



Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Community Gardens & Farms in Practice

[LVEJO](#) is a 20+ year community organization located in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. Our mission is to organize with our community towards environmental justice in Little Village and achieve the self-determination of immigrant, low-income, and working-class families. We do this organizing to hold local polluting industries accountable while imagining sustainable and healthy realities via a Just Transition framework. Our vision is to build a sustainable community that promotes the healthy development of youth and families, provides economic justice, and practices participatory democracy and self-determination.

We currently steward two agricultural spaces in Little Village; the Semillas de Justicia Community Garden and La Villita Community Farm. Semillas de Justicia is a 9-year-old, and still growing community garden with 100 garden beds where over 30+ immigrant families grow their own food. Semillas de Justicia offers its space to the community, whether it be for get togethers, workshops, meetings, programming with families (such as art), and supporting our gardeners projects they might have in mind.

This helps us create a space of trust, companionship, and a healthy work environment where we practice a new work system always open to change and new ideas. While keeping intact the root environmental justice / food justice principles of what our work actually means as we are there daily.

We like to think of the garden as a green safe space where one comes to recharge, get away for a while, and reorganize within themselves. While also having our support as organizers / land workers. That way they can care for themselves as they continue to organize and work towards climate justice in their own way, while also sharing their ideas and projects others might have in common within this same space.

La Villita Community Farm is a recently activated agricultural space located within a public park (La Villita Park) with the goal of practicing production farming and developing curriculum for an “Escuelita Agricola” (informal agricultural school), as a farm school for children. Our goal is to combine small-scale Indigenous farming practices, livestock care, and community healing

into a space where community members can expand their knowledge of land reclamation and stewardship. The farm and park are located in a former superfund site where, after 15 years of community organizing, it has been remediated and converted into a public

Farm. Food. Familias Mutual-Aid Meals and Grocery Distribution(FFF) is a project co-led by Getting Grown Collective and the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization with support from 4 community chefs to prepare and deliver meals to families in Little Village, Englewood, South Chicago and other neighborhoods on the southside of Chicago. FFF started with 50 weekly meals on May 6th, 2020 and has been consistently serving 350 meals weekly to this day. FFF also distributes 200 produce boxes weekly to families in these same communities.

FFF services some of the most affected communities by lack of access to food, increased loss of work, systematic disenfranchisement, strained access to

healthcare, an overload of local food pantries, COVID-19 and other food & environmental- related health issues. These communities also have a high number of folks working as essential workers. FFF aims to provide community members with weekly nutritional and culturally significant meals and produce as an offering of nourishment and mutual care

In the learning circle, we came together to further understand the role that sustainable and community-led agricultural spaces have in our collective liberation as people of color. Stewarding natural spaces gives us an opportunity to restore and/or support the continuation of natural ecosystems in relation to, not exclusion of, humans and specifically racialized communities. We realized that growing spaces can be catalysts for other organizing sectors as they not only offer a physical space, but also an integrated “natural systems” framework where we learn that we are all intrinsically connected and our liberation is bound to one another, to non-human relatives, and natural spaces.

This practice is an excerpt from the Learning Circle Brief, *From Food Justice to Liberation: Building Community Power through Community Gardens & Urban Farms*.