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Lewis Hine Documentary Fellow 2011-2012
October-November Report

The Third Season at The Food Project.

Autumn. Bright greens go yellow, then red, while the days get darker more quickly. Haste is made to harvest the remainder of the heartier crops: collards, kale, carrots, and leeks. Care is taken to prepare for the next season. Garlic cloves are planted by hand and hay makes a blanket over them to keep off the cold until the full-grown bulbs may be lifted from the spring soil. Tools are put away and equipment is repaired.

The Food Project follows the seasons. In the same manner as the farm, the organization seemingly slows down and does the less glamorous but equally important work of organizing for the coming spring, even as winter approaches. I find myself following a similar order.

Although my first official day at The Food Project was October 14, my introduction to the organization took place back in September. A couple of my colleagues in the Outreach Team were working on stories for the organization's 2010-2011 Annual Report and were in need of images. They kindly offered to fly me up from North Carolina and house me at a coworker's apartment for eight days. The purpose of this trip was tripartite: 1) For me to photograph the stories that they wanted to tell in their report; 2) For me to meet my new colleagues and get a feel for the culture at the organization; and 3) For me to find lodging. I am happy to say that we accomplished all these goals, and also yielded an unexpected benefit when one of the images was chosen for TFP's Thanksgiving Day card. This is, to quote Ki Kim (Director of Communications at TFP), "one of our most important donor cultivation devices, aimed at an important segment of our donor base—folks who give \$1,000 and up." I have attached a digital copy of this card to this report. I hope to share a copy of this Annual Report with you as soon as they are delivered by the printer, both to give you a better idea of the work that The Food Project does, and to illustrate a very direct way how the Hine Program has already benefited The Food Project.

When I returned to Boston in early October, I settled into a quiet little place in Jamaica Plain. Most mornings I left my camera at home. I wanted to get my hands dirty. So far I've helped to harvest at the thirty-one-acre farm in Lincoln and at the urban farm in Dorchester. In both places I wanted to get a sense of the work that goes on and to build relationships with the people who are often in these locations. This is a work in progress. I hope that the seeds that I am planting now will grow. Because the weather is getting colder, I aim to begin spending more mornings at the Dudley Greenhouse, where refugee groups in the neighborhood have garden plots—and where it will be significantly warmer.

Because of the season, most of the youth programming is in its annual hibernation mode. The bulk of TFP's youth activities happen, unsurprisingly, during the warm months. There are, however, thirty high school students who work as interns year round. These interns rotate through different pods over the course of the year to provide different kinds of work experience. I, along with my colleague Ki Kim, have been working with the Media Pod on Saturdays to get interns out into the field and producing words and images. So far we have conducted two photography and writing workshops with each of us leading sections of the

workshop related to our particular expertise. Because of the interns differing levels of familiarity with making images and their limited access to equipment, my contribution to these seminars thus far has focused on the power of images to spread a message and change minds, invoking the name of Lewis Hine, among others. Each of the thirty interns will have the opportunity to participate by the end of my time at TFP. Eventually, as the interns begin to produce and share more materials, we plan to post them to a new, youth-driven Food Project website. We would also like to see the youth run these meetings, and further share their work with others. I envision this program becoming self-sustaining and long running.

I have big plans. Even though winter looms close and the opportunities for community engagement are less than they will be in the spring and summer months, I have devised several projects to keep me busy until the snow thaws.

The first of these is a portrait project. I hope to photograph members of TFP staff in their home kitchens. This project will serve the dual purpose of making a record for TFP's archive and fulfilling outreach needs, as well as helping me to connect more closely with the people that work here. Their experiences and convictions could offer some compelling material for me as I craft my final project later this year. Beyond photographing these folks, and at the suggestion of Elena Rue and Alex Harris, I will capture video portraits of everyone and also have a few general, unifying questions to help tie these images together. Eventually, when the weather breaks, I would like to extend this project to include youth and people in the community who benefit from the services that TFP provides.

The second project, which I hope to start next week—timed for the arrival of my winter share in The Food Project's Community Supported Agriculture program—is a formal catalogue of the stuff that The Food Project produces and the tools it uses to produce them: cabbages, radishes, tomatoes, shovels, spades, knives, and all the rest. This work will provide TFP with visual aids for their educational outreach programs as well as (hopefully) beautiful, compelling images that they can use with their promotional materials.

Finally, I will continue working to interact and collaborate with the larger community that TFP serves, and as prudence and permission permit, will record my experiences and share their stories.

Although I am only one month into my fellowship, I feel very comfortable at my organization and with the goals that I have set. I look forward, from autumn, with excitement to see how all this work develops, and I also look forward to sharing more news with you soon.