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Creating an Inclusive, Critical Pedagogy

General Questions:

1. What does it mean to you and your community to dismantle racism through the food system?

Community is an interesting concept its like becoming new again. I have a couple communities, one, the community of where I was born, where my grandmother lives on the south side, the community I live in now, Little Village, and the community I work in now, Englewood. All which represent underserved communities of color. Since I have been here for the last three years I have seen a lot of food insecurity and food injustice. I got into food because it seemed to be a building block, for all that the foundational element for addressing the bigger ills, that cause these communities to be in the plights they were in. For me food gives people an opportunity to start a conversation. You can't be here and not eat, how you eat, what you eat, its not as sensitive a subject as politics or race. It's a good way to get conversation started if you give them something to eat, nine times out of ten if it tastes good, you are going to have a second of their time. If you can make something healthy that tastes good, its eye opening, and a potentially a life changing experience. The main power of food, beyond that, lies in the fact that you can start with a seed and get a huge plant. When I was a kid you would take a bean and a wet paper towel and I never got bean off of the plant but I was amazed by the process where a plant would become something from nothing, just water. For a lot of people, that was just a metaphor for their potential, where if they get a few basic things to help you there is unlimited potential for growth, economically, politically socially even culturally. Give people an opportunity to connect with the process and empower themselves and take ownership for their own land, space, body, and mind. Which is probably the most important step. To get people planting seeds, growing food, eating it, selling it or giving it away. From kids to old folks bridging gaps allows us to see a community again and provides us a common language that we take for granted and allows us to forget the things that we focus on what separates us, but it allows us to come to the table when our bellies are full, we can talk about other things that may not be as bad as we thought.

2. What would the world look like without an imbalance of power and privilege?

I don't know. I've never even thought of that. I can't say that I think there would be ever, I don't really believe there could be. We're animals inherently, pecking orders emerge and we are social creatures. inherently everyone has different strengths there is no way to accurately appreciate them if they're not your talent or not enough opportunities to spend time with them. As communities get smaller, you're able to see those talents come to the surface. However you also don't access talent outside its hard for people to relate to each other in regard to just appreciating people for what they are here. It doesn't have to be not passing judgment something that right now we're so entrenched in its hard to imagine.

If I were to imagine I'd say ego would have to be the fist thing to go. I think people would have to see that they are not the most import thing and they are a small part of a larger thing. We would also lose certain things that we like about peoples personalities that are ego driven, because its like watching a train wreck we can't take our eyes off of it. If we could take out that ego things would still be exciting in certain ways but, it would be boring compared to what we are used to seeing. It's really hard to imagine where we are all working together toward a greater thing that we may not know what it is but, we keep

on a path we feel and believe in it must come with communication verbal or non verbal that we might start be getting to understand but there are very few tools to accurately attain that sense. I don't know that world is a long ways away but ,it can happen in smaller pockets, there are people that are aware of the need to reduce ego and recognize everyones contribution. I'm not sure the whole world is ready but I don't know, there are a lot of things I don't know.

Theme:Creating an Inclusive, Critical Pedagogy

Description:Critical pedagogy involves restructuring how we teach and how we learn, with the goal of promoting consciousness raising and activism. It breaks down the hierarchy of the teacher-student so that both are valued for their experiences and knowledge. It stipulates that there is no "neutral" way of teaching or learning, but that those experiences are raced, classed, gendered, etc. Consequently, critical pedagogy can be a useful tool in social justice struggles, particularly dismantling racism, to create an inclusive way of organizing.

1. How do you strive towards inclusivity, democracy, and justice within your organization?

Inclusivity, that one is definitely easy in the sense that everyone who works with WeFarm is challenged to go out of their way to take on a project. Its really important that people take ownership of a project so they can be an assets to the organization but an asset outside the organization to lead workshops and demos on how to really do certain pieces of a puzzle really well. Its definitely a challenge to get folks these days to understand the importance to take leadership and ownership. We don't really have the opportunity to do that very often but its a cornerstone, probably the one thing the organization requires people to do, and its necessary, it would not work if it didn't happen.

