

A Hyperlocal Guide to History of Civil Rights

Hey Neighbor

We live in a place with a really rich history of participation in the civil rights movement and activism to promote equality. While we have a street named Martin Luther King Blvd. (thanks to the work of people like Loretta Scott King pushing us to honor the memory of Dr. King's work), many of our very local heroes go unremembered in formal ways (street names, holidays, monuments, textbooks). My aunt was involved in the work of the Black Panther party in our own very neighborhood, and with her passing I am reminded of the potential to lose so much of what we know about the history of that movement because oral histories may not survive past the lifetime of the story teller.



Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale at Merritt College in North Oakland

Keeping this in mind I have compiled some resources that I think are an important starting place for people in our neighborhood (especially if you weren't living here in the 60s). I feel like it is our obligation to our ancestors to honor their work and recognize the legacy of that work, especially when it has been marginalized.

Getting Started

A great local overview of the histories of Black history in Oakland presented by University of Southern California professor Dr. Alaina Morgan for the Exploratorium's After Hours program. (First 39 minutes) Starts in our neighborhoods and then bounces around a bit (but comes back again too).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOfrRkPNvR8&t=1225s>



Dr. Morgan talks about the impact of gentrification on Oakland, which is also a unique part of our extremely local history. Elmwood, right around the corner, was actually the first area in the US to zone for single-family housing.

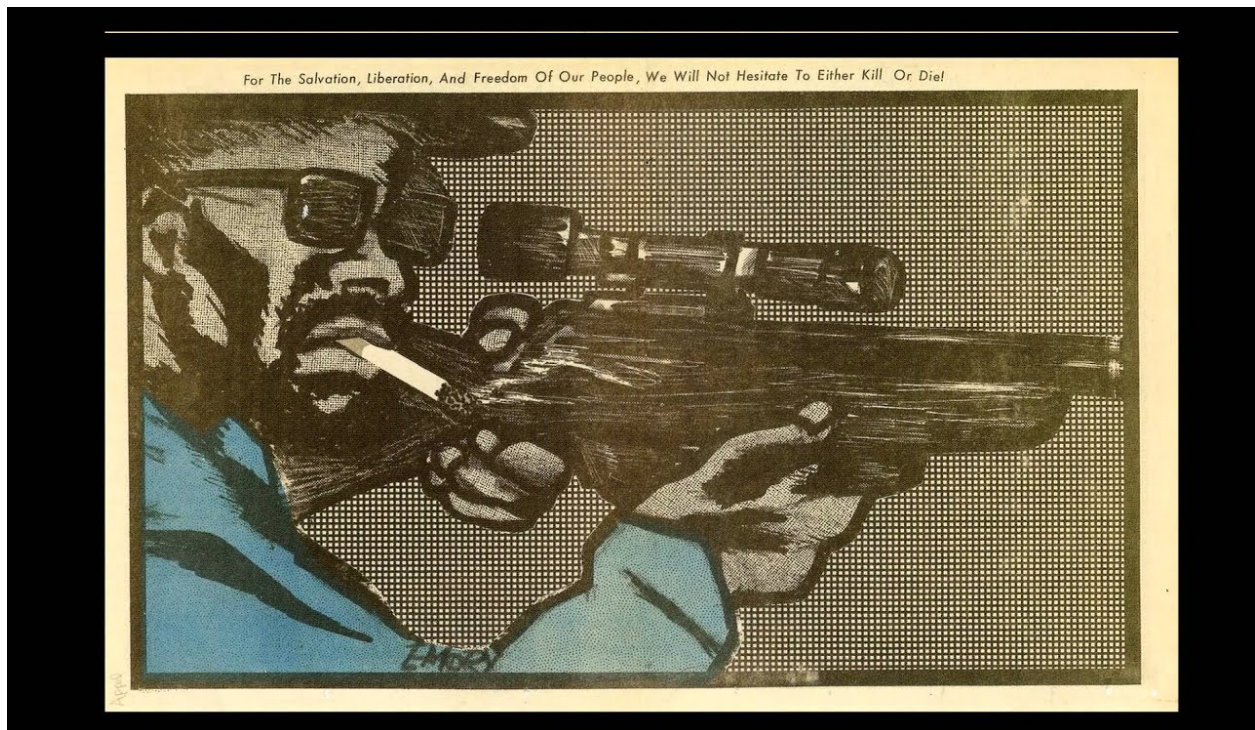
<https://www.kqed.org/news/11840548/the-racist-history-of-single-family-home-zoning>

For some more modern implications of how housing policy plays out in cities like ours (but not specific to cities like ours), I highly recommend the book *Neighborhood Defenders* (<https://www.amazon.com/Neighborhood-Defenders-Participatory-Politics-Americas/dp/1108477275>). You can sample some of the theory in this podcast (<https://www.stitcher.com/show/voxs-the-weeds/episode/neighborhood-defenders-66321406>).

Merritt College

An hour long documentary about the role of Merritt College (5714 Martin Luther King Dr., formerly Grove St.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54wYfIGYMrw>



Some background on the college

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merritt_College

Market St. x 55th

A summary of the historical marker at 55th and Market.

<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=72395>

A story that explores the significance of the collective action around the stoplight.

<https://www.latimes.com/local/abcarian/la-me-abcarian-black-panthers-20161202-story.html>

Dover St. Park

Some background on the relevance of Dover St. Park to the BPP.

<http://apeoplesguide.org/drupal/content/black-panther-park-north-oakland>

Phat Beets Produce, a local non-profit continuing the mission of the Black Panther party at a neighborhood park (and other places, too!)

<https://phatbeetsproduce.org/urban-gardens/#dover>

General Background on the Black Panther Party

If you are curious about why the Black Panther Party was remembered for it's militarism more than other aspects of their work, you might find answers in this podcast from RadioLab producers:

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/radiolab-presents-more-perfect-gun-show>

Some background on the impact of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Black Panthers.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/04/04/599195739/the-road-to-the-promised-land-50-years-later>

Bobby Hutton

<https://wamu.org/story/18/04/06/bobby-hutton-the-killing-that-catapulted-the-black-panthers-to-fame/>

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/bseale.html>

A map of relevant sites beyond the neighborhood

https://depts.washington.edu/moves/BPP_map-cities.shtml

Films

‘The Trial of the Chicago Seven’ (2020) was a film that came out last year that includes Bobby Seale, and was generally a pretty good film.

‘Policing the Police’ (2015) another film (haven’t seen it) that recounts stories of the Panthers.

‘The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975’ (2010) <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/black-power-mixtape-1967-1975/>

‘Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution’ (2015) <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/the-black-panthers-vanguard-of-the-revolution/#>

‘Free Angela And All Political Prisoners’ (<https://www.amazon.com/Free-Angela-All-Political-Prisoners/dp/B00EHHOEYK>)