



ASSATA
TAUGHT
ME



**SOUL
FIRE
FARM**

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo
Participants from the third session of BIPOC
FIRE link arms at the end of the program.

REFLECTIONS ON 2019

"And what is it to work with love? It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit." ~Kahlil Gibran

Our ancestral grandmothers braided seeds and promise into their hair before being forced into the bowels of transatlantic ships. As they plaited their okra, cowpea, millet, and black rice into tight cornrows, they affirmed their hope in a future on soil. They whispered to us, their descendents, "The road may be rough, but we will never give up on you."

Despite strident efforts to dispossess our ancestors of their seeds and their hope, our forebears held on. Through enslavement, convict leasing, sharecropping, Jim Crow, farmworker exploitation, and racial terror, they endured. They passed their seeds to us.

To survive, a seed must be grown and shared. To tend and pass on these seeds is our sacred task.

This year, we planted those seeds with next generation Black-Indigenous farmers who learned agricultural and carpentry skills during our week-long residential courses. We shared those seeds with our neighbors who received affordable doorstep delivery of farm fresh vegetables, herbs, and eggs. We presented those seeds to community members who witnessed our storytelling and participated in collective work on the farm, and were then inspired to take action toward food justice. We tended those seeds with youth who came to the farm to expand their sense of what is possible in their own lives. And most importantly, we tucked those seeds into the generous earth, ensuring that our Afro-Indigenous agrarian heritage will persist for future generations. This year, over 15,000 people received a 'seed' from our team.

In trying times, it is easy to fall into a pattern of cynicism, despair, and bitterness. It is much more challenging, day after day, to put on our muck boots, turn our faces to the cold wind, and build the world we want to see.

We thank you for seeing our love and labor, for supporting us, and for helping to carry the seed bundle forward.

Yours,

Leah, Larisa, Jonah, Cheryl, Lytisha, Damaris, and Noah

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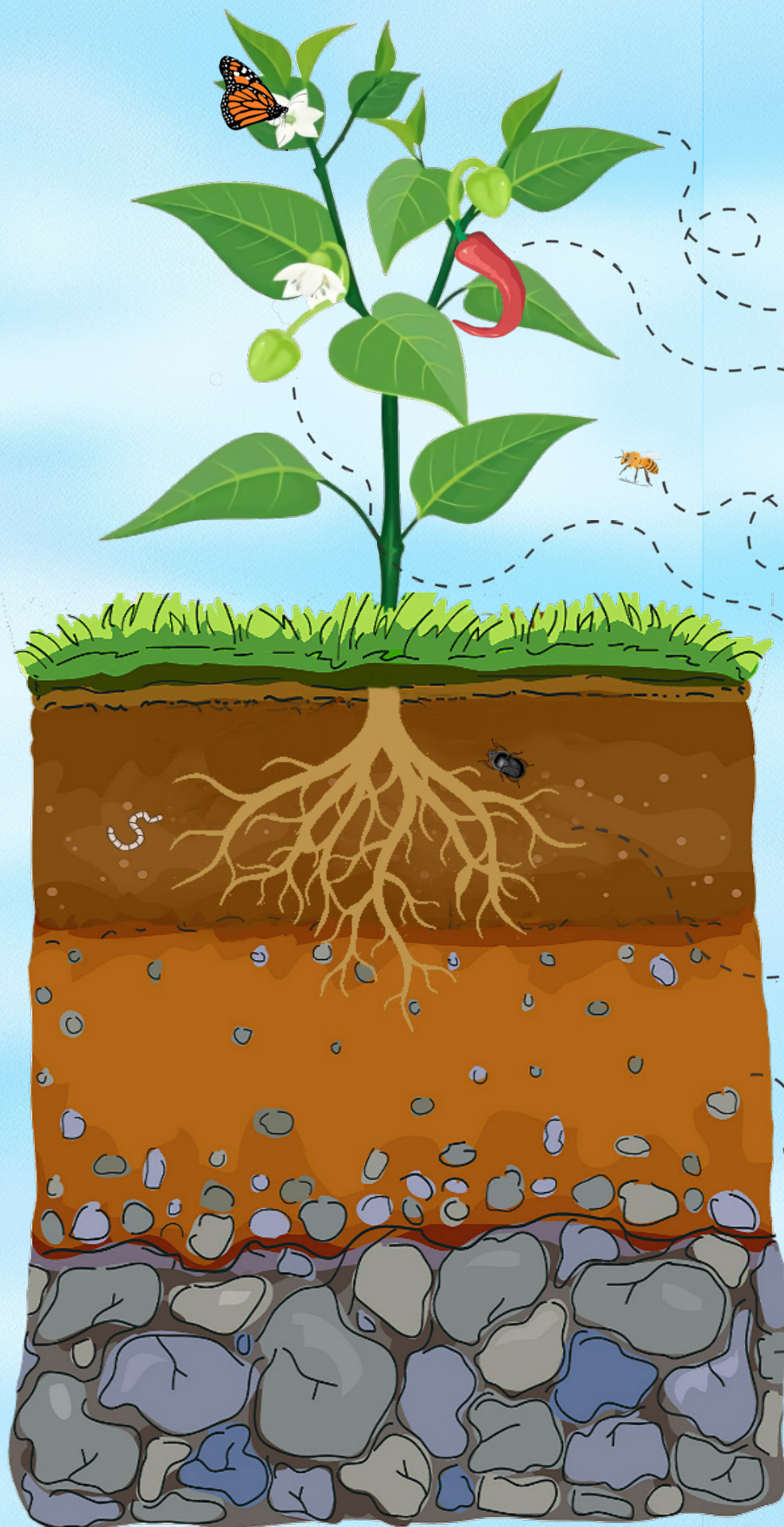
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FLOURISHING THROUGH 2019

