

Pathways to reparations: land and healing through food justice

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Abstract:

While mainstream efforts for reparations center financial compensation via legislation and litigation, social movements expand this conceptualization in order to address critical and yet often overlooked components of reparations. Equitable access to land and opportunities to heal from intergenerational trauma are two of these reparations demands that social movements prioritize. However, there is a dearth of scholarly literature exploring the role and impact of social movements on reparations. Therefore, we seek to develop this important conversation. In doing so, we elucidate the ways in which these two foci of reparations overlap with those of other social movements; food justice initiatives, in particular, also emphasize the connections between racial justice, land justice, and healing. We thus synthesize social movement, food justice, and reparations literatures to examine the overlaps between the goals of food justice initiatives and social movements for reparations. Using two case studies, Tierra Negra and Soul Fire Farm, we demonstrate the ways in which food justice initiatives support social movements for reparations. Contextualizing our analysis within reflections on personal experiences, we argue that through their efforts to transform systems of oppression, food justice initiatives provide an alternative pathway to achieving reparations.

Keywords

food justice, healing, land justice, reparations, social movements

Tierra Negra (black earth)

Rebekah A. Williams

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“We don’t call Tierra Negra a farm, because that industry holds too much trauma.”

An unassuming compound: squat white buildings appear abandoned, farmland surrounds. Shuffling between structures, we glance about, curious.

A circle of thirteen, seated on grass; our guide prays, then pays tribute to the Occaneechi, the first people.

“This land is sacred,” she says. “There are many ancestors here. After the Occaneechi, this was a slave plantation. One of the largest in North Carolina.”

“When we work on the land, we only work if we choose to, if it brings us joy, if it is a celebration. We do not force others to do this work.”

She urges us off, to sit alone, to seek who or what else is there with us.

There by the pond, I see them: women in white dresses, hats to shade beautiful brown faces from the sun.

I feel them. They are here.

Introduction¹

Working on the land, for many Black folks,² is an activity inextricably linked with ancestral experiences and traditions ranging from the traumatic to the celebratory (White, 2018). For some, working on the land is deeply tied to centuries of exploitation, subjugation, and violent displacement (Finney, 2014). Others find joy in working on the land and view it as a way to reconnect with ancestors and cultural traditions and to heal from historical trauma (Penniman, 2018). However, ongoing systems of oppression and agrarian structural racism too frequently prevent Black folks from determining their relationship with the land (Heynen, 2019; McCutcheon, 2019). Land ownership, and thus wealth generation and self-determination, has been historically denied to Black populations (Coates, 2014; Wood and Gilbert, 2000). Equitable opportunities to land thus remain a critical prerequisite to achieving racial justice in the United States (Holt-Giménez, 2017).

¹ This paper was written during the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings against police brutality in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. Food justice is only one manifestation of the systemic racism that has plagued the United States for centuries. The current moment brings front and center (again) the limits of not transforming these systems.

² Our decision to use Black folks, as opposed to other terms referring to those of African descent, is based upon Rebekah’s personal preferences as a Black mixed-race woman. Folks provides a gender-neutral, non-hierarchical term to refer to everyday people within a community; the use of Black folks thus refers to those identifying as part of the Black community.

Reparations, which seek to repair the harms that Black folks have endured for centuries, provide one pathway for achieving equitable access to and (re)connections with land (hereafter referred to as land justice) (Nuruddin, 2007; H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, 2019). Land justice further provides an avenue for a second, often overlooked, form of reparations: healing from intergenerational trauma (Humphries, 2016; CEP: Ten-Point Program for Reparations, 2014; Movement Generation, n.d.). Social movements for reparations (SMRs), in particular, center land justice and healing in their visions and approaches for reparations (Movement for Black Lives, n.d.; Movement Generation, n.d.). Many food justice initiatives (FJIs) also center land justice and healing, and thus often overlap with SMRs (i.e. Loh and Agyeman, 2019; Penniman, 2019). Using social movement theory, specifically the roles of framing processes and networks, we highlight the ways in which these seemingly disparate social movements support each other as they work toward shared goals and employ similar approaches. In doing so, we contend that FJIs present a nontraditional pathway toward achieving reparations.

Seeking to address the dearth of geographic research on reparations and SMRs specifically, we draw upon the framework outlined in this *Radical Food Geographies* special issue's call for papers. We demonstrate how intersections between SMRs and FJIs might be leveraged to transform oppressive political, economic, and social structures to promote both food and racial justice. Our analysis centers diverse ways of knowing and autoethnography in the production of knowledge (outlined in the section "Research through reflection"). Through two case studies, *Tierra Negra* and *Soul Fire Farm*, we explore the ways that FJIs incorporate many of SMRs' goals and approaches. In doing so, we emphasize the role of social movements and the importance of space and place in the process of (re)connecting with land and healing from intergenerational trauma. We thus advance radical food geography by elucidating the multiple ways that FJIs transform structures of oppression and move toward just futures by reinforcing and supporting reparations efforts.

Notes from the authors

This article reflects our endeavors to begin engaging with conversations on reparations, and more specifically SMRs. We are both relative newcomers to these discussions, and the following pages represent the process that we underwent as we delved deeper into the connections between reparations and food justice. This paper therefore is both research and writing as performance (Pratt, 2000): first, we use this paper to explore new research strategies, particularly by including personal reflections as autoethnography; and second, the writing process has pushed us to wrestle with inner tensions and grow as individuals and as a team.

