Claremont Colleges
Scholarship @ Claremont

Scripps Senior Theses Scripps Student Scholarship

2020

Anti-Colonial Foodways: Food Sovereignty in Post-Katrina New Orleans

Clara Zervigon

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses

Part of the Environmental Studies Commons, and the Food Studies Commons

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

ANTI-COLONIAL FOODWAYS:
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

by

CLARA ZERVIGON

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR SUSAN PHILLIPS

PROFESSOR NANCY NEIMAN

DECEMBER 13, 2019

ABSTRACT

After centuries of colonization, the geographies and social relations of New Orleans are incredibly unequal. While many in the city were aware of this fact, the destruction brought on by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 laid bare all the problems built into the city's environment and culture. The acute disaster caused major tragedy, especially due to the poor handling of the situation by the federal government. The recovery period after Katrina produced pain and distrust between many communities, but also unprecedented people-to-people solidarity. While the federal government's extreme mishandling of the situation reinforced generations of colonial trauma, its neglect also provided citizens with the ability to step out from beneath the colonial matrix that had formed its reliance on federal aid, and thus its devastation when these funds were distributed thoughtlessly.

New Orleanians are subject to neocolonial power structures, and creating a more localized and democratic food system is a method in which we seek to subvert these systems. While this has been an ongoing process, Katrina both solidified the need and provided the conditions for greater change in our local foodways. In this thesis, I examine how New Orleanians articulate their political selves through efforts at food sovereignty,. Drawing on interviews with eight participants, I demonstrate how food sovereignty is a vehicle for articulating the political self by exploring relationships to the various community and governmental groups that are present in New Orleans. While community relationships are often fraught, they are overall more positive than participant's relationships to the government. Participants all want a more sovereign future, but struggle to see it as a realistic possibility due to the constraints of the neocolonial, capitalist government.

KEYWORDS: food sovereignty, neocolonialism, colonialism, Hurricane Katrina, environmental justice, community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank the people who participated in the study. Their insight was invaluable throughout this process, and I learned so much from the conversations we had. I appreciate their willingness to take the time to speak with me, and their excitement about the project as it has developed.

I would like to thank my readers, Professor Susan Phillips and Professor Nancy Neiman, for the attention and hard work they have put into this process. I especially want to thank Susan for her guidance, as this project would not be where it is without her constant feedback. Thank you also to my thesis classmates, whose dedication to their projects has been a pleasure to watch.

A big thank you to my friends, family, and everyone I love. The support I have received over the last few months has been wonderful. I could not have done this without my parents, who have backed me immensely throughout this project and my entire life. Thank you for raising me to be curious and for sharing in the excitement of what I find. Thank you to my incredible friends, who have worked and played beside me all semester, especially Ellye, Quinn, Sabrina, Allie, Celia, and Simon. As always, a million thanks to Mitchell, who makes me feel like I can achieve anything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT ……………………………………………………………………………….. 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ……………………………………………………………... 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS ………………………………………………………………... 3

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS …………………………………………………………... 5

INTRODUCTION ……………………………………………………………………….. 6

A Colonial History ……………………………………………………………………… 8

Hurricane Katrina ……………………………………………………………………… 19

Literature Review ……………………………………………………………………….. 20

Methods …………………………………………………………………………………… 31

Positionality …………………………………………………………………………….. 32

Thesis Structure ………………………………………………………………………... 34

CHAPTER 1: KATRINA -- NEW ORLEANS EXPOSED ………………………… 36

The Aftermath ……………………………………………………………………………39

New Possibilities Through Food ……………………………………………………….. 55

CHAPTER 2: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN NEW ORLEANS …………………... 60

Food, New Orleans, and Community Change ………………………………………... 60

Introducing the Participants …………………………………………………………… 60

Community Relationships ……………………………………………………………… 65

Relationships to the Government ……………………………………………………… 88

Visions for the Future ………………………………………………………………….. 105

CHAPTER 3: DOMINATION, DISASTER, AND DETERMINATION ……………… 112

REFERENCES ……………….……………….…………………………………….………... 119

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Association
LiA	Love in Action
LNWFAC	Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition
RQG	River Queen Greens

INTRODUCTION

I have lived in New Orleans nearly all my life. It is my absolute favorite place, and I think it always will be. Besides the great food, great music, and great people, there is something so special about New Orleans that you can never quite put your finger on. It is the magic in that mystery that keeps residents enchanted, pursuing a joy of which we may never see the bottom. But if you would ask me to describe the city in one word, it would be complicated. New Orleans is in a precarious situation environmentally. The waters that feed our economy and culture could destroy our homes tomorrow if a big enough storm came around. The city is also host to a variety of social problems. Louisiana has the highest poverty rate in the nation and is ranked 48th in education, factors which are both created by and contributing to structural racism and classism, (Amadeo 2019; Knueven 2019)[1]. Murder rates remain among the highest in the nation, and government corruption runs rampant (CBS News 2019; Lane 2017). Despite residents' massive love for the city -- seen in its strong community relationships, commitment to cultural preservation, and rabid backing of the local football team[2] -- it sometimes can sometimes seem like New Orleans is too broken to be fixed.

New Orleans is a city defined in many ways by neocolonial systems of domination. Its history is largely violent and repressive, but it also creates a space for grassroots political struggle not available to other parts of the United States. The colonial narratives that continue to control the city today are riddled with contradictions, as different social and governmental structures were imposed by the various powers which controlled the land over the last three hundred years. The failures in communication between these lasting narratives of domination expose the arbitrary nature of their rules, thus providing New Orleanians with the groundwork to interrogate the ineffective state system and begin to perform anti-colonial labor. From the city's colonial near and distant past, local solidarity emerges. On multiple occasions, residents have taken matters into their own hands, doing work that the state refused to do.

---

[1] No page number was used in the citation because the information is from an online-only source without page numbers. This citation format will be used in all only-only sources cited. Several did not include a date, and for these citations the name of the contributor is followed by the webpage title.

[2] The city's most recent large-scale solidarity movement was a boycott of the Super Bowl after a poor call ousted the Saints from the running. Thousands filled New Orleans' streets and bars. In true New Orleans fashion, the protests largely took the form of partying and second-lining. (Brasted 2019).

