

# The Counter

The logo for 'The Counter' features the word 'The' in a bold, sans-serif font above the word 'Counter' in a larger, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a graphic element consisting of a horizontal line that extends from the right side of 'The', then turns 90 degrees downward to form a vertical line that ends at the right side of 'Counter'.

Annual Report  
October 2019 - September 2020

# Welcome

## Dear Friends,

When we launched in 2015, we were a staff of four, working in a small space with an idea about how to tackle coverage of the biggest issues in food. Five years later, we are an award-winning publication with a newsroom of 15 editors and reporters, who publish daily context and analysis for a global audience on the politics, business, and culture of food and agriculture.

We are creatures of our time, of course, and this has been quite a year. The first six months of the fiscal year graphically raised public awareness of systemic racism, and the last six months, with Covid-19 on the march, brought to the forefront in an unavoidable way issues of supply chain stability, food access, and exploitable labor. All this stimulated more fact-finding and investigative work on our part, as well as a critical look at our own organizational culture.

We had already prioritized representation on our Board of Directors, and waived residency requirements to expand senior-level bandwidth in key regions to make job opportunities available to journalists in areas without a dominant food media presence.

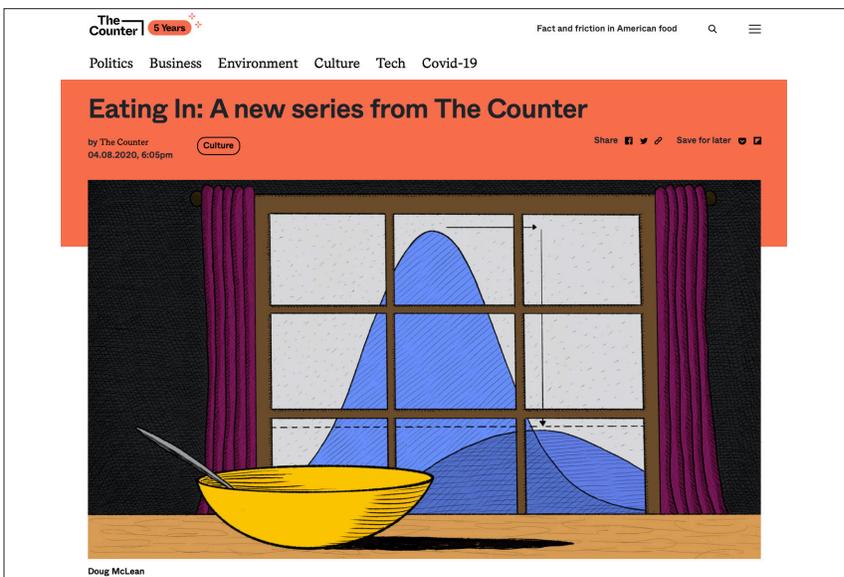
In 2021, we went further, overhauling our employment contracts to make them more fair and less restrictive, and pairing overly legalistic agreements down to a single, shared code of conduct and ethics the entire organization is committed to. We also pioneered a first-in-nation beat that covers the movement around justice for Black farmers and farmers of color across the country. The result of this essential work has been a bigger, more dynamic pool of Counter contributors and a staff that feels supported, protected, and most importantly, encouraged to bring you the deeply reported and engaging stories The Counter is known for.

So, if you have only recently become acquainted with us, please sign up for our free, bi-weekly newsletter, Thinly Sliced, so that we can come to your inbox automatically. Feel free to share with us your reactions and ideas, and consider lending us your support.

Yours,



Jeffrey Kittay



# About Us

The Counter is a nonprofit, independent, nonpartisan newsroom investigating the forces shaping how and what America eats.

We're the multi-award-winning home of a new kind of food journalism that goes beyond the gustatory to uncover the money, power, and politics behind our plates.

In an economy driven by consumer demand, food literacy is leverage. We believe that an informed public, armed with unbiased context and analysis, can demand change and be empowered to make the choices that matter in their own lives.

In the midst of twin reckonings—the Covid-19 pandemic and systemic racism's impact on every aspect of American life—food media faces a culture shift of its own. Responsible, vigorous reporting on the realities of our highly-efficient, ultra-processed food system have gone fully mainstream; the stories we cover make front-page news.

The Counter is a pioneer in inclusive reporting that represents the full spectrum of food stories, from the personal to the political. We are also pioneering an inclusive newsroom that is representative of the world we cover.