Although we have partnered closely on issues of food justice since 2017, we both come from very different backgrounds (which we offer below).³ In this light, we feel that it is important to note that while we generated our arguments together, we contributed to this paper in different ways: Rebekah by providing guidance and personal reflections, and Jessica by conducting the literature review and content analysis.

³ Because we are close colleagues and friends, and because the topic of reparations is one that is both sensitive and deeply personal, referring to ourselves by our last names feels insincere. As such, we have decided to use our first names.

A note from Rebekah.

I am of African American, German, and Swedish ancestry, and grew up in the City of Buffalo, one of the most segregated cities in the country. Through my parents and my paternal grandparents, I developed an understanding of and relationship with African and African American culture, art, stories, and spirituality. As a Black mixed-race girl in Buffalo, my Blackness was often challenged, and because of that I developed a strong desire to understand Blackness through the context of my own family history. After traveling in the United States to seek out stories of my family, I settled on the belief that Blackness is not any one distinct cultural aspect or set of cultures, but rather it is a shared experience that some people are connected to through ancestry, policy, love, and community, and as Black folks, our experiences are also deeply situated in place and time. I became involved in food justice advocacy at age 19, and then 15 years later in 2012, I started working at an urban farming non-profit organization called Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP). At MAP, my job was to engage Buffalo teenagers in urban agriculture and food justice education. It was my employment at MAP that led me to a Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Retreat where I first began to explore the concept of reparations.

A note from Jessica.

Growing up as a white privileged woman in rural New York, I was not introduced to issues of race until I moved to Buffalo in 2015 to begin my PhD in geography. Initially, I planned to focus my research on pro-environmental behavior. However, working at a local policy research and advocacy think tank deepened my understanding of the connections between environmental issues and social injustice. I began supporting the food justice efforts of two local coalitions and my dissertation topic shifted in collaboration with these coalitions to reflect their priorities. One of these coalitions is led by Rebekah, and it has been through her trust, guidance, and leadership that I have learned how to support FJIs. I write this all here in the hopes that readers, particularly those like myself who have benefited from white privilege, will understand that learning to be an effective ally is a long and often difficult process. Acknowledging white supremacy, listening, undoing assumptions, stepping back to let others lead, and recognizing when my actions are problematic (and correcting them) are just some of the steps that I have taken. This is an uncomfortable process and one that I do not think will ever truly end; however, the process, and learning to sit with the discomfort, is critical.

It is imperative to note that while this paper focuses on increased access to land for Black folks, we bear in mind that the land we refer to was initially inhabited by, and then stolen from, Indigenous peoples. Indigenous land struggles is a conversation that, as a Black mixed-race woman and a white woman, we are neither positioned nor qualified to guide. However, we recognize that the discussions contained within this paper remain incomplete until they are contextualized within this other conversation. For now, then, we simply honor the people of the region where our work takes place: the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations—Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora. We acknowledge that further scholarship around reparations and issues of food and land justice must incorporate Indigenous leadership (this territorial acknowledgement was adapted from Szczepaniec, 2018).

Research through reflection

The arguments contained throughout the following sections are supported by numerous ways of learning and disseminating knowledge. In addition to scholarly literature, we draw from

hearings, blogs and articles, and social movement websites and materials, which contain voices and perspectives that are too often unheard in the academy. Rebekah's reflections, some of which were written during writing workshops while others were recorded specifically for this paper, ground our arguments in lived experience by documenting her navigation of the intersections between reparations and FJIs. Through reflection, Rebekah develops her understanding of her personal identity, relationship to ancestry, and positioning within FJIs to surface broader social and political issues (Cahill, 2007). We posit the use of Rebekah's reflections as autoethnography, in that they document her encounters with the concept of reparations and narrate the process that she has worked through to develop her own perspectives and purposes in relation to food justice and reparations (Anderson, 2006; Cahill, 2007).

Documenting narratives told by people directly impacted by systems of oppression can initiate the creation of alternative possibilities to those systems and subsequently illuminate pathways to dismantling them (Goodling, 2019; Smith, 2012). Bradley and Herrera (2016: 9) build upon this point by arguing that research by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and their allies "must take shape and develop from our own perspectives and for our own purposes, and based on our own stories and the theories used to explain them." To this end, the inclusion of Rebekah's reflections decenters European scholarship praxis by reframing historical narratives and highlighting other important ways of knowing. Bradley and Herrera (2016) add that retelling stories is a healing process, and indeed, this article is part of Rebekah's healing process as she works to retell her history. As such, by weaving Rebekah's reflections together with analyses of the intersections between land, trauma, healing, food justice, and reparations, the conversations within this paper remind readers that research is a reflexive process that does not exist solely within the academy (Appadurai, 2006; England, 1994; Reynolds et al., 2018).

We used an iterative process to develop and incorporate the arguments made in this paper. Through a review of reparations, social movement, and food justice literatures (both peer-reviewed and from outside of the academy), we analyzed the many similarities between SMRs and FJIs. We employed a content analysis to distill key themes from Rebekah's reflections and the broader social and political issues that these reflections surfaced. Practicing writing as inquiry (Gullion, 2016) and performance (Pratt, 2000), we explored the numerous ways that the content analysis overlapped with our findings from the literature review and our resulting arguments. We developed the structure of this paper using Rebekah's reflections to introduce key themes and arguments and ground them in her lived experiences. A similar iterative process was used for developing the Tierra Negra and Soul Fire Farm case studies, which are both FJIs working to create a socially and ecologically just food system. While there are numerous FJIs that overlap with SMRs, we chose to explore Tierra Negra and Soul Fire for three reasons: (1) they are both renowned for their extensive food justice work and for being led by those identifying as BIPOC; (2) they both center land justice and healing from intergenerational trauma, yet they approach reparations differently; and (3) Rebekah was personally impacted through her engagement with both.