This occurred in modern history most notably during Hurricane Katrina. Residents braved dangerous conditions to rescue neighbors and strangers alike. Locals were some of the first people on the front lines, and the last people left to clean up the mess when government dollars were not enough. In many cases, government intervention was replaced by grassroots efforts, with locals taking charge of rebuilding and long-term resilience efforts. In addition to taking on such labor because they felt the government never would, residents acted on the sense of uniqueness that many New Orleanians feel. Many felt loyalties to a city they viewed as unique and special, and for that refused to abandon it. Katrina galvanized local solidarity, paving the way for current community resilience efforts. The prevalence and success of people-to-people projects added to community agency and built models for groups across the city to follow. While many of the original groups have disappeared, crumbling under the weight of the giant undertaking and the harsh nonprofit world, their impact lives on through new participants in food sovereignty.

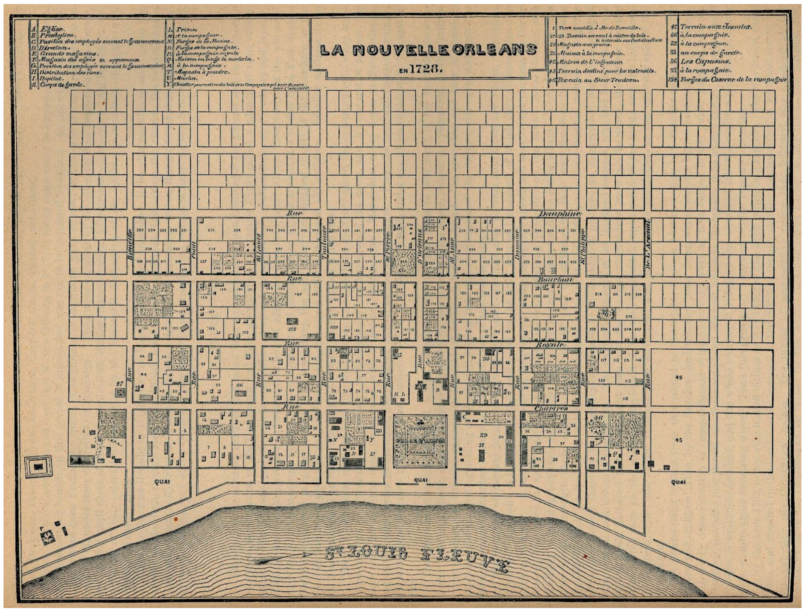
Katrina both solidified the need and provided the conditions for greater change in our local foodways, and food sovereignty is an important piece of this struggle. Building on histories of local solidarity, which equally are made equally of a love of the city and the necessity to fight to retain its ways of life, participants in local food sovereignty focus on upholding community culture and function. However, notions of difference imposed by the various colonial powers sometimes pit community members against each other as a safeguard towards oppressive system. These real and perceived differences often get in the way of making progress towards food sovereignty, as subgroups argue with each other rather than the state oppressor which defined them as different in the first place. Not surprisingly given the city's history, acceptance of government involvement in local food systems ranges from hesitantly excited to contemptful. Because of their precarious situation within social, governmental, and economic systems, participants in New Orleans food sovereignty mostly do not see systematic change as a possibility for the future.

This exposes networks of oppression in the neocolonial system, in which the government refuses to provide adequate social services, causing residents take up community-led projects as supplements. These projects are then squashed either directly by the government or as an indirect result of its political and economic system, all in order to prevent citizens from performing work that threatens the status quo. The foil to this rests in a utilization of New Orleanian social norms, in which community solidarity played out in the public sphere can counter historical patterns of domination and oppression.

A Colonial History

In order to examine New Orleans' present, it is essential to understand its past. *La Nouvelle-Orléans* was founded on Chitimacha land by French colonists in 1718 (Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha 2014;, History.com Editors 2018). The city was intended by the French to be a port for the territory acquired in 1682, *La Louisiane*, as it sat on high ground along the

Mississippi River and near the Gulf of Mexico (History.com Editors 2018). The colonists designed it to be like *La Rochelle* back in France, with square blocks and a main public plaza (Kendall 1922, 5). In order to do this, the colonists first attacked the Chitimacha. Those who were not killed were forced into slavery, making up the largest enslaved population in Louisiana at the time (Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha 2014). New Orleans' first inhabitants then included French politician Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bieneville, his military accompaniment, and his enslaved and indentured labor force made up of Black and Indigenous people (Kendall 1922, 3). Ursuline nuns and Jesuit monks would follow them, establishing a formidable Catholic presence on the small settlement (Kendall 1922, 7, 5). Next, a group of "reputable young girls" was sent by the French government to be cared for by the Ursulines, "to be disposed of, under their superintendence in marriage with the settlers," (Kendall 1922, 9). With the arrival of white women of child-bearing age, the initial colonial settlement was complete.



Map of the original French settlement, a part of the modern day French Quarter (Waring 1886)

The city was built on colonial violence, with French colonizers stealing Chitimacha land in hopes of economic gain. The colonists also regularly terrorized the other Indigenous peoples of the region. The Chaouacha, Chickasaw, and Natchez people were frequently targeted, as their lands were closest to the settlement of New Orleans. The local Indigenous populations fought to defend themselves on many occasions, including the continuous Natchez Revolts between 1716 and 1730, during which women, children, and enslaved people were often spared from their attacks (Barnett 2007, 105). On the occasions where these defenses were beaten down by the colonialists, Indigenous people were either murdered or put onto plantations as enslaved labor (Barnett 2007, 107). As far as violence inside the city walls, New Orleans' buildings were constructed by "twenty-five carpenters and as many convicts," which included enslaved Black and Indigenous people in their numbers (Kendall 1922, 3). Several plantations existed in the small settlement, including one gifted to the Jesuit priests by the French government, on which cash crops were cultivated by enslaved people for the economic gain of the colonial elite (Kendall 1922, 7). With these acts of violence towards the underclass, the class hierarchy of the settlement emerged. Initial classes were outlined as the political elite, made up of clergy like the Jesuits and colonial governors, the "humbler people" or other white French colonists below them, and enslaved or free Black and Indigenous people at the bottom (Kendall 1922, 9).

