From One Dreamer to Another:

Arts- Education-Community Collaborative Think Tank

Let’s do it with a Community Garden.

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Project Abstract

From One Dreamer to Another is a multi-collaborative Think-Tank that utilizes the power of Arts, Education and Community to address the specific needs of each community and its future. Every project is based on the explicit identity and needs of the community. The mission is to build strong communities with a vibrant arts culture and unite advocates for experiential education. Each unique endeavor contributes to the health of a resilient community. Bold models have been growing in neighborhoods throughout the U.S. initiated by passionate individuals. First Lady Michelle Obama, Davita Davidson, Alice Waters, Bette Midler, and Ron Finely have proven the powers of community gardens and are cited in this paper.

The think-tank brainstorming team structure includes: Professional Artists, Educators/Students, Community Organizations, and for the launching project, Gardeners/Farmers all experts in their respective fields. The ultimate goal is to encourage the brilliance of Arts and Education to serve our precious communities. Access to the intrinsic culture of Arts has been depleted in our small neighborhoods throughout our country. Replaced by quick-fix distracting antidotes, our communities fill up with Starbucks, chain stores and Amazon products. Our neighborhoods and families are losing unique humanistic spiritual connecting forces. Let’s reclaim our compass.

What local activity unites people of all ages, cultures, and crosses divisive boundaries in a sequential way, empowering neighbors? Community Gardens. It’s Universal. How and Why is revealed in this One Dreamer to Another senior project.
THINK TANK

A Think Tank is traditionally thought of in terms of war situations. An assembly of experienced experts gather and strategically plan a victory. Why not mobilize a team with expert artists, educators and community representatives advancing their insightful perspectives? The ultimate goal is building resilient innovative communities. The launching anchor project is a Community Garden driven by the cultures of arts and education serving the community.

Why a think-tank to launch a community garden? Think Tanks are independent organizations that assemble a body of experts. There is power in dialogue and collaboration. Through my interviews with several community garden leaders, most community gardens do not survive more than three years. A think-tank is committed to propelling projects. The garden will function as an anchor for Arts programs, exhibitions, events, festivals, and educational programs, enabling exemplary arts and education access to the community. Throughout the U.S. neighborhoods outside large cities are considered arts, education and food deserts. The Think-Tank platform calibrates vigorous creative goals for advancing the community.

Many well funded Think Tanks have full staffs, ambitious research, communications teams and substantial outreach to decision makers and to the media. Most influential think-tanks tend to wield political/economy agendas and many are affiliated with a University, with full time fellows and researchers working on its issues. Over time they gain prestige and are seen as authoritative sources of information. This is my hope for From One Dreamer to Another project.

The many disciplines under the banner of Arts, Education and Community, is prime for constructing a Think Tank umbrella dedicated to actualizing best-practice principles for empowering people and their communities.
Today, our society is at a crossroads. Disengagement, opportunistic politics, epidemic depression and addictions chronically divide us. Arts and Education manifests the best of humanity. Arts and Education restore living expressions of the human spirit producing the recognition of our common humanity. A love for music, art, poetry … unites people and strengthens the pulse of peace and creativity. The Think Tank’s Blueprint holds these conventions with each project. The structure of the Think Tank is composed of expert Artists, Educators/Students, and Community leaders.

I am proposing Ossining, NY as the model community. I chose Ossining because it is local, situated near a major city, and considered a ‘working-class’ suburb. I have made several connections to local businesses, retail shops, artists, gardeners, entrepreneurial organizations, and the Bethany Arts Community non profit organization. Sharing this project with many people from diverse perspectives, helped clarify this project. I learned of complicated challenges to achieving this goal, and was inspired by our dialogues.

Our newly elected representative, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (14th congressional district), recently planted a plot in a Community garden. This was an overt action signaling her alignment with concerns for climate change, health coverage and challenging social issues such as food deserts.

I say let’s start with a community garden to unite and grow our resilient communities.
COMMUNITY:

Hey, What Happened? Why are our Suburbs so fractured?

I grew up in the 1950s and 60s. From the South Bronx projects, the suburbs were a vision of picture-perfect life. We imagined, if you lived in a suburb, it was an automatic leap to the ‘Good-Life.’ We watched happy families on tv shows and commercials all portraying white families resolving easy problems and having all the comforts of a suburban home.

