

# FINDING COMMON GROUND

REIMAGINING A MEMORIAL MULTICULTURAL FOOD FOREST ON PIER 48 IN RESPONSE TO  
THE HISTORY OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION AND EXCLUSION IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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**Abstract**

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This thesis explores a systems thinking approach through speculative and creative storytelling in response to the history of Chinese immigration and exclusion in Seattle. I reimagine an inclusive future where a multicultural food forest along Pier 48 memorializes the 350 Chinese immigrants who were expelled from Seattle's waterfront during the 1886 riots. This narrative explores our connection to the more than human world and relationship to place. Historically, fungi, an imported culturally relevant food source, contributed to the physical strength of Chinese railroad workers known to work longer and harder than non-Chinese workers. Fungi thus serves as a character in my storytelling as a symbol for resilience, showing how ancestral food created a sense of place for the International District community. Growing culturally relevant food in this memorial multicultural food forest can help us honor history in a way which further explores the connections between social-ecological living systems for compassionate co creation. Connecting the importance of ecological diversity in soil organisms in this future food forest to the diversity of culturally relevant plants, to banding across ethnic lines communally as a multicultural community can help us imagine a resilient and healthy future (holistically). The exploration of the connection between soil, plants and people can help us find common ground and humanity. Speculative fiction thus can be a tool for landscape architects to utilize before diving into a permanent design.



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## I. Introduction

As a first generation Asian American born in the San Francisco Bay Area, understanding my ancestry has always played an important role in how I understand my place in the world, and what makes me who I am. I come from a Chinese and Korean American diaspora with parents who migrated to America for a better life. My father's family's place of origin is Guangzhou, while my mother's is Seoul. My mother's family fled from the effects of the Korean War in Seoul where my grandfather was a military general at the time. My dad's side of the family fled from Communist China to Hong Kong with my other grandfather who also worked for the military.

I have long grappled with how intergenerational history plays a role in shaping my personal and social-cultural identity while carefully observing the ancestral trauma that come from surviving and creating a home in a foreign place. Despite the lifetime of learning how to embrace history and understand and heal ancestral patterns, I've noted how the food I eat has always been a main grounding and positive source of cultural connection to myself, my family, and to others. Food has provided a sense of belonging and sense of presence in the moment while physically providing nourishment and connection. It has helped me form fond memories and attachments to my personal identity as well as develop a sense of reverence for ancestral food from my heritage. To me, the food from my cultures represents a form of social resilience and is a tactical expression of survival, love, and connection in the ever flowing change and continuum of life.

I find comfort in the cooking of food from the cultures of my parents - in my mother's kkori gomtang, my favorite oxtail soup before bone broth became a trend in American cuisine, and in my father's ginkgo chicken jook (congee). Both dishes to this day feed me, and infuse in me a sense of joy, mental relief, connection, and vitality. My father's medicinal herbal soups bring me back "home" with memories transporting me to when I was a child stealing sips of herbal soups brewed from cordyceps, ginseng, goji berries, and Chinese black chicken he said were meant for adults, and that he now prepares for me as an adult, especially during the cold Seattle winter months. Watching my grandmother since I was a child at her side crouched over on the ground of her kitchen churning different types of kimchi in her huge metal bowls to feed us for months while her enormous, brown clay pots outside her patio were fermenting soybeans for Korean miso are experiences that sparked my senses and curiosity to learn from her along with an anxiousness to not lose these traditions when she passes. Learning these traditions is much more than simply making and eating the food; it's a main ancestral knowledge that my family and I have learned for how to survive, enjoy, and thrive in the world. I get anxious about not learning all her exact recipes. They represent my childhood, joy, memories, and so much more.

Though I am not fully fluent in the Korean language, I feel a sense of home growing up within my cultures, as traditions around food are the main medium in which I connect with my grandmother. This is where I felt life began for me as a child; through my senses, where I remember a sense of feeling alive, safe, and well when next to my grandma's food. My four-year-old memories of her continuously replenishing my bowl of my favorite doenjang jjigae (soybean stew) until I absolutely couldn't even move or eat anymore represented an act of love, as she made sure I would never go hungry, unlike my parents who did not have the same privilege to know what feeling full felt like. The pleasure of smelling and tasting all the aromatic flavors with their distinct palates of hot, spicy, sweet, sour, and gamey in all of their deliciousness bring me a sense of deep connection to food as a symbolic pillar to my identity as a Korean and Chinese American.

Food plays a critical role in helping immigrants cope with new foreign places personally and socially.<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists such as John D. Holtzman have studied food in connection to memory, expressing food as "deeply symbolic, sensuous, psychological, and social."<sup>2</sup> Food, as tangible material within the physical environment, invokes "mnemonic cues"<sup>3</sup> through physical textures, taste, and smell which are informed by a cultural

and historic past. As feelings of dislocation and disorientation are common for migrants in new host places, the activities around preparing, producing, and consuming food specific to one's cultural connection to their place of origin reestablish a new sense of place.<sup>4</sup> The unique preparation of culturally relevant food thus is a way to claim identity from the external world to the internal "incorporation" of consumption as a foundation of identity. As cultural anthropologist Claude Fischler puts it, "we are what we eat."<sup>5</sup>

Foodways enable a personal and collective sense of belonging by linking the past and forming a community around a sense of place and home within oneself and others. As cultural, social, and economic practices relating to the production and consumption of food your ancestors ate in the evolutionary history of food, foodways include traditions of food production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing, and uses of food products other than for eating and food folklore.<sup>6</sup> Not only does food connect migrants with a shared identity reflecting their own history and facilitating the acclimation of a new place, it also connects others from different backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Food has been a form of survival into a new and foreign place for immigrants and is essential to our identities.<sup>8</sup> Given this, I ask, how can we imagine new ways of relationality around multiculturalism and food?

For this thesis, I explore how growing a culturally relevant, multicultural, memorial food forest on Pier 48 in Seattle can respond to the history of Chinese immigration, exclusion, and expulsion and can create a sense of belonging in the surrounding community today. I trace connections between food and Chinese history in Seattle, the immigrant experience, and social resilience through growing and importing culturally relevant food. Growing culturally relevant food in the Chinatown- International District was made possible through multicultural collaboration, and is a relevant example of how immigrant foodways maintained the well-being of the international community in Seattle. In the face of marginalization and displacement, food expressing cultural identity provided a sense of belonging.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, with the rise in current attacks on the Asian American and Pacific Islander community since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, sparked by Donald Trump's harmful anti-Asian rhetoric, it is more important than ever to address and amplify the history of exclusion more presently in the physical landscape by honoring a key memory in Seattle's history. Memorializing the Chinese ancestors who were pushed out of Seattle as well as celebrating the overall social resilience of the international community in the face of exclusion with a multicultural, memorial food forest can rightfully address the ongoing racism with an avenue forward; one focused on compassionate multicultural collaboration through foodways to deepen ties with the earth and each other.

The hateful discrimination towards Chinese immigrants in Seattle which resulted in the devastating 1886 riots on Pier 48, where 350 Chinese immigrants were violently expelled and sent off on the Queen of the Pacific steamship to San Francisco,<sup>10</sup> is a pivotal moment in Seattle's history that needs to be memorialized. With the recent rise in hate crimes, including the eight people massacred in Atlanta, six of whom were Asian American women killed by a white supremacist, it is paramount to reflect on this history that led to the 1886 riots as it very much parallels the same violence we see today. Radically responding to a history of racial violence symbolically with food to form deep bonds with the earth and each other proclaims the birthright of all humans to exist and thrive. By reconciling with the violence committed to not only these ancestors but to those still being harmed and affected today can teach us what realities we do not want to continually relive and how we want to lead instead as a collective community; a future where social justice, equity, and belonging are prioritized.

Landscape architects have the chance to address equity by creating spaces that build more avenues for multicultural collaboration and conscious community connection. Food landscapes can serve as a bridge for

how we may form more collaborations across ethnic lines by building and growing a livelihood imagining new relationality around foodways; one built on trust and compassion to understand our multicultural differences and our common humanity. This can be done by deepening one of the most essential and common connections we have with each other, which is with the earth starting from the care of our soil to the food on our plates. The connections we make around foodways can help build towards our collective well-being as it speaks to our nourishment, survival, and connection to each other. Ecologist and food rights advocate Vandana Shiva reminds us that food becomes our true currency of life,<sup>11</sup> as it allows us to forge new community connections across cultures and histories while preserving important food traditions. These traditions help maintain the biodiversity of our ecosystems connected to the growth of whole nutritious, culturally relevant foods and aid in the overall health of the planet.

### A food forest as a new memorial engaging living systems

Having a memorial as a food forest can forge new community connections by celebrating different cultures and histories. Though memorials are designed to preserve a memory of a person(s) or a somber event usually marked by a structure or static piece in the landscape, I would like to challenge what a memorial can offer by being a living system. In turn, my question for this thesis asks: How can living systems, such as food forests growing culturally relevant plants, commemorate erased/suppressed immigrant histories?

Reframing the notion of memorials as living systems challenges designers to not simply stop at a historic tragedy, but to instead reflect with an active and working response in the present. By celebrating the mosaic of cultural identities in connection to the culturally relevant plants and ways of life attached to them made around growing food, a food forest memorial can be a place for healing and serve as a reminder of the social resilience and empowerment of people who continuously rise up at all costs. By being in a right relationship with the earth and each other, in the participation of a living system built on reciprocity, a food forest memorial is an opportunity to rebuild our relationship with the earth and each other while honoring our ancestral wisdom and strength through our foodways; foodways that have preserved over time with plants we have evolved with that are a testament to our sense of belonging with the earth and as a key to our survival. The importance of unifying as a multicultural collective in response to Chinese history and exclusion is about accountability for how we come together in standing against oppression. Because of this, I wish to explore the potentials of Pier 48 for growing food and how it could celebrate and memorialize different cultures and histories while forging new connections.

The social resiliency that emerged out of Chinese immigration history in Seattle involving food and culture is a catalyst for reimagining what equality and social justice can look, smell, taste, and feel like in this food forest. The proposed culturally relevant, food forest is a way to honor that history and explore the connections between the life in soil, plants, and people in order to bridge a deeper understanding of a harmonious, reciprocal, regenerative living system from a systems thinking perspective. The social and environmental benefits include a balanced ecosystem, physical nutrition, personal sovereignty over our health and well-being, connection to culture and a sense of belonging, a spiritual connection to the earth, ancestral wisdom and community empowerment. By deepening the collective connection through multicultural collaboration with respect towards the multiplicitous ways of life, a food forest thus grows as the people grow in deepening the relationships between each other and in experimentation with the natural processes of life. It is an overall transformative process for every being, living, and nonliving.

A food forest mimics layered forest ecosystems and consists of eight layers: the overstory, understory, shrub, herbaceous, root, ground cover, vine, and mycelial.<sup>12</sup> Making the most of vertical and horizontal space, food forests are self-sustaining and mimic forest edges where competition between different species are low and where resources are balanced.<sup>13</sup> As a productive and low maintenance landscape, a food forest is able to accommodate a diverse range of species to coexist as space is optimized while upholding a balanced system of mutualism between species.<sup>14</sup> Food supply is continuous through the year due to the high biodiversity and natural decomposers to help build a healthy soil system and structure through a natural composting process utilizing organic matter on site.<sup>15</sup> A food forest ultimately emulates a real forest where the soil is living and natural pest control detracts the need for pesticides.<sup>16</sup> As Pier 48 boasts a unique location that acts as an edge between land and water, a food forest at this location can help mitigate flood and drought, retain water, and overall cultivate more biodiversity and habitat for wildlife. Cultivating interspecies relationships and multispecies alliances in this place can begin a conversation on what equity can look like in this food forest ecosystem for all the actors involved, human and non human, showing how equity in social and ecological systems are connected.

By valuing diversity from the microorganisms in the soil, to the culturally relevant plants that speak to the beauty of the cultures in connection to them, we can begin a deeper conversation on how liberation can be catalyzed by this food forest. Imagining the connection from the soil to the food on our plates, the diverse preparation of different cultural tastes, to the laughter and cheer around the dinner table, sharing rituals and celebrations, to moments of sharing a piece of ancestral plant wisdom in total reverence to the holistic connection with the earth; we can start to paint a picture of a viable future that works for all.

In order to express this reality, I utilize speculative fiction as a main process for exploration from a systems thinking point of view to explore a natural system working as a productive and transformative process. I trace connections of Chinese American history, cultural identity and belonging across time, and utilize concepts such as tentacular thinking, interspecies relationships, and multispecies collaboration to expand upon the activities and relationships that take place in this food forest.

A few major concepts inform my approach on how I use storytelling and envision the food forest as a whole: system thinking and memorials. The concept of systems thinking as explained by Joanna Macy formulates the baseline of my approach for how I see the relationships in this food forest as parts functioning for the whole and as whole systems within itself.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Donna Haraway's concept of tentacular thinking,<sup>18</sup> interspecies relationships, and multispecies collaboration also captivates me to frame how I am creatively exploring speculative fiction as a tool to bring this place to life. As I am bringing the two concepts of food forests and memorials together to explore how memorials can be a living system, I am interested in how we can form a deeper relationship with more than the human world. In tentacular thinking and interspecies relationships, I think about the non-linear entanglement between different species.<sup>19</sup> In multispecies collaboration, I explore the relationship we have with plants and other beings and how fiction explores an equitable approach for how humans can start to be in a state of reverence towards living and non living beings that have sustained and kept us alive; ultimately aiming to deepen this relationship and unravel what this connection means to us. What do we owe to them and each other? Unraveling our reciprocal role can shed a holistic picture of our connection to plants, the soil, and each other. As these concepts are also based on indigenous knowledge that has been repackaged by Western thinkers, I would like to acknowledge these indigenous origins. I have also selected speculative fiction as my narrative genre because it allows me to freely weave and explore upon these concepts. I find the freedom of creativity that comes with the process and exploring the depths of imagination as necessary steps for me as a designer.

