



BY ELIAS-DEEN SOO-HWAN ZADI

It all started with "Brown Bags for All" in January, 2020



As a BIPOC led community based nonprofit, we recognized the impact of COVID-19 pandemic early. We wanted to help the most vulnerable during pandemic: the unhoused. We started making hundreds, then thousands of brown bag meal kits. We distributed them in Skid Row and in South Central LA.

We got \$25,000 in private donations. Each brown bag cost \$2.50 to make.



February 20, 2020: We tried launching a neighborhood taco cart in Skid Row. The realities of pandemic started coming down like a two ton brick. One unhoused resident bought Lawry's seasoning and said "now it smells like home." We gave a thousand tacos that day.



My mother, Susan Park, founded Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice founded on February 28, 2020
KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance) became our fiscal sponsor

"We had \$50,000 worth of canceled catering orders during the last week of February in 2020. Shelter-in place-mandates loomed on the horizon. My restaurant foot traffic was sinking like the Titanic. I had over \$50,000 of ingredients for normal business that wasn't coming back. I started giving all the food away." Susan Park



My parents and our family restaurant, Revolutionario, is well known in the community for giving back. Our restaurant was a hub for the community and local officials took notice. Councilman Marquese Harris-Dawson gave my father an "Immigrant Business owner of the year award. My father attended a community cook out with Herb Wesson.

Councilman Wesson gave Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice its first grant of \$25,000 in March 2020.

The Community Took Notice. Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice raised \$150,000 in private donations from individuals

The Media Took Notice. Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice was featured in The LA TIMES, RAFU SHIMPO, The Korean Daily, CBS, Sundance Film Festival Panel, LA Taco, Hal Eisner FOX11 LA, and many more.

The screenshot shows the top portion of a Los Angeles Times article. The masthead includes the newspaper's name, a hamburger menu icon, a user profile icon, and a search icon. The main headline reads "This couple turned their taqueria into a food bank". Below the headline is a large photograph of a group of about seven people, including Susan Park, standing behind a table filled with bags of rice and other food supplies in a cluttered room that was formerly a restaurant.

The screenshot shows a news article with the headline "Paying the Good Fortune Forward". The byline is "By BRITTANY KO and ANNAKAI HAYAKAWA GESHLIDER". The article text discusses Susan Park's efforts to help the community through her former restaurant, Fugetsu-Do, which she has converted into a food bank. It mentions her family's history in the neighborhood and her commitment to supporting other small-business restaurants. A photograph shows Susan Park in her former restaurant, now a food bank, surrounded by stacks of food supplies. Another photograph shows a man loading boxes into the back of a car. The article concludes with information about Park's fundraising efforts and her plans to expand her initiative.

Revolutionario's restaurant parking lot turned into a food distribution hub with dozens of community organizations and grassroots nonprofits coming to pick up.

- Agape Church in South Central**
- My Cielo**
- Helping Hands**
- Chesapeake Apartments Tenants Union**
- Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance**
- Thai CDC**
- YMCA locations**
- Church of Latter Day Saints**
- Little Tokyo Services Center**
- Southeast Asian Community Alliance**
- API Forward Movement**
- Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians**

And many more



Food Companies Took Notice



In Kind Donations
Mutual Trading Co
NONGSHIM Ramen
Red Boat fish sauce
Asian food ingredients to provide culturally relevant foods to low-income Asian Americans



LA Mission shared their surplus in-kind donations with us. They gave us 1500 boxes of meat and cheese for 16 weeks. They gave us truck loads of personal care products.





Summer of 2020
We got meal contracts from Jose Andres' World Kitchen and DineIt to make 10,000 meals at a cost of \$10 per meal. We distributed the meals ourselves and through our community network of distribution partners



In August of 2020, Robert Sausedo of Community Build, a nonprofit founded by Maxine Waters, introduced us to Kat Taylor's "Growing The Table" Team to distribute produce purchased from BIPOC farmers to low-income BIPOC communities. GTT gave us an operating and administrative grant. Mr. Sausedo told us that we are family and he will always be at our side when we need him.



In October of 2020, we were approved for a \$440,000 grocery and prepared meal distribution grant from a Foundation.

From December 2020 to March 31, 2020
We purchased, packed, and distributed over 17,000 bags or boxes of groceries in four months.

We made or purchased over 14,000 hot meals in four months.



Spring/Summer 2021

The Foundation Grant overlapped in February with The Growing The Table Grant. We distributed 200 boxes of produce every week for 12 weeks.

As the GTT grant cycle was closing, we started intaking and distributing 1000 boxes of produce per week from the USDA for 12 weeks.

Fall/Winter 2021-2022: We took a break from our produce distribution, but continued our social and human services.



Winter/Spring 2022

We are in pilot II of Growing The Table

Our current produce distribution sites and partners:

The Korean Resource Center on Crenshaw

The Korean Resource Center on Kingsley

Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)

United American Indian Involvement

Baldwin Hills, Leimert Park, Crenshaw (BLT) Tenants Union

Chesapeake Apartments in South Central LA

The Giving Table in Inglewood

National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON)

Mano o Mano

Father's Table Homeless Shelter in Koreatown

Tongan Community in Inglewood

Keys to The Streets in South Central LA

Semillas Community in El Sereno

VOCES Church in El Sereno

In December of 2021, our nonprofit, World Food Bank, Kitchen, and Urban Farm was approved by the IRS as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit retroactively dated back to March 2021 when we applied for nonprofit status.

Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice became a program of World Food Bank, Kitchen, and Urban Farm.

The Korean Resource Center and CDC www.minjokrc.org is another program we started with KRC Union Members.

Reflections on the past and what we're doing today

My mother, Susan Park, started community level social and human services when we first opened our family restaurant in May of 2015.

Dan, an 84 year old Black elder , was living out of his van. He needed help fixing a parking ticket. He said that when he went to the Metropolitan Courthouse they told him to go to the DMV. When he went to the DMV, they told him to go the Metropolitan Courthouse. Back and forth. Back and forth. He was losing what little money he had at the gas pump. My mother looked up how to fix the ticket. She typed up a letter for him to show the DMV and the Metropolitan Courthouse. His ticket was resolved that day. If his van was impounded, he would have ended up on the streets. He refuses to go to a crowded shelter. We also gave him recyclables and hot meals. Because he didn't have to spend time looking for recyclables and because he saved money on 5-10 meals per week, he was able to afford housing. He eventually found a room for \$500 that he could afford with his social security payments.

Maria, a 98 year old indigenous elder lives all alone. She has no family. Our restaurant became a wellness check in center for her, where she could always get hot meals, translations for legal notices and letters from the county, and it was a place where she found people cared about her. We got her signed up for SNAP and MediCal.

Darla, a 98 year old, a Black elder was dumpster diving in our restaurant's trash container. We asked her what she needed. She said food and recyclables. We invited her inside our restaurant and told her that she can come anytime for a hot meal and a cold drink. We also gave her recyclables that we saved. Because she didn't have to spend hours per day looking for recyclables and food, she was able to find a part-time job. She earned enough to find a \$300 room to rent.

The individuals and families we have given healthy produce to since February 28, 2020 have reported back that they have experienced an overall improved feeling of security and health by knowing that they can get supplemental produce when they need it. The money they save on groceries helps them save money for other basic necessities such as rent, utilities, and work related travel expenses.

Our holistic approach helps marginalized people who do not have the resources, knowledge, or time to be shuffled around the system or who feel harmed by the system. We expanded our social and human services by being trusted community members that marginalized people felt comfortable with.

We found two homeless shelters in Koreatown. We in-took all the resident into social services and MediCal. Several residents qualified for Rapid Rehousing. We connected them with housing providers. We take a grassroots approach while utilizing our knowledge of systems. Susan Park took a job at the Korean Resource Center in October of 2021. She joined the union and formed The Korean Resource Center and CDC to grow social and human services, access to healthcare, and revitalize community. The Korean Resource Center has 10,000 constituents.

Our current services and direct aid...

Our strength lies in our grassroots, community based, people to people, one on one approach and our ability to harness systemic benefits with our professional, administrative, and executive skills

We work in the areas of social services and human services. We take a holistic approach to human care, health equity, improving access, behavioral health, and healthcare access

Letter and document translation

CalFresh (SNAP/EBT), Medical, Medicare, Social Security, Dental, Vision

Naturalization, DACA initial and renewal, Green card renewal, Family Petitions, VAWA, T-Visa, U-Visa, SIJS and other forms of relief

Tenants Rights, Eviction Protection, Rent Relief, Rapid Rehousing

Healthy Produce Distribution

Community Safety Patrol

Healthcare Access and Equity for Small Business owners and their employees

JEPWA Community Land Trust uniting Koreatown and South Central LA

Who We Are....



My sister Kamilah graduated from UCLA with a degree in political in June 2020. She is currently studying to take the California Bar. She was inspired by our mother. She witnessed people being helped in meaningful and impactful ways with just a little bit of legal information from our mother. My sister worked 3 part-times and helped out at our restaurant while attending college full-time. I'm on the same path as my big sister with an emphasis on labor union organizing.

My father, Chef Zadi, teaches culinary arts and helps distribute produce. He is our resident volunteer chef for our hot meal programs.



Eileen Wisco, Secretary and Treasurer
BS in Business Administration
concentration in accounting, minor in
information systems, San Francisco State
University

Laura Stewart, Vice President
Degree in Visual Arts, UCSD, lighting
director in the film and television industry

Susan Park, Director of Services and
Diversity. Fluent in English and Korean.
Some Spanish. In-language services
coordinator.



Zerita Jones, President. Long time
advocate for tenants rights, housing, and
a co- founder of Liberty Community
Landtrust. Founder of Baldwin Hills
Leimert Park Crenshaw Local Tenant's
Coalition and BKC (Black Korean
Coalition) with Susan Park



Kamilah Zadi, Community Legal Services
Coordinator on her way to becoming an
attorney. Legal apprentice The Collective
for Liberatory Lawyering, founded by
attorneys from Public Counsel.

Elias-Deen Zadi, Executive Director and
Youth Coordinator learning from elders
and igniting youth into action.

Shout out to our volunteers and seasonal staff who make it happen...

