

March 15, 2016

Peter Morich
Slow Food Atlanta
110 S Columbia Drive Unit 7
Decatur, GA 30030

Presbyterian Mission Agency
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Re: Grant Recommendation for Grow Where You Are

In 2015, Slow Food Atlanta recognized Eugene Cooke of Grow Where You Are with our Food Justice Award for his tireless work for Social Justice. I am recommending Grow Where you are for your Self-Development of People (SDOP) Grant.

Eugene Cooke is a passionate educator, farmer, community advocate, and leader in the fight for food sovereignty. Through Grow Where You Are LLC in Southwest Atlanta, Eugene works to educate and advocate for Urban Agriculture. Eugene fights the "fast food swamp" that surrounds the Southwest Atlanta community providing a place for the community to grow their own food, where the nearest grocery store selling fresh produce is 2 miles away. Through his Grow Where You Are LLC Project, Eugene works to create "local food abundance systems", transforming racism in the food system, increasing the community's food independence and working to represent the people of southwest Atlanta in the fight for good, clean and fair food for all.

Grow where you are works with many partnerships in the community to accomplish their work. Slow Food Atlanta was honored to partner with Eugene Cooke to bring Eric Holt-Gimenez of Food First to Atlanta in 2015, to talk about "Racism in the Food System." Eugene Cooke and Grow Where You Are organized and led an evening workshop with community organizations and citizens at The King Center to discuss what this means to the greater Atlanta area and how we solve these issues. The Atlanta Food Community is blessed to have Eugene Cooke leading the fight for food sovereignty and food justice.

Eugene Cooke and Grow Where You Are is first an educational and skill development organization. When you visit Eugene and his team at the farm, if you want to talk with him, you will work beside him on that days project while you are talking. I have had the pleasure of bringing groups to the Farm where Eugene teaches about Food Sovereignty, growing your own food and working for food justice. I know of his technical workshops on soil and growing techniques to increase output along with community garden workshops are important for the community and this work needs to continue.

Eugene Cooke and Grow Where You Are continue to enhance the quality of life for the community. With the recent closure of the Giant Food in southwest Atlanta adding to the food desert issues, the work of Eugene Cooke and Grow where you are is even more critical. When the store was foreclosed on by an out of state Bank, they erected a fence around the entire property in the middle of the night without notice to the community. The fence cut off access to the community garden. Eugene Cooke and Grow Where you Are organized the Food Justice and Urban Farming community to immediately move the community garden so it could continue to provide fresh food to the community.

<http://clatl.com/freshloaf/archives/2016/02/16/giant-food-grocery-stores-closure-adds-to-food-desert-issues-along-bankhead-corridor>

The Atlanta Food Community is blessed to have Eugene Cooke and Grow Where You Are leading the fight for food sovereignty and food justice. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Self-Development of People (SDOP) Grant will provide continued opportunity for this critical work to continue. On behalf of Slow Food Atlanta, we fully recommend Eugene Cooke and Grow Where You Are for this Grant.

Kindest Regards,
Peter Morich

Board Chair, Slow Food Atlanta
Curator, Lexicon of Sustainability

peter.morich@gmail.com
USA Mobile: 404-202-0603
Italy Mobile: +39 342 5880401

Good Shepherd Community Church
445 Lawton Street, P. O. Box 10906 Atlanta, Georgia 30310
(404) 758-5856

March 20, 2016

Self Development of People (SDOP) Grants Committee
Presbyterian Ministries Missions

Dear SDOP Grants Committee:

While serving as pastor of the Good Shepherd Community Church, the Church invited the “**Grow Where You Are**” organization to be responsible as our farmer volunteers to help support the **Good Shepherd Community Church Garden/Farm Program**. They gladly joined us in this community healthy foods mission. “**Grow Where You Are**” expanded Good Shepherd’s community involvement approach starting with a renaming of the name of the mission to the “**Good Shepherd Agro Ecology Center**”.

Some of the activities the Agro Ecology Center initiated in support of our community missions included the following:

- Increased the number of interactions with college and university organizations including Clark Atlanta; Spelman; Georgia State; Morehouse; Morehouse Medical School; and Georgia Technical Institute, using a service-learning approach
- Expanded our community involvement approach
 1. Brought in more volunteer workers and trainees
 2. Taught persons from community and school organizations how to grow food with organic -- natural (non-purchased man made) chemical fertilizers
 3. Taught effective mulching techniques
 4. Brought in “organic” support organizations to work with us to
 - a. Train volunteers
 - b. Support community festivals and
 - c. Solicit their purchase of natural grown food
 5. Supported a “Church give-away food program” for church members, low income people, and persons residing in food deserts
- Utilized the farm site to train the community on ecological restoration, water run-off control, and natural food growing techniques
- Bought seeds, plants, and tools to work the farm and share with volunteers out of their limited monetary resources
- Redesigned the farm to best utilize available water and sun
- Introduced a new farm concept and design to grow produce and pome fruit on man-made hills and
- Managed the farm.

The Church supported **Grow Where You Are** by allowing their personnel to eat food grown on the Church’s property and sell what they could market from use of about 1 ½ acres. They are no longer with us and need to be supported. They were of immeasurable benefit to our work and the community.

Thank you for consideration of **Grow Where You Are** as a SDOP grant recipient in 2016. I am respectful of your decision.

