

## Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

1221 Oak Street, Suite 536, Oakland, CA 94612

Phone: 510-272-6695 • Fax: 510-271-5151

Contact: Hannah Greene

Office: (510) 272-6768

Cell: (510) 220-3866

Email: [hannah.greene@acgov.org](mailto:hannah.greene@acgov.org)

**Press Advisory**

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### East Bay Black Elected Officials, Faith Leaders and Community Members Celebrate Black History



*Black Elected Officials and Faith Based Leaders of the East Bay celebrated Black History Month with an event at Z Café in Oakland called "Redefining Black Power." (Left to right: Salih Muhammad, Rev. Dr. Gerald Agee, former Black Panther Leader Elaine Brown, Supervisor Keith Carson and Oakland City Council Member Desley Brooks).*

**Oakland, CA** - In celebration of Black History Month, Black Elected Officials & Faith Based Leaders of the East Bay (BEO&FBL) joined the nation in recognizing the many leaders and unspoken heroes and sheroes whose struggles made possible the myriad of opportunities African Americans enjoy today in employment, education, health, business, politics and more.

On Thursday, February 27, 2014, BEO&FBL hosted a special event called "Redefining Black Power" at Oakland's Z Café. More than 100 people came out to hear notable speakers Rev. Dr. Gerald Agee of Friendship Christian Center in

Oakland, Oakland City Council Member Desley Brooks, former Black Panther Leader Elaine Brown and Salih Muhammad of the Afrikan Black Coalition, a group that works with Black students across the University of California system.

“Tonight we pause to honor our ancestors: the more than 12 million people who were torn from their families and died during the Transatlantic Slave Trade and those who gave their lives during the Civil Rights Movement and other struggles,” shared BEO&FBL Founding Chair and Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson. “Tonight we also honor the Africans and African Americans who made contributions in many fields such as technology, medicine, the arts and culture.”

Former Black Panther Chairman Elaine Brown started the night with a whirlwind review of the past 400 years of Black History in the United States, from the presence of African slaves in the colonies to the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s to the mass incarceration of young men of color today. Ms. Brown spoke passionately of the strength of the Black community in fighting against injustice. “When you say Black people don't care about education, you must be forgetting the blood we shed for education,” she said, referring to the Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education* and the struggle to desegregate schools.

Oakland City Councilmember Desley Brooks noted that of the 39,000 business in Oakland, only 13% are black owned. “People of color are the majority of residents in this city,” she said. “Why do we allow ourselves to scratch for crumbs? We need to stand up, speak up and be engaged in the issues that are important to our community.”

Salih Muhammad, a recent graduate of UC Berkeley and a national organizer of youth, challenged his elders to change the status quo and act decisively to achieve true liberation. “The main question we must deal with today is one of effectiveness” in job creation, education and health care said Mr. Muhammad, referencing Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s 1967 book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* “I challenge all of you to find five young people under the age of 25 and guide them and mentor them to create change in this community.”

Black Elected Officials of the East Bay is a non-profit organization founded by Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson. The Black Elected Officials of the East Bay later expanded to include the clergy leaders to band together as BEO&FBL. Over a decade, the goal of the organization has been to increase the quantity and quality of African-American elected, appointed and spiritual leadership in the Black community through networking and relationship building. Today, the organization consists of over 100 elected and appointed officials from throughout Alameda and Contra Costa County and meets bi-monthly.

Collectively BEO&FBL strives to improve the quality of life for all African-American communities. To support its vision, numerous activities are planned to engage and empower members' initiatives in the communities they serve.

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*Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit <http://www.acgov.org/board/district5>*