

2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

If I had just one word to characterize my feelings about the work of Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.) during 2021, it would be *gratitude*. Gratitude for all that we accomplished. Gratitude for F.E.P.'s remarkable staff, board members, and volunteers. But most of all, gratitude for the unwavering contributions of our many supporters. You might not realize it, but the struggle for food justice is a collaborative effort, and you are an indispensable part of that struggle. Your dedication to fighting for the rights of both human and non-human animals continued to inspire me throughout another unpredictable year, and I am deeply grateful for your support.

We at F.E.P. are very proud to present this report highlighting our work for 2021. These pages cover our biggest successes in our four main areas of work: encouraging people to stop eating animals, spotlighting the unavailability of healthy foods in Black and Brown communities, advocating for the rights of farm workers, and increasing awareness about the worst forms of child labor—including slavery—in the chocolate industry.

Of course, we also experienced a year of challenges, especially in light of the ongoing pandemic. COVID-19 inspired us to get creative, and we managed to make events like our Vallejo Healthy Food Fest and Fight for the Ocean Day virtual while also taking extra precautions during our School Supply Drive for the children of farm workers.

One of the projects I am most excited about is F.E.P.'s continued development of culinary resources. In 2021 we created VeganLaoFood.com to accompany VeganMexicanFood.com and VeganFilipinoFood.com. It is so rewarding to not only be able to share with others the comforting foods we grew up with but to also know that community members can enjoy our traditional foods without the systemic suffering of non-human animals while perhaps helping many of them go vegan. I am also very pleased to tell you that, thanks to your support in 2021, we managed to distribute 1,019 backpacks filled with school supplies for the children of farm workers!

There are a few highlights from the year that don't quite fit the format of this report. Among them is that after listening to our staff, we adjusted our office hours in 2021 to operate Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm PT. Research has shown that shorter work weeks can improve efficiency and productivity, and that has certainly proved true for F.E.P.

Cover Image:
Bunito was found in the streets of downtown San José, probably a child's Easter gift who was abandoned after the parents discovered rabbits are not a good "starter pet." We feel Bunito well represents veganism as rabbits are exploited for food, fur, sport, and experiments, and we hold true that all animals deserve to feel safe and not be harmed for any human purpose.

In addition, there is a fun video about Food Empowerment Project that I hope you'll check out if you haven't already. It was produced by Suzy González of the women of color/trans folks of color/gender non-conforming collective Veggie Mijas and features yours truly as an animated puppet; the video can be viewed on their Instagram at bit.ly/FEPvid. And I was honored to be listed among the "15 Notable Alumni of Saint Edward's University" in Austin.

F.E.P.'s mission is to create a more just and sustainable world by helping people recognize the power of their food choices, and in 2021, 69.4% of our budget went toward programs that actively reflect this commitment. We could not do any of this work without your generous support. As you read the following pages, I hope you will remember that it is your commitment to advocating veganism, to supporting food access in Black and Brown communities, to standing up for the farm workers who grow and pick our food, and to educating consumers about ethical chocolate that inspires us to keep fighting the good fight. Thank you!

With much appreciation,



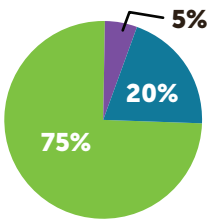
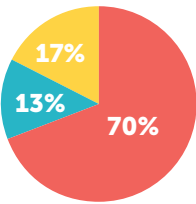
Lauren

lauren Ornelas
Founder

Photo Credit: In Her Image Photography

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW FINANCIAL SUMMARY

SPENDING	INCOME
PROGRAMS	GOV. GRANTS
\$459,386	\$53,759
G&A	OTHER GRANTS
\$88,167	\$200,000
FUNDRAISING	INDV. DONATIONS
\$114,319	\$746,872
TOTAL	TOTAL
\$661,872	\$1,000,631



Note: F.E.P. is a small and quickly growing non-profit organization, so it's crucial for us to maintain financial stability to ensure that our work can continue consistently; therefore, we allocate money for the upcoming year's budget and beyond. Thank you for supporting us.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021

VEGANISM

F.E.P. works to promote ethical veganism through education, through outreach, and also by providing tools to help people go vegan.