AT A GLANCE:

GROWING awareness and resistance by engaging 11,271+ people in public talks and workshops.

HARVESTING WEEKLY VEGETABLES for 350+ people through our sliding-scale CSA.

POLLINATING the movement with 90+ publications and media spots.

BUDDING future leaders among 675 youth who learned from our food justice curriculum.

ROOTING in on-farm trainings for 276 BIPOC participants to learn farming and building skills.

BUILDING TOPSOIL in the movement by collaborating on 8 policy initiatives.

GROUNDING our infrastructure to meet the needs of 1800+ people who visited the farm this year.

BLACK-INDIGENOUS-PEOPLE-OF-COLOR FARMING IN RELATIONSHIP TO EARTH

Between 1910 and 1997, Black Americans were uprooted from 90% of the land that they and their ancestors had stewarded in the United States. They were pulled from the soil through an orchestrated attack that undermined their sovereignty on land through legal loopholes, trickery, social intimidation, and economic pressure.

Their displacement reflects this country's earlier efforts to erase the presence of Indigenous people on their native lands and that of many immigrants who traveled here to seek reprieve from hardship and violence in their own homelands. The consequences of this disconnection, often over generations, have disrupted and continue to disrupt how Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) relate to land and farming.

In response to this systemic pattern, Soul Fire Farm roots its work in our on-farm training programs that offer a BIPOC space for people to reconnect to soil, understand the history of food injustice, and acquire skills for reestablishing their relationship to food, land, and farming. This year, we offered 4 weeklong immersions in English and 1 immersion in Spanish, during which numerous participants from previous BIPOC FIRE sessions returned as trainers to grow their skills as educators while sharing their knowledge and experience.

120

BIPOC trained through 5 weeklong farming immersions

93%

of alumni report having more farming skills as a result of the program

80%

of alumni are now seeking a land-based livelihood



"I have more confidence now in my instincts and knowledge about what to do in the garden. I just feel like everything is possible and my relationship to the land is valid."

- 2019 BIPOC FIRE alumni



Photo left
BIPOC FIRE en Español trainer Gabby and participant Güiro harvest carrots.

Photo left
BIPOC FIRE participants pose after performing a skit on pruning tomatoes.



NEW SHOOTS IN 2019

In 2019, we both expanded and deepened the scope of our training. We introduced a new series of daylong BIPOC FIRE "2.0" trainings on topics ranging from farm-based education and carpentry to pastured poultry, seedkeeping, and climate resilient farming. These workshops were designed to be accessible to growers of all experience levels with a focus on working farmers who may not have the time or capacity to attend our weeklong immersions.

