

SELECTED BIOS:

Effie Rawlings, born to a Midwestern farm family whose family grew seed corn. After graduation from high school, Effie enlisted in the Army. After her military service, she enrolled in UC Berkeley, where she took classes from the renowned Prof. Miguel Altieri. Altieri helped pioneer “agroecology”, actively used research fields at the Gill Tract farm, and worked on urban farming projects around the world. Effie became active politically on the campus, opposing the steep hikes in tuition passed down to the students from the UC Regents. In 2011 when the Occupy movement swept the nation, she was active in Occupy Oakland. Coming back from a seminar on farming with some friends, they were discussing how great it would be to have a decent sized farm in the city. At that moment, they drove past the Gill Tract farm which was threatened with a real-estate development, and she said, “Hey guys, I think I’ve found the farm.”

She set about organizing Occupy the Farm to save the public research farm.

Gopal Dayaneni, served as one of the main spokespeople for Occupy the Farm. He works with Movement Generation building organizational capacity with BIPOC community and youth organizations. He also teaches at Antioch College and lectures internationally about the intersection of economy and the environment. He is an urban farmer in the East Bay where he and his family raise much of their own food.

Ashoka Finley came to UC Berkeley from Los Angeles to study political economy, and became friends with Effie Rawlings while both were students. Ashoka had developed farming skills and was responsible for the farm planning when Occupy The Farm walked onto the Gill Tract with 15,000 seedlings. Following the Gill Tract action, Ashoka worked for Urban Tilth, an urban farming organization in Richmond, and has been active with planning Black led farming and land organizations in the Bay Area. Ashoka serves on the board of a solar power cooperative, consults and works on technology projects. He is currently working on a start up in San Francisco.

Dean Keith Gilles led the College of Natural Resources at the time of the occupation. From his first encounter on the Gill Tract with the Occupy The Farm organizers, community members and even some of his academic staff, Gilles was sympathetic to their aims, but was pointedly opposed to their methods. This stance clearly placed him in the middle – between those who wanted to develop the land for housing and shopping malls – and those wishing to preserve the research farm and expand the research and diffusion of urban farming by using direct action. Gilles no longer serves as the Dean of CNR, but still teaches in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics and the Department of Environmental Science Policy and Management. Gilles also serves as the Secretary of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate, and for the State of California he chairs the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Vice Chancellor Edward Denton, now retired, led the UC Berkeley’s Capital Projects (now renamed Capital Strategies) at the time of Occupy The Farm. His office had developed the

plans to build and lease a shopping mall to Whole Foods, as well as an assisted living facility for seniors on the Gill Tract. Denton stated at the time that Capital Projects also had plans to build housing on top of all the growing fields. Denton view of agricultural research was that it should take place “outside the urban area”, and that he planned to relocate the research growing fields well away from campus.

Denton was also on the committee that oversaw UC Berkeley building projects along with **Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost George Breslauer**. Breslauer taught in the Political Science Department with a specialization in the Soviet Union. In his role as Executive Vice Chancellor, Breslauer personally joined in the negotiations with Occupy The Farm during the three week occupation. Since this was a year of transition at Berkeley, with one UC Berkeley Chancellor leaving and a new one arriving the next year, Breslauer figured prominently in most major decision made on the campus during the production of the film. He did not make himself available for an interview, although he does appear in the film.

The University of California has ten campuses, 285,000 students, with over 70,000 academic staff and another 157,000 staff employees. UC is the third largest employer in California. Since its founding as a land grant college, with a charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln, Berkeley has been the flagship campus of UC. As a land grant college Berkeley is required to teach agriculture. The Gill Tract was its last farm of any size close to the campus.