

# **“THE CENTER” MESSAGING & MEDIA GUIDE**

*Prepared by Beth Trimarco Consulting: January, 2019*

*Organizational Name Changed*

## **Positioning “The Center” at a Cross Section of Issues**

“The Center” is uniquely situated at the cross section between several key issues: economic justice for low-wage workers, housing, and senior poverty. These issues have reached a boiling point in the Bay Area and are also reflected on the national stage. The biggest public facing opportunity for “The Center” – both in communications and advocacy work – lies in the alleviation of senior poverty and being advocates for a Just Lifetime for Oaklanders:

- Earning a decent living with health care and retirement during the working years in an area of incredible wealth and economic disparity;
- Having affordable and safe housing over one’s entire lifespan in an area facing gentrification and skyrocketing housing costs; and
- Having dignity in one’s senior years: a sense of well-being that includes community, housing, and enough money for food, health care, and one’s basic needs.

“The Center” residents have a unique view into the future of Oakland. They have persevered through low-wage jobs without benefits, unaffordable housing, and the skyrocketing cost of living. “The Center” residents know that without action, younger low-income folks of today will someday face the same difficulties the elders are facing now.

## **Senior Poverty: Next Wave Issue**

The retirement of the Baby Boomers is often referred to as the “Silver Tsunami” and presents an opportunity for public engagement in the media and public spaces. There is very little media coverage of senior poverty or the cross section of issues which create the perfect storm of challenges for older adults in the Bay Area: the housing crisis, health care costs, and a lifetime of low-income jobs. These three issues have been covered extensively, but not together, and not with an eye towards how they add up for seniors. This presents a wide opportunity for “The Center” to insert itself into the public sphere, leading the charge on a next wave issue.

Additionally, residents can be the public face of senior poverty for statewide and national organizations and coalitions who have challenge finding that authentic voice. “The Center” has it.

## **Narrative: The Problem**

There’s a global monsoon of wealth bearing down on Oakland. Each new crane that goes up is building a tower of prosperity for the select few, and a downward ladder for low-income Oaklanders – particularly those in their senior years.

Many Oaklanders struggle their whole lives only to face a penniless retirement. They've spent a lifetime in low-wage jobs with no retirement plans and run out of time to be able to work. Their bodies are too old for manual labor, and they are often unwanted in other low-wage service jobs. With no savings, they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Domestic, farm, and restaurant workers are just a few who are not only paid low wages during their working years, but are often ineligible for Social Security. These workers are disproportionately women, people of color, and immigrants.

Supplemental Security Income is for seniors who do not qualify for social security and is only \$733 per month from the federal government, with the CA supplement totaling only \$991 per month. For Oakland's seniors on SSI, it is impossible to survive without some community support. Sadly, many struggle with homelessness because SSI is so paltry in comparison to the cost of living.

This is an issue of economic racism. In Oakland, 2/3 of our homeless population is Black, and inequities in the system disproportionately impact people of color. In Oakland, these impacts are felt most acutely with the loss of quality middle class jobs; the racialized war on drugs and mass incarceration; and re-segregation because of gentrification. As the housing affordability crisis balloons with each passing year, more low-income people of color are pushed out, and more senior Oaklanders who have lived in our city for decades are forced to leave the only community they know, sometimes facing homelessness.

### **The Stats**

- 10K people turn 65 every day in the U.S.
- There are roughly 50K homeless seniors across the U.S.
- In Oakland, we have thousands of seniors struggling with housing, many are homeless, including a homeless encampment by Lake Merritt for people 55 and older.
- The average senior pays \$4,734 in health care costs in spite of Medicare.
- Wages have been stagnant since the 80s, and 28% of 55- to 64-year-olds have no retirement savings, and those who do only have an average of only \$150K.
- Pensions are things of yesteryear with very few having access.

### **Policy Solutions to Deal with the Crisis**

These are not intractable problems. We have the solutions and just need the will.

- Increase the supply of affordable housing by requiring a 25% share of new development be affordable like other Bay Area cities do.
- Set aside all publicly-owned land for affordable housing.
- Increase impact fees so that corporate developers pay their fair share in infrastructure costs and set aside money for affordable housing.
- Pass stronger renter protections, enforce the current laws, and provide low-cost legal services to fight evictions.

