

No one takes responsibility for fighting crime

WE ARE DEEPLY concerned about the deterioration of our neighborhoods in East Palo Alto. We have watched our streets increasingly become hangouts for criminal activity.

Public officials, especially if they have failed in their responsibility to the community, should be held accountable. But each group tends to shift its responsibility to others.

There is a saying that people get the kind of government they deserve. Why do we not see the same open street crime in Menlo Park and Palo Alto? There are many reasons, but one, we believe is that citizens there will not tolerate the kind of behavior we tolerate on the streets of East Palo Alto.

Why are we different? The standard answer is that we are a poor minority community and the deputy sheriffs just do not care. They harass and intimidate us, yet turn their heads when witnessing criminal behavior. On the other hand,

the deputies feel they cannot uphold the law, as they see it, without being branded abusive, charged with brutality and facing removal. So everyone is angry.

Poverty by itself is not necessarily the cause of crime. Many of us grew up and still live in poverty without becoming anti-social criminals. This community is in the lower end of the economic scale. We cannot afford the kind of protection and amenities that wealthy communities enjoy. Without immediate economic development we cannot improve or even successfully survive as a city.

Many of us have joined the United Homeowners in East Palo Alto. It is we, the stable, permanent group, who have most at stake. Together we can develop the power to make this into the kind of community we want and deserve.

**Julia Harvey
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EAST PALO ALTO