



California Trees

Spring/Summer 2015

Leading A Legacy

Diversity in Environmental Leadership

By Genoa Barrow

Leaves come in a myriad of shapes and shades, but those tasked with protecting and preserving them don't reflect the same diversity, according to a recent study.

"The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations, Government Agencies" conducted by Dorceta E. Taylor, Ph. D. of the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources & Environment was released in July 2014. It found that while some strides have been made in the past 50 years, most leadership roles in these organizations are still held by white males.

Dr. Taylor studied 191 conservation and preservation organizations, 74 government environmental agencies, and 28 environmental grant making foundations. Her report also includes information gleaned from confidential interviews with 21 environmental professionals who were asked about the state of diversity in their institutions.

According to the report, the largest gains have been seen by white women. The study found that women occupied more than half of the 1,714 leadership



positions studied in conservation and preservation organizations. Women also represent more than 60% of the new hires and interns in those organizations.

The numbers are promising, but the study found that there is still a "significant gender gap" when it comes to the most powerful positions in environmental organizations. For example, more than 70% of the presidents and chairs of the board of conservation and preservation organizations are male. Furthermore, over 76% of presidents of environmental grant making organizations are males.

The report also confirmed the existence of a "green ceiling," finding that only 12-16% of environmental organizations studied included minorities on their boards or general staff. Additionally, findings show that these employees are concentrated in the lower ranks.

PRIORITIZING DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

Ryan Allen, an Environmental Services Manager for the Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) in Los Angeles, says it's no surprise that few people of color are represented in



most mainstream agencies and organizations.

“Given the challenges minorities have faced in America, it’s understandable that the environment hasn’t been viewed as an urgent cause to take a stand on,” Allen said.

Edgar Dymally – a Board Member of the non-profit TreePeople – agrees. He says many minorities’ focus has been on gaining equal access to social justice and overcoming housing and employment discrimination rather than environmental equity.

Dr. Taylor maintains that increased diversity would mean increased focus on issues and concerns facing people of color and other underrepresented groups.

“You need to have everyone’s voice at the table, so you can fully understand the needs each community has,” Allen concurred.

“Many environmental groups put a lot of effort into working in low income and minority communities, because that is typically where the largest environmental needs are,” Allen continued. “I think the disconnect comes in not fully understanding how to communicate the work you are doing with the population you are trying to serve. KYCC plants a lot of trees in South Los Angeles, a largely Hispanic and African-American, low income community.

We talk about the benefits of clean air, stormwater capture and energy savings, but maybe the thing people really care about is how the trees will help lower asthma rates.”

What’s being done by smaller groups, experts maintain, could be replicated by larger organizations for an even greater impact.

“I think the disconnect comes in not fully understanding how to communicate the work you are doing with the population you are trying to serve.”

“KYCC works with a lot of recently immigrated families, and with that comes a lot of barriers in language and not understanding a new culture. Because of this we hire staff that can speak the language of the clients we serve – who understand the culture they are coming from. This allows us to keep our programming relevant to the communities we serve, and also keeps us connected.

“By letting the community tell us what they need, and then helping them to meet that need, we know the programs we run are making a positive impact on our clients,” Allen said.

EMBRACING AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

His thoughts are shared by Mary E. Petit, Founder and Co-Executive director of The Incredible Edible Community Garden, also based in Southern California.

“Diversity is a critical component to ensure the strength and longevity of not only environmental organizations but all organizations,” Petit said.

“It ensures we evaluate our programs through a wide lens. It keeps us honest. If we look at nature, the healthiest and most balanced, robust natural environments are those that are most diverse.

“But in order to embrace diversity and the strength that it can give an organization, people must be open and unbiased, not just in words but in how people live their lives,” she continued.

Eleanor Torres, Co-Executive Director of Incredible Edible Community Garden says she left the environmental arena in 2003 after becoming disillusioned. She returned in 2013 and while she was happy to see some “new blood” in the movement, she says there’s still work to be done.

“It hasn’t changed much. There has to be a huge shift in understanding,” she continued. “In urban forestry, you’re going to have to deal with people of color.”

Torres, who is Latina and Native American, entered the field in 1993 and has had her share of being the “first” or “only” person of color in a leadership position. She says issues of racism, sexism and classism still need to be addressed before real change can be accomplished.

Dymally has been a member of TreePeople’s Board for eight years. A civil engineer, his day job is as a Senior Environmental Specialist for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. He says he’s only come across a few people of color in higher leadership roles.

“There are some, but not a lot,” he shared.