Today, there are thousands of fragile communities throughout the U.S., a fast growing number of small cities, towns, and villages are silently suffering from lack of resources with limited ability to rebound from poverty, food shortage, poor education, and simple neglect. Alana Semuels writes in The Atlantic, when describing Norcross, Ga., “these communities lack infrastructure, safety-net supports, and resources to address [their needs]” (Semuels). She further recognizes these limitations keep families locked into poverty. Norcross, she points out, like thousands of other suburbs in the U.S. has a fast-changing demographic make-up.

One U.S. suburb, Ferguson, Missouri, (St. Louis suburb), exemplifies the challenges typical of impoverished suburbs. Abigail Hauslohner reported in the Washington Post regarding Ferguson, “The community is underserved in access to education, jobs and a wide range of public services. The brick houses are dilapidated and abandoned. Many have broken or boarded-up windows. And no one is out in the street during the day because there is nowhere to go: nowhere to work, nowhere to shop, residents say. Poverty and crime are just as rampant, if not more so, than they were in the past, residents say” (Hauslohner).

“An increasing number of Americans are just one crisis away from poverty, according to Kneebone, of the Brookings Institution. Nearly half of households in the U.S. have less than three month’s worth of savings, according to CFED’s Assets and Opportunities Scorecard. In
2016, 15.3 million residents of large metropolitan suburbs lived in poverty, compared to 12.2 million residents of their central cities” (BasSheva Manjon). The combination of migration and lack of livable wages are a burgeoning combustion. The under-class, working poor are often invisible.

This is a list of cities in the U.S. with the highest poverty rate, lowest median income according to the U.S. Census data report, 2018:

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<tr>
<th>Flint, MI</th>
<th>Syracuse, NY</th>
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<td>Bloomington, IN</td>
<td>Dayton, OH</td>
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<td>Reading, PA</td>
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<td>Detroit, MI</td>
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<td>Gainesville, FL</td>
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<td>Laredo, Tx</td>
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<td>Rochester, NY</td>
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Understanding the Possibilities Through Ossining, NY

Ossining is situated 30 miles north from New York City near the Hudson River, home of Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Statistics show 4.7% of Ossining residents attend college, 75% of High School students graduate and 31% graduate from college. Ossining per capita income is $28,562. Ossining, NY’s Spanish speaking residents are under counted in the census. Within the last two years, there is a growing fear among immigrants in applying for supportive assistance. U.S. immigrants have begun to remove themselves from public housing waitlists, child care subsidy programs and food stamps out of fear this could jeopardize their immigration status. These fears lead many people and their families to go underground in neighborhoods like Ossining, NY. The growing African and Caribbean population is not included in the Census report. Ossining shares borders with the wealthy neighborhood, Chappaqua NY.

<table>
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<th>2018 Ossining Demographic</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Hispanic/Latino population 48.5%</td>
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<td>- Language other than English at Home 53.5%</td>
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<td>- Persons without health insurance under age 65 21%</td>
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<td>- Persons in Poverty = 11.8% <em>(This number has been recognized as underestimated by the record number of people needing assistance)</em></td>
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*DATA U.S.A: (Deloitte) Ossining, NY: [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/ossining-ny/#demographics](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/ossining-ny/#demographics)*
“...for many in Ossining, life is not getting better. They feel the strain of higher taxes and housing costs, while suffering a diminished quality of life. Crowded schools, increased noise pollution and selective enforcement are a demoralizing but daily reality for too many residents whose voices are not heard” (Taliaferro).

The lack of access to fresh food and community engagement strongly correlate to depression and mental health difficulties. In Westchester County some of the wealthiest neighborhoods are within five miles of the poorest neighborhoods with highest unemployed, highest crime rates and lowest median income, higher disease rates and poorest education. The Food Bank for Westchester (Danise) estimates that an approximate 200,000 people, or 21 percent of total residents, are hungry or at risk of hunger in Westchester. Ossining shares borders with Chappaqua, one of the most wealthiest towns in the U.S. The most vulnerable are women, seniors, children and the disabled. In 2007, over 200 emergency food providers served approximately 5.5 million meals to Westchester residents, a near 20 percent increase from the prior year. Half of these meals were served to children.
There is an urgent need for every small community to build their own unique foundation, un-swayed by threatening situations both from the environment and internal struggles. When crisis hits a community, their power of unity, optimism, and courage in the process of recovery is revealed. It is clear the bonding partnership of arts and education, with community, is an effective sustaining way to grow successful communities. If each of us participated in a small way, we shift a divisive world to a supportive, harmonious place where the future light shines on everyone.

