

A position paper submitted to Peralta Federation of Teachers, AFT 1603, against allowing A's to build a stadium on Peralta/Laney land.

Peter Brown

Instructor, Machine Technology Laney College

Peralta Federation of Teachers CTE representative

I know it's 9 pages!! You don't hafta read it all! Read the summary. If you want to know my sources (lots of live links) and get more detail, read what you want of the other 7 pages.

Contents;

1. Summary; Pages 1, 2
2. In Depth (sources cited);
 - a. What can we expect from the A's? Pages 2 - 6
 - b. The context for this struggle; Pages 6, 7

Summary;

1. Everything the A's owners propose is described as being "for the fans, the students, the community". This is not the truth. The A's owners and other wealthy investors are abusing the loyalty & spirit of A's fans, the community, and the Peralta colleges, to profit from development that prices people out of Oakland.
2. The "A's stadium" is not about a stadium, or a baseball team; this is a real estate deal. It can only be understood as a part of all the corporate-driven development that's displacing and dispossessing lower income working class people from the city, and even from housing. This is certain to include quite a few A's fans. The stadium is an "anchor" project, a foot in the door to impinge on Laney, eventually shrinking, moving, or closing the school. The A's rejection of the Coliseum plan shows that this is precisely a real estate plan. The original plan was to build a new stadium in the parking lot and tear down the Coliseum for the new parking lot. This was far simpler than the challenges of the Laney site, yet it was rejected. The only reason is that developers do not envision boutique bars and restaurants in Deep East Oakland.
3. This development of a shiny new city for people with disposable income has no room for people who can't consume on that scale. It has no room for a community college that serves that poorer section of our working class. This is why we are being displaced, this is why Laney College is being run down; it is "broke on purpose".
4. The A's are a corporation owned by investors who invest to make profits; maximum profits. They, like other investors, invest in teams, stadiums, hospitals, pharmaceuticals, charter schools, real estate, weapons, agribusiness. A's owners are the exact same investors who are driving up housing prices, displacing people from Oakland.
5. Neither the A's, nor other corporations, will defend public education; the needs of the investment market now dictate that education be a venue for investment and profit, not for the development of human capabilities. We must hold government accountable at *all levels* to defend public education and the needs of the community. This is not pie in the sky; if Chancellor, Board, faculty, students, and staff were united and networking statewide & nationwide with their parallel groupings (i.e., other chancellors etc.) *who have exactly the same problems*, with the *demand* that the federal & state governments tax the corporations and the rich to fully & equally fund public education, there would be change within 2 years.