VALLEJO HEALTHY FOOD FEST

Our Vallejo Healthy Food Fest (VHFF) is one of our most popular annual events, created to generate enthusiasm and a demand for change. It's an opportunity to share the message that healthy food is not only delicious but should be accessible to everyone in Vallejo, California. As we did in 2020, we made 2021's VHFF a virtual event to keep everyone safe. That also meant it wasn't limited to people in or near Vallejo! We spread out the sixth-annual VHFF over two Sundays—September 12 and 19—and brought a blend of education and entertainment to dozens of households.

Week 1 featured a cooking demo, cookbook giveaways, a tour of Vallejo People's Garden, a guide to eating vegan in Vallejo, a colorful dance performance by Ballet Folklórico Quetzalli, a discussion about access to healthy foods with Helen Marie "Cookie" Gordon, and a tribute to Maria Guevara (1975–2020), who set the stage for F.E.P.'s work in Vallejo as our first community organizer. Week 2 included a jiu-jitsu demonstration, two more cooking demos, healthy living tips, and a wrap-up with our team. Both days are available as online videos in English and with Spanish subtitles at: <http://bit.ly/VHFF2021>.

VEGAN LAO FOOD

After the success of our Vegan Mexican Food and Vegan Filipino Food recipe booklets and websites in previous years, we used social media and our monthly newsletter to call on Lao cooks and chefs to submit recipes for a Vegan Lao Food resource, inspired by the culinary traditions of our board member Sharon Daraphonheth. The response was so enthusiastic that we launched VeganLaoFood.com in 2021. "Lao dishes are meant to be eaten in community," said Sharon, "and it is with this website that I hope to create a community for Lao vegans and/or those who are 'vegan-curious' about Lao food."

The site quickly gained a following: the group Reppin' Laos shared our video promoting the site on their Instagram page, and it appeared on the cover of the vegan publication *Nourish*, which also featured our recipe for larb lettuce wraps, considered the unofficial national dish of Laos. If you love to cook and want to try some mouthwatering flavors, please visit VeganLaoFood.com as well as VeganFilipinoFood.com and VeganMexicanFood.com!

NEW ADS

Speaking of our culinary websites and booklets, in 2021 we ran advertisements for Vegan Filipino Food and Vegan Mexican Food, both of which were inspired by our commitment to provide vegan resources that reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of our community. We promoted Vegan Filipino Food to the Filipinx community with a half-page, full-color ad (in English and Tagalog) in two newspapers for Filipinos living in the United States: *FilAmStar* and *Asian Journal*.



For Latinx Heritage Month (celebrated from September 15 to October 15), F.E.P. ran ads for our wildly popular Vegan Mexican Food recipe booklets in two Spanish-language newspapers: the Bay Area's *El Observador* and *La Opinión* in Los Angeles. Traffic to our VeganMexicanFood.com site subsequently increased by more than 300%! In fact, *El Observador* continued to run our ad on their homepage at no cost because they support our mission. Thanks to Meneka of Nooch Design Co. for creating such a powerful ad!

FIGHT FOR THE OCEAN

Ever since we launched Fight for the Ocean (FFTO) in 2018 to honor the birthday of Dr. Sylvia Earle on August 30, it has focused on helping people see the connections between veganism and conservation. While we normally encourage people to take action on this day by organizing a cleanup at a local beach, lake, river, or creek, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we broadened our FFTO effort in 2021 into a weeklong event—August 23–30—with virtual activities. This issue-based series attracted robust attendance within the vegan food justice community, garnering more than 2,000 views. Recordings also remain available on our YouTube by visiting <https://bit.ly/F4TO2021>.