Dymally joined TreePeople at the request of the Board’s only other member of color, who is Hispanic. He was urged to become more active and involved, largely because there weren’t many people of color represented. That “each one, reach one” mentality, Dymally said, is encouraged by the organization’s Founder and President Andy Lipkis, who is white.

Dymally said he’d like to see policymakers and lawmakers similarly embrace efforts to increase diversity.

“They can set the tone and bring energy to this struggle.”

LIVING – AND LEAVING – A LEGACY

Dymally is the nephew of the former California Lt. Gov. Mervyn Dymally, the first and only Black person to serve in that capacity. The younger Dymally points to his late uncle’s past success in getting minorities represented on statewide Water Boards.

“I would certainly like to see the President, or someone of his profile, maybe the First Lady, get behind this effort,” Dymally shared.

First Lady Michelle Obama, he added, has been a champion for nutrition and garden creation and can do the same for promoting the need for bringing different people and viewpoints to the proverbial environmental table.

The “State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations” report argues that the issue requires “priority attention” and makes recommendations for “aggressive efforts” in three areas-- tracking and transparency, accountability, and resources.

“Diversity statements without a plan and rigorous data collection are just words on paper,” reads the 187-page document.

“Organizations and associations should institute annual diversity and inclusion assessments. Disclosure should facilitate sharing

of strategies for addressing unconscious bias and overhauling recruiting beyond the green insiders’ club,” it continues.

The report also suggests that foundations, NGOs and government agencies integrate diversity goals into performance evaluations and grant making criteria, that increased resources be allocated for diversity initiatives to work, and that sustainable funding be provided for networking to reduce isolation and support existing leaders of color.

“You need to have everyone’s voice at the table, so you can fully understand the needs each community has.”

“I’m not sure what can be done that would immediately bring minorities into more leadership roles, but bringing more awareness and education to local youth, helping to inspire the next generation of leaders, would be a good first step,” Allen said.

“It has to start at the school level,” Dymally said, echoing the sentiment and pointing to TreePeople’s outreach efforts.

The organization’s environmental education programs encourage elementary and secondary school students and teachers in the Los

Angeles area to “dig in,” learn the benefits of growing the urban forest, and become lifelong caretakers of the environment.

“In 10, 15, 20 years, we’ll see some of those young people cycle through (the organization and the movement),” Dymally said.

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Dymally says the lack of diversity

may be explained, in part, because there simply aren’t a lot of people of color in the environmental arena to begin with.

“It might just reflect the numbers involved,” he said. It has been said that when young minorities see professionals “who look like them” in a particular field, the more likely they are to want to be that “when they grow up.” Seeing African American doctors can inspire African American children to think about medical school. Having prominent Latino lawyers in the community can motivate Latino youth to attend law school or pursue other legal professions. Exposure and access are key, Dymally shared.

Dymally says many people of color, African-Americans in particular, may not view the environmental arena as an attractive or lucrative career choice.

The environmental field is a “calling” for many, he says, and as such, it’s just as important that the people of color taking on leadership roles be “people of passion,” who will help bring resources to more people and drive California’s urban forest movement into the future.

Genoa Barrow is a freelance journalist based in Sacramento. Locally, her byline has appeared in the Sacramento Observer, The Scout, and Parent’s Monthly magazine.



Cover: The Incredible Edible Community Garden has a great turnout at a February 2015 community engagement meeting.

Opposite: A TreePeople board meeting hosts representatives from a range of communities.

Below: Treeplanters say hello at a KYCC Industrial District Green in February 2015.



by Chuck Mills

BILLS, BUDGET BACK URBAN FORESTRY PRIORITIES FOR 2015

Urban forestry funding could be flowing through California at record levels later this year.

Governor Brown's proposed 2015-16 State Budget allocates \$37.8 million in cap-and-trade auction proceeds for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program. Projects must reduce greenhouse gasses and meet the goals of AB 32. The Administration has also included proposed language that would allow \$10 million of these funds to be distributed competitively statewide.

Momentum for funding urban forestry through the state's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) continues to build among environmental justice stakeholders, natural resources advocates, members of the

Legislature, and key agencies within Governor Brown's administration. CAL FIRE reports that they received \$107 million in applications for the \$15.5 million available for local assistance grants in the 2014-15 State Budget – making urban forestry a strong contender for additional funds in the years to come.

“Governor Brown's proposed 2015-2016 State Budget allocates \$37.8 million in cap-and-trade auction proceeds for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program.”

Other funding sources for urban forestry in 2015 will likely include stormwater management grants through Proposition 1, Caltrans' Active

Transportation Program, the River Parkways Program administered by the Natural Resources Agency, and the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP).

