

Two Poets on Politics in Oakland: Ishmael Reed and Marvin X

**Update: Oakland's New Mayor Jean Quan;
OPD Killing Continues**



The more things change, they more they stay the same.... New mayor, same old shit with OPD killing another unarmed black man, brother Jones. Jean Quan is Oakland's new mayor, the first Asian and woman. At least she has a history of being on the ground, unlike outgoing Mayor Dellums, the Distant Lover who rarely showed his face in public, even as the people suffered trauma and grief at the Miller Lite sentencing in the Oscar Grant murder by BART police.

We wonder how will Jean Quan run Oakland? Will the OPD absorb 100% of the City budget? How is more police the answer to economic injustice, educational and health disparities? Will we be satisfied when Oakland becomes under full police occupation, mainly for the safety of white people, for sure North American Africans feel no safety from the police, never have and never shall, especially as long as the police are outsiders, in short, foreign invaders, aliens with no love for the people in the hood.

Will Mayor Jean Quan understand that if America can offer education, jobs and housing for terrorists in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, she must find job for young people in the hood who are unemployed, armed and dangerous. These young men and women are suffering traumatic stress syndrome, to no less a degree than soldiers returning from the wars abroad. American youth in the hood reside in a war zone. Parents never know if their children will make it home safely. If the police don't kill them in a freak confrontation, their turf rivals may smoke them, or they may get caught in a partner violence situation. Ray Charles sang about the Danger Zone. "Look around and you will see what's troubling me--the Danger Zone is everywhere."

I have warned people about the tone test when stopped by police: based on our tone of voice, we will be killed, arrested or released. Ask Harvard professor Dr. Gates! In our partner relations the tone test or the failure to exercise discipline in conversation escalates to verbal violence, followed by physical violence and/or emotional abuse.

Will Mayor Quan address such issues or will she continue the tradition of placating the business community at the expense of the hood? One thing for sure, her Asian community may not need much of her assistance. Chinatown is booming with banks on every block, housing, an economic vitality unsurpassed elsewhere in the city. Little English is spoken, yet a Chinese need not leave his community for any reason. All bills can be paid in Chinatown, phone, water, electricity, etc. Medical care is available in the hood. Actually, Asian money owns most buildings in downtown Oakland!

From our Academy of da Corner, 14th and Broadway, we can view City Hall, so we shall keep an eye on Mayor Quan. We will not doctor her to death, but we will keep our eyes on her to make sure she is doing all in her power to cure the sickness to save the patients, the citizens of Oakland. The latest news below reveals she shall have a daunting task:

Four people have been killed and at least four others injured since Friday in a spate of shootings in Oakland, a police spokesman said today. The first of the fatal shootings was reported at about 10:55 p.m. Friday in the 600 block of El Paseo Drive in East Oakland. Arriving officers found Kevin Lockett, 45, had been shot multiple times and killed, Oakland police Officer Jeff Thomason said. Two other people were shot and taken to a local hospital. Both were expected to survive.

Another shooting was reported at about 3:30 p.m. Saturday near the 1000 block of Eighth Street. Officers arrived to find two teens suffering from gunshot wounds. Both were pronounced dead at the scene. The victims have been identified as Edward Hampton, 17, and Nario Jackson, 18, according to Thomason.

Then on Monday evening, a 39-year-old man was killed in a shooting in East Oakland. The victim, who has not yet been identified, was fatally shot around 6:35 p.m. in the 1300 block of 81st Avenue, Thomason said. There have also been at least two non-fatal shootings in the city since Friday, including one early Monday morning that left a man in critical condition. That shooting occurred at about 1:30 a.m. in the 3100 block of High Street .Another man was fatally shot by police officers following a domestic dispute on Monday night. Derrick Jones, 37, was shot by officers responding to reports that he was assaulting a woman at a laundromat in the 5800 block of Bancroft Avenue at about 9:30 p.m. Monday. Thomason did not have any information today on arrests or suspect information in any of the shootings.

