

Statement From The Village & Allies On The Constant Attempts To Undermine The Community's Efforts To Ensure The Human Right Of Housing For All

March 7, 2018

Oakland, California

The Village is a people's movement to ensure the human right of adequate, dignified, temporary emergency housing as a pathway to self-sufficiency and permanent housing. There have been continuous undermining attempts to compromise The Village's progress by City of Oakland elected and appointed officials as well as law enforcement officers. The latest violation of our most vulnerable citizens by authorities occurred when two homeless leaders of The Village were forced to defend themselves and the encampment from an attack by a known predator.

Jodie Everett is part of The Village leadership and resident who intervened when his fellow Village leader and resident Mouangjoi Tracy Saelee Edmond when she attempted to defend herself from being assaulted with a nail-riddled two by four.

However, we know the person they were defending themselves and the encampment from is also a victim of the system. He is in desperate need of mental health services and housing. There is a compassionate way to deal with our unsheltered residents, but prosecuting them in our criminal justice system is not it. We need to show empathy and make sure they all get homes, medical services, mental health services, safety and protection. We do not need to pit them against each other. The issue we need to address is institutional. It is not about the two leaders who defended themselves and the encampment. It is not about the person who attacked Tracy. This should have never happened in the first place. They are all victims of an avaricious system.

The long line of attacks on the homeless residents of Oakland and The Village began in February 2017 when Oakland City Administration spent \$75,000 to bulldoze a safe, sober and organized encampment of tiny homes on neglected city land. It has continued with the City's consistent avoidance of dealing with the humanitarian crisis of homelessness in a constructive and humane manner. It escalated when Assistant to the City Administrator Joe DeVries instructed police and Public Works to herd six encampments across East Oakland and dump them onto the land the city granted the Village. This herding of unsheltered folks happened without consulting The Village. The City designated East 12 Street and 23rd Avenue as a safe haven for homeless residents that The Village autonomously manages. Yet the City Administration proceeded to create dangerous, toxic, and unstable conditions.

By refusing to provide the same city services and treatment available to all of Oakland's housed residents, including protection and other basic services, the so-called safe haven has become a nest of violence and criminal activity that has traumatized and harmed the residents of The Village and the surrounding community. The Mayor, Administration, and Oakland Police Department have been informed repeatedly about the conditions, the ongoing violence, the danger they created. They are doing nothing to address the issues they've created.

And now, scheduled for November 2018, the City plans to take away the land it granted The Village five months ago. The 80 people the City herded will now be forcibly displaced to rebuild the overpass that spans across the parcel.

It has been a long drawn out act of sabotage to the wellbeing of the residents who were corralled here. The City has undermined the efforts of the residents at The Village to maintain basic survival and improve their own livelihoods. Attempting to criminalize two of The Village leaders for having to deal with dangerous and inhumane conditions created by the Administration is the latest of the unjust and deplorable attacks.

What Mayor Libby Schaaf, Assistants to the City Administrator Christine Daniel and Joe DeVries are responsible for undermining the livelihood of residents at The Village; what the police did and what the criminal system is doing is a waste of resources. These two leaders are not people who should be charged. These two leaders had to defend themselves in that moment. Consistent ineffective and inhumane homeless policies and police misconduct mean that charges should be dropped, and services provided. Monies spent on criminal injustices rather than services to our city's most vulnerable is unconscionable. Monies spent on a corrupt police department to terrorize and harass our vulnerable curbside communities rather than permanent homes for the homeless is the sign of illegitimate leadership.

We demand these charges be dropped. We demand the Mayor and her Administration be accountable for trying to deliberately obstruct and destroy The Village. We demand all encampments be immediately sanctioned and provided with sanitation services, support services, security, and a pathway to permanent homes immediately.