This hierarchy was maintained by the built environment, which spatially separated class groupings. Many enslaved people were spatially separated from the prescribed 'society' through their placement in plantation fields during the day, in addition to their separate lodging during the night, barring some who worked in the master's home. Similarly, the built environment removed Indigenous people from this 'society' by walling off the city (Kendall 1922, 8). For white settlers, the colonial built environment created a possibility of class ascension that was largely barred to Black and Indigenous people. The layout of the initial town consisted of public spaces, such as the *Place d'Armes*, in which white settlers freely mingled with each other and established social connections.

Despite the layout of the city contributing to class stratification, social classes were not so binary as the previous explanation makes them seem. This is largely due to France's *Code Noir* or Black Code, in which Black people were granted rights not available in other European colonies in North America. For instance, enslaved Black people were legally allowed to marry each other, free Black people, and Indigenous people. They also often ascended in the class structure through illegal but commonly accepted relationships with white colonists, both forced and voluntary. Rather than retaining stringent understandings of how race defines class, colonists saw the people that resulted from these mixed marriages as Creole, creating a new, intermediary class (Lapiere 1928, 102; Jones 2007, 115). Additionally, enslaved people had the right to not work on Sundays, often using that time to gather in public places to socialize, make music, and express the cultures of the places they came from, which the French were less determined to erase than other European powers (Jones 2007, 115). Many also used this day to sell wares in hopes of buying their freedom, which was legal under the Code Noir. Importantly, this freedom legally (though not necessarily practically) entitled them to the same rights as whites, including the ability to purchase enslaved people or participate in the military or government (Lapiere 1928, 102; Jones 2007, 116).[3] Enslaved and free Black people's relative freedoms under the

---

[3] These scholars speculate this slightly more favorable view is due to France's proximity to Northern Africa and the history of migration between the two areas.

Code Noir increased their presence in spatially constructed white spheres, especially in public gathering or shopping spaces outside the home.

The acceptance of public space as mixed spaced created an increased level of social mixing, which became built into the culture of New Orleans, and far more so than other North American colonies under different European powers. While this conception of public space by no means eliminated severe racial violence in the colony, the more nuanced understanding of race in the French colony allowed for greater possibility of acceptance for those most oppressed by the colonial logic. Their acceptance into certain social spheres despite obvious external class markers demonstrates the arbitrary rules of a colonial logic. As we will see later in the history of New Orleans, the contradictions present in the colonial matrix can be used to undermine it.

This use of multi-racial, class-diverse public space carried over when the Spanish became the owners of la Nouvelle Orleans. Even though they technically owned the land, white colonists were very reluctant to become citizens under the Spanish crown: “the inhabitants of Louisiana resisted all efforts to convert them into Spaniards. To the end of the chapter they remained French,” (Kendall 1922, 39). They held tightly onto their ethnic and cultural heritage, thereby remaining loyal to cultural traits imbued by the built environment and Code Noir. Cultural comforts around public space in the Spanish era became visible with the construction of the robust market system during their rule. Recognizing the burgeoning informal markets due to increases in port trade and land viability, the Spanish government imposed official market regulations in 1769 (Tooker 2009, 15). This system reinforced the power of colonial elites, by giving plantation slavery an even larger stage on which to trade its raw materials, growing the city to steal more Indigenous land, and having larger plantations filled with an enslaved labor force in order to keep up with the growing economy. It also allowed people in traditionally lower racial castes to seek higher levels of agency, as the markets allowed them to become more visible and economically stable by selling their wares.

New Orleans' establishment as a formidable port also carried on with the tradition of social mixing in the public sphere, with a multitude of classes, ethnicities, and cultures coming face to face at the market. An early tourist to New Orleans described this market system as, "'...all colors, nations, and tongues are commingled in one heterogeneous mass of delightful confusion,' as French, Spanish, Africans, Native Americans, Creoles, English, and Americans browsed the wares of more than 500 vendors," (Tooker 2009, 15). The market system eventually grew to thirty-four individual sites. Its effect was long-lasting, with the last market's inauguration in 1911 (Tooker 2009, 15). The market became an essential part of the social fabric of the city, both reinforcing and subverting colonial logics of difference and power.

As the colony thrived under the Spanish, Napoleon soon wanted to take back New Orleans for its potential for commercial gain (Kemp 2010, 160-161). He managed to regain power over the land in a treaty, but ceded the Louisiana territory to the United States just three years later. Just as the territory was ceded to Spain in an attempt to end the Seven Years War, the transfer from Spanish back to French and finally to American control demonstrates the auxiliary nature of the colony (Herbermann 1913, 380). Its main purpose has always been for economic gain and political sway, and its function has always been to serve the metropole, regardless of the claimed ethnic or cultural heritage of the people there. This did not change when Louisiana was finally passed to the United States. What did change was that now the colony was within metropole. The city's proximity to its colonial overlord caused American social standards to be more heavily imposed. The most notable attempts were changes to the racial and class dynamics. One example was the reduction of nuanced understanding in regards to Black people within the racial class system. Under French Catholic social norms, which stubbornly remained throughout Spanish occupation, there were various spaces for free, enslaved, and mixed Black people in the caste system. Dissimilarly, the imposition of American Protestant culture attempted to relegate all Black people to the lowest rung on the social ladder (Steinber 2001, 725-726). While Americans moving to the city were able to sway the opinions of some locals higher on the race ladder, not all people, even many whites, agreed with this. White Americans from other regions were recorded to have remarked on the 'looseness' of New Orleans whites in relation to their Black neighbors, historically discussing the New Orleanian white elite as inferior themselves. In the words of historian Brenda Marie Osbey, white Americans described the New Orleanian racial elite as "those lazy, Latin, white people… who didn't appear to be very in control and didn't seem to care to be," (Logsdon et al. 2008). Those 'lazy, Latin, white people,' along with anyone with "mixed blood," became known as Creoles under the new colonial power. The word has had many meanings over time, but after the Louisiana Purchase served to, "[distinguish] native Louisianians from the English-speaking people that arrived after the Louisiana purchase," framing them as an other (Jones 2007, 116). In the attempt of yet another colonizer to control New Orleans, cultures clashed under newly imposed social norms.