- With a progressive governor and Democratic supermajority in the California Legislature, increase the SSI CA supplement to much higher than \$991 per month.
- Fund supportive housing like “The Center” for those experiencing chronic homelessness.

### **Policy Solutions to Deal with the Cause**

- Pass community benefit agreements with developers to increase the supply of affordable housing and provide quality jobs with living wages, affordable health care, and retirement benefits.
- Increase the minimum wage in Oakland and pass higher living wage ordinances on public land.
- Regulate gig economy employers like Lyft, Uber, and Door Dash so that “independent contractors” have access to benefits.
- Raise SSI to higher than \$733 on the federal level.
- Expand health care so that there is Medicare for all once there is a Democratic majority on the federal level.
- Increase HUD benefits for seniors once there is a Democratic majority at the federal level.
- Use Medicaid to pay for housing-related services for older adults – as housing is a part of good health – once there is a Democratic majority at the federal level.

### **The Tension Between Advocacy & Social Service**

A big adjustment for “The Center” will be the move from the direct service “charity” world into more of an advocacy role, and so there is a vastly different relationship with the media as well as a shift in the organizational landscape. News items will tend to be feature stories that are people-centric and cover the issues they face, rather than issue-centric with people as examples. Because “The Center” is a direct service organization that needs to maintain and expand its donor base, it is critical to create “warm and fuzzy” feelings about residents. It is also important – programmatically and racially – to put seniors in front, have them tell their own stories, and feel a sense of empowerment through participation and decision-making.

Finally, there is also a deep culture amongst donors of prioritizing social service over advocacy, so some “change management” strategies are recommended with the organization’s communications program. This is a longer-term process to move the gravitational center of the organization towards advocacy. It will not happen with one letter, one media story, or one meeting. Instead, it is a carefully thought-out plan of both management and communications to make cultural shifts over time.

### **Centering “The Center” Residents**

“The Center” residents are Oakland’s elders and all have incredible stories to tell. To break through the “noise” of policy wonks, those residents should be at the center of any media and public-facing community work wherever possible. As you know, this is also important given the racial dynamic

of having a white Executive Director representing senior residents who are almost entirely people of color.

It's worth noting that media tends to center white leaders. The reasons for this media bias are complex and structural, and it's a trend that "The Center" will have to remain aware of and mitigate with strategically-crafted media pitches.

Although coverage of advocacy by white leaders in Oakland can be well intentioned, as a whole this trend props up an unhelpful savior narrative and perpetuates a long-standing dynamic of silencing the voices of people of color. "The Center" has the power and the opportunity to shift this narrative and ensure that the voices of "The Center" residents are heard and celebrated in the media. True white allyship steps back to allow the space for people of color to speak for themselves. In the case of "The Center", the residents also present a very appealing public face of the issues, so it is not only ethical but strategic to ensure they are front and center in both media and public-facing community work.

Offering a view into the intersecting issues of senior poverty through the lens of seniors' lived experiences is one of the most comprehensive and easily digestible ways to explain these issues to the public. It is also the most attractive and persuasive because "The Center" residents are so appealing and full of rich storytelling, wisdom, and authenticity.

Take this opportunity to establish your residents as thought leaders. This will raise the profile of "The Center" Center, bring senior poverty front of mind in a way it has not been for reporters and Bay Area media consumers, and establish "The Center" Center as an expert voice in senior advocacy at the local, state, and even national level.

### **Messaging to a Youthful Bay Area**

The Bay Area is very youth culture driven, and with the influx of tech Millennials into Oakland, it presents a challenge to get audiences to care about old people. The greatest arrogance of youth is that most really don't believe they will actually get old. This generally carries until middle age when people start to feel the aging process and begin to worry about getting older. Still, there is a big cognitive disconnect, and folks often put the idea of a penniless retirement in the back of their heads, saying, "I will think of something." Most people have trouble understanding that they won't be able to work, and there really isn't a safety net. So messaging needs to connect to that younger audience in a different way than simply educating people on the realities of senior poverty.

