

# **Nikki Fortunato Bas Inauguration Speech**

**Oakland City Council, District 2 | January 2019**

***OVERARCHING THEME: Community, a sense of belonging, and people-powered government.***

Thank you! I am so honored to serve District 2 and all of you, Oakland!

This was an Oakland defining election. We won by 14 points. 11,000 people said yes to our vision of an Oakland that includes all of us, to governing together with a set of values that we promoted - equity, inclusion, and community participation. All of us means that I will represent you whether you voted for me or not. We all know our challenges are so great that we must come together.

We have a mandate for people-powered government. On Saturday, my first public action as an elected leader was hosting a community meeting to create my agenda together with you and to continue building the grassroots, progressive movement and infrastructure that emerged from our campaign and others.

I heard from you this weekend and over the past year - knocking on your doors, talking on the phone, and hearing from you in our neighborhoods. What I heard - is that you love Oakland deeply - this is your home - you are raising your family here - you want to stay here - and you want to hold on to a sense of belonging to the Town we all love.

But more and more of you are feeling left out. We feel the real threats of growing inequality, displacement and gentrification. We know that there are pervasive systems at the roots of these challenges like racism and unchecked corporate influence. These systems manifest in our daily lives.

I've walked the lake and met our unsheltered neighbors. Inside the tents are young people aging out of foster care and veterans with nowhere to go. Seniors who are creating your own safe communities. Working mothers raising children who can't afford an apartment. Beyond the statistics and tents, I have seen tremendous care, creativity and resilience - people creating community and a sense of belonging even under the most adverse conditions, humans pursuing our most natural human needs.

I've also met renters - who face threats of skyrocketing rents and hazardous living conditions without repairs. You feel a sense of instability and fear you may have to leave your hometown. You could easily become yet another Oakland worker who lives in the outer suburbs of Tracy or further.

And, I've talked with homeowners whose kids can't afford to stay here. Young adults are sharing space with parents because it's so hard to stay in Oakland. You have been here for generations, and we are all losing our sense of community and diversity.

Meanwhile, there are a record number of cranes across our city, more than in San Francisco. Housing development is booming, but it's booming for those who can pay thousands, and out of reach for middle and working class Oaklanders. So many of you are beyond frustrated with seeing this booming development while our housing and homeless crisis explodes.

Enough! No more free passes, no more deals behind closed doors. We want developers and corporations to be PART of our community by contributing to the things that we all love about Oakland. By employing and housing working and middle class Oaklanders and supporting public education, our transit system, local businesses and arts.

We are talking about people-powered government where decisions are NOT made FOR you but WITH you.

And as your councilmember I will have a transparent, accountable government.

We should grow as a city and we can grow as a city that is equitable and inclusive. We can do this and we WILL do this.

These are problems that we can solve if this council along with the rest of our city government - all lead together with a set of values that prioritize equity and real democracy. We CAN build an Oakland for ALL of us.

And I'll do my part by focusing on these three themes over my first 100 days and first year. Themes we developed together over the past year by engaging thousands of Oaklanders, themes that we began to flesh out this past weekend with our neighbors.

1. **Housing is a human right** - a key function of our city government is to make sure that everyone has shelter. We must provide essential services to our homeless neighbors and provide shelter while treating them with compassion and keeping families and communities together. We must create more affordable housing - low and middle income housing that keep Oaklanders here. And, we must continue to protect renters who are the majority of Oaklanders.
2. **Our city budget has to meet our community needs** and be driven by community values of inclusion, equity, and transparency. This means prioritizing our human needs - housing, job training, public safety that focuses on prevention. And we must make sure that funds that we as voters approved are spent responsibly.
3. **Our City must provide services for each and every neighborhood.** Services that create healthy, clean, safe environments for all of our kids to play and walk to school.

I look forward to working towards these goals over the next 100 days and next year.

I know that our Black neighbors are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, over-policing and lack of jobs, I will represent you. I am proud to be Oakland's first Filipina Councilmember, I will represent our diverse Asian Pacific American community. I am the daughter of immigrants and I will represent our Latinx and immigrant communities. I recognize we are on Ohlone land and I will represent our Indigenous communities. We all know Oakland is rich with LGBTQ culture, and I will represent you. We know Oakland is a Union Town, and I will represent our workers. Finally, as a parent, I will represent our kids and work for a future where they will thrive.

And while we are on the topic of families, I want to thank my husband who defies gender expectations and the role of men in family; I wouldn't be here today without your support.

Finally, this is not about me. There were so many people and organizations who volunteered, endorsed, donated and voted for our campaign. Please stand up. This is about people-powered government. I need all of you to keep working with me because we can only do this together. I also invite all of you to join us. **EVERYONE PLEASE STAND.** This is **YOUR** government. It's going to take all of us working together to bridge our divisions, and to connect to that sense of community and belonging that we all yearn. I am so humbled to represent you to truly make this a town where we all belong.

Thank you.