Toward land justice⁴

There was an acknowledgement of the historical trauma that plays out in a legacy of disconnection to land and farming, that future generations of Black folks have in turn experienced because of our ancestors' enslavement for the purpose of agriculture.

And even though I am disconnected from my own ancestors' land and place, whether that is the particular countries in Africa (the place where my ancestors had been stolen from), or the plantation where they had been enslaved, there was something powerful and healing about being there at Tierra Negra and connecting with a place where Black folks had lived and labored and connected with the land.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Tierra Negra: June 2018, HEAL Food Alliance School of Political Leadership (SoPL))

As Rebekah has felt through her own experiences, intergenerational trauma is bound with (removal from) the land. Since the abolition of slavery, Black folks have violently and intentionally been denied access to and ownership of land, much of which had been worked by enslaved ancestors (Nuruddin, 2007). A manifestation of racial capitalism, Black land dispossession has served as a tool to disempower Black folks to further white supremacy (Heynen, 2019). However, race-based land oppressions are due in large part to discriminatory policies and practices in the 20th and 21st centuries, rather than simply the reversal of the famed 1865 Special Field Order 15 colloquially known as “Forty Acres and a Mule” (Biondi, 2007; Coates, 2014; Heynen, 2018).

By 1910, Black folks across the United States held title to more than 16 million acres of farmland; however, by 2017 that number had dropped to four million (Census of agriculture, 2017; Daniel, 2007). The number of Black farmers nationwide has dropped from 950,000 in 1920 to 45,000 in 2017, and while today's average farm size in the United States is 441 acres, Black farmers generally own only 10–49 acres of land. In addition, Black land ownership dropped 3% between 2012 and 2017, compared to a decrease of only 0.3% in white land ownership during that same time period (Census of agriculture, 2017). It is therefore clear that while today's systemic and race-based (lack of) access to land is directly rooted within slavery, subsequent policies and practices have exacerbated land injustices (Biondi, 2007; Coates, 2014; Corlett, 2007; Nuruddin, 2007; Penniman, 2018; Stewart, 2016).

Of particular importance are the racist policies and practices of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other government agencies that directly contributed to driving Black farmers off of the land (Coates, 2014; Daniel, 2007). Biondi (2007: 262) notes that “until as recently as 1997, the USDA had a close to zero approval rate for loans to [B]lack farmers.” As Senator Cory Booker testified during the Juneteenth 2019 U.S. House of Representatives hearing, H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, it is clear that land-related discriminatory practices and policies have significant ramifications today: the average white family has ten

⁴ We are grateful to the reviewers for encouraging us to engage more deeply with the need for agrarian change and reform, as well as with abolition ecologies. We recognize that this article is only a starting point for integrating these concepts with reparations research.

times the wealth of the average Black family in the United States (H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, 2019).

Because our Black ancestors were enslaved for agriculture, future generations of Black folks may have shunned natural places and land that reminds us of agriculture ... We can't forget how white slave owners accumulated land and wealth through agriculture, that they were able to benefit from the enslavement of Black folks, and that their future generations of white children were passed down that wealth and land, while Black folks who were enslaved got nothing. We also can't forget the legacy of the Jim Crow South and redlining, and how those historical realities impacted Black wealth and land ownership.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Tierra Negra: June 2018, HEAL SoPL)

Due to these persistent disparities, land access has been one of the most prevalent goals in the movement for racial justice since the end of the Civil War (Nuruddin, 2007). Land, as Rebekah notes above, provides an avenue for self-provisioning via farming and a source of heritable wealth (Kelley, 2007). Black folks' forced removal from the land has thus deprived them of a critical way to generate their own income or to pass inheritance down to future generations (Coates, 2014; Kelley, 2007; Nuruddin, 2007; Penniman, 2018; Ragland, 2019).

However, perhaps more important than the accumulation of wealth, land provides an avenue toward freedom (White, 2018). Specifically, land is a physical space upon which Black folks can build their lives and exercise self-determination (Heynen, 2018; Kelley, 2007; White, 2018). Social movements such as the Republic of New Africa, the Malcom X Society, and the Black Panther Party, as well as numerous individual writers and activists all viewed self-determination as a right thus far denied to Black folks (Karenga, 2001; Kelley, 2007; Martin and Yaquinto, 2007; McCutcheon, 2013). To them, access to land was a necessary component for Black folks to build their lives in the manner that they choose, free from coercion, exploitation, and oppression.

Yet, access to land does not ensure opportunities for wealth accumulation and self-determination, and thus does not equate to land justice. Many institutions in the United States are based in ideology of Black inferiority and thus preserve racial injustices; until these institutions are transformed, race-based uneven development will continue to be (re)produced (Heynen, 2016, 2018, Inwood et al., Under Review). Such trends are made clear by the 2017 Census of Agriculture presented above, and are exemplified by *Pigford v. Glickman*, which in 1999 became the first successful class-action lawsuit brought against the USDA by Black farmers (Daniel, 2007). While the outcomes of this case acknowledged discriminatory lending practices of the USDA and provided over \$2 billion in cash settlements, it did not redress Black land loss and thus did little to resolve disparities in land ownership or to reform the discriminatory structural inequities of the USDA (Davy et al., 2017).