6. Claims that the A's will (might) provide significant funds to support Laney faculty and students, and even renovation of Laney facilities, encourage us to grasp at straws. Such agreements, between current A's ownership and PCCD, will last only until the A's are sold to new owners. Likewise, claims they will help prevent gentrification and displacement in our community are a joke; the A's owners are the billionaire investors buying Oakland real estate and displacing our students, our staff, and their families.
7. The new development of expensive housing, charming restaurants & night spots etc., is not *for* the currently highly paid tech workers priced out of San Francisco; it's to make money *off of* them. These people are a part of our working class, currently occupying a favorable spot in a job market; massive coding training of young people, along with further automation of code-writing, will soon affect their position in the labor market, and they, too, will begin being dispossessed. Already, many cannot purchase housing due to massive student loan debt.
8. Claims that these changes are natural urban development in which some move in and some move out, are not supported by the facts; a whole section of our working class, locally and nationally, is now considered disposable by corporations which are increasingly automated, and operate with very few people compared to past periods. This is why we have tent cities; this is why students, faculty, and other workers are living in closets and cars.
9. The A's say the stadium will be entirely privately financed; this has serious implications which *have not been addressed*; private financing means they must attract from \$700 million to \$1 billion in investors who will expect a high profit. This is why the A's want to buy, not just the land for the stadium, but the Laney parking lot and the BART service yards on the other side of 5th Avenue. They plan to build a multi-story parking structure with market rate housing units (and "some" affordable housing), *and* a "ballpark retail village" on the same land. Aside from the obvious problems of noise and pollution, of Laney students and staff sharing parking with stadium-goers (frequently drunk as they leave games), we must conclude that the A's intend to make a lot of money from parking fees, retail, and housing.
10. The city of Oakland will have to finance new freeway exits, on ramps, roads, bridges, and significantly upgrade Lake Merritt BART station – this will cost more than the stadium itself and is a direct giveaway.
11. No fight can be won by declaring surrender or retreat at the beginning, nor can it be won without recognizing and opposing the opponent's strategy. I am strongly in favor of PFT insisting that it be at the negotiating table if there is an ENA signed, with a strong set of demands in case our opposition is overrun. Minimizing damage from a stadium if we lose the fight against it must be part of our strategy, but I believe we must begin from a firm position against something that will inevitably hurt public education and our students.
12. The larger assault on our communities cannot be effectively opposed by simply trying to fend off that assault. It can only be opposed by taking the offensive. Only a strategic campaign to vastly enlarge the public sphere, outlawing corporate investment and profit from basic human needs including food, water, housing, education & healthcare, can effectively oppose the strategic campaign of corporate power to privatize all resources.
13. The Janus decision, gentrification, healthcare cuts, education cuts, and deportations are all part of the same game plan. As shown above, the game involves the same groups of investors, across the political spectrum. The Peralta Federation of Teachers is a community college union whose immediate survival *depends* on engaging and providing leadership for increasingly desperate, stressed faculty, and standing solidly for public education and the future of the entire

community. It can only do that if it opposes the A's stadium on Peralta land next to Laney. PFT must oppose the stadium.

In Depth;

What can we really expect from the A's, and what is the nature of the A's organization? Its nature defines its possibilities.

The A's are indeed a team, and are beloved by many, but the team is also a corporation, a privately owned corporation with a majority investor (John J. Fisher) and several minority investors (including Ross Walker and former owner Lew Wolff among unnamed others). What does this mean? It means that a professional sports team is an investment. MLB is not a not-for-profit venture.

There are laws that govern corporate behavior; some are statutory, written laws, but others are laws of behavior whether stated or not. Our economy is not a fantasy; these laws can't be ignored. The primary law, first & foremost, dictates that investment must be for maximum profit. Any other considerations are entirely secondary. If community needs coincide with this for a period of time, it may appear that corporations actually take the community's needs to heart. This is not true; corporations are not, in fact, people, and they are not allowed to care.

The End of Work; Rifkin, Jeremy/Tarcher, Putnam 1996

<http://www.occupy.com/article/digital-disruption-technology-and-economics-99#sthash.spF8T99u.dpbs>

Corporations are not governed by evil individuals, but due to the demands of the marketplace corporations do evil things, and those are carried out by human beings. Moreover, the .1% are wealthy *because* of their ownership of corporations and corporate private property, and the government laws that protect them. Once again, sports teams are owned by individuals & groups with large amounts of disposable income which they *did not pay in taxes*. Taxes which would fund public education.

The Fisher group bought the A's for \$180 million; the A's are now valued by Forbes at \$880 million. FORBES; <https://www.forbes.com/teams/oakland-athletics/>

While the owners of the A's presumably are real A's fans, they are investors. The A's corporation is but one of the investments in their portfolios, and investors buy and sell investments when it suits them for a variety of reasons. They have made a "commitment" to stay in Oakland, but only after Fremont & San Jose fell through. For instance, John Fisher (net worth 2.4 Billion), the son of GAP corporation founders Doris & Don Fisher (net worth \$6.1 Billion) owns not only the A's, but part of the giant Fairmont Resort & Hotel chain with Lew Wolff, plus 350 square miles of timberland for development north of San Francisco. Fisher sold his stake in the SF Giants to buy the A's. SF CHRON; <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/A-s-NEW-ERA-JOHN-FISHER-Son-of-Gap-founder-is-2719006.php> WIKIPEDIA; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Fisher

