



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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July 27, 2023

End Oakland's Public Safety Crisis

by

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Oakland residents are sick and tired of our intolerable public safety crisis that overwhelmingly impacts minority communities. Murders, shootings, violent armed robberies, home invasions, car break-ins, sideshows, and highway shootouts have become a pervasive fixture of life in Oakland. We call on all elected leaders to unite and declare a state of emergency and bring together massive resources to address our public safety crisis.

African Americans are disproportionately hit the hardest by crime in East Oakland and other parts of the city. But residents from all parts of the city report that they do not feel safe. Women are targeted by young mobs and viciously beaten and robbed in downtown and uptown neighborhoods. Asians are assaulted in Chinatown. Street vendors are robbed in Fruitvale. News crews have their cameras stolen while they report on crime. PG&E workers are robbed and now require private security when they are out working. Everyone is in danger.

Failed leadership, including the movement to defund the police, our District Attorney's unwillingness to charge and prosecute people who murder and commit life threatening serious crimes, and the proliferation of anti-police rhetoric have created a heyday for Oakland criminals. If there are no consequences for committing crime in Oakland, crime will continue to soar.

People are moving out of Oakland in droves. They are afraid to venture out of their homes to go to work, shop, or dine in Oakland and this is destroying economic activity. Businesses, small and large, struggle and close, tax revenues vanish, and we are creating the notorious doom-loop where life in our city continues to spiral downward. As economic pain increases, the conditions that help create crime and criminals are exacerbated by desperate people with no employment opportunities.

We are in crisis and elected leaders must declare a state of emergency and bring resources together from the city, the county, and the state to end the crisis. We are 500 police officers short of the number that experts say Oakland needs. Our 911 system does not work. Residents now know that help will not come when danger confronts them. Worse, criminals know that too.

Our youth must be given alternatives to the crippling desperation that leads to crime, drugs, and prison. They need quality education, mentorship, and, most importantly, real economic opportunities. Oakland should focus on creating skilled industrial and logistics jobs that pay family sustaining wages, and vocational training so Oakland residents can perform those jobs. With this focus we can produce hundreds, if not thousands, of the types of jobs desperately needed to stem economic despair. Unfortunately, progressive policies and failed leadership have chased away or delayed significant blue collar job development in the city, the Port of Oakland, and the former Army Base. That must change!

We also must continue with mentoring programs like the Oakland branch of the national OK Program that steers youth away from criminal activity. We believe that young people currently in the criminal life will choose another path if they are shown a way.

We urge African Americans to speak out and demand improved public safety. We also encourage Oakland's White, Asian, and Latino communities to speak out against crime and stop allowing themselves to be shamed into silence.

There is nothing compassionate or progressive about allowing criminal behavior to fester and rob Oakland residents of their basic rights to public safety. It is not racist or unkind to want to be safe from crime. No one should live in fear in our city.

We need our elected leaders to take responsible action to ensure public safety. The best way to start is to declare that we are in a public safety emergency. Then marshal resources to address crime and create economic opportunities, training, and youth mentoring so people can work and live productive lives.

We encourage the entire Oakland community to join a broad-based, united coalition around these three issues: 1) we have an emergency, 2) we must end the proliferation of crime in our streets and, 3) we must provide jobs, training, and mentorship so our youth have alternatives to crime.

Do it for the love of all Oakland residents. Each and every one of us has the right to live peacefully and safely.

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