The continued existence of such structural inequities is further illuminated through an examination of the governing bodies and decision-makers that guide federal agriculture- and land-related practice and policy. As of the time of this writing, the United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry (n.d.-a) has 20, all white, members. The USDA has only had one Black Secretary of Agriculture who served from 1993 to 1994 (United

States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, n.d.-b). As Black Farmers United NYS (2020) and the Black Farmer Fund (n.d.) argue, Black folks understand the types of investment and resources that they need in order to support and promote Black farmers and build wealth and power in their communities. Fair representation in governing and decision-making bodies is therefore an essential step toward reversing land dispossession and attaining land justice for Black folks.

Connections between land and trauma

At Tierra Negra, I felt a sensation or connection with the people who had been there before. We were told that there had been many people of African ancestry who had been enslaved there and I felt their presence... For me, in that peaceful place, with incredible land and diverse trees and ecosystems, I was also holding in my heart and mind an understanding of the atrocities that happened there, as a former plantation where so many beautiful African people had been enslaved...I felt a personal embodiment of their presence, sharing that place with them despite, or outside of, our differences in time and reality.

And somehow being there made me feel so much more connected to my own ancestors. It was really a very powerful experience...I am finding myself in tears now writing this, feeling that same intense visceral experience of their presence and a deep sadness for what those ancestors experienced on the land that houses Tierra Negra.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Tierra Negra: June 2018, HEAL SoPL)

Holding grief for the atrocities experienced by ancestors is a burden that Rebekah is not alone in bearing; indeed, Finney (2014) writes that for many Black folks, collective memory and identity is rooted in a shared “cultural trauma.” Not only have generations of Black folks suffered the violence of enslavement and discrimination, but each generation “learns from the previous one and inherits intergenerational trauma... the embodied stress of being [B]lack in this country affects us at the cellular level” (Ragland, 2019 3). Simply halting persistent violence to Black bodies, then, is not enough; healing from intergenerational trauma is imperative. Research by Gapp et al. (2016) indicates that positive environmental factors, or mitigating trauma through positive experiences, heals the harm experienced by current generations, thus preventing it from being passed down. Land justice is thus an essential step of the healing process as it creates opportunities for Black folks to develop spaces of physical and metaphorical safety, self-determination, and positive environmental factors (Finney, 2014; Penniman, 2018; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). Yet, because of existing systemic oppression, the question remains: how, for those who wish to do so, can Black folks gain land justice in order to heal from trauma? For many, the answer to this question lies in reparations.

Pathways to reparations

I had never really considered that reparations were a possibility, because they seemed too big a thing.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Movement Generation’s Justice and Ecology Retreat: November 2016)

Reparations lack a single, universally agreed-upon definition. While many conceptualize reparations expansively (i.e. Corlett, 2016; Ekiyor, 2007; Ogletree, 2007), we employ the

definition provided by Reverend Sutton during the Juneteenth, 2019 congressional hearing, H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice: to repair what has been broken (2019). This brief yet powerful definition broadens the scope of reparations to contend that, contrary to Rebekah's initial concerns noted above, reparations are indeed achievable. In using this definition, we seek to emphasize that healing, or repairing the brokenness resulting from both the physical and mental violence inflicted for centuries upon Black bodies, as well as the forced separation from the land, is critical for racial justice.

Reparations through social movements

The debate to determine if reparations are owed to Black folks in the United States is gaining prominence in public, advocacy, and academic spheres. Evidence of this trend is seen in the Juneteenth H.R. 40 hearing, calls for reparations from social movements including the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), and research that is pushing discussions of reparations beyond litigation and legislation (i.e. Inwood et al., Under Review). As the arguments for and against reparations are discussed in depth elsewhere, we shall not attempt to summarize the debate here (see Alkalimat, 2004; Beckles, 2014; Biondi, 2007; Coates, 2014; Corlett, 2007, 2016; Ekiyor, 2007; Hughes, 2019; Humphries, 2016; Karenga, 2001; Nuruddin, 2007; H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, 2019). Instead, we accept the argument that reparations are due to Black folks and are an important step to rectifying systemic wrongs.

As the importance of reparations lies in repairing what has been broken, reparations may include, but are much more than, financial compensation (Alkalimat, 2004; Humphries, 2016; Karenga, 2001; Kelley, 2007; H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, 2019). Importantly, reparations must transform existing economic and institutional structures that are inherently racist (Alkalimat, 2004; Heynen, 2016, 2018, Inwood et al., Under Review). Many SMRs take up this call, advocating for reparations that build new structures grounded in place-based strategies created and governed by BIPOC communities (Movement for Black Lives, n.d.; Movement Generation, n.d.; Southern Reparations Loan Fund, n.d.). Through this broadened, transformative conceptualization of reparations, these SMRs center goals such as land justice and healing.

Equally important is SMRs' preference for an array of nontraditional methods that embrace and yet move beyond the mainstream approaches of legislation and litigation. These include Black-led organizing, direct actions, self-determination, and deep democracy (Heynen, 2018; Movement for Black Lives, n.d.; Movement Generation, n.d.). The following sections explore how social movements advocating for land justice and healing offer alternative, transformational methods for achieving reparations.

Framing and networks in social movements for reparations

Drawing on Jenkins (1983), Goodling (2019), and Nicholls (2008), we understand social movements as networks of individuals and organizations working collectively to transform social structures and achieve political goals through nontraditional means. SMRs, then, are coalitions of individuals and organizations working to repair the harm caused by centuries of oppression using methods that extend beyond (but do not exclude) litigation and legislation.

