

SINKING OUR TEETH INTO AN IRRESISTABLE FUTURE

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS July 2021 - June 2022

Food 
  Culture 
 Collective



A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Real Food Real Stories is now **FOOD CULTURE COLLECTIVE**

Since 2014, Real Food Real Stories has served as a place of convergence and powerful connection. Now, what first began as a gathering of friends in our founder Pei-Ru Ko's living room, has grown into an expansive community of food cultural workers, culture-bearers, makers, creatives, and friends working to reclaim and reimagine our stories of food, land, and belonging.

In a time of systemic unraveling, the work of reimagining our shared food culture offers a guiding light, pointing the way toward greater economic, social and ecological harmony. **Food Culture Collective is a community united in the belief that we all have a role to play in transforming food culture.** Together, we are growing cultural power with BIPOC, women, queer & trans, immigrant, and otherwise marginalized, exploited, and targeted food culture workers and creatives. Together, we are nourishing narratives of healing and transformation to disrupt a culture of extraction and exploitation. Together, we are cultivating food community rooted in celebration and solidarity. **Together, we are Food Culture Collective.**

Dreamers, doers, world-builders- the FC Collective community joined us in person for a vibrant midsummer picnic in Berkeley, CA to celebrate the start of a new era.

Image Credit: Kristen Murakoshi



All of our programs, projects, and experiences are now united by an explicit narrative strategy. These deep narratives were surfaced in community, through the stories we shared. Over the last year, we've been settling into a bigger footprint of programs and impact, expanding our community of co-conspirators, leaning into play, and deepening our sense of virtual placemaking.

A few highlights:

- We launched a new program, **Around the Table**, featuring informal conversations between our community members and thought leaders, elders, organizers, and friends.
- We launched a follow-on **Immersion** program, a space for creative ideation and practice, to move from conversation into action together.
- We've expanded our 1-on-1 story facilitation into a **story circle** experience. Story circles are an ancient human practice, in which generational knowledge and cultural ways are transmitted. They offer us an opportunity to make sense of the world and transform our collective future.

We're cooking up more! We'll continue to dig into big questions and emergent insights Around the Table. We're redesigning our story facilitation training. We're launching a membership program. We're piloting two creative fellowships to support digital media and audio storytelling to animate our deep narratives. And, we'll be trying out ways to co-create pop-up in person experiences of place-based food communities.

I hope you'll join in, and embrace your own power to create culture through the foods we *grow, cook, and share.*



Jovida

Daring to dream: An "irresistible" future, to use Toni Cade Bambara's language, beckons us all. Image Credit: Tony Manalo



The way that this community collectively holds space for what we're trying to create on a larger scale **gives me the belief that it's possible to do things in a way that supports ALL living beings.** That belief is the spark that we can keep building on in our own lives, and the communities we're each a part of, to continue seeding collective change.

Krysta, ATT Attendee

2021 – 2022 AT A GLANCE

A SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST YEAR



It's so hard to put into words how much the ATT space means to me and the way that it gives me life, hope, and energy to keep engaging in the deeper work that's needed to transform our society. It truly is an experience that nourishes the whole body, mind, and spirit. As I write this there is a huge smile on my face; a sense of peace and connection in my heart.

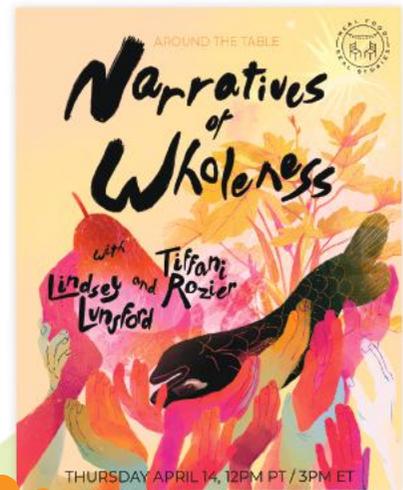
ATT Attendee

FC Collective Milestones

- We transformed from a storytelling community to a cultural strategy organization with national reach.
- We synthesized our narrative framework, drawing from the personal stories that community members had shared with us over the years, activating deep narratives and beliefs about the world that support collective healing and transformation.
- We piloted our virtual Around the Table series focused on seeding and animating the critical wisdom & narratives of food culture workers.
- We piloted a 6-week community of practice through Immersions focused on embodying the transformative narratives surfaced through Around the Table conversations.
- We expanded our 1:1 story facilitation into community-based story-circles rooted in our narrative strategy framework.
- We played with a new approach to digital culture, focused on creating spaces where people feel witnessed in their wholeness and are supported to dream, care for themselves and others, and feed their creativity regularly.
- We expanded our thriving community of storytellers, food culture bearers and workers devoted to engaging in radical acts of collective transformation.

