



Black Joy Parade

vibes

Experience Oakland's Vibrant Arts Scene

Street dancers. Jazz legends. Hip-hop superstars. Oakland has long been a creative hotspot, birthing top talent and exciting new forms of artistic expression. At the heart of it all is storytelling, and Oakland's creators have myriad tales to tell. Prepare to be inspired.

BY KIMBERLY OLSON

COURTESY OF VISIT OAKLAND



CHRISTINE CUEETO

LAKE MERRITT

OMCA

Discover OMCA, the Oakland Museum of California. The museum, garden, and gathering place in the heart of Oakland is where you can lose yourself in the fascinating world of California art, history, and natural sciences.

museumca.org

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DOWNTOWN

Paramount Theatre

Oakland's Paramount Theatre is one of the finest remaining examples of art deco design in the United States. Restored to its original splendor, meticulously maintained, and fully upgraded to modern technical standards, today the Paramount Theatre is one of the Bay Area's premiere performing arts facilities.

paramountoakland.org

[f](#) [@](#) [@oakparamount](#)



DOWNTOWN

Oakland Symphony

The Oakland Symphony reflects the East Bay's many cultures. The music made here embraces the people who make it such a vibrant place to live and thrive. It's an energy you feel at every performance. A harmony you hear in the Community Chorus. And the promise you see on the faces of the Youth Orchestra. This is the spirit of the Oakland Symphony. It's all in the music.

oaklandsymphony.org

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WEST OAKLAND

The Crucible

This 56,000-square-foot industrial arts studio offers classes for all levels and for students as young as eight years old. Try your hand at such disciplines as glass blowing, welding, blacksmithing, ceramics, and woodworking, to name a few. The Crucible is devoted to keeping industrial arts accessible to all through free programming and scholarships.

thecrucible.org | [f](#) [@](#) [@thecrucible94607](#)

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF RONNIE STEWART; COURTESY OF VISIT OAKLAND/JORDAN PARK; COURTESY OF OAKLAND INTERFAITH GOSPEL CHOIR; ALAMY; ILLUSTRATION: MARINA DAINEKO

MUSICAL BEGINNINGS

For nearly a century, Oakland has been an epicenter of musical innovation.

In the 1940s, Seventh Street in West Oakland was a bustling hub of Black culture, earning the nickname “Harlem of the West.” Music fans packed clubs like Esther’s Orbit Room and Eli’s Mile High Club to see blues artists like Sugar Pie DeSanto, Big Mama Thornton, and Jimmy McCracklin, who influenced The Rolling Stones.



JAZZ & BLUES

As migrants fled Jim Crow, Oakland gained new musical innovators.

Blues musicians put their own spin on the genre to create a swingy West Coast sound. Seventh Street was a jazz lover’s dream. Greats like Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, and Sarah Vaughan played at Slim Jenkins Supper Club.

City Beats

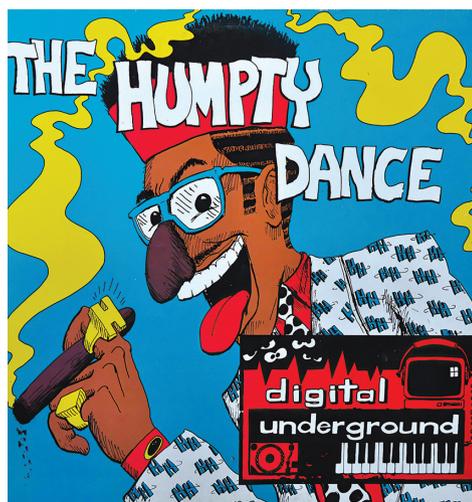
Thanks to its rich history and eclectic sound, Oakland’s music scene is still booming today. Whatever your listening pleasure — The Town delivers.

The cool cats head to legendary jazz club Yoshi’s, an intimate venue that comes alive with the musical stylings of top-tier artists, in historic Jack London Square. An Oakland institution, Yoshi’s has been lit up by many of the giants of jazz, as well as musicians in other genres. The venue hosts artists like Latin jazz great Pete Escovedo, chart-topping R&B singer Mavis Staples, and Oakland’s own horn-driven funk masters, Tower of Power. Bonus: Diners get preferred seating in the club after dinner.

If your taste runs to blues or gospel, check out West Coast Blues Society for events like the Legends of 7th Street Festival and the Red, White & Blues Festival.

