

Real Food Challenge launches new movement: Uprooted & Rising

Uprooted & Rising is a movement fighting for a future that will sustain and nourish generations to come, here and abroad.

(October 25, 2018) -- Ten years ago, the Real Food Challenge set out to harness the power of youth and universities to build a fair and sustainable food system. Today, we are launching [Uprooted & Rising](#), a movement fighting for a future that will sustain and nourish generations to come, here and abroad.

The result of a collaborative planning process over the last two years, UNR's goal is to end higher education's support for Big Food corporations and white supremacy in the food system and to direct the energy of our generation towards food sovereignty. Unless we act now to reverse the ever-growing power of Big Food across the globe, we will allow a cycle of exploitation to continue that uproots so many of us from our farms, communities, and traditional food ways. And because of colleges and universities' multiple ties to Big Food, [from the cafeteria to the classroom and boardroom](#), higher education is a strategic focal point for changing the terms of the debate and sparking a cultural shift in priorities.

Uprooted & Rising will create a culture shift through public action, digital organizing, and creative storytelling that uplifts and centers the ideas and experiences of those who have been marginalized by corporate control and white supremacy in our food system. UNR is a movement that is built to grow: within 7 years, we aim to have over 200,000 active leaders. We are inspired by the wisdom and resilience of our communities who have survived and thrived throughout the ages, and we are informed by social science research that illuminates the conditions that create deep and lasting social change. Uprooted & Rising includes students, workers, faculty, food producers, and community members that institutions of higher education are meant to serve.

The first notes of Uprooted & Rising have already been sounded. As co-founders of the new [Real Meals Campaign](#), we are working in a groundbreaking, intergenerational coalition to oppose the sweetheart deals between the cafeteria corporations on our campuses and the Big Food corporations that lock out community-based food producers. Launched last month with a march at Western Washington University, the campaign has already gained 56 endorsements, 74,000 petition signers, and has kicked off a wave of actions and media (see [livestreamed interview](#) of coalition partners). Not only will the campaign result in tangible wins for farmers, fishers, workers, and our environment, it will advance Uprooted & Rising by exposing higher education's ties to Big Food.

Even as we expand our base and strategy with Uprooted & Rising and the Real Meals Campaign, we are maintaining the core of what we've done as programming. The Real Food Challenge program will continue to support schools that have signed the Real Food Campus Commitment. We will continue bringing transparency to the food system through student-based assessments

using the [Real Food Calculator](#). You can continue to find [resources](#) on our website, including the [Real Food Standards](#), which were recently updated.

All of these threads of work, new and existing, are grounded in our mission to leverage the power of youth and universities, and they are contained under the organizational umbrella of Real Food Generation. Our external face, however, will be Uprooted & Rising.

Twenty student, staff, alumni, and sister organization leaders were deeply involved in the strategic planning process that birthed Uprooted & Rising, and over 100 others were consulted along the way. We were spurred by a recognition that Real Food Challenge wouldn't reach the scale of impact we need with the same tactics we are using. We're very proud of what we've done together -- \$80+ billion per year committed to Real Food to-date through the leadership of thousands of students (and a soon-to-be report documents the nine ways that is benefitting our communities). But experience has taught us that we can't achieve real food at the schools where Big Food's influence is most entrenched (e.g., where Coca-Cola has donated a building, where agribusiness recruits heavily, where a seed company sits on the board) unless we can shift the tide of public opinion against this encroachment on higher ed's public mission.

Recent events have underscored the urgency that led us to Uprooted & Rising. The latest IPCC report on climate change, not to mention the flooding of hog confinements in North Carolina, underscored how important it is to move away from factory-farmed meat (one of the demands in the Real Meals Campaign). The current political threats to food stamps remind us how vital it is to envision real solutions to hunger not regurgitations of the same limited formulas. The answers our generation needs should rise up from the communities we come from. The answers our generation needs should be freed from any corporate agenda and rooted instead in our communities.

We believe in the power of people. We believe that when we support each other to organize we WILL see an end to end higher education's support for Big Food corporations and white supremacy in the food system and we will celebrate our generation's support for food sovereignty.