Democracy is one of the harder ones. We don't really have democracy, even though everyone says that, its a republic in this country, we aren't all voting on everything, and we choose representatives to do that. I don't think we would want to do it even if we had to vote on everything for people to lose their ability to vote due to felonies, disenfranchisement or ignorance of the whole process, that is a short coming. Its hard to say what that all looks like and it is difficult to understand when you run an organization why the two examples of democracy exist. Going back to hierarchy, certain leaders emerge, and followers emerge, which is not placing value on one or the other, inherently, some don't choose to be in the decision making capacity for things, its not their preference but some people are. In an organization like ours its encouraged but not relied upon, because it could slow things down to assert that everyone needs to be a part of the decision making process. Allow people the ability to involve themselves or not because they are both equally fine.

Justice, if anything kind of goes out to the bigger, more so, that from within an organization we are looking to get folks with knowledge of organic and have means to purchase on a regular basis and take on responsibility of growing and take a chunk out of pollution, the economic and environmental impacts that commodity food and food processing takes out on everyone. In addition if they purchase a garden the price they pay allows lower income communitys to have the same access, perhaps in a more communal sense, in a community garden they still have the same or bigger plots to grow food in and take part in that and the true sense of justice requires responsibility. It's not an end goal, but an ongoing process if you get people engaged in the process, making it

a regular occurrence that they are protecting and insuring justice increasing ways in their life. I think is important you don't do one thing, like end racism or gender discrimination or something its justice. It would be something else an ongoing balancing act there will always be folks and institutions that promote injustice in one way or another. There has to be people and organizations willing to fight it, more importantly is to give not only the organizations, but the people the organizations work with, the tools to fight the injustice is probably the most important thing. Bureaucracy of organizations can depersonalize and hinder the implications of injustice. So many are facing it and there is no way to generalize it and say that its one thing its different for everyone. Everyone has to take part in that and it goes back to responsibility. We try to facilitate that at every turn and provide that information to allow people to take those steps to self empowerment.

2. How do you keep yourself accountable to the people you work with/for?

I think the one thing we do we have a rule in the handbook so people understand. The first is you have to get your hands dirty, you have to do outreach and sales, do not take it personal, and be honest and straight forward. The last two work really well together. We don't have time for people to not be honest and not be direct about certain things, we don't have the resources or time to be able to wait for people to figure things out when they are telling one thing, and doing another. So its important in the beginning, we state that this is a business, its a community organization but, we have an obligation to the bigger picture and its not really that important if a person says something there is a value to it and it needs to be addressed. By bringing it to the group or to an individual that it relates to and its important to put that on the table and it makes folks that work with us accountable to each other and to myself. The same applies for me, we are constantly trying to find ways through every step of the development of the organization to be sure that we ask what are we doing wrong, what am I doing wrong, what can be done better, and really being proactive in getting that proactive in encouraging people to state how they feel rather than what they thing someone wants to hear. I think that's kind of the best way, but there are more ways to do it, we are early in the process structurally there are very few things in place that would allow us to take a step back to really implement other strategies for accountability but, for now that is the main area we do that in.

3. How do you build on intersectionality to strengthen your work?

Community gardens are a great way, Chicago is racially segregated but economically its not as segregated as it would seem, for example you have Cabrini Greene on top of the Gold Coast. There is often an opportunity for folks who have physical resources to engage people with intellectual resources or personal assets and the garden is a great opportunity to bring the disparate worlds together. At the table with arugula, which grows the same in one persons bed as another persons bed. Whether in their neighborhood or side of the city, if they have a corner store as a main source of food versus a fine grocery store or organic farm stand that sells it for triple the price. It doesn't matter when it grows in the ground. People can share their knowledge on how to grow best, for most people its not very far back in their own personal history, encourage people to get in the garden and attend workshops and events to further bridge those gaps. Recognizing that community can be grater than your neighbors or the folks you know on the street, really seeing how it extends and community can be based around knowledge or food. That's intersectionality.

Old folks and young folds have keen interest in gardening for very different reasons, coming from opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of knowledge, its still fundamental appreciation for the process. Its unfortunate that the in between area that seems to be

disconnected from it. Often kids are a good way and they don't hold the same judgement or stereotypes of old people. They have a greater appreciation for their value and can ultimately communicate in terms of something physical and tangible in the garden. Eventually, bringing in the middle group, kids are always good place to meet in the middle. Those are the main ways we see intersectionality.