Oakland Symphony caters to lovers of both classical and inventive works, with orchestra, choral, and chamber ensemble performances at the Paramount Theatre and other venues. For rousing Black gospel, tune in for Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir performances throughout the year.

Hip-hop fans won’t want to miss Hiero Day in Jack London Square, a September festival featuring groundbreaking music from artists like Nef the Pharaoh, Ras Kass, and Talib Kweli.



HIP-HOP HYPE

The Town is home to yet another musical revolution.

In the early '90s, the city’s emerging hip-hop scene developed an iconic independent spirit, too. Oakland turned out major artists like En Vogue,

MC Hammer, and Digital Underground, who translated hip-hop and R&B their own way. Many local musicians had personal connections to the Black Panther Party. Tupac Shakur’s (who moved to the Bay Area in 1988) parents were members, for example, and D’Wayne Wiggins of Tony! Toni!

Toné! benefitted from the Black Panther’s free breakfast program. The injustices that galvanized the Black Panthers, like police brutality, also fueled these musicians’ politically conscious lyrics.



LOCAL VOICES RONNIE STEWART Co-Founder of West Coast Blues Society

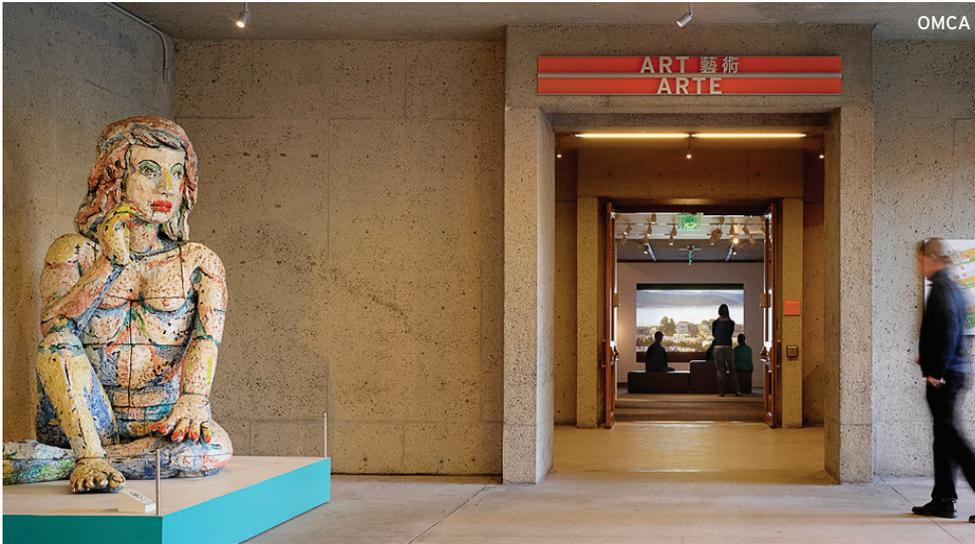
“It’s important that Oakland supports its history. New Orleans has Bourbon Street and Memphis has Beale Street. We’ve been trying to save [sports] but we should capitalize on history we already have.”

CELEBRATING HERITAGE

More than 100 languages are spoken around town, and it’s represented artistically, too.

Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts is a performing arts complex located in a historic downtown building. It includes a 400-seat theater plus class and rehearsal spaces for theater, music, ballet, African, and contemporary dance companies.

The Oakland Second Line Project brings free Black cultural arts community experiences to Oakland’s Black neighborhoods. The Oakland Asian Cultural Center promotes Asian and Pacific Islander arts and cultural programming with workshops, film screenings, exhibitions, weekly art, dance, music classes, and more.

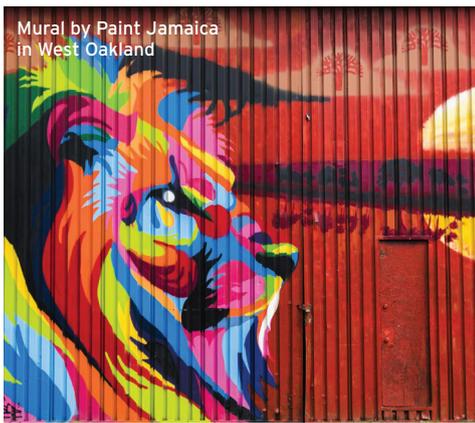


Hands-On Art

Try something totally new at these Oakland studios.