--Marvin X

11/11/10



Below is Ishmael Reed's analysis of Oakland's mayoral race. Ishmael has a brand of optimism that I lack, especially in the political arena. His choice for Oakland's next mayor is a former student of his at UC Berkeley, now a professor at San Francisco State University, Joe Tuman. Ishmael is not alone in his choice of Professor Tuman. My political advisers who visit Academy of da Corner have been backing Joe from the beginning of the race. I've listened carefully to their strategy since they correctly informed me that Ron Dellums would be Oakland's third black mayor. Personally, I have no faith in any elected politicians, white, black, latino, gay or straight. I'm more in favor of a people's democracy. Even if Joe is able to beat out the front runner Don Perata, will he be able to do any more than the previous three black mayors and the pitiful Jerry Brown who served as mayor as a stepping stone back to the governor's mansion? Some would say that even if they did nothing, which they did, it was a blessing to have the previous black mayors, Lionel Wilson, Elihu Harris and Dellums. But Obama has put the nail in the coffin that a black politician is any better, or worse, than a white. He has revealed himself to be a black man with a white heart, as they describe reactionary negroes in the Caribbean. Or we can look at the plethora of presidents (for life) and prime ministers in Africa, another genre of black men with white hearts, whose jails, prisons, dungeons and cemeteries are full of opposition leaders, even their wives (Nigeria), journalists, poets and writers. It doesn't matter what color the next mayor is, nor gender, for sure there will be no radical change.

We need a radical restructuring of the political order, but it will not happen until there is political consciousness among the masses, to the extent they will do as the people are doing in France at this hour, take matters to the street to express their displeasure with politicians who supposedly serve at the consent of the governed. At this hour what America needs is a good general strike for jobs, end of housing foreclosures, amnesty for petty criminals in jails and prisons (2 million or more, 90% under the influence of drugs at the time of arrest, along with mental health issues), a total revamping of the racist educational system, a discarding of white supremacy patriarchal mythology that allows homophobia, partner violence, emotional and verbal violence, plus conspicuous consumption to perpetuate the capitalist world of make believe. If women are 85% of the shoppers at stores and malls, if they boycotted the stores and malls for one week, the troops would come home from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere. But we keep hoping and praying a Democrat and/or Republican will save us, even after we see their tricknology election after election, no matter what race or gender.

In Oakland at the rally on the night of the verdict in the police killing of Oscar Grant, we saw an example of people's democracy when the rally initially took place in the middle of 14th and Broadway because our Maryor Ron Dellums refused to allow the people, who are his boss, to assemble in front of city hall that they own. There shall be a rally for Oscar Grant this Saturday in front of city hall, but we understand no politicians will be allowed to speak, especially since none of them have forcefully addressed the police killing of Oscar Grant. To the contrary, those in the race for the next mayor are trying their best to accommodate and placate the police department that is nothing more than an occupying army in league with drug dealers. Imagine peace officers absorb the majority of the city budget, 300 million of 400 million. They earn \$180,000 with salary and benefits, yet the murder, terror and trauma continues in the hood. Ask anyone if they feel safer in the hood, no matter the alleged crime decrease. That's like Obama telling us the job and housing crisis is actually getting better, after all, Wall Street and the banks are back to business as usual, so hold tight, prosperity is just around the corner, vote for me, I'll set you free, change is gonna come!

--Marvin X (Plato Negro)
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Sent: Thu, October 21, 2010 8:22:21 AM

Subject: Oakland

Marvin, I mentioned you in this piece that went worldwide. IR

<http://www.counterpunch.org/reed10202010.html>

October 20, 2010

A New Generation and a New Direction Professor Joe: Oakland's Next Mayor?

by Ishmael Reed

When Joe Tuman was my student at the University of California at Berkeley, I don't remember his receiving any grade less than an A. When I met his parents I could understand why. They were hard working Azerian Americans who provided their sons with good role models.

Since his days at the University of California at Berkeley, Joe Tuman has become a professor of political and social sciences at San Francisco State University and television personality. Now he is running for Mayor of Oakland.

He talked about issues both small and large when Tennessee and I sat down to talk with him at Day of the Dead Coffee Shop at 3208 Grand Avenue in Oakland. Small: He said that some critics are asking questions about his tanned complexion. He tries to explain to them that people from his part of the world have darker skin. They assume that he gets his tan from hanging around expensive beach resorts. Some also wonder why a teacher would become involved in politics. The candidate who is leading in the polls, Assemblyman Don Perata, is a former teacher.

Tuman says that he was drawn into the race over concerns about Oakland's crime situation. "Violent crime is the point of intersection for a lot of different things." For me, crime is another code word on the order of busing, welfare, and affirmative action. It's another attempt to cast blacks as scapegoats for the nation's social problems, so easy that Glenn Beck can do it, but Tuman seems to have a more sophisticated view of crime than those who use the term in an effort to run against blacks, a southern strategy that's been used by white candidates and capitalists, like the Koch brothers, since Reconstruction.

