



Yusuf Abdul-Wasi Burgess

Brother Yusuf, as most folks call him, is an Environmental Educator at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation where he coordinates the DEC Diversity Program and is responsible for an urban outreach to increase the diversity of their Summer Youth Environmental Education Camps. He is member of the Albany School District's Youth Safety Task Force, a collaborator of Youth Violence Intervention Conferencing and a friend and mentor to many youth from elementary school to college. As a concerned and dedicated youth professional he exposes young people to the natural world with engaging outdoor recreation activities. Part of his approach is to take urban youth on camping, boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, and skiing excursions. Getting them involved in pursuits that take them outside the often-constricting worlds they live in.

As the current Chairperson of the Environmental Awareness Network for Diversity in Conservation (EANDC), he encourages youth to participate in environmental stewardship projects, coordinates college tours and trips to job fairs. He has worked hard at maximizing parent, teacher and student interaction in outdoor activities. He is a *Champion* of the Eagle Eye Institute of Massachusetts and their "Learn about Forest" Programs, a member of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and a participant of Diversity Committee of the New York State Outdoor Education Association. He is a graduate of the Leadership Training Institute of Hofstra College and is currently pursuing a course of instruction at the New York State Empire College.

Brother Yusuf believes that today's youth are considered the most inactive generation in history, in part because of reductions in school physical education programs and a shortage of safe, available community recreational facilities. Providing programs and activities that promote a healthy lifestyle by incorporating physical activity, Yusuf has adopted the motto of "Leave No Child Behind Inside". "I want to get them to start thinking outside of the box and to challenge the devastating effects of *Nature Deficit Disorder* that plaques our youth today," he says.

A connection with nature is something that Brother Yusuf takes very seriously. Brother Yusuf is an avid Kayaker and Mountain Biker. He lives on Arbor Hill's Ten Broeck Street with his wife and three of his sons. Living in walking distance from the Hudson, you can often find Yusuf paddling his bright yellow kayak on the river or riding the bicycle path in partnership with his wife of 37 years.

His wife Cherrie, teaches Pre-K at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology and is who Brother Yusuf considers..." the wind inside his sail."