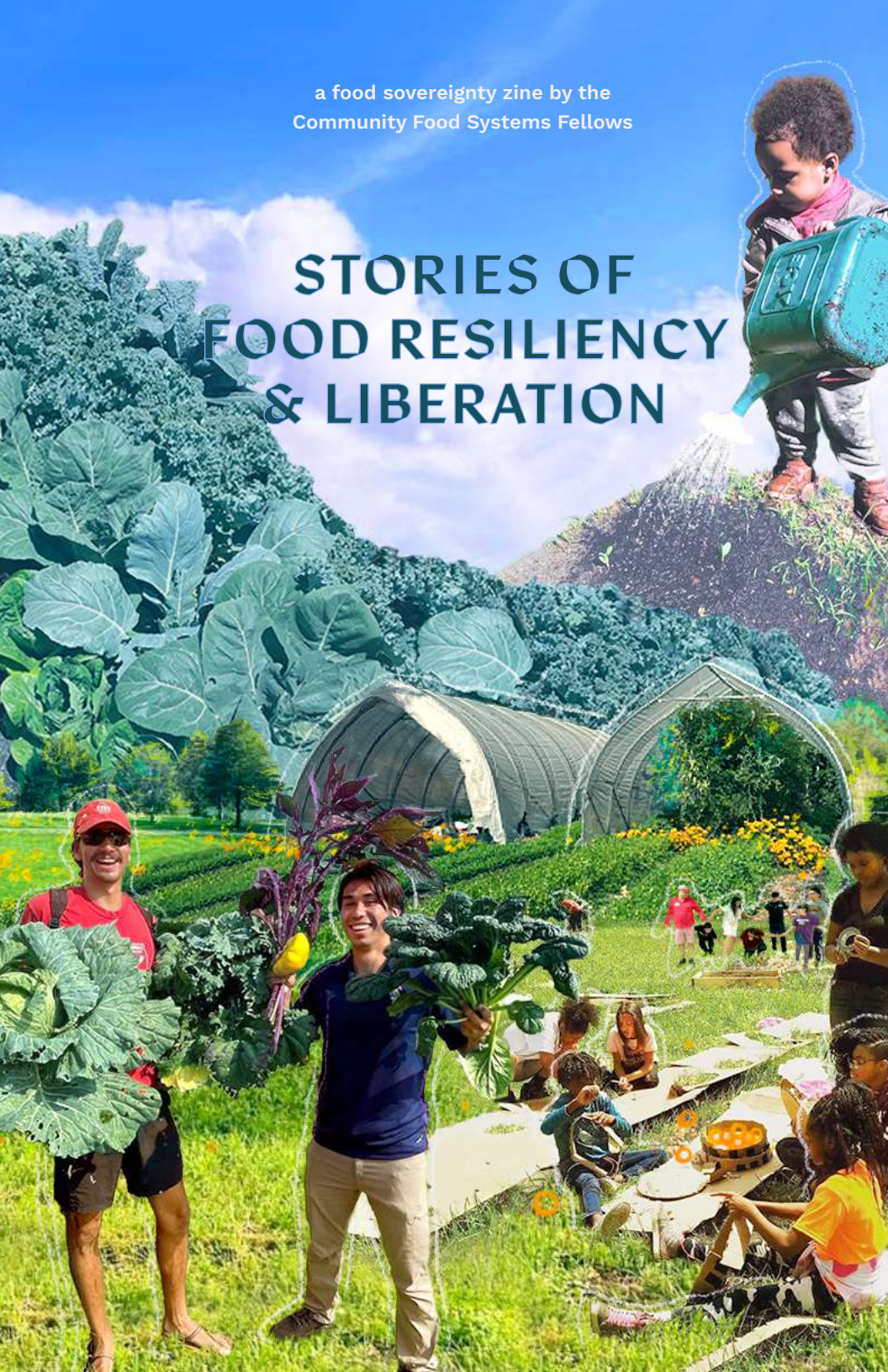


a food sovereignty zine by the
Community Food Systems Fellows

STORIES OF FOOD RESILIENCY & LIBERATION



STORIES OF FOOD RESILIENCY & LIBERATION

Thank you to the many partners, designers, and fellow stewards whose contributions and guidance made this resource possible.

