

**For Immediate Release**

**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

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# JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

## EVENT TO HONOR FIVE VISIONARIES FOR THEIR WORK IN CREATING A BETTER FOOD WORLD

## GAIL SIMMONS TO HOST LEADERSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY IN CHICAGO, PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH DELOITTE

**NEW YORK, NY (March 19, 2019)** – The James Beard Foundation announced today the recipients of the 2019 Leadership Awards, a program which spotlights the important and complex realms of sustainability, food justice, and public health. This year's honorees are: **Pioneer Valley Workers Center Staff Collective**; **Cornelius Blanding**, Executive Director, Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund; **Leah Penniman**, Co-Executive Director & Program Manager, Soul Fire Farm; **Sean Sherman**, Founder & CEO, The Sioux Chef; and **Anim Steel**, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Real Food Generation. Their tireless and meaningful work will be honored at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Leadership Awards ceremony and dinner in Chicago on Sunday, May 5, 2019 at The Dalcy. This ceremony, presented in association with Deloitte, has become an important part of the larger James Beard Awards weekend in Chicago, which includes Chef's Night Out, various food industry panels and events, and the Restaurant & Chef Awards Gala, on Monday, May 6.

Culinary expert, food writer, author, and dynamic television personality Gail Simmons, of Bravo's Emmy-winning series *Top Chef*, will serve as the master of ceremonies for this year's Leadership Awards. Since the show's inception in 2006, Simmons has lent her extensive expertise as permanent judge, as well as served as host of *Top Chef: Desserts* and head judge of *Top Chef Masters*. She is also the Special Projects Director

for *Food & Wine* magazine. In February 2013, Simmons was appointed Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Babson College, a mentoring role where she works with student entrepreneurs, helping them develop food-related social enterprises. In April 2016, she received the Award of Excellence from Spoons Across America, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating children about the benefits of healthy eating. She is an active board member and supporter of City Harvest, Hot Bread Kitchen, Common Threads, and the Institute of Culinary Education. Simmons's first cookbook, *Bringing It Home: Favorite Recipes from a Life of Adventurous Eating*, was released by Grand Central Publishing in October 2017.

The Leadership Awards raise awareness of timely industry issues by celebrating the visionaries responsible for creating a healthier, safer, and more equitable and sustainable food system. Honorees can be recognized for showing emerging promise or specific outstanding initiatives, as well as for bodies of work or lifetime achievement. Excellence of work, innovation of approach, and scale of impact within a community or the nation were among the criteria used to choose this year's honorees, selected by ballots submitted by past recipients. The Leadership Awards are part of the [James Beard Foundation's Impact Programs](#), which works to establish a more sustainable food system through education, advocacy, and thought leadership.

"Deloitte takes great pride in supporting the James Beard Foundation Leadership Awards, and recognizing innovation that strengthens our communities," said Tom Marriott, principal, Deloitte Consulting LLP. "With a focus on sustainability and well-being, Deloitte is committed to making an impact that matters in the food industry and beyond."

## 2019 James Beard Award Leadership Award Recipients

- [Pioneer Valley Workers Center Staff Collective](#)

Pioneer Valley Workers Center Staff Collective (PVWC) builds the collective power of workers and immigrants in Western Massachusetts and beyond. PVWC's worker leaders develop and organize grassroots campaigns for food chain workers' rights, including winning wage theft protections, stopping deportations, and building new worker cooperatives. Campaign victories lay the groundwork to recruit and develop new leaders and build a multiracial working-class movement to dismantle the root causes of exploitation and oppression. Worker-led campaigns are supported by PVWC's innovative solidarity and interfaith rapid response networks of 2,500+ individuals and participants from over 30 congregations. All aspects of PVWC are coordinated by the Mujeres Guerreras, a five-person, all-women's organizing collective; some are mothers, some are immigrants, some are queer, and all bring deep experience in worker, union, immigrant, faith, and environmental organizing.

- **Cornelius Blanding**, Executive Director, [Federation of Southern Cooperatives / Land Assistance Fund](#)

Cornelius Blanding is the Executive Director of The Federation of Southern Cooperatives / Land Assistance Fund, a non-profit cooperative association striving toward the development of self-supporting communities through cooperative economic development, land retention, and advocacy in order to increase income and enhance other economic opportunities for low-income

African American and other limited resource communities across the South. Federation/LAF is the only organization in the United States where its primary objective is the retention of black-owned land and the use of cooperatives for land-based economic development. In addition to his tireless work in the Southern US, Blanding has worked to develop and strengthen cooperatives in many countries including US Virgin Islands, Cuba, Haiti, and Africa to address concerns to improve food sovereignty in economically challenged communities.

- **Leah Penniman**, *Co-Executive Director & Program Manager*, [Soul Fire Farm](#)

Leah Penniman is a Black Kreyol educator, farmer, author, and food justice activist from Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, NY. She co-founded Soul Fire Farm in 2011 with the mission to end racism in the food system and reclaim our ancestral connection to land. As co-Executive Director, Leah is part of a team that facilitates powerful food sovereignty programs - including farmer training for black & brown people, a subsidized farm food distribution program for communities living under food apartheid, and domestic and international organizing toward equity in the food system. Leah has been farming since 1996, holds an MA in Science Education and a BA in Environmental Science and International Development from Clark University, and is a Manye (Queen Mother) in Vodun. The work of Leah and Soul Fire Farm has been recognized by the Soros Racial Justice Fellowship, Fulbright Program, Grist 50, and Presidential Award for Science Teaching, among others. Her book, *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land* was released in Fall 2018.

