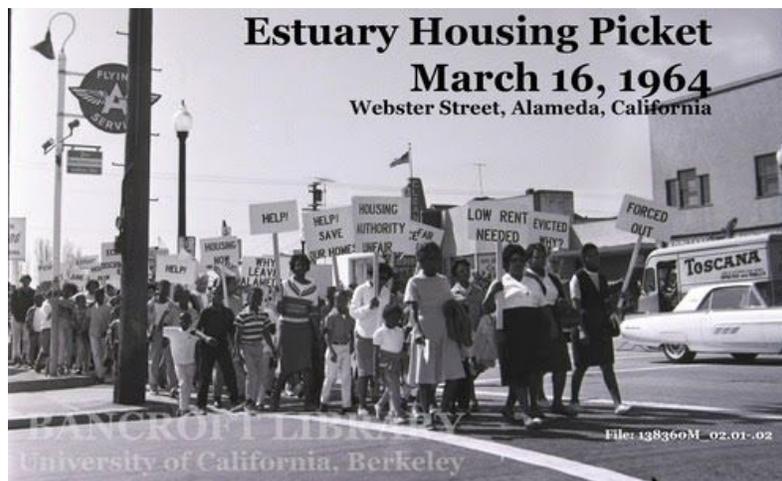


Historical Context: Racism & Housing in Alameda

*Below is a collection of articles about the history of racism, housing, and the fight for housing justice in the City of Alameda. The majority of articles are by historian Rasheed Shabazz. This provides important historical context to the current campaign to repeal Article 26, an exclusionary zoning measure written into the Charter of the City of Alameda; the repeal is on the ballot in November 2020 - a **“Yes” vote on Measure Z will repeal the article from the City Charter. Zoning decisions would then be made via the existing public planning processes.** The repeal is an important step in the ability to create the numbers of affordable housing needed in the region and at costs that are affordable to low- and very-low income renters.*

When reviewing the history of housing in Alameda, the displacement of low-income tenants repeats itself throughout the decades. Because of widespread inequity, low-income tenants are more often Black and People of Color than white residents in the Bay Area. Current fights to expand affordable housing opportunities and increase tenant protections are rooted in this history. This is especially true in the fight for affordable housing for low- and median-income Black residents of Alameda County, who experience high rates of housing-cost burden and homelessness compared to residents of other races, and have experienced well-documented housing discrimination and waves of displacement from Alameda because of city-backed decisions over the last century.



Archive of Image [provided by Rasheed Shabazz](#) for a presentation in 2013. [Image shows Black protesters crossing a sidewalk in Alameda on Webster St in 1964. They are holding picket signs with words such as “Low Rent Needed,” “Evicted Why?” “Forced Out” and “Housing Authority Unfair.”Text on the image says “March 16, 1964 Webster Street, Alameda, California and Bancroft Library University of California Berkeley with the File #]

EBHO shares this document as an educational tool. We hope this history clarifies why the fight for affordable housing and against exclusionary zoning are part of the broad work of enacting housing justice and racial justice in Alameda and the East Bay. Together, we can understand how the inequity that characterizes our region today came to be, and join together at the ballot and in our neighborhoods to create a better future, one characterized by justice and opportunity for all.

Another History of Measure A (1973) Rasheed Shabazz. (Alameda Sun) January 2020.

Measure A is an exclusionary zoning charter amendment adopted by the Alameda electorate in 1973 designed to prohibit construction of multifamily housing. Proponents emerged in opposition to the proposed development of Harbor Bay Isle by Utah Construction and Doric Development and the pro-growth City Council incumbents. Although purported to “protect the environment,” an examination of the stated positions of the original “framers” and opponents, and the multiple legal challenges can help Alamedans understand how Measure A prolonged racial and economic inequalities.

While the 1960s and 1970s brought an increased national consciousness of the environment and racism, Alameda experienced increased racial residential segregation and exclusion. The Island’s electorate supported Proposition 14, a statewide initiative overturning fair housing legislation, and the Alameda Housing Authority displaced thousands of Black tenants.