In West Oakland, The Crucible teaches industrial art classes for all skill levels in a range of mediums, from welding and woodworking to glass blowing and ceramics. This long-running institution is the largest non-profit industrial arts education facility in the U.S.

Ever wanted to run away to the circus? It's easier to just take a class at **Kinetic Arts Center**, with its wide range of circus art programming and performances like trapeze, air ballet, tumbling, and theatrical clowning. More traditional mediums are taught at **Studio One Art Center**, which has a variety of digital, visual, and performing arts classes for all ages.



Paint The Town

Oakland's art scene is on point, with compelling works that are often culturally relevant to the local communities.

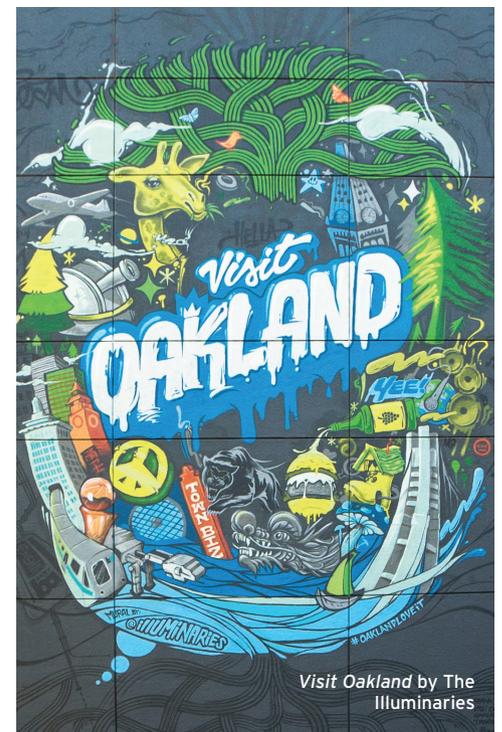
Explore California's past, present, and future at the **Oakland Museum of California (OMCA)** which offers thought-provoking exhibits that have explored everything from Burning Man to Dorothea Lange's photography as activism to Afrofuturism. OMCA showcases influential California artists and history, usually with an Oakland take. And on Friday nights, enjoy the museum's **Off the Grid** event, with live music, food trucks, and unique activities.

Oakland Art Murmur (OAM) is your portal to eclectic artwork by diverse local artists. Join its **First Friday Art Walk** featuring unique art venues open to the public. Chat with local artists, learn about their work, and take home an original artwork. To visit art galleries on

your own, use OAM's visual arts guides, which map some of the top spots in various Oakland neighborhoods.

For a classic setting, head to **Joyce Gordon Gallery**, a Black woman-owned fine art gallery that features works by artists of color.

And if you prefer to see your paintings alfresco, go on a **mural walk** and discover Oakland's colorful street art. The city is emblazoned with more than 1,000 murals. In Chinatown, see golden fire-breathing dragons and other Asian-themed murals by the young artists of **Dragon School 99**. If you prefer to be guided through the city's colorful streets, Art Murmur hosts free, family-friendly mural tours every second Saturday of the month (you can book private group tours, too).



Showtime
See what's playing at some of Oakland's historic theaters.



FOX THEATER

This architectural gem opened in 1928 as a gilded movie palace. Today, it's a 2,800-seat venue renowned for live music and other performances.



PARAMOUNT THEATRE

Home to Oakland Ballet Company and Oakland Symphony, this 1930s-era theater offers tours on the first and third Saturdays each month.



GRAND LAKE THEATRE

Catch a movie at one of the country's top-ranked vintage movie palaces, which features Egyptian and Moorish palace-themed auditoriums.

TURFinc performers in front of the Fox Theater.



BANDALOOP

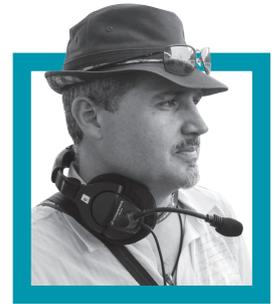
Dancing in the Street

Whether performing ballet or bustin' moves, Oakland's dancers leave audiences transfixed. While some of the genres are familiar, these artists prefer to take things up a notch.

Watch in wonder as aerial dancers from **BANDALOOP** glide, leap, and flip across walls. As pioneers of vertical dance, these talented artists perform elegant choreography while suspended by nylon climbing ropes. The world renowned group has danced on the sides of Oakland buildings, along the walls of Golconda Fort in India, and upon granite rock faces in Yosemite National Park.

