

The Drinking Gourd Refuge



Service is the Antidote to Suffering

Winter 2025-26

Issue 2

Growing with the Flow

Here we are, on the rainy, first day of a new Gregorian calendar year. Despite the calls for new beginnings, new goals, and new intentions, the land, water, and sun around us tell us that we are still right in the middle of something. The soil is as cool as it gets

here, the welcomed rain feeds the roots of the collards, potatoes, garlic, beets, and carrots that we managed to get planted in the ground this fall, and winter in the California Bay is in its fullness. The call on this day of new year celebrations is towards reflection.

This inaugural year has been about discovery, flexibility, problem solving, and the joy of sowing and reaping. In August, we sat on the earth, preparing to build our first greenhouse, and we prayed that our labor would be fruitful and serve many. We have been at work these last months building two greenhouse, hauling compost and mulch down the El Sobrante hillside, cultivating twelve rows of vegetable crops, planting, covering, and tending. We've deterred critters, hungry for their own abundance. We have repaired part of our greenhouse, damaged in the exceptionally strong winds. The solid Chevy S10 pick-up truck we purchased needed a few attempts at TLC before it was ready to roll, and the inground crops are slow growing in the cold.

And we have harvested. The microgreens are proving to be dependable through the fall and winter (as long as we keep a voracious little rodent out). In November we began our first cutting and bagging of broccoli, sunflower, and pea microgreens! We made our first deliveries to [Dorothy Day](#)



[House in Berkeley](#), [East Oakland Youth Development Center](#), and to other folks. Soon, we will add mushrooms to the deliveries, and in the Spring, collards and more to come. We continue to learn that life, land, and weather has its own plans and rather than try to force it against its momentum as modern corporate-driven industry suggests, we do best to be in alignment with the flow.

Celebrations!



Volunteers came out and prepared beds, layering mulch, compost, and hay on twelve rows. Another day, volunteers came and planted crops

and helped to harvest our first donation of microgreens. If you are interested in volunteering in the Spring, please reach out by email or DM us on instagram.



Hands in the Soil

Part of our long term vision is to become a welcome space—a refuge—for our folks who don't typically get the opportunity to retreat. We would love to invite people to rest and be served and also to reclaim and heal fraught relationships with land and soil and food. So many of us have a relationship to the land that is complicated by the forced labor in our lineage wielded by colonization, slavery, and unbridled capitalism—we and our ancestors have been forced into extractive, intensive toil for the profit of others with little to claim for ourselves. But as ———said, “the land was the site of the crime, not the perpetrator.” The land can ground us when things are chaotic. It can compost our grief and hold our dreams. Some days, while kneeling by a row of fresh soil and transplanting vegetables or pulling weeds, we can work through some stuff. What may be possible when we get to experiencing reciprocity with the land? What can happen when working the earth is a source of healing and respite rather than harm?



Reaping the Joy!

We delivered our first harvest of microgreens to [Dorothy Day House in Berkeley](#). We have sent over ten pounds and coming to local organizations and community!



1 lb Sunflower

What are microgreens?
They are very young, edible vegetable plant sprouts, but much younger than full grown plants. They are only a few weeks after germination. Microgreens are nutritious and densely packed with vitamins and antioxidants.

How do you store them?
Place them in a resealable plastic bag or wrap in a paper towel and store them in the crisper drawer. They will last for up to a week and you can give a light rinse as you go.

How do you eat them?
Add them as a garnish to salad or soup, a burrito, a smoothie, or eat by themselves.

Recipe Ideas:
Add a handful of broccoli microgreens on sandwich, or toast.
Make a salad with pea microgreens, olive oil, and pepper.
Wrap microgreens in seaweed with avocado and cucumber.
Snack on sunflower microgreens like chips.
Be creative!



A Table Set Before the World

What does it mean
to give food?

Not charity.

Not transaction.

Not leverage.

I mean—what does it mean to place bread in a stranger's hand
and not ask for their story first?

What does it mean to offer succor,
to make a place of rest,
to say with our bodies what our mouths cannot yet say?

We are still discovering this,
even though the measure of a people has always been found
in how they treat the hungry.
Our people learned this before we had buildings.
Before we had pulpits.
Before we had freedom.

In brush arbors and hush harbors,
with lookouts posted and songs coded,
we learned how to feed each other
when feeding each other was an act of resistance.

The early Christians were spoken of in whispers by the empire.
“They give too much,” the Romans said.
“They care for people who are not their own.”
And Scripture records it simply:

“They broke bread from house to house and shared their food with
glad
and generous hearts.”
— Acts 2:46

That spirit survived the Middle Passage.

It survived the auction block.
It survived the kitchen table with one extra plate,

just in case somebody came through the night.

And the wisdom did not belong to one people alone.

In Morocco, for centuries, Muslims tended Jewish cemeteries
when Jewish families were displaced or diminished.

