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# NOWHERE TO GO



LIKE OTHER OAKLAND RESIDENTS, MR. TATUM KNOWS BART IS GOING TO TAKE HIS HOME.

To lose your home at eighty means a great change. Mrs. Stenyard and Mr. Tatum have lived in their houses for over 20 years. Many of the houses in their block are already torn down. Large open spaces stretch between the few remaining houses. There is an emptiness, a kind of sadness, about their streets.

Not a hint of all the living—the homes and families, the people and the buildings — remains, only little pieces of glass, and tin folded into the bare ground.

Those people more acutely aware of the transit problems in the bay area perhaps do not stop and feel this sadness. Many people will benefit from the new system. Nothing lasts forever anyway.

Mrs. Stenyard and Mr. Tatum have worked hard and accepted the responsibility for their own lives. They are property owners and taxpayers and have been financially responsible citizens of Oakland.

Statements have been made that Oakland has a relocation program for the people BART displaces from their homes. Neither Mrs. Stenyard nor Mr. Tatum

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photos by Lynn Phipps

# NOWHERE TO GO

By Carol Brown

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## AS BART MOVES TO TAKE THEIR HOMES

have been contacted by any relocation agency.

BART and the city of Oakland both refuse to accept responsibility for these people. The money offered them by BART is inadequate; it cannot begin to replace their homes. They are too old to get loans, they cannot afford to make house payments with their incomes. It is frightening to think of working hard all your life and then to lose what you have gained—without adequate compensation. This is the kind of problem that only grows bigger and snowballs.

Mrs. Sneed, a neighbor of Mrs. Stenyard and Mr. Tatum said "This block here—most everyone owned their house before they started demolishing. Some of our friends got very little for their property and now they're having a hard time trying to maintain the property. They paid such high prices for what they're buying, that now they don't have the money to care for it." Mrs. Sneed also pointed out, "They call this the slum or the ghetto, but they don't have a special tax that's cut. It's only recently that we started to get anything around here for our tax dollar. At least in their old age they should be given another house."

Most of the houses still standing are owned by people who refuse to sell, because they know there are no houses in Oakland available for the money BART is offering.

### Mrs. Betty Stenyard Age 85

"I moved into this house in 1946, January the 18th. Twenty years in the same house. . . and I sure hate to get out of it. I was born in 1881 about 90 miles from Greenville, then moved to Greenville about 1935. I started working in the crops ever since I was large enough to work. Went to school a little, but we had to work at the time I was coming up.

"My husband came out ahead of me. He worked in the shipyard.

"A week or so after I got here I started work in the Oakland Naval Hospital, Oak Knoll. Doing some of everything. When I first started I washed dishes, then I

went to vegetable work. In Mississippi I worked in crops, cotton and corn, cotten and corn

and stay a month, and come home and stay another month. We'd go down on the bus. Sometimes it at four in the morning to catch that bus, in the frost and the cold. One thing happened that had never



Mrs. Stenyard in her West Oakland home.

here who come in and look after me, and it don't cost so much to live here.

"They offered me \$7,000, but for something comfortable like now it will cost \$14,000 or up. With \$7,000 if I'm not replaced, I'll have to rent.

We worked for nothing. Then when I quit crops I worked for white folks. I'd never worked in a hospital before. It was the time of war and they need help. I liked it fine. I worked at the hospital three years, two months and two weeks. After I quit at the hospital, I went back to work at the harvest, and worked there until I quit in 1953 when I caught pneumonia.

"We worked crop down at the side of Fresno, about 30 or 40 miles from Fresno. I'd go down

would be crowded. The bus would pick up folks around here—pick them up at different stops. I've been through some things since

"I think I didn't need to be on welfare as long as I was able to work. When I first was here, my husband worked at the shipyard from February to October. Then he worked at another one. He was sick and had a nervous condition and would shake. Every year it got worse and worsen.

"In 1959 in December had my first vacation and went back home to Mississippi. Everything was fine. . . just like it was. Nothing different to my eye.

"I like West Oakland, don't want to move to East Oakland. This is the first place I stayed when I came. I have neighbors I've been in California. I'd be up

happened to me before—down there we slept in tents. . . something I'd never done in my life.

### Mr. Barclay Tatum Age 79

"I'm feeling fine today. So far my garden is good, and I'm eating and doing good. Can't ask for more than that. I don't have no complaint—except that there's not enough money.

"I've been in this house since about '43, got pension in '55. I worked at the Navy Supply base from 1912 to 1955. Got a pension, got a little something.

"I was born in Danville, Kentucky, about 145 miles from Louisville. In 1887, not 1927, 1887. So I've got a little age on me—79. I don't drink but I do

smoke my pipe. I don't fool with no wine though, you don't see no wine bottles round here. I was a Pullman porter for awhile—been around everywhere. Did that about 21 years—around 1912 or something like that. Don't recall things like that too well.

"I don't have any relatives here—none but myself. My closest relatives are my wife's people—I have a niece in Los Angeles. Have no people of my own.

"BART is causing me lots of discomfort in my having to move. I haven't moved yet of course but I've got to. I haven't got a place to move yet—they have segregated me out. They have given me the date to move yet. The money they offered me is not enough but I'll have to do with it. It would buy one corner of a house."

Mrs. Sneed explained what BART had done: "Mr. Tatum has actually been pressured to move. BART gave him false statements. A man came and promised him a house with wall to wall carpeting, plus \$7,200. He signed the property over, but then he found out the statements were untrue. This would be too bad now if his niece hadn't come and stepped in."

"I hate to leave this house," Mr. Tatum said, puffing on his pipe and looking around, ". . . been here so long."

BART says they are giving the highest possible values on these houses. Mayor Reading says they can't pay high premiums. The Home Owners and Tenant Association and the Presco Neighborhood Council are group in West Oakland that are trying to deal with these problems. If nothing is done soon, the matter will probably be taken to the courts. If the court gives higher value than the people will be better able to relocate.

Something must be done by someone, something SHOULD be done. The problem is being created now. It can be solved now—or like other problems, will be put off until it can no longer be ignored. If Oakland can look the other way while the harvest of peoples lives is being snatched away, Oakland only preparing for her own bountiful harvest.