Social movement theory provides us with several ways to analyze SMRs' goals and methods. One of the most salient is framing, which is the process of generating and maintaining meaning for movement supporters, opponents, and observers in order to inspire and legitimize campaign

activities (Benford and Snow, 2000; Hamilton and Curran, 2013). Examining networks is also critical to understanding how SMRs create and share meaning by exchanging and pooling knowledge and resources, thus increasing their power, reach, and political influence (Loh and Agyeman, 2019; Nicholls, 2008). The combination of framing and networking enables SMRs to not only produce meaning, but to expand their reach and ability to generate support and collective action via the dissemination of this meaning to other individuals and organizations.

From food justice to reparations

Racial justice advocates and scholars have long recognized the connections between food and land (in)justice and poverty (Heynen, 2009; Holt-Giménez, 2017; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; Taylor, 2011; White, 2018), but scholarly literature rarely makes explicit the role that food justice might play in achieving reparations. The following sections illustrate the importance of doing so.

Food justice as social movements

Conceptualizing SMRs as social movements illuminates the similarities between their goals and those of other social justice movements. Such alignment is clear between SMRs and FJIs, which are social movements working to transform the unjust power relations and the ideological, political, and economic structures that currently dominate the industrial food system (Bradley and Herrera, 2016; Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; Loh and Agyeman, 2019). This food system intentionally perpetuates race and class discrimination, denying BIPOC communities equitable access to production, distribution, and consumption of food (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011; Holt-Giménez, 2017). FJIs working toward food justice emphasize democratically controlled food systems led by BIPOC communities that prioritize social and ecological well-being and enable communities to equitably exercise their right to grow, sell, and eat fresh, healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate, local food (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011; Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; Gilbert et al., 2018; Sbicca, 2018).

It is critical to distinguish FJIs from other movements that appropriate the term food justice. Such food “justice” movements too often limit their focus to food security, romanticizing white imaginaries of the food system, working within rather than challenging structures of oppression, and perpetuating injustice rather than redressing it (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; Passidomo, 2014). FJIs, on the other hand, “go beyond food” to address broader systemic issues (Passidomo, 2013). In doing so, as with SMRs, FJIs employ framing processes and networks to generate support and collective action for the desired transformations (for examples, see: Reese, 2019; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; Sbicca, 2018).

Food justice overlaps with reparations

According to Cadieux and Slocum (2015), FJIs employ four central “organizing nodes” to transform the food system: (1) land access and use; (2) trauma and inequity; (3) economic exchange mechanisms; and (4) treatment of labor. While different FJIs place varying levels of emphasis on these four nodes, engagement with one or more of these nodes sets FJIs apart from the other food “justice” movements mentioned above. These nodes indicate the multiple directions taken by FJIs for food system transformation depending upon their goals and the context in which they are grounded. For example, a network of FJIs in Boston is working to develop a food solidarity economy movement (node 3) via a community land trust (node 1) (Loh

and Agyeman, 2019). In California, FJIs and workers employed throughout the food chain are building upon decades of organizing in order to gain safe working conditions and fair wages (node 4) (Sbicca, 2018). In the 1960s, the Freedom Farm Cooperative located in the Mississippi Delta viewed land justice (node 1) as a pathway to “physical, emotional, and psychological nurturance” (node 2) (Baxter et al., 2017: 99). In other words, FJIs past and present, rural and urban, employ(ed) these four organizing nodes in different formations and combinations as they work(ed) to transform the food system.

An in-depth examination of the first two nodes make explicit the potential overlaps between FJIs and SMRs:

- Achieving *land justice* “creates equitable ways to access, manage, and control land and other resources...; applies agro-ecological land use practices that benefit more-than-human life as well as human society; builds on diverse knowledge systems to grow food, make change, and sustain societies,” and
- A focus on *trauma and inequity* “recognizes structural relations of power as necessary to confront race, class, and gender privilege; acknowledges the historical, collective traumas...; enacts policies that repair past injuries and trauma that are still felt today” (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015: 14).

The overlaps between the above two FJI nodes and the goals of many SMRs are clear. For example, the M4BL’s Black Lives Matter Reparations Policy Agenda demands “reparations for the wealth extracted from our communities through environmental racism, slavery, food apartheid, housing discrimination and racialized capitalism ... focused on healing ongoing physical and mental trauma, and ensuring our access and control of food sources, housing and land” (Humphries, 2016). The same is true of other SMRs such as the Black Land and Liberation Initiative and CARICOM’s Ten-Point Program (CFP: Ten-Point Program for Reparations, 2014; Movement Generation, n.d.). As such, we argue that those FJIs focusing their efforts on addressing land justice and trauma and inequity have the potential to support SMRs by serving as an additional pathway toward reparations.

Food justice initiatives as reparations

There is an encouragingly large number of FJIs throughout the United States in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Though we cannot begin to discuss them all here, we are grateful for their valuable work and hopeful that future research will emphasize their efforts and build off of the conversations below. Here, we limit our analysis to Tierra Negra and Soul Fire Farm.

Tierra Negra

Our relationship with land and place needs to be a ‘choice’, and if it is our choice to live and work on the land, that relationship with the land can be a healing one.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Tierra Negra: June 2018, HEAL SoPL)

Tierra Negra, located just outside of Durham, North Carolina, is a part of the Earthseed Land Collective, which works “to increase the self-determination of ourselves, our communities and generations to come,” through the “pursuit and practice of collective liberation” as a “transformational response to oppression and collective heartbreak [emphasis added]” (Earthseed

Land Collective, n.d.). Led by and for BIPOC communities and with a commitment to growing a food system that is just, sustainable, and community-controlled, Tierra Negra embodies the definition of an FJI. Initially, those at Tierra Negra struggled to bring about opportunities for land justice and healing as they were working land owned by others. Rent increases forced Tierra Negra to move, thus disrupting connections that had been formed with the land, dissuading the formation of future connections, and delaying the creation of a place of BIPOC self-determination and safety (Bowens, 2015). Lack of land ownership thus hindered the ability of those at Tierra Negra to choose how to interact with the land, a choice that, as Rebekah notes above, is critical to the healing process.

