

Oakland Youth Movement

Climate Justice March



On Friday, September 23, hundreds of elementary to high school students took to the streets to protest coal in Oakland. Protesters rallied at Frank H. Ogawa Plaza and then marched through the streets of downtown Oakland chanting, "No coal in Oakland, yes to life!"

The goal of this protest was to bring awareness to the ongoing threat of the Oakland Bulk and Oversized Terminal—a coal transportation facility that has been proposed since 2015 and that the city contends would have detrimental impacts on the health and environment of Oakland. This terminal would be located in West Oakland, disproportionately impacting residents in this area where communities have already experienced a multitude of environmental injustices. West Oaklanders have historically been exposed to high levels of air pollution, leading to increased rates of cancer, asthma, and lung disease. The coal terminal would only worsen this problem. The city and the developers are engaged in an ongoing legal battle over the proposal.

However, this was not just a protest but also a lively celebration of the resilience of Oakland youth and their ability to unite and fight against injustice. The gathering, organized by Youth Vs. Apocalypse (a youth climate justice group) featured presenters who engaged participants through chants, storytelling, and music. There was even a marching band of 5th grade students from Manzanita Seed Elementary School who helped keep rhythm and spirits up during the march.

Following the march, a group called Science for Survival organized a number of educational booths. We contributed by leading tables where we taught how to make "seed bombs" and about the dangers of lead poisoning. At the seed bombs table, we mixed soil, water, and seeds to create balls that can be scattered in barren areas and revegetate the surrounding environment. At the other table, we gave passersby information about lead poisoning and offered free tests so they could test their own paint and water. We were visited by a wide variety of people—from elementary school students to a former lead regulator for the EPA. Overall, we found the booths to be fun, interactive ways to connect and exchange information with our community.

This protest was not the only one of its kind. Thousands of other youth protestors across the globe were in the streets fighting for climate justice on September 23 as part of an international youth-led and -organized movement *Fridays for Future* founded by Greta Thunberg. The collective focus was pushing leaders and policymakers to prioritize the lives of the people in their communities over profit.

—Hattie Bradshaw and Amba Beattie, FOSC Student Board Members