Throughout this research paper, I have included videoclips and links making it more interactive. The trailblazers voices and images embody their passion and courage. I found it inspiring and hope you will too.
Why a Community Garden?

From One Dreamer to Another team members (Professional Artists, Educators/Students, Local Organizations, Local Retailers, Senior Citizens, Journalists, and Gardeners) have an intimate pulse on the community and its immediate needs.

Through my research, I have found Community Gardens provide a natural way to unite diverse groups of people. In these times, almost every aspect of our lives is tainted with divisive political agitation. Community gardens function like a magnet for sharing, providing an authentic environment for dialogue and common ground. Gardens naturally are inclusive and benefit multiple generations, cultures and heritages.
Benefits of Community Gardens

**Mental Health** is influenced by spending time in a garden. Depression is rampant across our nation and does not differentiate in age, ethnicities or neighborhoods. The more one interacts with soil, planting, and actively growing fruits, vegetables, and flowers, the more one’s mind becomes balanced, meditative, joyful and produces positive thinking. Collaborative work also prevents individuals from isolation. Gardening has a natural way of connecting with nature, getting in better physical shape, providing a safe space for de-stressing, and recognizing self-worth. Direct connection with Nature, a sense of dignity emerges by simply being in a garden. This environment encourages a harmonized value of life among living plants and people. Gardening is arguably one of the most common ways of interacting with nature and enjoyable. Gardening requires, at most, a relatively small piece of land, and in many parts of the world, such gardens are today common.

There is increasing awareness among researchers and health practitioners of the potential health benefits derived from gardening activities (Clatworthy, Wang and MacMillan). Studies have shown that gardening increases individual's self esteem, vigor, psychological well-being, positive thinking, sense of community, and cognitive function (Gigliotti and Jarrott), (Gonzalez) (van den Berg), (Wakefield), (Wichrowski), (Wood). Reductions in stress, anger, fatigue, and depression and anxiety symptoms have also been documented (Wichrowski) (Wilson, Christensen, Wood). Engagement with gardening has increasingly been recognized as not only a cost-effective health intervention (Clatworthy) but also a treatment or occupational therapy for those with psychological health issues, called “horticultural therapy” (Gonzalez).
**Education** Community gardens are a vast resource for innovative experiential education.

Sequential learning is unlimited. Opportunities for new modes of education are explored while designing plans, resourcing seeds, formulating a smart garden, documenting butterfly/bird, migration, heritage/historical research, journaling; there is an unlimited resource of powerful education. Researching cultural food history, nurture seedlings through a harvest, spark creative minds.

Designs by the collaborative team to grow food for neighborhood diverse demographics, provide food for schools, shelters, local clubs and retailers renders a proactive education. This has been demonstrated by Alice Waters’ Edible Schoolyard Project which today has over 1,000 schoolyard gardens in 53 U.S. states and 75 countries. (Waters). “The mission of the Edible Schoolyard Project is to build and share a national edible education curriculum for pre-kindergarten through high school.” Studies show most children under the age of five thrive on discovery, fearlessness and open to playing and interaction.

Education through community gardens promote best-practices in project-based learning, systems-thinking with an interdisciplinary approach, while connecting directly to our local community. Experiential-Interactive learning programs include much more than academics allowing Creativity, Goal-Setting, Collaboration and Imagination as effective tools for learning. In the last 5 years, more training programs have grown based on the Edible Schoolyard Academy, with training for teachers, grants, and networking with other programs. An example of an Edible Schoolyard is the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, Ca. Students, teachers and community members, share meals around the table to plan and discuss what they want to accomplish with the garden. Academics are taught through growing plants and school
lunches are provided from the garden. The curriculum advances their ability to work as a team, curiosity, nutrition, arts, sciences, math and engagement with the environment.

