

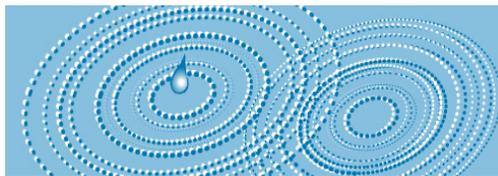
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*Building Community  
Making Meaning  
Recording History*

## **Our Oakland : Eastside Stories**®

### ***Artist Builds Community in East Oakland through New Digital Archive***

EAST OAKLAND, CA – Public Artist Rene Yung and community partners have invited a group of East Oakland residents to be the first of many to jump start a new digital archive called **Our Oakland: Eastside Stories**. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from 10AM to 1PM, more than a dozen families will convene at the shared campus of ACORN Woodland School and EnCompass Academy to record stories, songs, photos and other artifacts to add to the bilingual digital archive. The archive is part of the public art Yung was commissioned for the new East Oakland Community Library, and will be featured at the library and online. Yung conceived the project to counter negative portrayals of the neighborhood that confine the community's sense of hope.

"I believe in the deep humanity within each community," say Yung. "**Our Oakland: Eastside Stories** seeks out that humanity in the men and women and children of East Oakland, to give voice to the rich heritage of the community in stories of their everyday. **Our Oakland** celebrates the assets they bring to the city of Oakland, amidst the serious challenges the community faces."

The archive will be structured around five linked themes: Our Place, Our Culture, Our Family, Our History, and Our Dreams. Yung chose these themes to connect the stories and events in peoples' lives to changing places and overlooked histories of fast-changing East Oakland.

Yung brought together a group of community partners to help build the archive, including ACORN Woodland Elementary principal, Kimi Kean. "I am excited about 'Our Oakland' because it's a great opportunity for our students and their families to have a positive inter-generational experience, and to learn about their neighbors and take pride in themselves."

The October 25 event is a pilot for a much larger endeavor to collect and digitize community stories, songs, and artifacts for the archive over the next year and a half. For this first event, families nominated or invited through community partners will "seed" the archive with their stories. Community media partner Youth Uprising will interview and record participants, while the 100 Families program of the Alameda County Office of Education will lead visual art projects relating to the project themes. Future phases of the story collection process will include a series of "Community Storytelling Days" that will be free and open to the public, as well as an online contest for stories and images from and about East Oakland.

Press are invited to attend the event to learn more about the project, and witness the launch of the project.

#### **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. The overarching theme of Mutuality and Transformation unites the project components. The stories will highlight the interrelation between individuals, their actions, and their environment. **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.

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**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. **Our Oakland** fulfills that mission in that it celebrates the diverse and connected stories of Oakland residents and showcases them in the public space of the East Oakland Public Library.

**ABOUT THE OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY:**

The mission of the Oakland Public Library is to inform, inspire and delight Oakland's diverse community as a resource for information, knowledge, and artistic and literary expression, providing the best in traditional services, new technologies and innovative programs.

The new East Oakland Community Library where the project will be installed will be located at 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Rudsdale Street in Oakland. Scheduled to open in late 2009, the 21,000 square foot, LEED Silver certified public library will be the city's first green municipal building. Located near two new small elementary schools, ACORN Woodland and EnCompass Academy, the library will have a strong community focus serving both local and regional users.

**ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

**ACORN Woodland Elementary School** and **EnCompass Academy** are two small schools co-located with the new East Oakland Community Library. ACORN Woodland Elementary's mission is to focus on its students as young scholars, seeds who are planted in their families and communities. EnCompass Academy emphasizes teaching to the whole child, to connect self, family, communities and heritage.

**Youth Uprising** is a not-for-profit organization, seeded and supported by Alameda County and the City of Oakland, offering a wide range of programs and services that develop youth leadership in order to transform the community.

**100 Families** is a program of the Alameda County Office of Education that began at the Center for Art and Public Life at California College of the Arts.

**SUPPORT:**

**Our Oakland: Eastside Stories** is a public art project funded through the Oakland Percent-for-Art Program. Additional supported came from the Open Circle Foundation.

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