

# MEET RICHARD MORRIS



## BIO

Richard Morris (he | him) joined Cultivate Charlottesville in June of 2018 as Urban Agriculture Collective Program Director. He grew up in the desert valley of Phoenix, Arizona and began an apprenticeship in the family garden sometime between learning to walk and ride a bike. He earned a degree in graphic design from Arizona State University and went on to become an instructor of design at the National Education Center.

For over two decades, Richard has worked across the healthcare, education, aerospace, and financial industries as a graphic and software designer/developer and team manager. In that time, he has always maintained a garden of one sort or another. In 2005, he completed a Summer internship on the Flack Family Farm in Vermont. More recently, he comes to CSG from a ten-year stint at Polyface Farm. He has done volunteer work with local Charlottesville food equity organizations and is the author of “A Life Unburdened: Getting Over Weight and Getting On With My Life”. Currently, Richard lives on a few green acres with his family where he practices small-scale food production on a home foodstead.

## IN HIS OWN WORDS

### **WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF HAVING CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS AT CULTIVATE CHARLOTTESVILLE?**

Much of our work is filtered through the lens of racial equity. A key component of equity is shared power across systems and structures. A co-directorship based on shared leadership allow us to live out our values in real time for all to see. We're not just talking the talk, we're walking the walk.

### **WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST PRESSING GOAL IN THE FOOD JUSTICE MOVEMENT?**

Propagating the truth of food as a human right is the key to rallying the collective will of the people to make that truth a reality in everyday people's lives.

### **HOW DID YOU BECOME A FARMER/GARDENER? WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO GROW?**

Growing up, there was always something edible growing in my family's backyard, even when we were most economically insecure. I learned that the power to grow food was a power that was mine to use. I learned that as long as I had a little bit of soil, I could grow something to eat.

### **PERSONALLY OR PROFESSIONALLY, WHAT MAKES YOU MOST PROUD?**

Most of my career has been spent tarrying in the fields of corporate America across the healthcare, aerospace, and financial industries. I've worn many hats and have had many titles, but the one I'm most proud of is, Farmer Rich.

### **WHO IS YOUR MENTOR? HOW DID THEY HELP YOU TO GROW?**

Mrs Rose was my high school Freshman year home room teacher. She saw potential in me that no one else did. She helped me grow my expectations for the kind of life I could have and taught me how to flourish in the poor soil of racial injustice. She's resting in power now, but I will never forget her.

### **WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SONG? WHY?**

"That's the Way of the World", by Earth, Wind, and Fire. It came out when I was in high school. Whenever I hear it, I'm taken back to those days and see the faces of my friends who held so much potential, but those memories, like the song, are bittersweet.

### **WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL? WHY?**

I'm going to cheat on this one and say that my favorite meal was the one where the chicken was one of the broiler hens I raised. It was cooked with the leaf lard from one of the pigs I raised. The potatoes, green beans, garlic and onions, all came from my garden. The strawberry and blueberry fruit smoothie I had for dessert, came from my berry orchard. It was a milestone moment for me. Cora Lee, my mother, an Alabama farm girl, would have been proud.

### **WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE SUPERHEROINE OR HERO?**

Hands down, John Henry. He was a man of the people, fighting for the dignity of purposeful work. Born with a hammer in his hand, he was my Thor, but so much more, because while he didn't have the privilege of being a god, he never let that stop him from speaking truth to power. He let his hammer do the talking. As a child, I never accepted the notion that he dies at the end. Even now, I can imagine him quietly retired, surrounded by family, and spending time in his garden. His hammer, resting in an honored spot above the fireplace, remains at the ready.

