

"PART 4 : HISTORY OF BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT"

By David Jaffe

Following the disturbances of the Fall of 1966 community leaders wanted to translate the attention given to Hunters Point into political gains. In 1966 the city set up a committee to study the causes of the disturbances. The South Bayshore Study, 1969, recognized that, "...poverty, unemployment, lack of job opportunities, poor schooling-contributed to the mounting social unrest and the frustration and suspicion which exploded into the riot of September 1966." (South Bayshore Study, as quoted from Rifkin.) The

Study suggested comprehensive physical planning, like improved housing and business centers, as a way to improve life in Hunter's Point. The Model Cities Agency, begun in 1968 with financial aid from the Federal City Demonstrations Act, focused on the economic and social needs that the Bayshore study wrote about. One of the goals of the Model Cities Agency was to improve citizen participation in the decisions that affect their lives. Model Cities, the third in a succession of participatory community self-help organizations during the 1960s, built on

the work of the Citizen's Committee and the EOC. Model Cities created task forces on economic development, manpower administration, law and justice, culture, health, education and housing, all attempting to combat the high unemployment and school drop-out rates, the inadequate housing and the poverty that continued to plague Hunters Point.

The law and justice commission built on the work of Earnest "Pee Wee" Mitchell, who, throughout the 1960s had been working with felony defense

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lawyers. Model Cities education committee continued the work of its predecessors and, with the aid of Beatrice Dunbar, focused on getting the Dr. Drew school named after the Black leader.

Youth involvement was encouraged by the Model Cities plan in an effort to develop future leaders for the neighborhood. It was the Vanguard, a gang of approximately 120 young people, that provided much of the man power for local youth programs. By organizing weekly dances, by helping out at the Miss Bayview pageant, by renovating the opera house and by serving food to the less fortunate during Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Vanguard became the backbone of the Bayview Hunters Point group.

Reflecting on the period of intense community activity from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Brooks comments that there was, "No way to pinpoint any one responsible. What occurred out here are collective activities and concern a great number of people...At the center there were no paid people. At the time there was a lot of real community feeling about helping one another to make this work. It was a very exciting period." Model Cities continued to be active until the mood in Congress toward community based

programs changed during the 1970s.

In 1973 two separate events signaled the beginning of a new era for Bayview Hunters Point. The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard closed, and the city succeeded in gaining control of Federal funds. The Shipyard had been fighting a death struggle for over 25 years. In 1949 the yard almost closed, but the Korean war the next year saved it. In 1962 defense secretary McNamara wanted to close the yards, but once again war came to the rescue. As the Vietnam war came to a close in the early 1970's there simply was no need for the huge shipyard. Unfortunately Hunters Point already had a 30% unemployment rate before the Navy eliminated 5184 jobs, 40% of which were held by minorities. The closing of the shipyard put an added burden on an already socially taxed Hunters Point. The Navy has since been engaged in a cleanup of the many hazardous waste sites on the grounds of the shipyard caused by years of storage of radioactive waste from other military facilities.

The same year that the shipyard closed City Hall succeeded in its long struggle to control the money going to the array of social programs in Hunters Point. According to Harold B. Brooks, "When we had self-determination in the EOC the City Hall

screamed so hard that they gained control of the dollars that affected people's lives."

Since the mid-1970's there has not been as much community control over the programs. According to Brooks, participation is essential to successful programming. A problem with the social service agencies today is that, "...we have directors you don't see. With Model Cities everybody knew me. Now we have programs and only the leadership is conversant with the directors... it was nothing at 10:30 or 11:00 at night for a bunch of young people or adults to knock on the door coming by to talk about what they needed to do. People gave of their time and they had that kind of concern. Now you have people running programs they didn't develop. They didn't go through the hassle of getting people together, fighting city hall, fighting the government."

Drug dealing has become a problem in the past 10 years, as it has in cities all over the country. According to Sam X Jordan, drugs always existed in Hunters Point, people were just quieter about it. The 1969 Model Cities Agency interestingly prophesied the present drug problem.

Constructive community projects during the 1970's and 1980's have centered around housing and community centers.



Hunters Point war barracks.

The Hunters Point Redevelopment Project, The San Francisco Housing Authority Target Project Program (TPP), and The Bayview Hunters Point Non-Profit Community Development Corporation have all focused on building new low-income and market rate housing, and on creating parks and social spaces around the Hunters Point hill. In the tradition of naming streets after national heroes, the streets on the hill have all been named after past and present community leaders and major black figures like James Baldwin and Whitney Young.

