2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

FOOD IS POWER.ORG

got colonization?
gotcolonization.com
Dear Friends,

What a year 2022 was for Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.)! Not only did we celebrate our 15th anniversary—our quinceañera—but thanks to your support we had one of our most successful years yet. The message from our new One Glass at a Time anti-dairy campaign, for instance, was seen by hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Our annual School Supply Drive resulted in us delivering nearly 1,000 backpacks filled with school supplies to the children of farm workers. We redesigned our Chocolate List app, making it easier than ever to navigate while you browse for vegan chocolates and to submit requests for F.E.P. to review companies’ practices. And we turned VeganLaoFood.com into the latest in our series of printed recipe booklets for vegans and the veg-curious.

Those are just a few highlights you’ll read about in this report, which covers F.E.P.’s most important successes of 2022 in our four main areas of work: promoting veganism for the animals; increasing access to healthy foods in Black, Brown, and low-income communities; advocating for the rights of farm workers; and educating consumers about the worst forms of child labor—including slavery—in the chocolate industry. You’ll also read about our campaign in support of Amy’s Kitchen workers, for which we got an enormous amount of press in 2022.

Looking back at our early days as a small, all-volunteer group, it is truly remarkable to see how we’ve grown into a powerful and internationally respected staffed organization. Food Empowerment Project could not have come this far without our wonderful supporters, and we think you will be pleased to learn that in 2022, 73% of our budget went toward F.E.P.’s programs.

Thank you again for your commitment to vegan food justice and to F.E.P.’s mission to inform people about the many ways that their individual choices have a real and lasting impact. It is because of your support that we have the strength and the financial ability to do what we do, and we are deeply grateful.

With much appreciation,

The Food Empowerment Project Team
HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

VEGANISM

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

ANTI-DAIRY CAMPAIGN

On National Milk Day (January 11), we released our new eight-page anti-dairy booklet, One Glass at a Time! The booklet examines how dairy milk production harms non-human animals, workers, and the environment, as well as its role in colonization and environmental racism. The booklet was made available for free on our new website GotColonization.com. Among the thousands who ordered copies of the booklet were the Tamien tribe in the Santa Clara Valley, California, and an additional network of tribes in Canada, who each requested copies in bulk.

In February 2022, we gave the campaign a big boost by unveiling two billboards—one in Oakland, California, and another in Madison, Wisconsin—with the message “Got Colonization?” and directing consumers to the special website. The Oakland billboard was located near Mills College, where it was viewed by an estimated 73,000 adults per week, while the other billboard was placed near the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where it was seen by some 217,000 adults per week. (California and Wisconsin are the number-one and number-two dairy-producing states.)

We also promoted the campaign with a video, which you can find here: bit.ly/Anti-Dairy. The billboards and video resulted in a huge wave of activity on the website. From February to March 2022, visits increased by 440 percent, new visitors went up by 491 percent, and views saw a bump of 474 percent. Moreover, a Wisconsin-based media executive was so impressed by the billboard there that they gave F.E.P. a discount on print and digital ads in their newspapers (Wisconsin State Journal and The Capital Times) and on Madison.com.

VEGAN LAO FOOD

We followed up the 2021 launch of VeganLaoFood.com with our latest recipe booklet, Vegan Lao Food. Featuring nearly a dozen delicious Lao plant-based recipes, ranging from Khao Poon (Curry Soup) to a veganized version of Larb (a traditional favorite), Vegan Lao Food was inspired by F.E.P’s first intern and former board member, Sharon Daraphonhdeth, who wanted to share delicious Lao recipes while honoring Lao traditions. “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.”

You can order these booklets on VeganLaoFood.com. Of course, we hope you will also check out VeganFilipinoFood.com and VeganMexicanFood.com!

NEW RECIPES

Did you know that F.E.P. is adding recipes to our sites all the time? It’s all part of our effort to help people go and stay vegan. One of the recipes we added in 2022 is pandesal, a staple bread roll in the Philippines, traditionally enjoyed at breakfast, which you’ll find on VeganFilipinoFood.com. It is naturally vegan, being made from flour, yeast, salt, sugar, oil, and water.

