

## This Month

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Hello folks! And thank you for checking out The Magic Word. Here's what you'll find in this month's issue.

## 1 Some thoughts on welcome

I am an introvert. The type of person who loves going deep with a small group of friends, but low-key agonizes over going to large gatherings. So when my new roommate invited me to a party on my second day living in Portland back in 2012, I said yes, but internally dreaded those first moments of walking into a gathering of unfamiliar folks and getting my footing, regardless of how lovely people might end up being.

I mustered up my energy as we walked into the backyard and scanned the situation to find the snack zone (both for the food and for something to do during those first few minutes). Soon after, a woman approached me with a warm smile. "Hey, I'm Stacey!" she said. I introduced myself and gave her a brief run-down of my life transition. She listened intently, then responded, "It's nice to meet you, Lucy. I'm really glad you moved here." Then she nodded her head toward the far end of the backyard and asked if I wanted to join her in a game while we got to know each other.

While the words were kind, they don't capture the attentiveness and genuine show of care that she offered. She wasn't phoning in what she thought she was supposed to say. She was present and sincere, inviting me into a space that I could tell she actually wanted me to join her in. In that moment, I felt welcome.

In reflecting on moments in my life where I've felt welcome, a lot of memories from childhood through today pop into my mind. But I can also think of many times when I did not feel welcome. When I felt I wasn't wanted in a space, or when I received a surface-level invitation but the space actually felt uncomfortable or even unsafe. The difference between those experiences, and the impact they had, are significant.

When have you felt welcome? When have you not felt welcome? What specifically made you feel welcome or unwelcome? And how did the feelings you experienced—physical, emotional, and otherwise—impact you in those moments and even after?

Understanding what will cultivate a welcoming experience for all community members is critical for practitioners in both food and design. Whether you are hosting an experience where community members share meals, or facilitating a design process in collaboration with stakeholders, how you hold space, and how that makes people feel, is paramount. It shapes how folks engage with all aspects of the experience moving forward, and if they want to do so at all.

And to be sure, feeling welcome—and creating a space that is welcoming to others—isn't the be-all and end-all. It doesn't necessarily mean someone feels a sense of inclusion or belonging. (More on that to come.) But it's an important starting point when you share space with others.

That's why I chose welcome as the concept to explore in The Magic Word's first issue. Is it a bit on the nose? Totally. And it feels like the right way to start. I'm sure glad you're all here, and I can't wait to reconnect with you monthly. Thank you so much for joining!

- Lucy

## 2 In conversation with...

Angela McKee Brown



**Hey Angie! Thank you again for participating in The Magic Word's first featured interview. Can you share with folks a bit about who you are, what you do, and what brought you to your work?**

Thanks for inviting me, Lucy!

In terms of a little about me, for the last decade, I've been designing and building meaningful food experiences with communities. What does this look like in terms of work? Well, I am currently the Entrepreneur in Residence with Emerson Collective and founder of Project Reflect, a design lab. Prior to this, I served as the Executive Director of the Edible Schoolyard Project, a nonprofit based in Berkeley, CA that is focused on providing hands-on learning experiences in gardens, kitchens, and cafeterias that connect children to nature, food, and each other. Before joining Edible, I served as the Director of Innovation and Strategy with San Francisco Unified School District's Future Dining Experience, where I oversaw the redesign of the school meal experience. I have also worked to expand access to market opportunities for chefs and food entrepreneurs who are women, immigrants, and people of color while at the non-profit La Cocina.

My work has been influenced by my time as a Stanford University d.school Civic Innovation Fellow, where I learned the design thinking process and explored the question of why students were choosing hunger over school meals. The answer is simple yet complex: they are responding to a system that was never designed for them. To learn more, check out this Op-Ed I wrote for Civil Eats on the topic.

All this is to say, I love food and I have always known I wanted to work in the food space. My mother taught me about the power and beauty of sharing a meal around a table, and I've carried that with me throughout my career.

