew up in the area no longer found any fish in the upper parts of the creek. In 1923, the East Bay Municipal Utility District was formed, consolidating all of the existing dams into one system. With the advent of this new supplier, residents of the Dimond and Fruit Vale now drank water that came from miles away. The fresh water creek that flowed year round was no longer important to the population.

With its waters ravaged by silt and mud, Sausal Creek was channeled, straightened, and mostly buried under ground. The force that gave the first colonizers water and food was now forgotten. By the 1940's, the creek was nothing more than scenery to increase real estate prices. Today the creek water runs clear once again, although its lower reaches are tainted with oil and other toxic substances. Despite all the forces against them, the rainbow trout have returned to the upper reaches of the watershed. Children play in shady pools on summer days, and some Oakland children are lucky enough to have seen the fish. Neighbors harvest cherries and plums from trees planted over a century ago. Springs of fresh water still exist in the redwoods. But there are very few people today who can conceptualize living off the creek and the water it provides.

Every morning the fog rolls in and fills the creek with more water. This fog recharges the springs and moistens the air. If there is enough water during the summers, the trout can return to the upper parts of the watershed. If there are pools deep enough and warm enough, the trout can spawn in larger numbers. The more trout that are born in Sausal Creek, the more they will return in the future. And if the trout ever return in large numbers, that will mean Sausal Creek has been healed. If the creek is ever healed, we will be able to live off it once more. At their height of sustainability, the rural towns of Fruit Vale and Dimond grew enough food to not only support themselves but to ship large quantities of produce to the other side of the country. They did all of this with free water that started as fog. It flowed all year round. It asked only to be respected, unspoiled, and left to meander where it wished. This was too much to ask for the first colonizer. But it is not too much for us.

### Initiating a Decolonization Campaign

As you can see, the early colonizers of the East Bay were too greedy to live in balance with their surroundings. These people simply took the land, resources, and humans they found desirable. The laws, codes, and regulations came later, largely as a rationalization for their past conquest and plundering. The colonial power in the East Bay has no legitimacy, nor has it ever. This includes every City

*responded to various specific laws or ordinances? How could they do so now?*

**JT:** Useful tactics and strategies change depending on various conditions. I think the basic thing is to make sure that we don't get trapped inside the electoral-legislative system. This doesn't mean that direct action is the only way to get the goods, it means building up organizations that are truly independent of the State, who are committed to building an intercommunal front and are genuinely dedicated to building up a real base in impacted communities. When you have that in place, you have the space to figure out with your neighbors how to responds to specific laws and ordinances.

I work at a nonprofit that helps people exit homelessness. We do an excellent job at what we do and I'm constantly inspired by the residents and staff. There's no shame in that. But while we contribute to the struggle for housing as a human right, I'm clear that non-profits can't be the main vehicle for challenging capitalism. We're helping people to survive, but the fight goes on beyond the nine-to-five.

**FW:** *In the chapter, 'Landgrabs and Lies,' you discuss how residents in public housing contemplated blockading the SF trolley cars as a means to bring attention to evictions. Are these actions just media spectacles or much more? Is grabbing the spotlight helpful?*

**JT:** We live in a society full of spectacles and symbols, so fighting to expose spectacles and redefine symbols is legitimate. But it's not the end of the story if you are fighting to win. In the public housing example, it was actually those of us "outside agitators" who suggested that tactic. The tenants at North Beach Public Housing narrowly voted the proposal down, because they correctly realized that they could lose their homes, children, and in some cases citizenship bids if they were arrested.

As I detail, in the book, we then created together another direct action strategy that actually won a contract of right-to-return guarantees. If we had been arrogant about it and went ahead with the action, we would have killed the trust and collaboration. It didn't only pay off in terms of a campaign victory. When the Housing Authority tried to trump up some false charges against me and another EDN member, and asked residents to sign a petition alleging child endangerment, they defended us. The SFHA operatives were ran off the property. The point is that direct action is a tactic with certain powerful values behind it. It's not a religion or a, "I'm a better radical than you game." It's meaningful when everyday people decide to support it as part of a strategy.



