

East Oakland, Again

They said the library was opening again.

Again.

Like a door can close

and the world just keeps moving

as if nobody noticed.

But we noticed.

We noticed the quiet.

The boarded windows.

The empty space where people used to gather

to ask questions,

to find answers,

to find somewhere to be

when home felt too small.

And now—

look at it.

New walls.

New windows.

New books waiting on shelves

for hands that haven't touched them yet.

But I don't think this place is new.

Not really.

Because East Oakland has never been new.

We've always been here.

We've been here

in the heat of summer

and the cold of waiting for the bus.

We've been here

when things were beautiful

and when they weren't.

We've watched things leave.

We've watched things change.

We've watched buildings get torn down

and rebuilt

and renamed

and forgotten.

And somehow,

we keep coming back.

Maybe that's what home is.

Not something that never changes.

Maybe home is the thing
you recognize
even after it does.

The streets may look different.
The building may look different.
The library may open its doors
to a new chapter—
but when those doors open,
East Oakland walks in with them.
Every child looking for a book.
Every elder looking for a newspaper.
Every student looking for somewhere to study.
Every person who just needs
somewhere warm to sit
and remember that they belong somewhere.
And maybe that's what libraries do.
They don't just hold stories.
They give us somewhere
to write our own.
So today,
Brookfield opens again.

And I think that's worth celebrating.

Because opening isn't just

about unlocking a door.

It's about saying:

we're still here.

It's about saying:

you can come back.

It's about saying:

there is still room for you.

And as someone born and raised

in this city,

as someone who has spent my whole life

watching Oakland become,

unbecome,

and become again—

I know something about beginnings.

They don't always look like beginnings.

Sometimes,

a beginning looks like a building

opening its doors again.

Sometimes it looks like a kid

walking inside for the first time.

Sometimes it looks like a poet

standing in front of a crowd

trying to find the right words.

And sometimes,

a beginning is simply this:

A door opens.

We walk through.

And we realize—

we were never really gone.

East Oakland,

we're here.

Again.