SENATE PRESIDENT INTRODUCES PARK BOND BILL

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León (D – Los Angeles) introduced Senate Bill 317 this year, which would place the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Rivers, and Coastal Protection Bond Act on the 2016 ballot if successful. Though the measure is certain to be amended many times over the next several months, the current version contains \$30 million for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program.

The last park bond to be passed by voters was Proposition 40 in 2002 which provided \$10 million to CAL FIRE for these purposes.

SILICON VALLEY LEGISLATOR PROTECTING RIGHT TO VOLUNTEER

Assembly Member Rich Gordon (D – Menlo Park) has introduced Assembly Bill 327 this year which would extend by seven years state law exempting volunteers for specific projects from public works prevailing wage law. Gordon successfully carried the legislation that created a five-year extension of the exemption in 2011.

“Volunteers are the cornerstone of community

conservation efforts, and extending this important provision will allow California to tap into one of our greatest resources for healthy communities and the environment- volunteerism,” noted Assembly Member Gordon.

California ReLeaf and its Network are part of a diverse coalition of nearly 200 organizations supporting this effort.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR URBAN FORESTRY AGAIN IN FLUX

Congress moved a continuing resolution in 2014 that extends the current annual funding level of \$28 million for the U.S. Forest Service's Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) Program through September 2015.

“The current version of the measure contains \$30 million for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program.”

However, the President's budget proposal for FY 2016 suggests slashing the U&CF Program by 15% down to \$24 million. Urban forestry advocates in DC, including American Forests, are working with Congress to try and get that funding level up to \$31.3 million, which is consistent with what was enacted in fiscal year 2012.

Chuck Mills is the Director of Public Policy and Grants at California ReLeaf.

University of California Riverside

OPENING RECEPTION: AUGUST 19, 5:30-7:30 P.M.

NETWORKING & EDUCATION: AUGUST 20 ALL DAY

Join us in Southern California for a full day of guest speakers, networking, and learning how to broaden the reach of urban forestry efforts in your region. Connect with some of our 93 California ReLeaf Network Members to share stories, successes, and an all-around good time as we navigate the next steps of urban forestry together.

Visit <http://californiareleaf.org/programs/workshops> for more information and registration!



Guest speakers include:

José González

FOUNDER, LATINO OUTDOORS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Facilitator

Diversifying the Conservation Movement: Approaches for Equity and Inclusion Through Story and Culture

José is an experienced educator in formal and informal education settings with an array of associated interests in the arts, education, conservation, and the environment. He has broad experience as a K-12 public education teacher, environmental education adviser, outdoor education instructor and coordinator, and university adjunct faculty. Currently he is leading Latino Outdoors and working on other bridging opportunities with Latino communities and conservation.



Bobby Pena

CO-FOUNDER, BPCUBED, INC.

Public Relations / Latino Outreach / Marketing Communications

Steps to Effective Media Communications

Bobby is a proven communications professional and a well-respected member of the Latino business community who has helped large and small for- and non-profit organizations and government agencies effectively reach Latino and other ethnic markets. Bobby has led public relations projects for the Sacramento, California and U.S. Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and has served on the Board of Directors for the California Conservation Corps Foundation.



Kelaine Ravdin

OWNER & FOUNDER, URBAN ECOS

Urban Ecologist

Understanding GHG Sequestration & Trees

Kelaine offers ecological and technological consulting to make our cities greener, more sustainable, and more environmentally sound. She has a background in ecology and landscape architecture and has pursued research in these fields as a Fulbright Scholar in Berlin and with the U.S. Forest Service. Recent work includes the development of several OpenTreeMap projects in cities across California, iTree training, and guidance for institutions to use urban forestry for greenhouse gas mitigation and energy conservation.



WANT TO HELP?

Every dollar donated to California ReLeaf helps us strengthen and secure urban forestry legislative efforts in California, maximizing our members' hard work.

Donate online at
californiareleaf.org/donate.

California ReLeaf is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and donations are tax-deductible. Our Tax Identification number is 90-0138904. Thank you for your support!

PLEASE CONTACT INFO@CALIFORNIARELEAF.ORG WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS REGARDING THE RELEAF NETWORK LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP.

Tree Lodi

Guardians of Our Urban Forest



by Amelia Oliver

Lodi: this Central Valley city serves a unique and diverse community with a big influence on California. Though the City proper has a population of over 63,000 within just over 13 square miles, its services extend to an estimated 175,000 people. Its economy has a historical agricultural component and

is currently touted as the “Zinfandel Capital of the World.”

LIKE CITY, LIKE CANOPY

Lodi’s population spans a large range as well: demographic trends in the area reveal emerging populations of Hispanic, Hmong, and Sikh – more than 30% of Lodi speaks a language other than

English at home. Furthermore, the population is aging and many households are multi-generational.