COLLECTIVE WORLDBUILDING AROUND THE TABLE

More personal than a panel, less stuffy than a salon, our **Around the Table** (ATT) events feature leading food and cultural workers in an intimate, rich conversation to reimagine food culture, as both storytellers and people who are growing a new world. ATTs affirm story as a tool of navigation, a way of chewing on big questions at the heart of how we grow, eat, and gather around food. **Together, we unearthed some magic:**



Poster Credit: Cate Andrews



Poster Credit: Pearl Shen

That's why storytelling and cultural workers are so vital in this movement, because we are actually having to reimagine and create more nourishing conditions to grow the next generation of people who see themselves no different from the land, who see themselves as woven into that. And that is deep, long game cultural work..

Rowen White, Decolonizing Food Culture ATT

We were honored to co-create these dynamic story events with an incredible team of visiting artists, food culture change makers and movement strategists:

- Rowen White, Sierra Seeds
- Jocelyn Jackson, People's Kitchen Collective & JUSTUS Kitchen
- Lindsey Lunsford, Tuskegee University
- Tiffani Rozier, Afros & Kives
- Kirsten Kirby-Shoote, i-Collective & Leilú Gardens
- Salimatu Amabebe, Black Feast
- Alexis Flanagan, Resonance Network
- shane bernardo, Food as Healing

Our storytellers and guides in this work are the people taking the risks to transform food culture, particularly those reconstructing power to tell a more mutual story, with creativity and vision for the future.

PLAY AS PORTAL

This year we piloted a new style of programming that focuses on embodiment and play as a vital path to discovery, to give our community an opportunity to feel into the edges of insights surfaced through our ATT conversations. An experiential learning series and creative practice community, **Immersion**s are intended to support the collective with growing a deeply nourishing relationship to food, land, and community. **We embrace play as a bold tool to disrupt the status quo, a portal to radical dreams, an essential practice in collective sense-making, and a source of continued nourishment.**

The process of us deconstructing the consumptive pathways is for us to get a little bit uncomfortable. And, even a lot uncomfortable. I don't want to back up from that: we're going to be uncomfortable. We're going to have to lead harder lives. That difficulty, and that discomfort, is a direct pathway to more joy, and more life. It is not a bad thing!

Jocelyn Jackson

[The] Around the Table Immersion felt like a pouring of life back into myself, like the sprinkle of love/magic I'd been deeply longing for.

Immersion Participant

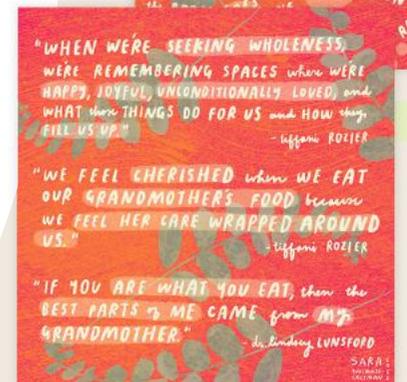
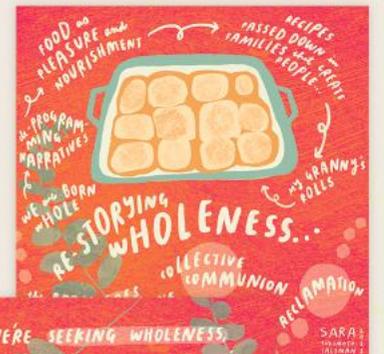
16
Countries
tuned in

8

Food culture
workers hosted
in conversation

855

Attendees



Graphic Recording credit: Sara Yukimoto-Saltman

SHIFTING *POWER* THROUGH *STORY*

Stories are our seeds. They evoke and inspire, they connect us, and even move us to action. The best stories are unique and one-of-a-kind. When we bring them together, we shape the logic of belonging, of what matters, of how we understand the world.