In addition, Fisher is a leading promoter of and investor in charter schools; his fellow enthusiasts include Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, Bill Gates, . This shows how, across the bipartisan political spectrum, there is a corporate class agenda which unites gentrification, displacement, de-funding & corporatization of public education, and deportations. <http://chartergrowthfund.org/people/fisher/>
<http://chartergrowthfund.org/people/>

<http://www.kipp.org/board-of-director/john-fisher-chairman/>
<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/what-obama-said-about-charter-school-week/article/2590212>
<http://www.oprah.com/pressroom/oprahs-angel-network-grants-6-million-to-us-charter-school>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/immigration/trump-is-deporting-fewer-immigrants-than-obama-including-criminals/2017/08/10/d8fa72e4-7e1d-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html?utm_term=.d82509fe54b4

Fisher and A's minority partner Ross Walker (and other A's minority owners) recently purchased one of the shrinking number of SRO (Single Room Occupancy) hotels in downtown Oakland; the sale was contingent on the previous owner evicting all tenants, because the shell investment corporation through which they bought it specializes in converting such properties into boutique hotels and market-rate housing. SROs are a last resort to stay off the streets. EAST BAY EXPRESS;
<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/oakland-as-minority-owners-purchase-downtown-oakland-sro-after-previous-landlord-evicted-low-income-tenants/Content?oid=7301511> also, owner Lew Wolff is building a luxury hotel in Oakland; SF Business Times;
<https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2017/07/24/lew-wolff-oakland-hotel.html>

So these A's owners who promise to help control housing prices, and who propose to protect our students, faculty & staff from homelessness & dispossession by building "market rate housing with *some* 'affordable' housing" for students & staff, **are the very millionaire/billionaire corporate investors actually participating in the feeding frenzy** begun in Jerry Brown's mayoralship (search 10K plan Oakland) and now aided by our own city council & mayor Libby Schaaf (in an incredibly corrupt city government process), so that *they are participants in pricing our students and staff out of Oakland and out of homes in order to make more \$billions!*
<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/SevenDays/archives/2017/06/19/grand-jury-oaklands-backroom-dealing-to-sell-city-owned-land-is-systemic-problem-vulnerable-to-undue-influence>

In addition, Fisher is a leading promoter of and investor in charter schools; his fellow enthusiasts include Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, Bill Gates, and Arne Duncan. This shows how, across the bipartisan political spectrum, there is a corporate class agenda which unites gentrification, displacement, de-funding & corporatization of public education, and deportations.

<http://chartergrowthfund.org/people/fisher/>
<http://chartergrowthfund.org/people/>
<http://www.kipp.org/board-of-director/john-fisher-chairman/>
<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/what-obama-said-about-charter-school-week/article/2590212>
<http://www.oprah.com/pressroom/oprahs-angel-network-grants-6-million-to-us-charter-school>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/immigration/trump-is-deporting-fewer-immigrants-than-obama-including-criminals/2017/08/10/d8fa72e4-7e1d-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html?utm_term=.d82509fe54b4

A real estate deal

The evidence above indicates that the stadium is not fundamentally about baseball; it is a straight-up real estate deal, designed & strategized to enhance the profitability of current development money-makers including Brooklyn Basin, the BART development plans for the 6th St-9th St./Fallon to Madison parcel, the 12th St. parcel, the once-public, now private Kaiser Auditorium, and the OUSD Administration building. Further, it is an anchor next to some of the most valuable (and "underutilized" according to some) land in the city of Oakland; a core for further development which I

believe would result in serious encroachment on Laney to the detriment of the community, possibly even resulting in shrinking, moving, or closing the Laney campus.

This speculation is based on demonstrably similar scenarios playing out in cities across the United States; city after city is deeply in debt to global investment banks (PCCD debt to Morgan Stanley Bank = \$1.5 million/year); Detroit, New Orleans, Oakland, and Puerto Rico are prime examples. The U.S. landscape is littered with the carcasses of public institutions that entered into “public/private partnerships” with corporate interests, only to discover that in the majority of these cases the public pays and the private profits. Large numbers of vulnerable populations are being driven out of these and many other cities. Regardless of the specifics, large sections of our population are becoming “surplus”, and worth less or even worthless to those with power; the owners of the corporations.