Among the highlights of the week, we had cooking demos from our wonderful volunteer Maria French and from Kay Kay and Chef Korenn Rachelle, two contributors to *Plant Based Planet*, a cookbook filled with vegan recipes from around the world. (All the proceeds from the print cookbooks sold were donated to F.E.P., and we are so grateful!) Members of our board led a book club discussion of *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs. We had a conversation about sharks with artist Caiti Rose of Sharktopia and featured some of her beautiful coloring pages, which participants could order online. Whale researcher Dr. Deborah Giles was our special guest for a powerful interview about orcas. We also offered a segment focusing on household reusables. The event was a huge success, and we thank you all for participating!

EAT YOUR ETHICS

Food Empowerment Project is here to help ensure that your values are reflected in your food choices. That's one reason we hosted "Eat Your Ethics: Four Courses of Empowerment," a series of online events packed with morsels of information about veganism to help attendees better understand the realities of animals raised and killed for food, along with other issues of injustice within our food system. F.E.P. presented this as the perfect series to participate in for those new to veganism, those interested in going vegan, or those wanting to learn other ways to help make their eating habits more ethical. The series—which also shared information about a wide variety of nonhuman animals; addressed how colonization has impacted people who are lactose normal; discussed why Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities are more likely to be victims of environmental racism; examined the abuse of humans in the chocolate industry; presented ideas on how to shop with care; and much more—lasted from March through August.



NEW WEB PAGES

We are constantly adding resources to our website, and in 2021, we created two new pages. The first was "Workers in the Fishing Industry," which explores the issues surrounding those who toil on fishing boats or in fish processing plants. These workers are subjected to a wide variety of physical and emotional abuse. While it may be tempting for those who advocate for animals to disregard the suffering of these people, it's important to remember that they too are victims of domination and violence. In other words, while it's another reason not to eat creatures from the ocean, it's also a call for compassion for these maligned workers.

The second new page was "The Buzz About Honey." Did you know that the honey industry shares several parallels with the dairy industry? For one thing, the honeybee is not native to North America; just like cows, honeybees were brought to the U.S. centuries ago from Europe to serve as agricultural animals. In addition, both the dairy industry and the commercial honey industry are built upon models in which humans ultimately steal the animals' food source and replace it with an inferior and unnatural substitute. Like cows, honeybees are artificially inseminated. And, just as cows and calves are considered "expendable" in the dairy industry, so too are bees sometimes killed after they have outlived their "usefulness": bee farms have been known to destroy entire colonies after harvesting because it's cheaper than feeding the bees throughout the winter.

We are very proud of these informative new resources and hope you will check them out!



FARM WORKER RIGHTS

F.E.P. works to advance the rights of farm workers by supporting corporate, legislative, and regulatory changes and works with farm worker communities to help meet immediate needs.

SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

We are thrilled to report that in 2021 F.E.P. collected and distributed 1,019 backpacks filled with pencils, paper, pens, and other necessities to the children of farm workers! On July 22, 240 backpacks laden with school supplies were delivered to our longtime partners Movimiento Cultural de la Unión Indígena in Sonoma County. The next batch of 356 backpacks went to a farm worker community in California's Central Valley on August 2. And then, on August 3, we delivered the remaining 404 backpacks to another large group of farm workers in the Central Valley.



We had already met our goal of 1,000 backpacks when a farm worker contact asked if we could provide backpacks and supplies for an additional 19 kids. Thanks to your support, we were able to help. Another contact told us how impressed she was with F.E.P.'s understanding of the farm workers' needs, especially since we were able to give each student a reusable water bottle, which many of the kids were beginning to ask for because schools were shutting off communal drinking fountains as a health safety measure during the COVID-19 pandemic. (It was the first and only year we've handed out water bottles,

and each was inscribed with an inspirational message for the recipient.) Again, it is due to your generosity that F.E.P. is able to quickly adapt to requests like these. As you may know, farm workers are victims of an unjust system that benefits corporations over workers, often leaving parents and grandparents unable to afford school supplies for their children or grandchildren. Thank you to all of you who helped make 2021's School Supply Drive such a success!



