

# Food Empowerment Project Embraces Shared Leadership to Advance Justice, Equality, and Sustainability

*The new collective organizational model streamlines communication, nurtures creativity and drives more impactful initiatives*

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*lauren Ornelas, F.E.P.'s  
Founder and Senior Programs  
Director*

[Empowerment Project](#) (F.E.P.), a leading vegan food justice organization, today announced a transformative organizational shift. By adopting a collective model, F.E.P. reaffirms its commitment to justice, equality, and sustainability in all aspects of its operations.

Under the collective organizational model, F.E.P. aims to create a more inclusive and collaborative environment where every voice is valued and heard. While organization-wide decisions are made democratically through majority vote, team-specific decisions are driven by leaders with input from others. This framework promotes transparency, with essential organizational information readily accessible

to all. Employees also have the responsibility to assess their own and their coworkers' performance, including participating in hiring, promotion, and certain termination decisions. This democratic approach not only fosters accountability but also empowers team members to contribute meaningfully to the organization's mission.

F.E.P.'s founder lauren Ornelas, who championed this shift, says, "I feel this is the natural evolution of the organization and hope other organizations can follow. Our transition to a shared power model represents a strategic step forward in our commitment to justice. Being a collective, we are fostering a sustainable approach to F.E.P.'s legacy."

F.E.P.'s collective model (a work in progress) emphasizes collaboration and accountability – crucial elements in advancing its mission. As a nonprofit dedicated to promoting a fairer and more sustainable world through food choices, the organization advocates for issues such as promoting veganism for animals, farm worker justice, fighting food apartheid, and raising

awareness about child labor and slavery in the chocolate industry. This transition to a more inclusive model streamlines decision-making processes and creates a platform where employee talent, passion, and expertise can thrive. Embracing a collective organizational structure also empowers team members to pursue special projects with dedicated support, nurturing innovation and adaptability within the organization.

“We believe that relying on a single individual to lead a team within a traditional hierarchical framework isn't sustainable and contradicts our core values. Instead, as an organization, we advocate for a more inclusive approach that fosters longevity and facilitates meaningful progress by ensuring that every voice is heard and valued equally,” says Ornelas.



lauren Ornelas, Founder and Senior Programs Director of Food Empowerment Project

#### About Food Empowerment Project

Founded in 2007 by Lauren Ornelas, Food Empowerment Project is dedicated to creating a more just and sustainable world by recognizing the power of one's food choices. The organization aims to empower those with the least resources across various advocacy areas, including fair conditions for farm workers, access to healthy foods in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, and the protection of animals. As a vegan food justice organization, Food Empowerment Project also exposes corporations that exploit low-income areas by promoting unhealthy foods or perpetuating food deserts (also known as food apartheid areas), and those that profit from chocolate produced through the worst forms of child labor. Food Empowerment Project is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. To learn more, visit <http://www.foodispower.org>.

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