View: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVrnqZsgHk

This is not just a California movement! Examples of Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx schoolyard gardens. View: https://www.edibleschoolyardnyc.org/

**Commerce** develops between the gardens, the local retail shops, local restaurants and community organizations. As demonstrated in the cited gardens, exchange of it’s fruits and vegetables with local food shelters, schools, restaurants and retail partners presents many opportunities, while building a network of strong community unity.

Presently local Community gardens are hosting weekly markets selling their produce and goods created from their produce. Many Community Gardens hire additional professional gardeners, crafts technicians, electricians, Garden Suppliers to assist in maintenance and building the garden.

From One Dreamer to Another’s cultural Arts Events and Festivals, would bring more commerce attractions. The visionary imagination with artist’s influences renew innovated advantages. Life through the lens of artists and educators gives us a fresh way to approach and respond to chronic challenges in the neighborhood and appealing to more commerce opportunities.
Leadership Skill Building  Smart Planning, Coordinating, Organizing, Collaborating, are all necessary for successful training skills in compassionate leadership. Experiential Leadership training learned in the garden, can be applied by empowering every participant to take on decision-making roles.

No garden can be successful without a strong work ethic. The leadership skills are transferable. Students’ problem-solving challenges solidifies their experience for generating new innovative business models. The lessons from community gardens foster a Dream Big attitude and develop skills to actualize a vision.

Families  There are less affordable activities available for full family participation. Multiple generational families can fully engage with other families in a positive, fun environment, free of commercial messaging. As part of From One Dreamer to Another plan, multiple family activities would be integral to programming. Some families struggle with communicating and spending quality time together. Participating in garden activities allows all ages to play and enables families to enjoy each other.

Providing for families is equal to building communities.

Crime Prevention  A New York Restoration study showed non-major felony rates dropped where community gardens were created. “The more green spaces are built, the more conscious attention about our present environment is awakened.” (Anuta) There are few spaces where people of different socio-economic and racial backgrounds can merge and collaborate. Community gardens create these kinds of places. Expanding community gardens is one
of the most effective and least expensive poverty measures reducing crime and improving public health.

**Arts Access** Art events and festivals promote access the culture of arts and imaginative thinking. Poetry, Theater, Dance, Music, Art Exhibits build a strong central community. Arts culture tends to be easily accessible in large cities and limited by high cost admissions. Community gardens organized by a think-tank collaborative, are focused on presenting Arts Culture in all its forms. The arts function to revitalize and restore the human spirit and humanity itself. Our planet is scarred and damaged, its life systems threatened with collapse. Modern civilization will be healthy only when the poetic spirit regains its rightful place.

**Screen Addiction** I did not grow up with computers or cell phones, but most of my classmates have. During every class I have taken, students are involved with their phones and laptops during class. I was distracted by this constant activity and now understand, this is an accepted addiction.

Raising and caring for a garden gives one an opportunity to separate from screens. Phone addiction can affect our physical and mental health, our relationships and our productivity. America’s obsession with smartphones has been associated with the obesity epidemic. Like drug or gambling addictions, smartphones provide an escape from reality. Gardening puts one back in touch with the present surroundings in a safe a positive environment.

In the Harvard Business Review Psychology article. “Having Your Smartphone Nearby Takes a Toll on Your Thinking”, “...the mere presence of our smartphones can adversely affect
our ability to think and problem-solve — even when we aren’t using them.” (Duke).

Performance was measured. Without the phone, people performed at a higher rate than with a phone.

“more concerning is the fact that this [screen] addiction is linked to some serious mental health risks. Though it’s only a correlation, the team found a tight relationship between mental health issues and a rise in “new media screen activities.” About 48% of those who spent five or more hours a day on their phones had thought about suicide or made plans for it, vs. 28% of those who spent only one hour per day on their phones.” (Walton).

In a United Press International article, “Study: Too Much Screen Time Increases Obesity Risk for Children”. (Thompson). Barnett explained, "Although kids seem to be spending less time watching television, they're still viewing TV content. They're just doing it on these new devices. It means they are still sedentary with these other types of screen-based recreational devices.” Researchers in this article stated children are being exposed to screens at a very young age. They found an average daily television time among children under two ranged from a half-hour to more than three hours. Dr. Martha Gulati, cardiology division chief for the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix, found a link between time spent on a screen and the likelihood of excess weight. The percentage of children who spend more than two hours a day with a screen has increased by about a third in recent years (2007). (Thompson).