This culture clash has affected New Orleans since its American takeover. Cultural norms from each era of colonization exist, and as Louisiana historian Robert A. Sauder demonstrates, this includes the powerful French-era conceptions public space.

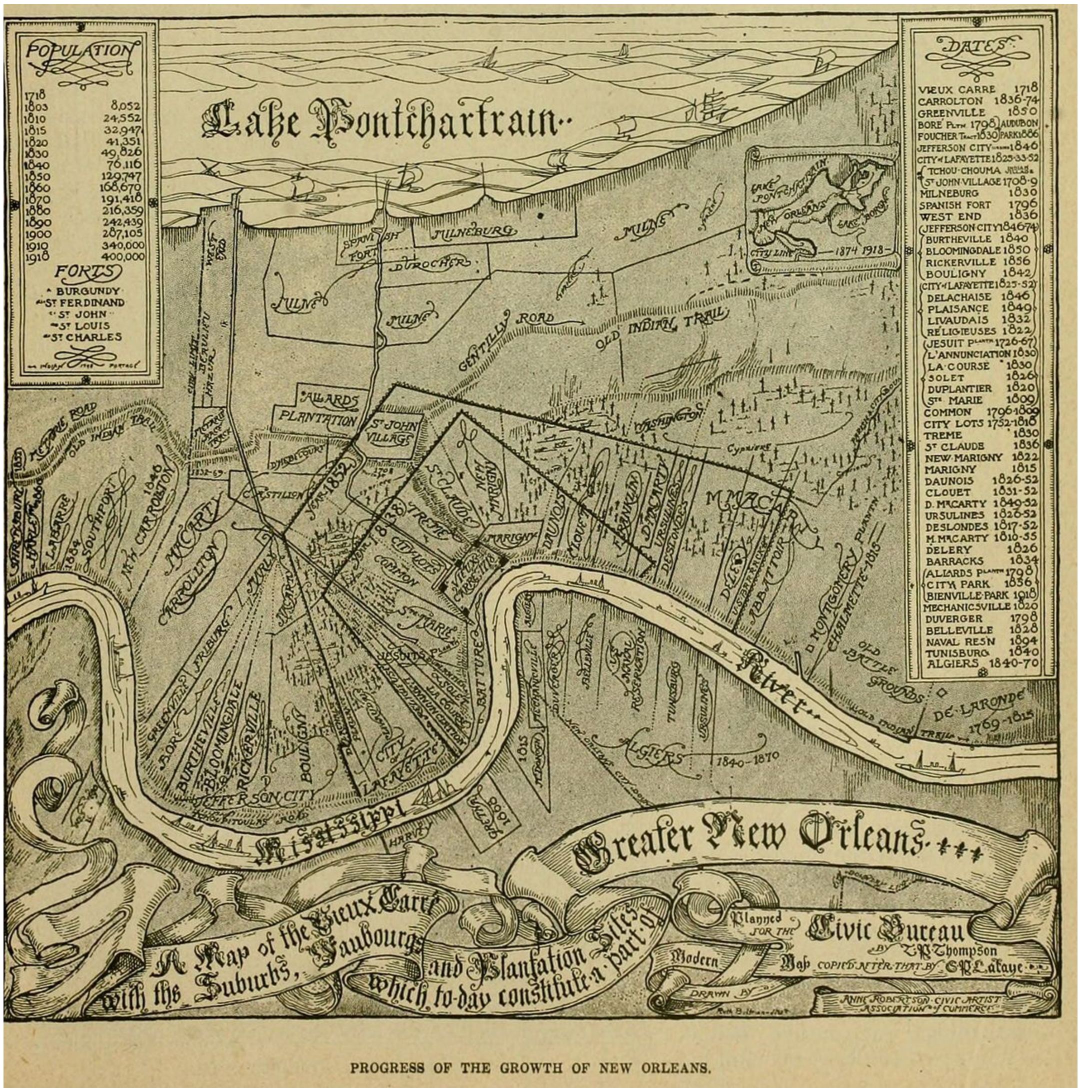
> The Latin Creole was unusually conservative and averse to change. A visitor to the city in the 1880s noted that "the Creoles gave the tone to New Orleans. And it was the French culture, the French view of life, that was diffused. The business habits of the Creoles were conservative and slow, they do not readily accept new ways." The survival of the European tradition of shopping in the public market until recent times illustrates New Orleans' inherent conservatism. The original form of marketing simply would not be lost even if protective measures had to be implemented to enable it to survive. Although Anglo-Americans eventually became the dominant group in the city, their aggressive business habits were toned down by the leisurely habits of the Creoles. In many ways the Americans acquired Creole habits; the original population was a potent one culturally, and the public market endured as an important institution in the city (Sauder 1981, 295).

The stubborn upkeep of the public market system demonstrates the particular opportunities provided by New Orleans' violent colonial history. New Orleans' uniquely evolved social culture both maintains long histories of colonial violence -- mainly through the social stratification and other physical and mental violences faced by the Black, Brown, and Indigenous populations -- and provides a cultural framework which creates space to undermine these violences, namely the mixed-race applications in the public sphere and the acceptability of trans-racial and -class mixing. The illogical contradictions present in the colonial matrices from each era, in addition to the ways in which they fail to communicate with each others' arbitrary rule set, provide the groundwork for undermining the entirety of the colonial system. This concept is made clear by the modern applications of the market system. The fundamental incompatibility of the European-Catholic colonial narrative with that of the American-Protestants provides New Orleanians of all backgrounds with a sense of difference from the rest of their new American 'caretaker.' It is through calculated use of these differences that New Orleanians may begin to break down the colonial restraints of the current colonial power which seeks to dominate them, intentionally articulating their difference as a colony with their specific social norms. It is by first articulating difference that the arbitrary rules which create colonial violence and oppression can be interrogated. I argue that the use of food and public space, with both being historically important to the city's social fabric in a way that is unique in the United States, is a primary way in which modern New Orleanians perform this anti-colonial labor.