On VeganMexicanFood.com, meanwhile, we added a tamarind salsa recipe; this versatile condiment is as delicious in tacos as it is on fruit salads. And on our Vegan Recipes page (foodispower.org/recipes-meals/) you’ll find our new recipe for chocolate chip pumpkin muffins; perfect for fall or any time of year, they are as easy to make as they are delicious.

FIGHT FOR THE OCEAN

On August 30, we marked our fifth-annual Fight for the Ocean Day! As you may know, we launched our Fight for the Ocean Day in 2018 to help commemorate the birthday of oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle. Fight for the Ocean is a day to inform those who eat “seafood” that fishing nets kill many other species, including whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and sharks. It’s a day to put into practice the belief that, as vegans, we may feel we are doing our part by not consuming sea creatures, or any animals, but we also need to do more. That’s why we encourage people to take action by organizing a clean-up at a local beach, lake, river, or creek. In 2022, we included a vegan honey walnut shrimp recipe and a video educational series on marine animals, and we collaborated with the incredibly talented artist Caiti Rose of Shartopia to present some free coloring pages filled with ideas on how people can help ocean creatures. We also offered free ocean fact sheets and information cards.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

NEW ONLINE PAGES

We are constantly adding resources to our website, and in 2022, we added a page on avocados and revamped and re-released our vegan foods page. Why a page on avocados? Well, vegans and omnivores alike consume 11 billion pounds of them every year, but there are some environmental and social downsides to this green superfood, so we’ve examined how avocados are produced to help you make informed choices. Did you know, for example, that avocado production is highly water-intensive, using an average of 70 liters per avocado? Or that growing avocados is so lucrative that farmers cut down older trees and replace them with young avocado trees, draining local water supplies and leading to deforestation? Or that the economic success of avocado production has led to a variety of human rights abuses? We’re not asking people to stop eating avocados, but our page—which is available in English and Spanish—does include some suggestions for those who want to eat with their ethics.

Our revamped vegan foods page, meanwhile, covers a wide variety of the most popular vegan food products—local and global brands alike. Among the upgrades, we have included additional information about certain food with a “learn more” hyperlink. Beside Impossible”, for example, is a link to an article about the company’s decision to test on animals, while a hyperlink next to Amy’s Kitchen explains that we cannot currently recommend their products due to concerns about how they treat their workers. Visit the vegan foods page (in English and Spanish) at foodispower.org/find-vegan-foods/. And if there are any brands that you love that are not on the page, please contact us!

AMY’S KITCHEN

Speaking of Amy’s Kitchen, many of their workers spent 2022 speaking out against how the company mistreats them, and F.E.P. was there in solidarity. Amy’s Kitchen is a Bay Area-based frozen food enterprise known for its organic vegan and vegetarian meals, and they proudly tout themselves as a small, family-owned, socially responsible business.

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CHOPPED WITH A VEGAN TWIST

F.E.P. hosted a special online event called Chopped with a Vegan Twist. It was created especially for people who love to watch cooking shows such as the Food Network’s Chopped but hate when they use animal ingredients. In our version, we challenged three very talented vegan chefs—Juan Kirby, Norma Pérez, and Mariah Ragland—to create two dishes each using some surprising ingredients: chickpeas, olives, coffee, and apple honey or date syrup for an entrée, and avocado, chocolate, an ear of corn, and a tomato for a dessert. Along with discovering some new tips and tricks from the chefs, attendees learned about F.E.P.’s work surrounding food justice, such as farm worker rights and transparency in the chocolate industry, and what impact they can make with their food choices.

We had some great guest speakers, too. Eunice Jarquin of Equal Exchange spoke about fair trade avocados and how her company operates as a co-op; Santa Clara University Professor Christopher Bacon, co-founder of the Environmental Justice and Common Good Initiative, discussed the impact of coffee production; and Dr. Amie Breeze Harper, founder of the Sistah Vegan Project, talked about the role F.E.P. has played in her work for social justice. Meanwhile, our newest board member, Jessian Choy, spoke about the importance of supporting F.E.P.

