

From: [Varily Isaacs](#)  
To: [Holly Young](#)  
Cc: [Varily](#)  
Subject: Successful effort to redact racist language in home titles in Muir Beach  
Date: Monday, August 12, 2024 9:22:42 AM  
Attachments: [CamScanner 08-12-2024 08.40.pdf](#)  
[stubbs-s.png](#)

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi Holly,

One more item I would like to have you share with my fellow commissioners.

Commissioners,

I spoke with my good friend Dana Zook yesterday about how our commission might go about creating a town-wide campaign to redact racist language in LG home titles and learn more about our town's history. Dana owns a documents research company and shared that she participated in such a campaign in Muir Beach not long ago. Please read the attached article.

The two people that led the Muir Beach effort were:

[Gary Friedman](#),

Leighton Hills, [REDACTED]

I spoke with Gordon last night at Rob Moore and Kylie Clark's garden party. Gordon has agreed to reach out to Gary to learn more about the community effort in Muir Beach.

I googled Gary Friedman and found another article that provides some insight into Gary.



Gary Friedman Became the 'Godfather of Conflict Mediation'  
zocalopublicsquare.org

Varily Isaacs  
[REDACTED]

## Muir Beach Residents

# Repudiating a Shameful Legacy – Step One Mission Accomplished

By Gary Friedman

We are pleased to report that the community effort to stand together to repudiate our racist history through restrictive covenants on many of our properties has been a great success thanks to the almost unanimous participation of those of us who had been identified as owners with the restrictive covenants. Our title searcher found deeds in the Bello Beach portion of Muir Beach which contained the following restriction: **the premises herein described shall not be used or occupied by any person except those of the Caucasian race, except that persons of other races may be employed as household servants.**

The CSD unanimously supported the effort to repudiate the covenants with the following language: “We repudiate this clause and are ashamed for our country that many once considered it acceptable, and state that we welcome with enthusiasm and without reservation neighbors of all races and ethnicities.”

This practice called “redlining” was adopted in the 30’s and 40’s not through Antonio Bello, an early developer, as we suspected, but through the Muir Beach Company, a subsequent developer acting in concert with real estate brokers and banks, in an effort to maximize the appeal of our properties with this restriction. The practice was widespread throughout Northern California as well as other places around the country after World War II, a rather stunning action to greet the returning military veterans of color on their return home. In effect, this froze out these veterans and others of color from participating the post-war real estate boom and limited the options for people of color to areas that were less in demand. The effects of all of this continue to this day as we all sit on land that has appreciated and continues to appreciate manyfold even in the time of COVID.

As we have become more aware of our racist history in the country, this repudiation serves an important first step for Muir Beach to have collectively recognized this injustice and become what we believe is the first community in Northern California to have done this collectively. On Saturday, December 5th, 52 lots in Muir Beach had the restriction legally excised, through the action of 25 current owners of those lots, who came to the Community Center in the midst of COVID, to

have their signatures notarized by Cindy Cione. Cindy is Martha de Barros’ daughter in law, and is a licensed notary who came down from Gualala to volunteer her services so that we could do this together. Our title searcher Dana Zook charged us discounted rates to go through the arduous task of checking all Muir Beach properties to identify those deeds that contained the restriction. And the Marin County recorder waived all recording fees so that the only costs incurred were for searching the titles. Once Dana identified all of the affected properties, Leighton Hills took on the time-consuming task of matching the identified deeds with Muir Beach addresses.

As it turned out, there seemed to be no discernible pattern that could be determined, as these all occurred in the 30’s, 40’s and early 50’s so many of you who expected to find the restriction in your deed were surprised that your properties were spared.

Several people in the community have raised the question that now that we have taken this important first step to do what we can to erase the stain of racism, what action can we take to concretize this important symbolic gesture? Stay tuned.

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Here kitty kitty...



*Little Bobby in our yard last week, hunting and sniffing at a gopher hole, but soon lost interest and posed for this pic.*

– Janet Tumpich



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# A MARIN LAWYER BECAME THE 'GODFATHER OF CONFLICT MEDIATION'—THEN HE RAN FOR LOCAL OFFICE

In These Polarizing Times, Is Any California Community Safe from Bitter Battles?




"A Lion Attacking a Horse" (1770), painting by George Stubbs. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.

by JOE MATHEWS | NOVEMBER 30, 2021

There is no mask or vaccine that can protect communities from high conflict. Even people who are highly skilled at avoidance and de-escalation can get stuck in bitter, all-consuming, no-win battles in their hometowns.

That's the lesson of Marin County lawyer Gary Friedman, as recounted in journalist Amanda Ripley's 2021 book *High Conflict: How We Get Trapped and How We Get Out* (<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/High-Conflict/Amanda-Ripley/9781982128562>).