Tuman agrees with my North Oakland neighbors that crime has multi-ethnic contributors, a shock to a white *Oakland Tribune* reporter who interviewed me about violence in Oakland. This white reporter is among an army of white anthropologists, sociologists, novelists, film makers, and university professors, who see the inner city as a “gold mine of opportunity,” the phrase used by salespersons at Lionsgate Studios to woo investors to its black incest movie, “Precious.” Maybe inner city residents should cordon off these “hot zones” and charge admission to those endowed with studio money, grants and fellowships.

This reporter has received a fellowship to talk about the mental problems resulting from violence in Oakland, but I could tell that he hadn’t explored the issue with any kind of depth when he defended “The Wire,” which has become a national drug for people who, apparently miserable in their own lives, can only get their brains’ pleasure centers stimulated by seeing black people brought low, a multi-billion dollar racket. He wants to pick the brains of my neighbors and me. He wants us to be his unpaid informants. We’re supposed to be like Richard Leakey’s Kenyan assistants. We go out and discover the bones while he does the carbon analysis and gets the headlines.

I told Tuman about the experiences of my North Oakland neighbors and me who confront crime that has multi-ethnic contributors, not just blacks. Right now two Asian American gangs are competing for the right to control drug marketing on my block. On Oct. 14, around the corner from my house, a drive by shooting resulted in the death of an innocent bystander. Asian American gangs are not the only outsiders using black neighborhoods to accrue illegal profits.

For years, blacks and more recently white gentrifiers have tried to close down a local liquor store camouflaged as a grocery store located a few blocks from my home. Its’ front is an outdoor office for the district’s drug dealers and a scene of gunfire and murder. The store owner, a Yemeni-American, comes to our Neighborhood Crime meetings and denies any role that his store plays in such activity, but when interviewed by Otto award winning playwright Wajahat Ali, who, with David Eggers, is writing a pilot for HBO, he admitted to some of the accusations that have been voiced by Marvin X, a playwright and author, who goes by the pen name of “Plato Negro,” as a result of his conducting spontaneous peripatetic classes on the streets of downtown Oakland.

Yes, some Arab storeowners do exchange sexual favors for groceries with poor black women customers. Sometimes these affairs result in children so an Arab storeowner might have an inner city baby momma along with a traditional family.

White bloggers, members of the Angry White Male constituency to which the media market their product, people who get all of their information about urban life from CNN's farce, "Black In America," and Hollywood, called me a racist when I wrote that members of their beloved "model minorities" engage in bad behavior, but at a recent meeting, John Russo, Oakland's city attorney, confirmed our observations. He said that Asian criminals were operating in Oakland's black neighborhoods. On Oct. 14, Russo made the front page of *The Oakland Tribune* after he sought to apply a gang injunction to a Latino gang called Nortenos, which would mean that members of the gang would be "disallowed to congregate in public between 10 pm and 5 am, carry or be in the presence of guns, wear or display gang symbols or commit several specific gang-related crimes within a specified 'safety zone' in the Fruitvale district." "Businesses won't develop here because of crime," Tuman says. I reminded Tuman that though I live in a "hot zone," crime was down 15 percent in Oakland. By businesses he says he means huge concerns like Clorox and Kaiser.

According to *The East Bay Express*, homicides plummeted 21 percent and overall violent crime dropped more than 15 percent in the first four months of the year. Property crimes are down 21 percent. Though the local Jim Crow media is a Jerry Brown booster, during his last year in office, crime "skyrocketed." Oakland has sought to deal with the staffing of the police department by floating several measures.

In 2004, voters approved Measure Y. In order to be eligible for \$20 million in funding for the police, the number of police officers could not fall below 739. Under this measure PSOs, 60 problem-solving officers, would work in neighborhoods. Because the number of police officers fell below the 739, after 80 officers were laid off in July, only 682 sworn police officers remain on the force, which means that the city can't collect the \$20 million.

On Nov. 2, voters will vote on two propositions. Measure X would generate revenue by charging owners of single-family homes a \$360 parcel tax for the next four years. It's predicted that this measure will be defeated.

Measure BB has a better chance of passing though Tuman predicts that both will go down. If Measure BB passes, the 739 officer requirement would be eliminated and the city will collect the \$20 million. PSA officers will be restored which would help my neighborhood because the only person from downtown who was concerned about our safety was Paul Brekke-Mismer, a Public Safety Officer. I talked to Brekke-Mismer whose job was cut foolishly by the layoffs.