Despite these barriers, Tierra Negra continues to pursue transformation within the food system. Using framing processes, they generate meaning by building trust and developing multivisions to guide their work through initiatives such as Just Us dinners that connect food justice advocates and farmers of color (Bowens, 2015). Tierra Negra has also developed a network of strong relationships with local community elders and Indigenous nations, grounding their work in the ancestral traditions of those who previously worked the land (Bowens, 2015; Conui, 2018). In 2016, Earthseed Land Collective purchased a 48-acre property in Durham County, which has provided Tierra Negra with space for community convening, organizing, healing, and celebrating (Earthseed Land Collective, n.d.). Cooperative ownership of this land has enabled Tierra Negra to build a space where BIPOC communities can feel mentally and physically safe and exercise self-determination, and offer these communities the choice to (re)connect with the land. Workshops and rituals grounded in honoring both enslaved and Indigenous ancestors add additional meaning and identity via framing to Tierra Negra's efforts to build new systems grounded in cooperation, justice, and agricultural sustainability. These events disseminate these values not only throughout the local communities connected with Tierra Negra, but nationally, as well. Thus far, they have hosted over 20 groups from both rural and urban areas across the country, through which they work to build out national networks around the principles of food justice (Bowens, 2015; Conui, 2018; Earthseed Land Collective, n.d.). As was the case when the HEAL SoPL visited Tierra Negra, some of those involved in these convenings are affiliated with SMRs such as the M4BL, or with other FJIs such as MAP (Conui, 2018). Thus, not only is Tierra Negra an FJI itself, it also provides space for other FJIs and SMRs to come together around common values.

I have a tattoo on the inside of my right forearm.

I thought I'd never get one, but I got this tattoo in December of 2018 as a reminder of personal healing that I experienced at Tierra Negra. The image in my tattoo is a plantain plant.

During a visit to Tierra Negra as part of HEAL SoPL, I participated in a workshop on plantain; how to make medicinal salve with it, and the healing benefits of the plant. The workshop took place after an introduction to the land and the history of the place where Tierra Negra is located, and after we spent time alone there, when I felt the presence of my ancestors (in reference to Rebekah's poem above).

Following that experience, my fellow HEAL SoPL members began talking about us all getting the same tattoo of plantain.

I got the tattoo with them as a reminder of the healing connection I experienced with my Black ancestors through the land and place at Tierra Negra (Figure 1).

When I see this image on my arm, I am reminded of my own commitment to healing from historical trauma through place and nature.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Tierra Negra: HEAL SoPL, December 2018)



Figure 1. Rebekah and fellow HEAL SoPL members pose with their new tattoos of the plantain plant (photo by author).

There is no direct mention of reparations on the Tierra Negra webpage or other related materials, nor does Rebekah recall reparations being explicitly discussed during the HEAL SoPL trip to Tierra Negra. However, such reference is not necessary for a form of reparations to occur. As Rebekah makes clear above, Tierra Negra offers BIPOC communities an opportunity to (re)connect with the land and creates spaces for healing from intergenerational trauma, accomplishments that embody reparations as defined by SMRs. Furthermore, by leveraging framing and networks, Tierra Negra disseminates its values throughout the country and encourages others to promote self-determination, BIPOC leadership, and the transformation of systemic oppression. Finally, Tierra Negra creates opportunities for financial reparations. First, by emphasizing the importance of equitable wealth distribution, they invite donations to “Sustain Us” from those with disproportionately large shares of wealth which are used to build additional gathering spaces and fund other projects (Earthseed Land Collective, n.d.). Second, they employ a sliding scale for their workshops, in which those with more resources pay more and those with fewer resources pay less. These funding structures thus enable a redistribution of wealth while simultaneously creating opportunities for land (re)connection and healing spaces to BIPOC folks who desire it. As such, Tierra Negra demonstrates how FJIs support SMRs by serving as an additional pathway toward reparations.

Soul Fire Farm

On the closing day, the hand drums had been set up in the field near a bench, nearby there was also farm work that needed to be done. All of the participants were invited to do what we felt called to do: farm work or drumming. The drumming felt celebratory, a way of saying goodbye to each other and the land.

In that closing day experience and in being encouraged to self-care as we needed, my experience at Soul Fire Farm felt very much like the message we got at Tierra Negra: ‘When we work on the land, we only work if we choose to, if it brings us joy, if it is a celebration. We do not force others to do this work.’

(Rebekah, reflecting on Soul Fire Farm: August 2019, BIPOC Farmers Immersion program)

Located on 80 acres outside of Albany, New York, Soul Fire Farm is another FJI that works to uproot racial injustice in the food system by fostering BIPOC leadership, land justice, environmental sustainability, and healing from oppression and forced disconnections with the land (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c). As Rebekah notes above, Soul Fire shares many of Tierra Negra’s underlying values and visions, such as the importance of place-based relationships, connecting with ancestors, and choosing if and how to (re)connect with the land (Penniman, 2018; Penniman and Snipstal, 2017). In doing so, Soul Fire seeks to create a “Safer Space,” grounded in the expectation that all humans, other beings, and the land will be treated with respect through seven agreements: nonviolence, identity, consent, presence, listening, sharing, and self-care (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c).