### **Campaign: Vintage Oakland or Classic Oakland**

We recommend a campaign of "Vintage Oakland: Stories from Our City's Elders" or "Classic Oakland: Stories from Our City's Elders" for all facets of communications. This would be something residents would need to buy into, and they might have different ideas of what the campaign could be. Their input and ground-up decision-making is critical for success.

The public does not think of senior poverty when thinking about the housing crisis, and the Bay Area's gentrification is very Millennial driven. Featuring seniors' stories, our rich Oakland history, and re-establishing respect for elders is "The Center" greatest strength. It will be key in creating an attractive and persuasive public image that carries both interest for a changing donor landscape and gravitas in the policy arena.

Oakland's elders have earned their gray hair over a lifetime of working to make our community stronger, raising their families, and contributing to our City. They've had a lifetime of struggle – and a lifetime of wisdom to pass onto the next generation so we can move forward, do more, do better, and lift up everyone in our community so folks have a Just Lifetime from cradle to grave.

### **Components of "Vintage Oakland" or "Classic Oakland"**

- Program: Resident-centered storytelling, empowerment, and legacy creation in the Council of Elders. Create buttons: "I am Vintage Oakland."
- Graphics: Using the mural across the street and "Vintage Oakland: Stories of Our City's Elders"
- Website: Feature Vintage Oakland as the slideshow on the homepage, putting residents' stories up front instead of couched far down on secondary pages.
- Facebook: Feature shorter versions/videos of residents telling their stories.
- Instagram: Create a senior-run "Vintage Oakland" account.
- Donor Comms: Always feature a senior story in letters – show transformation, and by using Vintage Oakland, begin to attract a younger, more local group of donors.
- Corporate Comms: Vintage Oakland will attract the Millennial donors that are part of corporate volunteering. Encourage story sharing and the connections between old and young to deepen engagement of young donors.

### **Filling the Void on Senior Poverty**

The new Executive Director is also uniquely situated as an expert in both labor and housing issues, and can fill the void in senior advocacy in the East Bay. Though there are organizations involved in advocacy for seniors, there is no one organization leading the charge in communications about senior poverty, nor is there any strong local driver of coalition efforts.

"The Center" is seen as the public face of the crisis of senior poverty, with residents representing a very sympathetic voice in statewide advocacy in Sacramento. There is very little Oakland-based advocacy, and almost no media on the subject.

Because the new Executive Director has such a strong background in housing, there will be a tendency to jump into the overcrowded field of housing advocacy. However, coalitions in this space are well-formed, leadership from both the organizational and political level is well-established, and there is a narrow path for public engagement.

It would be far more fruitful to fill the void in leadership around senior poverty and to advocate for a Just Lifetime for Oaklanders. In this advocacy space, affordable and safe housing is one of several legs of the stool to support a dignified life, but not the sole focus.

## **MEDIA SCAN: BAY AREA OUTLETS**

### **Oakland Magazine Topline Assessment:**

A standard social justice pitch would miss the mark with this outlet. Though the magazine includes an upfront 'Reporter' section covering news & politics, articles about social issues are generally solution-oriented and even celebratory. Oakland Magazine veers towards a tourist/travel magazine in tone, featuring stories about all that is excellent, innovative, joyful, and beautiful in Oakland and the East Bay.

Stories about health, housing, and poverty frequently revolve around an innovative Oakland-based program and/or exceptional Oaklanders—thought-leaders, satisfied program participants, academics, advocates, etc. For example:

- A feature [article](#) about toxic stress in children celebrates two female, African-American pediatricians whose Oakland treatment clinic is at the heart of a groundbreaking study.
- A news [article](#) about unaffordable housing and blight features an East Bay organization that's attempting to solve both problems with one innovative solution.
- A news [article](#) about the untapped potential of East Bay youth profiles three young scholars who benefited from a local education nonprofit that's now expanding.

Oakland Magazine's editorial approach presents an opportunity to pitch a story that both:

- Celebrates "The Center" fantastic residents and uplifts its innovative programs.
- Includes an analysis of the unique cross section of issues faced by "The Center" residents and Oakland elders, including low wages, stagnated SSI benefits, high healthcare costs, transportation issues, the housing crisis, the changing landscape of Oakland, and the psychological and material effects of structural racism both past and present.