Promises, promises.....

First, any promises agreed to in a development contract would be between the current A’s owners and the Peralta Board of Trustees. Teams get bought and sold all the time; the next A’s owners are *not* committed to stay in Oakland. What if they threaten to move, unless any CBA (Community Benefit Agreement) clauses are negated? If they decide to run out, even if PCCD sues them they can tie us up in court for years; justice delayed is justice denied, and who’s got the most money for lawyers? I guarantee you it’s not Peralta.

Second, infrastructure and financing; while the A’s have stated that the stadium will be privately financed with no public money used, it is a given that the City of Oakland will be expected to shoulder many of the infrastructure costs of street changes and other changes needed to keep baseball games from interfering with education at Laney. These infrastructure costs will actually be expended to ensure that the A’s corporation can successfully make money from selling baseball, parking, and housing on the Peralta/Laney property, not to mention other retail businesses they’ve stated they want to include in developing the Laney parking facilities. They will need to make *lots* of money to pay off the investors who supposedly will privately finance the ballpark to the tune of \$700 M or \$1 B, depending on who you hear it from. Investors don’t give their money away.

Some assert that the Peralta location is just a negotiating ploy to get the City to fund a stadium somewhere else under threat of the A’s moving, after all those nasty student/staff protestors bollixed up the Peralta deal. This merely shifts the scenario, not fundamentally changing it; we are being played as suckers whom they think they can outmaneuver.

Third, gains for Laney/Peralta students; any gains won from negotiating and building a stadium next to Laney College will be temporary and short-lived. They will be overwhelmed by the ongoing dispossession faced by members of our community who need Laney College.

Fourth, some at other Peralta campuses actually believe that Laney unjustly takes up resources (not true; Laney gets *less than its share* of the Peralta budget), and that the other 3 campuses might benefit if Laney were reduced in size or even closed (we hear the same claptrap at Laney, aimed in the opposite direction). This ignores the corporate agenda against public education, discussed below. It ignores how the District administration plays us against each other with false, distorted, and misleading budget figures. Bickering and conspiring between and against each other plays directly into the hands of the corporate forces of development. The other Peralta schools, COA, BCC, and Merritt will be weakened, not strengthened, by setbacks, shrinking, or even closing of Laney College, to the detriment of students and the community. Peralta will stand together, and together with the community, or it will fall.

Finally, there's the argument that "gentrification and displacement are bigger than the A's and the stadium; we can't fight displacement by fighting the stadium, so why fight it? Why not negotiate the best deal we can out of it to try and help our students a little bit?"

Here's why we must fight every single instance of encroachment of corporate property on our community, tooth and claw;

No fight can be won by declaring surrender or retreat at the beginning, nor can it be won without recognizing and opposing the opponent's strategy. I am strongly in favor of PFT insisting that it be at the negotiating table if there is an ENA signed, with a strong set of demands in case our opposition is overrun. That must be part of our strategy. However, those who believe we can come out ahead with the stadium don't even acknowledge there is a strategy at work here. The assertion is that we're all just people milling about and the A's have a nice idea; why not try it?

Dealing effectively with the problems we face requires a major shift in our thinking; from seeing these billionaire investors & the corporations that make them rich, as either the saviors or wreckers of our favorite teams, to seeing them as they are; parasitic organizations which feed on the community.

Example; Charter schools in Oakland (and nationwide) began as a few spunky little experimental schools, started by groups of teachers and parents trying to defend their children from the increasingly bankrupt public school system. Now, Oakland has one of the highest percentages of charter schools in the country, and 90% are corporate-owned, making profit from our children. This was not inevitable, but it succeeded because few recognized and fewer would acknowledge that the "spunky little experimenters", however sincere, were being used as a wedge in a strategy which, from the beginning, had the goal of turning over public school funds to private corporations.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/charter-school-executive-profit_b_5093883.html

<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/two-highly-touted-oakland-charter-schools-quickly-closed-andmdash-and-now-owe-the-district-money/Content?oid=5091277>

The corporate strategy is to drive an institution to ruin, announce that it is ruined, and then propose the only available alternative; which just happens to be very profitable, and which turns over public funds to private corporate hands, increasingly without creating anything of value. Sound familiar? That is the world of investment today, unhinged from any semblance of the old days of productive investment when millions of housed, healthy, well-educated workers were necessary to make profits.

