

INSIGHT 01

SPACE TO CONSIDER AND PROCESS EMOTION IS CRITICAL IN MOVING FORWARD.

Participants' emotions provide greater context into the food system and how communities have been impacted differently. This section highlights the prominent emotions first, followed by the thought or belief that caused the emotion.

“White farmers are then able to invest resources into the land [because they have resources from generations of free labor and exploitation]. Black people look at the land and see the history of slavery and violence and murder and don't want any part of it”

- BIPOC



BIPOC COMMUNITIES

We heard participants in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities express emotions such as **pain**, hurt, and **frustration**. These emotions were caused by **pain** from the post-slavery era, **frustration** that some members of these communities have a lack of interest in land ownership and farming, and hurt regarding the cycle of disenfranchisement of Black labor and land.

Specifically, much hurt resulted from the fact that white people have historically seen opportunities in farming where Black people saw historical **pain**. However, conversations about **pain** and **frustration** shifted to healing when youth were involved early in agriculture and consideration was given to the ways in which the Black church can serve the community.

Additionally, youth were inspired by their possibilities in the food system and encouraged to create awareness about the power of federal policies such as the Farm Bill to mobilize the community. We heard **pride** described in discussing small communities and there was a desire to see the narrative shift to reflect their assets.



WHITE PEOPLE

In contrast to the participants in the BIPOC identity conversations, those in the white community had less emotion related to **pain** and **fear** due to historical trauma. However, this group expressed sentiments of challenge, **frustration**, and **fear** regarding power dynamics and imbalances.

Many participants expressed **fear** and **tension** about how to fight power imbalances, let go of power, and acknowledge how the food system has historically impacted communities of color. However, they also shared feelings of **hope** and **passion** for embedding racial equity work in the system and coming to terms with privilege and power.

Discussions of power were coupled with statements of power dynamics due to race and positionality in food work. **Passion** and **excitement** were also represented in envisioning the future of the food system post-pandemic. One participant stated, “we planted seeds that might blossom later,” regarding the shift towards innovation for the future.

Passion was heard in connecting the different levels of food work between community, local, state, and federal efforts. Participants, however, expressed **frustration** with the lack of coordination of efforts and long-term planning across organizations.

“... the place that is hardest for White people is understanding power dynamics. They are scared, and that’s understandable. White people should be caucusing about power dynamics and white supremacy, and that’s the work we need to be doing.”

- WHITE

LATINO COMMUNITIES

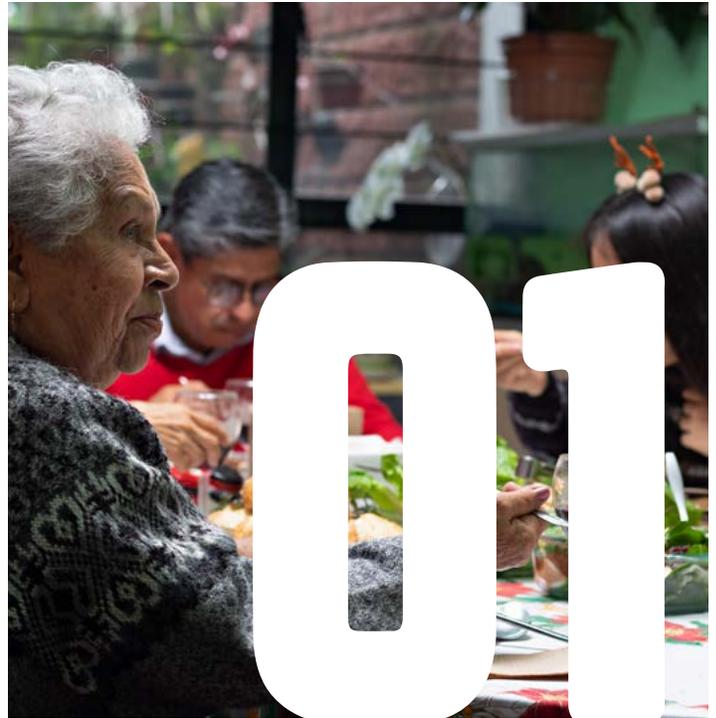
Participants from the Latino community expressed emotions ranging from **frustration** and fear, to **hope** and **pride**.

The barriers and miscommunications faced by members of their community were some of their biggest **frustrations**. These challenges were only made worse by the pandemic, which created deeper inequities. Additionally, there was **frustration** about the treatment of farmworkers. Many struggle with access to food, despite the fact that they are part of the system itself. The lack of conversation about the root causes of food insecurity in the community was another point of **frustration**.

However, we heard participants express **hope** for the future and **pride** in their community. Especially in a community that is “all united to provide” and that innovated in a crisis. Participants expressed **hope** that there would be future research to help understand the needs of the Latino community, and to grow the availability of culturally relevant foods.

