

# Visions of Richmond, California

By Scott Braley, Sheryl Lane,  
and Jesse Clarke



**R**ichmond, California spans 32 miles of shoreline along the San Francisco Bay, with stellar views of the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, and Marin. It boasts a mild Mediterranean climate, a diverse population, and easy access to everything from the Napa Valley vineyards to Silicon Valley. It's also home to the largest refinery in the Bay Area (owned by the Chevron Corporation), has a violent crime rate that has led to its being labeled the third most dangerous city in California, and has an unemployment rate of 36 percent for Black men between 16-24 years of age.

The lens through which one views Richmond depends on one's experiences. There are those who have lived in the city for generations and relish its cultural past and promising future. There are those who have remained in the city after many industrial and higher paying manufacturing jobs have left and are struggling to survive. And, there are the newly arrived—new immigrants seeking some affordability in one of the nation's most expensive regions, or those who seek the beauty of living close to economic and cultural centers like San Francisco.

In this photo essay, photographer Scott Braley gives us a glimpse of Richmond, its residents and workers, while Sheryl Lane asks them about their visions for the city. What do they like or dislike about Richmond? And by the way, who owns Richmond?

Photo:

Richmond transit village, where BART, buses, and Amtrak come together.

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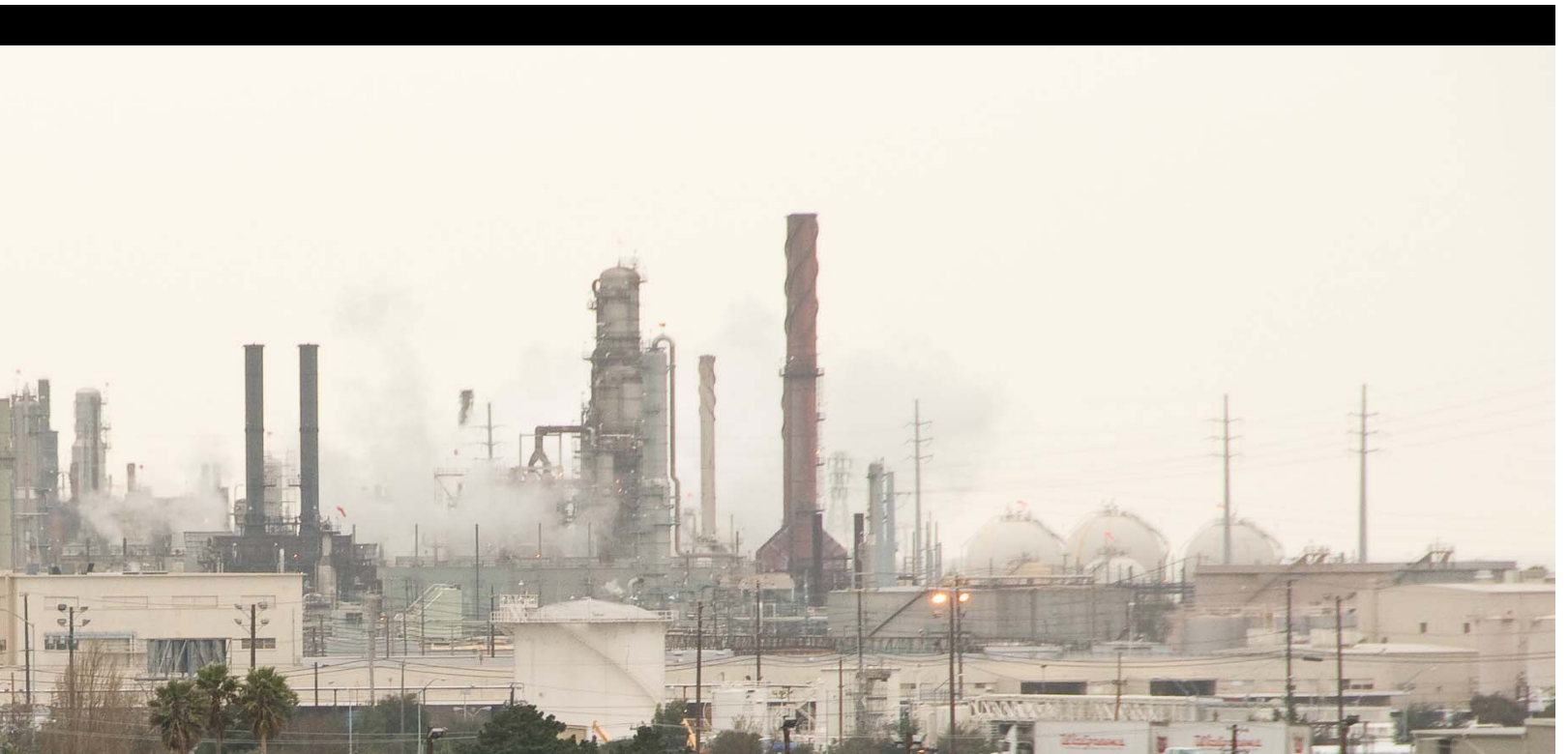
Photo:

Henry Clark grew up in North Richmond, went to college, and returned to work with his community. He has been the director of West County Toxics Coalition for many years.

