



June 19, 2020

For many people, a visit to Oakland is a return home—to family, to a place where they grew up or a city they've adopted as their new home. For many, visiting Oakland is a way to “travel” the world through different restaurants, cultures, languages, art—all without ever leaving an Oakland neighborhood. To many people, a visit to Oakland starts off as a trip, and ends up being about an awakening, a new connection with the great people in our communities.

Black Lives Matter in Oakland. Oakland has been the stage of countless protests denouncing injustice and calls to action toward justice and equity. As the birthplace of the Black Panther Party, Oakland's Black community has long been at the forefront of the movement for Black lives. Here, we have decried and mourned the unconscionable loss of Black lives to violence across the country, including Oakland-native Oscar Grant. Oakland is home to vibrant voices amplifying the need for systemic change in our country.

Visit Oakland wants to remind our community, and visitors, that Oakland is where diversity is appreciated and thrives. Oakland is a place where people of all walks of life experience a sense of belonging, and Visit Oakland is committed to making this particular truth shine.

Visit Oakland's role is to promote Oakland's beauty, its richness and—most importantly—its people. Through our inclusive marketing, shaped by our diverse staff, our partnerships with the amazing people we have the honor to collaborate with, and the events we promote—from the Black Joy Parade, the Día de los Muertos celebrations, Oakland's LGBTQ Pride celebrations, Art Month and Restaurant Week—we as an organization, are committed to ensuring every aspect of our work in service of our great city is inclusive and equitable. The calls for racial justice reverberating around the world only strengthen our commitment to a future where everyone—in particular our Black residents and travelers—know they belong.

We as an organization appreciate and support everyone who is in Oakland. It is our job to tell Oakland's story, to market businesses and amplify voices through the lens of tourism. We believe in the transformative and healing power of tourism—both for travelers experiencing Oakland, and for our communities who welcome strangers that quickly fall in love with Oakland.

We are proud of Oakland, and we are proud of the work we've done to promote Oakland's stories. Visit Oakland is committed to lifting the Black community and amplifying Black voices. We also acknowledge the opportunities we have to continue to grow and learn, to have our work be informed by the Black Lives Matter movement's vital efforts to address systemic injustice in our communities, across the United States, and around the world. We recognize our role as leaders in the travel industry, and we will continue to lead by example.

It is vital that we—our City, our leadership team, our stakeholders, our small and mighty team, and our industry—commit to continued conversations around systemic injustice, however difficult these may be at times, as we collectively strive for a more just and equitable future. We welcome the opportunity to join everyone at the table, and we hope to see you in Oakland soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Everton".

Mark Everton  
Visit Oakland | CEO