We also added a new BIPOC Builders Immersion for intermediate and advanced builders to learn about timber framing. Participants spent the week developing and honing the skills needed to create the timber frame for our new equipment shed. This program complemented our original Builders Immersion, in which novice builders had the opportunity to gain proficiency with fundamental building skills.

With this expanded programming, we aim to nurture an ever-growing network of farmers and builders at all skill levels who are rooted in our collective effort to transform the food system from the soil up through to our streets.



Photo top left
Seeds brought and shared by Mama Ira Wallace of Southern Seed Exposure during the BIPOC FIRE 2.0 on seedkeeping.

Photo top right
Former apprentice Ceci teaches participants at the BIPOC FIRE 2.0 on Climate Resilient Farming about "micro-organismos de montaña."

Photo bottom left
Participants of the Timber Framing Builders Immersion pose with the timber frame they built and raised during the immersion.



Photo bottom right
BIPOC Builders Immersion participants collaborate on a wall during the BIPOC Builders immersion.

Photo top
Amani leads a group in an Uprooting Racism in the Food System training at the Hub Farm.

Photo bottom
Volunteers at a Community Farm Day clean onions for the CSA.

Photo opposite
Healers from Harriet's Apothecary celebrate the hazelnuts they harvested from the land.



PUBLIC SPEAKING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

11,271 people engaged through public talks and keynotes

905 activists trained through food justice workshops

12 community events reaching an additional 1,035 people

"Soul Fire's message is beautifully holistic - incorporating history and spirit and science and activism and getting your hands dirty to grow food! "

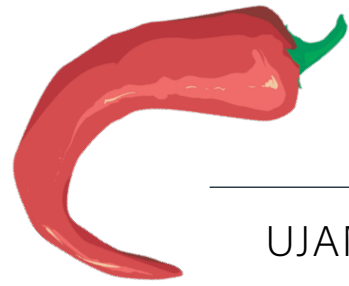
- 2019 audience member

In order to grow a just and equitable food system, we will need widespread mobilization of people working in their communities to resist and replace oppressive structures. Political and historical education is critical for people to become activated in the work for food justice. This year, we embraced this aspect of our work by traveling throughout the country offering food justice and anti-racism trainings to community groups, nonprofit organizations, universities, and food, farming, and social justice-related conferences.

We offered public talks and keynote addresses to participants and audiences ranging from the International Herb Symposium and the Museum of the African Diaspora to Yale University and the New York State Department of Civil Service. We shared Uprooting Racism in the Food System workshops with other activists and earthworkers at organizations such as Green Thumb NYC, Food Corps, and Stone Barns.

In addition, we connected with our local community by hosting several public events. Community members heaved mulch and dug potatoes at our monthly Community Farm Days and gathered for celebration and healing at our annual SOULstice festival and Harriet's Apothecary Healing Village. The work of connecting to communities both locally and around the country is essential to the structure and foliage of our mission.





UJAMAA COOPERATIVE FARM SHARE

105

average number of CSA members who received a weekly share

25%

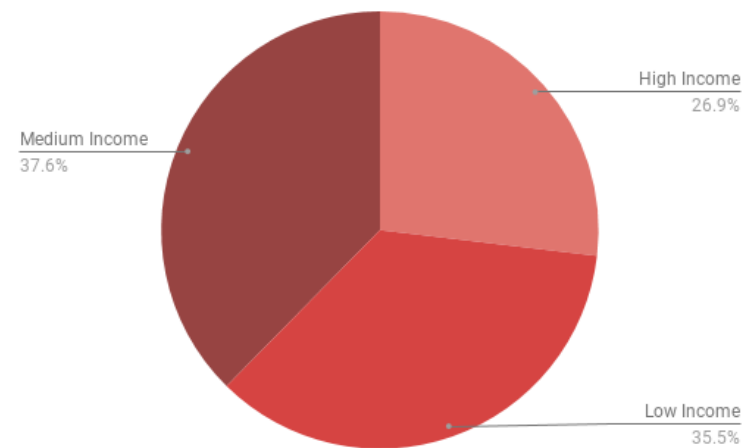
of members received a free or minimal cost share through EBT and/or our Solidarity Share program