Our ongoing daily coverage of the pandemic this year brought many new journalists to our pages, whose reporting we've been proud to feature during a devastating period of job loss in our industry.

At the end of this fiscal year, we totalled 4.9 million pageviews, which was 10 percent higher than our previous fiscal year. Year over year, we've grown our monthly users from 151,000 to 222,000, which represents an almost 50 percent growth between 2019 and 2020.

## Awards and Accolades

The Counter's entire vertical of Covid-19 reporting, including the "Eating In" and "Shutdown Notebook" series, were inducted into the Library of Congress's historical archive of coronavirus materials in November of 2020.

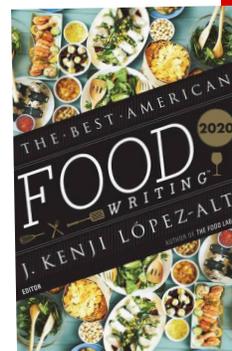
Awarded "Best Food Coverage" by the Association of Food Journalists in 2020.

Editors Joe Fassler and Dr. Cynthia Greenlee appeared in 2020's *Best American Food Writing* anthology, edited by Silvia Killingsworth and J. Kenji López-Alt.

Nominated for a 2020 James Beard Media Award for our investigation into decades of discriminatory loan practices by USDA against Black farmers.

Reporters H. Claire Brown and Jessica Fu were recognized by the North American Agricultural Journalists Association (NAAJA) for their 2020 series on USDA's much-maligned Farmers to Families pandemic aid program.

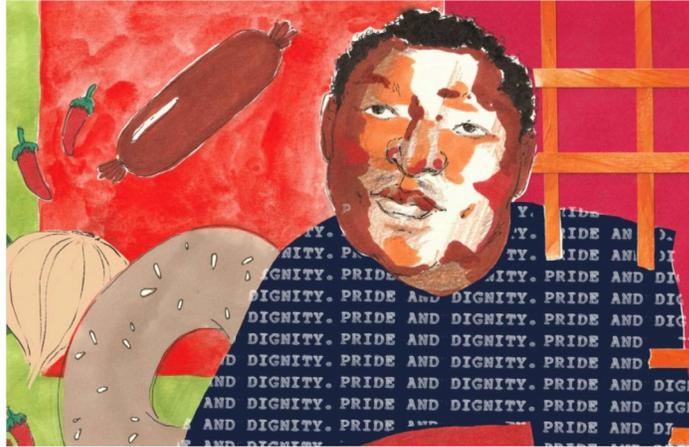
Counter staffers Karen Stabiner, Joe Fassler, and H. Claire Brown, along with reporters Jessica McKenzie, and Leigh Kunkel were awarded "Best in Business" 2020 awards from the Society for Advancing Business Writing and Editing (SABEW).



# Editorial Highlights

**In the last year, food media has undergone a profound cultural shift,** confronting its history of bias and appropriation at the same time America is reckoning with its own 400-year racist history. Last summer, in the midst of our national collision with a pandemic of a different sort—ongoing police violence—Kate Cox penned a letter to our readers. In it, she detailed our commitment over the long-term to narrowing another chasm in American culture: the dearth of Black and other voices of color in food media, and in media writ large.

We started with our own organization: We have prioritized representation on our Board of Directors and made our newsroom fully remote to expand senior-level bandwidth in key regions, while publicly committing to hiring more editors and writers of color to help us shape our coverage. We publish stories that expose systemic injustice in every part of the food system from government agency to retail shelf, which requires us, at every turn, to challenge our biases as journalists. We will continue to do that.



Portrait of Michael Thompson, who is serving time inside the Muskegon Correctional Facility in Michigan, where he recently organized a meal for 50 of his fellow inmates to celebrate George Floyd's life.

Joye Elizabeth Elijah

The Counter's newsroom is increasingly representative not just in terms of race and ethnicity, but in age, gender, and

## **"I didn't trust my palate or my body or my mind": Covid-related smell loss puts chefs through the emotional wringer**

by H. Claire Brown  
01.11.2021, 2:22pm

Culture

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iStock / Softulka

geography. Building an inclusive newsroom and representative board are processes we're proud to talk about publicly.

Access to land, capital, and to enough food for an active, healthy life for vulnerable children and families—especially children of color—are systemic issues that require human stories to bring them out into the light. To do that work in earnest demands a staff of reporters who challenge our blind spots, question assumptions, and open the door to new networks of sources. That's the work we do in tandem with journalism, and that work never ends.

