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## OCCUPY THE FARM

A Documentary by Todd Darling  
PBS PREMIERE, Earth Day 2021

NorCal Media: KRCB -TUES., APRIL 20 - 8:00 pm

KPJK - THURS. APRIL 22 - 7:00 pm

**Following the Film, a Roundtable Discussion Will Up-Date the Work on the Farm During the Pandemic and New Threats to the Land.**

**A link to a screener of the film is available upon request.**

Filmmaker Todd Darling and some interview subjects are available for interviews.

**OCCUPY THE FARM** tells the story of 200 urban farmers who walk onto a publicly owned research farm (Gill Tract) on the eastern edge of the San Francisco Bay and plant it with two acres of crops in order to save the land from becoming a real-estate development. The documentary is directed by **Todd Darling**, runs 90 min, and will have its Bay Area broadcast premiere on KRCB -TUES., APRIL 20 - 8:00 pm, and KPJK - THURS. APRIL 22 - 7:00 pm

### Press Images

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/TxMpUzQlxj>

### Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/117053430>

Film Website: <http://occupythefarmfilm.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OccupyTheFarmFilm?fref=ts>  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/occupyfarmfilm>

## ABOUT THE FILM

**OCCUPY THE FARM** follows a community's struggle to preserve public land for urban farming. The Gill Family transferred their farm to UC Berkeley in 1929, believing that it would always remain a farm. But by the 21<sup>st</sup> century only a fraction of it remained open growing fields. The film captures an intense conflict over the fate of the last remaining 20 acres of farmable land in the urban East Bay. Compelling characters on both sides create a vivid narrative as community members employ an ingenious and audacious strategy to confront a powerful institution that had ignored them.

When the 200 community members marched to the gates of this farm, they did not carry signs protesting the University of California's plans to turn this research farm into a shopping mall. Instead, they carried tents, tools and 15,000 seedlings. They cut the padlocks off the gate, marched onto the land and planted two acres of crops. What happened next changed the destiny of the land and presented a hopeful new strategy for activists. From preparing the soil, to police raids, from lawsuits to overflowing harvests, **OCCUPY THE FARM reveals a resourceful community facing off against a powerful institution to provide access to healthy food and protection for public lands.**

The film will air throughout the Bay Area on PBS stations KRCB April 20, 2021 and KPJK April 22, 2021. Following the film, a roundtable discussion will up-date the work on the farm during the pandemic, discuss new threats to this contested land, and reflect on what the pandemic, and climate change mean for the future of urban agriculture. Participants scheduled include: **Effie Rawlings**, UC Gill Tract Community Farm member, and OCCUPY THE FARM organizer; **Ashoka Finley**, an OCCUPY THE FARM organizer and urban farmer who works in technology, and is now part of a start up in San Francisco; **Will Smith**, of Black Earth Farmers, took the responsibility to manage farming operations just prior to Covid-19. Throughout the pandemic he led farming, and food distribution for the Gill Tract; **Charisma Acey**, Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning in the College of Environmental Design, and is the Faculty Director of the Berkeley Food Institute. Prof. Acey looks at the potential for urban farming amid increased pressures on the available land; and **Todd Darling**, director/producer of OCCUPY THE FARM.

## UPDATE: THE FARM TODAY (2021)

OCCUPY THE FARM transformed from an occupation to an actual farm. Organizers who had once been arrested for trespassing now have keys to the front gate. Slightly more than one acre of land at the Gill Tract became the UC Gill Tract Community Farm. Volunteers from the community work alongside researchers from College of Natural Resources and have created a research farm that operates a weekly farm stand, distributes food to East Bay organizations, and studies how best to create resilient, urban agriculture.

**During the pandemic, the need for resilient, urban farming became painfully obvious. Tens of thousands of families in the Bay Area became food insecure. Food banks were stretched to their limit as a result of Covid-19. This one acre farm was able to supply food to 70 East Bay families a week, at no charge, even with delays and the complications of developing COVID 19 protocols.** With the arrival of Spring, the farm is now busy planting crops, preparing for a productive 2021. Revolving crews of volunteers arrive to work the farm and are led by Farm Educators.

Now however, the Gill Tract land faces a new dilemma. UC Berkeley says they need housing for an expanded student population. Land that currently contains the farm's barns and offices, and that once housed numerous green houses, has been targeted by the University for a large, six or seven story dormitory. Intended for graduate students, the dormitory would be built by a Texas company American Campus Communities. According to its web site, this company specializes in "the privatization process". The company would build the dorm on the Gill Tract and then own and operate the building. This new dormitory will shrink the growing lands as the existing facilities would have to be moved onto the remaining fields. According to preliminary plans, **the dormitory will provide no classrooms or space for the farm, nor offer any educational linkage to this farm.** Additionally, the University's ten-year commitment to operate the UC Gill Tract Community Farm will soon expire. The test of whether these public resources are for research for the public good, or will be "privatized" is once again on the table. According to UC Capital Strategies, the UC Regents still have to approve the plans and the contract with American Campus Communities.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKER**

### **Todd Darling - Director**

Todd Darling is a Berkeley, CA based filmmaker. His first documentary, "Año Nuevo" aired nationally on PBS on "Latino Consortium", screened at the Mill Valley Film Festival, and won the Eric Sevareid Award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Darling works in film and TV in LA and the Bay Area, and directed reality shows, "Murder In Small Town X" for Fox, and three seasons of "Laguna Beach" for MTV, helped produce the international broadcast of five Olympic Games, and one World Cup. His own independent documentaries include "A Snow Mobile For George" (Netflix, Big Sky, Sedona, Santa Barbara), "High Tech Families" (PBS), "Black Rock Horse" (Big Sky Documentary Film Festival), and he was the Executive Producer of "Saviors of the Forest" that was in competition at the Sundance Film Festival and screened on Encore. Currently, Darling is at work on a limited documentary series about dams, rivers and the conflict between the industrial users of dams and the Indigenous tribes who live on those rivers.

Interview on NPR: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/11/08/362338673/occupy-the-farm-in-berkeley-the-revolution-will-be-irrigated>

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