Cover, graphic design, and illustrations by Melissa Teng, studio mqqt.

Right photo by Marc Peeples.

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DEAR COMMUNITY,

We are a group of 10 Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders working within the food system connected through Vital Village Networks' Community Food Systems Fellowship.

Our dream is to build off of our diverse experiences to transform our current food system into one that is stewarded equitably by local communities.

We orient ourselves with the understanding that our current food system has played a large piece in the oppression of historically resilient peoples in the U.S., particularly Black and Indigenous folks, through genocide, slavery, food apartheid, forced land removal, and the attempted destruction of cultures. It is only through dismantling harmful policies and structures and reckoning with the past, that we will be able to build a food system where all people have access to and choice over their food - where people are food sovereign

In this work, we look to our historically resilient community members and ancestors to guide us. We use "historically resilient," rather than "marginalized communities," to center the ways our communities have fed themselves despite the weight of larger systems being stacked against them, through practicing solidarity economics, mutual aid, and leading liberation movements that place their communities' wisdom at the center of the food system.

Travis Andrews (he/him)

Sierra Doehr (she/they)

Femeika 'Meik' Elliott (she/her)

Jamie Gonzalez (she/her)

Cassandra Loftlin (she/her)

Hallie Nelson (she/her)

Marc Peeples (he/him)

Kim Ross (she/her)

Patricia Tarquino (she/her)

Tacumba Turner (he/him)

HELPFUL LANGUAGE

Food System

The web of interconnected relationships, structures, processes, and policies that creates the landscape for how folks connect to food. This landscape includes food policies, the growth of food, food supply chains, mutual aid networks, institutions, marketplaces, restaurants, and more.

Food Sovereignty

The right of communities to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. Communities should define their own food and agriculture systems, rather than large governments or big agriculture. Food sovereignty centers the need to restore relations in the food systems, everyone in the food system, and the natural world (*Campesina*).

Food Apartheid

Underscores that the root cause of the inaccessibility of fresh food in poor, predominantly communities of color is the result of decades of discriminatory planning and organized policy decisions (*Karen Washington*).

Land Reparations

A restorative process that includes a range of actions that seek equitable distribution of land—including the return of land, land reclamation, rent paid for land, or taxes paid to Black and Indigenous communities,* as well as other people of color—in order to acknowledge the violent history of colonization, racism, forced labor, and theft of land that, within the context of the united states, were perpetuated by european settlers and the state.

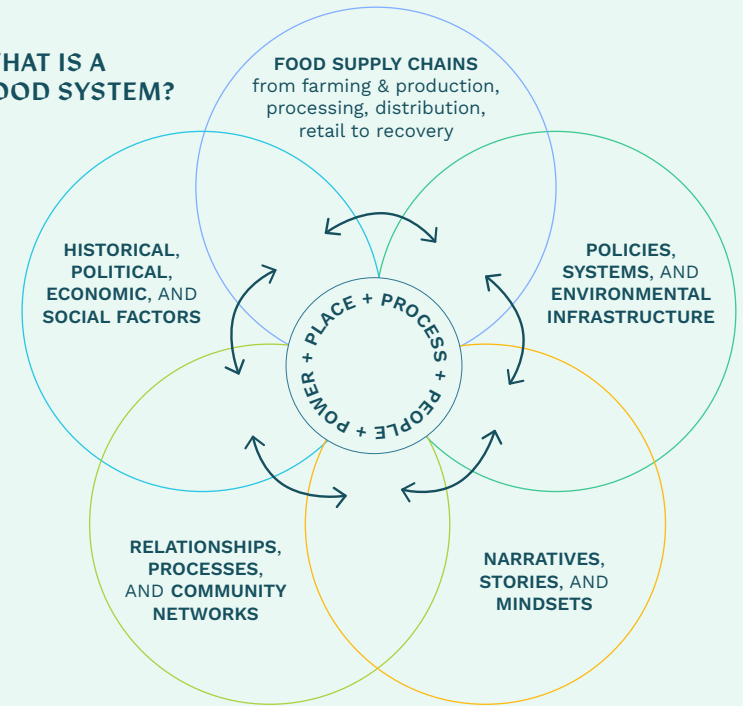
Imperialism

The practice, theory or attitude of maintaining or extending power over foreign nations in order to obtain power and/or wealth and deny the validity of the inhabitants' claim to their land.