Just before the 2020 election, The Counter's editorial team went wide-lens, extending our coverage beyond the Covid crisis of the moment and into what recovery for America's food and agriculture systems will actually require. Disaster

reporting doesn't end when the country moves from peak- to low- boil crisis. But it shifts from the acute circumstances

of the moment to the need for longer-range thinking about resilience, including how to approach existing issues the pandemic laid bare: the systemic racism of Black land loss and lack of access to capital; disproportionate impacts on the supply chain at both farm gate and last-mile; and the changing dynamics of food aid, from USDA to food banks.

We believe in the value of reportage that focuses on the reemergence and reinvention of people who work in this disparate food system as we reshape, repurpose, and realign the fundamentals key to establishing an equitable and sustainable normalcy in food today.



In 2014, Sara Rademaker started American Unagi in rural Maine, now the largest commercial eel farm in the United States.

Gregory Rac/Portland Press Herald via Getty Images

## With dreams of small business, not empire, LA Trade Tech culinary students are built for this moment

by Karen Stabiner  
12.08.2020, 10:19am

Business

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Courtesy of LATTCC

## How the kitchen became political: A short history of the “dinner-table issue”

by Dr. Cynthia R. Greenlee • Mike Dang  
11.13.2020, 2:44pm

Culture

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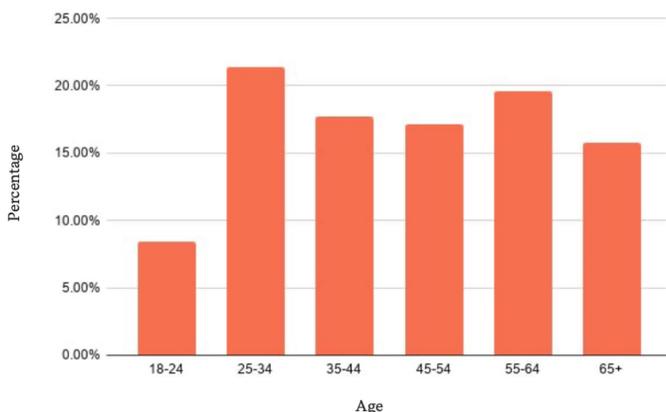
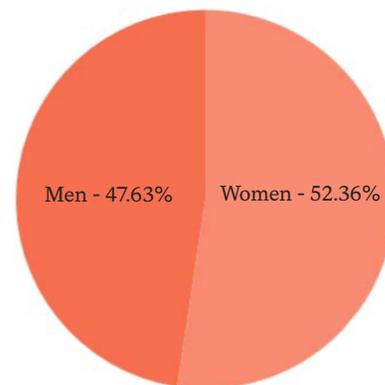


Flickr / Joanna Bourne & Raul Luna | Graphic / The Counter

Counter audiences depend on our daily reporting to understand and inform their work, demand change, and make educated decisions. The Counter’s readers are deeply food-curious, but their interests are diverse. They look to us to help them understand food through the lenses of news, politics, culture, and business. They work in media, politics, academics, advocacy, and in every part of the food chain, from production to processing to restaurants and food service.

## Who We Reach

Top Countries by Readership	Top U.S. Cities by Readership
1. United States	1. New York
2. Canada	2. Chicago
3. United Kingdom	3. Los Angeles
4. India	4. Dallas
5. Australia	5. Atlanta
6. Philippines	6. Washington
7. Germany	7. San Francisco
8. South Africa	8. Houston
9. New Zealand	9. Seattle
10. Ireland	10. Boston



## Year in Numbers

~ 5,000,000 Annual Pageviews  
 ~ 300,000 Weekly Readers  
 ~ 30,000 Subscribers

## Who Else is Reading Us

Pickups and citations from hundreds of major outlets in 2019 and 2020, including:



# Financials, 2019–2020

## Sustainability

In 2020, American journalism saw its most devastating year since the 2008 global financial crisis. More than 16,000 reporters and editors across the country lost their jobs. Not only were journalists in every sector covering a pandemic we were also living through in real time, a record number were imprisoned for their work in 2020, as governments cracked down on coverage of Covid-19 and ongoing civil unrest.