An additional contribution of American colonization was a boom in plantation slavery. Although it existed throughout French and Spanish colonization, the American era saw the practice grow exponentially, largely due to increased sugarcane production. Between 1824 and 1861, cane sugar became Louisiana's biggest crop. In that time, sugar production increased five-fold, and sugar estates multiplied by seven, rising from 193 to 1,308 (McDonald 2008, 182). To give an idea of the scale of this enterprise, "in any given year the combined crop of other sugar-producing states in the South was less than five percent of that of Louisiana," (Louisiana Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism 2018). These plantations were "some of the largest and richest plantations in the South," and were home to nearly half the enslaved people in all of Louisiana. The boom in sugar also accounted for the consolidation of land into the hands of the few. Notably, "with this consolidation, the number of slaves on each plantation grew steadily," (McDonald 2008, 183). Therefore, the wealth of the economic elite in Louisiana was directly correlated with the exploitation of and violence towards enslaved Black and Indigenous people. Also important to note is that plantations were confined to South Louisiana, and made up a majority of modern-day New Orleans, barring the settlement at the French Quarter (McDonald 2008, 182). This means that both the agricultural landscape of Louisiana was mainly made up of plantations, and the power elite largely comprised of their owners.

Although plantation slavery does not exist today, its legacies continue to bear on Louisiana. Sugarcane remains an important crop in the state, with 13 million tons of cane produced yearly and estimated 17,000 employees involved in its cultivation. However, only 11 processing facilities exist in the state, mirroring colonial era monopolies by a handful of sugar families (American Sugar Cane League 2019). Additionally, of the five largest landowners in Louisiana in the last decade, two belong to old-line sugarcane families (Business Report Staff 2009). The wealth accrued by racial and class elites at the expense of those lowest in the hierarchy continues to benefit families whose ancestors enslaved people.

Importantly, plantation slavery and its economic consolidation has had an immense effect on the Black population of New Orleans. In addition to severe violence and exploitation faced by Black enslaved people during plantation operations, New Orleans' largest population has been barred from such generational accumulation of wealth due, both due to the enslavement of many and the strict economic laws imposed upon free and enslaved Black people. It also contributed to enslaved Black people's spatial and social isolation from the rest of society. Social separation and lack of ties to the greater New Orleans community also added to European prejudices, which frame Black people as an unworthy 'other' and thereby excuse their miserable treatment by those higher on the racial caste hierarchy. At one point during French colonization, 37% of the New Orleans population was made up of this underclass (Larino 2018). The fact that the city's and state's Black population remains high today contributes to its unequal federal treatment in contrast to other large, more traditionally (read: racially) 'American' places.


Lake Pontchartrain
POPULATION
1718
1803 8,052
1810 24,552
1815 32,947
1820 41,351
1830 49,826
1840 76,116
1850 129,747
1860 168,670
1870 191,418
1880 216,359
1890 242,439
1900 287,105
1910 340,000
1918 400,000
FORTS
BURGUNDY
ST FERDINAND
ST JOHN
ST LOUIS
ST CHARLES
DATES
VIEUX CARRE 1718
CARROLTON 1836-74
GREENVILLE 1850
BORE PLTN 1798
FOUCHER TRACT 1830
AUDUBON PARK 1886
JEFFERSON CITY 1846
CITY OF LAFAYETTE 1825-33-52
TCHOU-CHOUMA
ST JOHN VILLAGE 1708-9
MILNEBURG 1830
SPANISH FORT 1796
WEST END 1836
JEFFERSON CITY 1846-74
BURTHEVILLE 1840
BLOOMINGDALE 1850
RICKERVILLE 1856
BOULIGNY 1842
CITY OF LAFAYETTE 1825-52
DELACHAISE 1846
PLAISANCE 1849
LIVAUDAIS 1832
RELIGIEUSES 1822
JESUIT PLANTN 1726-67
L'ANNUNCIATION 1830
LA COURSE 1830
SOLET 1826
DUPLANTIER 1820
STE MARIE 1809
COMMON 1796-1809
CITY LOTS 1752-1818
TREME 1830
ST CLAUDE 1836
NEW MARIGNY 1822
MARIGNY 1815
DAUNOIS 1826-52
CLOUET 1831-52
D. MCCARTY 1849-52
URSULINES 1826-52
DESLONDES 1817-52
M. MCCARTY 1810-55
DELERY 1826
BARRACKS 1834
ALLARDS PLANTN 1798
CITY PARK 1856
BIENVILLE PARK 1918
MECHANICSVILLE 1820
DUVERGER 1798
BELLEVILLE 1828
NAVAL RESN 1894
TUNISBURG 1840
ALGIERS 1840-70
Mississippi River
Gentilly Road
Old Indian Trail
Metairie Road
Algiers 1840-1870
De Laronde 1769-1815
Old Battle Grounds
Greater New Orleans
A Map of the Vieux Carré with the Suburbs, Faubourgs and Plantation Sites which to-day constitute a part of
Planned for the Civic Bureau by T. P. Thompson
Modern Map copied after that by S. P. Lafaye
Drawn by Annie Robertson, Civic Artist, Association of Commerce
PROGRESS OF THE GROWTH OF NEW ORLEANS.

Map from 1918 showing timeline of New Orleans plantations and neighborhoods. Names of both are listed on the right-hand side of the map, with plantations in parenthetical groupings (Lafaye 1918).

With a basic understanding of this colonial history as groundwork, we can begin to unpack current New Orleans' travesties and progresses. Using Hurricane Katrina as a case study, the enduring colonial relationships between the US state system and the city of New Orleans become clear in the modern day. The acute tragedy produced by the storm was largely brought on by governmental negligence. The various governmental agencies' mediocre handling of the situation, coupled with a history of infrastructural and social neglect, encouraged increased political actualization on the part of the residents. The rebuilding of the city was largely performed by residents, a phenomena which played out with social solidarity in public spaces. This would not have been possible without cultural foundations laid by the colonial era. Increased political agency on the part of residents set the stage for the current food sovereignty movement in New Orleans, as one of the first things inhabitants rebuilt was the local food system.

Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina was the disaster we were all waiting for, but no one expected. New Orleans has experienced its fair share of catastrophic storms and floods, but Katrina was by far the most devastating in the modern era. Thousands of lives were lost, a majority of the city was flooded, and disaster relief was lethargic at best. I intend to paint Katrina as a breaking point which laid bare all of New Orleans' colonial hang-ups at once. The extreme federal mishandling of the situation demonstrated the city's position as an auxiliary dependency in US territory, rather than a bonafide and valued US city. Local political corruption and ineptitude exposed an elite class which sought to capitalize on federal negligence by gaining power at the expense of residents. Disparities in flood severity, infrastructural collapse, food access, and general trauma illuminated all of the failings of the colonial state simultaneously, both disgracing politicians and politically emboldening locals. The blind-eye of the various levels of government coupled with increased political will by residents, allowing locals to step out from beneath the weight of the colonial matrix that had restricted them for so long. This created unprecedented levels of community organizing and local development, in many ways spearheaded by food access projects.

Katrina set the stage for New Orleans’ modern food sovereignty landscape, in which community-led projects have become far more common. However, ineffective governmental policy, politicians trying desperately to stay in power, and historical systems of discrimination remain as formidable barriers. The landscape is further complicated by the influx of outsiders after the storm who seek to make their impact on New Orleans, for better or for worse. These conditions make local sovereignty all the more important, due to the increased amount of outside influence, and all the more possible, due to shifts in power and agency.

Literature Review

Two main bodies of literature are relevant to this project on food sovereignty and coloniality in post-Katrina New Orleans. One involves critical analysis of the United States food system and its alternative movements, and the other discusses the social and political construction of disaster. While there is some work that exists at the intersection of these two domains (Kato, Passidomo, and Harvey 2013; Passidomo 2013; Passidomo 2014; Rose et al. 2011), this literature review will build the background necessary for understanding the food sovereignty landscape of a post-disaster city.

The food justice and food sovereignty literature articulates discourse on political acts of food and how they relate to identity assertion. These examples are contextualized using food regime theory, which analyzes the relationship of food politics to larger systems of power (Friedmann and McMichael 1987; Friedmann 2005; McMichael 2009). Combining food regime theory with the discourse on disaster politics and disaster capitalism examines the failed promises of the capitalist nation-state in regards to its subjects. In order to evaluate the coloniality of relationship structures in New Orleans via food, an understanding of the intersection between food, power structures, and the construction of political landscapes is essential.

Food Justice

Food justice is an established concept within the field of Environmental Justice (EJ) that deepens critical discussions on food systems. In general, scholars of food justice examine how race, class, and gender shape and are shaped by our food system, as well as how people seek to subvert systems of oppression using alternative food practices (Hislop 2014; Glennie and Alkon 2018; Guthman 2007, 2008). Sociologists Charlotte Glennie and Alison Hope Alkon state that food justice occurs in three main ways: through activism in the form of social movements, creation of alternative food practices, and examinations of inequalities in conventional and alternative food systems (Glennie and Alkon 2018, 1). Glennie and Alkon's definition encompasses a wide range of activities. Under their framework, a comparison of the strategies of two food access coalitions in Chicago, a survey of food banks across America, and a study on the impact of food access on health all belong under the umbrella of food justice (Glennie and Alkon 2018, 5, 6).

Julie Guthman is a key food justice scholar who examines alternative food practices on the basis of inclusion and accessibility, mainly along racial and class lines (Guthman 2008). She addresses how presupposed notions of whiteness within the food justice movement act as an exclusionary force in regards to minorities (Guthman 2008). The food justice movement often reflects the perspective of those implementing alternative practices, rather than the perspective of the people food justice workers are claiming to ‘aid’ with their projects, as Guthman notes in her analysis of her students’ projects in the community surrounding their university (Guthman 2008). Other scholars analyze race and the industrial food system (Voit 2017; Gray 2014). For example, Kelsey A. Voit (2017) critiques the food moevemnt’s lack of attention towards the inherent racial hierarchies present in the industrial food system. She asserts that such grassroots food work that does not take an explicitly anti-racist approach tends to reach and benefit a whiter and more resourced demographic (Voit 2017). Voit posits food justice as a way to conceive of collective liberation through its participants’ approaches to fighting for food access (Voit, 2017). These scholars demonstrate how systematic racial inequality is both created and reproduced by the contemporary American food system and its alternatives.

Food activist Andrew Fisher (2018) provides an example of how efforts that appear to subvert inequalities in the food system actually reinforce them. For example, he describes the “Unholy Alliance” between corporations and anti-hunger charities in his book *Big Hunger*. Fisher names this the “hunger industrial complex,” because corporate-charity partners refuse to acknowledge the issue of economic inequality at the heart of the hunger crisis in America and thereby make no systematic progress in ending hunger (Fisher, 2018). Fisher’s analysis, combined with that of Alkon, Slocum, and Guthman, demonstrates that subversive intent does not equal effective political change.

Some scholars choose to look at racial inclusivity and accessibility from the perspective of whiteness in order to tease out the ways in which it affects a space, thereby understanding how to better make room for other identities. Alkon discusses the repercussions of whiteness in alternative food geographies in her work on farmer’s markets in Northern California (Alkon

2012). The book is her attempt to “try to better understand how and to what end low-income communities of color were making use of local food systems,” which often exclude them based on cultural aspects of whiteness embedded into the market landscape (Alkon 2012, 9). Slocum is also critical of whiteness in alternative food movements, discussing how, “whiteness is produced in progressive non-profit efforts to promote sustainable farming and food security in the US,” (Slocum 2006, 520). Like Guthman’s analysis of her white students’ food justice efforts in non-white communities, Slocum discusses how “these well-intentioned food practices reveal both the transformative potential of progressive whiteness and its capacity to become exclusionary in spite of itself,” (Slocum 2006, 520). She comes to the conclusion that Whiteness rests on inequalities of wealth within alternative food projects (Slocum 2006). Race and class are often articulated together in scholarly discussions about food justice. This speaks to the fact that food justice is a deeply interdisciplinary field, and, as it seeks to challenge underdevelopment and systematic oppression, multiple identities are often at play in food justice discourse.

