

HBCU Green Fund AUC Fellows plant 100 trees in Africa during Spring Break



CAPTION: HBCU Green Fund AUC Fellows join their host families for a photo during their trip to Northern Senegal to help in the fight against climate change.

ATLANTA – A group of HBCU Green Fund Atlanta University Center Fellows recently dedicated their spring break embedded in an African village on the border of Senegal and Mauritania building a tree shelter, planting trees and digging a well in their ongoing efforts to help the vulnerable communities that are most impacted by the effects of climate change, but contribute the least. The climate advocates spent a full week without Internet, TV and phone service to help mitigate the devastating effects of global warming.

The inaugural HBCU Green Fund Eco Spring Break Service-Learning Program at REDES Ecovillages connects students,

faculty and alumni from Black colleges including Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, GA, with students and faculty from Cheik Ante Diop University in Dakar Senegal. With over 100 villages in Senegal and Mauritania, REDES Ecovillages helps traditional communities become ecovillages by blending deep-rooted culture with modern ecological and community-building methods. The program gives students an opportunity to help with the climate crisis and also learn innovative solutions the Africans have implemented.



“I’m so proud of these young leaders who put down their social media to live for a week with families in a rural village where electricity, water and food were extremely limited. It was a game changer for young professionals who consider themselves to be climate justice advocates,” said Felicia Davis, founder of HBCU Green Fund. “The experience provided the volunteers with a deeper understanding of climate change, food waste, plastic pollution, and the devastating impact of wasteful western habits on distant communities along with an opportunity to make a real and tangible difference.”

Davis adds, “We gain as much or more than we give, it is powerful to function as a part of nature, as a steward seeking ecological restoration and balance. With a small donation the HBCU Green Fund financed the construction of a shelter for tree saplings and a well that women farmers requested so they don’t have to walk all the way to the river and back for water.”

The Eco Spring Break Service-Learning program is one of several initiatives the HBCU Green Fund sponsors as they cultivate relationships with local communities in the U.S., Africa and throughout the African Diaspora to promote conservation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture and development. The group currently has ongoing projects in 14 countries in Africa, including Ghana and Tanzania, two of the countries Vice President Harris recently visited and declared climate change an “existential threat to the entire planet.”

“It was a life-changing experience,” adds Serena Echols, an HBCU Green Fund Fellow and senior environmental science major at Spelman College. “We lived with host families sleeping on the floor just as they do. Our days consisted of working on various projects to help transform the villages of the Sahel. We also learned to milk a cow or a goat and planted more than 100 trees.”

“When we returned to the U.S. and heard Vice President Harris’ call to action it reinforced our commitment to fighting for climate justice and made us feel like we were playing a personal role in the mission to address the climate crisis in Africa and around the world,” adds Echols.

Based in Washington, DC and Atlanta, the HBCU Green Fund (hbcugreenfund.org) is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization working with historically black colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad to advance sustainability, promote student engagement in green initiatives, and train the next generation of global green leaders. The organization’s Atlanta University Center Clean Energy Fellows Program introduces students to career opportunities in the clean energy sector and connects students with Black entrepreneurs that provide training in renewable energy technologies. The HBCU Green Fund partnered the Harambee House/Citizens for Environmental Justice (HH/CFEJ) to lead a delegation of 27 persons from the United States and Africa to participate in COP27 in Egypt last November and are planning to take a delegation to to COP28 in Dubai in November of this year.