### Speculative fiction as an exploratory tool

Speculative fiction offers a vehicle for uninhibited imagination for diving into the depths of narrative by working with the power of words to deepen the relationship of place as a process enacted before designing an actual site and can ultimately serve as an exploration that can benefit landscape architects to expand their creative vocabulary. Coming from our dreamspace, fiction can evoke imagined, supernatural, and futuristic elements and takes place beyond our known or "real" world.<sup>20</sup> Margaret Atwood defines speculative fiction as literature that deals with possibilities in a society which have not yet been enacted or are latent.<sup>21</sup> This enables certain connections not otherwise found in linear approaches to redevelop our relationship with life, our belief and value system that then translates into the actions we take in the "real" world to make change.<sup>22</sup>

Because fiction enables life to present itself non-linearly, evoking multidimensional aspects, it allows me to dynamically engage with all the elements present in this living system in "real time" as it is happening to the reader and characters. The aliveness of all the interrelationships gives a richer and more robust understanding of this food forest and how all the living processes are engaging within the space. By enchanting the present moment within the fiction, imagining life in this world encourages multiuse and new imaginative uses of a space before making hard lines for a design on paper in our "known" landscape architecture world. It is a chance to re-enchant my imagination as a powerful tool to reimagine a more equitable world, explore new meanings, shift power dynamics through an empowered narrative, and explore social dreaming beyond conditioned programming. Reclaiming our own storylines and sharing our deepest desires and dreams can be a powerful practice. Sharing alternative visions for our world through speculative fiction is a tool with the potential to share this practice with communities landscape architects help design for and to help collaborate across disciplines. It can give the power and voice back to marginalized communities to reclaim their liberation and empowerment through imagination and help shape the future.

For this speculative fiction writing process, I have chosen four main themes, exploring each theme with a short story and five vignettes to visualize the experience of the site and elements at play. The themes are:

- 1) history of Chinese immigration and exclusion in Seattle;
- 2) the importance of culturally relevant food and identity as a form of resilience;
- 3) cultural ritual and ceremony of plants, people, and food as connected to history and memory; and
- 4) the regenerative relationship of soil, people, and food in this memorial food forest celebrating diversity, preserving and remembering traditions around food, and sharing knowledge of foodways to bridge intergenerational, multicultural, and multispecies alliances.

Migrating to a foreign place takes courage and the ability to dream. Immigrants imagine new futures when they move to a foreign place and dive into the full unknown in pursuit of a new narrative for their lives. The stories we tell ourselves thus are extremely important as storytelling is a basis for how we take grounded action in the present. Understanding who is telling the story and the historical perspective of a place is also vital to our well being. This also includes what we do as landscape architects, as the narratives we create ultimately shape the place we are designing. Dreaming and imagination are two of our greatest creative tools to help us move forward, take actionable steps towards our dreams, and motivate us to physically embody a better future through our daily choices. Creatively exploring the vehicle of storytelling thus is important to me as a designer and why I utilize speculative fiction as a central method and framework.

## Endnotes

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## II. History of Chinese Immigration, Exclusion, and Expulsion in Seattle

In search of “gold mountain,” immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian province in China migrated to California for a hopeful future in the late 1800s.<sup>23</sup> By 1874, after gold was discovered in eastern Washington, many Chinese immigrants eventually came to Seattle. Cheap labor was also directly recruited from China through labor contracts from established Chinese settlers who imported and distributed resources for the Chinese immigrant community. Once gold was depleted, Chinese immigrants worked in coal mines, railroad construction, farming, fishing, lumber mills, and at canneries.<sup>24</sup> Their efforts largely contributed to Seattle’s economic growth.<sup>25</sup> However, early discrimination against Chinese immigrants was codified through anti-Chinese legislation as early as 1860, preventing Chinese from testifying against whites in court. The measure was called “An Act to Protect Free White Labor Against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor and to Discourage the Immigration of Chinese in the Territory.”<sup>26</sup> Early immigrants were even taxed simply for residing in the Washington Territory. It was apparent that early white settlers wanted to reserve Seattle for only themselves.<sup>27</sup>

In the mid 1800’s, an economic depression in the United States hit and many furious European immigrants believed their jobs were being taken from them by Chinese workers.<sup>28</sup> One prominent figure and agitator in the anti-Chinese movement was an Irish immigrant named Denis Kearny, leader of the Workingmen’s Party who coined the slogan “The Chinese Must Go!”<sup>29</sup> He was known for his racist remarks, inciting violence from laborers all along the west coast who were out of work to aggressively direct the blame towards Chinese immigrants.<sup>30</sup> His priority was to expel the Chinese immigrants from the U.S. with legislation. In a notable speech, Kearny yelled, “If the ballot fails, we are ready to use the bullet.”<sup>31</sup> Two major groups that propelled the anti-Chinese movement in Seattle were The Knights of Labor which consisted of European immigrants and the “Law and Order Group,” made up of city officials and well known citizens.<sup>32</sup> The anti-Chinese movement from 1885-1886 was determined to make sure legislative action would take place with a mission to solve the “Chinese problem,”<sup>33</sup> a term used in many local newspapers. However, despite these sentiments, many contractors consistently hired Chinese immigrants due to working longer and harder hours and at lower rates than European immigrants.<sup>34</sup>

The fight for working rights and labor conditions increased as working conditions worsened from the late 1800’s to the depression era from 1929-1939. As European immigrants went on strike for better wages, they were appeased with higher wages.<sup>35</sup> However, when Chinese immigrants also went on strike for better wages during this time they had their food supply cut off with no choice but to keep working or risk starvation.<sup>36</sup> Racist discrimination towards Asian immigrants and especially Chinese immigrants continued. European immigrants, in fury, formed labor organizations specifically to put pressure on Congress to prevent Chinese immigration. This resulted in the horrendous Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first immigration law in the U.S. to ban immigration based on race.<sup>37</sup>

After the Exclusion Act of 1882, in the span of six years, Chinese immigration to the U.S. declined from 39,500 to 10 in 1887.<sup>38</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act was also utilized to prevent other minorities of Asian descent from entering the U.S. Before the Exclusion Act, the Page Act of 1875 restricted borders from Chinese women entering the country deeming them undesirable or immoral and to end cheap Chinese labor, specifically forced labor.<sup>39</sup> Both of these acts limited immigration mainly to Chinese men who were already contracted to

come for work leaving their families at home in China as well as single men looking for work.<sup>40</sup> Women were unable to migrate, settle and create families due to this discriminatory law. Naturalization of immigrants in America was also prevented. As a result, the Chinese population was mainly male workers who were isolated and lived in single hotel rooms.<sup>41</sup> By 1910, the ratio of men to women was 13:1.<sup>42</sup> Some are preserved and are the reason there are so many single room buildings seen today in the Chinatown-International District and are physical relics of this piece of history. Anti-Asian sentiment only grew causing tension to build and eventually erupt.



Figure 1. Industrial Map of the Puget Sound, Washington (1916). “Olympic Peninsula, showing railways and steamship lines, areas of lumber and shingle production and their outputs, electric power, coal mines, flour mills, fish canneries, cement factories, milk condenseries, and other industrial and agricultural districts.” Seattle Immigration Bureau, Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railway. Source: Historic Maps Collection <https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/sc001.htm> at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>

As anti-Asian sentiment grew, so did hate crimes, sparking riots on the west coast.

On September 2nd, 1885, 28 Chinese miners were killed by white men in the Spring Rock massacre.<sup>43</sup> Just three days after this incident, 35 Chinese who were sleeping were attacked on a hop farm located in what is now modern day Issaquah, and three men were killed.<sup>44</sup> In Tacoma, 700 Chinese men were forcibly expelled.<sup>45</sup> During this time, news reached Seattle to anticipate further expulsion. People were anxiously waiting for this event to happen in Seattle after hearing about Tacoma. The U.S. Secretary of War sent federal troops to Seattle twice declaring Marshall Law to make sure more violence did not break out and that the rest of the Chinese immigrants were sent off on ships and cleanly deported.<sup>46</sup> On February 7th, 1886 near Pier 48, 350 Chinese immigrants were forcibly put on the Queen of the Pacific steamship to go back to San Francisco as 1500 people also raided the Chinese settlement during this time.<sup>47</sup> The removal resulted in fewer than 300 Chinese people living in Seattle during this time. Even after the riots, Chinese people were still violently being attacked: 25 Chinese people were massacred at China Camp in Kittitas.<sup>48</sup> Only seven Chinese immigrants survived after the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the Cascade branch, and 31 Chinese miners were later massacred that year on Snake River.<sup>49</sup> Still, the construction of Seattle continued with Chinese labor despite the attacks on the Asian community.

Even as all this upheaval and discrimination against Asian immigrants continued, Seattle was rebuilt with cheap labor by Asian immigrants after the Great Seattle Fire in 1889.<sup>50</sup> Cheap labor from Chinese people contributed immensely to what Seattle looks like today. Asian immigrant laborers worked in logging, at sawmills, in the mines, grading the city’s topography, filling major roads, and doing construction for railroads.<sup>51</sup> Major earthworks such as the Denny regrade, and later Jackson regrade of 1909, and the Montlake Cut were largely done by Chinese immigrants.<sup>52</sup> Although Chinese laborers were instrumental to Seattle’s major reconstruction of the city after the fire of 1889, then Senator Squire of Washington supported and even motivated hostility towards Chinese immigrants to continue. This overall sentiment was also mirrored on the federal level. The U.S. Senate stated, “the hiring hordes of Chinese in the towns is thought to interfere with the healthy growth and development of society, and is a constant source of uneasiness and dissatisfaction to the white laborer.”<sup>53</sup>



Figure 2. Denny Regrade, 1911. One of the major earthworks to reshape the landscape of Seattle that Chinese immigrants highly contributed to. Source: Michael Upchurch. The Seattle Times.

Figure 3. Landfills, Regrades and Cuts in Seattle. Source: Seattle Municipal Archives.

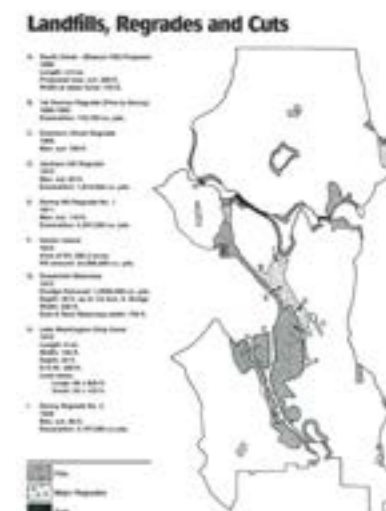




Figure 4.1- 4.13 (from left top to right, left middle to right and left bottom to right). A personal exploration using collage to trace where Chinese immigrants worked and lived. The 1916 Industrial Map is included. Lines are traced and connect to the many faces of Chinese immigrants at logging and railroad sites. The Denny Regrade and Montlake cut show all the hard work done at the height of industrialization. In the midst of economic contribution, Chinese workers experienced harsh discrimination depicted by the propaganda I use to express some of the antisentiment Chinese people faced. Chinese workers also stayed in single room hotel rooms during this time. The 1886 riots are also included to show the culmination of the overall harsh experience many faced.



Figure 5. Chinese immigrants are lined up at the wharf on Pier 48 to be sent off on the Queen of the Pacific Steamship bound for San Francisco during the 1886 riots. Source: Washington State Library.



Figure 6. Seattle Anti-Chinese Race Riot. February 7, 1886. Angry mob of 1500 people violently forcing Chinese immigrants to leave Seattle. Source: International Examiner.

Despite all the heartless prejudice towards the Asian community in Seattle, the resiliency that came with the struggle shaped over time into what is now known as the Chinatown-International District, a strong and resilient community. In many forms of displacement, spatially and psychologically, the Pan-Asian Community of the Chinatown-International District became and is a community representing strong social resilience in the face of power structures and forces of domination. Food was central to keeping a cultural sense of place to their homeland. Even in the midst of the Exclusion Act, imported goods were kept alive and contributed to the well-being of residents.<sup>54</sup> They even used it to their advantage to appease Caucasian taste buds by cooking American Chinese food. A double edge sword, the evolution of commercialization of Asian American cuisine shaped what is known as the Asian American experience. While appeasing the taste buds of white Americans, many residents made a living feeding their customers. A new identity of adaptation and survival took shape. Imported goods were important to keep the culture and livelihood of Chinese residents alive.

Chinese imported goods were a significant contributor to the livelihood and wellbeing of residents. The Nippon Yusen Kaisha and Blue Funnel steamship lines were maintained to import goods from China.<sup>55</sup> Wholesale products were sold to local restaurants, stores, and workcamps. The Wa Chong Company, Quong Tuck, and Ah King, were the largest of these companies and owners were also labor contractors organizing community members to work in different industries at the time.<sup>56</sup> Chin Gee hee, a partner of the Wa Chong Company who later opened Quong Tuck Company (one of the first brick buildings on 2nd and Washington St. constructed after the Great Seattle Fire of 1889) was a prominent labor contractor importing and exporting Chinese goods through these companies. He also was a leader and spokesperson for the Chinese people to help protect the community,<sup>57</sup> and negotiated with anti Chinese committees during the removal of Chinese immigrants. He and his family were among those who were safe and stayed in Seattle during the riots.<sup>58</sup> Overall grassroots organization around culturally imported goods and food created a sense of belonging and connection to cultural identity and contributed to the everyday diet of Chinese workers to get them through the harsh working conditions.

