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Berkeley News

Berkeley Talks: Berkeley artist Mildred Howard on the impact of gentrification in the Bay Area

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Mable Howard (left) and her daughter, Mildred Howard, pictured here in 1985, are the subjects of a new documentary, *Welcome to the Neighborhood*, by Pam Uzell. Mildred, a longtime Berkeley resident and artist, spoke at BAMPFA on June 19, 2019, about the impact of gentrification on the Bay Area. (Screenshot from documentary, *Welcome to the Neighborhood*, by Pam Uzell)

On Wednesday, June 19, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) celebrated Juneteenth — a national commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States — with a visit by Mildred Howard, a widely acclaimed artist and longtime Berkeley resident whose family has deep roots

in the Bay Area's African American community. Howard appeared at BAMPFA for a screening of the



From left: Larry Rinder, director of BAMPFA; Berkeley artist Mildred Howard; and Leigh Raiford, associate professor of African American studies at UC Berkeley. (BAMPFA photo)

new documentary, *Welcome to the Neighborhood*, which highlights her own family's history in South Berkeley and the neighborhood's transformation over the past 50 years.

Following the screening of the 30-minute film, Howard was joined in conversation by Leigh Raiford, UC Berkeley associate professor of African American studies, and Lawrence Rinder, BAMPFA's director and chief curator. Their discussion touched on a range of topics, from South Berkeley's ongoing struggles with gentrification, to the role of the university in supporting diverse communities, to Howard's own work as an artist. Some of her works are on display in BAMPFA's exhibition, *About Things Loved: Blackness and Belonging*, which was curated by a UC Berkeley class co-taught by professor Raiford, and runs through July 21.

Directed by filmmaker Pam Uzzell, *Welcome to the Neighborhood* tells the story of Howard's mother, Mabel Howard, who moved to the Bay Area during World War II and became an influential civic leader in South Berkeley's African American community. Mildred Howard recalled her mother's prominent role in fighting to preserve the fabric of her community, including her success in preventing BART from dividing the city with an above-ground rail line. This legacy continues to inspire a new generation of activists fighting for equality in Berkeley and beyond; as Howard put it, "as a black woman in the United States, social activism is in my DNA."

Learn more about BAMPFA exhibition, [*About Things Loved: Blackness and Belonging*](#).

[*See all Berkeley Talks*](#).



"Safe House" (2005), by Berkeley artist Mildred Howard, is one of the works in BAMPFA's new exhibit, *About Things Loved: Blackness and Belonging*. (Photo by JKA Photography)

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