Settler colonialism

When a foreign nation settles on another nation's land, forcing the original occupants' displacement from their land, oftentimes through extremely violent measures like genocide. For example, european settlers colonizing Turtle Island through the genocide

WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?



of first Nations peoples in what is known as the Americas today.

European Settler Agricultural System

The unique agricultural system within what is known as the united states that was created by european settlers who colonized land from First Nations peoples. Features of this food system include racial capitalism, cultural hegemony, factory farming, and an established hierarchy that puts humans above the natural world.

Stewardship

Taking care of something with care, intention, and value of well-being. This is most often used in relationship to land stewardship, which involves taking care of the earth.

Foodways

The cultural, social, and economic practices that impact how folks relate and connect to food.

* Land Reparations and Indigenous Solidarity , Resource Generation: <https://resourcegeneration.org/land-reparations-indigenous-solidarity-action-guide/>

A TIMELINE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Ancestral Food Systems

Food sovereignty, as a practice, has existed amongst Black and Indigenous populations for all of time. Over 10,000 years ago, the domestication of wild grains and other types of plants led to our ancestors developing sustainable systems of agriculture, which led to the development of their civilizations. These ancestral food systems focused on biodiversity and co-existing with nature in reciprocal ways. The natural world was an extension of their own health and role in the world, rather than a disjointed space for humans to dominate.

“The food sovereignty movement revolves around placing both farm workers and consumers at the core of the food system. Addressing the challenges posed by global climate change necessitates a profound reevaluation of our relationship with the planet and our role within it.”

— Leila Alhemali

Colonization and Imperialism Changed our Ancestral Foodways

Colonization from European settlers in the Americas and imperialism chartered globally by what became known as the United States, changed global food systems for our historically food sovereign ancestors.

As our Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander ancestors were systematically exploited and oppressed through forced labor, genocide, and land removal from their ancestral lands, the sustainable food systems they stewarded became highly volatile and unstable. This process formed what we call the European settler food system in the United States, and ripples of that violence spread globally through American imperialism.

Our ancestors did not just simply give up on their foodways amidst this violence.

For example, while Indigenous peoples were tortured and mutilated by settlers for growing their

traditional foods, they hid their seeds for survival, burying seeds underground in vessels that they could come back to later.

Our ancestors' stories of resilience, cultivated joy, and commitment to preserving their foodways inspires and offers much wisdom in our current fight for food sovereignty.

“Our ancestral grandmothers braided seeds of okra and millet and rice and sorghum—all their cherished crops—into their hair before being forced to board transatlantic slave ships. They believed, against the odds, in a future in the soil.

And with those seeds they also braided cultural traditions about how we interact with land, how we take care of the soil, and how we share resources and labor. African Americans brought these traditions to North America with us, and the colonial empire tried to stamp them out through centuries of enslavement and sharecropping and exclusion from fair-labor protections.”

— Leah Penniman from SOULfire Farms



A TIMELINE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Modern Global Food System

The modern industrialized food system as we know it in the so called united states was born after the world wars and is only about 100 years old.

The use of synthetic fertilizer and industrial machinery has shifted us into a fast paced world of food production since then. This food system has also been systematically set up to oppress and limit the ability for low-income folks and communities of color to freely choose what foods they want to eat as a result of food apartheid.

For example, racist and derogatory language was used to demean indigenous foodways. Indigenous food systems are being re-evaluated for their effectiveness, compared to destructive systems created by european settler colonialism on Turtle Island.

This current food system has caused more harm than good for both the environment and our health. Heavy tilling practices led to the dust bowl, synthetic fertilizers and overproduction

are destroying soil for agriculture, heavy herbicides and pesticides run-off is ruining groundwater, and urban expansion is reducing biodiversity. We have seen our health decline one generation after the other, while Big Agriculture and politicians continuously prioritize profits over the people and the planet. Rates of food apartheid have skyrocketed and this will only increase as the climate crisis approaches ecological disaster.