Attendees also had the opportunity to vote on awards for our culinary artists in three categories: best plating (Mariah for her “chicken” and waffles), best ingredient transformation (Juan for his chickpea patty sandwich), and crowd favorite (Norma for her pastelitos). And one lucky attendee was chosen at random to receive a shipment of Lagusta’s Luscious chocolates! A post-event survey found our Chopped with a Vegan Twist show was a hit. Sam C., for example, wrote: “I didn’t want the event to end. The educational parts were excellent!” That’s why we’re planning another installment.

We featured 3 incredible vegan chefs to cook up some tasty dishes using mystery ingredients!
HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

AMY’S KITCHEN • • • CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

“We choose what’s best for our customers, our farmers, our employees and our planet,” their website reads. “It’s a tall order, but we wouldn’t have it any other way.” Unfortunately, when workers exposed startling labor practices—including dangerously fast production lines, chronic injuries due to poor safety standards, complaints of sexual harassment being ignored, lack of access to restrooms and drinking water, and locked fire exits—and began discussing the formation of a union, they were met with silence and union-busting tactics.

When F.E.P. learned what was happening behind the scenes at a food company that claims to treat their employees “like family,” we began amplifying the workers’ demands for a safer workplace, improved and affordable health care, and a living wage. Our founder, Lauren Ornelas, penned a letter to Andy Berliner, Amy’s Kitchen CEO, in which she wrote, “If your company went into this business for the animals, it is unconscionable to not give that same respect to your workers. If you started your company to advance the healthy aspects of plant-based eating, it is outrageous to then disregard the health of your own workers.”

We also supported a nationwide consumer boycott of Amy’s Kitchen products and campaigned for many worker-owned markets to pull these products from their shelves and frozen food sections. After the company closed its factory in San José, California—costing the jobs of more than 300 people who were looking to unionize—F.E.P. co-organized a press conference in front of the plant. At the end of the event, we distributed 300 orange ribbons representing the laid-off workers and invited attendees to tie them onto the fence in front of Amy’s Kitchen as a demonstration of solidarity. Images of workers attaching these ribbons were quickly shared around the world. Indeed, with our help, the issue of how Amy’s Kitchen mistreats their employees has been covered in The Washington Post, The San Francisco Chronicle, KQED, Forbes, The Press Democrat, Vegetarian Times, and many other news outlets.

We rounded off the year by trying to deliver to the Amy’s Kitchen headquarters in Petaluma, California, a letter signed by 75 vegan, labor, and community organizations and authors in support of the company’s workers. Unfortunately, they locked the doors on us and refused to allow the letter to be delivered. Luckily, a Petaluma city councilmember succeeded in hand-delivering the letter the very next day.

This company’s abuse of its workers is another example of what F.E.P. means when we say that just because something is vegan that doesn’t always mean it’s cruelty-free!

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

F.E.P. has been coordinating a School Supply Drive for the children of farm workers since 2013, when we recognized how much these kids needed—and appreciated—backpacks, pencils, notebooks, pens, and the other supplies so essential to a successful school year. This is one of our favorite events because we can give something back to the people who plant, grow, and pick the foods we all eat. Thanks to your compassion and generosity, we delivered 980 backpacks filled with school supplies in 2022! We could not have done this without you and without the support of many hard-working volunteers.

As rewarding as the School Supply Drive is, it is a lot of work. Just like every other year, 2022’s event found F.E.P. volunteers gathered in July for days of endless counting, backpack sorting, and school supply shopping. And after figuring out how to fit more than 400 backpacks in a minivan, we set off to three different drop-off locations.