Soul Fire’s initial efforts focused on “Solidarity Shares,” which provide fresh and healthy food to local low-income families. However, Soul Fire’s activities have expanded since its founding in 2010 and now include Farming Immersions, Building Immersions, Uprooting Racism in the Food System trainings for both institutions and individuals, and Youth and Intergenerational Education programs (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c). As is the case with Tierra Negra, participants come from across the country; thus, Soul Fire’s workshops and trainings serve not only to share knowledge and skills but to generate connections among national networks of individuals. Soul Fire further cultivates these networks by participating in public speaking events and giving workshops and trainings both nationally and internationally.

Through these events, Soul Fire guides participants in gaining an understanding of the root causes of land injustice and trauma and the role of food justice in dismantling oppression, and in developing the skills needed to build a just and regenerative food system. Framing processes underlie this work. Through traditional spiritual practices, celebration, and self-care, Soul Fire invites participants to perceive food justice not as an end goal but as a pathway toward ending racism and growing self-determination (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c). Centering these frames illuminates food justice as a critical piece to the larger whole that is racial justice. Finally, Soul Fire also uses a sliding scale for its workshops and speaking events. This scale applies not only to wealth discrepancies among individuals, but among entities. For example, institutions such as universities or non-profits with an annual budget of over \$1,250,000 are asked to pay more for workshops than smaller nonprofits and BIPOC-led organizations (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-a). These sliding scales redistribute wealth, ensuring that Soul Fire’s opportunities to grow, heal, and (re)connect are equitably accessible to all, BIPOC folks in particular. Based on these values,

activities, and financial mechanisms, it is clear that like Tierra Negra, Soul Fire works toward many of the same goals, and uses many similar approaches, as SMRs and can be viewed as fostering reparations.

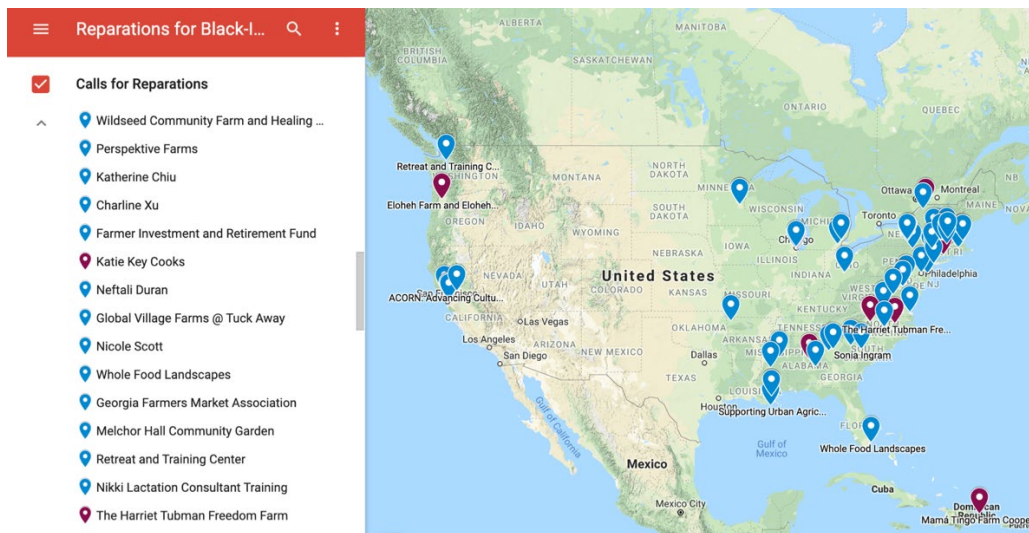


Figure 2. A screenshot of the Reparations Map, taken with permission from Soul Fire Farm’s website (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-b).

However, unlike Tierra Negra, Soul Fire explicitly advocates for reparations through a Reparations Map (Figure 2), which is managed by the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) (fiscally sponsored by Soul Fire Farm).⁵ Created to support the reparations efforts coordinated by the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, this is a map of urban, suburban, and rural FJIs throughout the United States that promotes reparations through “people to people solidarity” (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c). There are three criteria that projects must meet in order to be included on the map: they must be BIPOC-led; must be directly related to land, agriculture, and/or food justice; and must be connected with Soul Fire, NEFOC, or the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, or have a reference from another BIPOC-led farming organization. Through these criteria, the FJIs on the map not only benefit from reparations themselves, but they also support SMRs via overlapping goals and values. Those included on the map create profiles that note the resources they need, such as land, equipment, or financial assistance, and their contact information (Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-c). Those able and willing to give the needed resources use the map to find the projects that they wish to support and contact the project coordinators directly to arrange transfer of these resources, which are considered reparations (i.e. Willoughby, 2018). The Reparations Map exemplifies how reparations must be BIPOC-led and include much more than financial compensation: in some instances, reparations are weed-whackers, hoop houses, land, or pro bono building help (Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, 2019; Soul Fire Farm, n.d.-b). The Reparations Map thus creates a digital network that is a physical manifestation of the ways in which FJIs support SMRs by providing nontraditional pathways for reparations.

⁵ The Reparations Map can be found here: <http://www.soulfirefarm.org/get-involved/reparations/> or here <https://nefoclandtrust.org/reparations>

Navigating reparations as white allies

I was approached by an individual who had learned about the concept of reparations through a panel discussion that included elements of the Movement Generation Just Transition framework. The panelists had encouraged white folks to pay reparations and through that event he was personally inspired to make a financial contribution to a local BIPOC-led climate justice initiative.