- **Sean Sherman**, *Founder & CEO*, [The Sioux Chef](#)

Sean Sherman, Oglala Lakota, focuses on the revitalization and awareness of indigenous foods systems in a modern culinary context, a mission which led him to create the company The Sioux Chef in 2014. Sherman has studied extensively to determine the foundations of these food systems which include the knowledge of Native American farming techniques, wild food usage and harvesting, land stewardship, food preservation, regional diversity, Native American migrational histories, along with indigenous culture and history in general to gain a full understanding of bringing back a sense of Native American cuisine to today's world. In 2018, Sean co-founded the nonprofit NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems), which this year is in the process of opening a not for profit indigenous restaurant and training center called Indigenous Food Lab. His vision is to open Indigenous Food Lab's in cities across North America with the focus of helping regional indigenous communities to develop healthy community based indigenous food businesses, to help bring much needed economic opportunities, influence healthy culturally appropriate diets, and re-identifying true cuisines of the Americas. In 2018, his book *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, won the James Beard Award for best book in the American category.

- **Anim Steel**, *Co-Founder & Executive Director*, [Real Food Generation](#)

Anim Steel is the co-founder of Real Food Generation (RFG), an organization harnessing the power of youth and universities to create a food system that truly nourishes us all: one that is defined by food sovereignty, and not the "Big Food" agenda in the United States. RFG's key

initiatives include the Real Food Challenge, a student-driven campaign to expand local and sustainable food purchasing on university campuses; the Real Meals campaign, an intergenerational coalition that opposes deals between cafeteria corporations and the Big Food corporations that lock out community producers; and the emerging Uprooted & Rising movement fighting Big Food and white supremacy in higher education. Anim is the former Director of National Programs at The Food Project in Boston, MA and co-founded the HEAL Food Alliance.

Tickets for this year's Awards gala in Chicago go on sale March 27, 2019, and the Awards will be broadcast live via the James Beard Foundation's [Twitter feed](#). On April 26, 2019, the James Beard Media Awards, an exclusive event honoring the nation's top cookbook authors, culinary broadcast producers and hosts, and food journalists, will take place at Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers in New York City.

### **About the 2019 James Beard Awards**

The 2019 James Beard Awards celebrations begin in New York City on Friday, April 26, 2019, with the James Beard Media Awards. The exclusive event honors the nation's top cookbook authors, culinary broadcast producers and hosts, and food journalists and will take place at Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers.

The events then move to Chicago, beginning with the Leadership Awards dinner on Sunday, May 5, 2019. The dinner, presented in association with Deloitte, will recognize honorees for their work in creating a more healthful, sustainable, and just food world. The James Beard Awards Gala will take place on Monday, May 6, 2019, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. During the event, which is open to the public, awards for the Restaurant and Chef and Restaurant Design categories will be handed out, along with special achievement awards Humanitarian of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Design Icon, and America's Classics. A gala reception will immediately follow, featuring chefs and beverage professionals from across the country, including past JBF Award winners and many who are involved in the Foundation's Impact Programs, from Smart Catch Seafood to Women's Leadership programs and the James Beard Chefs Bootcamp for Policy and Change. The VIP Dinner chefs, those who cook a multi-course dinner and create an experience in the balcony boxes during the Awards show, will be chefs from the esteemed Union Square Hospitality Group.

This year's theme, "Good Food For Good™" is synonymous with the James Beard Foundation's mission. It is the simple summation of what the organization stands for, from unique and delicious dining experiences at the James Beard House and around the country, to scholarships, mentorships, and a variety of industry programs that educate and empower leaders in the food community. The Foundation has built a platform for chefs and asserted the power of gastronomy to drive behavior, culture, and policy change around food. With this theme, the annual Awards aim to bring attention not only to its deserving winners but to the Foundation's overall mission as well.

The 2019 James Beard Awards are proudly hosted by Choose Chicago and the Illinois Restaurant Association and presented in association with Chicago O'Hare and Midway International Airports and Magellan Corporation as well as the following partners: Premier Sponsors: All-Clad Metalcrafters, American Airlines, HMSHost, Lavazza, S.Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water ; Supporting Sponsors: Hyatt, National Restaurant Association™, Robert Mondavi Winery, Skuna Bay Salmon, TABASCO® Sauce, Valrhona, White Claw® Hard Seltzer, Windstar Cruises; Gala Reception Sponsors:

Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, Ecolab, Front of the House®, Kendall College, with additional support from Chefwear, Loacker and VerTerra Dinnerware. Intersport is the Official Broadcast Partner of the 2019 James Beard Awards.

Established in 1990, the James Beard Awards recognize culinary professionals for excellence and achievement in their fields and further the Foundation's mission to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. Each award category has an individual committee made up of industry professionals who volunteer their time to oversee the policies, procedures, and selection of judges for their respective Awards programs. All James Beard Award winners receive a certificate and a medallion engraved with the James Beard Foundation Awards insignia.

## About the James Beard Foundation

The James Beard Foundation's mission is to promote *good food for good*™. For more than 30 years, the James Beard Foundation has highlighted the centrality of food culture in our daily lives. Through the James Beard Awards, unique dining experiences at the James Beard House and around the country, scholarships, hands-on learning, and a variety of industry programs that educate and empower leaders in our community, the Foundation has built a platform for chefs and asserted the power of gastronomy to drive behavior, culture, and policy change around food. To that end, the Foundation has also created signature impact-oriented initiatives that include our Women's Leadership Programs, aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in the culinary industry; advocacy training through our Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change; and the James Beard Foundation Leadership Awards, which shine a spotlight on successful change makers. The organization is committed to giving chefs and their colleagues a voice and the tools they need to make the world more sustainable, equitable, and delicious for everyone. For more information, please visit [jamesbeard.org](http://jamesbeard.org) and follow @beardfoundation on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

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