85%

of members surveyed report eating more fruits and vegetables during the CSA



Income Levels of 2019 CSA Members



Age Ranges Present in Member Households

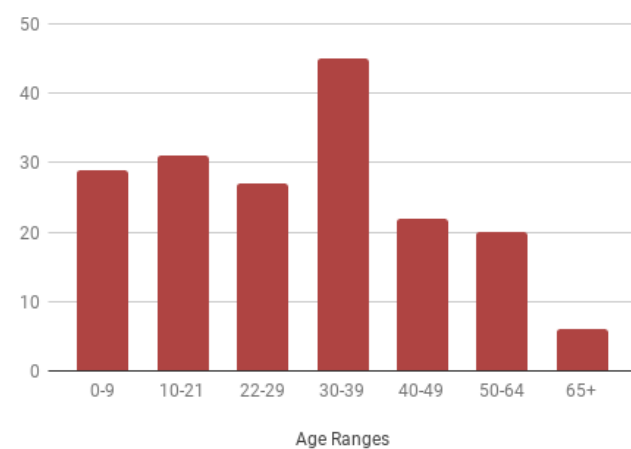


Photo top left
A bountiful salad made entirely from ingredients from the farm.

Photo bottom right
A sample CSA share.

Photo right page
"Liberation" Jam for the CSA made from strawberries and medicinal herbs during a BIPOC FIRE.



"Soul Fire Farm creates a collaborative experience with its share members that is dissimilar to a customer-vendor relationship and closer to a mutual aid relationship."

-2019 CSA Member

"Everyone in my family eats less processed food and it makes us feel healthier."

-2019 CSA Member

In our local Capital District, more than 1 out of 6 children are currently food insecure*. Most of these children live in neighborhoods that are designed to feed them industrially processed foods while denying them self-determination over their diets. We worked to resist food apartheid in our community by providing a weekly box of fresh vegetables with optional eggs and chicken for up to 110 families for 20 weeks this summer.

Our CSA is based on the principle of Ujamaa, or cooperative economics, which uplifts the reciprocity and mutual support of strong communities. Our farm share celebrates this principle through a commitment to meeting the needs of our members by offering doorstep delivery and a sliding scale payment model. Based on their self-reported income level, members can contribute to the farm at multiple payment tiers. In addition, we offered 17 fully subsidized Solidarity Shares to families impacted by immigration and mass incarceration, most of them returning members from 2018.

Our weekly CSA newsletter provided a platform for us to contextualize the food we were distributing and offer recipes and tips for using the share. Through the newsletter, we invited our members to celebrate the cultural legacy of dozens of Afro-Indigenous and BIPOC crops by sharing stories about plants such as collard greens, callaloo or amaranth, tulsu, edamame, and East African kale. In keeping with the educational mission of our farm, we also incorporated reflections on farming and food justice topics ranging from the history of the Mohican people stewarding the region to soil health and climate change. With the support of Community Farm Days and our farm training programs, we broadened the scope of our products by including speciality items such as jams, pickles, and medicinal herbs like echinacea and bee balm. As we learned from our members, resisting food apartheid is about not only providing produce but also about reestablishing the interconnected relationships between our bodies, food, farmers, and the land that supports them all.

*"Child Food Insecurity Rate," Healthy Capital District Initiative.



FOOD JUSTICE
FOR YOUTH



675

youth who learned from our food justice curriculum

90%

of youth group chaperones surveyed reported plans to educate others about farming and food justice after their visit

"We were guided through a journey that day where we did a lot of work on ourselves and on our group dynamics. Truths surfaced that we had to face and lessons were learned. We laughed SO hard and ran around free, nourished ourselves and supported each other."

-2019 Youth Group Chaperone

We know that in order to truly transform the food system, our youth must have the necessary skills and resources for this work to blossom. During our youth programs, we engage students from elementary school through university with a curriculum aimed at connecting them to the earth while educating them about the realities of racism and oppression in the food system. Youth who visit our farm explore getting their hands dirty in the field and cooking with farm fresh vegetables in the kitchen. Interwoven with these hands-on tasks are lessons on the meaning and history of food justice, in which the students are encouraged to reflect with creative expression about the history of BIPOC land and food sovereignty.