At the same time, the nonprofit news industry grew. The Counter was fortunate to see continued strength in our fundraising efforts, which sustained us into the end of the fiscal year and looking forward. While overall revenues were down from our original expectations, our operation maintains a strong show of long-term commitment from our seed funder and board president, S. Donald Sussman, who made a multi-year pledge of support. His gift provides a cushion in our growth strategy and sustains us against any prolonged distress in running our day-to-day operations—even in the face of a global crisis.

After incorporating as a nonprofit in October 2019, we built a fundraising strategy focused on growing revenue through four key initiatives: major gifts, foundations, board support, and reader support. We have invested in our fundraising strategies in three key areas to date:

- **Major gifts/foundations:** We have and continue to build relationships with foundations in both the media and food/agriculture spaces. In fiscal 2019, we are funded by: The Chicago Community Foundation, Shachar Foundation, Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation, The Marcus Foundation and the Ida and Robert Gordon Foundation.
- **Board Support:** Primary funding comes from our Board of Directors, which provides annual operating support throughout the course of the year. Our Board President provided seed funding and continues to provide major financial support annually, but our members of the Board continue to support our operation in several aspects throughout the year.
- **Reader support:** Our community of readers supports The Counter with gifts of various sizes, and we've placed a special emphasis on developing relationships with readers who make recurring donation commitments. In this aspect of our fundraising, we work with News Revenue Hub, which provides a user-friendly donor dashboard and runs the annual NewsMatch fundraising campaign, during which funds are matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$1,000 per individual donor.

**The New Food Economy Inc. (DBA The Counter)**  
**Statement of Activities**  
**for the year ended September 30, 2020**

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenue and support:			
Contributions	\$2,480,915	\$4,075,000	\$6,555,915
Interest income	7,298	-	7,298
Net assets released from restriction	<u>500,000</u>	<u>(500,000)</u>	-
Total revenue and support	<u>2,988,213</u>	<u>3,575,000</u>	<u>6,563,213</u>
Expenses:			
Program services	<u>1,093,479</u>	-	<u>1,093,479</u>
Supporting service expense:			
Management and general	634,783	-	634,783
Fundraising	<u>82,862</u>	-	<u>82,862</u>
Total supporting service expense	<u>717,645</u>	-	<u>717,645</u>
Total expenses	<u>1,811,124</u>	-	<u>1,811,124</u>
Change in net assets	1,177,089	3,575,000	4,752,089
Net assets - beginning of year	<u>1,028,389</u>	<u>500,000</u>	<u>1,528,389</u>
<b>Net assets - End of Year</b>	<b><u>\$2,205,478</u></b>	<b><u>\$4,075,000</u></b>	<b><u>\$6,280,478</u></b>

On top of our ongoing investments in capacity-building, we take our role as stewards of donor funds very seriously. In 2019, we prioritized and continue in 2021 to maximize efficiencies in development and operational costs—specifically overhead—by becoming a fully remote newsroom, which has eliminated the enormous cost of maintaining office space in New York City. We have also contracted to third parties our accounting, human resources, insurance services, benefit packages, and technology support through a bidding process overseen by our Board.

While we continue to strive for capacity on both sides of our organization, the attached statement of functional expense demonstrates that our development and operational costs are on par—and often come in under—those of our peer organizations in similar early-stage lifecycles.

**The New Food Economy Inc. (DBA The Counter)**  
**Statement of Functional Expenses**  
**for the year ended September 30, 2020**

	Program Services	Management and General	Fundraising	Total
Salaries and wages	\$800,899	\$336,875	\$45,026	\$1,182,800
Payroll taxes and other employee benefits	75,215	30,970	4,424	110,609
Editorial expenses	122,899	32,056	-	154,945
Office and administration	23,028	110,608	-	133,636
Professional fees	-	59,689	27,899	87,588
Occupancy and utilities	47,086	19,800	2,647	69,533
Insurance	24,362	8,598	2,866	35,826
Depreciation and amortization	-	26,875	-	26,875
Registration fees	-	5,284	-	5,284
Travel	-	4,028	-	4,028
<b>Total functional expenses</b>	<b><u>\$1,093,479</u></b>	<b><u>\$634,783</u></b>	<b><u>\$82,862</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,811,124</u></b>

# Supporters

**S. Donald Sussman**, board president and philanthropist, provided the funding to launch The New Food Economy in 2015, and has made a sustaining three year pledge for \$6 million.