Ripley's masterful work is not a California book—it recounts conflicts from Chicago to Colombia—but it is what Californians should read if they want to navigate more peacefully through this polarizing time.  ([HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/ZOCALOPUBLICSQUARE](https://www.youtube.com/zocalopublicsquare))

And it has an unforgettable California character in Gary Friedman.

Friedman is the godfather of conflict mediation. He has an uncanny ability to help people listen to each other, and to tap into their best selves at difficult moments. He started by representing both sides in divorces—putting spouses in the same room—in the late 1970s. Since then, he's mediated thousands of cases, handled all sorts of disputes (including the 1996–97 San Francisco Symphony strike), taught lawyers and law students at Stanford and Harvard how to navigate conflict, and published books on negotiating.

"When conflict takes over, it creates its own reality," Friedman and Jack Himmelstein cautioned in 2008's *Challenging Conflict: Mediation Through Understanding* (<https://www.americanbar.org/products/inv/book/159243045/>).

Friedman had lived in Muir Beach, an unincorporated community of under 400 people, for decades when a neighbor suggested he run for local office in 2015. Friedman thought that, as a board member of the Community Services District in charge of roads and water, he could change the tone and reduce the conflict in local politics.

Then he won—and forgot his own lessons about avoiding the traps of conflict.

He and his allies called themselves the "New Guard," turning "Old Guard" board members and longtime staff into adversaries. Elected the board's president, Friedman got rid of the snacks and social time that built connection and understanding. And he made rapid changes to the board's practices that produced a backlash.

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Too much conflict is high conflict—where the conflict is so stagnant that the conflict itself becomes the destination.

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He tried instituting shorter, more efficient public meetings by imposing new rules and time limits on speakers. But some locals complained about restrictions on their expression. In the name of inclusiveness, he started new volunteer sub-committees—so many different subcommittees that they became a joke. And in making all of these changes, he didn't explain himself clearly—a common mistake, since people overestimate how well others understand us. He didn't listen as much or stay as intentionally curious as he had as a lawyer-mediator.

Then, he made a big policy mistake—on water, that most conflict-heavy subject here in California. To compensate for higher management costs that had built up over years, he proposed the immediate doubling of water rates, rather than a phased-in plan. And as the “Old Guard” criticized him and his policies, he started to feel under attack, which made him more defensive and aggressive. His everyday relations with neighbors soured. His view of the Muir Beach battle grew grandiose—in conversation, he associated the Old Guard with Trump. He even attacked his critics in an online post.

“I couldn’t get it out of my head,” he later told Ripley. “It felt like we were at war.”

“Hearing Gary talk this way,” Ripley writes, “was alternately reassuring and alarming. On the one hand, if even the godfather of conflict mediation can’t help getting pulled into conflict traps, then we can all be forgiven for some of our pettiest moments. On the other hand, it felt ominous. If Gary could not resist the grasp, what hope is there for the rest of us?”

When Friedman’s board ally lost re-election in 2017, the “Old Guard” took back over. Humiliated, Friedman contemplated resigning from the board, but decided to stay on—and to better understand the conflict.

He voted himself out of the board presidency, voted to get rid of his own sub-committees, and looked for ways to support his opponents. He distanced himself from what the book calls “fire starters”—people who had previously encouraged him to fight politically. He made fewer comments at meetings, and he talked more about his gardening, as a way of making lighter, more positive connections with people. Eventually, he found himself recovering from what he called his “personal derangement.”

As Friedman and Ripley both explain in the book, some conflict is good and healthy—when movement and questions and curiosity lead the people involved to understanding and a better place.

But too much conflict is high conflict—where the conflict is so stagnant that the conflict itself becomes the destination. There is no winning such quagmires, which Ripley compares to L.A.’s La Brea Tar Pits—which first trapped prey, then the predators in pursuit.

“High conflict makes us miserable,” she writes. “It is costly, in every sense. Money, blood, friendships.”

When I left a phone message for Friedman recently, he called right back. “I think I really learned humility in a much deeper way,” he says. “Also, maybe it’s really surprising, but people like me a lot more now when they see I’ve failed.”

Friedman is 77 now, and I asked him if he had wised up and retired from the conflict-mad world of California local politics.

He immediately said no.



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"I feel very strongly that our community is upside down—our houses have become worth so much that we're systematically kicking out people," he says. "Affordable housing is a big challenge. The community is generally not inclined toward it. I'm trying to figure out how to lay the ground—how we can have the conversation in this community and turn it into a reality."

I couldn't help chuckling. Housing might be the only California issue that can rival water's power to trap a person in high conflict. At least Friedman now has even more experience in how to escape it.

## JOE MATHEWS

writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square (<http://zocalopublicsquare.org/>).

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