*Photo left
A youth group mulches trees in the orchard.*

*Photo right
A youth participant holds a chick during a daylong workshop.*



PUBLICATIONS AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORT



"The director of the the Yale Sustainable Food Program listened to your interview on my show and is changing his curriculum to include George Washington Carver and many other points you discussed."

-2019 Interview Host

90+

media spots featuring the work of Soul Fire Farm

34

organizations using our food justice and uprooting racism curriculum

72

alumni and partners supported through consultations or references

It is essential to our work that we do not pursue it alone. We celebrate the awareness that our efforts are part of a larger web of organizations, activists, and communities who are all resisting oppression in the food system. We aim to support this collective effort through publishing articles, distributing our curriculum, providing references, and sharing our story and analysis through media features. We also offered numerous consultations to our partners and program alumni on topics ranging from developing a land trust cooperative, securing grants, developing action plans, and establishing a low-income CSA. In sharing this pollen, we aim to contribute to the thriving of our comrades and flourishing of the movement.

Featured in:



Partnered with:





Photo bottom left
NEFOC members during a network gathering hosted at Soul Fire Farm.

Photo bottom right
FIRE alumni Dishaun builds a raised bed as part of Love Fed New Haven, a project that received funding through the reparations map.



MOVEMENT
BUILDING

8

policy initiatives developed with other farming and food justice advocates

11

BIPOC-led projects collectively received over \$12,500 through the NEFOC reparations map

As farmers, we know that nutrient-rich topsoil is essential to the health of a farm. As activists, we know that social transformation similarly relies on nutrient-rich conditions to grow. At Soul Fire Farm, we work to nourish the topsoil on the farm as well as in the movement for food and land justice. In late 2018, Soul Fire Farm facilitated the hiring of two co-coordinators to lead the Northeast Farmers of Color Network (NEFOC), an organization working to create a land trust and mutual aid network for people of color in the Northeast. In 2019, we began a two-year fiscal and institutional incubation to support the co-coordinators as they develop an organizational framework while stewarding the mutual aid network, seeking land opportunities for the land trust, and securing additional funding.

In addition, we contributed to numerous policy platforms related to food and land justice, including the Farmers and Ranchers for a Green New Deal policy platform. In collaboration with other Black farmers around the country, we drafted a letter to Senator Elizabeth Warren regarding her platform on Black farmers and were chosen to be one of the advocates representing the signatories on a call with Warren's staff. We also continued to work with partners such as the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, the HEAL Food Alliance, and the Black Urban Growers and Farmers Association on food and land justice policy. We see this effort as returning nutrients into the collective topsoil of our work to grow liberation and sovereignty in Black, Indigenous and other POC communities.

FACILITIES AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

1800+

people who visited the farm this year

As the scope and reach of our programs continues to increase, the bedrock of our built infrastructure is constantly shifting to accommodate this growth. This year, we expanded the capacity of our campus through building a new parking lot to accommodate visitors during our large events, installing a backup generator for the entire farm, completing a new multipurpose equipment shed, progressing on a bathhouse, and refining the tooling and design of the building shop. We also improved the efficiency of our greenhouse system by renovating the seedling tables and broke ground on a multi-year project to expand housing and program space as well as install a much larger septic system to support all of our guests.



Photo top left
The new roof on the "Hive" porch, a popular gathering spot during programs.

Photo top right
The new equipment shed that holds firewood, tools, and a chicken brooder.

Photo bottom left
The completed building shop.

Photo top left
New signage for our parking lot.





STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2020



I. REGENERATE

- Implement Afro-Indigenous practices to produce fruits, plant medicine, pasture-raised livestock, honey, mushrooms, vegetables, and preserves for community provisioning.
- “Solidarity share” at least 75% of the harvest with community members living under food apartheid through Capital District institutional partnerships.
- Build and support 6 urban farms for households in the Capital District through “Soul Fire in the City.”

