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Restore Oakland’s Job Training Facility and Community Resource Center Opens Its Doors

Innovative East Oakland hub unites a myriad of services and organizations under one roof

OAKLAND—Restore Oakland opened its doors today as a first-of-its-kind community hub and resource center, legal clinic, shared workspace, job training facility, and soon-to-be-launched living-wage restaurant. The new space will provide Oakland residents the opportunity to access housing rights legal services, get trained for higher-paying jobs, host organizing meetings, tap resources to launch and incubate a food-oriented small business, resolve conflict through restorative justice circles, and enjoy a healthy sit-down meal. Around 200 social justice organizers, community leaders, restaurant industry workers, Oakland residents, and supporters attended the grand opening event, which was [documented on Twitter](#). View event photos and other resources for media at [Restore Oakland's website](#).

“At Restore Oakland people can walk in to get free job training in the restaurant industry and access to services that will open the door to more economic opportunity. This building is the vision we want to see for workers, for formerly incarcerated people, for members of the community. Restore Oakland is a space where people can both improve their lives and create the kind of future our city needs,” said Saru Jayaraman, President of ROC United and Restore Oakland cofounder.

“I grew up in Oakland, and I increasingly see the city dividing along economic and racial lines. Strong communities need strong, community-centered organizations, and at Restore Oakland people can come together to organize and act for one Oakland,” said Zachary Norris, Executive Director of the Ella Baker Center and Restore Oakland cofounder. “We hope that our center serves as a model for other cities across the country as a place where folks impacted by prisons and punishment can unite, access restorative justice services to resolve conflict, and create opportunities rooted in healing.”

The [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#) and the [Restaurant Opportunities Center United](#) (ROC United) jointly purchased the new Restore Oakland building, which will also house [Causa Justa/Just Cause](#), [La Cocina](#), and the ground-floor COLORS restaurant, and provide meeting space for [Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth](#) (RJOY) and [Community Works](#). Restore Oakland’s offerings include job training, restorative justice, eviction prevention and tenants’ rights counseling—all under one roof at the intersection of 34th and International in East Oakland’s Fruitvale neighborhood.

“Restore Oakland is not like any other building. By creating a central space where residents can go to build power, access a range of opportunities to earn a better living, build toward a safe and secure East Oakland, and restore community health and wholeness, Restore Oakland will work to bridge the gap between housing rights, conflict resolution, small business incubation and human rights,” said Reetu Mody, Interim Executive Director of Restore Oakland.

Mass incarceration and economic injustice are harming communities of color, pushing people into poverty and prison, and acting as roadblocks to dignity and opportunity. The Bay Area has some of the nation's highest rent costs and home prices as well as some of the top rates of income inequality and unemployment. In addition, the region has the widest [race-based restaurant wage gap](#) in the nation.

“Restore Oakland provides a powerful model for how every city can play a role in ending mass incarceration by creating a new type of infrastructure that facilitates restorative justice while advancing economic opportunity in communities that have long been oppressed,” said Deanna Van Buren, cofounder of Designing Justice + Designing Spaces, the architecture and real estate nonprofit that designed Restore Oakland. “Oakland is leading the nation by showing what the next iteration of justice looks like. We’ve proven it is possible for communities to replace adversarial and punitive buildings like courthouses and prisons with centers like Restore Oakland that ensure a more safe and secure future for everyone.”

The building's ground floor will house the COLORS sit-down restaurant, which will pay a livable wage, hire people from the community, and offer a training kitchen and community cooking classes. The building will also provide stable office space for the nonprofits involved, providing a toehold in a real estate climate where nonprofits are getting priced out of the communities they serve.

“Community Works is thrilled to partner with Restore Oakland to offer an alternative to youth incarceration at Restore Oakland,” said Jason Toro, Executive Director of Community Works. “Our Restorative Community Conferencing (RCC) program diverts youth under 18 and young adults 18 to 24 out of the traditional justice systems and into a restorative process where they will meet the needs of those they harmed by their actions.”

“It is such an inspiration to have Restore Oakland in the community that I grew up in. To be able to have all the resources in one building is revolutionary,” said Tracey Bell-Borden, an Ella Baker Center member. “This area is just now becoming gentrified, but to have Restore Oakland planted here, seeing all the different collectives that are coming together, actually gives us a lot of hope.”

“With Restore Oakland being in the heart of the Fruitvale, we always talk about unity, but I think it's very much needed for people to truly find common ground in our humanity, because my humanity is tied to your humanity,” said Carolina S., a student at COLORS Hospitality Opportunities for Workers (CHOW). “It's awesome that there's a place like Restore Oakland available for folks, and to be able to teach folks about what's really happening with these issues.”

For photos of the grand opening event and more information about Restore Oakland's services, please [view our press kit](#).

To tune into the online conversation, visit [#RestoreOakland](#).

Restore Oakland: a Model for Community Investment and Safety
(VIDEO):<https://youtu.be/Cijisb7CdvQ>

The [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](http://ellabakercenter.org) (ellabakercenter.org), located in Oakland, was founded in 1996 by Van Jones, Diana Frapier, and Mike McLoone. Following in the footsteps of Ella Baker, a brilliant, Black hero of the civil rights movement, we organize with Black, Brown, and low-income people to shift resources away from prisons and punishment, and towards opportunities that make our communities safe, healthy, and strong.

[Restaurant Opportunities Center United](http://rocunited.org) (rocunited.org) engages people who work in the industry, employers and consumers to ensure all people who work in restaurants can achieve financial independence and improve their quality of life. The Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York was initially founded in New York City by Fekkek Mamdouh and Saru Jayaraman after September 11th, 2001 to provide support to people who work in restaurants who were displaced as a result of the World Trade Center tragedy.

[Designing Justice + Designing Spaces](http://designingjustice.org) (designingjustice.org) is an Oakland-based architecture and real estate development nonprofit working to end mass incarceration by building infrastructure that attacks its root causes: poverty, racism, unequal access to resources, and the criminal justice system itself. DJDS counters the traditional adversarial and punitive architecture of justice—courthouses, prisons, and jails—by creating welcoming and nurturing spaces and buildings that facilitate restorative justice, rehabilitation, and community building. DJDS also operates the [Concept Development Fund](#), a program which helps nonprofits and advocates transform ideas for community infrastructure reinvestment into fully realized designs complete with budgetary outlines, imagery, and other critical details. DJDS is co-founded by architect Deanna Van Buren, whose [TEDWomen](#) talk on what a world without prisons could look like has more than one million views, and real estate developer Kyle Rawlins. In 2018, [Architect Magazine](#) recognized DJDS as one of its “champions of social change.”