

Urban Habitat Welcomes Allen Fernandez Smith as New Executive Director



For just the third time in its 22-year history, Urban Habitat has a new executive director. Allen Fernandez Smith took over leadership on May 2, 2011. He succeeds Juliet Ellis, who left at the end of October 2010 to become the Assistant General Manager for External Affairs at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and Carl Anthony, who co-founded the organization and led it for its first 12 years.

“I’m delighted to pass the torch to Allen Fernandez Smith,” Ellis said. “He will bring vision, practical experience, passion and commitment to an organization that is moving on the key issues of equity in the Bay Area and beyond.”

A Chicago native, Fernandez Smith graduated from the University of Illinois and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. After moving to the Bay Area, he coordinated the first-ever citywide initiative to improve San Francisco’s after-school programs, and served as a senior community development specialist in the San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Community Development.

“Fernandez Smith was our point person in Bayview Hunters Point, where he brought city agencies, community leaders, and business owners together to develop an economic strategy for the neighborhood,” said San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Fred Blackwell. “With his ability to work with diverse partners on complicated issues, he’s well prepared to take Urban Habitat to the next level—and Urban Habitat is clearly ready to go there.”

Most recently, Fernandez Smith served as Executive Director of the California School-Age Consortium (CaSAC), a statewide nonprofit dedicated to advancing the professional development of youth workers across California. He guided the group through a successful strategic planning and reorganization process.

“It is rare to find someone with the combination of management skill and engagement in social justice work that Allen Fernandez Smith brings to the job,” said Urban Habitat Board Chair Joe Brooks. “Al is the right person at the right time.”

Fernandez Smith comes to Urban Habitat at a dynamic point in the organization’s evolution. Founded in 1989 by national environmental leaders Carl Anthony, Karl Linn, and David Brower, the organization has worked hard to popularize a regional perspective on issues of environmental and social equity and build power in communities of color through a combination of education, advocacy, research, and coalition building.

“I believe that effective public policy must be crafted with the authentic voice and experience of our communities. When that happens, policies are more responsive to community needs and can lead to lasting, systemic change,” Fernandez Smith said.

“I’m very excited for the opportunity to work at Urban Habitat and help advance our policy, advocacy, and organizing efforts. Building upon the organization’s collaborative spirit and partnerships, we will continue to take action on a wide range of social and environmental justice issues that face our low-income families and communities of color.”

Smith now lives in Oakland, California with his wife, Kay Fernandez Smith, deputy director at PolicyLink, and their children, Malcolm and Malaya. ■

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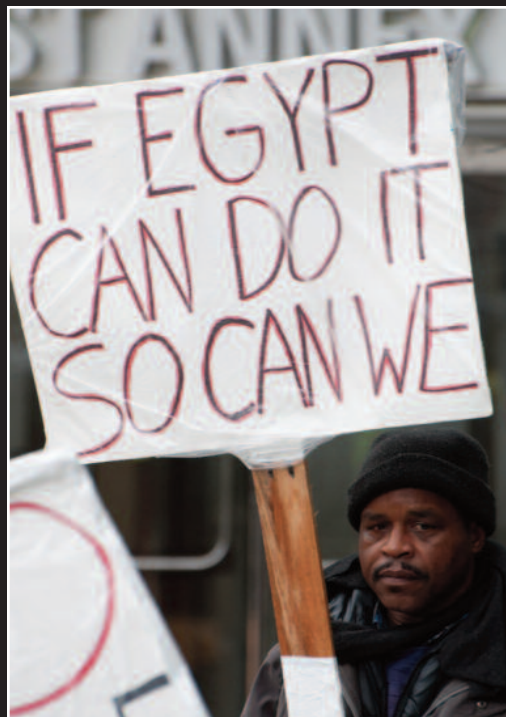
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