The business community along Third Street is the present focus of efforts to revitalize Hunters Point. The India Basin Industrial Park and the Bayview Plaza shopping center opened during the 1980's. The Bayview Merchants Association has become a strong force in the area, attempting to bring together the diverse group of businesses centered around Third Street.. The Merchant's Association recently

won a city award as the best association of its kind. Jordan mentioned past president of association. The challenge, according to Jordan, is to capitalize on gains made in civil rights and build economic muscle within the community. To build this muscle the community must, "recycle our money," said Jordan. Recycling money means spending money within Hunters Point, making the community an attractive place for local people to stay and start businesses.

The history of the Bayview Hunters Point community is a story external forces using community land and local residents organizing to take control of their lives. The pendulum marking the relations between City Hall and Bayview Hunters Point has swung between manipulation and assistance many times over the past century. The immediate future of Bayview Hunters Point will most likely be determined by yet another combina-

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BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT RESIDENTS

This is a call for community involvement in confronting the continuing opposition to affirmative action within the San Francisco Fire Department, lead by the International Association of Firefighters Local 798.

PUBLIC FORUM

APRIL 14, 1990, SATURDAY
8:30 TO 10:30 AM

FACILITATED BY JIM MARTIN, REGIONAL DIRECTOR NAACP REG. 1
SOUTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
1200 PHELPS (AT OAKDALE)
SAN FRANCISCO

We are asking that the communities served by the S.F.F.D. contact the Executive Board of Local 798, and invite them to this forum to explain their past and present opposition to the integration of our department.

The S.F.F.D. is currently operating under a court mandated Consent Decree, to increase the numbers of minorities and women hired and promoted, through valid examinations. The Decree also provides for an improvement of working conditions within the department by eliminating all forms of harassment.

The I.A.F.F., as a national organization has consistently opposed affirmative action programs in cities all across the country.

The purpose of this forum is to show Local 798 the effects of their fight against equal rights for all workers. They must choose between an apartheid type system within the S.F.F.D. or the positive effects of embracing the true principles of unionism.

If you plan on attending this forum, and for further information, please contact The San Francisco Black Firefighters, at 822-3456. A panel will be formed using one representative from each community group, labor union, church, etc.

We have members available to speak to your organization between now and the forum.

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T.M.

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tion of city intervention and local organization. The city seems ready to give financial resources to the area to combat drug use and crime. Whether these resources will be controlled from outside the community or by local leaders is yet to be determined. Whether or not City Hall takes an active role in the area, it will be the local citizen's organizations, founded in the late 1940's, nurtured in the 1950's and expanded during the 1960's and 1970's that will continue to be the motivating force behind any movement to improve living conditions in Bayview Hunters Point.

Their success was part of a nationwide lobbying effort by mayor's and governor's associations to convince Congress that funds should be channeled through City Hall, rather than given directly to citizens groups. The problem was essentially a political one. According to Brooks, the people who traditionally had to look to the politicians for help, "...suddenly had the money, and the people they would elect would not be the type of people that would...say, 'you can't fight City Hall.'" During the 1960's and early 1970's constituencies were forming around these grassroots leaders, who then presented a challenge to the power of traditional City Hall politicians.

City Hall politicians complained that they, the elected city officials, should control Federal money, not unelected

leaders from the communities that needed help. Congress went along with this argument and ended direct funding. One of the first casualties was the Model Cities Commission which had been receiving city tax dollars for local programs. The Federal government replaced Model Cities with the Community Development Bloc Grants. These grants, which exist today, were controlled not by Bayview Hunters Point community organizers, but by the Mayor's Office of Community Development. Another program that lost community control was the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The housing agency, once in close contact with the community, now became dependent on the funds it received from City Hall.

The loss of community control of programs contributed to the deterioration of living conditions in Bayview Hunters Point over the past decade. This deterioration is evident with the increased drug dealing and violence. According to Jordan, drugs always existed in Hunters Point, people were just quieter about it. Without strong local leadership the drug trade can proliferate on the streets. The drive by shootings that shocked the neighborhood last Spring are also a new twist to an old problem. During the 1960's gangs would fight each other with fists and knives, but rarely with guns. Brooks remembers that, "...once in a very great while...someone shot his best friend in an argument... But [it] was not like the drive-by[shooting]."

The local organizations need to regain control of the decisions that effect the community because it is the local organizations that best understand the needs and possibilities of Bayview Hunters Point.

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David Jaffe Note: Most of the research for this article was done at the Anna Walden library. Rifkin's book, Third Street, is an especially enjoyable guide for someone who wants to find out about the history of the neighborhood. You can find the book at the Walden Library.