But in one way, my colleagues are right; it is bigger than the stadium, and bigger than Oakland, and we can't win against our displacement and dispossession *just* by fighting the stadium, or the developers locally.

We can win, but our task is larger than the stadium. We might lose the fight to stop the stadium; we must have a strategy to negotiate from strength in that case, but we must not wave the white flag before even starting to fight.

The fight against the stadium is a *training ground, where we learn how to weld ourselves together into a political force*, where we learn by asking "why this happening, and what is the solution?" It's where we learn that the fight against dispossession, tyranny and fascism *is* the fight for our basic human needs, that all basic human needs are human rights.

Going forward, Laney will never be the same. If the stadium is built, I believe Laney may be closed after a few years. If it is not built, and we allow the current corporate/investor/landlord assault to continue unanswered, Laney will be diminished, and at best still provide severely limited education that doesn't meet all the needs of our community. The reality we face and must respond to is that either Laney will be destroyed, or, we will have to transform Laney with a new vision of how our community college serves Oakland, publicly funded by our federal government.

The larger assault on our communities, in which the stadium is a key tactical move, cannot be effectively opposed by simply trying to fend off that assault. It can only be opposed by taking the offensive. The opposite of dispossession is possession; housing without the possibility of eviction or denial, clean food & water without possibility of denial, healthcare without possibility of denial, education without limits or possibility of denial, funded fully & equitably by the state & federal governments as a sacred public trust. Only a strategic campaign to vastly enlarge the public sphere, to remove all basic needs from the realm of corporate investment and profit, can effectively oppose the strategic campaign of corporate power to privatize all resources.

We must set our goals high, and fight to win them. We live in a world of abundance, and our poverty is manufactured.

PFT must oppose the stadium;

The Janus decision, gentrification, healthcare cuts, education cuts, and deportations are all part of the same game plan. As shown above in the example of John Fisher, the game involves the same groups of investors, across the political spectrum. The Peralta Federation of Teachers is a community college union whose immediate survival *depends* on engaging and providing leadership for increasingly desperate, stressed faculty, and standing solidly for public funding of public education and the future of the entire community.

It can only do that if it opposes the A's stadium on Peralta land next to Laney. PFT must oppose the stadium.

The context for this struggle;

In the community; The A's proposal to build a stadium on Peralta cannot be considered separately from its powerful effect on adjacent Laney College, nor can the stadium or Laney be considered separately from the process now devastating the lower-income community surrounding Laney throughout the Bay Area.

Laney students, and Peralta students overall, are primarily low-income and are increasingly unable to afford the rapidly rising rents in Oakland and the local East Bay. Students are working longer hours to afford rents, many, moving out of town or both. We have students, classified, and teachers commuting from Pittsburg, Antioch, Brentwood, Tracy, Benicia, and Vacaville. **At least 10% of our students are homeless**, either long-term couch surfing, living outside, or in cars.

<http://college.usatoday.com/2017/06/30/up-to-14-of-community-college-students-are-homeless-new-study-says/>

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-homeless-community-college-20170628-story.html>

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-cal-state-homelessness-20160620-snap-story.html>

These students and staff are experiencing exactly what the rest of the lower-income working class of Oakland and U.S. are experiencing; dispossession. We are being dispossessed of housing (losing ownership and becoming renters, being evicted or priced out of rental housing; dispossessed of public education (chronic underfunding and understaffing, deteriorating and chronically under-maintained facilities, radical cuts to classes, chronically poor student services making enrollment, assessment, financial aid difficult to access), dispossessed of healthcare, dispossessed of food (more than 10% of students are “food insecure”; we now have campus food banks). This dispossession is occurring at the hands of billionaire professional investors and developers, including investment groups such as the Goldman Sachs, the Blackstone Group, and the Carlyle Group, some of the largest corporate landlords in the world, now actively investing in Oakland.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/blog/real-estate/2016/07/goldman-sachs-oakland-office-acquisition-hp-gs.html>