He told me that he'd be willing to come back if he were rehired. Better than that, the next Mayor should hire Brekke-Mismer as an advisor. Find out why he was able to empathize with inhabitants of black neighborhoods while others have failed.

Tuman credited the Dellums administration, considered a bust by the media, for Oakland's decline in violent crime. He's one of the few reporters giving Dellums credit for anything, including the decline in crime, which according to multiple polls was the number one issue when he was elected. Two other reporters whose opinions counter the consensus among the local mainstream media's that the Dellums administration was a failure are Robert Gammon and J. Douglas Allen-Taylor. Gammon's comments appeared in the March 31, 2010 *The East Bay Express*. He wrote: "Oakland's mayor revamped the police department, but hasn't received credit for the substantial decrease in crime. "Oakland's crime problem spiraled out of control in the last two years of Jerry Brown's administration. And then it remained high in 2007 and 2008 during Ron Dellums' first two years as mayor of Oakland. Brown, however, managed to escape criticism for failing to slow the crime wave, while Dellums was excoriated for it — despite the fact that his crime numbers were never as bad as Brown's. And now, Oakland's crime wave appears to be over, yet Dellums isn't getting credit for that either, even though there's an argument to be made that the decisions made on his watch are partially responsible."

J. Douglas Allen-Taylor, writing in the much missed *Berkeley Daily Planet*, which was driven to online status by powerful Berkeley critics, described Dellums' critics as "The big-pocket developers who made a killing when Jerry Brown was mayor and Mr. Perata held considerable 'influence' over a majority of the votes on the Oakland City Council on key development issues. The leaders of the Oakland Police Officers Association police union, who raked in considerable perks and power and millions in overtime during the same period. These interests would certainly like to return to the days when Oakland was like an International Boulevard hooker ripe for their easy plucking, and so have helped direct and fuel an enduring media blitz that has left us with the false impression that Mr. Dellums is a doddering old fool, napping at his desk during the afternoons, and neglecting the business of the city."

Some of the unfavorable comments about the Dellums administration were a result of his owing back taxes and the impression that his spouse, Cynthia, had too much influence on his administration. He was criticized for spending thousands of dollars for expenses while lobbying on behalf of Oakland in Washington, but his lobbying efforts brought 65 million dollars of stimulus funds to the city. I suggested in a SF Gate cartoon that Dellums, in order to satisfy his critics, take Greyhound to Washington, take his guests to a horse burger diner and stay in a flophouse.

AWM bloggers will probably discount this, but a double standard has been applied to black male politicians by the media and Federal law enforcement since Reconstruction. Defenders of David Dinkins pointed out unsuccessfully that the crime rate in New York City declined, drastically, under the Dinkins' administration.

They were shouted down by the shrill opposition that now dominates public life. In the Oct. 25, 2009 *New York Times* Michael Powell took a second look at Dinkins: "Taking office in 1990, just as a Wall Street and real estate collapse pitched the city into deep recession, Mayor Dinkins, the city's first African-American mayor, stumbled more than once. But he also registered more successes than most New Yorkers realize, and so he laid part of the foundation for today's New York.

"Dinkins faced a very sharp economic downturn, and he was in the very difficult position of coming in with high expectations from many constituencies," said John H. Mollenkopf, a political science professor at the City University Graduate Center. "Yet he expanded the police force and rebuilt neighborhoods; he deserves more credit than he gets for managing that time." Yet Matt Littman, writing in the progressive *Huffington Post*, described the Dinkens "regime" as "awful," while praising Rudy Giuliani whose poll numbers prior to 9/11 was 40%. Some New York firemen attribute the death of their fellow fireman to procedures that were put into practice by Giuliani.

Tuman's answer to crime is to hire more police; he believes that the layoffs that the city council ordered as a budget saving measure has ended a deterrent to what he refers to as "irrational capitalism," meaning the drug business, but I informed him that the black players in Oakland's drug business, the kind of people one sees on television and in Hollywood movies are the underpaid mules and other ethnic groups are making the real profits and are using those profits to grease their way to the suburbs. For example, the Yemeni store owner says that he makes over \$200,000 per year in profits, mainly through liquor sales. When I asked him during a public meeting why a Muslim was selling liquor, a policeman, one of those whose role at the meeting is supposed to be informational, abandoned this role and told me that I was out of order. Turns out that the policeman and the store owner and the cop are tight.