Our story workshops and story circles are two ways we invite storytellers to share personal experiences based on prompts that activate our deep narratives.

To transform food culture and reimagine our world, we must shift power. Sharing stories of meaning, and listening with our full attention, reorients how we navigate the world, weaving individual stories into a collective garment.

A [digital] CULTURE OF *NOURISHMENT*

As a food culture-change organization, we celebrate people in their wholeness and believe that everybody has a right to healing and nourishment—even in digital spaces. As we root ourselves in the values of care and belonging, we have taken some time to lay out how we are cultivating our digital presence as a source of true healing and transformation for our community and beyond. FC Collective Digital Culture Creative and social strategy maverick Ada Cuadrado-Medina is transforming our orientation to social media, as a pathway to offer glimmers of life-affirming narratives taking root.

Spotlight: Grist Fixers Story Circle

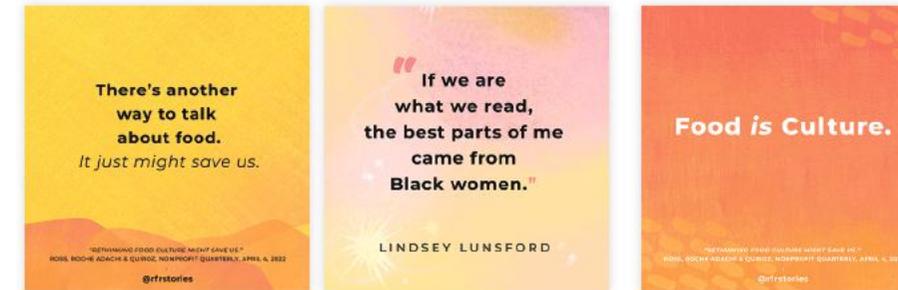
Grist Fixers are visionaries who are cooking up the boldest, most ambitious solutions to humanity's biggest challenges, brought together by the Fix Solutions Lab. In March of 2022, story facilitators Jamie Li and Stefani Reneé Medley met up virtually with 42 members of the Fixer community to share stories of belonging, joy, and mutual flourishing.



This year, Ada successfully shifted our social channels away from traditional promotional styles to more fluid, imaginative and life-giving storytelling through:

- Inviting People Into a Community of Practice
- Cultivating Imaginative Muscles
- Embracing Slow Media
- Building and Deepening Relationships to Place and One Another — connections (primarily off-screen) through rootedness, presence & care.

The resultant **40% growth in our audiences** demonstrates the vital need for nourishing content. Our engagement increased by 11%, and we noticed high levels of interaction with media that centered thought-provoking, world-bending questions. **Below are a couple snapshots of social media posts that piqued curiosity in our audiences:**



Similarly, FC Collective newsletters now offer longer form, slower reads filled with nuggets of wisdom, uplifting media and juicy invitations to participate in the work of collective change. Thanks to this transformative storytelling, **newsletter engagement doubled this year.**

BUZZING IN THE ECOSYSTEM

FC Collective is part of a growing ecosystem working towards a world shaped by care for the land, waters, and people who nourish us. Together with a network of co-conspirators and collaborators, we align our strategies with those who are helping us to “set the table” for generations to come. From one-time narrative strategy workshops with partners such as Food Solutions New England, and Slow Food USA, to ongoing coalition-building, our work is part of a broader, intersectional movement.

FEATURED PARTNERS

HEAL Food Alliance

HEAL is a coalition of 55 organizations working together to transform food and farm systems from the current extractive economic model towards community control, care for the land, local economies, meaningful labor, and healthful communities nationwide, while supporting the sovereignty of all living beings. *This year, FC Collective became a member of HEAL, and has partnered with HEAL on the upcoming relaunch of our podcast and the Ears in the Field audio Fellowship.*

The People's Food & Farm Project

The PFFP is building a participatory vision for food sovereignty for the San Francisco Bay Area. The project will pilot a model for people-powered food system governance centering the voices of workers and BIPOC communities, along with a public funding mechanism for Bay Area food and farm programs. *FC Collective serves on the Organizing Team for the PFFP, and will be offering story circles in support of the PFFP goals.*

