



WHY ARE ALL MY FRIENDS MOVING TO OAKLAND?

Broke-Ass Stuart ponders the question of relocating across the bay



My friends say they are moving to Oakland because San Francisco has let them down. The douchebags are winning. Divis is clogged with Google buses. Valencia is drowning in shmancy new restaurants. North Beach is full of knuckleheads. Mark Zuckerberg bought a house in the Mission. The artists are leaving. The city is gentrifying.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because the rent is cheaper. The landlords aren't looking for ways to kick you out. You won't have to have six roommates. You won't get outbid for a room by some dot-com fuckface. You won't have to be a mildly well-known writer just to get invited to interview for an affordable room. When you break up with your girlfriend, you won't have to keep living with her for two months since neither of you can afford to move out. They say they're moving to Oakland because it's the town that could, not the city that already did.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because it has heart. Because it's less cynical and less self-conscious. Because it's more diverse and more friendly. Because you actually get to know your neighbors instead of just nodding to them in passing on the stairs. Because there's no one from the Marina. They say they're moving to Oakland because it has art. The kind that Murmurs as a monthly street fair. The kind that shapes late at night in underground warehouses, in community work spaces, as wheat paste in the streets, as protest in Oscar Grant Park.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because there's more space. They extol the many merits of Lake Merritt. They're moving because there's room to park your car. There are parks in the hills from which you can see stars. They'd rather see the view of San Francisco from afar. My friends say they're moving because they can have a backyard. You can have a vegetable garden and chickens and dogs and potbellied pigs. Actually, one of my friends doesn't know if she can have a potbellied pig. But she really wants one.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because it's far less disgusting. They say Oakland doesn't smell like piss and shit. That they don't have to step over syringes and crack pipes each time they leave their homes. No 6th Street zombies and no Tenderloin. No 16th Street BART crackheads and no 24th Street BART drunks. They say they're moving to Oakland because there's no human feces sprayed against the wall like some utterly demented Jackson Pollock painting.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because the weather is better. Because Oakland is always 10 degrees warmer. They get an actual summer, one where you don't need a space heater and you might even be able to get a tan. Because fuck Indian Summer. And fuck always wearing layers and fuck having hoodies for your dog. They say they're moving because on New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July you can see fireworks light up the whole goddamn Bay Area and not just pop in muted colors through the cover of fog.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because they can. They say they're moving because it feels like something special is happening there. They compare it to Brooklyn because of the bridge and the tunnel and the exodus of artists and working-class people. They say it's like Portland but with *way* more black people. Some of them say they are moving to Oakland like they think they're some kind of pioneer settlers. Just like some kind of pioneer settlers, they'll realize there were people there before them. They're moving to Oakland so they can rep it, wearing shirts that say, "I Hella ♥ Oakland."



My friends say they are moving to Oakland for the restaurants and bars. Because they love *Bakesale Betty*, *Zachary's*, *Miss Ollie's*, and *Dogwood*. They love *Flora*, *Heart & Dagger Saloon*, *Cafe Van Kleef*, and *Beer Revolution*. They Love *Linden Street Brewery*, Eritrean food, taco trucks, and the *Tamale Guy*. They say one of these days they'll finally try *Giant Burger*.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because it's edgier and imperfect. The robberies, the gunshots, the Oakland PD. The rioting, the protests, the Oakland PD. They say they are moving because they see the writing on the wall, the beginning of a gold rush. They want to set roots and grow with Oakland as it grows too, creating a community and actively participating in it. Raising kids in it. Owning property. Helping shape what might be the next great American city.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because all their friends seem to be moving there. They say San Francisco is done. That Oakland is now like the San Francisco they remember, or the one they wished they lived in, or the one they imagined when they moved here from wherever it was they came from.



My friends say they're moving to Oakland because it's just across The Bay and they say, "You'll come visit right?" and you say you will. And this time you might be actually telling the truth.



But I'm not moving, I'm staying in San Francisco. I'm staying because I can walk everywhere I need to go. Because no matter how much they raise the rent, this is still a city of freaks and misfits. Because no ones gushes in adoration for their city the way San Franciscans do. I'm staying because my city loves me. And *fuck*, do I love her back.

Also, I've got pretty damn good rent control.

**Author's note: I'd like to thank all my friends and Facebook peeps for giving me their input on why they moved to Oakland. If there's anything I missed, add your ideas in the comments section. And you can find me on Facebook [here](#) and follow me on Twitter [here](#).*

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