Tuman didn't mention the role of white suburbanites who make profits by arming the gangs who terrorize our neighborhoods. I'm still waiting for HBO to do a pilot about this component of the drug trade. Moreover, my neighbors would also consider him naïve to assert that more police would deter "irrational capitalists," or, in his words, "regulate" them. Even when we had a "robust," police force using Tuman's word, North Oakland blacks and now white regentrifiers have complained about the lack of police protection and during a recent meeting we were told that there would be even less protection as a result of the layoffs, resulting in their refusal to pay toward their "Cadillac" pensions, the adjective used by a perceptive Oakland politics watcher, Robert Gammon of *The East Bay Express*.

The police know about these criminal operations including the one that's been threatening our neighborhood for over five years but nothing has been done about it and those who live in other parts of North Oakland complain that a similar situation exists in their neighborhoods.

Tuman, however, has a solution to the budget for the police department which puts a strain on the city's budget. According to *The East Bay Express*, Oakland's "\$414 million general fund budget, which is where the \$83 million deficit lies, is taken up almost entirely by police, fire, and debt service the city is obligated to pay. In fact, according to the mayor's budget, police will cost the general fund about \$198 million this year, while the fire department costs about \$104 million, and the annual debt service amounts to about \$45 million, so that's \$347 million for just three items, which leaves only \$67 million for nearly everything else city government does."

Tuman would pay for more police by using a university model for retirement and recruitment. He'd retire officers at 60 or 62 and then hire them back part time as independent contractors. Since this is the key issue in his campaign, I asked him to write out this proposal so that I wouldn't misquote him.

"First, with respect to containing/controlling costs for policing: Long term, I believe we need to rethink the assumption that a police officer in Oakland must (on average) cost about \$180,000/year with salary and benefits. The city council and even former Senator Perata believe this to be so. The Council limits their approaches to staffing our police department in only two ways: either they want to raise taxes to pay more officers this \$180k average, or lay off officers and pay less of them that same amount.

"Even Senator Perata buys into this mentality, saying he would simply find the same amount of money (\$180k average) by laying off other city employees to hire back laid off police officers. I think about this differently; I question that amount. Why does it have to be \$180k? Why couldn't it be \$140K or \$145K? Since the police contract is closed for a few more years, and I do not want to go to interest arbitration over this issue, my solution to this would be to begin offering voluntary early retirement incentives to eligible officers (10-15% of the force are within 2-3 years of retirement), and using savings from these retirements to begin hiring a new second tier of police recruits who would come in at a lower salary base. Essentially, gradually manage out my most expensive officers who are going to retire anyway--and slowly replace them with officers at a more affordable salary for the city. With an unemployment rate hovering at 20% for the city, I'm confident we could find many applicants for these jobs, even at reduced salary. More officers, in turn, reduces the need for overtime, and means that both overtime and pension costs will be less, since these are calculated by base salary. This has worked in other bureaucracies; it can work here, too."

With this proposal, Joe Tuman is inviting the displeasure of the Oakland police union, an organization so powerful that it has interfered with the local mayoral election by actually campaigning against one of the mayoral candidates, Jean Quan, who called for police layoffs. "Jean Quan will say anything to become mayor," said Dom Arotzarena, President of the Oakland Police Officers Association. "And her record proves she would do nothing if she got the job. Our city is desperate for leadership. This is the wrong time for Oakland to settle for just another politician like Jean Quan."

On Oct.12, I received a flyer that denounced Jean Quan. It was sponsored by Coalition for a Safer California an organization whose contributions come from police organizations, developers, and businesses like AT&T and Blue Cross. Every time I turn on the television there are uniformed policemen endorsing this candidate and denouncing that one. The enormous power that millions of whites have given to the police for the purpose of containing the black and brown population will eventually backfire and lead to their repression as well. So powerful is the Gun Lobby it's announced that it's going to address policy issues other than the Second Amendment. One of the reasons that Rudy Giuliani defeated Mayor David Dinkins is attributable to his encouraging a police riot against Dinkins.

One of the contributors to CSC is Signature Properties whose president is Mike Ghielmetti. Ghielmetti and Phil Tagami, managing central partner of the California Capital Group. were among the developers who received millions in subsidies during the Brown administration--millions that critics argue, haven't benefited the city. Brown was also criticized for his close ties to developer, Phil Tagami, sometimes called "The real mayor of Oakland." So confident is the real mayor that he publicly insulted Mayor Dellums by insisting that he fill out a time sheet for the hours he spent serving as mayor, something that was never required of Mayor Brown who was often absent from city hall.