### **Nuts & Bolts:**

- Pitch two months in advance. The magazine goes to print 3-4 weeks before issues hit stands.
- Pitch directly to reporters.
  - Patrick Hoge ([patrick.hoge@gmail.com](mailto:patrick.hoge@gmail.com)) and Janis Hashe ([openlinescomm@gmail.com](mailto:openlinescomm@gmail.com)) both write good articles about social issues including housing, social services, and poverty. Andrea A. Firth ([Andrea@andreaAfirth.com](mailto:Andrea@andreaAfirth.com)) has written about East Bay health initiatives several times. They are all freelance.
- Alternately or additionally, you can pitch:
  - Judy Gallman, Editor ([judy@OaklandMagazine.com](mailto:judy@OaklandMagazine.com), 510-879-3729). Judy covers features.

- Bob Gammon, Publisher ([RobertG@OaklandMagazine.com](mailto:RobertG@OaklandMagazine.com), 510-879-3752). Bob covers news.
- Themed issues: This March is the Style Issue, so a pitch for March will not land. The Home & Design Issue is expected to be in July this year, which may present a good opportunity to pitch a story about “The Center” innovative supportive housing approach.

### **Components of a Pitch for Oakland Magazine:**

**Subject Line / Headline:** As you know, keeping a succinct headline in mind while pitching will help the pitch remain focused even though the outlet will write their own. Suggestions:

- “Vintage Oakland: Stories from Oakland’s Elders”
- “Once Homeless, These Oakland Seniors Are Now Housing Advocates”
- **The Pitch:**
  - Invite Oakland Magazine to write an article featuring the stories of St. Mary Center’s residents and the nonprofit’s unique approach to addressing the cross section of issues that perpetuate poverty in Oakland’s elder population.
  - To align with the style of the magazine, use “Vintage Oakland” as the brand for selling the stories of elders which are at once full of struggle, color, and celebration.
  - Offer that Oakland Magazine can profile several fantastic residents who will speak to how their lives have been affected by low wages, stagnated SSI benefits, high healthcare costs, transportation issues, the housing crisis, the changing landscape of Oakland, and the psychological and material effects of structural racism both past and present.
  - Oakland Magazine is particularly interested in organizations that present innovative solutions. “The Center” Center has a big picture approach to the work – the organization excels at treating the symptoms of poverty while also working to address the causes. “The Center” meets the immediate needs of clients who are homeless and struggling, but also provides support and guidance to help them transform into advocates and activists when they are ready. In addition to this topline point, be sure to outline what makes “The Center” Center the best, the first, and/or the only:
    - The best supportive housing program for low-income Oakland seniors facing health and addiction issues.
    - The first program to provide both housing and political organizing opportunities for low-income seniors in Oakland.
    - The only winter shelter for seniors in Northern California.
- **Profiles:**
  - Provide short “Vintage Oakland” profiles of three diverse residents with colorful histories. People who have been Oakland residents for decades and are now able to remain in Oakland because of “The Center”. People who can speak to “The Center” Center’s transformative effect on their life and what it means to them to be able to stay in Oakland amidst rising costs and rapid gentrification. At least one of these

residents should be involved in advocacy work and last year's SSI / food stamps victory.

- Ortencia would be an excellent person to profile in the pitch. She speaks candidly about her situation while also positioning herself as an advocate for the younger generation. She's special because of her full circle story: Ortencia worked for many years as a teacher and even at 85 she still advocates for her students' generation, who she worries will face even more hardships than she does in their senior years.
- Clyde is emotionally compelling. His story illustrates how a health problem can upend a person's life after 35 years of dedication to a trade. He's a good messenger and can speak to the way SSI and other benefits don't cover the rising costs of living in the Bay Area. What "The Center" programs has he been a part of?
- **Program Staff Interview(s):**
  - Offer interviews with 1-2 staff who run innovative programs at "The Center," particularly those that address poverty now (direct services) and in the future (political organizing and power-building community events).
  - Suggested messaging: "Here at "The Center", we're working to remedy senior poverty in Oakland. But we're also working to prevent it in the future. And our residents are a vital part of that advocacy."
- **Photos:**
  - Attach photos of the garden, Senior Day at the Capitol, and a lunch hour or other community center event, and the people you profiled in the pitch.
- **Timeliness:**
  - This is not the most important element for a feature pitch. However, incorporate a timely hook if one exists. Suggestions:
    - Senior Day at the Capitol
    - A celebration at the community center
    - A housing advocacy meeting
    - Fundraising gala
    - Opening the winter shelter

