Friday, July 28, 2017

Remarks at the Friday reception in the Ocean View Field at the UCSC Farm
By Kellee Matsushita-Tseng, Chadwick Garden manager
Part of the 50th Anniversary of the UCSC Farm & Garden’s “First 50” Celebration

Creating a truly just and sustainable food system will require brave new ideas; radical ways of seeing, thinking, and believing, and all of our collective hearts.

We need to build leadership in places where the food system has failed the most; especially in low income communities and communities of color. CASFS has the opportunity to support, engage, and provide opportunity for those who need to be leading our food systems transformation.

Therefore, I’m thrilled to announce the Food Justice and Equity fund, initiated in 2016 by CASFS People of Color Alumni Network. This fund will provide full scholarships for low-income apprentices that are already working in their communities on the frontlines of change, on issues of health, social justice, and food access. We hope this fund will continue to make the program more accessible for all and are very excited that we will be able to launch this scholarship fund this year, thanks to a generous gift from Bon Apetit Management Company.

We are continuing to expand and develop the apprenticeship curriculum, including classes and trainings on food justice, food sovereignty, labor issues, social systems, anti-oppression work, and have debuted the CASFS social justice reader this year. With this reader we hope to inspire a collective shift toward a future that supports the work of farmers, gardeners, and activists to create food systems that are community oriented and ecologically minded, where the risks and benefits of food production are shared justly. The reader highlights how communities across the globe are building health, justice, and equity in their approaches to food production, and will continue to change and develop to address the most current issues impacting our food systems.

We have continued to build and grow the Black Lives Matter Garden, which was initiated in 2015 by apprentice Leo Orleans. The Black Lives Matter garden has been relocated to the main farm, and signifies the resilience of individuals, families, and communities who are the historic and current day targets of racialized violence and cultural genocide, and is a space to create solace, healing, and inspiration. It has medicinal plants, traditional ancestral foods, an altar space, and garden beds aligned in the four directions.

We are holding multidisciplinary workshops on seed sovereignty and the building of local seed systems. These are unique spaces created out of engaging collective wisdom, that provide an opportunity to look at current efforts and create creative new solutions together, and a way for us to critically look at the current state of seeds and think of ways to move forward.
As we look forward to the next 50 years, I am excited to imagine the possibilities of what we can create together as community, and what will happen in the next 50 years when we manifest our dreams, combine our skills, and put our resources together to create change. I imagine that...

*These will be the years when babies*
*Born deep in the belly of a city*
*Share first steps with sprouting squash*
*On soils cleansed of cadmium and mercury*
*By the towering sunflowers*
*Of the new skyline*

*These will be the years when mothers*
*Who have defended their sacred waters*
*Precious lifelines under the earth*
*Can put down their fists at last and open their hands*
*To greet the rivers that feed the fields*
*And springs that run clear and sweet*

*These will be the years when stories*
*Of forgotten seeds kept safe in the pockets of grandmothers*
*Are brought back to life,*
*with the notes of their homes,*
*And the rhythms of their places.*

*These will be the years that land*
*Is liberated from the shackles of slavery*
*Returned to common hands*
*Not sold to the highest bidder*
*But stewarded by those who make amends*
*And sing to the corn seeds deep in the earth.*

*If every change*
*Beginning as the idea*
*That many hands and joined hearts, can build a future of dreams and hopes,*
*Then these will be the years.*

*Thank you.*