

Ms. Shapley gave a 3-minute summary. Here is her full statement.

Today's World Forum Celebration and Tree planting is a **big moment** for our little volunteer group.

Restore Mass Ave started 18 years ago in late 2006. A few neighbors and embassy workers came together to try and repair the neglected landscape of "Embassy Row." The two miles of Massachusetts Avenue, west and east of the bridge here had been a glamorous world attraction a century before with its stately mansions and long shady walks. Along with US and foreign notables, five US presidents have chosen to live right by this Avenue; two former presidents now live near here.

Back then sites along the Avenue were derelict. Trees were missing or dying, though among them were glorious ancient trees and the adjoining forest that we see here by the Embassy garden.

For today's Celebration, Restore Mass Ave was invited to partner with DC Urban Forestry to continue the carefully chosen tree-plantings typical of our 18-year program to 'restore' the great green avenue.

We and DC foresters reviewed many sites along the two miles of the avenue. Planting and care had paused during the years of disruptive road construction which most of you know well. We're able to make awards Certificates, in just a few minutes to seven winning Embassies.

How did we get to this moment, with so many friends and fuller rows of trees? Looking at you all, I see the same players that started our program and made a successful model. Per standard measurements, in our project area [tree canopy grew by 13%](#) in RMA's first decade!



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I see the State Department's Office of Foreign Missions, represented by Clifton Seagroves. Cliff's predecessors agreed that under the Foreign Missions Act, the 2002 DC Tree Law's restraints on taking down large trees applied to foreign-owned sites in DC.

Cliff's predecessor was a huge help with our first embassy encounter, represented today by the Ambassador of Zambia. One day in '06 or '07, I heard buzz saws down the street and walked down there. Workers were high in a huge old white oak tree - in a stand of these trees - cutting off branches. So I phoned the State Department's OFM to say, stop; if they have no permit it's against the Tree law!

I also called city forestry - Earl Eutsler's predecessor. Arborist Ranjit Babra drove out here.

By the time I got to the embassy entrance the sawing had stopped. The Embassy had gotten OFM's call to hold off. I introduced myself and RMA as the friendly local NGO; soon the city inspector arrived in the form of Ranjit.

The huge white oak trees were on Zambia land; Ranjit and I met with the Zambia rep on city land. We discussed the law, the need for a permit, why they were cutting. Peace broke out.

The Zambians have been great friends of trees on their and city land ever since. We're delighted to be giving you an Award today.

So we have proceeded, adding trees to restore the double shady rows. First along city curblines, such as ginkgo in Sheridan Circle chosen by Ranjit. Also we sited "second row" large trees in bare lawns to **restore the avenue as it looked in [this 1913 photo](#) over here**. Many came through Casey Trees - including trees for this embassy and the public land down at the corner in 2009. Thank you, Casey Trees!



But **all of you** - World Forum leaders and Earl's agency - created today's breakthrough for little Restore Mass Ave. **Now, for the first time, RMA's tiny projects here are connected to the challenge facing cities all over the world to grow many more mature trees.**

Previously we have not tried to connect individual projects with the needs for urban forest in the home countries of our partners. Of course our embassy partners - here today and others - know their forestry issues back at home.

Our plantings are not only symbolic, RMA plants only to restore the historic shady, connected canopy as the trees mature.

We offer trees only when the closest stakeholder will take care of them. We come back to assure long-term care and respect for all good trees on and near that property.

When help is needed, we have tree care workshops on the sidewalk. Dragging hoses, pulling weeds, moving mulch! Fun!

We show people that they have agency. By actively watering and maintaining the tree bed, they can grow a new little city tree or tree by their building. They can delight in its spring flowers, little fruits, leaves and the birds. Local owners take pride watching "their" trees mature - as people do with children.

RMA sticks around as the friendly local NGO to stop takedowns. Along with the OFM and city arborists, we share with foreign and domestic owners our city's model rules that were revised in 2016 to protect largest trees.



By adding a few trees at a time, assuring new trees get going, and holding onto the canopy already here, our local forest grows. The benefits are shared by many beyond those planting and growing them.

Why success?

By the same measures that the District uses to measure tree canopy, tree growth - or shade - increased by 13.2% in our first decade 2006-2016. (We hope for data through 2020 soon.) Tree canopy across District land spread by 2.5% in this time, a respectable result that took loads of effort.

Canopy spread more here because, first, the DC's 2002 Tree Law had just taken effect when we started in 2006. At the time Casey Trees was revving up expertise and policy coordination to in the city. Casey awarded us several Community Plantings which pushed us along.

Our continued success is due to the three things shown on our [Home Page](#) -- RMA's Tree Program Model.

First - Best-practice planting, not trees everywhere and anywhere. We plant the right tree in the right place:

Right tree means the historic species or a similar type;

Best practice includes siting a tree to restore the great avenue through a forest, as with the new dogwoods in the Embassy Garden here. We plant where trees will get hands-on care in their early years.

Second - We arrange local, long-term care by diplomats and others. We are not a garden club, though we sometimes do work ourselves. Our mission is **education** - teaching people we meet here to take care of trees near their workplaces and homes. They can take this knowledge wherever they go in the world.



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People rotate. Embassy staff and ambassadors change. New US owners buy the homes. We see new faces and meet new people all the time.

But we're still here! For 18 years guarding and adding trees and trying to teach people they have agency in spreading the urban forest.

You'd think we're getting older! **Not so! Enabling you all to nourish and grow mature trees makes us younger!**

RMA's **third principle is sharing the benefits.** This brings me to the World Forum meeting, this Celebration, and all of you.

You are sharing the benefits right now! Here in this lovely garden with two Award dogwood trees planted by this forest.

We can't count all the benefits. We can't take photos of the scent and air. But long-term, we'll share the memory and inspiration of this moment.

Restore Mass Ave is honored that the World Forum and the Ambassador of Italy has granted us this breakthrough to a larger role.

The real honor goes to those who are taking action on our local yet global scale. Our eight World Forum Award honorees are witnesses and advocates for greening cities in the critical years ahead.

Thank you.

Ms. Shapley and Ms. Osore then gave out the Award Certificates.

For photos and WFUF info please see restoremassave.org/events/.



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