

URBAN RELIEF



“Building Healthy Communities One Tree At A Time”

MISSION

Urban Relief is an urban forestry nonprofit organization established in Oakland California to address the environmental and socio-economical needs of communities that have sparse greenery or tree canopy. We are committed to the revitalization of core urban areas through tree planting that creates green jobs, increases environmental awareness and investigates the benefits of trees in low-income communities.

HISTORY

Since our establishment in 1998, we have been successful in planting and distributing over 15,000 trees throughout East Bay Area communities while conducting weekly tree planting events, delivering educational presentations to the public and creating job opportunities for youth and adults. Since 2004, we have also been involved in several long-term ecosystem research case studies.

PROGRAMS

Tree Planting & Maintenance engages community members to plant trees in core urban areas where there is a lack of greenery. After trees are planted, our staff helps to maintain them for the first 3 years.

Urban Forestry Education & Stewardship Training cultivates leadership & skills of young adults in urban forestry while building community capacity in environmental management.

Ecosystem Research explores the environmental and ecological benefits of trees as well as social, psychological and economic services they provide.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

31st Green Street Demonstration Project (2010-Present)

- Monitors water conservation & quality as a result of tree planting with structural soil
- Partners: USDA, Forest Service, CA Dept. of Water Resources, Oakland Redevelopment Agency, UC Davis Scientist Qinfu Xiao

Climate Protection in West Oakland (2008-2010)

- Focused on the capacity of trees planted in West Oakland to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs), air pollution (i.e. particulate matter), and building energy consumption
- Partners: Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Center for Urban Forestry Research

Ettie Street Social Evaluation Project (2008-2010)

- Examined social and economic benefits of planting trees including green jobs and environmental justice applicable to East San Francisco Bay Area communities
- Partners: CA Dept. of Water Resources

Ettie Street Watershed Restoration and Evaluation Project (2004-2007)

- Indicated that increasing regional canopy coverage reduced pollutant loading into the San Francisco Bay (1 Tree = 946 lbs of pollutants)
- Partners: Center for Urban Forestry Research, CA Dept. of Water Resources, USDA Forest Service

URBAN RELEAF



Urban Releaf Staff celebrates Urban Releaf Day

FROM THE FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

Over the last 14 years, I have come to find that issues of environmental justice and equity should be at the forefront of the environmental movement. Communities of color and poor communities are often times underrepresented, ignored or pushed from decision-making policies that directly affect their quality of life.

It is important to understand that groups of color that deal with an exorbitant amount of social and environmental pressures can play an extraordinary role in providing positive examples of community based solutions and has the potential to advance the environmental movement.

-Kemba Shakur

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

National

- PEOPLE Magazine, 2012 – “Heroes Among Us: Kemba Shakur Greens Her Oakland Neighborhood”
- NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, 2012 – “Making a Difference: From Concrete Jungle to Urban Oasis”
- HGTV Curb Appeal, 2004 & 2005
- Arbor Day Foundation, Lawrence Erensen Award Nominee, 2012

Local

- Oakland Tribune, 2012 – “Gauge of Bay Area Neighborhood Wealth? Look into Trees”
- UC Davis Magazine, Winter 2012 - “A Tree Grows in Oakland”
- 4th Annual Juneteenth Honoree, 2012
- KQED and Wells Fargo Women's History Month Award, 2012
- KTVU Channel 2, 2012 “MLK DAY: Holiday volunteer community project in Oakland has important, scientific aspect”
- CBS Eyewitness News, 2011 - “Lesson’s in Growing Shade”
- Modern Day John Muir Honoree Oakland Museum of California, 2011
- Community Leadership Award, Black Elected Officials & Faith Based Leaders of the East Bay,

- Urban Releaf Arbor Day Award, City of Oakland, April 10, 2010
- Black Women Organized for Political Action, 2010
- UC Berkeley CRS Magazine, 2009 - “Renewal Takes Root”
- Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame, 2009
- Oakland Green Hero Award, PG&E Co., 2009
- Outstanding Urban Forestry Project of the Year, Californian Urban Forestry Council, 2008
- Business Roundtable Spotlight Award, 2007
- Bay Area Jefferson Award, 2005
- EPA Environmental Award for Outstanding Achievement, 2005
- National Parks Chrissy Field Award, 2004
- Trees for the Millennium, Port of Oakland, 2000

STAFF EXPERTISE

Kemba Shakur, Founder & Executive Director

14 Years Experience as Executive Director

Gregory Tarver, Jr. PhD, Director of Education

ISA Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist

Jim Gillespie, Director of Tree Operations

ISA Certified Arborist

Kevin Jefferson, Director of Research & Technology

Candidate for ISA Arborist Certification

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