<https://alamedasun.com/news/another-history-measure-1973>

Black History Month Rasheed Shabazz. (Alameda Sun) February 2019

Racist housing practices in Alameda like restrictive racial covenants, zoning and “redlining” excluded Black migrants from calling the Island home. Realtors, homeowners and community builders placed racially restrictive covenants in deeds and homeowners associations that excluded non-White people from living in certain areas of Alameda. “There are restrictions against Japanese, Chinese and Negroes...” states a 1913 advertisement for Waterside Terrace. According to the advertisement, “These restrictions are thrown about this property, as it is the intent of the owners to make this the modern high-class home place of the city.” The false association that Black people lowered property values continued to impact the racial geography of Alameda for decades. <https://alamedasun.com/news/black-history-month>

Wall Street Comes to Alameda: The world's largest private equity firm buys the island's largest apartment complex. Rasheed Shabazz. (East Bay Express) May 2018.

The Alameda Housing Authority developed the land, which is situated on the west end of Alameda, to house workers during World War II in 1943. The authority demolished the 760-unit Chipman Housing Project in 1958 and sold various parcels to private developers. In 1964 and 1965, Los Angeles-based Gersten Company built the Buena Vista Park Apartments. In exchange for a subsidized federal loan, Gersten agreed to keep rents below market rate for 20 years, or until it could pay off the loan. In 1987, Gersten paid off the loan and announced plans to double residents' rents. Low-income and predominantly African-American tenants protested and appealed to Gersten and the city for help, eventually resulting in Section 8 vouchers for many families. However, 325 families did not qualify for subsidies, which led tenants and housing advocates to sue the City of Alameda for discriminatory housing policies in 1989. The suit included Alameda's 1973 charter amendment, Measure A, which banned the construction of new apartments. A judge ruled



that the city's policies discriminated against low-income residents. The parties settled the suit in an agreement that kept Measure A but granted an exemption to replace the 325 units lost. <https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/wall-street-comes-to-alameda/Content?oid=16278307>

'Alameda is our Home': African Americans and the Struggle for Housing in Alameda, California, 1860-present (2013) Rasheed Shabazz's Undergraduate Research Paper.

In 1973, the city's majority white voters enacted a city ordinance that banned construction of apartment buildings. This policy, Measure A, restricted the development of affordable housing for four decades and has dramatically shaped the physical island and its local politics. Housing discrimination has defined the collective Black experience in Alameda. From the 19th century to present, developers, homeowners, landlords, policy-makers, and realtors have discriminated against African Americans seeking housing in Alameda. In response, Black people consistently wage battles for more affordable housing and inclusionary policies in Alameda. Prejudice realtors and developers restricted Black renters and homeowners to the specific areas of the island prior to the Second World War. During and after the war, housing discrimination limited the majority of African Americans to temporary housing projects. Policies to redevelop project lands and direct the island's future development intentionally exclude low-income renters and people of color. African Americans contest residential exclusion, build community by creating organizations and institutions, forge interracial alliances for open housing, and challenge exclusionary policies and practices.

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7pp2q0gh>

A history lesson: Tenants V. Alameda, Rasheed El Shabazz Rasheed Shabazz. (Renewed Hope Housing Advocates Blog.) 2014.

In 1987, African American tenants of the Buena Vista Apartments in Alameda, California, sued the City of Alameda for discriminatory housing policies. The lawsuit occurred after the owner of the largest subsidized housing complex in the East Bay decided to convert the property to market rate rents. The plans to double and even triple rents would displace hundreds of families.

After pleading with City government and the owner, Section 8 vouchers were acquired for many residents—all but 325. These 'lost' affordable housing units led to the lawsuit challenging Measure A, a 1973 citizen-enacted ordinance that banned construction of apartments. After a judge ruled Alameda's land use policies discriminated against the poor, the City settled to protect its treasured exclusionary zoning policy. Part of the settlement called for replacement of the lost 325 affordable housing units.

<http://renewedhopehousing.org/180/>

[Guest Yes on A blog: Rasheed Shabazz](#) Rasheed Shabazz. (Blogging Bayport Alameda) April 2019.

The effort to stop the wellness center is explicitly exclusionary and implicitly racist. FOCC attempted to use a Black woman in anticipation of concern that their actions would have racist impact. This special election echoes a long history, going back to 1964's Proposition 14, in which producers of racist ideas and policies have attempted to use the ballot box to exclude people and convince the electorate to vote against their best selves. Voting for Measure B does not make you a racist, but using your power to oppose a wellness center for unhoused people reinforces institutional racism.