**FW:** *In the book you talk about when you first started organizing, you didn't understand the "finer contours of institution racism." What caused this shift?*

**JT:** I still believe that winning long-lasting change means hammering out the difficult and risky unity between groups and finally kicking white supremacy to the dustbin of history. When I was young, I associated racism primarily with the Nazi Skinheads who tried to pollute my hometown, Vallejo with their bullshit. Later on, I came to recognize how white supremacy was reflected in institutions, planning codes, educational systems, and urban renewal plans. I grew up with friends across the color lines, so it was difficult to separate the institutional from the individual in my analysis.

**FW:** *You talk about how cities are a battleground, that they are the "primary sites of contestation" between capital and working-class movements. You also go on to expand upon your concept of how it is then in the interest of capital to displace people, especially those of color, out into the suburbs, or to use a larger term, "spatial deconcentration." Can you break down for our readers just what this means?*

**JT:** Spatial Deconcentration is the result of pushing working-class communities out of the city into the surrounding suburbs. There's a lot of debate on how planned the process is. During the 1980's New York City squatter Frank Morales wrote a pamphlet alleging that it was an intentional attempt to prevent radical organizing and insurrections of the 1960s variety. What can't be debated in that deconcentration is firmly imbedded as a goal of federal policy, under the guise of "economic integration."

Why would the rich desire this? It helps them control the political life of a city. If you work in San Francisco, but commute in from Tracy, you don't have time to even discuss how to change things for the better with other people. One of the most powerful things in the world is when neighbors and co-workers gather and have these debates. So whether your politics privilege massive direct action or electoral participation you're missing the ability to plan and conspire with others. Rich people love this state of affairs because it makes extending their power all the easier.

**FW:** *When you talk about spatial deconcentration, you make the excellent point that many that were displaced from public housing and large cities where then funneled into home ownership and then became victims of sub-prime loans. In Oakland several years ago, this led to many neighborhoods losing many long term residents, over-*

# SEIZE THE TIDE

## *decolonizing the watersheds of the east bay*

*Say infrastructure and you're saying that life has been detached from its conditions. That conditions have been placed on life. That life now depends on factors out of its control, that it has lost its footing. Infrastructures organize a life without a world, suspended, expendable, at the mercy of whoever is managing them.*

-The Invisible Committee, 2014

### **Black Spring, Dirty Water**

Without assuming too much, it is fair to say that you are currently at the mercy of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). If you refuse to pay them for water, they will eventually put a lock on your water meter. If you clip the lock and turn the water back on, they will remove the meter and disconnect your house from the pipe network. The money you must pay to EBMUD is supposedly meant to maintain the infrastructure and pay the workers, although it is hardly that simple.

The biggest customer in the East Bay is the Chevron refinery in Richmond. Every day, the refinery uses up roughly 10 million gallons of water. In a single week, it consumes enough water to supply 500 houses for a year. Throughout the year, the refinery uses over 3 billion gallons of water. Up until 2010, the refinery drew from the same water supply as every other EBMUD customer. But since 2010, around 7.5 million gallons of waste water are being recycled from the municipal network. Today, the refinery only uses around 2.5 million gallons of fresh water a day, or 15 million gallons a week.

According to the UN, humans need just over two gallons of water a day to survive. As it stands, every day that the Richmond Chevron refinery is operational, it consumes enough fresh water to satisfy the needs of 4,500 people for an entire year. **The annual water use of the refinery is equivalent to the amount needed to supply the combined populations of San Jose and Oakland for an**

**entire year.** EBMUD services 1.3 million people, yet its biggest customer consumes more in a year than the entire population of the East Bay. Even with its recycled water, the refinery is a glaring example of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism.