For more details, see *Tracing Back the Roots of the Food Sovereignty Movement*, <https://thecommons.earth/blog/tracing-back-the-roots-of-the-food-sovereignty-movement>



“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”

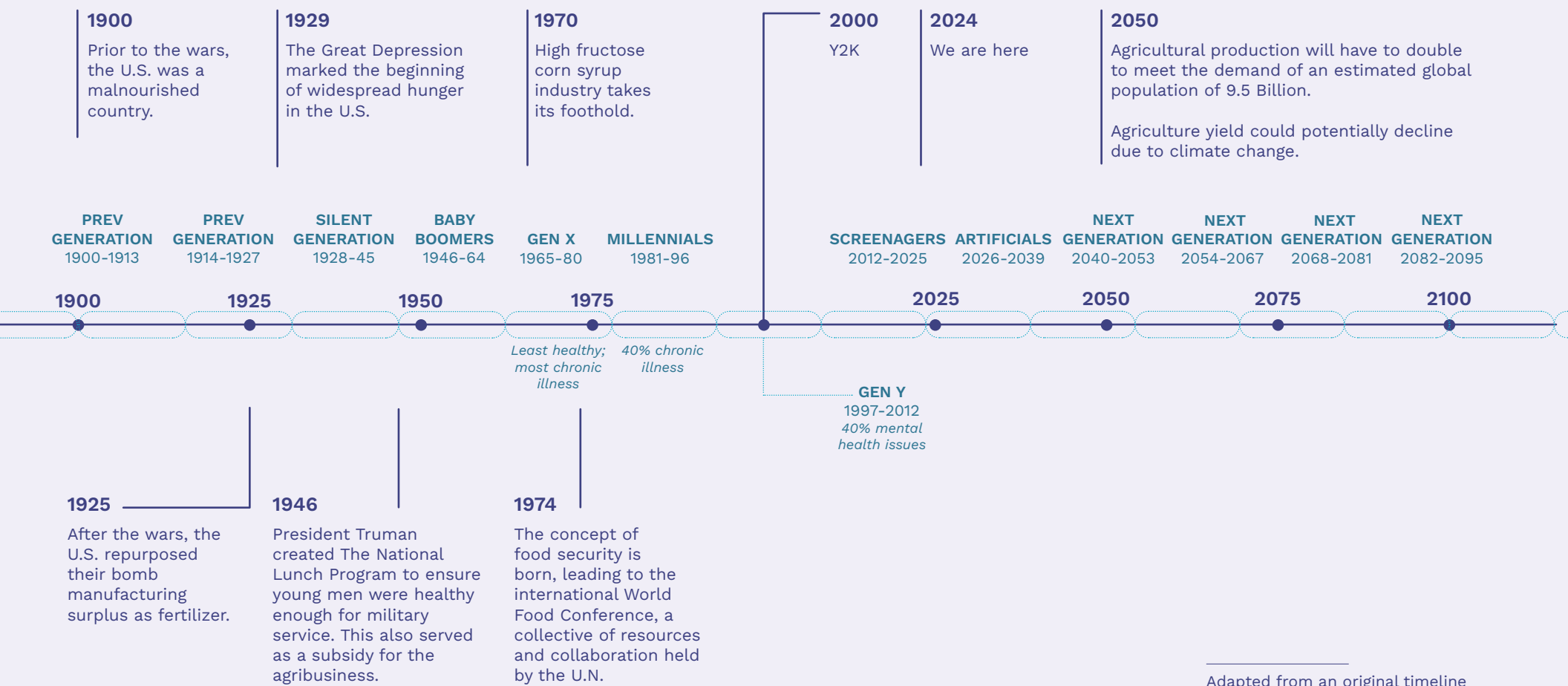
— Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007

Photo: Femeika “Meik” Elliott

A TIMELINE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

100 YEARS BACKWARD & 100 YEARS FORWARD

Food Security is National Security



Adapted from an original timeline by Travis Andrews, Native Farming Solutions OKC.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



Photo: Travis Andrews

Food security issues of today will change dramatically in the next 30 years . . . Land and water access will be two major issues . . . As populations continue to grow, we will see shifts in food production as there will be less space for pasture proteins and less soil grown foods . . . The future will require education of farming and awareness of policy or legislation that supports local food systems . . .