<https://laurendo.wordpress.com/2019/04/09/guest-yes-on-a-blog-rasheed-shabazz/>

[What Would a Black Man Have Said](#) Rasheed Shabazz. (Blogging Bayport Alameda) June 2017.

Alameda has a fascinating legacy of thinly veiled exclusionary, or rather racist and classist rhetoric, particularly when debating the very emotional and complex issue of housing. In the past, some so-called Alamedans would use "Oakland" as a code, a euphemism, a racial proxy rooted in exclusionary housing policies. For example, in 1992, when the City defied a court order and did not apply for state housing funds, a speaker at a council meeting received a standing ovation when stating low-income housing in Alameda would "create an East Alameda like East Oakland." This comparison is rooted in racial segregation and stereotypes.

<https://laurendo.wordpress.com/2017/06/13/guest-blog-what-would-that-black-man-have-said/>

[Pre-World War II history of African Americans in Alameda described](#) (East Bay Times) Janet Levaux covering Shabazz's talk. October 2017

After the turn of the century, restrictive residential covenants began to become more pervasive in town, he explained. For instance, the Fernside district prohibited those of "African, Japanese, Chinese or of any Mongolian descent" from buying, owning or leasing property. The rules became unenforceable in 1948, but remained on the books until 1969, according to Shabazz.

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2017/10/02/pre-world-war-ii-history-of-african-americans-in-alameda-described/>

[WWII expanded racial segregation in Alameda, scholar says](#) Jennifer Modenessi covering Shabazz's talk. February 2018.

Take, for example, the zoning laws Alameda adopted in 1923. Through what the scholar and historian calls "racialized zoning," Alameda leaders placed industrial uses on the

north side of the Island, near where black and Asian residents made their homes. The move — including a decision decades later to place housing projects for largely black tenants near an Army gasoline storage dump — didn't just locate industrial growth near specific groups of people, Shabazz said during the Feb. 13 presentation at the Alameda Free Library. The regulations were “also protecting white homeowners on the far east end and the Gold Coast from having noxious uses near their homes and potentially lowering their property values,” Shabazz explained.

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2018/02/21/wwii-expanded-racial-segregation-in-alameda-scholar-says/>

Tearing Down Monuments. (Blogging Bayport Alameda) Lauren Do.

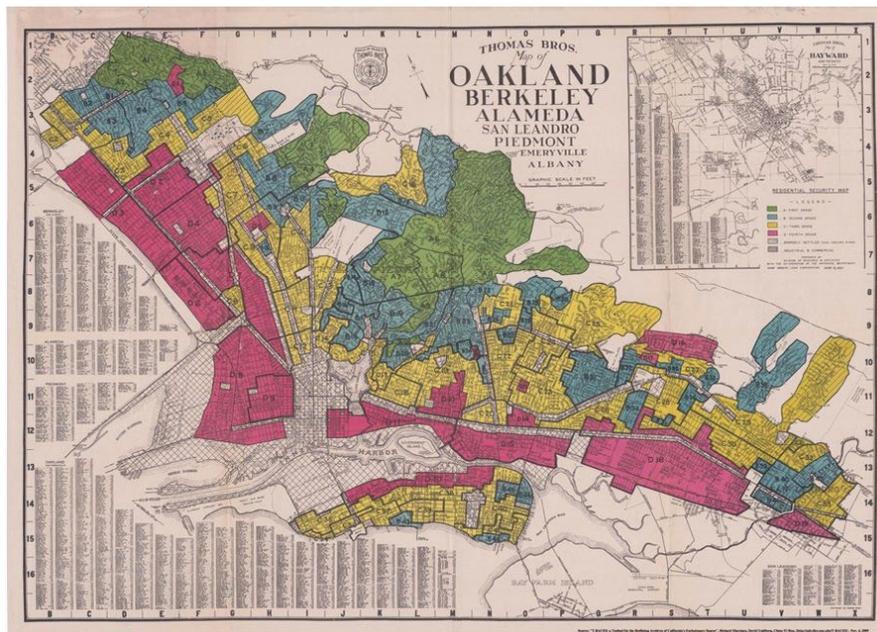
It actually feels good to not be one of the few to shout into the void about A/26 and its racist impacts. I was revisiting some of my older posts on the issue and I ran across a set that I had written about six years ago when the issue of redlining was entering the national dialog and Ta-Nehisi Coates was broaching the subject of reparations. Let's just say, based on the comments, some folks were not too pleased by making the connection between systemic racism, redlining, reparations, and A/26.