Diet contributed significantly to the strength and resilience of Chinese people feeding their physical bodies, heart, soul, and minds with culturally identifying foods that shaped who they were; strong resilient hard workers, working for a better life, some for their families abroad and some on their own in a foreign land. Notably, many Chinese worked longer and harder than Caucasian laborers, and had their own unique diet.<sup>59</sup> They would drink only hot tea; the Chinese menu included "dried oysters, abalone, cuttlefish, bamboo sprouts, mushrooms, five kinds of vegetables, pork, poultry, vermicelli, rice, salted cabbage, dried seaweed, sweet rice crackers, sugar, four kinds of dried fruit, Chinese bacon, and peanut oil... Seemingly, this was the forerunner of the modern American well-balanced diet. The fare of the Caucasian laborer consisted of beef, beans, bread, butter, and potatoes."<sup>60</sup> The stark difference in diet showed how food reflects cultural differences and was very important to help with physical and mental well being. Community members were able to grow and sustain a continuing resilient livelihood through organizing around culturally relevant food and soon social establishments grew and evolved with them.

Growing their means of support, community members created hubs for the establishment of social associations in the common living room areas on the top floors of single-room occupancy hotels. They also housed their imported goods in the general stores to serve the community at the ground level of these hotels. Goon Dip, a wealthy Chinese entrepreneur, and 170 other pioneers bought land and built the first buildings owned by Chinese people as anchors for the community after the Jackson regrade.<sup>61</sup> The first buildings were on King St. located on 8th and King St. and two between 7th and 8th Avenue. In 1911, Goon Dip also built the historic Milwaukee hotel on 7th

and King St. The Wing Luke museum of today is located in one of these historic buildings known as the East and West Kong Yick building, which housed the first general store of imported goods below the hotel and social associations in the “family rooms” in the upper floor which were main common areas which also housed a community kitchen and a mah jong room next to it.<sup>62</sup> People with the same surname and common ancestry as the family who owned the general store utilized the facilities.<sup>63</sup> Grassroots organizing helped establish family associations such as the GeeHow Oak Tin where the hotels became a social center and established community relationships. The Chong Wa Benevolent Association was also established and represented the Chinese community in Washington governmentally to the outside world.<sup>64</sup> As Lew G. Kay, the first Chinese graduate from the University of Washington, states in a 1909 Coast Magazine article, the Chinese were “true pioneer builders of the Great Pacific Northwest.”<sup>65</sup> Not only had the community organized to help their own people, but they connected across ethnic lines, showing the importance of how coming together multiculturally contributes to the well being for everyone.



Figure 7 left. The Gee How Oak Tin Association room. Source: Alabastro Photography. The Seattle Times.



Figure 8 right. General Store on the ground level of the East Kong Yick Building, now Wing Luke Museum. Source: Alabastro Photography. The Seattle Times.

The history of the Chinatown-International District is a unique precedent as a community that banded across ethnic lines to fight for their future displaying strong community resilience. The area grew to be unique as a multiracial community with immigrants from many different countries. By 1946 the Jackson St. Community Council was formed, a multiracial organization working to make social and economic change in the community.<sup>66</sup> African Americans, Japanese, Filipino, as well as white Americans lived in close proximity together in the Chinatown-International District and wanted to improve the wellbeing and the physical conditions of the neighborhood.<sup>67</sup> Many notable community leaders crossed ethnic lines to fight together for public housing, tenant rights, election reform, paths to naturalization, employment opportunities, and civil rights.<sup>68</sup> Inter\*Im, the Committee for the Corrective Action Program, Seattle Chinatown/International District Development Authority, were all coalitions and organizations that put pressure on the city government for the betterment of the International District Community.<sup>69</sup> With the support of multiracial campaigns and strong grassroots movements, the Chinatown-International District grew to become a resilient and multicultural community with a strong cultural presence, adding to the vibrancy of Seattle today.

Pan-ethnic leadership has been foundational to the resilience and formation of the Chinatown-International District. Bob Santos, a widely respected community leader and executive director of Inter\*im, demonstrated great leadership and showcased how valuing diversity helps bring about change. Through the organizing that occurred to make one of the first community gardens, the social resilience of the Chinatown-International District strengthened. The Danny Woo Garden continues to serve immigrant communities of the Chinatown-International District and has been a pillar for the community allowing residents to grow culturally relevant, healthy food while sustaining traditional growing practices. The “Gang of 4”--Bob Santos, Bernie Whitebear, Roberto Maestas, and Larry Gossett-- formed a Minority Executive Directors Coalition,<sup>70</sup> and brought Asian American, Native American, Latino, and African American communities together to create the garden after Bob Santos successfully haggled an astounding rental price from the Woo family for just a dollar a year.<sup>71</sup> Volunteers from all backgrounds came together to “cut brambles of blackberry bushes” in order to clear land to build this garden.<sup>72</sup> Taking a united stand on immigrant rights and social services, they have shown what can be done when people of all backgrounds come together, advocate for another, and enable lasting positive change. Growing culturally relevant food continues to play an important role in placemaking and is important to note as a pathway towards equity.

Culturally-relevant food has been a major grounding medium in placemaking for community members. Through imported goods from China, growing, and cooking familiar foods, culturally relevant food has not only helped restaurants to flourish commercially, but it has also made up the diet of workers helping immigrants settle in an unfamiliar place by contributing to the physical health and cultural identity of workers on the railroad and working in different industries. Growing culturally relevant food in community gardens has also helped create a sense of place for the cultural identity of residents. The building of a community through food and banding across cultural lines showcases the positive effects and possibilities that can happen through valuing multicultural relationships. With food as the bridge, the Chinatown-International district has paved the way, showing the importance of coming together and valuing diversity by building a sense of place for everyone and setting an overall example for how to build towards a resilient future that is viable for all.



Figure 9. Volunteers at Danny Woo Community Garden. Source: Unknown. dannywoogarden.org

Figure 10. “Gang of 4” Bob Santos, Bernie Whitebear, Roberto Maestas, and Larry Gossett formed the Minority Executive Directors Coalition. Source: Ken Lambert. The Seattle Times.

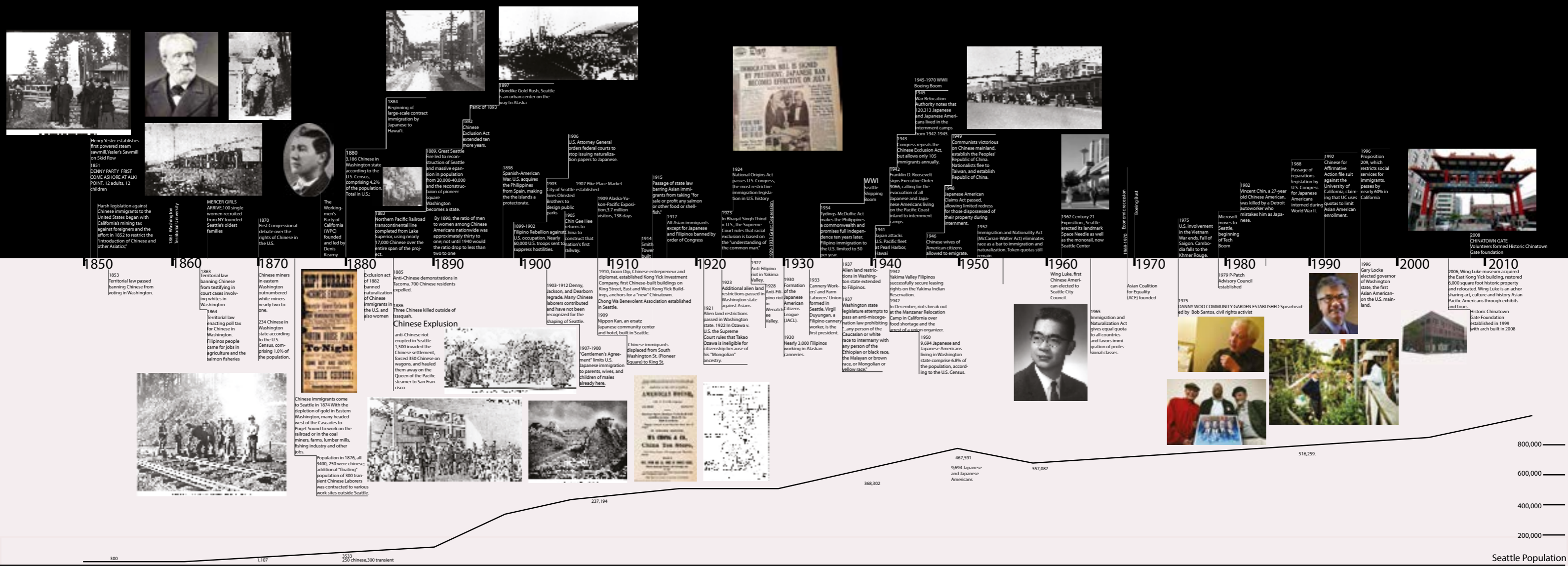


Figure 11.1-11.25 (From top left to right, bottom left to right). A historic timeline highlighting key events in Chinese immigration and Asian American History. The events in black are in context to U.S. history while the bottom highlights key events in Seattle's history. Below is a population graph of Seattle. Source: Seattle Census.

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### III. Literature Review: A Multicultural, Memorial Food Forest, and Conceptual Framings

In this chapter, I explore a range of literature that informed this project and shaped my thinking. I first dive into the literature of memorials and food forests. It is important to understand how memorials have been framed conceptually and their functions in the physical landscape. I then explore food forests and why they are important in our environmental climate today. I describe what they are, how they function, and how they are beneficial. This sets the stage for why I am interested in bringing the concepts of memorials and food forests together. I then look at systems thinking as my overall approach for how food forests and memorials come together and function as a whole living system. I also explore the concepts of tentacular thinking regarding interspecies connections and multispecies collaboration. These are important to how I explore systems thinking and the way it can function in a food forest memorial on a more micro level. This, in turn, plays a significant role in the relationships I develop between the different characters in my speculative fiction stories. I also explore Soul Fire Farm as a precedent that inspired my stories. Soul Fire Farm's focus on using ancestral connection to steward and engage in spiritual activism on the land inspires me. Their mission to uproot racism with food sovereignty through training and education programs while engaging in culturally relevant food growing practices on their regenerative farm, is extremely applicable and refreshing. They offer a holistic perspective where ecological justice addresses racial justice issues in order to make equitable change. Through deep social collaboration and relationship with the land, and demonstrating what sovereignty can look like on a physical and emotional level through growing food, their farm has become a national movement paving the way for revolutionary change.

#### What Is a Memorial And How Does It Function?

Memorials play a very powerful and active role in the public realm. Memorials embody social memory with place in the physical landscape and are symbolic spatial representations of interpreted historic events dealing with tragedy and loss.<sup>73</sup> They call out important moments or trajectories in our collective history, and although they have tended to commemorate tragedy and loss in a somber way through built forms and site designs, there are other possibilities, particularly for landscape architects.

Memory, understood by late nineteenth-century cognitive psychologist Sigmund Freud, is "the private agent of unconscious mental processes, used as a tool to retrieve information from the past,"<sup>74</sup> and is formative to social identity.<sup>75</sup> It is important for more places to create a sense of place and recover hidden pasts as it helps people to make sense of their place in the world in connection to others. By echoing the universality of memory and place, memorials enable communities to come together and form more coherent group identities<sup>76</sup> through the sharing of social memories. People are able to search for their "roots," as memorials become personal and also connect to a broader understanding of place. Ultimately serving as an opportunity to create a comprehensible narrative in the world,<sup>77</sup> memorials reflect cultural values enabling people to look to the past to make sense of the present.

Landscape architect Judith Wasserman frames memorials as having “intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and communal” benefits, functioning as places for “memory, ceremony, reflection, healing, and collective action.”<sup>78</sup> For example, as most memorials reflect tragic historical events, processing grief and loss is a vital role for these sites. Geography professor Kenneth Foote and author of *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, describe memorials to undergo “sanctification” which is the creation of sacred spaces.<sup>79</sup> In Foote’s words, sanctification happens “when communities experience loss and want to honor the victims and families who lost loved ones. It can also happen when people see some real moral value or lesson epitomized by tragedy.”<sup>80</sup> Gathering communally to mourn and accept grief as a natural process to help aid healing is fundamental to the human experience and is necessary as there is no timetable for it.<sup>81</sup> This can be experienced in the form of rituals and ceremonies for reflection and collective action such as burning candles and laying down art in honor or memory of a loved one, gifting food, or a bigger ceremony with song or dance. Through the increased participation and repetition of rituals, rituals enacted within memorials can consecrate a place.<sup>82</sup> Notable French Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep, describes the ritual experience to be liminal; instigating a sort of embodied and metaphoric crossing through the physical movement within the memorial space, between the conscious and unconscious, placing a once viewed ordinary place to now hold rare meaning.<sup>83</sup> The physically embodied acts facilitate a healing process that can be described as transcendental.<sup>84</sup> An intellectual and embodied experience simultaneously works together within the body and instigates a deeper connection to place and a more compassionate understanding of past tragic events for the community affected.