Food Sovereignty

Expanding on discussions of food justice, which seeks to remove inequality from our food system, food sovereignty goes a step further to put control of the system back into the hands of the people. The *Declaration of Nyéléni* is one of the founding documents of the food sovereignty movement. Created at the first global Forum for Food Sovereignty, involving over 500 representatives from more than 80 countries, the declaration both provided an official definition for food sovereignty and outlined points for collective action transnationally (Via Campesina 2007). The representatives defined food sovereignty as such:

> 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. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. (Via Campesina 2007).

Food sovereignty takes the previously established concept of food security and gives its power to the people. Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that, "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life" ("Topic: Food Security," International Food Policy Research Institute). Food sovereignty takes this one step further, in defining food as a fundamental human right, and in stipulating, "healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" as part of this right (Via Campesina 2007). While food security is defined by nation-states, food security is designed by the people, fundamentally redefining relationships of power in favor of the people.

Since the paradigm shift from food security to food sovereignty, scholars have focused mostly on rural environments as the locus for food sovereignty (Alteri and Toledo 2011; Henderson 2016; Ibarra et al. 2011). However, some scholars have attempted to bridge the rural/urban divide. For instance, Jennie Jonsén asserts that food sovereignty discourse is "incomplete" as the food access needs of the urban poor have not been adequately discussed (Jonsén 2005, 34). Clendenning et al.'s report that food sovereignty narratives are present in food activism in urban America, although most organizations would more likely label themselves under food justice (Clendenning et al. 2015). This is important in analyzing food sovereignty efforts in New Orleans, as not all who by definition practice sovereignty would label themselves as such.

Food Regime Theory

Scholars of food regime theory use food systems analysis to critique the greater capitalist system (Friedmann 2005; McMichael 2009). Harriet Friedmann developed the theory along with Philip McMichael to address food's role in the formation of state and global networks of power (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). McMichael defines food regime theory as such:

> Food regime analysis emerged to explain the strategic role of agriculture and food in the construction of the world capitalist economy. It identifies stable periods of capital accumulation associated with particular configurations of geopolitical power, conditioned by forms of agricultural production and consumption relations within and across national spaces. Contradictory relations within food regimes produce crisis, transformation, and transition to successor regimes. (McMichael 2009, 139).

Friedmann names the latest regime the "corporate-environmental food regime," which has developed in order to restructure of late-stage capitalism (Friedmann 2005, 227). By picking certain demands from recent social movements to appropriate for business uses, the new regime will appear to take a more eco-friendly and social justice oriented approach to capital. However, Friedmann asserts that no whole-sale revolution of the system is on the agenda because these demands will be used to benefit capital, not to alter its essential structure, which favors oppression. (Friedmann 2005). Food regime theory is useful in examining how relations of power intersect with the food system, and how control over food can be used to promote a neoliberal capitalist agenda under the guise of progress.[4] But it can also show how the grassroots rebel against food regimes. Looking at both top-down and bottom-up attempts at power, food regime theory also exposes crucial contradictions in specific food regimes that create crisis, transformation and transition, (McMichael 2009).

The theme of contradiction discussed in food justice, food sovereignty, and food regime theory will be essential to understanding how disasters are created and how their consequences are dealt with. This appears in both the promise of the neoliberal capitalist agenda that progress will be made despite making no substantive efforts and the discrepancy between intent and impact of well-meaning organizations. The variety of attitudes and approaches to problem solving in the post-disaster landscape characterize it as one of contradictions, where aid projects do not always benefit the target population and opportunists seek out hurtful ways to benefit from destruction.

Disaster Politics

In 2009, Pelling and Dill discussed a collection of works in the disaster studies field (Pelling and Dill 2009). Their piece brings up early thinkers in the discipline such as materialist geographer Michael Watts, who came from the perspective that disasters are products of pre-existing social relationships and can also cause changes in social systems, (Pelling and Dill

---

[4] Neoliberalism here is a type of liberalism that believes in a global free market and sees competition "as the defining characteristic of human relations. It redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. It maintains that "the market" delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning," (Monbiot 2016).

1983, 21). They note that more recent thought on disaster studies has branched into the domain of disaster politics, or the social and political construction of the disasters themselves rather than just their effects on social relations. They also note a change since the beginnings of the discipline from describing outcomes to analyzing how changes occur. This is especially crucial when, "political impacts are at times coded or hidden, distorted by media coverage or rapidly suppressed by the powerful," (Pelling and Dill 2009, 21). Building on conceptions of how disasters are portrayed, there has been much work on how seemingly 'natural' disasters are often in large part man-made and politically motivated (Bullard and Wright 2009; Hyndman 2011; Squires and Hartman 2007). This kind of analysis is especially relevant in understanding why disasters produce certain effects, as it moves blame from the natural environment to those who have politically influenced the destructive outcomes. In combination with that of food regime theory, this lens can help us examine how particular junctures both expose and alter power regimes.

Disaster Capitalism

Naomi Klein brought discussions of disaster politics from academia to the public eye. In her book *The Shock Doctrine*, she coined the phrase "disaster capitalism," saying, "I call these orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities, 'disaster capitalism,'" (Klein 2007, 7). Citing events as diverse as the coup on Pinochet in 1973 Chile to 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, she seeks to expose "that this fundamental form of capitalism has consistently been midwifed by the most brutal forms of coercion, inflicted on the collective body politic as well as on countless individuals," (Klein 2007, 7).