Ghielmetti's Oak-to-Ninth project, a 64-acre housing development was opposed by preservationists. Others charged that the subsidies received by developers during Brown's tenure amounted to "corporate welfare."

State and local police and corrections organizations often behave in an arrogant manner because California's shrinking and elderly white population has given them carte balance to deal with black and Hispanic residents anyway they desire and when a policeman murders a black or Hispanic he or she can always get a suburban jury to acquit. One of the reasons for violence in the inner city, usually stemming from competition over drug markets, is the lackadaisical manner by which these homicides are treated by the police, many of them commuters and some of whom belong to far right organizations which view such homicides as a form of population control. If Tuman loses the election it's because he is asking the police to take a pay cut. He had the chutzpah to take on an entity that views itself supreme--over the Mayor's office and the city council.

One of Tuman's rival, candidate Rebecca Kaplan, has been endorsed by black businessman Geoffrey Pete, who said that he was impressed with Kaplan, who promised to help in revising, "Oakland's outdated and regressive nightclub and cabaret regulations." She also has the endorsement of the Black Women Organized for Political Action and The Sierra Club. Some have called her an opportunist for switching from the Green Party to the Democratic Party.

And though she has received endorsement from some black leaders and groups, it is charged that she is the candidate for young whites who frequent downtown restaurants clubs and coffee shops. People who are pushing blacks out of Oakland. People who enjoy movies that star Reese Witherspoon and queue up before Pizza places and ice cream parlors.

Ms. Kaplan, a lesbian, agrees with Tuman that Oakland police officers are paid too well, as she told *The East Bay Express*, “The average cop costs the city about \$188,000 annually in pay and benefits. She notes that police officers in other cities, from New York to Baltimore, make much less. And she points out that Oakland could have more cops on the force if it paid them lower salaries. ‘We have fewer police officers than other cities because we pay them more,’ she argued. ‘But making the costs so high so that you don’t have adequate finances, in my mind, is not a public safety position.’” Ms. Kaplan was among those council members who joined in the protest against the shooting of Oscar Grant by a Bay Area Transit policeman. Tuman said that he was asked to enter the mayoral race as a result of the violence that followed Oscar Grant shooting. Not only was the “violence” exaggerated by reporters like the *Time*’s Jesse McKinley, but most of those arrested were white out-of-towners, anarchists and not “irrational capitalists.” After running a photo of two black alleged looters, as though the rioters were exclusively black, the *SF Weekly* on July 9, 2010 provided an update: Authorities have adjusted the arrest total to 78 -- with fully three-quarters of those arrested hailing from outside Oakland. Why is it that these folks were apparently happy to help Oakland burn, but not live there the rest of the time? Do they find Oakland too dangerous? Were they worried about, er, meeting the wrong sort of person there?

But none of the candidates has been as tough on the police as Jean Quan. Quan, who has the support of Assemblyman Sandre Swanson, labor unions and non-profits criticized the refusal of the police to pay 9% toward their pensions like other city employees. She told the *Express*, “The union said it wouldn’t start paying 9 percent into police pensions unless the city guaranteed no layoffs for two years. Quan argued that such a guarantee would have been financially irresponsible because voters might reject tax measures in next month’s election.”

The police and their allies have expressed their opposition to Quan by sending out flyers linking her to Mayor Ron Dellums, who is considered a foe of the police union. The flyer passed around in my neighborhood carried the headline: “If you thought Ron Dellums was a good Mayor... You’ll love Jean Quan.” Its main complaint is that Mrs. Quan supported, “Laying off up to 200 police officers while opposing efforts to reduce the City bureaucracy.” Intimidated by the criticism of Dom Arotzarena, the powerful president of Oakland’s Police Union, Mrs. Quan capitulated. She sent a flyer into my neighborhood, which shows her standing in front of a police car and recapping her tough on crime bon a fides.

In its most recent display of arrogance, the police were about to charge the city of Oakland overtime for their attending a charity event in Redding, California! This is an example of their favoring the suburbs where most of them live over Oakland where they get paid to serve. Like Quan, Tuman's response to the event invites even more anger from an entity, the police union, which in the view of Chip Johnson, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, puts its needs above those of Oakland's citizens. In his response to me Tuman wrote: "As far as the most recent episode of questionable overtime payments goes, let me react in this way: "I am encouraged by the fact that our officers want to participate in a charity event; this speaks volumes to their willingness to be good civic partners here as well as in other places. I do not feel, however, that in this economic environment it is appropriate to charge overtime costs for this cause... There is a lesson here: everyone in city government (not just the police officers) should be more careful and honest stewards of public funds--and under my administration, they will be just that." Tuman would remedy the situation of Oakland's police being drawn from the suburbs by insisting that more police be hired from within the city of Oakland.