As memorials provide comfort for communities who are directly affected by the events being commemorated, they also provide an opportunity for others to gain insight into the lived experience of those tragic events through what Wasserman describes as “memory work.”<sup>85</sup> For example, modern dancers interviewed about their experience at the Salem Memorial explained their relational experience to be like a dance choreography.<sup>86</sup> They observed how the memorial space stimulated particular patterns of movement that were sympathetic to the ways the executions were programmed in the landscape.<sup>87</sup> Walking around the edge of the Salem Memorial outlined a cyclic dance of time, mimicking the time frame of the executions.<sup>88</sup> Phenomenologists also explain the importance of the body and movement in the commemorative experience<sup>89</sup> by asserting that memory does not exist without body memory. Therefore, just as memory informs place, the body is guided by the materiality of physical traces in the memorial landscape evoking movement through the physical landscape as a way of remembering and the emotional quality of the social memory being commemorated.

In my personal experience at the Holocaust museum in Berlin, Germany, I remember entering a dark room where a skylight vertically lit a enormous pile of steel cutouts of faces to represent all the lives lost. By being huddled in this room in the crowds and confronted with this social memory in a moment of time, the lack of movement and ability to see only the eerie light casts on these metal faces imprinted a very dark and chilling, emotional, and heavy experience. Though this was a museum, I felt this moment was successful in capturing the devastating loss through the lack of movement in this space. The room was sympathetic to the many souls who had to hide in cramped spaces for fear of their lives. In a sense, the range of emotional experiences that memorials can evoke is vast; from grief to fear, to healing and transformation. Thus, memorials can function as modern day sacred spaces for the contemporary world for the social and cultural realm<sup>90</sup> due to their deep experiential qualities.

Though memorials provide sacred spaces in the modern world, how we choose to remember history in our physical landscape is a reflection of social, political, and economic forces that propagate inequalities, oftentimes reflecting colonized versions of memorial landscapes. Many grassroots organizations view it as a fight for place. Though memory and place are universal, the fight for place in today’s ever-present globalized world illuminates today’s identity politics.<sup>91</sup> As Jay Winter states, we now see “the emergence of multiple social and political groups claiming voice and rivaling for representation in the public sphere.”<sup>92</sup> The ever-present debates around legitimization that arise in the pre-construction phase of memorials reflects a fight for social rule, a fight for power.<sup>93</sup> This has resulted in the lack of representation for many marginalized groups and many important immigrant cultures in American society marking key events in history in the physical landscape we see today.

At the national level, many minority causes<sup>94</sup> are not memorialized or are limited in their historical representation in the physical landscape. However, stories that reach national recognition take a long process of lobbying at the local, state, and regional level before they gain attention or are deemed a National Historic Landmark. Only twelve sites in the U.S. connected to labor history were selected as National Historic Landmarks in 1935<sup>95</sup> and since then has risen to only twenty five. Interpretation of history in our physical landscape today therefore requires continual vigilance for greater inclusion of stories that have been marginalized.

The multicultural memorial food forest that I propose in this thesis is an opportunity to offer an equitable way for various cultures to share their personal stories, ancestral histories, and experiences while paying respect to Chinese immigration history. It offers a new type of memorial that is therapeutic and a productive landscape for all. In addition, though memorials can facilitate healing, engaging with a living system as a memorial can expand therapeutic benefits even further by enabling visitors to connect deeply with nature.

There are precedents for living memorials across the U.S. Launched by the US Forest Service in 2002, the Living Memorials Project supports and documents the creation of 687 living memorials in response to the events from September 9/11.<sup>96</sup> These typically take the form of community green spaces and range from planting single trees to whole forests. The plants used also served as symbols to tell specific stories about the people who passed, creating cathartic experiences for visitors and community members as an outlet to help process grief and trauma.<sup>97</sup> Community members felt a kinship with others and with the trees they planted.<sup>98</sup> Different sites also had specific narratives and symbolism according to the chosen plantings with particular flora.<sup>99</sup> For example, the planting of willows in Coney Island represented sadness while sunflowers planted in the Sunflower Project NYC represented New Yorkers because they were seen as surviving in harsh conditions.<sup>100</sup> Survivor trees from the attacks were also replanted in many sites to represent unity and resilience.<sup>101</sup> Connecting to the cycles of nature, the Living Memorials Project fosters the ability to slow down and connect people to all of life.<sup>102</sup>

By deeply connecting with the rhythms and “spiritual power of nature”<sup>103</sup> the people involved in these projects were able to develop a deeper kinship with one another and other species. They were not only able to acknowledge loss, but they could heal because they came together for a shared purpose.<sup>104</sup> In addition, those who lost family and volunteered to plant the plantings were able to continuously care for the growing plants which propelled a deeper healing process. When connecting tragic events to the cycles of nature, connecting to the main forces of nature such as death and life through growing plants also facilitates healing. This process can help instill an acceptance of loss and grief while cultivating hope and experiences of emotional rebirth for those wanting to move forward with their lives.<sup>105</sup> Overall, living memorials have soul mending<sup>106</sup> and meditative benefits and can be highly nurturing and beneficial in cities.

### What Is A Food Forest And How Does It Function?

A food forest is an opportunity to work with nature as a part of the self regulating system that sustains all organisms including humans.<sup>107</sup> Food forests imitate forest edges and are planted with edible plants. By mimicking ecological designs found in nature, they consist of eight layers: the overstory, understory, shrub, herbaceous, root, ground cover, vine, and mycelial.<sup>108</sup> Food forests utilize space three dimensionally and create opportunities for more plants to coexist in an area without causing competition between species. This enables a more resilient, biodiverse ecosystem to adapt to weather, pests, and diseases.<sup>109</sup> Rainwater is absorbed and healthy microclimates are created by the design and placement of plants. The soil is shaded, moist and rich in nutrients as the returning organic matter creates a healthy and balanced soil structure. The different canopy layers from tall to small trees, herbs, shrubs, and groundcovers grow together vertically and enable for smaller trees to catch sunlight as each plant contributes to the other’s success.<sup>110</sup> For example, from the edge, taller canopy trees grow while smaller trees grow underneath and spread out enough to catch sunlight. Shrubs are further out in the sun while herbs, flowers, and groundcovers are out on the sunniest edge. Overall, food forests become self-sufficient without the need for replanting, productive, and low maintenance.

Following the natural cycles of the seasons, food forests are able to sustain themselves through natural compost from dying leaf litter and without the need to weed, fertilize, or use pesticides. Natural compost contributes to a healthy, living soil while promoting diverse microorganisms and a balanced soil structure. Nutrients become more biologically available for plant fertility,<sup>111</sup> providing local food that is nutrient dense and rich. In addition, a good soil structure will help filter pollution from stormwater runoff as water flow slows down and more infiltration is possible through the aggregates in the soil.<sup>112</sup> A healthy, protected soil also prevents greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change to be released into the atmosphere.

Urban forests contribute to healthier green spaces in the city, cleaning the air and water while providing a cooling effect in the city as temperatures continue to rise.<sup>113</sup> By providing food, medicine, and materials, urban food forests enable city residents to experience numerous social, cultural and material benefits.<sup>114</sup> Food forests therefore have the ability to create diverse, multifunctional, self-sustaining ecosystems with benefits that include mental well-being and enhanced social solidarity all while fostering community empowerment.<sup>115</sup> Through cultural practices that take place in the gathering of edibles, medicines, fungi, etc, culturally-relevant ecological knowledge is retained while increasing overall connection to traditional foodways and diverse healing practices.<sup>116</sup> Residents and natural cycles are in sync while promoting food justice, food sovereignty, and personal sovereignty of overall health.<sup>117</sup>

### How can a systems-based approach, engaging tentacular thinking, interspecies connection, and multispecies collaboration frame the making of a food forest as a memorial?

“We no longer see Earth as just a rock we live upon, but as a living process in which we participate. Earth takes on a presence in our consciousness as the source of all we are and can become.”<sup>118</sup> (Macy and Brown 2014)

Food forests have the potential to serve as an important cultural landscape that commemorate racial and ethnic identity and foods and thereby serve as a new kind of living memorial. It enables people from all backgrounds to come together around important social memories to not only reconcile with loss but to also celebrate a continuing resilience. Working with food memories show how a living memorial can help bring people together to move forward therapeutically with tragedy while honoring specific cultures as food symbolically and literally speaks to survival and continual growth.

#### Systems thinking

A living systems theory emerged in the natural sciences in the 20th century as a way of “seeing the world” and understanding its capacity for renewal and regeneration.<sup>119</sup> Systems thinking is a way to see natural processes as “wholes.”<sup>120</sup> Because nature self organizes at every level, from “suborganic to biological, ecological, mental, and social”<sup>121</sup> it is easier to see nature as a “living being”<sup>122</sup> that is self regulating, where the dynamic organization of its parts are inextricably linked and working in relationship as “balanced systems.”<sup>123</sup> Systems are in a constant state of flux in pursuit of balance where “the properties of open systems permit the variety and intelligence of life-forms to arise from interactive currents of matter/energy/information.”<sup>124</sup> Though aspects of nature may physically appear as separate entities, the unseen connections are actually “interdependent and interwoven.”<sup>125</sup> Deep ecologist and systems thinker Joanna Macy brilliantly explains four main principles:

“Each system, from atom to galaxy, is a whole.”<sup>126</sup> A system cannot be defined by only its parts but can only be understood as a “dynamically interrelated whole.”<sup>127</sup> It cannot be reduced to its parts as it depends on the “synergetic” relationship and dynamism between its parts. The interrelationships create new properties to emerge and are ever evolving where new properties are constantly shifting and emerging.<sup>128</sup>

In an open system, the constant input of energy, information, and matter permits systems to find homeostasis due to what is termed as a “flux equilibrium” process.<sup>129</sup> This provides for the ability of systems to self regulate and adapt to changing conditions in their environment.

Open systems are always evolving in complexity while in the process of maintaining balance. Open systems restructure and reorganize while in the flux of maintenance towards homeostasis and create new norms for function as they evolve through positive feedback.<sup>130</sup> The process is continuously evolving and growing.

Each system is identified as a holon where it is considered a whole in itself while also being made up of subsystems meaning there are systems within systems, forming what is known as nested hierarchies.<sup>131</sup> In nested hierarchies, order is created from below or by the larger context. Self generation happens through “adaptive cooperation” between parts, the components of a system diversify as new roles are coordinated along with the invention of new responses.<sup>132</sup>

A food forest is an example of an ecological system with complex subsystems at work to help maintain the balance and working productivity as a whole. For example, the dead leaf litter in the fall provides organic matter and nutrients to the soil. The roots then absorb the nutrients to facilitate the continuous growth of plants. This cycle of death of leaf litter is a seasonal cycle to help maintain a balanced system, repeating the death of old leaves to support the rebirth and continuous growth of plants. Through the adaptive cooperation and mutual benefits of its parts, the cycle continues and adapts. The growth of the plants and their health depends on the types of nutrients they receive, and this feedback affects plant growth.

Another system in a food forest is that of mycelium. Mycologist Paul Stamets states, “I believe that mycelium is the neurological network of nature. Interlacing networks of mycelium infuse habitats with information-sharing membranes. These membranes are aware, react to change, and collectively have the long-term health of the host environment in mind.”<sup>133</sup> Ecologically, fungi are important interconnected organisms that facilitate interspecies communication between trees through their mycelium, and in return, the mycelium in the broad underground soil network receives sugars.<sup>134</sup>

Historically in the context of the Chinese immigrant experience, fungi was a major and important ancestral food. In this project I focus on fungi because they act as a symbol for social and ecological resilience. I use fungi in my stories of speculative fiction to reflect an intersectional connection to land and multilayered relationships typical of systems thinking. Connecting social and ecological levels in my short stories is an example of how I use a systems theory approach to illustrate multilevel connections between all living beings in this food forest.

By using a lens of intersectionality within systems thinking, this food forest feeds the land and all living beings. The organization of this regenerative system at every level from “suborganic to biological, ecological, mental, and social”<sup>135</sup> shows how one living process feeds the others. For example, a living soil with microorganisms and healthy bacteria fuels a healthy ecosystem of the forest plants, wildlife, and people. The ecosystem in turn supports the mental and social health of the people of the forest. Furthermore, it is possible to take each living process and see subsystems operating within itself. The soil, for example, is its own nested hierarchy of working systems showing how living processes are synergistic, self regulating, and ever evolving, constantly transforming itself from within and by the larger context as a whole. Joanna Macy states this quite eloquently, “As the open system consumes the matter that passes through it, so does it also process information -- ever breaking down and building up. Like fire, a system both transforms and is transformed by that on which it feeds.”<sup>136</sup>

Living processes are systems constantly being renewed, replenished, and transformed. By taking action at an ecological level with the soil, plants, and its people, this food forest can also begin to heal the people on a social level. Healing the earth ecologically, in turn heals ourselves. Beginning with the care of our soil can ripple into how we socially care for one another.