#WeGovern Learning Community

Offered by Project ReSet & the Resonance Network, #WeGovern is a foundational set of agreements to guide decision-making rooted in mutual care. WeGovern is boldly reimagining and reclaiming governance, inspired by a rich history of Indigenous practices rooted in care for land, natural resources, community, and collective well-being. *FC Collective participated in the WeGovern learning community to explore how our cultural strategies can activate community-driven governance.*

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

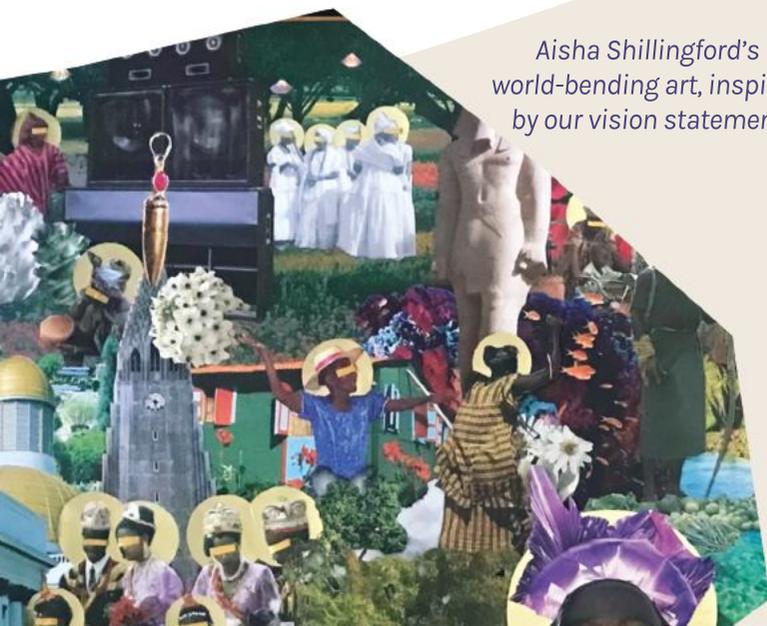
Could rethinking food culture transform our world?

FC Collective co-authors Jovida Ross, Shizue Roche Adachie and Julie Quiroz argue that “to heal our food system, we must heal our shared food culture” in an article for the NonProfit Quarterly (NPQ) blog and print magazine. The widely-shared essay offers our insights on the power of centering BIPOC narratives to an evolving national conversation at the intersections of cultural strategy and food justice, and reached upwards of 6,000 readers.



Imagine a future where the ways we grow, cook, and gather around food affirms our relationships to the places we live, to the people who came before us, and to future generations. Imagine a future where we recognize care as the essence of all labor and appreciate all people’s labor, no matter the form it takes. Imagine that we joyfully nourish each other, that we all know we belong, and that we recognize land as kin.

Aisha Shillingford’s world-bending art, inspired by our vision statement



IN THE TEST KITCHEN: TASTES & GLIMMERS of WHAT’S TO COME

Digital Culture Fellowship Launch

Can our relationship to social media support our collective healing and transformation?

This Fall, Food Culture Collective has invited applicants to a 6-month Digital Culture Fellowship to dive into this question, exploring how to reimagine, curate, facilitate, and shape our digital spaces to nourish our communities and feed a food culture rooted in care, subverting traditional expectations of social media spaces. The selected Fellow will act as a digital-curator meets thought-leader meets artist-in-residence on Food Culture Collective’s social channels, and we are so excited to welcome them soon!

Hungry Ears & Ears in the Field Fellowship

We are thrilled to be working on the relaunch of the FC Collective **podcast and audio fellowship**. The Hungry Ears podcast, produced in partnership with HEAL Food Alliance, is an immersive, intimate, narrative-driven podcast featuring stories by emerging audio producers who participate in FC Collective’s new Ears in the Field Fellowship. Listeners will be immersed in stories that witness food as a teacher and its power to shape the narratives that nourish us.

Thriving in Community

Ready to play with your food?