As an incentive, for the police to recruit from the inner city, he'd provide the police, fireman and teachers affordable housing by using vacancies left over from Jerry Brown's 10K program. Tuman wouldn't use the term failed to describe the disappointing results of Brown's 10K plan. He says that by his second term Brown had lost interest in the mayor's job and was looking forward to the next job. Others have a less polite view of Brown's administration. One of the charges was that he was too beholden to developers who were his campaign contributors. In 2004, Brown obtained a \$61 million dollars subsidy for Forest City, a developer, to build in Oakland. The development called "Uptown" has been beset by problems and instead of condos, the developer, because of the bust in the housing market, has had to settle on rentals. Before that, my real estate agent says that they were just about giving away condos at \$125,000 a pop. Tuman is certainly informed and with more experience might understand the viewpoints of those who live in the hot zone of North Oakland. He says for example that racist practices in the Oakland system of education are unintentional.

After observing my daughter's run for the school board, I'd disagree. The North Oakland's district run was tilted in favor of the white affluent Rockridge section of Oakland. The attempt to keep Hispanic and black students from entering the Chabot Elementary School where they would study alongside the children of upper middle class white students was deliberate. The successful candidate was focused solely on this school and after her election millions of dollars were directed to this school while some of the schools attended by blacks and Hispanics go without text books.

Having accomplished her goal of directing money to the school where her children were enrolled, she disappeared from public view, only required to attend monthly board of education meetings.

Racism exists elsewhere. The residents of Piedmont Ave., a tony section of Oakland, are undergoing some soul searching, (or are they) over some recent racial profiling of some black children. The Tribune reported: "Last week, the City Council held a public hearing reviewing an incident in March where two minority students were stopped and questioned by police walking home from school after someone called to report supposed suspicious activity.

The call was unfounded and police closed the matter after speaking to the students." Problems in our district are also complicated by police corruption that could be viewed as racist because the police would not practice corruption in the suburbs where they live. Prof. Jerry Bryant is correct when he says that black neighborhoods have been used to raise ill gained revenue for other groups, traditionally. With the billions passing through hands as a result of drug profits, there is corruption internationally and locally. Some of those who attend the Beat 10Y Market Street Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Meeting chaired by Vertis Whitaker usually question why the police are so chummy with the drug dealers. The "mainstream" pundits and journalists don't see some of the police action that we witness. They don't care to see it. When I challenged two Oakland Tribune reporters to cover yellow on black crime as much as they did black on yellow crime, they didn't even bother to reply.

Sam Hamod, the poet and publisher, recounts what happened when The Nation of Islam rid Washington D.C. projects of Jamaican drug gangs; the police went after the NOI because they were no longer receiving kickbacks from prostitutes and drug dealers--money that is used to improve the lifestyles of suburbanites. The underground economy in black neighborhoods throughout the nation pays for home improvements, medical bills, college tuition, and vacations for white and colored ethnic groups. In one Harlem precinct, twenty six policemen were charged with corruption.

"A former New York City police officer caught in the sweeping scandal at the 30th Precinct in Harlem was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison for dealing drugs, evading taxes and breaking into property without a search warrant." *The New York Times* 9/10/96. And what has become of Adrian Schoolcraft, a patrol officer who uncovered evidence of racial profiling as a policy for a Brooklyn Precinct?

"Officer Schoolcraft is on suspension without pay on charges that he left a work shift on Halloween in 2009 without permission, and then failed to return, said his lawyer, Jon Norinsberg. He has filed a \$50 million lawsuit claiming department officials retaliated against him, including taking him to a hospital in handcuffs that night for psychiatric evaluation, after he reported his suspicions. He has also secretly recorded roll calls that have resulted in allegations that commanders at the 81st Precinct pushed ticket and arrest quotas on officers. The police have denied the existence of quotas." *Times*, Oct.15

At one time, black businessmen who were excluded from the capitalist system by the banks could obtain loans from black numbers bankers, but whites took control of that too. The film "Cotton Club" touches upon this subject.