### *Tentacular Thinking, Interspecies Connection, and Multispecies Collaboration*

-- The tentacular are not disembodied figures; they are cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids, matted and felted microbial, and fungal tangles, probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones. The tentacular are also nets and networks, it critters, in and out of clouds. Tentacularity is about life lived along lines — and such a wealth of lines — not at points, not in spheres. “The inhabitants of the world, creatures of all kinds, human and non-human, are wayfarers”; generations are like “a series of interlaced trails.”<sup>137</sup> (Haraway, 2016)

Haraway posits that humans and non humans are not isolated singular beings, but tentacles in a multi-species network co-existing in complex and entangled ways. Haraway points out, the word tentacle comes from the Latin word tentaculum which means “feeler” while tentare means “to feel” and “to try” alluding to how species cocreate and entangle.<sup>138</sup> For example, human bodies and minds are not just made up of only humans but are made up of billions of bacteria in our guts.<sup>139</sup> Certain plants like legumes contain nitrogen fixing bacteria. Tree communication in a food forest is only made possible by the networks of mycelium. These parallel, and entangled existences show how there is no separation in matters of existence.<sup>140</sup> We are always evolving and experimenting with living processes and systems in relationships, constantly forming new norms and adapting with each other.

Donna Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledge”<sup>141</sup> also guides my work. She states the need to confront strong truths with profound relationality in historical conjecture and not just simply relativism.<sup>142</sup> She points out that opening up and building complex “contact zones” of knowing the world and other ways of knowing happens through interrelationship.<sup>143</sup> In Haraway’s framework, she states, “everybody in a contact zone is transformed in the engagement with each other and no one form of knowledge is dominant over another... these conditions are imperative for true collaboration.”<sup>144</sup> More importantly, multiple truths and realities can coexist together.<sup>145</sup>

Moreover, multispecies collaboration is a way of imagining co creating in experimentation of how species are responding to each other, to nurture and endure together while playing and paying attention to the diverse ways of life. Its about making new ways of relating to nature possible and a possibility of exploring flourishing reciprocal relationships.<sup>146</sup> From this perspective, speculative fiction will allow me to explore what it may mean to listen to the plant world and other living and non-living beings to open up new contact zones for collaboration. Through the imaginative process of storytelling I will explore new ways of relating between different characters and their unique perspectives and explore new pathways for how we may collaborate on a multispecies level and come into emergent ways of thinking and relating to the more than the human world. For example, using fungi as a character in my story as not only an important ancestral food but as a system that holds up the fabric of the food forest is one example for how I explore this. Tentacular thinking together with a systems approach allows me to portray the multiplicity of truths happening simultaneously between the living and non-living beings in this food forest. As I explore the different characters of species in my stories, I open up the multitude of possibilities of how different species are engaging with one another and the multiplicity of layers in interspecies connections as a vital component for the well being for not only one character but the well being of the forest as a whole.

### *Weaving a food forest as a living systems memorial*

“May the food we are eating make us aware of the interconnections between the universe and us, the earth and us, and all other living species and us. Because each bite contains in itself the life of the sun and the earth, may we see the meaning and value of life from these precious morsels of food.”<sup>147</sup> -adapted from Thich Nhat Hanh

The ability to honor history by growing a multicultural urban food forest can be profound. Weaving food forests together with a memorial through a systems approach opens the door for a contact zone, as Haraway suggests, for interspecies connection and multispecies collaboration in order to experiment with new ways of being within our entangled existences. Seeing the bigger picture of how the marginalization of Chinese immigrants is met with food that speak of resilient food memories to instill a sense of cultural belonging for all who grow food in this food forest follows a systems approach for how we respond to racist hate and oppression with social liberation. As everyone’s well being is connected in this food forest, we have a chance to shift to more regenerative systems where every level of connection in a living system is nurtured as it also deepens our connection with more than the human realm. As we have the chance to bring in more fresh iterations to decenter ourselves as a human species to one that is responsible and humbly resituating our belonging on this planet more equitably, in connection to the wellbeing of all other life forms as an extension of our collective identity, we can fuel the change we wish to see in the world starting with the soil. From the diversity of microorganisms in the soil, to the various plants grown to the cultures connected to the plants, we can experience a healthy and flourishing living system in which we help to protect, preserve, and enhance all living and non-living beings by nurturing all the elements. As a living and working productive process in co-creation, with the ability to replenish and transform through continuous feedback, this living system can feed and nourish all in connection to it as a whole and as systems within itself.

A food forest as a memorial thus provides food that physically nourishes, honors memories, and affords a sense of cultural belonging. This food forest, as a contact zone, enables people to be physically and spiritually transformed by food through the embodied practices of growing food. We can see how multispecies collaboration includes honoring the land at all levels and honoring immigrant cultures for everyone’s liberation. These are not separate parts but as a holistic system at work. Just as a food forest makes a biodiverse habitat, with its wide array of plants, so can the types of people connected to them culturally be diverse, following nature’s principles of diversity at every level. This diversity and interconnectedness are important factors for what is needed ecologically and socially in our world today.

### **What lessons does Soul Fire Farm present to this framing?**

Soul Fire Farm is an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm where ancestral wisdom stewards how the land is cared for and guides sustainable agricultural practices and skill shares.<sup>148</sup> Located in Petersburg, New York, it was founded in 2010 by a Black-Jewish family living in the South End of Albany, NY where fresh food was scarce.<sup>149</sup> Neighbors asked for them to create a farm for the local community and after four years of building the soil on 80 acres of Mohican land, the farm opened.<sup>150</sup> The farm has grown into a national movement for food sovereignty, which aims to uproot racism by providing reparations and land reclamation for indigenous and Black farmers and by training the next generation of farmers through immersion programs.<sup>151</sup> It now operates as a successful nonprofit delivering food, training young adults and adults, holding workshops and lectures, and collaborating with other organizations nationally. Their description for the farm immersion program states:

“We use Afro-indigenous agroforestry, silvopasture, wildcrafting, polyculture, and spiritual farming practices to regenerate 80 acres of mountainside land, producing fruits, plant medicine, pasture-raised livestock, honey, mushrooms, vegetables, and preserves for community provisioning, with the majority of the harvest provided to people living under food apartheid and targeted by state violence in our local community. We are a resource for education in ancestral farming practices, and we collaborate with the land to support our communities in healing from racial trauma and imagining bolder futures.”<sup>152</sup>

Soul Fire Farm’s focus on healing racial trauma through growing food by being in a reciprocal relationship with nature and in spiritual connection with the land truly inspires me. Reversing harmful ecology on the land provides healing to the people as they deepen ancestral practices and build community. In a podcast interview with community organizer Antonia Perez on Herbal Highway,<sup>153</sup> a community radio channel in the Bay Area, I was inspired by how Antonia spoke about the more than human world and how we engage with it on a spiritual level. She elaborated on the importance of ritual and what it means to commune and connect with the land. She described plants as relatives whom they deeply revere. Rituals are a very important practice to help slow down and get deeply in tune with nature as well as our physical bodies. Through plant ceremonies, rituals, and offerings, community members connect to the more than human realm by getting in touch with pollinators, plant wisdom, as well as memory by slowing down into deep time to connect to the plant world outside of the English language. A community volunteer also pointed out that through a plant sit meditation she realized the plant she was tuning into was used in her grandmother’s recipes. It was as though the plant was communicating to her from a place of knowing in her body. By connecting with the physical senses in the body, community members tune into emotional healing and transformation with the plants.

Furthermore, growing culturally relevant food becomes ritualistic and enables a reciprocal relationship and conversation with the land to take place. Giving back to the land through offerings, being grateful for the production in the seasons, and asking for consent to grow food at the start of the planting season fosters a compassionate relationship with the land and each other. In addition to food, herbs and plants are gathered to create spiritual baths and libations. Expressing gratitude before meals is also important and contributes to the livelihood and foodways on this land. To me, the work is revolutionary and helps rebuild a more holistic connection with the earth and is a direction I feel is important to move forward that can help create a sense of belonging in light of the racial trauma and racial conflict many face today.



Figure 12. Soul Fire Farm Farmers learning through storytelling and ritual. Source: Leah Penniman. <https://lithub.com/what-indigenous-stories-can-teach-a-new-generation-of-farmers/>



Figure 13. Participants in the Black and Latino Farmers Immersion program. From left, Terressa Tate, Leah Penniman, and Beatrice Anderson. Source: Capers Rumph. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2014/08/15/farmers-immersion>

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#### IV. Speculative fiction as a critical design tool to explore the future

Speculative fiction, as Margaret Atwood defines it, is literature that deals with possibilities in a society that have not yet been enacted or are latent.<sup>154</sup> It contains futuristic, fantastical, imagined, supernatural, technological elements that are rooted in what our current human species can do or is on the path of making possible.<sup>155</sup> It portrays alternate worlds in order to question our current known world, and plays with imagination to have an impact on the evolving path of change in our "real world."<sup>156</sup> Mainstream books by Margeret Atwood such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Hunger Games* are examples of such stories in western culture. Notable authors such as Ursula Le Guin, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Octavia E Butler, and Adrienne Maree Brown all have shaped the conversations around the trajectories of Western society in order to impact the future in-the-making. Speculative fiction focuses on specific elements and changing what is real or possible to change social-cultural paradigms.

Using fiction as a tool helps us inquire about how things could be<sup>157</sup> in our world and has the ability to introduce its own value system. By imagining realms of possible, alternate worlds in which the created fiction operates, the reader savors the "unreality."<sup>158</sup> Author Keith Oatley states in *Such Stuff as Dreams*, that fiction can engage the viewer "with the ability to think ethically and with possibility."<sup>159</sup> Speculative fiction is an opportunity to confront human nature in all its complexities<sup>160</sup> by having the reader be at once immersed but also be a critical observer, as the fiction exists independently from the "real world."<sup>161</sup> Fiction frees the reader and designer from the conventions and reality of our current political climate while paving the opportunity for creative experimentation in order to challenge social norms. Dunne and Raby define speculative fiction as a sort of moral inner compass navigating a fictional world where disbelief in the fictional world is momentarily suspended.<sup>162</sup> While playfully enabling people's imaginations to flow freely, fiction "acts as a catalyst for collectively redefining our relationship with reality. We momentarily forget how things are now. As reality is made more malleable through identifying with characters and situations beyond our own lives fiction ultimately unsettles the present and explores the future."<sup>163</sup>

Speculative fiction can operate from a probable, plausible, and possible context.<sup>164</sup> Starting off with a "what if" question for a future that cannot be entirely predicted can help set in place factors that will increase the probability of more desirable futures happening.<sup>165</sup> In a probable scenario, it is a space of what could happen. In a plausible context, the scenarios that are developed are to be believable and scientifically possible showing how there can be a path from where we are in today's world to where we are in the plausible scenario.<sup>166</sup> The series of events that lead to the new situation is believable even if fictional, helping readers to be able to relate the scenario to their own world helping them to critically reflect.<sup>167</sup> In between what is plausible and possible is where speculative culture such as science and social fiction can operate fully. Designing for how things could be and for possibilities altogether<sup>168</sup> enables the possibility of incorporating new value systems as it deals with unreality so that reality can be judged on how it lives up to ideals. According to *Speculative Everything* by Dunne and Raby, good critical design offers alternatives and shows how experiences are not final; "a critical design through the theory of alternatives tells us where we want to go and can utilize the theory of transformation that tells us how to get from here to there—how to make viable alternatives achievable."<sup>169</sup>

Speculative fiction questions how we engage with the world, the human and more than human spirit. It can use creativity and imagination in a way that challenges a patriarchal, western, and reductionist culture built on the foundation of colonialism and white supremacy that values science and empirical evidence to give us credibility, merit, and permission to move forward with ideas. Because speculative fiction speaks to the everyday experience,<sup>170</sup> speculative fiction is decolonial in its own right as it utilizes the freedom of unhinged narrative. In *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, black feminist writers and activists Adrienne Maree Brown and Walidah Imarisha coined the term "visionary fiction"<sup>171</sup> to discern science fiction that is connected to building "new and freer worlds"<sup>172</sup> away from mainstream science fiction that tends to strengthen dominant narratives of power.<sup>173</sup>

As immigrant narratives can be also largely shaped by those in power, dreaming is a form of reclaiming power, agency, and personal identity. Brown declares, "once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless."<sup>174</sup> She states that "those of us from communities with historic collective trauma must understand that each of us is already science fiction walking around on two legs."<sup>175</sup> By offering our own narratives, we can proclaim "the right to dream of ourselves, individually and collectively."<sup>176</sup> Brown further elaborates how this space is essential for any decolonization work, claiming visionary imagination to be the "most dangerous and subversive fiction there is"<sup>177</sup> and as a birthplace "where all other forms of decolonization are born."<sup>178</sup> Therefore, largely influenced by Brown's work, I wanted to use a speculative fiction approach in recapturing Chinese immigrant history and culturally relevant food as a means to imagine a more equitable world.

I have chosen to embark on this creative process of writing speculative fiction rather than to do a site design because I believe we need drastic imagination to fuel an ever-changing world and create new paradigms of relationality seeded in hope and resilience around equity. It is also important to spread more awareness around the framing of our relationship to the more than human world while exploring marginalized narratives. I believe this is the key to our evolution. It is imperative, as Donna Haraway phrases it, "to stay with the trouble."<sup>179</sup> I view speculative fiction as a powerful tool for landscape architects to creatively explore new ways of being and designing as we tune into an ever changing environment and imagine multiple uses of a space.