2. EQUIP

- Train 130+ new farmer-activists through our BIPOC FIRE (Black-Indigenous-People of Color Farming in Relationship with Earth) and BIPOC Builders weeklong immersions in English and Spanish. Equip 100+ farmers through our daylong land-based skills workshops.
- Support 10 BIPOC FIRE graduates through our alumni mentorship program and provide technical assistance to 100+ alumni and community partners.
- Inspire 1000+ youth and intergenerational community members to connect to the land and advocate for food justice through daylong educational and volunteer programs on the farm. Develop a Spanish-English video library of BIPOC FIRE farming lessons to augment on-farm coursework and reach those unable to attend programs in person.



3. ORGANIZE

- Increase the efficiency, safety, and quality of life of staff and participants through advancement of key infrastructure and capital improvements.
- Uplift radical self-care and healthy work culture, as evidenced by regular “real talk” sessions, living wages, adequate days off, adequate professional development opportunities, and group participation in team decision-making.
- Maintain the financial integrity of the organization by keeping 3+ months operating expenses in the bank as reserve and ensuring a minimum of 25% of the annual budget from earned income.

4. MOBILIZE

- In collaboration with HEAL and NBFJA, refine and advocate for a policy platform that honors farmworkers, rematriates land for Indigenous people, advances reparations for Black farmers, and regenerates ecosystems.
- Catalyze the transfer of resources and power to BIPOC Farmers by training 400+ people in Uprooting Racism in the Food System, addressing audiences of 5000+, and publishing articles and media interviews that reach 10,000+.
- Incubate and support the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust in its goals.



Left page, photo left
Planting red beans in the milpa,
our intercropped beds based on the
“Three Sisters” model.

Left page, photo right
A Moyamensing tomato, the seeds of
which were developed by incarcerated
activists in Pennsylvania in 1800s.

Right page, photo left
Seeds of the Hopi Yellow
Watermelon.

Right page, photo right
Glass gem maize seeds.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Grants and Large Donors *(over \$5k)*

Bafrayung Fund
 Bezos Family Foundation
 Bloomfield Family Foundation
 Cedar Tree Foundation
 Claneil Foundation - Emerging Leaders
 Dr. Bronner's
 Haymarket People's Fund
 Jamie Swanson
 Jewish Communal Fund
 Kalliopeia Foundation
 Lucy Kahn Fund
 Manya K. Rubenstein
 Nell Newman Foundation
 Newman's Own Foundation
 NoVo Foundation
 Presbyterian Hunger Program
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 R.G. Summersgill Charitable Fund
 Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (Donor Advised)
 RSF Social Finance - Seed, Soil, and Culture Fund
 Ruth H. Arnow, Jewish Communal Fund
 The Commonplace Fund of RSF Social Finance
 The Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation, Inc.
 The Janey Fund Charitable Trust
 Threshold Foundation - Food and Farming Funding Circle
 TIDES Foundation

As well as 200+ additional individual donors!

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Revenue

Contributions	\$52,495
Grants	\$346,055
Interest	\$14,926
Merchandise	\$23,818
Farm Sales	\$66,854
Program Fees	\$59,526
Public Speaking	\$40,598
Total Revenue	\$604,271

Expenditures

Buildings and Grounds	\$34,620
Business Expenses	\$2,274
Contract Services	\$95,598
Equipment Maintenance	\$9,155
Insurance	\$19,996
Land and Buildings Lease	\$25,932
Farm Expenses	\$24,231
Program Food & Supplies	\$26,965
Operations	\$59,123
Salaries	\$251,011
Travel & Training	\$22,244
Utilities	\$3,110
Total Expenditures	\$571,148

Net Operating Revenue \$33,123

OUR TEAM



Care Team
Chaga, Farm Dog



Program Team (left to right)
Ria, Kitchen Manager; Amani, Trainer; Brooke, Kitchen Magician; Leah, Program Director & Co-Director; Cheryl, Administrative Program Coordinator



Farm Team (left to right)
Noah, Farm Apprentice; Lytisha, Grower & Chicken Manager; Larisa, Farm Manager & Co-Director; Damaris, Assistant Farm Manager



Building Team (left to right)
Kiya, Construction & Facilities Assistant; Jonah, Facilities Manager & Co-Director