For expressive, thought-provoking dance that explores everything from the meaning of home to veterans' issues, you have to see **AXIS Dance Company**. The acclaimed troupe of disabled and nondisabled performers is reimagining what dance can be.

Oakland Ballet mesmerizes audiences with innovative ballet performances at Oakland's art deco **Paramount Theatre**. The company spans genres — from classical ballet to folklorico to street dance — reflecting the East Bay's diversity. 🌱



LOCAL VOICES
THOMAS CAVANAGH
Executive Director and Executive Producer, **BANDALOOP**

"Oakland comes out for **BANDALOOP**. At our home show before the April 2022 tour, we had over 3,000 people attend each of the three shows. We closed Grand Avenue and filled it with people on picnic blankets and beach chairs – for public art! When we travel the world, we spread the good word that Oakland is the hive where the artist mind can thrive."



TURF DANCING 101

Stroll the streets of Oakland long enough and you'll spot turf dancing, a style that combines graceful, balletic movements with abrupt, angular gestures like popping, tutting, and breaking. The genre, born in Oakland in the early 2000s, spread to cities across the country. To see this style in action, watch talented young dancers of **TURFinc** perform in Oakland and beyond.



COURTESY OF OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY/JORDAN PARK

The Oakland Ballet Company performing *Luna Mexicana*.

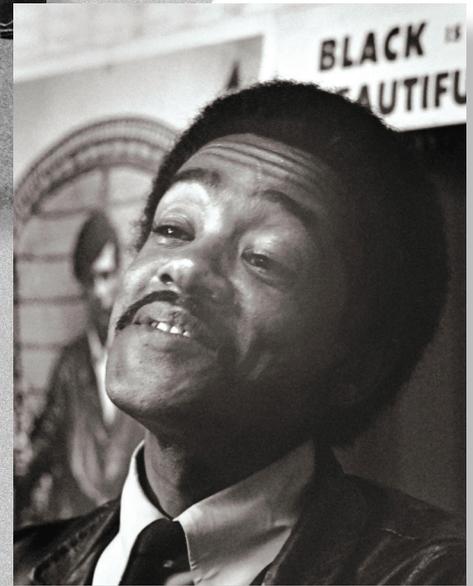
A Cultural Revolution: Black Panther Power

BY KIMBERLY OLSON

Born in Oakland, the Black Panther Party is indelible to the city's history and communities. Its influence continues to this day, expanding mutual aid programs and inspiring a new generation of activists in the U.S. and abroad.

In 1966, political activists Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton met at Merritt College in Oakland. Determined to challenge police brutality and oppression of the Black community, they organized a group of young, poor African Americans to create the Black Panther Party. The Black Panthers, part of the Black Power movement, initially focused on patrolling Black neighborhoods to protect residents from police violence.

But it quickly evolved into a revolutionary, nationwide organization aimed at helping the Black community take control of their own destiny. With an ideology rooted in socialism, Black nationalism, and armed self-defense, the Black Panthers demanded guaranteed income and affordable housing, campaigned for prison reform, and registered voters. Women led many local chapters, which offered arts education, free breakfast programs, health clinics, legal aid, and more.



Clockwise from left: Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party; *All Power to the People*, 1969 by Emory Douglas, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party; Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panther Party

LIVING HISTORY

Here are a few ways to experience the Black Panthers for yourself.

• **Visit the Black Panther Party's former headquarters.** The two-story West Oakland Victorian was once the hub for national party

decisions and housed the party's newspaper staff. *Located at 1048 Peralta St.*

• **Embark on a two-hour Black Panther Party walking tour** with Dr. Saturu Ned, an original party member, who guides you to key historic sites in Oakland.

• **Check the calendar at OMCA**, which has exhibits on Black Power and the Black Panther Party. *Located at 1000 Oak St.*
• **See West Oakland Mural Project's Women of the Black Panther Party mural** and its beautifully curated mini museum that celebrates these women

community leaders (schedule an appointment for a tour). *Located at Center Street and Dr. Huey P. Newton Way.*
• **Visit Marcus Books**, the country's oldest Black-owned, independent bookstore, to pick up a volume (or a few) about the Black Panther's history

and enduring impact. *Located at 3900 Martin Luther King Jr Way.*
• **Head to the African American Museum and Library at Oakland** to peruse back issues of the party's *Commemorator* and *The Black Panther* newspapers. *Located at 659 14th St.*