Stretching social imagination is a way to be provocative and reflective. With the ability to critique and inspire, it can serve as a tool for landscape architects to expand our modes of inquiry. It can be a toolkit for how we approach a wide range of factors and help us understand a site in all its complexities. Using a spatial design lens through speculative fiction plays with the fluidity of awareness with how characters engage with a physical space on a mental, physical, and emotional level in "real time" with the reader experiencing the fiction in the moment. Speculative fiction is also a great tool to further explore systems thinking in that it offers creative freedom to explore the multidimensionality and complexity of living processes at play within a site. Used as a tool before investing in a site design, it ultimately helps create a more meaningful design by deepening the relationship to a place through the power of words and how they are framed to explore new meanings.

## Endnotes

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## V. Speculative Fiction for Pier 48: Short Stories

In this next chapter, I explore four main themes in my stories that are pertinent to explore: (1) the history of Chinese immigration and exclusion in Seattle, (2) the importance of culturally relevant food and identity as a form of resilience, (3) cultural ritual and ceremony of plants, people, and food as connected to history and memory, and (4) the regenerative relationship of soil, people, and food in this memorial food forest. It is important to celebrate diversity, preserve and remember traditions around food to be shared with others, and bridge intergenerational, multicultural, interspecies, and multispecies alliances. Each theme will be an exploration as a short story as well as a visual exploration in the form of vignettes for further exploration.

Diving deeply into narrative enables me to fully explore a place, exploring the past present and future of how my characters are experiencing the world in all its multidimensionality with the physical landscape; the spatial and sensual experiences as well as the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. From a systems perspective, I imagine the living and breathing experience of this memorial food forest in all its complexities, as well as how humans and non-humans engage in this food forest to shed light on how all actors are working in cooperation together.

### Part 1: From Exclusion into Warmth

*Find me, the blue mushroom said. I am connected to all of life, I am a source of energy that will speak to you in new languages, I will guide you to souls before you, to your ancestors, to your present family, and to souls you will soon meet in the future. They will paint the picture of who you are and where you have been. Here you will understand where you belong, of your spirit in space and time and where you are cradled and comforted within the mold of mother earth. Here, take me, let me come with you into this world. It is time to plant the seeds. You will find me in one of your sacred spaces which is a common place that opens you up to your internal world.*

The next morning I woke up slightly nauseous. Right, I'm back in my room, tracing the old 70's décor of wood paneling along the walls of my brick duplex. And here I am circling in my dreams again and getting pretty good at lucid dreaming, I thought. That was a strange one. This time though, something different was calling out to me. I was handed a bright blue mushroom and it spoke. My throat felt dry so I took a sip of water and walked to my dresser. "Blue mushroom, what in the hell?" I felt a weird pang in my chest, a familiar void hitting me. Without thinking, I began my ritual of slowing down. I touched my jewelry chest, its carvings carried the memories of my mother's hands. I traced the indented curves of beautiful swirls and remembered the time she told me she had a gift for me but wouldn't let me peek into her makeshift wood shop that smelled of fresh citrus pine just out in our backyard. I need to get back to that place, I thought. The carvings looked a little different this time. As I opened the little wooden jewelry chest, there lay a spectacular bronze object, its reflection dancing in the sun rays shining through my curtains.

Engraved on the jewelry box, it read, *In the moonlight*. I peeked inside of what looked like the end of a little telescope with a view hole and suddenly the air felt stale around me. My body was cold and I had a feeling I was no longer in my room. Maybe I am still lucid dreaming, I thought. I felt a muddy slime sensation against my chilled skin and I was unable to grasp my footing on clear ground. I looked down on what appeared to be mud. Where was the stability? I tried to walk. I slipped, I fell. Any form of humanity vanished as I lost control of my body and dropped suddenly onto the muddy surface. I smelled of feces. Why do I feel like I am no different than these feces I have been smothered by on this sticky mudflat, I wondered. I felt a sudden surge of anxiety and my head started to spin. Taking slow deep breaths to calm myself, I looked over my right shoulder and saw water and immediately started to smell a salty breeze. I noticed the ocean next to me as my vision finally came into focus. It was nighttime and dark. The moonlight showed roots of plants, old withered brown driftwood and rickety logs smothered in a web-like material that eerily protruded and grew from the ground. Different colored pink, purple, coral, brown, and blue mushrooms sprouted in all different directions. The air smelled of decay, a fresh, slightly metallic, rotting scent filling my sinuses. I saw worms crawling, maggots feeding on small dead animals, roly pollies, beetles, and an endless plethora of little critters scurrying in the open then back into their little hiding places. I can only imagine the insects and life beyond the surface that I couldn't see.

The world chanted through the squeaky sounds of mice, the tapping of driftwood pieces knocking into one another by the force of the gushing ocean wind, the cawing of crows, and the cry of seagulls hanging out in rickety wood piles. Though I knew I was next to the ocean, I could only see dark shadows of trees around me as well as a huge mound of dirt in front of me. It was filled with creatures and dead matter entangled with this-thread like material intermeshed with any and every organism around. It was as if this huge mound in front of me felt like my worst enemy, confronting me with a presence I couldn't understand. As I tried to get a hold of this place, I felt a desperate urge to get to the other side of this huge growing pile that looked like its own soil organism universe. It looked like there was an opening to the right of this pile but I noticed that the invisible mycelium web that connected everything also covered the air around the mound like an electromagnetic field, its web flashing like a radar in and out of sight in the dark. I'd rather not find out what would happen if I went through it.

Going up and over the mound seemed like the safest bet. I noticed my body shaking. I'm glad at least I have some pants on. Luckily, my pants were warm dark blue sweatpants and I had a long black undershirt under a black long-sleeved fleece I wore to bed just moments ago. This unruly place sent a deep chill in my bones with a touch of creepiness that made me feel strangely unwanted and unsafe but at least I had some warm clothes to protect me. Still, my body began to shake. Getting out of this current place may be the only way to actually wake up, I thought.

*Don't worry, a voice said. This is where things die and will be made into new life. It's not a very pleasant place, but this is where the decomposition of death brings in new life. This dirt is no longer dirt, it is in the process of becoming more alive. The soil will feed all the life that is around and is necessary. Everything around you is alive. I am alive.*

I wasn't sure where this voice was coming from. It was the same voice as before but this time I heard it in my mind and body, as if it was a part of me. *Follow the path and then you will see what can become of death, of this unpleasant experience,* the voice said. As I was listening to this voice which sounded like the blue mushroom from my previous or same dream -- I couldn't tell the difference at this point -- I noticed the silvery mycelium filaments were growing and pulsating under my feet, growing thicker and bulging out of the ground by the second. I felt it push the soles of my feet forward. *If you don't move or keep growing, I will most likely grow over you and you can stay here if that is what you so desire.* Great, well this voice agrees with my initial reaction. I guess this is the only choice I have. It's time to move. I kept my head up and walked forward hoping I would not trip and be swallowed up by the earth. I really did not want to get stuck, but already my body was starting to feel heavier by the moment, accentuating the sense of entrapment and loss of control I had been feeling since the moment I arrived.

*You know, some people lived in these conditions just east of here. The Duwamish tribe who were displaced lived here when their ancestral lands were destroyed. They sold oysters and other goods but when this place became a fruitful place for commerce for the white settlers, they became displaced again. However, back then it was called Ballast Island. Ships came carrying their ballast and built up an artificial island on this part of the coastal waterfront. Sand, silt, pebbles, brick, wood, cobbles as big as soccer balls as well as yellowish and brown sandstone boulders filled this area. But that's deep below the earth now.*

This voice seems to be instilling in me a body memory. Like I had been here before. And I knew that underneath the earth, my body knew what laid there and knew the memories that preceded me before I had arrived. It gave me a sense of understanding that seemed to overcome my sense of feeling trapped. Instead of feeling anxiety, I now felt a strange sense of determination, a certain knowing that told me that if I get to the other side everything will make more sense. Something better was awaiting me on the other side. I saw the path ahead. As I approached the dirt mound, I saw the path that snaked up and turned into what looked like a compost pile; the mud seem to be churning into a soil mixture of organic matter; leaf litter, rotten fruit, banana peels, moldy orange peels, stalks of Chinese lettuce, and bok choy, exuding a purplish brown hue before my eyes.

I started to climb the mountain which eventually covered me in more mud. Not sure how much time passed by as I pushed on, pulling myself up with every piece of hardened deposit I could find. I stepped and touched mossy deposit and slimey humus while discovering where the mycelium filaments wove through all the earth creatures crawling and slithering about. I found myself tangled with all the worms, old rotten food, insects, not caring that there were wood chips in my hair as I pressed on my mission to reach the other side. The view around me was still dark, with no view of what was beyond this place except for the ocean behind me.

It started to pour. I knew I couldn't make it up all the way and found a little cave outlined with hardened rock, cramped and just small enough to fit myself in, away from the rain. I was tired and needed to rest and sleep again. I felt all alone in an alien place with a weird voice speaking to me, not sure when I would return home or what I would find in this uncertain place. I felt a very unsettling feeling in the pit of my stomach. Despite it all, I knew I had to go on and held on to that second of hope that things would make more sense once I reached the other side of this muddy journey. Or hopefully I would fall asleep now and maybe end up back in my room. As I started to fall asleep out of pure exhaustion, a part of me knew in my body that my ancestors before me moved earth as big as this mountain and I can make my way over it as well. As I dreamt, I had flashbacks, of people hop picking in the fields, being violently hit and falling onto the dirt they were working on. There were fires, sounds of metal working to build railroads, sleep deprivation in cramped shacks, starvation and going back to work in the fields. I saw cannery factories and felt the deep sadness of being separated from loved ones. I saw the pits of mines where the sound of picks dug and clanked for rocks and earth to be taken out in huge containers, of trees crying as they were cut with blood and sweat. I saw hunger, anger, and violence upon immigrant workers who were constantly moved with nowhere to fully sleep and rest.

I woke up and still found myself in the dark. Still in this cold and wet place. I had more strength and knew I wasn't far. I pushed on knowing this wouldn't be forever and tried to shake off the terrible dreams, though something in me felt they weren't just dreams. I climbed over more dirt, rocks, soil, logs, decomposing mice bones, roots, plant matter, and kept going. The daylight will soon come, I thought, and I will soon find something better. I found myself going downhill now. Though I lost track of time with no view except for the bottom of this mountain, I knew I was close. Exhausted and drenched in my sweat, the sweat cooled my body. I took another step, lost my balance and tumbled into the muddy mixture for what felt like a half minute thinking I would hit something and hurt myself badly. I finally stopped rolling and found myself at the bottom of this god awful slimy hill. I feel like I weathered the storm, physically and mentally. I cried and sat there staring at this mountain and eventually zoned out on what I just accomplished. The earth continued to spin and rotate around the sun as I sat there, exhausted over what I experienced, but it felt comforting to finally get closer to understanding where I was and what the hell I was doing here.

Figure 14. (next page) The main character of the story whose name we will find out later faces mud mountain with angst and determination, knowing that climbing over is the only way to get the answers she is looking for. Source: Image created by author.



## Part 2: Coming Home: Our DNA, Our Food Medicine

Time did not seem to exist. At this point I had to let go of trying to make sense of things in my mind as no logic could explain what I was experiencing. I felt the heavy clay mud stick to my pants and push me down onto the earth and tell me: yes, you did just climb over a huge mound of dirt that was filled with dead creatures. It was also very much alive--teeming with bacteria microorganisms, filaments growing and protruding in all gangly directions, rotten muck, worms--and mycelium consuming it all. Not knowing how much time had passed, the mud on my clothes slowly began to crust, lessening the weight on my body. As I was coming to my senses, a light misty yellow golden hue started to peek from the sky. I turned, only to be blinded by its rays as its pure essence showered me with warmth.

Emerging from the light, I made out a figure. I couldn't really tell who or what it was, but it felt familiar. It approached me and I heard a voice calling out. "Hello? Myung ju is that you?" The voice came closer and I felt a sense of warmth I had not felt since arriving in such a foreign place, even though I had a strange sense of connection to this place. This voice felt extremely comforting, and I could take a deep breath again. My nervous system started to calm. I felt a sense of relief after what already seemed like a journey of a lifetime.

"My goodness, is that you Myung Ju? Why on earth are you covered in so much mud?!"

Tears streamed down my face. "Grandpa? How are you here? Where am I?...Where are we? Is that really you? What's going on?!"

"Dear child, dear child, yes it is me. Everything is alright. I've been expecting you. But not like this," he laughed. "Hahaha let us go get cleaned up and we can have a chat by the fire."

He came closer and I could see his face more clearly now, the lines and wrinkles I remembered as a child, his crooked hand that got smashed during the war but would bring me back to the days I mischievously stole butterscotch from his candy jar when I was five before morning cartoons. His crooked hand holding his cane had a life of its own as it hollered and jerked at me demanding I bring his candy back moments later when he woke.

He took out his blanket, the one he always carried for himself; brown, slightly musty and smelling of his endearing sweet earth scent - a scent that only he could smell like. He wrapped it around me as I took another deep breath and sighed.

"I can't believe it's really you Yeh Yeh."

"Yes, we have much to talk about."

As we walked, my eyes started adjusting to the hues of green grass, the smell of the fresh misty morning air and the moist dirt that filled my nostrils. I could start making out green mounds and forested paths, cradles of earth filled with plants and terraces stepping down into the earth, and an open sky before me. We reached what looked like a cottage and I smelled a similar pine smell from my mom's shop and felt a comfort in my belly knowing I was home and safe. A fire was crackling under the white clay adobe walls alongside a warm yellow armchair beckoning me to sit. "Oh my god finally," I thought.

"Sit child, sit. Let me pour you some lotus root soup while you sit and rest."