Graves watered. Stones upright. Names remembered.

Not because they were the same—

but because the dead must not be abandoned.

And our Jewish siblings have long taught this wisdom:

“The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come.”

— Tosefta Sanhedrin 13:2

And again:

“You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of
Egypt.”

— Deuteronomy 10:19

Black folk know something about being strangers.

We know something about borrowed land and borrowed time.

Tzedakah—righteous giving—is not about kindness alone.

It is about repairing the tear in the fabric of the world.

And the Qur'an makes it plain:

"They give food, despite their love for it, to the poor, the orphan, and the captive, saying: We feed you only for the sake of God. We desire neither reward nor thanks."

— Qur'an 76:8–9

That sounds like Big Mama's kitchen.

That sounds like fish fries for bail money.

That sounds like passing the plate when nobody had much, but everybody had something.

Do you hear it, Church?

Not reward.

Not thanks.

Not compliance.

Only fidelity to the Holy.

Now let us be honest, beloved.

When we feed those we do not know,
we are feeding those who do not think like us.

Those who do not vote like us.

Those who do not love like us.
Those whose words may wound us
and whose beliefs may trouble us.

So the real question rises—
and it rises from the back of the church:

Do we feed the homophobe?
Do we shelter the misogynist?
Do we offer water to the racist?

.

As long as they do not interfere with our capacity
to care for others—
yes.

Not because we affirm their harm.
But because hunger is not a referendum.
And shelter is not an endorsement.

Jesus said it this way:

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?”
— Luke 6:32

And the Qur’an sharpens it further:

“Let not the hatred of a people cause you to swerve from justice.”

— Qur'an 5:8

This is not weakness.

This is what our elders called
strength that knows who it belongs to.

What we offer here—
food, shelter, presence—
is not currency for entry.

It is not a conversion tool.
It is not proof that we are right
and others are wrong.

It is testimony.

An admission that we did not earn
what has been given to us.

Friendship.

Health.

Knowledge.

Land close enough to hear the wind
and soil willing to receive seed.

The Bible says:

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

— 1 Corinthians 4:7

And the Rabbis teach:

“A person does not own their wealth; they are entrusted with it.”

— Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah

Old Black folk used to say,

“Don’t get beside yourself—
you didn’t bring it,
and you can’t take it.”

So the question shifts, doesn’t it?

It is no longer,

“Will we give?”

It becomes,

“How dare we withhold
what was never ours to begin with?”

Howard Thurman once wrote:

“I want to be me without making it difficult for you to be you.”

That's not just philosophy.

That's porch wisdom.

That's survival theology.

Make no mistake, we have discernment.

We will not bless systems
that grind the poor into dust.

We will not sanctify violence,
exploitation, or cruelty dressed up as policy or piety.

The Qur'an warns:

"God does not love corruption."

— Qur'an 2:205

The Prophet Isaiah thundered:

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice?"

— Isaiah 58:6

And the Talmud cautions:

"Whoever destroys a single life is considered to have destroyed an
entire world."

— Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

Still—

we will not be conscripted
into shallow polemics
that survive only by keeping us afraid of one another.

Black faith has never been about fear.
It has been about getting free together.

So instead—

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”
— Psalm 23:5

Yes. A table.
A freedom table.
A kitchen table.
A communion table without gatekeepers.

Where enemies and allies
eat the same bread.
Drink the same water.
And discover—perhaps for the first time—
that hunger makes liars of our divisions.

As this Western year turns,

we remember that time itself does not move in one direction.

It is another year in the Muslim calendar.

Another turning in the Jewish calendar.

Another cycle remembered by the Dogon.

Another day counted by those
whose names were never written down.

And Black folk know this too—
because our ancestors measured time
by survival, not dates.

For how many is today
just another day hungry?
Another day unseen?
Another night without shelter?

To them we speak now—and always:

No matter who you pray to.
No matter what year it is for you.
No matter what you believe.

We of the Drinking Gourd
will meet you as a friend first.

Church—why?

Because Scripture agrees across its many tongues:

“To whom much is given, much is required.”

— Luke 12:48

And we have been—
abundantly, undeservedly—
blessed.

So we set the table.

And like our people always have,
we leave the light on.

Amen.

Rev. Ayize Jama-Everett

Head Minister, The Drinking Gourd Refuge

About us

Drinking Gourd is a Black-led community, envisioning the stewardship of a farm and spiritual center. With deep respect for the earth and its wisdom, our mission is to grow and deliver healthy and nurturing food to disenfranchised communities in Oakland, offer a refuge and restoration for folks who don't typically get to retreat, and provide ceremony and healing space for people who practice or wish to learn more about plant medicine.

Get Involved

If you are interested in volunteering, sharing resources or ideas, or donating, please contact us at The drinkinggourdrefuge@gmail.com



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