Racism unintentional? My neighbors would disagree. They know that if they lived in the more affluent white sections of Oakland they'd receive better service and better protection. A recent article in the *Oakland Tribune* revealed that traffic fines are leveled disproportionately in the down scale sections of the city. When I had to appear in Oakland traffic court to pay a one hundred dollar fine for not coming to a complete stop, I found that 95 percent of those there to pay fines were either black or Hispanic. If, as Tuman says, class, not race determines ones status, why weren't more whites present?

The practice of absentee landlords renting their properties to drug dealing gangs can also be seen as an act of racism. The lower property value of my neighborhood and those like mine can be attributed to this practice. An abandoned house located on my block was the scene of prostitution and drug dealing before it was boarded up. The city has been promising to demolish it for two years; it's still there. Such is the power of Oakland's landlords that she has been able to ignore citations from the city and threats of fines. She owns four properties in North Oakland and is probably the product of a two family home.

AWM bloggers even white progressives--like Robert Scheer who praised the Tea Partiers and Rand Paul (on KPFA, 10,9, '10), while condemning Obama, Maxine Waters, and Jesse Jackson)--would probably disagree that racist practices are being used against the black citizens of Oakland, but I no longer will take the role of an unpaid research assistant for them. Their minds are frozen in their attitudes toward blacks.

Tuman said that the mayor didn't have a role in forming school policy, which didn't bar Jerry Brown from influencing Oakland's school policy, but could use the office as a bully pulpit. He would direct funds to non-profits who have a track record for improving conditions for marginalized students. He'd also study the approach of schools located in poor districts whose test scores are competitive.

Tuman showed his command of the issues including ways of pumping more revenue into Oakland's public schools. It was a geekish recital from a young man who is in full command of the facts. His late father would be proud. I promised the elder Tuman that I would include a reference to Babylonian astrology in one of my free associative novels. I told Joe that the promise had been fulfilled.

Judging from the excitement generated by Don Perata at a rally held by my brother, Dr. Michael LeNoir, Don Perata is going to be hard to beat. Having faced down an automatic weapon when his car was hi-jacked and having survived prostate cancer and an FBI probe, the kind of experiences that bring reflection and wisdom, he carried on like a lion in the winter, wounded, but still full of fight, before a crowd of enthusiastic black supporters. The federal probe ended with no charges being filed. Having undergone three 100 percent tax audits, I can't imagine what a federal probe must be like. Perata blamed the probe on the Bush administration seeking to undermine the power of Democrats. In his mind, he's already cut Oakland's budget by eliminating some boards and commissions, which he feels are unnecessary. He spoke of a program for the arts, perhaps drawing revenue to the city by employing its famed creative resources, Rap, Blues, the visual arts.

Mr. Perata has been endorsed by a number of black pastors, including Bishop Bob Jackson, who heads the 7,000-member Acts Full Gospel Church. When Ms. Kaplan sought Mr. Jackson's endorsement, he said he told her, "I don't think you've had a chance to warm up your seat yet," according to *The New York Times*. On Oct. 18, he was endorsed by *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Though the local media are harping on Don Perata's flaws, specifically his role in an Oakland Raiders deal that has left the city millions of dollars in debt until the year 2025, Tuman is the only candidate who comes to the mayoral run with a clean slate. He began as a dark horse, but is now gaining in the polls. He placed second in an endorsement by *The Oakland Tribune* followed by Rebecca Kaplan. Jean Quan was third. In *The East Bay Express* endorsements, Tuman placed third after Quan, second and Kaplan, first. Tuman, Quan and Kaplan are hoping that ranked-choice voting will mean that second and third place votes could determine the winner. Perata believes that ranked-choice voting has "deprived voters of substantive discussions."

Tuman's debut as a politician has been impressive. He's open to ideas, too. Having watched "irrational capitalism" at work since the late 80s when these operations invaded my neighborhood, I proposed that tutoring in business might be an alternative to jail for some these underground capitalists, and if successful, the extending of micro loans to those who achieve a certificate. He took note of this idea.

One thing for which Jerry Brown should be commended. For awhile he lived in a neighborhood where he witnessed firsthand the dysfunctional side of Oakland. If elected, Tuman or whoever is elected should do the same.

Win or lose, Tuman represents a new direction and a new generation.

Ishmael Reed is the publisher of *Konch*. His new novel, *Juice!*, illustrated by him, is available for pre-order at Amazon. He can be reached at: Uncleish@aol.com.