The newer, higher-income renters and buyers, some making well over \$100K, are largely tech workers for the software production-dominated industries of Silicon Bay, and have been priced out of San Francisco and the Peninsula. Regardless of our image of them, these folks are also part of our working class; they are filling a labor market which is currently favorable to them, but as primary & secondary schools introduce massive code-writing training, and as code-writing is also increasingly automated, many of their situations will become increasingly tenuous.

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/21/coding-education-teaching-silicon-valley-wages?CMP=share_btn_link

Some refer to these changes as a natural process of urban development in which populations naturally change, current residents moving out and newer residents moving in, as though this might somehow work out for all concerned. Nothing of the sort is happening; anyone looking with honest eyes around Oakland and the entire country will see that a vast and growing number of our people are simply being pushed down and out of the entire system. This is not some minor collection of problems, for which solutions simply require enough letters to our representatives, or a few more or less regulations; it is based on fundamental changes to our economy which cannot be put back in the box.

Erik Brynjolfsson, Andrew McAfee; [The Second Machine Age](#) – W.W. Norton

Washington Post; https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/review-the-second-machine-age-by-erik-brynjolfsson-and-andrew-mcafee/2014/01/17/ace0611a-718c-11e3-8b3f-b1666705ca3b_story.html?utm_term=.5d9c7278730f

Douglas Rushkoff; [Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus](#) – Random House

Peter Brown; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jTWnkyHYwI>

Peralta management, private funding, and the de-funding of public education;

The A's are dangling before us the prospect of significant funds and income to be made available to Peralta and to Laney specifically, for all the things we so sorely need; facility repairs/upgrades, more faculty, student housing....they even claim it might be “ongoing”. I assert that any such funding will be short-lived and limited, if nothing else, by the term of ownership of the current A's owners.

However, the point we must pay attention to is that we are in this state of chronic, serious underfunding precisely of the corporate agenda for education, and because our federal and state

governments no longer force these corporations and billionaires to pay their taxes; their ability to purchase and own sports teams is entirely based on having hundreds of millions, even billions of dollars in disposable income which they did not pay in taxes. Public money has been massively withdrawn from public education at national & state levels.

Last year, the city chose to privatize Kaiser Auditorium on the north edge of Laney. In doing so, they rejected a viable plan that would have kept it public, providing jobs for Laney students, cultural development and other steps that would benefit Laney. This shows where the city stands with its “concern” about our school.

Our Peralta administration, both Chancellor and Board, and our Mayor and City Council, have shown that they will neither be accountable, nor hold government accountable to serve and defend the people; instead, they toe the line they are instructed and incentivized to toe; jump at any private source of funding available to make themselves look good while selling the community down the river. Despite years of pleading and documentation of understaffing, dysfunction, and lack of maintenance, we remain without any real preventive maintenance funding, and with key student services not functioning effectively. I assert that Laney and other Peralta campuses are being run down purposely. The evidence contradicts the statements of the Administration to the contrary.

It is not pie in the sky to assert the necessity to fight for public funding; if Chancellor, Board, faculty, students, and staff were united and networking statewide & nationwide with their parallel groupings (i.e., other chancellors etc.) *who have exactly the same problems*, with the *demand* that the federal & state governments tax the corporations and the rich to fully & equally fund public education, there would be change within 2 years.

Neither the A’s, other corporations, nor our city government, will defend public education; the needs of the Market now dictate that education be a venue for investment and profit. The full development of human capabilities is entirely secondary, and even politically threatening, in this new economy.

This is the environment in which we address the matter of an A’s stadium.

“This is incredible! In America, we will not let rich people not be rich!” Wanda Sykes 2008

“Maybe corporations use people like we’re investments, or products.” Dave Chappelle