Resilient Community Community gardens function as an effective way to improving public health, knitting neighbors and community friendships, reducing crime, and providing vital innovations opportunities. Social science thinking suggests that social isolation is an ongoing
contributing factor in lack of social mobility and advancement, poverty, mental health problems, and violence. In moments of need, the community garden has built a network of people, bonded by the garden who can instantly access each other. Contributing to the success of a community by growing food that will feed its residents and add money in their pockets addresses food insecurity and financial insecurity. The two are too intrinsically linked.

A community garden is a basic tool to place control back in the hands of residents. Instead of relying on big box chains for basic food needs, or commercial chain stores for instant gratification, community gardens supply a reservoir of natural advantages.
Why Did the First Lady Michelle Obama Choose a Kitchen Garden?

When I first heard the news Michelle Obama had chosen a Community Kitchen Garden as her FLOTUS.US campaign I was slightly disappointed. I was hoping for something bold, audaciously confronting the country’s inadequacies, injustices, and set everybody straight. Instead, she chose a GARDEN!

What was Michelle Obama’s intent with a public transformation of a large section of the White House grounds into a Kitchen Community Garden?

Long before she resided in the White House, Michelle Obama had a deep passion for struggling communities. She worked within community organizations and participated actively in finding new ways to improve conditions. “I first had the idea to plant vegetables at the White House in my kitchen back in Chicago. It was early in the presidential primary season. I had been thinking about how the food my family ate affected our health. And as I was putting dinner on the table that night, I thought to myself that if something amazing happened, if my husband actually won, that planting a garden at the White House – a garden where children could learn about growing and preparing fresh, nutritious food – could be one small way to get started.” The emphasis on the vegetable garden movement at the White House was to encourage Americans to consider healthy food choices. She determined the garden will take a leading role in educating
children about the benefits of locally grown produce in an attempt to decrease the rising cases of obesity and diet-related health issues affecting the nation. Mrs. Obama was confident that by educating the children of this generation, "they will begin to educate their families and that will, in turn, begin to educate our communities.” Mrs. Obama discovered her grandmother ran a community garden and helped many people in the African American community have access to fresh foods.

"My mom grew up in the South Side. They were a working-class family [with] six brothers and sisters. They couldn't afford to go to the grocery store, so there was a victory garden and that's where they got their vegetables." (Obama) View: snapshots of the work First Lady Michelle Obama created. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/node/357156

“Victory gardens” were promoted during World War II to reduce demand on the food supply. It was even deemed a patriotic act to eat food grown from a victory garden. (Schum).

View: https://www.history.com/news/americas-patriotic-victory-gardens

I believe Michelle Obama was courageously addressing the mega processed food industry, environmental issues and education system with the White House Kitchen Community Garden. Helping people to connect with their food, eat more healthy on a budget and recognize that we're less dependent on the industrial food chain and cheap fossil fuel, teaches important habits of mind. Environmental issues are a natural discussion for any community garden.

View: https://www.vox.com/2016/12/16/13884820/house-conservatives-kill-michelle-obama-anti-obesity-campaign
Examples of Successful Community Gardens

“I can get alcohol faster than I can get an organic banana. Why are these communities of color designed like that?” RON FINLEY

Ron Finley of South Central LA, identified his neighborhood as a food desert. Obesity and diabetes was very high and lack of fresh food was one source of prevalent diseases. He created ‘Green Grounds’ to challenge many of the destructive forces in his neighborhood. He invited everyone to participate and soon all ages, even teens were enjoying the benefits of being part of growing healthy food.

“I see an opportunity where we can train these kids to take over their communities, to have a sustainable life. …what I am talking about is putting people to work, getting kids off the street and letting them know the joy, the pride and the honor in growing your own food…” (Finley). “We have communities nationwide that are food prisons that could be producing their own organic food while addressing climate change. By educating the public about regeneratively homegrown food, Climate Victory Gardens are raising awareness about one of the biggest global challenges of our time and showing Americans how they can make a difference for themselves, their households, and their communities. Soil equals life.”