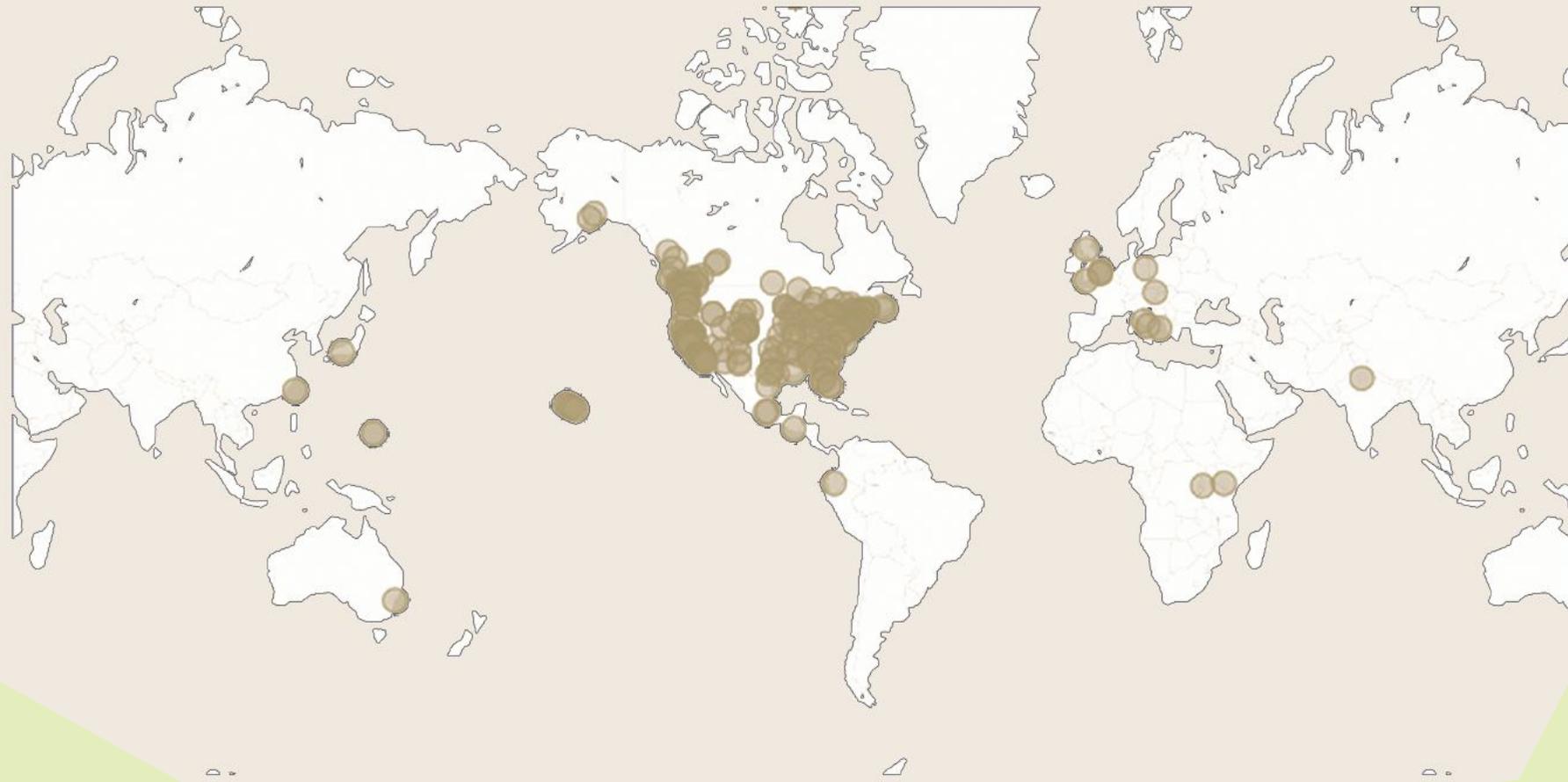
FC Collective is now inviting our audiences to **dream, interrogate, practice, and nourish in community with us**. Membership is a way to deepen relationships within our food community and support our collective work. Co-conspiring with our community is a key part of catalyzing food culture change, and there are now several ways to play, dream, and make connections with us!



When we approach food work as cultural work, we are able to **crack open, reimagine, and rewrite** the implicit assumptions of fiercely-held narratives, transforming the shared spaces, practices, and norms that make up culture.

FC Collective NPQ Article Excerpt

Places people tuned into our public programming
between July 1, 2021 and Jun 30, 2022:



PLAY
WITH YOUR
FOOD

REIMAGINE
OUR WORLD

Food 
  Culture 
 Collective