<https://laurendo.wordpress.com/2020/06/18/tearing-down-monuments/>

Rasheed Shabazz's Tumblr: <https://dasquarebear.tumblr.com/>

More important history

about the fight for racial justice, economic justice, and affordable housing in Alameda:



A map of how banks assigned loan favorability and 'risk' in the East Bay. "Redlining" was a practice of de-valuing and coding red the neighborhoods where Black residents and immigrant families from Mexico, China, Japan, the Philippines, and other non-European countries lived. [Learn more.](#)

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538 9th Street, Suite 200 Oakland, CA 94607

Room for HOPE: A video overviewing the History of HOPE (Housing Opportunities Provided Equally),



HOPE was an organization fighting for racial equity in housing in Alameda from the 1960's to the 1980's: <https://youtu.be/u2ySOkdmqCl>

Civic Unity: Five Years in the West End of Alameda, excerpt 1 “The Battle of Harbor Island”



A film documenting the fight against the displacement of an entire building of renters in the West End. by Luna Productions, Catherine Ryan and Gary Weimberg. <https://vimeo.com/12085156>

Civic Unity: Five Years in the West End of Alameda, excerpt 2 “Modessa’s Story”



A film documenting one of the last people left in the building as tenants were displaced; it shares some of the impact displacement has on community members. by Luna Productions, Catherine Ryan and Gary Weimberg.

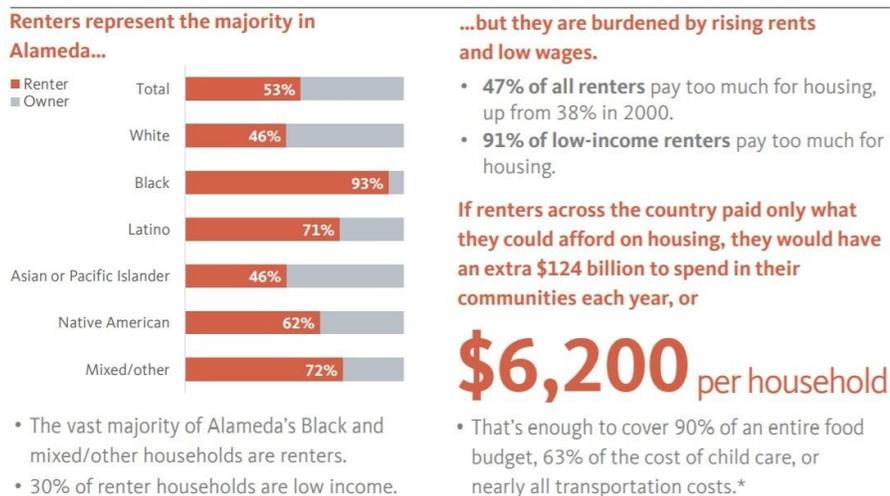
<https://vimeo.com/12081432>

History of Renewed Hope Housing and the fight for Affordable Housing in Alameda:

Renewed Hope argued that affordable housing was something everyone in Alameda would benefit from. The council was told “our children can’t afford to live here; people of average incomes such as teachers and firefighters can no longer afford to live here; losing families is bad for school funding.” The city council was very committed to the notion that the mostly white, middle class homeowners in town was its only real constituency. Renewed Hope supporters often faced a well-organized opposition made of people who supported Measure A, whose message was “we are the real Alameda” and “if you can’t afford to live here you should leave.”

The city went ahead with plans to tear down these homes and construct 485 large new homes, now known as Bayport, but 48 homes for moderate income homeowners – roughly in the \$60,000 range for a family of four in 2000 – were included, as required by state redevelopment law.” <http://renewedhopehousing.org/category/history/>

When Renters Rise, Cities Thrive: 2017 PolicyLink Renters Week of Action Data Sheet.



<https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Alameda-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Will 2019 be the Year of the Tenant in Alameda? (Alameda Magazine) Diego Aguilar-Canabal. February 2019.