We learned very quickly on our drop-offs that certain things happen for a reason. When our first drop-off location for 2022 didn’t go as planned, we went to the farm workers at the local grape fields and delivered directly to them! This sudden shift turned our School Supply Drive into one of our best. Farm workers collected all 400 backpacks for their kids, nephews, nieces, and cousins and called on friends to get some for themselves. They ensured no one was left behind. One farmworker was still in school, and after picking some backpacks for his family members, he asked if he could have one too. This is a testament to how selfless and deserving they are of this mutual-aid act. We thanked the farm workers for everything they’ve done and continue to do for us. They kept sharing how grateful they were, and we expressed how much we appreciate all they do for us.

For our second drop-off location, we met up with our friends at Movimiento Cultural de la Unión Indígena, an Indigenous-led organization made up of Oaxacan migrants in California. This community-led organization centers on language justice and ensures students stay engaged and connected to their culture, customs, and traditions. We’ve worked closely with this resilient group in the past few years and were able to deliver 400 backpacks to them.

Finally, we worked with Lizabeth Valdez in the Central Valley, where we dropped off our remaining 180 backpacks. Lizabeth does incredible work to protect the rights of farm workers and is an essential part of our School Supply Drive every year! Thank you to everyone who shared our posts, donated funds, and shipped supplies directly to our office in 2022.
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, UPDATE
As we have reported in previous reviews, in 2020, Growing Healthy People for Pittsburg (GHPP), a group in Pittsburg, California, asked us to conduct an assessment on the availability of healthy foods in their community. The next year, F.E.P. undertook a comprehensive survey and focus groups addressing the availability of healthy foods in the city. The initial phase of the project involved assessing community needs through survey work in conjunction with a local university. The results of this research and survey work (which followed a review of the data by a second academic department) suggested that the community did not demonstrate the food access profile initially expressed by community partners, so further research was needed. In 2022, GHPP told us that because they did not have the organizational capacity to continue—and since the community’s circumstances had shifted when a new grocery store opened—they decided to bring F.E.P.’s work in Pittsburg to a close.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD
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.

CHOCOLATE
Tragically, more than 2 million children (some as young as five) are believed to be working on cocoa farms—primarily in Western Africa and Brazil—and that’s why chocolate has been at the core of F.E.P.’s work since our founding in 2007. Chances are most of the chocolate available in stores is tainted by unjust labor practices, and that was borne out by media coverage in 2022, including an investigation by England’s Channel 4 that exposed how children have been found working in Ghana to harvest cocoa pods used by food giant Mondelez International, makers of “accidentally vegan” products such as Oreo™ cookies, among others. Undercover footage shows children barefoot, wearing shorts and T-shirts, using long machetes to harvest cocoa pods and clear weeds. One child, Michelle, said she had not had any contact with her family for five years and is not allowed to attend school; she said she is being forced to work.

The good news is we can all do something about this: we can avoid purchasing chocolate from the worst forms of child labor, including slavery. With that goal in mind, in 2011 F.E.P. created a list of chocolates that we do and do not recommend based on where they source their cocoa. You’ll find that list on our website (in English, Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese). Two years later, we converted the list into a free app available in both Apple and Android versions.

In 2022, we redesigned our Chocolate List app, making it easier than ever to navigate while you browse for vegan chocolates and to submit requests for F.E.P. to review companies’ practices.

- Users have the option of adding companies to their favorites and contacting them on social media—either to commend them for being on F.E.P.’s recommended list or to call them out for using cocoa sourced from where the worst forms of child labor are most prevalent.
- If a company isn’t found on the list, users can enter information for us to contact the company.
- There is also a new feature that allows Android and Apple users to scan a chocolate label’s barcode and automatically search the list.

Find a company not on our list? Let us know! We are constantly researching and adding companies that manufacture at least one vegan chocolate.

F.E.P. was also excited to add a video recipe for vegan chocolate cake to our website. You’ll find the video at https://foodispower.org/recipes-meals/vegan-chocolate-cake/.

