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Founder & CEO

WANDA

How is WANDA working to advance the Food as Medicine movement?

Through policy, partnership, program development, and communication initiatives, WANDA is actively advancing the Food as Medicine movement with an equity and intersectional lens. For instance, WANDA created a Food as Medicine Fellowship, penned the African Heritage Diet as Medicine, and launched a Black Food Census in Eating Well. Also WANDA serves on national food boards such as the National Food Museum, Milken Institute, Tufts Food and Nutrition

Innovation Council, National Produce Prescription Collaborative, and USDA NAREEE Advisory Board, and convenes BIPOC leaders. Ultimately, WANDA promotes equitable access to nutritious cultural food, advocates for the Food Bill of Rights, shifts the narrative around food as medicine, empowers the community to reclaim their food ways as their medicine, and fosters community health and resilience.

What actions can each of us do today to accelerate Food as Medicine?

To accelerate the Food as Medicine movement, each of us can take immediate action by engaging in mutually beneficial partnerships with BIPOC ventures, actively participating in Food as Medicine research initiatives, promoting affirming and inclusive representation from people, partnerships, to produce throughout the entire FAM ecosystem, supporting the leadership development of BIPOC individuals within the movement, and getting involved in local food policy

councils and coalition efforts to advance Food as Medicine. These actions will contribute to greater equity, representation, collaboration, and policy change within the Food as Medicine landscape.

How has the food as medicine policy space evolved over the last year? What still needs to happen to move the needle?

Over the past year, the food as medicine policy space has experienced significant progress and evolution with increased multi-stakeholder engagement, national attention, and investments. However, we need more research, marketing, and procurement investments in African heritage foods to promote health and wellness, ensure communities most affected are co-creating economic and policy solutions, increase

access to capital for small and BIPOC businesses entering the FAM movement, and expand the narrative of impactful stories that highlight the transformative potential of FAM across the entire supply chain.

It is crucial to continue advocating for systemic changes, including equitable funding for research on the health benefits of diverse food traditions, addressing structural barriers to food access and affordability, and integrating food as medicine principles into healthcare systems and educational curricula. These actions will help foster equity, inclusion, and systemic change within the FAM policy space.

How can we continue to inspire change and commitments?

We must amplify the voices of entrepreneurs and changemakers

on the ground, highlighting their invaluable contributions and resilience. For instance, my grandmother enjoyed cooking, but also had a list of medical complications. I am changing the narrative by learning that diabetes is not my heritage and working to create a new legacy through reclaiming and remixing my heritage food as medicine. That's how we inspire change by committing to give platforms for voices like mine to advance policy, implement culturally informed programs, and build better pipelines to increase generational health by investing in people with lived experiences. By sharing our stories, promoting inclusive dialogue, and fostering collaborations with diverse stakeholders, we can collectively understand the challenges, apply the lessons to opportunities that await. These transformative solutions need to build an equitable and sustainable food system that honors and uplifts communities most impacted by chronic diseases.

What are you looking forward to at the Food as Medicine: Policy Summit?

At this Summit, I anticipate engaging in discussions and collaborations with colleagues leading change within healthcare, community, media, and food retail. I am excited to explore innovative policy solutions, gain new insights on advancing food as medicine initiatives, and contribute to the collective effort of promoting health equity and empowering Black women in the food system and their communities.

To hear more from Tambra Raye Stevenson, join us at the Food as Medicine: Policy Summit this November (29-30th) in Washington, DC. She will be sharing her insights on the Closing Panel Discussion With Open Q&A: How can all Stakeholders Work Together to Drive Policies and Improve Access to Food as Medicine Programs?