Northeast Farmers of Color Network (left to right)
Stephanie, Co-Coordinator; Çaca, Co-Coordinator

FEATURED ALUMNI



Kiani Conley-Wilson
Common Greens Farm, Troy, NY



Crystal Cruz
Huerto Semillia, San Juan, Puerto Rico



Will Smith
Black Earth Collective, East Bay, CA



Quinn Jackson Buck
Nehiyawewin Language & Culture for Canadian Parks and Wilderness, Alberta, CA



Nina Taylor
Share Food Mobile Market Manager, Philadelphia, PA



Ileri Carrasco, Jazmin Martinez, and Vivi Moreno
Catatumbo Farm Cooperative, Chicago, IL

Shout out to our 2019 Board Members (pictured middle left on page 21): Abby Lublin, Adaku Utah, Rev. Dr. Adele Smith-Penniman, Dr. Claudia Ford, Dr. Kristin Reynolds, Dr. Gail Myers, Gerald Mitchell, Jalal Sabur, Karen Washington, Kavitha Rao, Keisha Cameron, Olivia Watkins, Rosa Rivera, Tagan Engel, Taina Asili

LAND STEWARDSHIP

We are proud to announce the establishment of the:

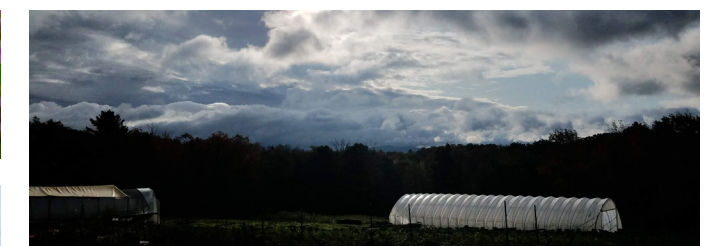
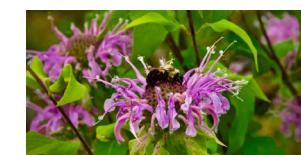
Soul Fire Farm Land Stewardship Collective LLC

"The purpose of the Collective is to honor and steward the Land, to provide habitat for human members and guests and function as a cooperative housing corporation, to embody and model collective principles, and to promote land sovereignty for peoples impacted by discrimination, colonization, displacement, and oppression." -Land Stewardship Collective LLC Legal P

At Soul Fire, we take very seriously our commitment to honor and uplift the Original People of the land we live on - the Muheconneok, also known more commonly as the Mohicans. The name Muheconneok means People of the Waters that are Never Still, honoring the Mahicannituck river that provided their people a home and livelihood for generations. Only much later, as the Mohican people themselves were systematically depleted and attacked through disease, war, trade, trickery, and eventual forced displacement to the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation in northeastern Wisconsin*, did the river come to be named after the white colonist Henry Hudson.

In 2019, in recognition that "private property" and "land ownership" are colonial tools used to displace Indigenous communities, we completed a multi-year process of transferring the beloved land of Soul Fire Farm from private to collective ownership. This transition took countless hours of research and innovation to transform "white man's law" from a structure designed to enforce private property to a model that uplifts collective stewardship and Indigenous solidarity.

In the Soul Fire Farm Land Stewardship Collective, individuals can acquire shares that afford them rights to build or grow on the land, as well as vote on decisions along with longterm residents. The land itself also holds the right to veto any decision made by the collective, which is determined through an annual divination. We are hopeful that this model will reflect the integrity of our relationship to the land and that other land-based projects can build off of this work to continue composting the legal system into a fertilizer for growth.



written and designed by damaris miller

opening reflection by Leah Penniman

pictures by Naima Penniman, damaris miller, Lytisha Wyatt and 2019 BIPOC FIRE participants

many thanks to Cheryl Whilby, Cynthia Chasteen, Katherine Anstreicher, Leah Penniman, and Stephanie Wayde for assistance with editing

*Learn more about the Mohican people at www.mohican.com



SOUL FIRE FARM

1972 NY HWY 2
Petersburg, NY 12138

Phone

(518) 880-9372
Google Voice

Email

love@soulfirefarm.org

Social Media

[@soulfirefarm](#)

Website

www.soulfirefarm.org