## Foundations

Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation  
Fund for Nonprofit News at The Miami Foundation  
Ida & Robert Gordon Foundation  
The Chicago Community Foundation  
The Columbus Foundation / Grace Communications  
The Marcus Foundation  
Ruth and Stephen Fund - Triangle Community Foundation  
Shachar Foundation

## Individual Giving

### \$25,000 AND ABOVE

Bonnie Porta

### \$1,000 AND ABOVE

Douglas Phillips  
Gregory Muth  
Jeffrey Kittay  
Rohit Shukla  
Steven Lipin

### \$500 AND ABOVE

Ann Brown  
Anthony Fagnant  
Corinna Baban  
Gretchen Wetzel  
Harley Seligman  
James Ferguson  
Jason Ingle  
Jennifer Johnson  
Marc Kramer

Marcie Rothman  
Nathaniel Pazik

### \$250 AND ABOVE

Anjali Oberoi  
Ben Palen  
Corie Brown  
David Puente  
Geraldine Wang  
Glenn Reed  
Joan Brucha  
John Vena  
Sue Zelickson

### \$100 AND ABOVE

Alekya Prathivadi  
Alison Arnett  
Allan Abramson  
Amy Rogers  
Andrea Folds  
Andrew Gold

Andrew Smith  
Barbara Knecht  
Ben Miller  
Benjamin Roberts  
Beverly Gilbert  
Bill Horne  
Brian@ Mind Full of Food  
Brittany Solano  
Carrie Balkcom  
Christine Matthews  
Christine Ryan  
Christine Tkac  
Christophe Hille  
Christopher Fagnant  
Christopher Hirsch  
Corby Kummer  
Dan Liu  
Dan O'Dea  
Dana Smith  
Daniel Pullman  
David Dietz  
David Hankin

David Levinson  
David Miner  
David Whiteman  
Elizabeth Johnsen  
Emily Kaufman  
Emily Payne  
Ensign Cowell  
Erika Lim  
George Goldstein  
Helen Elkins  
Hugh Joseph  
Ian Petrie  
Jacob Ward  
Jaimie Sanford  
James Lugg  
Jamie Bowers  
Janet Clark  
Janet Katz  
Jason Flatt  
Jennifer Allan  
Jennifer Antos  
Jessica Galen  
Jim and Mary Dooley  
Jim Hermann  
John Cornyn  
Jon Fogarty  
Jonathan Kingsman  
Julie Holley  
Justin Rashid  
Kas Vargo  
Katherine Kehrli  
Kathryn Jarvis  
Keith Pascal  
Kim Richman  
Kristin Zellhart  
Laura Hundley  
Lin Griffith  
Linda Halley  
Linsey Herman  
Lisa Bernard  
Lorraine Garkovich  
Louis Pechman  
Louise Ungerth

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Mark Maraia  
Mary Lou Newberger  
Mary Middleton  
Matthew Jacobson  
Mattie Kahn  
Mitra Behroozi  
Nadia Berenstein  
Nancy Saretsky  
Nancy Vermès  
Nora Hilfinger  
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Radoslava Dogandjjeva  
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Rebecca Sadinsky  
Rhonda Caldewey  
Richard Wilk  
Ricky Stephens  
Robert Eiser  
Robert Gonzalez  
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Samantha Baiz  
Sarah Brunnig  
Sarah Graddy  
Scott Stone  
Sefi Amir  
Sharon Su  
Sohrab Andaz  
Steve Hess  
Steven E Bensel  
Sue Kirchhoff  
Sunwoo Kahng  
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Susan Burns  
Susan Fix  
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Teresa Briggs  
Toni Liquori  
Vivek Bhagwat

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Wayne Elston  
Xenia Morin  
Yvonne Stolworthy  
Zane Latham  
  
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Adrienne Moore Baxter  
Adrish Majumdar  
Allison Connell  
Alvin Steele  
Angelica Braestrup  
Ann Okerson  
Ann Riza  
Anna Roginska  
Anne Carey  
Anne Sholar  
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Barbara Kemp  
Barbara Schoos  
Ben Patten  
Bethany Rydmark  
Betsy Perna  
Betti Wiggins  
Bonnie Krauskoff  
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Catherine Poole  
Cathy Davies  
Cathy Nonas  
Cathy Stanton  
Charles Janson  
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Claude Arpels  
Claudio Castro  
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Concepcion Saravia  
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Robert Sager  
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Ryan White  
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Sarah Hunt  
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Tristan Loper  
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