"Ah, my favorite. The infamous lotus root soup you always use to make me." I trembled as I tried to wrap my hands around the bowl, picking it up from the beautifully carved wooden tray that resembled my mom's craftsmanship. "Where are we and what is this place, Grandpa?"

"We are on Pier 24, Myung Ju, and this is my current dwelling, dear child. The year is 2220. Oh I forgot, I need to chop more lotus roots to make another batch of soup."

"How are you alive right now Yeh Yeh?" As I sipped on the soup with its roasted peanuts and savory dried octopus, filling my tastebuds to my heart's desire, I felt my strength and a certain vitality coming back, though I was also suddenly hit by an immense tiredness from the whirlwind of recent events climbing the mud mountain. I started tearing up again and wanted to tell him all that I experienced; the flashbacks of memories that weren't mine but I felt connected to, the blue mushroom that spoke to me, and the anxiety I felt just being on that mountain.

As he chopped the lotus roots, the speed and agility of his fingers carried a muscle memory of knowing and doing that cut the root in half and half again even with a crooked hand. He took out the dried octopus, dates, peanuts, cutting and seasoning the broth with his magic in ways only he knew how and what I've always admired him for. Food as his pure art, magic, and love. I always saw him as some sort of wizard. I did now too.

"Well," he said. You see, Great Grandpa worked excruciatingly hard before our family came to Seattle. He was tortured and bullied mentally and physically by the white European immigrants who claimed the land. It was never his plan to stay, but the pay was better than at home in China. That mountain you faced is just the same height he physically moved with others like him, shaping the earth to what you see as you walk and roam the landscape of Seattle. It is filled with all his memories and pain and it has a life of its own. However, we create new life with this compost mountain in our food forest here. It's what he would have wanted. He dug the earth, grading the land with machines and helped build the railroads by hand. He had no breaks and worked like a dog, heck, even was treated like one. He did all that work so we can live and flourish like we do today. Are you done with your soup? Come outside with me now."

I put my bowl down not wanting to leave it, craving more. I took one last sip of soup and managed to also get the last crumble of peanuts at the end of the bowl, licking what I could and sat it down on the wooden tray. I followed my grandpa out the door even though my body wanted so much to just continue resting on that yellow armchair forever.

We walked out and I was able to make out more of where I was. I could make out tall loquat trees, smaller asian pear trees, herbs and shrubs of all sorts, lavender groundcovers of thyme, and other miraculous flowers in bloom wanting to offer thier medicine. As we stepped down the terraced slopes of green earth, we passed by more fruit and nut trees, ginkgoes, figs, until we reached a vibrant pond filled with tall lotus leaves and exuberant pink lotus flowers. I spotted people knee deep in the muddy water, digging for lotus roots.

“Now you know where I get my fresh lotus roots from,” my grandpa grinned. “As I was saying, great grandpa and his friends were able to survive because they ate imported food from China which gave them their strength. Our food is medicine for the soul, body, heart and mind. Our ancestors drank hot tea, ate dried oysters, abalone, cuttlefish, bamboo sprouts, mushrooms, five kinds of vegetables, pork, poultry, vermicelli, rice, salted cabbage, dried seaweed, sweet rice crackers, sugar, four kinds of dried fruit, peanut oil...this is what kept us alive.”

“They did not have any of that food in Seattle. We brought that here. What made us thrive and think of home was our very own food medicine. We have that right here in this food forest. And we have the right to make a home here, too, in this earth and soil. You know the lotus, it helps us feel better in this type of cold weather. And if you cook it the way I cook it, like Yeh Yeh cooks it for you, you feel better right? When we came here, we knew the food wasn’t good, it would make our belly ache and bloat. However the lotus, it helps you digest all the bad stuff for you, all the impurities and you are less stressed. Helps you sleep when you are nervous.”

“Oh, yes, I remember you always made me this soup, too, when you could tell I was on my feminine cycle,” I said.

“Oh, and did you say you heard that blue mushroom speak? It is our guide here. It is our relative of the shitake mushroom we ate so much of. It helped us keep going on those horrible railroads. Made our minds strong.”

“It’s like I’m speaking for great grandpa but I feel he is here with us and I can feel his experience in my bones, his body and spirit never left us. Great grandpa is here with us right now and did not separate from us. We can get a sense of what he went through.”

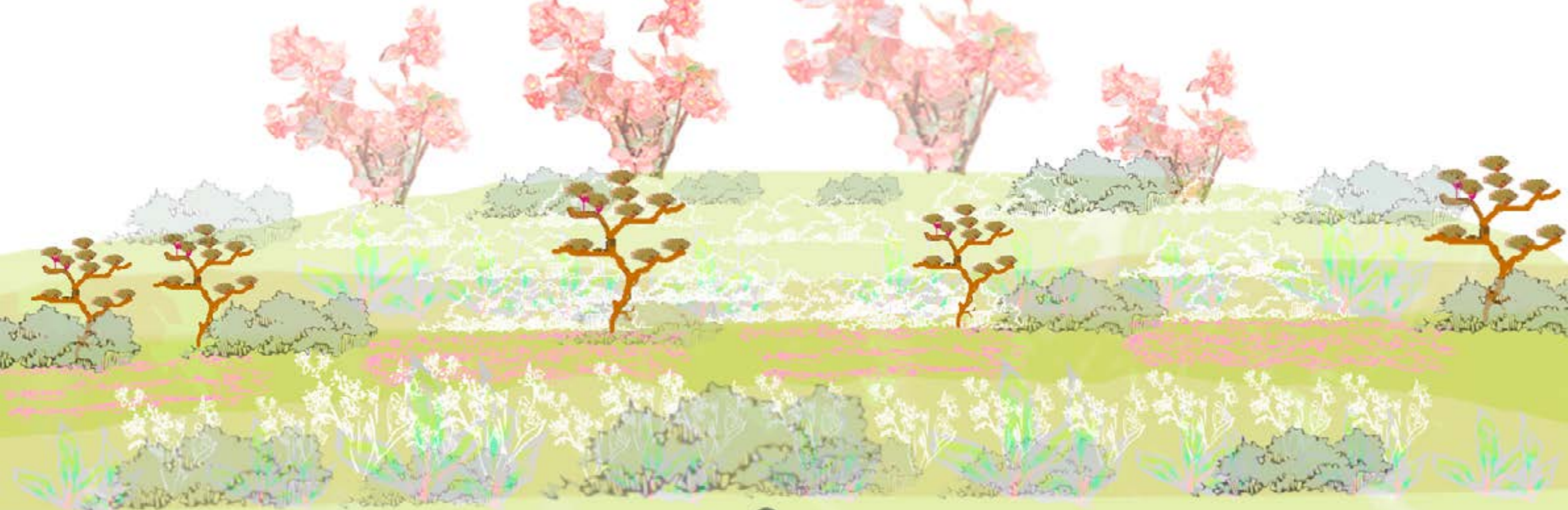
“That dependency on the mushroom grew as it fed us, made us smarter to make decisions about what to do. Our relationship with it is important and so it is very much respected here. It still guides us. It tells us how to plant, when to plant, how to respect the earth and the soil as we formed an inherent connection to the mushroom. It needs us and we need it. The blue mushroom always speaks to us and we speak back to it.”

He then crouched down and spoke to the leaves of the lotus thanking and praying to lotus as he gently picked the leaves from the stem. “Ah yes, this will make a good tea later.”

We continued our journey in this treasure-rich landscape filled with food, memories, love, heartbreak, and medicine.

Figure 15. (next page) Myung Ju tours the food forest with her Yeh Yeh (grandpa) and stumbles upon other people in the food forest tending to the lotus pond. Source: Image created by author.

Figure 16. (pg. 56-57) Myung Ju crying at the location she can feel where her ancestors were physically harmed before being sent off on the pier. She communes with the soil and plantkin all around her and becomes mesmerized of a new life before her in this food forest. Source: Image created by author.





### Part 3: They told us who we were: Our Plant Kin

Myung Ju decided to explore the landscape of the food forest around her. She followed the rolling terraces and found all different food medicines and plant-kin arranged according to the five Chinese elements of fire, wind, earth, water, and metal. Carefully arranged by what was asked to be planted there by the plantkin and earth, plants were nestled according to the slope and availability of sunlight and she felt in awe of how intentional everything was. The plants shone with happiness. Following the geometric flow of the plants, she came across the area of planting according to the metal element. There she traced a path up to the top of a nearby mountain where red plants overflowed. She could feel that this was just the location where her ancestors were brutally beaten before being sent off on ships. Tears streamed down from her eyes, a salty bitterness filled with anger rolled down her face and fell into the soil. *"Just let it absorb into the earth,"* the fungi murmured. The water particles dripped as if magnetized from underground. *"We will take your weeping tears and hold them, we can take it, it's okay. Just as we hold this forest together, the earth will hold you and let you be so that you can grow into the person you desire to be. This forest will show you what is actually meant for you. Start anew and let the tears flow. There will be more room for you to grow inside and out the more you express all the pain. Though your ancestors felt rejected, a new path is unfolding before you here. As we weep with them, we will move forward and flow where the trust is mightier so you can take a bold new shape."*

As she wept, she looked at where she was - a colorful and vibrant landscape lay before her. She could trace the horizon line of the ocean, the terraced foodscapes, and people below tending to the soil, the soil she herself dug her hands into as she wept. She felt a sense of communion with the dewy scent in the earth as if it were a part of her. This comforted her and her mind stopped her wanderings and angst. Her body started to alchemize into a sense of warmth just like she felt when sitting next to the hearth fire in Yeh Yeh's dwelling. She felt her connection to the ground. The earth was her body and her body was the earth. As she looked to the waters, she imagined her tears reaching the ocean. She cried and released all the pain stored in her DNA from her ancestors before her, as if all the bloodshed sacrificed was coursing through her body in her bloodstream and being released through her tears. She heard the crackling of fire down below in the communal gathering space, down in the center of one of their terraces next to the gathering tables and close to the mushroom storehouse. She squinted her eyes and made out a friend who was starting their weekly bonfire and gathering more wood.

As she gazed at the fire, she thought, *"Fire does not lie, it crackles the truth."* Her heart started to burn like the fire below as she felt what was created here in this food forest beat true to her heart. The people, the food, the soil, the plants, the insects and all the earth creatures gathering and conspiring together, radiant and alive more than ever, just like the sun. The simplicity and beauty of it all. She felt her ancestors as her feelings gleamed true, needing to be seen, cried out, and witnessed. The air filled her spirit and swayed with her, fusing with her soul, and her resonance with the earth grew as she listened deep within the wells of her body, the languages spoken to her through her connections with all the elements around her. She slowed down and attuned to her senses and the mycelium in the soil started to speak.

With slithering whispers it continued, *"Be patient as this soil replenishes the nutrients to allow you to grow and nourish the paths of togetherness. You and your ancestors have always been wanted here. Your plantcestors, our plantcestors have always been in morphous dance with you through time helping you find your way again, keeping you healthy, and communicating with you. They say you can be safe to be truly you as you exist here with us. There is no you without us, nor us without you. You are witnessed here in this forest, as the blood of your ancestors run through you."*

*"As you take care of the plant kin, they and we will take care of you. Your cries will be felt. Let it all out on the earth and soil and our plancestor ginkgo will grow with you to show you a better way, giving you counsel on what your body needs to thrive. As you are present with them, as you breathe, smell and be happy with the food that nourishes you, you will know that to be and exist is enough. Your presence is enough and matters in this world."*

*"Let the plantcestors continuously whisper this truth to you until you feel it in your bones. They will always be here if your body is open enough to receive this message when you commune and nourish yourself through the medicinal nutrients of their bounty that speaks of their love for you and your innate belonging. Here in this food forest, we remember and gather together to remember your ancestors and weave a new life through the fabric of trust and reciprocity within our forest. As you are aware of your present being and body in connection here, your bonds in this forest will grow. You have arrived."*

