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Urban Releaf

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"Building Communities One Tree at a Time"

"Urban Forestry Takes Root in the Green Jobs Movement"
by Crystal Ross O'Hara

"Trees are really a tool for reshaping the vision of an area. When you see trees and a lot of greenery, the impact is immediate.'

Besides being beautiful, the tree plantings have inspired residents and business owners to do more...Some residents have even planned 'guerrilla gardening' events, unauthorized volunteer plantings of trees and greenery at abandoned or blighted areas.

For both Noe Noyola (one of the volunteers) and Shakur, the greatest satisfaction in their work has come from what they describe as creating a movement—seeing others motivated to plant more trees and overcome what they at first saw as limits
to their environment. 'When I first started this 12 years ago, people looked at me like I was crazy and now they appreciate me,' Shakur says. 'They said, hey, we have issues of prison and food and unemployment and you're talking about trees. But now they get it!'

Providing young people in her neighborhood with experience that makes them more employable has become increasingly important, Shakur says. In recent months, West Oakland has been shaken by the deaths of several young men due to violence, some of whom Shakur knew personally and had worked with Urban Releaf.

Shakur hopes to one day open a 'sustainability center,' that would serve as a central location for providing green jobs for young people in Oakland, Richmond and the greater Bay Area. Shakur believes more job opportunities for young people could stem the tide of violence.

'Righ now there's really an emphasis on the green jobs market and I'm enjoying it, because it is putting an emphasis on providing jobs for the underserved,' she says."

Download article PDF or visit California Releaf's site.

Salute to Sisterhood

Kemba Shakur was one of 10 women honored for her work advocating for environmental justice, urban forestry and green jobs.

The awards came from Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA). The statewide nonprofit focuses on engaging African-American women in political issues that affect the quality of life among African-American and poor communities.

Read article or visit BWOPA.
Urban Releaf Interviewed on the Black Hour and KDEE Radio Stations

On August 20th, Urban Releaf was featured on KDEE’s Going Green segment hosted by Leonard Robinson (aka EnviroBro), and on August 26th on the Black Hour Internet Radio Show.

Go to KDEE’s Going Green Segment.

Listen to Black Hour interview (click on August 26th mp3).

Investing in the Next Generation of Arborists

The U.S. Forest Service and CAL Fire have teamed up to support Urban Releaf to invest in the next generation of arborists. In January 2010, youth employees from Urban Releaf will be candidates for the next International Society of Arboriculture exam.

Gregory Tarver, Jr., Director of Education and Technology at Urban Releaf, will instruct classes and prepare youth for the upcoming exam. This opportunity will serve to take our young people to another level by giving them the credentials they will need for a career in arboriculture and/or urban forestry.
Recent Events

West MacArthur Tree Planting

On August 22nd, Urban Releaf partnered with Soul of the City and numerous organizations to plant trees on West MacArthur and West Streets. 250-300 people attended the event organized to bring awareness to issues of youth jobs and the environment, and to advocate on behalf of slain youth. Aztec dancers and horses stole the show. Special thanks to Supervisor Keith Carson, Diane Castleberry, Sandy Macias, John Melvin, Margaret Gordon, Nwamaka Agbo, Jakada Imani, and Hakim Davis.

Watch Video

UC Berkeley Peace Corps Club Plants Daffodils Around West MacArthur’s Trees

On September 12th, Urban Releaf and about 20 volunteers from UC Berkeley Peace Corps planted Daffodil bulbs around West MacArthur's trees.

Berkeley Peace Corps is an independent public service secular student organization centered on the core value of community development, which aims to promote community awareness and a sense of personal and social responsibility in the community and environment.
Upcoming Events

Cooling the Earth with Trees

November 11th: Urban Releaf will partner with Girl Scouts Save the Bay. Join us to help plant trees on 43rd and West Streets to bring the forest back to the city streets.

Keep Oakland Beautiful Board

November 14th: Urban Releaf will partner with the Keep Oakland Beautiful Board, a volunteer agency that does beautification projects around the city. We will plant trees on International Boulevard in East Oakland.

New Highland Elementary

December 5th: Urban Releaf will partner with New Highland Elementary in East Oakland to plant both fruit and street trees at their site.

Help us help more youth plant trees!

Make a donation to Urban Releaf through TreeBank.
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