The story of the defeat of Measure K in 2018 was as much about landlord hubris as a victory of the progressive coalition they galvanized. Promoted by the ominously named Alamedans In Charge PAC, Measure K paradoxically tried to sell a convoluted measure supporting weak rent control, while at the same time fomenting a conservative backlash against it. In a letter to fellow landlords uncovered by the East Bay Express, rental property owner Don Lindsey drew a hard line in the sand, asserting that Alamedans In Charge would “wrest control” of the Island from the “far left” back to “the middle.” That

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battle cry united common enemies.

<http://www.alamedamagazine.com/February-2019/Will-2019-be-the-Year-of-the-Tenant-in-Alameda/>

The Year of the Landlord? (Alameda Magazine) Steven Tavares. April 2018.

There's an increasing concern among Alameda tenants that they may lose their fight for rent control and just cause evictions on the Island.

“Still, landlords are gearing up for a big fight at the ballot box this November. They've made clear that they intend to target Councilmember Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, who plans to run for mayor, and Councilmember Jim Oddie, because of their votes in favor of just cause. In a letter obtained by the magazine's sister publication, the East Bay Express, Don Lindsey, one of Alameda's most influential landlords and co-founder of the property management firm Gallagher & Lindsey, wrote that landlords are preparing to raise huge amounts of cash for the November 2018 election. “The war that we are fighting seems to be about rent control, but that is only a small part,” Lindsey wrote. “It is the vehicle they are using to rally the progressive community to take control of Alameda.”

With Alameda just cause ordinance on pause, notorious landlord issues eviction notices. (East Bay Citizen) Steven Tavers. August 2017.

Residents at Alameda's Bay View Apartments on Central Avenue have stood as the symbol of the island community's struggle with rising rents and a lack of affordable housing for more than two years.

On Wednesday, just days before the start of a new school year, three families received 60-day eviction notices from the owners of the complex, known in popular parlance as 470 Central. Three additional tenants were given three-day notices for non-payment, said the Alameda Renters Coalition. The evictions come at a time when an Alameda landlords group successfully postponed implementation of just cause restrictions approved by the Alameda City Council in June. A referendum petition sought by landlords to nullify just cause, which allows property owners to evict tenants without cause, was certified in July by the Alameda city clerk.

(Update: All tenants were evicted or asked to leave for remodeling, and a 1 bedroom apt now rents for \$2,298)

<https://ebcitizen.com/2017/08/17/with-alameda-just-cause-ordinance-on-pause-notorious-landlord-issues-eviction-notices/>

Alameda Special Election: Measure in support of homeless services wins. (East Bay Citizen) Steven Tavers. April, 2019.

“The election is over. This vote shows Alameda is a community that faces issues with compassion and not by building walls,” said Doug Biggs, executive director of the Alameda Point Collaborative, the group that will operate the Alameda Wellness Center

on McKay Avenue. Biggs says he intends to continue outreach with neighbors in order to gather their concerns over the project.

Tavers also offers additional context [here](#).

<https://ebcitizen.com/2019/04/09/alameda-special-election-measure-in-support-of-homeless-services-wins/>

The 'Real Alamedans'. Rasheed Shabazz. (East Bay Express) July 2018.

Subtitle: A group of Alameda residents met in June to discuss forming a PAC to combat union and developer influence in city politics. But a sexist comment is drawing criticism.

Some council observers have suggested that the recent city manager fallout and subsequent recall efforts are a proxy battle over housing. Councilmembers Oddie and Vella are viewed as being pro-tenant, and some of the same people who supported Keimach are also opposed to just cause evictions.

<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/the-real-alamedans/Content?oid=17991971>

Towing for Dollars in Alameda. East Bay Express. November 2018

Since 2013, more than 1,400 vehicles have been towed from one West End apartment complex by one company: PPI Towing.

<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/towing-for-dollars-in-alameda/Content?oid=22699785>



East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) is a member-driven organization working to preserve, protect, and create affordable housing opportunities for low-income communities in the East Bay. We realize this mission through education, advocacy, organizing, and building coalitions. EBHO envisions an economically and racially just world where housing is a human right; everyone, particularly low-income people and people of color, have access to a range of affordable, healthy, and stable homes and live in diverse and culturally rich neighborhoods of their choice; and where everyone has an equal part in shaping the future of their communities.