(Rebekah, reflecting on an alliance that can't be named: November 2019)

Just as Tierra Negra and Soul Fire emphasize that BIPOC leadership is essential to FJIs, SMRs need to be led by and for Black folks. However, there is room for white folks to support these movements, as Rebekah's reflections indicate above and below. Indeed, white folks need reparations, as well. Katrina Colston Browne argues that reparations help white folks to acknowledge their own ancestry and move from guilt to grief, a much healthier, more productive emotion: "It is good for the soul of a person and of a nation to set things right" (H.R. 40 and the Path to Restorative Justice, 2019). It is time for white folks to acknowledge that their privilege was (and is) derived from the exploitation and oppression of Black folks and it is time for white folks to join the movement for justice by participating in reparations.

Earlier this year a white friend in Buffalo reached out to me to inquire about local BIPOC-led food justice initiatives that they might make a financial contribution to. They explained that they had been referring to the online Reparations Map for several years to find and give to farm projects led by BIPOC farmers, but now they wanted to give locally.

This friend, who can trace their ancestry back to a patriot of the American Revolution, explained that they had been using the Reparations Map to identify BIPOC farm projects located in communities where their ancestors had lived. Each year, they had made an annual financial contribution to one of the farm projects included on the map. By acknowledging their white ancestors' inhabitation of places where they contributed to oppression of local communities of color, they were able to use the Reparations Map as a tool for justice.

(Rebekah, reflecting on Soul Fire Farm's Reparations Map: June 2018)

Yet, as is too frequently the case with food "justice," white folks frequently co-opt or seek to lead social movements. In order to prevent this from happening in SMRs, it is essential that white folks follow the guidelines laid out by Penniman (2018): first, Black folks define what reparations are and how they are operationalized; second, reparations occur without stipulations or oversight requirements; and third, white folks accept that personal sacrifice is a probability. Adhering to these standards means that white folks will need to engage in difficult conversations and confront their privilege and history. Developing a firm understanding of the systems of oppression that have perpetuated racial injustices for centuries helps white folks become allies (Beason, 2019; Ogletree, 2007).

If white folks engage with SMRs as allies rather than attempting to co-opt or lead the reparations movement, new possibilities arise. Specifically, do the overlaps between SMRs and FJIs position SMRs to disrupt white co-optation of food justice, as well? If FJIs are framed as SMRs, could

this open new pathways to gain white food justice allies? These are conversations that we look forward to engaging more deeply with in the future.

Conclusion

Reparations require repairing the brokenness resulting from centuries of oppression. However, such healing cannot be fully achieved without land justice. Land provides a source of wealth, a space for self-determination, and an opportunity to (re)connect with ancestors and cultural traditions. As SMRs strive toward transformative reparations, these two elements, land justice and healing from intergenerational trauma, remain central to their goals. We show that the same is true for FJIs. Drawing on social movement theory, we demonstrate how SMRs' and FJIs' use of framing processes and networks reveals the overlaps between these seemingly disparate movements. Rebekah's reflections further illustrate these similarities. By making explicit these parallels, our analysis illuminates the ways in which FJIs such as Tierra Negra and Soul Fire Farm support SMRs as alternative pathways toward reparations.

This paper builds upon current reparations literature by emphasizing the importance of SMR approaches and goals in reparations efforts, as well as by beginning to address the dearth of reparations conversations within the field of geography. In doing so, we simultaneously advance radical food geography in several ways. First, our exploration of the overlaps between SMRs and FJIs unites reparations, social movement, and food justice literatures in novel ways. Second, by examining the alternative methods used by SMRs and FJIs to promote food and racial justice, we provide a new window into understanding how social movements transform systems of oppression. Third, analyzing the important role of space and place in healing from intergenerational trauma demonstrates the relationships between land justice, reparations, and food justice, and how they can be leveraged to imagine and operationalize new pathways for radical change. Finally, the incorporation of Rebekah's reflections reminds readers that (in)justice is personal and that knowledge of (in) justice originates from sources both within and outside of the academy. These pages culminate in and reflect the process that we have thus far undertaken to understand how we, as food justice scholars and activists, contribute to efforts for reparations.

Yet this paper marks just the start of our explorations into reparations and there remain several lines of inquiry that need to be addressed in future research. First, conversations regarding reparations and land justice remain incomplete as long as they neglect to address Indigenous land struggles, particularly decolonization as defined by Tuck and Yang (2012). Are reparations and decolonization incommensurable, or are there ways that these movements can support each other? Second, there is a need to examine how SMRs and FJIs might be contextualized within the broader agrarian question (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010; Bernstein, 2006; McMichael, 1997). How are these social movements impacting and impacted by neoliberal globalization and the corresponding calls for land reform and political inclusion? How might SMRs and FJIs learn from past land reform failures? Finally, as is the case with the Tierra Negra and Soul Fire Farm case studies, many FJIs and SMRs rely on donations and philanthropy; however, the control of such financial flows too often rests in the hands of wealthy white folks (Barman, 2017; Moloo, 2018). As reparations must be for and by Black folks, does a reliance on philanthropy really assist FJIs and SMRs in repairing what has been broken? Furthermore, overlaps between FJIs and SMRs might lead to competition for philanthropic funds. How might such competition

impact cooperative reparations efforts between social movements and organizations? We hope that readers will join us in delving into these and other questions arising from these pages.

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