The Lodi tree canopy mirrors the City’s population – diverse and mature. As with many municipalities across the state, funds for tree maintenance are scarce. Although benefit-abundant, a mature tree canopy requires a diligent Management Plan; one that addresses pest or disease issues and has a plan for hazard tree removal and replacement. If no such Plan exists, it often falls on the citizenry to become the Guardian of the Trees. This is the job of Tree Lodi.

THE GENESIS OF THE GUARDIANS

The Tree Lodi story begins with a mistletoe invasion in its mature tree population. Tree Lodi founder, Joyce Harmon, knew the ills of mistletoe and began a concerted effort to bring this to the City’s attention; through civic action, letter writing and education, becoming known as the “Mistletoe Lady of Lodi.”

After realizing she could do no more as an individual and that the issues and needs went far beyond just mistletoe, she decided that an urban forest organization was needed. Joyce founded Tree Lodi in 2005: a diverse group of tree specialists, educators, local business owners, and individuals that came together, volunteering their time to improve Lodi’s urban forest. (Now at 91, Joyce has reduced her responsibilities and serves as Treasurer.)

Tree Lodi’s debut project was Lodi’s Centennial tree plantings: the planting of 100 cork oak trees at nine parks. Currently the group is active at Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations at local parks and schools. One of its most popular programs is the Memorial and Celebration Tree Program. Funds generated through this program buy all new City trees, allowing the City to concentrate funds on the mature Urban Forest. Tree Lodi cares for each tree it plants for up to three years – using all volunteers. Each of Tree Lodi’s

plantings includes a hands-on component to fully engage the audience. The future of the forest is, very literally, in their hands.

TREE LODI TODAY

Tree Lodi’s most recent project involved the removal of 36 aged and hazardous Bradford pear trees and their replacement with more appropriate tree species. This proposal received mixed reviews when announced, but Tree Lodi continued to communicate the benefits of the project: the improved urban forest, decreased maintenance costs, safety issues due to limb failure, and a sense of pride and involvement. The project, which was scheduled to take up to five years, was completed in less than a year – thanks to the help of 124 volunteers and immense community support.

TRAINING TREE PEOPLE FOR TOMORROW

As suggested by their logo, a focal part of Tree Lodi’s planning

involves increasing stewardship of Lodi through education and involvement of Lodi’s youth.

“We are especially concerned about the future of Lodi’s trees and the need to develop stewardship programs that involve the youth of our community,” shares board President Steve Dutra.

Committed to “preserving, protecting, and promoting Lodi’s urban forest,” Tree Lodi runs on powerful volunteer energy to retain the title “Guardian” of their Urban Forest. If you ever find yourself “stuck in Lodi, again,” you’ll be sure to thank Tree Lodi for the healthy Lodi shade.

Amelia Oliver is the Network & Operations Program Manager at California ReLeaf.



Inset: Joyce Harmon, “Mistletoe Lady of Lodi” helped found Tree Lodi in 2005. Today at age 91, she still serves as Treasurer.



Tree Lodi
guardian of our urban forest

“Though the City proper has a population of over 63,000 within just over 13 square miles, its services extend to an estimated 175,000 people.”



Member Snapshot

YEAR FOUNDED: 2005
 JOINED NETWORK: 2009
 BOARD MEMBERS: 7
 BOARD PRESIDENT: STEVE DUTRA
 STAFF: ALL VOLUNTEER
 WEBSITE: WWW.TREELODI.ORG
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BIG CHANGES FOR CALIFORNIA ReLeaf

It's been a bustling few months for California ReLeaf, but with plenty of good reason.

NEW DIGS

We've moved! Our new home at **2115 J Street, Suite 213** is in the heart of midtown Sacramento, in an old hair salon with plenty of natural lighting and – you guessed it – great views of the city's trees. Come say hi next time you're in town!

THE GANG'S ALL HERE

After a season of "musical chairs," the new California ReLeaf staff has finally settled in:

- **Cindy Blain**, *Executive Director*
- **Chuck Mills**, *Director of Public Policy & Grants*
- **Amelia Oliver**, *Network & Operations Program Manager*
- **Melissa Gutierrez**, *Education & Communications Program Manager*



Besides bringing on a new team member, we've also redefined roles for the entire organization in a way that allows each person to maximize his or her strengths. We're feeling strong and settled, and we're already diving in to rebooting and revamping the best resources California ReLeaf has to offer. The future of urban forestry is bright, and we're fortunate to have such a strong network made of people like you to help make a real difference with urban trees in California's communities.