

SOUL AS A CITY (ODE OAKLAND)

A short film, spoken-word song, and multimedia project by J.R. Rice

***What if the city
Your soul was searching for
Was also searching for you?***

ABOUT THE FILM

Oakland is more than a backdrop. It is a witness, a memory, and a living soul.

Soul as a City (Ode Oakland) follows Jonah Tarver, a young Black poet who arrives at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park feeling lost and disconnected. As he moves through the shoreline, port structures, observation tower, and a lone tree overlooking the Bay, an unseen presence follows him.

What first feels threatening slowly reveals itself as Oakland's spirit - memory, grief, history, and hope - calling Jonah back to his voice.

CONNECTION TO THE BOOK

The film is a visual prelude to I Was, Am, Will Be, J.R. Rice's upcoming multimedia poetry collection. It continues Jonah's journey from Broken Pencils and explores identity, Blackness, love, grief, memory, and becoming.

Book release: October 2026.

Visit www.jrrice.com for more updates.



CREDITS

- Written, directed, and performed by J.R. Rice | @imjrice
- Music production by Lax the Monk | @laxthemonk
- Presented in association with West Oakland Matters | @westoaklandmatters
- Special thanks to the Port of Oakland and Middle Harbor Shoreline Park
- Book publisher: Afterword Press | @afterwordpress

STAY CONNECTED

www.jrrice.com | @imjrice
Full film: youtube.com/watch?v=bRw_1VBrURQ

SOUL AS A CITY (ODE OAKLAND) - SONG LYRICS

Listen, respond, and join the call-and-response sections.

JONAH TARVER

How do I start this?
Ok here we go
"To my dear Oakland,
I write to you
Feeling lost, incomplete,
Missing a part of me
Please help me see
Who I was...Am...And will...BE..."

THE SOUL

Before the rails, road, and concrete,
Before the port and era of Hyphy,
Our city was just land, water,
And free...free...free...

JONAH

If you hella Bay, say it with me:

Oakland has a soul as a city,
With a heart of gold that is gritty,
Where loss is told way too easy,
So call me One soul in a city.
One, one soul...in a city.
One soul...in a city...One soul

SOUL

Our town kept a pulse beating,
With a heart undefeated by collapse,
Still achieving with a power to come back...
Come...back...back...back....

JONAH

If they hella Bay, say it with me:

Oakland is my soul as a city,
A rose grown from spite and pity,
Who chose hope when life felt empty,
So just name us: The soul of a city.
The, The soul...of a city.
The, The soul...of a city.
The soul...of a city

SOUL

Raised under souls of memory,
Standing bold after the rumble,
Oakland will shape what comes next,
And liberate those who still struggle...
Struggle...no more...

JONAH

If we hella Bay, say it with me:

Oakland will be both soul and city,
Grand land sown from Ohlone history,
Yes, my home ain't known to be pretty,
But Oakland is our soul, their soul,
your soul,
Not just...a "city."
More than...a "city."