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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Storytelling Event Gives Voice to Community's Hope in Hard Times

EAST OAKLAND, CA – A public art and community engagement project called **Our Oakland: Eastside Stories** will convene approximately 20 families from East Oakland on March 28th, 2009 to record stories and songs for a new bilingual digital archive. The event will be the second in a series of “Community Storytelling Days” produced by Our Oakland’s Lead Artist and Project Director, Rene Yung, in collaboration with numerous community partners. (See page 2 for list and partner info to date.)

The **Our Oakland** archive is part of a larger public art project by Yung that was commissioned for the new East Oakland Community Library by the City of Oakland’s Public Art Program. The archive will be featured in a permanent kiosk at the library and will also be accessible online. Yung is bringing together diverse civic partners to reach East Oakland community members and to provide culturally relevant featured content for the website.

“The idea is to harness community resources to produce something greater than the sum of the parts,” Yung states. “**Our Oakland** works on two levels. First, it empowers individuals to voice their stories, which have been very compelling. Just as important, the project builds community by connecting partner organizations, who each bring their resources to the table to create something new and positive even in these challenging times.” Yung developed this model as a creative response and humanizing counterpoint to negative portrayal of East Oakland, and to offer residents the opportunity to collectively build a new cultural asset for their community.

Our Oakland is collaborating with a broad group of community partners on the March 28th event. Acorn Woodland Elementary School will provide space for the event, while East Oakland Boxing Association and EnCompass Academy outreached to their communities to invite participants to tell their stories. The Nutrition Education Training Academy will provide fun family educational activities relating to healthy eating. Youth UpRising, First Voice with Media Alliance, and BAYCAT, will provide media production teams to record the community stories.

Yoram Savion, Multimedia Coordinator at Youth UpRising noted “We’re excited to be part of this event for the second time. It’s great for our young producers to have the opportunity to contribute back to the community using the multimedia skills they’ve developed at Youth UpRising.”

The content resulting from this event will be featured in the online archive that will go live in late spring or early summer. Future phases of the story collection process will include additional “Community Storytelling Days,” as well as an online contest for stories and images from and about East Oakland. Please visit: <http://oaklandspeaks.weebly.com/> for more details.

Event Details:

Date/Time: Saturday, March 28th, 2009, from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm
Location: Shared campus of ACORN Woodland Elementary School and EnCompass Academy
Corner of Rudsdale Street and 81st Avenue, East Oakland, CA

Pre-registration is required for this space-limited event. To join us as a storyteller or volunteer please contact Ada Pinkston at 201-294-2764 or adapinkston@gmail.com

To join us as a member of the press please contact Mary Fuller at 510-350-7492 or mary@maustinfuller.com, or Rene Yung at 415-648-1302 or reneyung@ouroakland.org

Please visit <http://oaklandspeaks.weebly.com/press.html> for more photos, videos, and quotes, or to donate.

[MORE]

Additional Information about the project and its partners:

ABOUT OUR OAKLAND: EASTSIDE STORIES

Our Oakland: Eastside Stories is an integrated public art project by artist Rene Yung that will beautify the new East Oakland Community Library with architectural art elements, and create a digital archive of community stories told by residents through photos, videos, and audio narratives. These stories will explore individual and collective memories revolving around themes of Our History, Our Place, Our Culture, Our Families, and Our Dreams. Our Oakland will provide a humanizing counterpoint to the negative portrayal of East Oakland, and offer residents the opportunity to collectively build a new cultural asset for their community. Ms Yung additionally designed the project as a series of dynamic civic partnerships that harness complementary resources to create a greater whole, and to form a sustainable model that uses cultural innovation to help urban revitalization.

ABOUT RENE YUNG:

Rene Yung is an internationally exhibiting installation and public artist, designer, and writer, who works in cross-disciplinary community-based art projects that address social and cultural issues in relation to the built environment. A native of Hong Kong, Ms. Yung has exhibited at venues including TransCulture, part of the 46th Venice Biennale; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, Texas; and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. She has completed extensive public projects for organizations including the Seattle Office of Art and Cultural Affairs, the San Francisco Art Commission, and the Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle. A graduate of Stanford University, Ms. Yung is the recipient of grant awards from the Creative Work Fund, the Center for Cultural Innovation, and the California Council on the Humanities' California Story Fund. She is on the faculty of City College of San Francisco.

ABOUT CITY OF OAKLAND PUBLIC ART PROGRAM:

Our Oakland was commissioned by the City of Oakland's Public Art Program - Cultural Arts & Marketing Division, which serves as the primary resource and advocate for art throughout Oakland, and honors and celebrates the diversity of Oakland.

ABOUT THE EAST OAKLAND COMMUNITY LIBRARY at 81st AVENUE:

The new East Oakland Community Library where **Our Oakland: Eastside Stories** will be installed, will be located at 81st Avenue and Rudsdale Street in Oakland. Scheduled to open in late 2009, it will be the Oakland Public Library's first new branch library in ten years. The 21,000 square foot, LEED Silver certified library will be the city's first green municipal building, and will have a strong community focus serving both local and regional users.

MEDIA PRODUCTION PARTNERS

- Youth UpRising
- FirstVoice
- BAYCAT
- Media Alliance

<http://youthuprising.org>
<http://firstvoicemedia.wordpress.com>
<http://www.baycat.org/baycat>
<http://www.media-alliance.org>

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PARTNERS

- East Oakland Boxing Association
- Acorn Woodland Elementary School
- EnCompass Academy

<http://www.eoba.org>
<http://awe.ousd.k12.ca.us>
<http://encompass.ousd.k12.ca.us>

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY PARTNERS

- The HOPE Collaborative
- Nutrition Education Training Academy
- Bay Area Children's Power Play

<http://www.oaklandfoodandfitness.net>
<http://groups.ucanr.org/neta/>
<http://bayarea5aday.ucdavis.edu/>

SUPPORT

- City of Oakland, Public Art Program
- Open Circle Foundation
- Individual Donors

<http://www.oaklandculturalarts.org/main/publicart.htm>
<http://www.art4environment.org>

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Photo 1 (screenshot from video):
Maria Diaz and her daughter Mary Cruz Diaz speak of their hopes for their future and their family, in a video produced by Our Oakland Media Partner Youth UpRising at the first Community Storytelling Day on Oct. 25, 2008 .

Video is viewable at:
<http://oaklandspeaks.weebly.com/stories.html>

Photo 2:
Young media producers from Youth UpRising edit videos during the first Our Oakland: Eastside Stories Community Storytelling Day, Oct 25, 2009



Photo 3 (screenshot from video):
Community activist Fannie Brown speaks about her hopes for the new Obama administration just days before his inauguration as she holds her baby grandson, in a video by Ada Pinkston, Our Oakland Outreach Coordinator.

Video is viewable at:
<http://oaklandspeaks.weebly.com/stories.html>