

Exposure of students to crime in the Fruitvale District of Oakland

In the Fruitvale District of Oakland there are almost 30 schools and day care centers, there is also a high rate of crime. According to [CrimeMapping.com](#), within a two-mile radius of the corner of Foothill Blvd. and Fruitvale Ave., there have been more than 300 crimes that have been reported in the month of May. Elizabeth Guerra, a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, a school within the Fruitvale District, says that in eight years of experience in working with students after school she has worked with many students who have been affected by crime. Guerra has had students whose families have been victims of home invasions, whose “mother’s have been robbed”, and has even “done a memorial for a student [who was] murdered.”

View [Fruitvale Schools](#) in a larger map. Infographic by Natalie Rodriguez

and



Jefferson School in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, Calif. Elizabeth Guerra is a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, one of two schools within this campus. Photograph taken on June 22, 2013. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

The [Unity Council](#) defines the Fruitvale District as a two and a half square mile area bordered by High St., 14th Ave., Interstate 580, and the Oakland Estuary. The list of crimes reported by [CrimeMapping.com](#), which is linked through the [City of Oakland's Police Department](#), includes crimes such as robbery, assault, prostitution, and burglary. Of approximately 375 reported incidents of crime, 86 of them were assaults, 51 were theft related, and 48 of them were burglaries. Crimes were reported the seven days of the week. There is a high concentration of crimes bellow the Foothill Blvd, which is where more than half of the schools are located.

Guerra believes that students are affected and exposed to crime in schools that are "more down towards that area." "That" area is what she considers to be "down bellow Foothill." International Blvd., which is bellow Foothill Blvd., has made headlines because of [prostitution](#). The Fruitvale

District is considered one of the “hot spots” for robberies in the article [“Oakland: Robbery capital of America.”](#)

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Catalina Palacios, local Health Educator and HIV Test Councilor who calls Oakland “work and home,” is not surprised by the fact that within a matter of days Oakland has seen three police chiefs in office. Within two weeks, articles about the problem of [prostitution](#) in Oakland were published; the trailer for the film [“Fruitvale Station”](#) was released; Oakland made headlines as [“America’s Robbery Capital;”](#) and the city has been through three different police chiefs. Palacios believes that crime in Oakland “is getting worst” with robberies being the biggest problem in the [Fruitvale District](#) where she works and lives.

One day after Oakland was named the [“Robbery Capital of America,”](#) Police Chief [Howard Jordan](#) [stepped down](#) for medical reasons. Acting Police Chief [Anthony Toribio](#) “voluntarily” stepped down two days later. Palacios believes that “the criminals are more organized than [the police] are,” because “they’re downtown playing musical chairs.”

The Fruitvale District

According to the [Unity Council](#), the Fruitvale District has the city of Oakland’s most diverse population. It is known for its

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Latino celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo and [Día de los Muertos](#). The film "[Fruitvale Station](#)" is a movie about the 2009 shooting of Oakland resident [Oscar Grant](#) at the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit ([BART](#)) station. Grant died at the station after being shot by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle. Recently though, diversity, celebrations and films are not the only thing Fruitvale has gained attention for; now added to the list are also its [high robbery rate](#) and [widespread prostitution](#).

Crimes and the Youth

Palacios who not only lives, but also works in the Fruitvale district has seen the effect of robberies at work and at home. Her neighbor was robbed at 7 a.m. one morning after he stepped out for a cigarette, to which she says that robberies have become so common that "it's like [going] down the street to get some groceries." In working with youth she has also noticed a drop in participation because the youth "get mugged on their way to the program." In other cases, they program participants and their families have been victims of "home invasions."

A second crime that highly concerns Palacios daily is prostitution, particularly when she believes that the girls are under age. Local news station [KTVU](#) published a special report on [prostitution](#) on International boulevard, which runs through the Fruitvale district. According to [KTVU](#) there are girls as young as 13 prostituting.

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As a part of her work, Palacios regularly gives out condoms. Her concerns for the girls are that “they are protecting themselves, and how much say [they] have when it comes to protecting themselves. Are they there by choice or by force?” Palacios shares the story of a young girl who she gave condoms to who “looked like she was 12.” Her pimps, says Palacios, “didn’t look any much older than her.” In addition to her concern for the safety of the girls, Palacios is aware that the prostitution is taking place at all hours of the day and night. With more than four public and private [schools in the neighborhood](#), “Everybody gets to see it.”

Resources



Fruitvale District residents run errands up and down International Blvd in Oakland, Calif., on Friday, May 3, 2013. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

Despite the district’s crime rates Palacios remains hopeful, “It’s beautiful to live in Oakland.” Below is a list of community resources that are readily available in the Fruitvale District.

- [East Side Arts Alliance](#)
- [The Unity Council](#)

- La Clinica de la Raza
- El Centro Legal de La Raza
- The Youth Law Academy
- Native American Health Center