10 million gallon of water goes into the refinery each day and out comes 250,000 barrels of refined petroleum, or 4,750,000 gallons of gasoline. **In other words, for every two gallons of water put into the refinery, less than one gallon of gasoline comes out.** This gasoline is then burned up by millions of vehicles at varying rates. A hybrid Prius can travel 50 miles on each gallon, whereas a Suburban SUV can travel only 20. Either way, both vehicles release climate changing carbon molecules into the atmosphere at consistent rates, thus contributing to the long drought in California. But despite all of the available data, the Chevron refinery is still using up 2.5 million gallons of drinking water per day, all so that millions of other people can poison the atmosphere and warm the planet. Something is clearly wrong with this situation and it is no exaggeration to say that it needed to be stopped years ago. With a bleak future ahead of us, it is important to begin formulating an exit strategy.

Making matters worse locally, EBMUD announced that it will be raising a surcharge to water rates by 24% on all customers. The reason for the raise: people are using less water. Because people are cutting back their use, EBMUD is getting less revenue coming in. But raising the cost under the guise of "drought conditions," the agency can bring in more cash. The 'drought surcharge' is coupled with a permanent hike of 8%, which was supposedly implemented to replace crumbling infrastructure and pay off debts for construction projects. The current raises by EBMUD is a classic austerity move, pushed through the auspices of water conservation and raging drought. Furthermore, while poor and working-class people are cutting back on water use, many wealthy Californians balk at the idea of cutting water consumption. As one upper-crust put it in the SF Gate, "People "should not be forced to live on property with brown lawns, golf on brown courses or apologize for wanting their gardens to be beautiful. We pay significant property taxes based on where we live, [and], no, we're not all equal when it comes to water." Like everything else, to the rich and corporations go the spoils and water. For everyone else, we pay out the nose.

### **Creeks, Redwoods, Trout, and Fog**

Meanwhile, in the foothills of Oakland, a simple process occurs every summer morning. Fog rolls into the bay from ocean, bringing with it moisture. At the tops of

the redwood hills, this moisture is captured in boughs and branches. It drips down to the floor of the forest and seeps into the ground. There are days when the fog does not leave the hills, and while the redwood and cypress are shrouded in the clouds, the forest is gathering water for itself.

What excess remains eventually emerges out of various springs that lead to the tributaries of Sausal Creek. These tributaries snake through the redwood forest before reaching their confluence. As with most colonial projects, unnatural impediments are placed at the most important sites of indigenous life. In the case of the Sausal Creek watershed, there is the 580 freeway and a driving range interrupting the natural meeting point of several tributaries. After these waters all collide, they are channeled underground until they are past the driving range. They reemerge in Diamond Canyon and travel through a lush canyon of oak, cypress, redwood, and an unfortunate amount of ivy. They are then diverted back underground and channeled into open air canals that parallel Fruitvale Avenue. Ultimately, these waters merge into the bay through a concrete pool at the end of a long pipe. The pool overflows only during strong storms, and normally it serves as a fresh water source for a wide variety of animals.

Thanks to the redwood forest above, Sausal Creek runs all year round, delivering fresh water to the bay. It is now relatively unsafe to drink from any spot below the freeways, but the water from the springs is safe and clear. This same water source is what enabled the small towns of Fruit Vale and the Diamond to come into being. In 1849, the first major wave of Anglo-Saxon colonizers arrived along Sausal Creek and in 1850 the first saw mill was built in the redwoods along the stream. The fresh water was diverted into boilers and used to power the saws that devastated the old growth forest that had stood over Oakland since the beginning of time. Several more mills sprung up in the years that followed, employing nearly 400 men. Within a decade, the redwoods that extended from Montclair to the Diamond were chopped down and rendered into lumber for new houses in Oakland and San Francisco.

In 1853, a man named Henderson Luelling started a farm and plant nursery along the creek. He channeled water towards his fruit orchards and began to grow Bing cherries and other crops. Fruite Vale was the name he gave to the region, and for the next twenty years the land along the creek filled with farms and orchards. Hops, oranges, grains, and apricots are just some of the foods that were grown in this small bread basket. The Diamond became famous for its beer gardens that served local brews sourced from local fields, while the Fruite Vale became well known for its sprawling fields of oranges, peaches, and apricots.