View:
http://ronfinley.com/meet-ron-finley/
https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerilla_gardener_in_south_central_la?language=en
https://www.greenamerica.org/healthy-soil-cool-climate/turning-food-prisons-gardens
“Neighborhoods with gardens and parks have lower crime rates, because residents feel a sense of ownership over their communities.”

**Bette Midler** created New York Restoration Project (NYRP) in 1995, a non-profit organization, driven by the conviction that all New Yorkers deserve beautiful, high-quality public spaces within walking distance of their homes. NYRP planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks, and transformed open space for communities throughout New York City’s five boroughs. As New York’s only citywide conservancy, NYRP brought private resources to spaces that lack adequate municipal support, fortifying the City’s aging infrastructure and creating a healthier environment for those who live in the most densely populated and least green neighborhoods. She collaborated with 50 Cent the celebrity rapper to create a safe and fun park in his old neighborhood in Queens among the 50+ community gardens designed by NYRP.

View: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxASmHchjgo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxASmHchjgo)

Bette Midler gathered celebrities to get involved in her community garden fundraising and advocacy actions. She enlisted her friends, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Sheryl Crowe, Patti LaBelle, 50Cents, and Jon Bon Jovi, as entertainers. “Most of the money that we raise for the work comes from that party.” It’s important to care about the environment, given that Donald Trump doesn’t believe in global warming. Climate change is real,” Midler says. “It’s actually the most important story of the age. I think about it every day. I worry about the oceans and the fact
that there’s so much plastic now and people are so wasteful. That’s a terrible sin to me.” (Setoodeh)

Bette Midler, demonstrated the powerful influence artists have on actualizing a vision. Her partnership with 50Cents resulted in the transformation of a vacant lot in 50 Cents former neighborhood where he grew up, to a safe clean garden productive garden. Community Gardens allow successful Artists to be directly involved with people and their neighborhoods while contributing to the harmonious future for our shared humanity.

View

View: from 4:30 - 10:44
“Through the learning gardens, children will ultimately learn their decisions are important; their environment and cultural decisions are meaningful. We have always known learning by doing is the best way to teach.”

Alice Waters, chef and founder of Edible Schoolyard Project started working with farmers to create a menu of fresh foods for Chez Panisse her California restaurant famous for its revolutionary organic cuisine in 1971. She then visited a school in her neighborhood when her children were school age and found the conditions deplorable. She proposed to the principal a vegetable garden that would supply the school’s lunches. Today, Alice Waters's idea is known as Edible Education, and that first program in California inspires and trains educators from across the country and around the world to seed and grow sustainable programs in every community. This program has developed schoolyard gardens throughout the U.S. and provides in-depth-educational pre-kindergarten, K - 12 edible education, and Life Labs curriculums.

Edible Education connects the experience of school to the real, live experience of students. It prioritizes access to the healthy food. (Waters). Her restaurant, Chez Panez has helped support the original edible garden concepts implemented in the Schoolyard Education programs. She has founded school gardens which feed the school’s student body. Alice Waters has proven the necessity of bringing gardens to youth as a form of education and transform the way we learn and connect with food.

Edutopia School Gardens are great examples of educating through gardens. Connecting the students’ experiences while prioritizing access to the healthy food. This provides a strong start at
school and lasting life experience. Integrating an edible education into schools can dramatically change the schooling experience for every child. I believe these simple values can be incorporated in our small community gardens. (Waters).

Alice Waters states in Forbes Magazine “For me, the best way for all of us to address climate [change], to educate our children and feed them the best possible food and teach them the values they need to live on this planet, would be to give them a free, sustainable school lunch.” (Schatz)

View:
Alice Waters: Edible Education https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTadAxKxq3M
In Conversation with Alice Waters – YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTadAxKxq3M.com/watch?v=1QDbybNoUYg
Edutopia The Edible Schoolyard Yields Seed-to-Table Learning https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC3H0sxg4tY
Devita Davidson, describes Detroit as the poster child for urban decay and her story of how ‘Detroiter’ changed through urban agriculture and food entrepreneur ship with a people power movement of turning vacant crime ridden lots to gardens. She demonstrates with many examples of transformed neighborhoods into food growing businesses cooperative models. Over 1500 farms and gardens as of 2017 from “Growing Detroit” a non-profit organization. New innovations such as Detroit Vegan Soul Food restaurant is changing the health and landscape of Detroit. She is one of the founders of FoodLab Detroit to help small neighborhoods start healthy food businesses.