Richard S. Bright

Retired Pastor Richard S. Bright (H) 404/696-8041

cc: Pastor Nolan English and Trustee Board

3/16/2016

To the Members of the SDOP Committee:

It is my privilege to recommend Grow Where You Are for a Self-Development of People (SDOP) grant. I have known the three core members of GWYA for one year after discovering an article about their work online while researching veganic farmers in the U.S. I am a writer and researcher for a hunger relief organization called A Well-Fed World, and we were looking to partner with a team of veganic farmers to further our food justice programs.

Note: the term veganic is simply a combination of "vegan" and "organic," and describes methods for growing food that do not use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or animal products, and which are more sustainable for the environment and our shared natural resources. Although organic standards prohibit synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, organic growing practices still typically include the use of animal manures and slaughterhouse by-products, such as bone meal and blood meal, for fertilizer. The latter two are typically collected from slaughterhouses and often come from diseased animals. As for manure, most cases of e.coli poisoning from vegetables can be traced back to the use of animal manures for fertilizer. Veganic growing techniques eschew both chemicals and animal products, and also strive to minimize impacts to wildlife and ecosystems. They are among the most health-promoting, eco-protective methods available for growing food.

As I began to read descriptions of some of Grow Where You Are's projects that empower underserved communities to take more control of their own food security, nutrition and health, I was so impressed that I called my boss in the middle of the night while she was on a business trip in England. I have since met the members of GWYA personally, seen them at work installing food gardens, and collaborated long distance on several projects. I remain in awe of their tireless work ethic, their commitment to community service, and their embodiment of that timeless wisdom, *Be the change you wish to see*.

After reviewing your application guidelines, it is my opinion that you will not find a group whose work is more aligned with your criteria and mission, or more deserving of your support. I would like to just briefly address a few of the ways in which Grow Where You Are meets and exceeds your expectations for excellence as outlined below.

Per your stated criteria, projects must:

Address long-term correction of conditions that keep people bound by poverty and oppression. This will utilize some combination of the SDOP core strategies to

promote justice, build solidarity, advance human dignity and advocate for economic equity.

Since 2009, Grow Where You Are has been transforming urban spaces in underserved neighborhoods in Atlanta by creating community food gardens & vegetable farms. Over the past 10 years, GWYA's co-founder Eugene has assisted in the creation of 18 urban farms, 14 school gardens, and 40+ home gardens, and has planted 400+ fruit trees in cities throughout the U.S. as well as in Jamaica, Haiti and Kenya.

In the communities where they work, GWYA promote much-needed public awareness and education around small-scale, sustainable growing practices; increase food sovereignty in low-income neighborhoods; empower people in urban areas to reconnect with the land; and improve public health and food security through plant-based nutrition. Grow Where You Are is also addressing long-standing structural inequality, including: racism in the U.S. dietary guidelines, unequal access among low-income families to proper nutrition information, and the unequal distribution of grocers and markets with healthy foods in low-income urban communities, which are characterized by 'food deserts'— areas of little to no access to fresh fruits and vegetables. To address this disparity, in addition to planting food gardens, Grow Where You Are has begun a series of pop-up produce markets in train stations and other areas of public transit, selling affordable organic produce from their farmsite. They also hope to install a permanent farmer's market stand in an area of SouthWest Atlanta that will be accessible by foot and bus to underserved neighborhoods.

Be sensitive to the environment while accomplishing its goal(s) and objectives.

In addition to producing abundant, healthful food for humans, Grow Where You Are's veganic agro-ecological farming methods work to restore the health of the earth by prohibiting the application of pesticides, chemicals and synthetic fertilizers, and instead recycling organic plant food scraps and bio-matter back into the earth, replenishing soils and reusing valuable nutrient sources that would otherwise have been diverted to landfills as food waste. And as previously mentioned, these growing techniques also work to protect biodiversity and local ecosystems.

Not advocate violence as a means of accomplishing its goal(s) and objectives.

Alongside promoting non-violence to people and the land, GWYA also promotes non-violence to animals through their focus on animal-free growing techniques and their provision of 100% plant-based meals to volunteers and community members. Grow Where You Are endeavors to serve humanity in a way that promotes the least harm and the most good for people, animals, and the planet all at once.

Be presented, owned, and controlled by the group of economically poor people who will benefit directly from it.

Grow Where You Are's creative, community-based initiatives heal and transform local

food systems as well as the lives of community members. But while their impact in the neighborhoods where they work is tremendous, GWYA members have historically subsisted on very little means since the organization's inception, contributing much of their service without meaningful financial compensation. An SDOP grant would allow Grow Where You Are to establish the necessary infrastructure and relationships to not only address immediate needs of the community, but also to seed and continue to cultivate long-term solutions in collaboration with community members.

I feel as though I have barely scratched the surface of the many ways GWYA is healing and sustaining their community, or of the potential they have to do even more. A grant from your organization would help sustain them in turn so that they may continue to perform their life-changing—indeed, life-saving—services. On behalf of myself and my employer organization, A Well-Fed World, it is my privilege and honor to offer my highest recommendation of Grow Where You Are to the SDOP Committee. You will not find a more worthy or devoted group of human beings.

Yours sincerely and with gratitude,

Ashley Capps
Writer/Researcher/Outreach Specialist
A Well-Fed World
ashley@awfw.org
(704) 517-7867