The power of second chances turned Antwoin Gutierrez’s life around: “So many doors were closed to me because I was formerly incarcerated. No one would hire me, far less train me. I became desperate, until a friend told me about a hands-on job training program run through the CHOW (Colors Hospitality Opportunities for Workers) Institute at the COLORS Restaurant. The skills I learned in the program led me to be hired as a trainee at The Doe Fund. I became a full-time employee and the organization’s youngest Culinary Instructor by age 27. Today, I am the founder of Fresh Taste, a thriving, innovative bakery and catering start up.”

A joint initiative between Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC United), Restore Oakland is a community advocacy and training center that will mobilize Bay Area community members to transform our economic and justice systems and make a safe and secure future possible for themselves and for their families.

The Neighborhood and The Need

We all want to live in an Oakland where everyone belongs and can prosper, our families feel safe, and all residents can take part in the benefits of a flourishing economy and a thriving community. Yet, our economy and the justice system fail to create opportunity, accountability, or inclusion for all our residents.

Too often, our city’s resources have gone to prisons and punishment rather than pathways that lead to economic security and real safety. Many people in Oakland have been shut out of job and career opportunities due to prior involvement with the criminal justice system along with decades of unjust economic and criminal justice policies.

Our longstanding community organizing and research efforts highlighted the need for a space where community members can come together to build power and transform Oakland. The lack of investment in our neighborhoods by local institutions and decision makers makes our unity as neighbors even more important.
Why Restore Oakland?

We believe in community prosperity and safety. Our vision is a people-powered economy and an accountability centered justice system. Our community organizing and advocacy efforts will help shift resources away from prisons and punishment and toward reinvestment in community and restorative justice.

We believe in people power. Our model is unique because we lead with organizing and advocacy to mobilize the power and self-determination our communities hold, while also providing hands-on job training, business incubation, restorative justice mediation, and housing rights services—all in one space.

We believe the restaurant industry holds opportunity. The restaurant sector holds promise for creating jobs and careers, including for immigrants and people who have been formerly incarcerated. Restore Oakland will act as a model for generating economic opportunity for all.

We believe in accountability. Every year, Restore Oakland will work with hundreds of local community members to hold our institutions and decision makers accountable to our community’s collective needs and vision for the future.

We believe in community. Together with the community, we are creating a better model for community transformation that can be replicated in other cities and communities.

Our Work

Build community and economic power. Community organizing, collective power-building, and community self-determination will advance campaigns driving investment in jobs, housing, and education, not more punishment and prisons.

Job training and placement. Hands-on training through COLORS restaurant and placement services will help workers advance to livable-wage restaurant jobs in a fast-growing Bay Area industry.

Business incubation. Working people will be supported to incubate and launch their own worker-owned food enterprises, such as pop-up restaurants, catering businesses, and food companies.

Restorative justice. Restore Oakland will serve as a neighborhood space where community members can come together and resolve conflict, offering an alternative to punishment and incarceration and providing solutions rooted in healing.

IT WILL TAKE ALL OF US to strengthen Oakland to make sure everyone—people who have been incarcerated, working people, immigrants, and people of color—belongs and thrives.

Join Us

Your support will allow us to realize our full vision of Restore Oakland. Join us and help ensure a people-powered economy and an accountability centered justice system.