As BIPOC food systems leaders fighting for food sovereignty, we believe in the power of local communities to shift power from the bottom up.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



Photo: Marc Peebles

We believe a liberated & equitable food system looks like

- Local communities having control over their food system and the policies that shape it, rather than private businesses or the federal government,
- Food as a right,
- Growing food in ways that honors the land and the people that grow/distribute it,
- Rematriation of land—meaning restoring sacred relationship between indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands across the world,
- Land and labor reparations for Black and Indigenous peoples,
- Local, independent farms having control over their seeds and what they grow,
- Deep collaboration between community and farmers to create access to fresh, affordable, culturally relevant foods for all residents,
- Cooperative and solidarity grounded businesses. Community land spaces managed by neighbors,
- All farmers paid dignified wages with access to supportive benefits,
- Centering of historically resilient communities and their histories with the food system including: BIPOC folks, disabled folks, migrants, women and gender expansive peoples,
- Decentering western approaches to farming/food and lifting up the traditions and stewardship of Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian American and Pacific Islander peoples,
- Restoring local food economies and trade networks,
- Focus on cultural, physical, and spiritual nourishment when it comes to how humans relate to food.

What is the future that we would like to see?

Not a dictated future,
But an inclusive future that includes what
people are saying
food sovereignty is.

Instead of being told,
We should be inviting everyone
to share what they would like
the world to look like.

Instead of dictating the future vision,
We must invite people to determine the
future they would like to see.

The future isn't for me,
it is for my children.



Liberated Legacy

Hear this powerful oral story from Marc Peeples, Liberated Farms, on his and his family's history and journey.



Food systems fellows gather together at their first in-person fellowship retreat at the Mattapan Nature Center in Boston, MA, during Vital Village Networks' National Community Leadership in October 2023.



ZINE STEWARDS SPOTLIGHT

Learn more about the 2023 Community Food Systems fellows and co-authors, stewards, dreamers of this food sovereignty zine and connect with us!

TRAVIS ANDREWS

he/him

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Garden Program Manager of Skyline Urban Ministries

I am the Garden program manager for Skyline Urban Ministry. We are a food resource center which distributes dry goods and we aim to provide as much fresh produce as we possibly can. Our organization acknowledges the importance of food that has high nutritional content and we aim to provide fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy products to our low-income patrons who may not otherwise be able to afford these foods. Our garden program diverts food waste that doesn't make it to new homes and diverts it from the trash and into soil conditioner for future use in the garden. Our system of soil conditioners and soil building techniques are proving to be very effective at growing food while reducing costs of fertilizer and reducing waste. In addition to being a passionate gardener, I am equally driven to educate and about food

as medicine. Much of our process of making fertilizers is derived from methods of food preparation and preservation prior to home refrigerators. These techniques in combination with my knowledge as an native herbalist, we are able to create potent concoctions that are dialed-in for specific growth traits like: root, leaf, stalk development all the way through fruit/seed formation. I enjoy teaching others the relationship we have with plants as food and medicine.

SIERRA DOEHR

she/they

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Executive Director of Saticoy Food Hub

Sierra DoeHR (she/they) is a first generation Filipinx-American whose experience with colonialism in the U.S. has continually led them to seek healing. Their healing journey led them to become a practitioner of energy healing and apprentice of Hilot, an ancient Filipino healing

art. Their work as a food justice advocate eventually guided them to the intersection of food security and racial equity as a health educator and backyard farmer. In 2019, Sierra started Saticoy Depot, a decolonized urban farm on Chumash territory (Saticoy, CA) where they grow pre-contact foods in a space that is safe from white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. While tending to the land, neighbors from the community would share about their own backyard gardens and the bounty of food they were also growing. Sierra decided to organize this collective growing power and founded Saticoy Food Hub, whose programs include Saticoy Farmers Market and Saticoy Community Fridge, both of which aim to increase economic opportunities for food producers, while providing access to fresh, local food for community members. Sierra has a vision for Saticoy based on a food system that vitalizes the hyper-local economy and increases food access, thus combatting the oppressive system of food apartheid.