#### **Pitching Opportunities Based on the Magazine's Cycle:**

- Annual Home & Design Issue (July): story about "The Center" innovative supportive housing approach.
- Annual Holiday Issue (Dec): story about Winter Shelter & Gift/Meal Program.
- Annual Best of Oakland Issue (April): Submit for the "Best Homecare for Seniors" category.
- Election Issue (Nov): story about "The Center" seniors preparing to volunteer at the polls.

#### **San Francisco Chronicle Topline Assessment:**

There is a dearth of stories in the Chronicle that adequately address the cross section of issues facing "The Center" residents. Target the following reporters with pitches that address their beat or area of interest while urging them to report on the intersection of senior poverty, lack of

affordable housing, a history of low wages with leading to an inability to save for retirement, stagnating SSI benefits, rising costs of living.

**Switchboard:** 415-777-1111 and ask to be connected

**Kevin Fagan** specializes in enterprise news-feature writing and breaking news. From 2003 to 2006, Kevin was the only beat reporter in the United States covering homelessness full-time. He still writes stories about homelessness 1-2 times a month, although he writes almost exclusively about San Francisco. An exception being [this trend piece](#) about the allocation of tiny homes for homeless people throughout the Bay Area. We suggest pitching Kevin on a story about seniors who can no longer afford to live in San Francisco but have been able to remain in Oakland, featuring a charming “The Center” resident with a history in San Francisco and Oakland.

Contact info: [kfagan@sfchronicle.com](mailto:kfagan@sfchronicle.com)

**Tatiana Sanchez** is an immigration and civil rights reporter, new to the Chronicle but not to Bay Area news. She reported on race, demographics and immigration for the Bay Area News Group until recently. We suggest pitching her on lifelong issues of economic racism which have left many Black and Chinese seniors facing homelessness. Also discuss “The Center” unique, culturally competent approach to care and housing.

Contact info: [Tatiana.Sanchez@sfchronicle.com](mailto:Tatiana.Sanchez@sfchronicle.com)

**Kim Veklerov** is the Chronicle’s Oakland/East Bay reporter and covers policy, social issues, and general news. She has done some coverage of housing issues, but is mostly a go-to for general pitches that are Oakland-specific. We suggest pitching her when there are policy issues that “The Center” is advocating for. Contact info: [kveklerov@sfchronicle.com](mailto:kveklerov@sfchronicle.com)

**Gwendolyn Wu** is a Chronicle fellow looking to write meaningful stories, particularly about Asian American issues and culture. Right now she is a crime & public safety reporter who has written compassionately about San Francisco’s homelessness crisis and solutions to a lack of affordable housing. We suggest pitching her on a story about “The Center” Asian-American and immigrant residents, the unique issues that contributed to their circumstances, and what organizations and Bay Area cities can learn from Asian-American seniors about how best to address senior poverty.

Contact info: [gwendolyn.wu@sfchronicle.com](mailto:gwendolyn.wu@sfchronicle.com)

**Tara Duggan** is a food reporter who has written extensively about hunger. We suggest pairing up with a San Francisco-based organization and pitching Tara on a trend story about Bay Area organizations taking an innovative approach to solving senior hunger issues, including food stamp and SSI advocacy.

Contact info: [tduggan@sfchronicle.com](mailto:tduggan@sfchronicle.com)

**Catherine Ho** is a healthcare and health technology reporter. She occasionally writes about how state and federal politics affects vulnerable communities’ access to health care, including immigrants and Californians without insurance. We suggest pitching her on a story about ballooning senior poverty due to the intersection of disability / health issues, inadequate or

nonexistent health benefits. Ideally the pitch would be tied to news about state legislation or policy advocacy at the state level.

Contact info: [cho@sfchronicle.com](mailto:cho@sfchronicle.com)

**Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar** is a healthcare reporter for the Associated Press, based in Washington DC. Articles run by the SF Chronicle that adequately address the intersection of senior poverty, disability, and healthcare are largely written by him.