**The theme for this month's newsletter is welcome. What do you think it means for someone to feel and be welcome? And how is feeling welcome connected to feeling a sense of belonging?**

I appreciate that you chose the theme of "welcome" for your first newsletter! I've been fascinated by the concepts of joy and belonging for a while now and I think there is an aspect of each that connects to the feeling of being welcomed. When you feel joy and belonging, you are feeling a sense of freedom and ease. If one is truly welcomed in a space, I think that means you are able to feel joy and that you belong in that space. This means you are able to be your fullest self, be truly heard/understood, and find connection in the space. This doesn't mean you aren't challenged. It just means you aren't dismissed outright because there is trust associated with the interaction. We see the word "Welcome!" everywhere, and it doesn't always mean what I described. When not done with intention, the word "welcome" serves as an artificial greeting that lets you know there is an entrance, but is ambiguous about what will be on the other side of that entrance. If we are intentional about how we design our "welcome," we can transform who enters a space and what the experience is once they are inside. It is important to be generous and kind when welcoming people in and it is equally as important to be generous and intentional about what they are experiencing once they are inside.

**From your perspective and experience, how is cultivating a welcoming environment connected to designing more equitable food futures?**

Great question and great questions are key to the design process. So, this prompt makes me think of the work I've done with school cafeterias to make them more welcoming and inviting for students. When researching why students were opting out of school meals, one of the big reasons was that the school cafeteria didn't feel welcoming. Students didn't want to enter the space because of this. So, when I think about the importance of a welcoming environment in designing more equitable food futures, I think about what happens when a cafeteria space isn't welcoming and the impact that has on children eating. This can also be seen by people feeling OK to shop in a grocery store or eat at a restaurant or market when they can enter and harvest from a community garden or shop at a farmers market. When we are intentional with our designs and create obvious and understandable cues to welcome people into a space, we are creating access to nourishment. While working with the school district, we spent A LOT of time talking with students and making sure their thoughts and ideas were represented in the designs we put forth. I can create a design that makes sense and is obvious to me, but it could mean something completely different to a 15-year-old or someone with a different lived experience than me. In order to create welcoming spaces, we must design with those for whom the space is for. That is how you are going to get the best insights and actually be able to prototype if the designs work before you release the final design. A community should be able to clearly see their fingerprints all over the final design they are using. That is when you will have achieved something that is welcoming and transforms who uses the experience and how the experience is used. This is paramount for creating more equitable food futures.

**Where can folks go if they want to learn more about you and your work?**

A lot of my work looks like your work, Lucy, so I'm super glad that folks reading this are already part of your community and connected with you. If they would like to learn more about my work, please click the links provided above or send me an email at [angelamckeebrown@gmail.com](mailto:angelamckeebrown@gmail.com) so we can connect and chat. Lucy and I are looking for projects to work on together, so holler if you have a design need we can meet.

## 3 Resource smörgåsbord

Every month we'll share a variety of books, articles, podcasts, and other resources on the month's concept and other topics at the intersection of food x equity x design.



**This San Francisco Supper Club Gives Youth a Chance to Reinvent Themselves by Gabrielle Lawrence on Civil Eats (article)**

At Old Skool Café, young people whose lives have been impacted by violence, the foster care system, and incarceration are learning the ins and outs of the food business and forging new paths in the process.



**Village Mart & Deli: A Market Transformation Story (video)**

This initial cut of a short documentary by John Haas and Kei Karayan shares the story of Village Mart & Deli, a community hub for El Sereno residents and commuters alike in the eastside of Los Angeles, and their partnership with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council's Healthy Neighborhood Market Network (HNMN).



**Design for Belonging by Susie Wise (book)**

This book features a pantheon of host-heroes to inspire your design for belonging endeavors and tools and exercises for framing your work.



**Model of Care for Co-Design Practice Cards (tool)**

The Model of Care for Co-design cards include simple prompts for individual practitioners and teams to use while planning and doing co-design. They are based on the book Beyond Sticky Notes by KA McKercher, and draw on a range of practices, particularly trauma-aware practice and strengths-based practice.



**Uncentering Yourself in Your Design Practice (event)**  
**October Community Jam: October 5, 2022**

In this interactive session hosted by Inclusive Design Jam, Janey Lee (she/her), Senior Product Designer at Spotify, will talk about lessons learned in the process of critically examining and evolving her design practice. We'll then move into an interactive exercise to explore how each of us has centered ourselves in our design practice and ways that we can uncenter ourselves moving forward. Registration is free.



**People Nerds (event)**  
**October 19, 2022**

It's dscout's annual conference dedicated to foster community and resources for human-centered thinkers and UX practitioners. Registration is free.

To read previous issues of The Magic Word, check out Studio Magic Hour's website.