

the Race, Poverty Environment

The Oakland Renaissance: A Blessing for Some

Art, but No Money In the 'hood

Refa's experience is paralleled by that of graffiti artist Desi, whose nonprofit organization, Community Rejuvenation Project, has created a series of murals—both commissioned and illegal—promoting peace and nonviolence in high-crime areas throughout West and East Oakland. Desi



secured permission from a building owner and CEDA funds to do a mural at 41st and International Boulevard, in the heart of the Fruitvale District, where graffiti often marks the presence of Norteno street gangs. Over the course of several months he led a team of artists, including aerosol legend Vulcan and

numerous neighborhood youth, to create the approximately 4500 sq. ft mural on the side of a Smart & Final building. One key focus of the Community Rejuvenation Project, Desi says, is to further the notion of cultural arts districts and arts corridors throughout Oakland with concentrated works in a specific area, such as the Funktown Arts District they created with murals within a one-block radius of Park Boulevard.

Desi points to the closure of the Parkway Theater and its adverse effect on local business. CRP's murals on the Parkway's building and in surrounding areas, he claims, "bring that neighborhood back to life."

Source: <http://urbanhabitat.org/18-1/arnold>