Contact info: [ralonso-zaldivar@ap.org](mailto:ralonso-zaldivar@ap.org), (212) 621 1500

### **East Bay Times**

**Marisa Kendall** covers housing for the Bay Area News Group. She writes about homelessness and the impact local companies have on housing availability in the region. She seems to have a special interest in stories about creative solutions to homelessness and the housing crisis. We recommend pitching a story about how a lack of affordable housing and other factors (wages, SSI, disability, health) have created a perfect storm for near-homeless seniors in the East Bay. Position “The Center” Center as a model for the region in addressing the unique needs of this oft-ignored population.

Contact info: [mkendall@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:mkendall@bayareanewsgroup.com), 408-920-5009

**Erin Baldassari** covers both transportation and the housing shortage for the East Bay Times and Mercury News. She won a Pulitzer as part of the Ghost Ship Fire reporting team. If “The Center” has any transportation-related advocacy coming up this year she would be a good fit for that story. But she’s also a sharp reporter and if Marisa passes on a housing story, Erin is a good bet.

Contact info: [ebaldassari@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:ebaldassari@bayareanewsgroup.com), 510-208-6428

**Ali Tadayon** covers Oakland for the Bay Area News Group. He has written multiple stories about homelessness and affordable housing politics in the East Bay, including stories profiling successful anti-poverty programs.

Contact info: [atadayon@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:atadayon@bayareanewsgroup.com), 408-859-5289

### **East Bay Express**

Because of a lawsuit, the EBX laid off its entire editorial staff and may fold. We’ll see what happens in the next six months, but it’s unlikely they will run any stories on “The Center” while they focus their attention on their bread and butter: investigative journalism. HOWEVER, their lack of content presents an enormous opportunity to write opeds or suggest weekly blogs as a volunteer writer.

### **OPED Ideas**

All opeds should focus should be built on the foundation of senior stories and preferably come from “The Center” residents.

- The effects of government shutdown on any senior services or poverty-related programs such as SNAP.
- Increase CA SSI supplement under Newsom and Democratic supermajority.
- Lower income requirement of \$1,500 for below-market rate “affordable” housing since those on SSI have less.
- Oakland’s elders: the invisible part of our city that’s vanishing.

### **Providing a Pipeline of Senior Stories to National Organizations**

There is more media coverage on aging and senior poverty on the national front. “The Center” can provide a pipeline of trained senior spokespeople who all have stories to tell. Many national organizations and coalitions struggle to find seniors who can speak on the issues because they are not member based, do not provide services, and/or focus only the policies themselves. “The Center” can outreach to all those organizations and their press people to get on their radar as a resource for media stories. This would provide seniors a potentially empowering experience, help move policy, and get “The Center” out there. Articles can then be sent to donors and funders.

### **TALKING POINTS**

#### **“The Center”: A Place of Hope, Healing, and Justice**

*“The Center” has a wonderful tagline that should be used wherever possible – it is positive, succinct, and inspiring.*

“The Center” provides hope, healing, and justice for Oakland’s seniors facing poverty and homelessness. It is one of the few places to provide Whole Person Care to elders, including housing, food, counseling, community, and a sense of belonging.

Here at “The Center”, we’re working to remedy senior poverty in Oakland. But we’re also working to prevent it in the future. And residents like us are a vital part of that advocacy.

“The Center” residents are superheroes. We’ve been through a lot, and we’ve persevered. But nobody in the Bay Area, not even superheroes, can truly get by on \$991 per month. We shouldn’t be asking that of anyone, let alone elders.

“The Center” fights poverty by putting good, healthy life first. We break through racial and economic barriers to create pathways. We improve seniors’ health, housing security, financial stability, and overall sense of well-being.

Oakland has a rich history of being a community where people could grow old. Where the village takes care of people in need. With runaway housing prices and policies that don’t work for elders, we’re straying from that legacy. So we are leading the charge in Oakland to re-orient our policies to stand by Oakland values of justice, compassion, and caring for elders.