In her TEDTalk, she states:

“… urban agriculture has Detroit thinking about its city now in a different way,… these stories are neighborhood-based stories, but these stories are powerful. They’re powerful because I'm showing you how we're creating a new society left vacant in the places. They’re powerful stories because they're stories about love, the love that Detroiter’s have for one another, the love that we have for our community, the love that we have for Mother Earth, but more importantly, these stories are stories on how devastation, despair, decay never ever get the last word in the city of...”
Detroit. They held onto hope. They never gave up. They always kept fighting. And listen, I know, transforming a big city like Detroit to one that is prosperous, one that's functional, one that's healthy, one that's inclusive, one that provides opportunities for all, I know it's challenging. But I just believe that if we start strengthening the social fabric of our communities, and if we kickstart economic opportunities in our most vulnerable neighborhoods, it all starts with healthy, accessible, delicious, culturally appropriate food.”

“Urban agriculture in Detroit is all about community because we grow together. These spaces are spaces of conviviality, where we are building social cohesion as well as providing healthy, fresh food to our friends, families and our neighbors.”

African-American elders known as “Gardening Angels” set up community gardens as a means to empower the community, youth and instill the importance of self-reliance. From the Gardening Angels came Detroit Summer, a program that paired young people with elders to plant gardens, paint murals, create cycling programs and poetry workshops. Today, Detroit is home to some 1,500 urban farms and gardens — from personal backyard plots to market farms, employ neighborhood residents and supply their harvests to local markets and restaurants throughout the region.

View: How urban agriculture is transforming Detroit | Devita Davison
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G88JZ1DIdg8
“A Community Garden also about food sustainability, from farm to table,” It’s also about how this isn’t just a black problem, it’s a class problem. Poor people don’t have access to good food.”

Rapper, Killer Mike, Atlanta

Killer Mike, discovers the community garden in the episode Living Black on the Netflix series Trigger Warning with Killer Mike. Mike explores his own challenge of consuming only African American/Black products. This eliminates him driving any of his three cars and severely limits his food sources. Hungry, his desperate search for food ultimately leads him to a grandmother Ms. Ethel, who grows her own vegetables and raises her own chickens in the West Broad School and Church Community Center. He learns in the days of segregation; this was the only source of food for this Black community.

They host a Farmer’s market, where Ms. Ethel who physically works the garden. Ms. Ethel is 83 years old and cooks for her business, Soul Food with a Twist.

Ms. Ethel worked on her family’s farm (Black owned and Black supported) over 50 years ago. Killer Mike learns about the African American Black community and how survival was dependent on each other providing all the resources necessary to live a healthy life. The vegetable garden and chickens were critical to survival and to compassionate community networking.

Michael Render (Killer Mike). “When I was growing up as a kid, people had gardens right in their backyard. People had chickens right in their backyard, and I lived in Atlanta, I lived
in the West End neighborhood in Atlanta. Dr. King’s parents lived there. So, with the loss of that, we’ve lost greater independence as a community. We’ve lost a financial incentive that would’ve kept violence and poverty out of the community.” (Aued).

Warning: cursing language included in this clip Trigger Warning, Episode 1, Living Black highlights Killer Mike learning about the African American Black Community’s reliance on a Community Garden.

View: Netflix Trigger Warning with Killer Mike, Living Black Episode Clip for Mike’s visit to Broad Street Community Garden, starts at 19:07.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW79j81iLDI

One is able to view this specific episode, Living Black, only if you have access to Netflix - Warning: cursing language included in this clip Trigger Warning, Episode 1, Living Black
Personal Note: Ethnicity and Farm/Gardens Stigma Associations

A personal note: A friend (graduate from Harvard, Hip Hop Dancer, works in the financial district and identifies as Gay and is of African American decent) and I met to do a hang together. I suggested we all visit a farm and pick some produce together. His response was: “Oh Noooo, we are Black, we don’t pick food. It’s too close to slavery.”