FEMEIKA 'MEIK' ELLIOTT

she/her

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Founder of Rooted East Knoxville Collective & Chief Operations of the Knoxville Community Gardens & Growers Alliance

Femeika Elliott, is the founder of the Rooted East Collective located in Knoxville, Tennessee and the Chief Operations of the Knoxville Community Gardens & Growers Alliance. She is a food educator, home gardener and herbalist.

Femeika is skilled in public service and resource allocation with nearly 10 years experience focusing on substance abuse, mental health, child welfare and the juvenile justice sector.

She loves speaking passionately about transforming your everyday dishes into healthy masterpieces using fresh ingredients to uplift the lifestyle of others. She started her health foods brand Meik Meals in 2019 and continued to pivot in the entrepreneurial scene to address major health crisis within the black community such as mental health, postpartum medical and food apartheid.

She enjoys being a social

ZINE STEWARDS SPOTLIGHT

justicepreneur and advocate for marginalized communities as Black health, liberation and restoration remains at the forefront of her vision.

She holds a Masters (M.C.J) and Bachelor's from Middle Tennessee State University with a concentration in Social Work.

Words from Femeika: "Wherever I see an issue that festers in our community, I make it a priority to address it with creative solutions. I have multiple purposes in this life, I'm thankful to let spirit use me to serve others with a grateful heart & cheerful spirit."

She is the founder of Meik Meals and the Lotus Program Experience—a fertility, pregnancy and postpartum food service.

JAMIE GONZALEZ

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President of Food Policy Council of San Antonio

Jamie Gonzalez is a builder, culinarian, and a growing force in changing the culture of how San Antonio eats. Known as "The Produce Lady", she utilizes her unique moniker, 15+ years of produce industry experience and a passion to feed people to develop feeding

programs that support an equitable food system.

Jamie is the founder of the BIG FRESH Market Box Programs. These produce boxes and markets are the catalyst to a variety of hands-on experiences with produce and have been recognized by Bexar County for their ingenuity. Since 2020, Jamie distributed over 3,000,000 pounds of produce through over 50 public/private partnerships.

Jamie lives her mantra "everybody eats" through her professional and philanthropic efforts. She is an Executive Committee member of The Mayor's Fitness Council, a founder of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, a member of the American Heart Association Health Equity Advisory Board, and the President of the Food Policy Council SA. Jamie has been recognized by the SA CURRENT as one of the Fearless Women in the SA Food Scene. In 2022, Jamie was the campaign winner of the North SA Chamber's Civic Leadership Academy, Co-champion of the Flavor SA, Culinary competition, and an AHA - EmPowered to Serve Finalist. When she isn't talking about produce; Jamie can be found playing with food, watching movies, and indulging her competitive side by losing so many games to her family.

CASSANDRA LOFTLIN

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Healthy Communities Augusta

After studying political science, anthropology, and Africana Women's Studies, I entered culinary school to further my passion for food and social justice. During my career, I have worked as a nutrition and health educator in an after-school program for low-income youth and in a youth detention center. My goal in both roles was to educate individuals about nutrition and to improve/support their nutritional intake. What I learned in both scenarios is that food insecurity is often labeled as 'poor food choices' when in fact, a broken food system, in addition to poverty and discrimination is to blame. In my primary job as Food Editor for Ark Republic and Black Farmers' Index, I curate and write stories that highlight individuals that are using their unique talents to rebuild the food system. I am currently working to start a sliding scale, neighborhood food cooperative in east Georgia to serve areas of low income and low food access. Food insecurity and a broken food system do not exist in a vacuum. Over the years, I have developed a philosophy that we need to bring an empathetic

lens and a people-centered approach to addressing issues within the current food system.

HALLIE NELSON

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Director of Jefferson County Food Policy Council

Hallie Nelson is a food system practitioner who works collaboratively across sectors to create community-led and equitable solutions. She grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and studied biosystems engineering, sustainability, community and civic engagement, and Spanish at Auburn University.