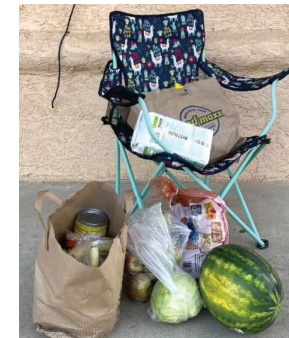
WINERY OUTREACH

We were honored to join 50 other community members who visited Sonoma County wineries to discuss demands made by farm workers impacted by wildfires in the area. There were teachers, union workers, doctors, and young activists, all gathering to deliver the farm workers' calls for such basic requirements as clean bathrooms.

This effort was coordinated by North Bay Jobs with Justice, a nonprofit we're a member of and whose executive committee Lauren is on. One of the wineries the group approached, St. Francis Winery, has been on F.E.P.'s recommended list for several years, as they make vegan wine and had good policies on farm workers in the past. We sent a letter to the winery letting them know that we would remove them from our list unless they met the demands of the farm workers—and, unfortunately, we had to do just that.

FOOD DELIVERY

Sadly, farm workers are among the most impacted essential workers during the pandemic, and so F.E.P. sent more than \$1,000 worth of food to farm workers in California's Central Valley, where they were in quarantine due to COVID-19. We are so thankful that—with your generous support—we were able to provide some of the support they needed right away. We thank the farm workers for what they do and thank YOU for donating to this special effort of support.



IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIAN FARMERS

For most of 2021, hundreds of thousands of farmers and farm workers in India, along with Indian farmers' organizations and trade unions, demanded the withdrawal of the three agricultural laws the Parliament of India passed in 2020—laws that they say are "anti-farmer" and prioritize corporate interests over their own.

In January, F.E.P. released a statement of solidarity, noting that we see the struggle by farmers and farm workers in India as an inspiration to all those challenging corporate power and exploitation around the world. After observing how similar India is to the United States in its struggle with racism and discrimination, the statement closes with, "We encourage the Indian government to respect the right to peacefully assemble and protest without any use of violence or intimidation in any form." The government finally repealed the laws on December 1.



ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

F.E.P. aims to improve access to fresh, healthy foods—access that is often denied to Black and Brown communities and low-income communities in the U.S.—through corporate campaigns, as well as community-requested surveys, advocacy, and other support work.

PITTSBURG, CALIFORNIA

F.E.P. understands that advocating for veganism means little if consumers don't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. So when we were invited to survey access to healthy foods in the City of Pittsburg, California, we were eager to get started! In 2021, we began working with a local group, Growing Healthy People for Pittsburg (GHPP), which helped organize the first survey event on July 31. Among the dozen volunteers who went into grocery stores, markets, and other businesses that sell fresh produce was Pittsburg's vice mayor, Holland Barrett White. "Partnering with Food Empowerment Project has reinforced, for me, the importance of plant-based eating and what that can mean for the health of our Pittsburg community," he said. "As a public official I want to help empower my neighbors and my colleagues throughout the region to embark on this journey to transition our communities towards a healthier way of living. I am tremendously grateful to work with an organization that's dedicated to racial equity and vegan food justice."

In addition, we organized a screening of *Invisible Vegan* in Pittsburg, and about 40 people from the community attended. Not only did they enjoy the vegan snack packs we created, but they were so charged about veganism that they expressed interest in creating a list of restaurants where they can find vegan food!



CHOCOLATE

F.E.P. is working to inform consumers around the globe about the worst forms of child labor, including slavery, that take place in the chocolate industry

MAJOR UPDATE ON OUR CHOCOLATE PAGE

Chocolate has been at the core of F.E.P.'s work since our founding in 2007. It's an ever-changing issue, but what tragically remains consistent is that many chocolate companies—even some of the biggest and wealthiest brands in the industry—source their cocoa from farms that use the worst forms of child labor, including slavery. Which is why chocolate is often a prime example of what we mean when we say that just because something is vegan, that doesn't mean it's cruelty-free.

To help consumers better understand the problems involved, we created a comprehensive chocolate page detailing the use of child labor in the chocolate industry, why it is so prevalent, and what you can do about it. We spent several months in 2021 giving the page a major update so that it now includes information from new reports, explores recent revelations about child slavery on cocoa farms in Brazil, and considers how the Coronavirus likely led to a 15–20% increase in child labor on cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast and Ghana.

ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS IN 2021

Food Empowerment Project's vision of a more just and sustainable future includes animals, people, and ecosystems—and we need to build shared understanding to get there. Our leadership tirelessly draws the connections between these and other aspects of vegan food justice in talks, interviews, and panels in order to educate and engage our communities from coast to coast.

APPEARANCES:

Here is a selection of 11 out of more than 30 public discussions and appearances that were made throughout 2021.

UC Berkeley Plant Futures Symposium

Tulane Environmental Justice Summit

Lewis & Clark Animal Law Symposium

Farm Sanctuary's Social Justice & Our Food System

Justice for Animals Program (USF)

New York City Bar Association—Food Justice: Intersections within Civil Rights and Animal Rights panel

UCLA Undergraduate Seminar

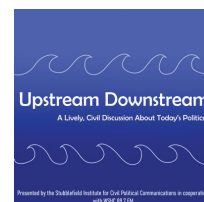
Black Vegetarian of Maryland FB Live with Destiny

Supreme Master Three-Part Television Interview

Youth Climate Save Panel

SSD IG live with Afro-Vegan Society

PODCASTS:



MEDIA

F.E.P.'s work was featured this year in the following articles and interviews.

(Note: This is just a sampling of our media presence in 2021. Please see our website for a more comprehensive list.)

Food Empowerment Project Employs Education to Help Consumers Make Ethical Food Choices

Date: January 16, 2021 | Source: Foodtank



Support These Intersectional Environmental Organizations for Black History Month

Date: February 1, 2021 | Source: Green Matters



How To Make Your Valentine's Day More Sustainable

Date: February 11, 2021 | Source: Worth



5 Shocking Ways Child Labor Is Still Used in Food Production

Date: March 2, 2021 | Source: One Green Planet



15 Vegan Women Activists of Color You Need to Know About

Date: March 4, 2021 | Source: VegNews



What Is Sustainable Food?

Date: March 18, 2021 | Source: Good Housekeeping



Larb Lettuce Wraps

Date: March 29, 2021 | Source: Nourish



Is Your Easter Chocolate Funding Slavery? Investigating the Dark Side of Your Favourite Treat

Date: March 31, 2021 | Source: Green Is the New Black



How to Have a Kind Easter Celebration

Date: April 2, 2021 | Source: The Kind Life



salon

6 Tips for Adopting the Vegan Diet

Date: April 25, 2021 | Source: Salon

Think Outside the Banana. Eat the Peel

Date: May 10, 2021 | Source: New York Times



Radio Host Danny Parkins Raises \$660k for Nonprofit Supermarket in 24-Hour Radiothon

Date: June 24, 2021 | Source: Newsweek

Child Slavery Case Against Nestlé Rejected

Date: June 24, 2021 | Source: Organization for World Peace



Veganism Isn't Just About Saving Animals. It's About Saving the World

Date: August 4, 2021 | Source: Yahoo! Life

Amid a Global Banana Crisis, Puerto Rico's Abundant Biodiversity Offers a Taste of Hope

Date: August 20, 2021 | Source: The Washington Post



Setting the Table, Not Running It

Date: September 16, 2021 | Source: Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development

Groups Urge Biden Administration to Plan for Extreme Heat in US Border Policies, Abandon Deterrence Model

Date: September 25, 2021 | Source: Human Rights Watch



Should Vegans Be Concerned About the Mental Health Of Farmers?

Date: October 27, 2021 | Source: The Bearded Vegans

Chocolate Is One of the Most Damaging Foods to the Environment—Here's Why

Date: November 2, 2021 | Source: Well + Good





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HELP US IN THE FIGHT TO BRING FOOD JUSTICE TO ALL

By recognizing and making informed food choices, we can prevent injustices against people, the environment, and animals. Your support will help Food Empowerment Project get one step closer to a more just and sustainable world.

DONATE TODAY



www.foodispower.org/give

We appreciate your support of our programs.
We are a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and all donations are tax deductible.

Keep up with all the latest F.E.P. news on our social media platforms!

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