Japanese immigrants were laborers on pineapple plantations in Hawaii, known as the sugarcane slaves. Before the war, Japanese immigrants to the United States were recognized as successful farmers. Anti Japanese and anti Asian land laws prevented them from owning property, so many leased their properties. Families who returned home after years of incarceration found their farms and homes vandalized and destroyed. In the War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps, incarcerees had to grow their own food. People of all ages were made to work long hours in the field or in processing centers. The work was rigorous and inmates were not provided with adequate equipment, water, food or protections to meet the demand.

“Japanese Americans removed from their own farms were coerced with blatant appeals to patriotism—to do farm labor on other people’s farms to ‘save’ crops from a labor shortage due in part to their incarceration.” (Niiya) While we celebrate the hard work of farmers today, we acknowledge the role of farming in some of our country’s ugliest histories — from appropriation of Native lands and slavery to ongoing exploitation of immigrants and incarcerees.
Farm work for many cultures throughout America inherently carry an underlying negative stigma about farm labor. There were harsh conditions tainted with unjust and horrific conditions. (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians).

Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers who suffered from the exploitation of farmers and the high usage of toxic chemicals, which caused crippling health conditions and their children, fought to protect and organize farm workers and their families. (Pao).

We must find ways to flip the switch on those associations by bringing our community gardens forward. Our gardens today must recognize the injustices of past cruel farming practices, while actualizing a valuable innovative community presence.

My friend, Linda Tarrant Reid, founder of Grow Lincoln Park Community Garden, shared, over 65% of the Community Garden participants are from overseas countries (four African countries, Korea, China, Latin America, and Caribbean Islands). Roots and Wings Community Garden in Dobbs Ferry, thought approximately 60% of their gardeners are from South American and Caribbean Islands.

Gardening can provide links to one's cultural heritage and serve as a vital tool in propagating cultural pride.

When we look to our American Victory Gardens we see evidence neighborhoods were a source of fresh foods (even canning fruit and vegetables for winter months) and uniting the community.
From One Dreamer to Another
Ideas grow stronger when they are shared.

From One Dreamer to Another Think Tank, employs a strategy with a commitment to engaging the collaborative power of Arts, Education and Community while simultaneously addressing the specific needs of the community. The launching project of a community garden serves a connecting force and community anchor. Taking a look at life’s conditions through the lens of this collaboration gives a fresh approach and response to chronic challenges.

We must address divisions, create new ways of interacting, and unite as a community of diverse people. Finding the courage to share our stories is an under-estimated power that fortifies our communities. Internal framework. From One Dreamer to Another will pay close attention to sharing stories. This is an under-estimated power that fortifies our communities. Our stories and personal histories remind one another of a shared humanity. Everyone’s story matters and contributes to our past, present and future.

Imagine sitting on a garden bench after a concert, and listening to someone’s personal story.

Immersed in material concerns, clamoring to snag a new position or thing, contemporary humanity has been cut off from the vast wonders of the universe. We struggle against feelings of isolation and alienation. We seek to fill the heart's thirst with immediate fixes, only to find that our cravings have grown more fierce. This separation and estrangement divorces us from nature, from society and from each other. Our families, neighborhoods and schools have become fragmented with an emphasis on accumulating things and positions.
After many interviews with community garden leaders, I found a typical year is well planned around Nature’s schedule. Every month identifies what is important to the Community Garden’s prosperity and regenerative innovations. As in the Edible Schoolyard Academy, Arts and Cultural Festivals, our Community can Dream Big from the roots of the garden and community.

The eyes of a creative thinker, discover in each person a unique and irreplaceable humanity. The culture of arts and education growing from a garden unleashes our greatest imagination. Transcending limits, discovering connections from person to person, from one heart to another, invokes new ideas and systems, for developing our intelligence, wisdom, imagination, and compassion one village at a time.

We can find the poetic spirit vibrantly active in the pursuit of truth to the unfathomable bonds that link us to the world.

Creativity is for everybody. It is essential for people to have access to the culture of arts and education everyday. Our country is desperately in need of a unified optimism. From One Dreamer to Another Think Tank’s focus is to enable each of us to cultivate a connection to a universal dignity and brilliance. A community garden with this mission sparks a genuine generosity beyond materialism. We can provoke the greatness of each neighborhood by unleashing humanity’s genius with a Dreamer Community Garden.
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