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The Accidental Influencer

VALLEJO'S ABRAHAM WOODLIFF TAKES ON THE POWERS THAT BE, ONE MEME AT A TIME.

BY CASEY CANTRELL • PHOTOS BY LIA CECACI



He runs Bay Area Memes, one of the most popular Facebook meme pages in the region. He's got nearly 150,000 followers on social media. Daveed Diggs and G-Eazy are fans.

Abraham Woodliff has no idea how he got here.

You'd never know it talking to him. The fiery Vallejo writer isn't shy about sharing his opinions, delivering explictive-laden invectives against politicians ("they don't give a f—k about people"), performative activism ("if people really cared as much as they say they do, we wouldn't be here"), and the housing crisis ("there are more f—king empty houses in San Francisco than there are homeless people").

That attitude spills over into Bay Area Memes, where Woodliff tackles some of the region's biggest issues (homelessness, racism, crime) with an unfiltered humor that takes on everyone—"poor people, rich



people, white people, black people, young people, old people, gay people, straight people." Warning: The faint of heart might want to look away.

But the memes page itself? "It was kind of an accident," Woodliff says.

It started in 2016, when Woodliff wrote a harsh takedown of San Francisco's tech elite on The Bold Italic, an online magazine owned by Medium. The article went viral, and it prompted a series of responses—including a comment from Twitter's co-founder and CEO of Medium, Ev Williams.

Inspired, Woodliff typed up a response article to Williams's comment—only for his piece to be rejected by the editors at The Bold Italic and Williams himself. Rather than tone down his writing, Woodliff decided to create his own platform on Facebook—a memes page that would allow him to talk about the issues important to him.

"For me, it's personal," he explains.



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No one:

PHOTOGRAPH BY G. WOODLIFF FOR MEMES
BART Police when there's a report of a smoking being UNLAWFULLY CONSUMED on the BART platform.



Born in Oakland and raised in Martinez, the 28-year-old provocateur grew up in Section 8 housing and spent some time in a homeless shelter. He saw firsthand the class divide that left some behind while others thrived—often at the expense of the working class.

"I'm always low-key mad about how everything is," he says. "I'm not a radical. I just want a version of capitalism that's a little fairer."

Woodliff had no expectations for the page—"this probably won't work," he recalls thinking—but then, he started racking up followers, first in



Abraham Woodliff

the hundreds and then the thousands. Suddenly, he had a massive audience. He began posting excerpts of his creative work, hoping to find traction as a writer.

His efforts paid off. This November, Woodliff is set to release his first book—a collection of short stories and poems he has written and published over the years.

"I'm a working-class kid from the Bay Area," he says. "This doesn't make sense. I don't know how the f—k this happened. I'm not supposed to have this."

But his work is about more than his own art, Woodliff says. "I'm just trying to create a platform catering to the working class of all races and backgrounds," he says. "I want to create a voice that's particularly talking to them, not influenced by corporate interests or money, to do humor and stories for them." Follow Bay Area Memes at [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/realbayareamemes) memes and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/realbayareamemes).

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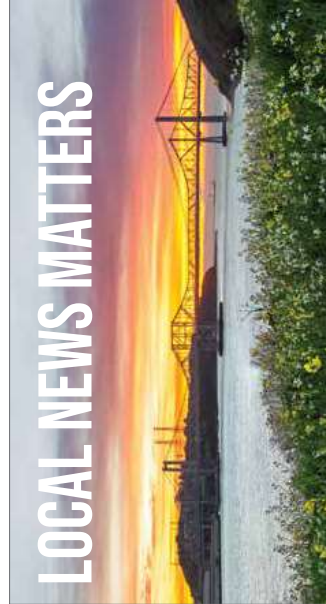
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BY CASEY CANTRELL

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