MAJOR UPDATE ON OUR CHOCOLATE PAGE
As we have reported in previous reviews, in 2020, Pittsburg store opened—they decided to bring F.E.P.’s work in circumstances had shifted when a new grocery capacity to continue—and since the community’s so further research was needed. In 2022, GHPP told profile initially expressed by community partners, the community did not demonstrate the food access by a second academic department) suggested that survey work (which followed a review of the data a local university. The results of this research and needs through survey work in conjunction with phase of the project involved assessing community the availability of healthy foods in the city. The initial comprehensive survey and focus groups addressing their community. The next year, F.E.P. undertook a assessment on the availability of healthy foods in group in Pittsburg, California, asked us to conduct Growing Healthy People for Pittsburg (GHPP), a Brown communities and low-income communities foods—access that is often denied to Black and F.E.P. aims to improve access to fresh, healthy 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. Here is a selection of 10 of the public discussions and appearances that were made throughout 2022.

**APPEARANCES:**

Interview with Bronx High School of Science students

Peace Advocacy Network talk

Environmental Crime Class – Iona College

Brooks Congress panel

Collective Liberation – George Washington University Law School

USF talk (law students)

Austin Pets Alive! virtual chat

Stanford University talk

Faunalytics panel

Zoomers to Boomers – The Raven Corps.

**PODCASTS:**

HOLDING POWER THROUGH FOOD CHOICES

LAUREN ORNELAS
FOUNDER/PRESIDENT AT FOOD EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

THE PURPOSE OVER PROFIT PODCAST

The Raven Corps.

Zoomers to Boomers – Wheels For All

Vegan Boss Radio

APPEARANCES:

ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS IN 2022
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 2022. Please see our website for a more comprehensive list.)

**Animal Liberation Is Climate Justice**
Date: January 23, 2022 | Source: New Politics

**Buying shuttered Aldi’s site is good, but city must do more to eliminate food deserts**
Date: March 1, 2022 | Source: Chicago Sun-Times

**Calls for a Boycott of Amy’s Kitchen Grow Amid Allegations of Workplace Safety Issues**
Date: March 4, 2022 | Source: Vegetarian Times

**Vegan Food Activists Call for Amy’s Kitchen Boycott on Heels of Worker Complaints**
Date: March 4, 2022 | Source: SF Eater.com

**Inside the controversy at Amy’s Kitchen, the Bay Area’s wildly popular organic food company**
Date: April 12, 2022 | Source: The SF Chronicle

**How to Know If Avocados Have Gone Bad**
Date: December 15, 2022 | Source: The List

**How Lauren Ornelas and Food Empowerment Project Are Leading the Food Justice Movement (Exclusive)**
Date: May 10, 2022 | Source: Green Matters

**Lingering ‘Food Deserts’ Spark Calls for Further Federal Help**
Date: June 3, 2022 | Source: Bloomberg Government

**Employees protest mistreatment at major San Jose food plant**
Date: August 2, 2022 | Source: San Jose Spotlight

**Hypocrisy At Amy’s Kitchen: Can A Food Company Be Truly Sustainable When It Comes To Worker Rights?**
Date: August 9, 2022 | Source: Forbes

**Eliminating Child Labor in the Cocoa Industry**
Date: August 19, 2022 | Source: Borgen Magazine

**Amy’s Kitchen vs. Its Workers**
Date: August 24, 2022 | Source: Eater

**What You Need to Know About the Amy’s Kitchen Boycott**
Date: October 11, 2022 | Source: Sliced

**Nutrition Advice Has Major Cultural Gaps That No One Talks About**
Date: October 21, 2022 | Source: Prevention

**Amy’s Kitchen Worker Abuse**
Date: October 26, 2022 | Source: The Majority Report

**Amy’s Kitchen Accused of Unsafe Working Conditions, Protest at Headquarters**
Date: November 15, 2022 | Source: KCBS News Radio

**Why Change Chocolate?**
Date: December 15, 2022 | Source: WNWN Food Labs

**Leaders in Animal Protection: Lauren Ornelas**
Date: May 3, 2022 | Source: Vegan Hacktivists