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*“We need to get off the petrochemical treadmill,” says Dr. Henry Clark, executive director of West County Toxics Coalition, and a community activist for over 25 years. Clark sees Richmond residents “taking back the community that is theirs” and overcoming Chevron’s long held dominance.*

*“I see Richmond continuing to become the leading green community in the Bay Area. It’s leading the charge that is now coming to full green blossom with the development of green jobs and renewable technology that can be transferred around the world and to developing countries.”*



■ Photos: (Above) Refinery and industrial areas in Contra Costa County, west of Richmond.  
(Below) The view north toward the Richmond Bridge and the oil shipping terminals from the Miller Knox Regional Shoreline Park.



Photo: St. Mark's Church located in the "Iron Triangle" of Richmond is noted for its community organizing and social activism. © 2008 Scott Braley

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*"I love Richmond because of its community, especially the Laotian community who call Richmond home. I also enjoy the weather here. My vision for Richmond is a city that improves its roads and provides safe and affordable housing, especially for seniors."*

Thangsoun Phut Ama, 84 years old, came to Richmond 30 years ago from Laos.



Photo: Dessheney Campos does schoolwork at the Richmond Public Library. © 2008 Scott Braley



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*“What I dislike about Richmond is that you have to worry about block territory. If you cross the lines, you can get shot. My vision for Richmond is a city that is drug free. I like Richmond for its diversity—a lot of people of different races and backgrounds live here.”*

*“As far as employment, you have to go outside of the city to find a job because what is mostly here are retail, minimum wage jobs. I am trying to get back in college; I had to drop out to take care of my family.”*

Ramone McKneely, 21 years old, has lived in Richmond his entire life and works for UPS in Richmond.

Photo:

Looking west on Willard Street to the refineries.

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*Harland Masters, 72 helps his community by helping kids and parents cross safely to Ford School at one of Richmond's busiest intersections, 23rd Street and Clinton Avenue. Retired from the United States Army, he lives in neighboring San Pablo where he is raising a granddaughter.*

*"I want to see a cut down in crime and violence in the city, more police are needed."*

*When asked what he likes about the city, he says, "I like the climate."*



Photos:  
(Above)  
Harland Masters.

(Below)  
St. Mark's Church.



*“I like Richmond for its good community and the good jobs coming to Richmond. A lot of developers are coming and building here, such as the new Civic Center project and development along Macdonald Ave.*”

*“I dislike the drugs. It is something that we need to get out of the city. We need more after school programs so that our youth can have places to go and play.*”

*“We, as a community, own this city and I’d like to see companies like Chevron helping the community. For example, they can help us get all of the drugs out of the city.”*

William William has lived in Richmond for 25 years. He works for the Richmond Rescue Mission and on construction projects throughout the city.

■ Photo: (Left) Ralph Ragland shops the Richmond farmers market for vegetables.  
© 2008 Scott Braley



■ Photo: Tony Hernandez, third generation resident at Atchison Village, pitches for his son AJ on a village lawn.  
© 2008 Scott Braley



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■ Photo: County Sheriffs investigate a shooting at Chesly and Filbert, between the Community Health Center and the West County Toxics Coalition office, just outside Richmond city limits.

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*“I would like to see economic empowerment for Richmond residents and increased bus lines so that people can get around; better and more affordable housing; safer communities and streets.*

*“We need more quality jobs for Richmond residents in the city. We need more youth programs and reentry programs for the large population of parolees. We need more opportunities for seniors and economic programs to keep them from losing their homes.”*

*When asked who owns the city, she responds, “Chevron. They are doing just enough to keep people off their tail. They used to do more, such as more apprenticeship programs and more money for scholarships. Chevron can give more back to the community because they are making a large profit, but they are not doing enough.*

*“Developers are coming in but they are not giving opportunities to residents—providing low-income housing or job training to the community.”*

Lorie Chinn, community activist and president of ACORN, Richmond Chapter has lived in Richmond for 20 years.



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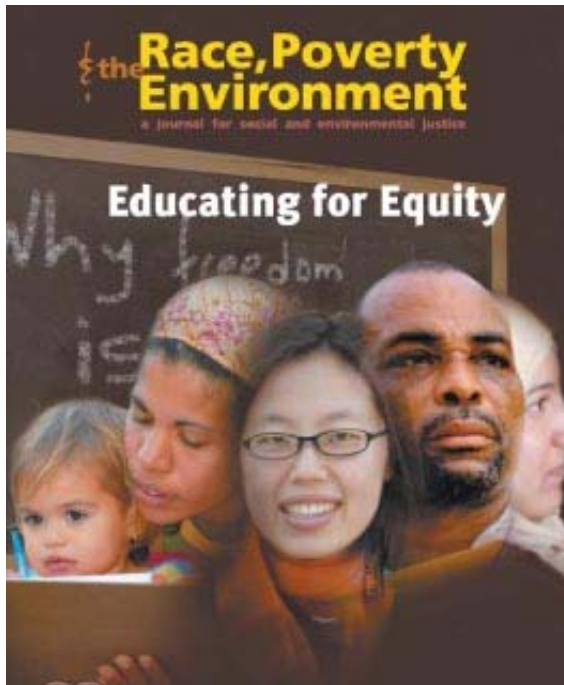
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