There was also **pride** from participants in the history and culture of food within the Latino community. **Passion** was represented in an increased desire for community representation within policy and advocacy for Latino needs.

There was **passion** and **tension** heard regarding education as a potential solution to addressing issues in the food system. According to some participants, increased awareness is needed to influence better food choices and policy engagement. Others stated that the solution must address the root causes of food inequity, including low wages, discrimination, immigration, and poverty.



“We are a culture of tradition and memories from our ancestors - we continue those memories.”

-LATINO

“Sometimes families have fear due to immigration status. It hasn’t helped during COVID that relief is often for families who have status, and eliminated for those who are not documented.”

- LATINO

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Emotions from the rural communities' identity conversations ranged from **pride, love, hope**, and excitement to **frustration**. **Pride** and **love** dominated the conversations. To these participants, "rural" meant a place and the story of home, not just a population density. Participants felt that being in a rural community provided them with a stronger sense of community and connectedness.

The idea that struggles bring future opportunities created **hope** and **excitement**. There was a feeling that now is the time to seize the momentum from the pandemic.

Fear and **stress** came from the lack of profits and control experienced by rural farmers. However, there was also **tension** between the need to make a profit from farming as their livelihood and the current level of capitalism in food. Participants expressed a desire to move away from the profit-guided capitalist system. But there was uncertainty about how to do so.

Additionally, these participants felt **frustrated** by how few people want to stay in rural communities. Yet, the food that is grown in these areas is disproportionately consumed by those in urban areas.

Getting youth involved in food work and integrating agriculture into the education system was a point of **passion**. There was also **excitement** about youth and Black people regaining an interest in agriculture, leading to a return to rural areas to farm and grow.

Participants expressed **hope** in community-driven solutions that focus on improving infrastructure and the capacity of local and regional food suppliers. Some ideas included a direct-to-consumer agricultural model and collaboration between rural and urban spaces to strengthen the food supply chain.

Policy solutions that support these examples include increasing broadband access and providing resources for regional food markets. Others noted that grants beyond low-interest loans were effective for creating innovation outside the current models.

"I'd like there to be more work that does things that scare people. We have a system of monetizing and capitalizing everything."

- RURAL



URBAN COMMUNITIES

In these conversations, the key emotions represented were **frustration** and **hope**. Participants in the urban communities' conversations felt confused by what the term "urban" meant to them. There was **frustration** with the term, due to its implicit association with race and socioeconomic status.

Participants felt **frustrated** trying to balance their personal beliefs with those of the organizations that they represent. **Frustration** was also expressed about the strict and racist policies that stall collaboration and innovation.

In contrast to rural conversations, our team noticed urban participants felt disconnected to place and were more connected to their organization.

Hope was felt regarding the desire for collaboration sparked by the pandemic. The pandemic also created **hope** for shedding light on long-term disparities and inequities.

"As a white woman, I can't remember ever having been identified as 'urban'. Has this word ever been neutral, or has it always been coded for suburban/urban; white/black; rich/poor?"

- URBAN



YOUTH & ELDERS

Youth and elders were interviewed both together and separately, so their emotions expressed in conversations have been grouped together. However, there are key distinctions between the two groups that will be discussed later in the report in insight #8. In these identity conversations, we heard emotions similar to other group conversations. They ranged from **excitement** to **frustration** to **sadness**.

We heard **frustration** within the youth group around the disinterest of agriculture in the Black community. Additionally, they were **frustrated** by elders' lack of innovation and creativity in farming. The idea that local food is seen as "boutique" or exclusive was also frustrating to this group. Our participants felt that eating local food needs to be a normal part of food consumption. Participants also expressed **frustration** about the disproportionate investment from the state towards hemp production instead of food production.

There was a specific feeling of **sadness** related to the **isolation** and lack of connectivity in the elder populations. This was only made worse by the pandemic. One participant explained that feelings of **isolation** are not specific to age, but to active vs. homebound senior populations.

A lot of **excitement** was generated by youth engaging in food work and the chance for youth and elders to work more strategically together. This connected directly to the feeling of **hope** that youth are the future and elders need to give them the platform to build the future.

"You get to hear the perspective of what the future wants." Our youth is our future; if we cultivate their needs/ desires, we're building the future."

- YOUTH/ELDER

Calls to Action:

- For change to happen, we need to seek out and encourage emotional intelligence training and understanding.
- All leadership can benefit from more emotional awareness. This includes community leaders, organizational leadership, and institutional leadership.
- "Doing food differently" is both head and heart work.
- Deepening food-related organizations' and leaders' ability to work from a place of emotional awareness/justice/intelligence allows us to value our experience. The emotions that are invoked during this process can be used as important guides in what to do and how to do it.