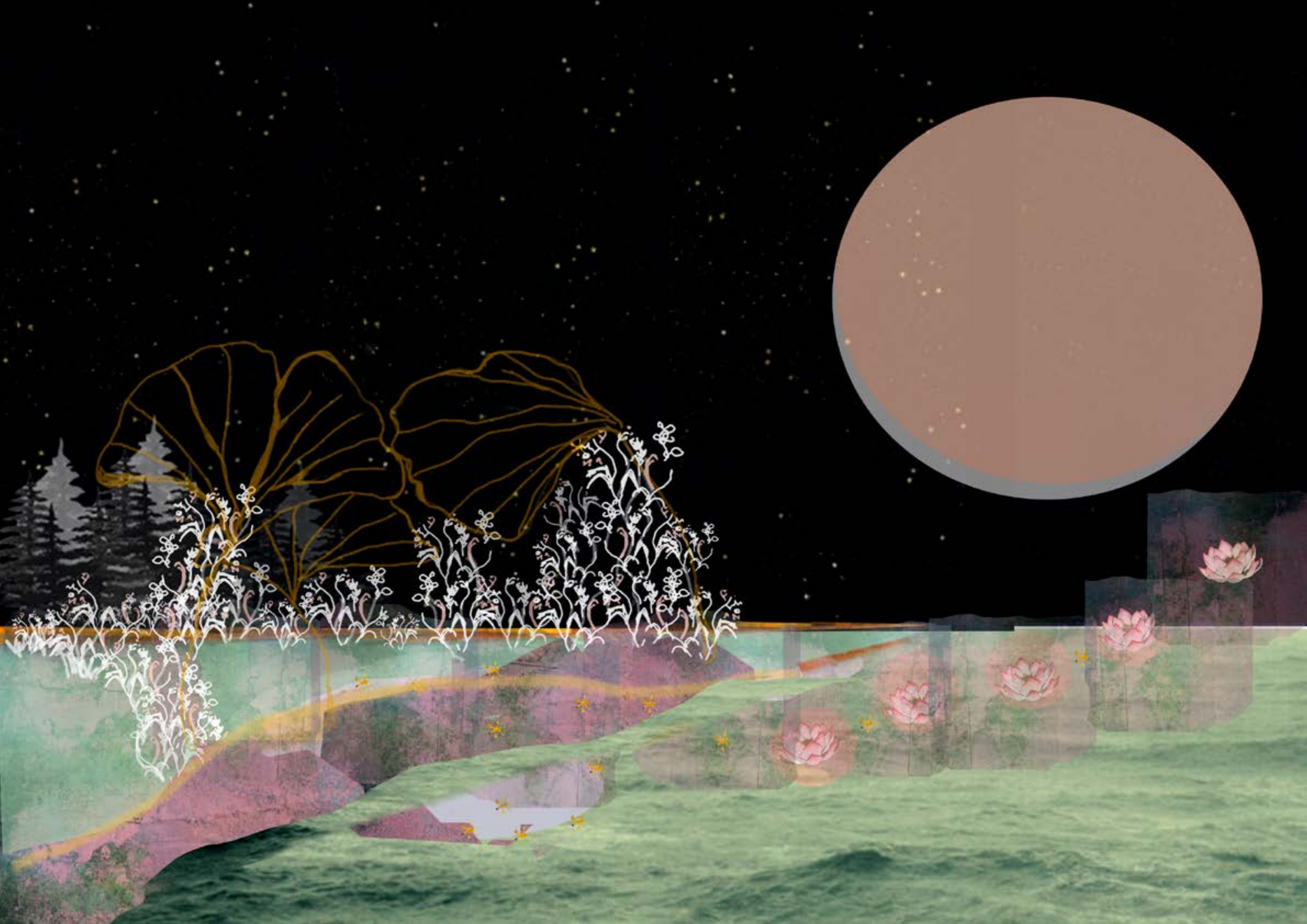
So she listened and revered plancestor ginkgo as fungi worked with the ginkgo and breathed life into the ginkgo trees. The mycelium told the roots to the other trees, *"It would be nice to produce a more abundant harvest this time than the last. The people need it right now."* The other trees received this message. As the word was spread more budding nuts grew and fell. The people in the forest harvested their nuts for food and made porridge that helped recover old memories. The people remembered where they came from and felt grounded in a web of belonging between themselves and all species they were a part of as they heard the secrets of the forest enchanting them into their sovereignty, renewal and awakening.

At last, she finally realized that she always belonged. She felt an affinity for the earth-- its cycles and its deep nourishment through consuming her ancestral food. Food she grew up eating connected her ties with the earth. She felt joy in her body that spread tingles as she ate the ginkgo soup and different types of food medicine from her ancestors. She wanted to praise it, worship it. The food told her she was safe, that she was here, that her people were here and appreciated, loved by the earth and caressed in a sense of belonging her ancestors didn't feel at first. Through the nourishment of their food medicine, she slowly felt the presence within this truth reverberate across time as it imparted wisdom to whoever ate it. She felt her ancestors with her, the plants hugging her and the food kindly nourishing her.

With a full belly, she headed straight for the edge of the pier to greet the ocean. On her way she said hello and thank you to the ginkgo and ginkgo replied back with a gentle sway, *"I am soft with your gratitude."* The softness melted on her heart, her skin and mind and started gently swaying back and forth together in a rhythm. The bugs grew ecstatic and green luminescent rays emitted from the earth and formed a path into the sea down the pier. The rhythm continued and started waking up the humans, to sway in similar tones, feeling the soft ease of the wind and the twirl of the ginkgo leaves. Growing ecstatically together into the night, they followed the path of luminescence to celebrate remembrance of their ancestors, giving offerings to the forest for all bounty of ginkgo nuts they received to make porridge that winter, the nuts to aid them in their remembrance journey and gratitude for those who came before them. They let their lotus blossom lanterns fly into the night. They remembered their homeland and also gave thanks to the Duwamish land for letting them grow and harvest their food and live in a land that was originally stolen from the Duwamish. It became a place of remembrance for all.

Figure 17. (next page) Edge of Pier 48 where the lotus lantern ritual takes place. The lanterns float into the sky as the community goes back into the forest to dance and celebrate their sense of belonging in this food forest, remembering their ancestors as they give gratitude for all their food medicine from the ginkgo trees that harvest season. Source: Image created by author.

Figure 18. (pg.62-63) Local community members grow and tend to the food forest; the mushroom store house, a fruiting body of the ancestral fungus relative, stores cultural memories and knowledge and guides the attunement for the planting season. Source: Image created by author.





## VII. Reflection

As I reflect on this thesis exploration, I see that three main themes grounded my work: (1) reflecting on and responding to racist history through the landscape; (2) cultivating a sense of safety and solidarity through a multicultural food forest; and (3) utilizing speculative fiction as a tool in landscape architecture to dive deeply into narrative to better inform design decisions. Here, I discuss these themes and explain why each is important.

The first main theme I sought to address in this project is the importance of responding to and actively reflecting on histories of tragedy, violence, and exclusion. Specifically, I focused on the historic tragedy of the 1886 riots in Seattle on Pier 48. These riots grew from the build-up of hateful mistreatment towards Chinese immigrants that began before the 1882 Exclusion Act, the first overtly racist act signed into law. Responding to this history means actively coming up with new ways to connect in our humanity and foster compassion in our everyday lives through the physical spaces we design. This is an opportunity to reclaim and celebrate the Chinese immigrant experience for what it truly is - an empowering story of resilience of people who deserve equal kindness, dignity, peace, and respect.

The second main theme is that multicultural memorial food forests that grow culturally relevant food can be a contact zone and an active solution, a new kind of memorial as a living system instead of a static piece in the landscape. In this project, I sought to consider a multicultural food forest on Pier 48 in Seattle, a site of significance in the history of Chinese immigrants. Such a food forest memorial offers multiple mutual benefits for all the actors involved and creative solutions for how we are relating to the earth on a multicultural and collective level. My position throughout this project has been that by standing in solidarity with Chinese immigrants against racism and appreciating their innate belonging on this earth, we recognize our inherent connection to each other and sense of belonging on this planet. A food forest is one avenue for a transformative and just solution. It helps us to respond as a multicultural community and emphasizes how we can move in solidarity with one another into the future. It affords overall social and environmental health by celebrating our unique cultural identities through culturally relevant food and by dedicating ourselves to bridging differences, collaborating, and unifying as a multicultural collective.

Food connects us to our ancestors and pays homage to them with the types of traditions that are preserved from one generation to the next. Foodways offers insights and opportunities to share our personal and ancestral histories with food memories that have shaped and nurtured our identities. Sharing different ways of life with others through how food is cooked, prepared, grown, as well as discovering different types of culturally relevant food can be a powerful way to form new connections and build trust. Seeing how food is medicine in our lives can deepen our compassion and understanding towards one another. Overall, connecting to ancestral food can deepen our sense of belonging to our cultural identity and more than the human world by forming a sacred relationship with our food and traditions. The ritualization of food through cultural celebrations or personal rituals in context to culture identity and history can consecrate sacred bonds to the forest and plants, and what it means to care for ourselves spiritually and emotionally through growing food. Food becomes about honoring our sense of belonging and social liberation as we environmentally care for the earth as a part of ourselves.

The third theme, re-enchanting our imagination through storytelling, is one of the most powerful tools we can use in landscape architecture to envision building newer and freer worlds. Utilizing speculative fiction can help designers fully immerse themselves in uninhibited pure creativity and imagination to deepen

their relationship with narrative that will then inform design. It enables designers to reimagine the future from a place of empowerment as a form of social dreaming. Speculative fiction also can be used as a tool for collaboration in community design. Narrative can be used to break the false assumptions that systems of oppression may create and place on marginalized voices.

Utilizing speculative fiction to imagine a culturally relevant, multicultural food forest which memorializes the 1886 riots in Seattle has been an exploration into stretching my social imagination on what the future can look like. This food forest ultimately aims to build towards a united multicultural front that is centered around building a strong multicultural community, a sense of belonging in the celebration of our various cultural identities, and an even deeper connection with the earth from the soil, our food, and plant kin.

Speculative fiction has enabled me to bring personal stories into light to understand history, ecological processes, and family relationships in a new way, finding connections that I otherwise wouldn't have found if I simply stopped at a purely intellectual level and went right into designing a site. It helped me reimagine a future, and quite frankly, process some trauma by using multiple perspectives and voices that enabled me to imagine storylines with greater emotional expression. Breaking out the norm of design thinking, I moved into a deeper creative place, one of experimentation and play. As stories can also be used to process trauma and express hard emotions, deep connections and relationships to a place, landscape architects can team up with advocates, community leaders, and people in the community to utilize speculative fiction to foster an equitable approach to design by literally giving the voice and power back to our communities. It has the potential to be an equitable and empowering solution for true collaboration before designing an actual site by reclaiming and reframing the narrative envisioned by the community itself, becoming fully visionary. We have an opportunity to work with social justice advocates who already use speculative fiction as a form of dreaming and change making for the future, working across disciplines to have a bigger impact. In addition to exploring communal engagement, it can also benefit any designer to use it as a toolkit for their own personal practice.

As a designer, I realize one of my greatest tools is my ability to dream. I believe our ability to dream bigger takes us closer to liberation because we reorient and take action from a place of embodied truth where the wisdom comes from not only our intellectual minds but from our intuition, our hearts, and capacity for empathetic compassion. Reality is made malleable in our dream space and the more we believe in our dreams, the more we can make them a reality as we show up how we wish to see and connect with the world from a place of deeper truth, compassion, forgiveness, and resiliency to change and evolve. The power is in our hands to create our stories ourselves from a place of deep truth, from a deconditioned place and start believing in this reality and taking intentional actionable steps that are aligned with this dreamscape and value-oriented system. I hope my writing can stoke an inner flame to see the beauty and power of storytelling to reshape our realities to one that feels closer to our calling for change. I hope this reflection can help shed light on how we may deepen our bonds and relationships in how we see the world, knowing our words, energy and intention can open up our connection to a place, unfold our spirit and connection with the more than human world, as well as the ever-evolving present connection within ourselves and with all of life around us.

Landscape architects have the opportunity to open the channels of creativity where we are in experimentation with life's ever flowing creativity in us, around us, ready to be played and curiously explored in the present moment. By honoring history in the past, present, and the making of the future through the visualization and storytelling of this future in this food forest to me is a first step of how I envision a freer

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world. From here, I feel more able to design a site that aligns with my dreams and feel it can be used to work from a more equitable standpoint. By imagining my connection deepening within a living system by creating multicultural and multispecies alliances through growing culturally relevant food, I feel I am bridging community in all forms in the very root of the this word, by communing and unifying with all of life around us and as a part of us; with our ancestors, with our plant kin to be food that nourishes us, with the soil, and with ourselves all as an integral part of a whole, the whole being the living system of earth. Overall, storytelling and speculative fiction has enabled me to express my values as a designer, reclaim and reframe a narrative with hopes to help dream, shape, and design a better future.

This thesis has helped me understand and voice what my values are as a designer. I value the importance of amplifying and honoring cultural histories, specifically Chinese immigration history to better understand where I come from, so that my response for moving into the future is intentional, meaningful, and exemplifies the change I would like to see and tangibly experience in the world. I believe we need more dedicated spaces in the public in our cities that provide the healing power of nature, provide safety physically and emotionally specifically to address racial trauma that inflicts a lot of invisible wounds. This memorial multicultural food forest is built on the values of care, safety, belonging, equity, and healing with dedication to uphold these values. It is a step forward, to better collaborate, witness each other more deeply, heal ourselves and work in ways that build conscious connection and community in the right relationship with people from all backgrounds and with their ancestral plants, to land and all living beings. In the context of recent national crises of anti-Asian violence, this thesis has informed me as a designer and clarified the necessity to prioritize social and racial justice. Instead of being a fight for a place in the community, this food forest becomes a place centered around healing and community building by amplifying Chinese-American history. It is a safe place for discussion and sharing, posing new questions, learning, collaborating, and socializing. We must design for more compassionate cultural landscapes for community building and multicultural collaboration while also helping rebuild a healthy ecological landscape for all.

Through the exploration of this thesis and the recent news of the massacre in Atlanta where one of those killed could have been my mother, I am constantly reminded of the importance of celebrating the uniqueness of our cultural identities and to see them as gifts. It is also important to preserve our traditions and celebrate them together as a united multicultural front knowing that our liberation is bound together. It is also important to take strides to deepen our capacity for compassion, understanding, and trust. I value making more room for marginalized voices to be elevated and valued, especially for people who are marginalized by systems of oppression. It is important to create our own storylines and share our story from a place of empowerment in order to change the current narratives of mainstream culture as well as know how much power each of us truly hold to rise above false definitions created to keep us in boxes and create change. The power of narration--of using speculative fiction to imagine a future where growing culturally-relevant food speaks to our identities, safety and belonging and where pan ethnic collaboration is at the forefront of our priorities for moving forward in the world--speaks truthfully to a vision of what social justice can look like in the design field and in the world.

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