## **Vintage Oakland or Classic Oakland**

*Having messaging that residents can take pride in – something they own – will help elevate the “The Center” “brand” in public and with donors. What they own is Oakland’s history and wisdom.*

“The Center” residents are Vintage Oakland: we are our city’s history, its wisdom, and we’re helping determine its future.

We have earned our gray hair and have a lifetime of wisdom to pass onto the next generation so we can move forward, do more, do better, and lift up everyone in our community so folks have a Just Lifetime from cradle to grave.

We are Vintage Oakland, and we’re not going anywhere. We welcome newcomers who come here for our diversity and rich cultural history, and are working together to make sure Oakland’s future can promise a just and healthy life for all.

Vintage means an enduring classic, and “The Center” residents represent true blue Oakland and all that we want to preserve of our rich cultural history as a city.

## **The Problem for Senior Oaklanders**

*To fill the void in public advocacy and communications, having messaging that weaves together the intersectional issues of senior poverty is essential. Senior poverty is also an invisible problem in the Bay Area, so speaking simply in broad strokes is a necessity.*

Many Oaklanders struggle our whole lives only to face a penniless retirement. We’ve spent a lifetime in low-wage jobs, and we can no longer work to pay the bills.

No one on minimum wage can save *and* raise a family during their working years, and now that we are too old to work, we are stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Who is in these low-wage jobs? Almost entirely women, people of color, and immigrants.

Many of us do not qualify for social security, and we live on less than \$1000 per month – not even a superhero could survive on that in Oakland.

With the housing crisis, many of us are forced to leave the only community we’ve known our whole lives, and some of us even face homelessness.

This is an issue of economic racism. It’s the lack of access to middle class jobs; the racialized war on drugs and mass incarceration; and re-segregation because of gentrification.

Oakland's seniors are tough – we stretch every dollar to put a simple dinner on the table of broth and noodles. We take the bus even when walking to the station hurts. We sleep in shelters when we have to, even when it's as cold inside as it is outside. It shouldn't be this hard.

As the housing affordability crisis balloons with each passing year, more low-income seniors are forced into poverty or worse: homelessness.

### **The Solutions for a Just Lifetime**

*The public doesn't know about these problems, and they must be reminded of solutions in a simple way without jargon.*

We've spent a lifetime caring for our families and our communities. And now that we're in our golden years, we need a little bit of care too.

We need to re-orient our policies so seniors are not in crisis today, but also address the root causes so we are not in crisis in the first place.

This includes raising social security and SSI so that those living on a fixed income actually have enough to keep a roof over our heads, food on the table, and money for the doctor and prescriptions.

It means raising wages and providing retirement security during people's working years so folks can actually save for our golden years.

Finally, it means addressing systemic racism to break barriers for people of color to acquire education, job training, and middle class jobs.

### **A Connected Community and a Place to Belong**

*We all know about the cultural war going on between new and old Oakland, young and old, with deep racial division. It is important to acknowledge this division and speak positively about creating a connected community where we all belong. We must speak to the pain and fear of long-term residents. However, we aren't going to be able to stop the influx of young, white, tech wealth coming to Oakland, and need to signal that they should be included in preserving Oakland's rich cultural history.*

There is great division in our city right now between old and new residents. But the truth is, whether we have lived here all our lives or are new to the town, we all crave a connected community.

By creating a connected community that includes old and new residents, young and old, we create a sense of belonging for all. And most importantly, we can work together to make sure that as this city grows, no one gets shut out, forgotten, or forced on the street.

At the very core of human nature is the desire to be valued, to feel at home, and to have community and a place to belong. However, the housing crisis and income inequality creates fear we'll lose our place. We fear scarcity. We fear that we will lose Oakland's rich cultural diversity. However, by coming together and sharing, we all rise and preserve our sense of home.

Through making connections, we bring down beyond barriers between old and new residents and across racial lines. Only then will we be able to transform and develop the hope and drive to tackle the challenges in our community such as the housing crisis, senior poverty, and homelessness.

When people aren't getting their needs met, it's really hard to connect. And when it's hard to connect, it's hard to heal. And when it's hard to heal, it's hard to organize.

But when people are a part of a community, we feel better, and we feel connected to something larger than ourselves. Community and a sense of belonging has the power to heal.