Hallie now leads the Jefferson County Food Policy Council, which is dedicated to creating a food-secure community with healthy food access for all residents; a vibrant and equitable farming infrastructure; a healthy ecosystem; and a thriving local food economy. Hallie works alongside local governments, nonprofit organizations, food and farm businesses, residents, and policymakers to foster conversation, coordination, and capacity building with a focus on equity. Prior to joining the Food Policy Council, Hallie worked for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to analyze

ZINE STEWARDS SPOTLIGHT

and develop national eligibility policy for special populations, including college students, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. She also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay where she worked alongside community members to develop an agricultural extension youth group. In her free time, Hallie enjoys gardening, knitting, sewing, and weekend road trips to explore nearby parks and food.

MARC PEEPLES

he/him

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Co-founder of Liberated Farms & Detroit Food Policy Council Member

My name is Marc Peeples known to the community as Brother Truth. I am an urban farmer and educator born and raised in Detroit. I am co-founder of Liberated Farms and Pyramid Builders Institute of S.T.E.A.M. Both of which were established in the community where I grew up to help create a community we all can be proud of. A survivor of the #GardeningWhileBlack incident Bro Truth took the attention of a viral moment and turned it into a movement! Our mission is to combat food apartheid by empowering the youth with skills and education that will change the culture of their

communities. We offer multiple programs for the youth throughout the year including a Youth Farmer Apprentice Program, Free Coding and Computer Programming class and a Rites Of Passage program for young boys. We also have a program called "Feedem Freedom Bags" where we provide 5lbs of fresh grown produce once a month to each occupied home within our community. Fighting food apartheid one household at a time!

KIM ROSS

she/her

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Kim Ross is an Appalachian native residing in Bluefield, West Virginia. As a passionate resident, she has devoted over a decade to the redevelopment of her rural community. Kim understands the importance and impact food systems have on a healthy community. Since the decline of Bluefield's economy, many food retailers have passed on the opportunity to meet the local demand. This has inspired Kim to rally the community together, and meet their own needs. We are currently working on a small grocer model that connects local consumers with local/regional food suppliers, while educating the community on the benefits of healthy food options.

By focusing on educating the locals on fresh produce and its benefits, this could have a huge impact on combating the health disparities that plague rural Appalachia, African American, and impoverished areas.

PATRICIA TARQUINO

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Director of Urban Community Agriculture, Nashville Food Project & Board Member, Cosecha Community Development

I am Patricia Del Pilar Tarquino. I was born in Cali, Colombia, near the eastern foothills of the Andes Mountains. I am an immigrant, a Berea College alumna, and former environmental justice community organizer in Central Appalachia. I currently live in Nashville, Tennessee and work in collaboration with several urban agriculture nonprofits, farmers and organizations on issues of land and food access in Davidson County.

TACUMBA TURNER

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Environmental Justice Project Coordinator of New Sun Rising & River Wise

Tacumba Turner is a dedicated advocate for community wellness, environmental justice, and sustainability. As the Environmental Justice Project Coordinator, New Sun Rising & River Wise, Taccumba plays a pivotal role in addressing community challenges with innovative green infrastructure solutions, all while empowering disadvantaged youth to build brighter futures.

"I think it's important because we are so alienated from our food and we have an impaired relationship with food that I think manifests itself in a lot of the health outcomes you see," --Being able to reconnect not only with the land but where your food comes from, learning about our heritage, as it pertains to both things, I think it's very important.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY RESOURCES

CURRENT POLICIES



Farm Bill, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

Set to expire Sep 30, 2024



2024 Jefferson County Food Policy Platform

by Jefferson County Food Policy Council (English)



2024 Plataforma de Políticas Alimentarias de Jefferson

de Jefferson County Food Policy Council (Español)



Council on Hunger and Food Policy

by New York State

Example of a collaboratively developed local food policy platform

SPACES FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION



Local Food Advocacy Workbook

by Jefferson County Food Policy Council (English)



Cuaderno de Trabajo de Abogacía Local para Justicia Alimentaria

de Jefferson County Food Policy Council (Español)



From Food Justice to Liberation: Building Community Power through Community Gardens & Urban Farms

by the Praxis Project



Organizing for Racial Equity Within the Federal Government

by Race Forward



FREE THE LAND