Since discussions of disaster politics and disaster capitalism are largely spatial, education specialist KJ Saltman couples his analysis with that of renowned geographer David Harvey (Saltman 2007). In Saltman's work on the American school system, he uses both disaster capitalism analysis and Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" to discuss the shift in public schools to charter schools (Saltman 2007). His assessment is useful in determining how space is used in the construction of disaster. Disaster capitalism focuses on a variety of spatial settings, from the redevelopment of schools and school districts post-disaster (Saltman 2007), to regional discussions of international aid after tsunamis (Hyndman 2011), or hurricane-affected landscapes as sites for international tourism (Stonich et al. 2008). It can even be applied as a critical lens when interrogating academic approaches to a whole culture, such as *Archaeology as Disaster Capitalism*, a post-genocide analysis of how archeaologists capitalize on stolen and disappearing Indigenous heritage (Hutchings and La Salle 2015). Study of disaster capitalism is a broad field with many applications.

Disaster Politics and Capitalism in New Orleans

The lenses of disaster politics and disaster capitalism have been fundamental to unpacking the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. As stated in a book in part by one of the fathers of the EJ movement, Robert Bullard, the writers state that "the disaster in New Orleans after Katrina was unnatural and man-made" (Bullard and Wright 2009, 6). Scholars have interrogated everything from the effect of the city's systematic inequality before the storm on underdeveloped communities of populations of color (Giroux 2006), to the effects of aid by exogenous-led but New Orleans-based nonprofits (Harvey et al. 2014), to how media portrayals of affected populations changed aid funding dynamics by playing to racial and class-based fear

(Sweeney 2006) and the complete lack of effort by the Bush administration (Smith 2006). Importantly, many of the discussions of rebuilding also focus on the grassroots, demonstrating how the people of New Orleans (as opposed to their political elites) were often the quickest and most effective sources of aid (Squires and Hartman 2007; Gratz 2015). This understanding of Hurricane Katrina as a political and natural disaster is imperative in evaluating the storm's consequences.

Food Justice in a Post-Katrina Landscape

Building on discussions of race and class of the post-disaster landscape, food justice scholarship in the post-Katrina era focuses both on how populations were affected differently by the storm and how they seek to reinsert their various identities into the narrative. As far as scholarship examining Katrina's unequal effects, Rose et al. examine *The Effects of Hurricane Katrina on Food Access Disparities in New Orleans* in their piece (Rose et al., 2011). Using a highly empirical method, they, "combined existing directories with on-the-ground verification and geographic information system mapping to assess supermarket counts in the entire city," in order to assess not just food access disparity, but how disasters such as Katrina have the potential to affect it (Rose et al. 2011, 483).

Of the scholars on food justice in the post-Katrina era, Catarina Passidomo is one of the most prominent (Passidomo 2013, 2013, 2014, 2016; Kato, Passidomo, and Harvey 2014). The aforementioned article with Kato, Passidomo, and Harvey goes into detail about the varying levels of political engagement achieved by political gardening acts in post-Katrina New Orleans. They describe how, "the study illustrates how urban gardening is inherently political, but are cautions that the extent to which gardening can subvert social injustice in the city may be limited," (Kato, Passidomo, and Harvey 2013, 1845). They noted, "tensions among the activists and the residents along racial, class, age and nativity lines," which often contributed to the ability of the projects to carry out their stated goals (Kato, Passidomo, and Harvey 2013, 1845). These scholars help frame food justice as something that should be enacted both for and by communities.Their discussion is useful as it investigates not just the presence of political acts of food but their effect on the community, and how they play into systems either developed in or affected by a post-disaster landscape. By interviewing both the creators and target population of an unsuccessful CSA program in New Orleans, Kato's analysis discusses a similar discrepancy between those enacting and those 'receiving' food justice projects (Kato 2013).

Passidomo discusses in her dissertation, "the extent to which food justice and food sovereignty discourses and activism interact with and affect the material and social realities of the frequently low-income communities of color in which they are situated," in addition to discussing "whether such activism helps or hinders pre-existing efforts to alleviate hunger, overcome racism, and promote social justice at the scales of the neighborhood and of the city," (Passidomo 2013, i, 227). Much of Passidomo's work focuses on how political food can help citizens re-assert their agency and autonomy (Passidomo 2013, 2014). These analyses are all situated in post-Katrina New Orleans, and demonstrate that food justice work is the most effective in these cases when identities such as race and class are articulated together, especially in neighborhoods where these identities are most present.

My research will build on discussions of disaster capitalism by exploring the concept through food sovereignty. In looking at how locals sought to counter disaster capitalism through (re)building community-led food infrastructure, my work adds a narrative from below to the story of the capitalizing elite class. Discussing these grassroots stories allows us to see not only the systems which exploit and capitalize on disasters, but how we may seek to undermine them. This exploration of anti-disaster-capitalist food will provide a new example to the growing body of case studies on food sovereignty by bringing the discussion of small-scale sovereignty to the urban sphere, and by providing an explicitly anti-colonial narrative.

Methods

In order to examine current efforts at food sovereignty in New Orleans, I wanted to first examine the neocolonial power dynamics present in the city. Because food sovereignty reworks, "the central notions of sovereignty: territory, economy and power," I felt establishing how these notions are understood in New Orleans was important to understanding the limits and possibilities of food sovereignty there (Trauger as quoted in Edelman 2014, 920). To do this, I used Hurricane Katrina as a case study. Using a mix of primary and secondary sources, I examined how power revealed itself after the storm. I used this to examine political possibility from the grassroots in the post-storm era, especially political activism around food, both of which have increased due to the Katrina era's lack of adequate governmental support.

Next, I interviewed seven individuals who are involved in food sovereignty in different ways around the city. I talked to four local producers, one co-founder of the largest local farmers market umbrella, one chef, and one food pantry owner. I asked them questions about the nature of their work, such as their daily tasks and general goals. Once I got a feel for what their work looked like, I would ask how they saw their efforts within larger political systems, the subversive movements which seek to undermine them, and specifically (but not exclusively) food sovereignty. We discussed monetary and social support networks for their endeavors, and what dynamics were involved in feeling accepted into or pushed out of the various subcommunities of New Orleans where the projects took place. We also discussed their opinions on government involvement in local food, and how Katrina changed the way they navigate the local food system. I sought their perspective on the current New Orleans food system, whether or not they liked how it functions, and if they saw the potential for food sovereignty in the future. The bulk of the research is made up of these individual interviews. As I come from an explicitly anti-colonial perspective, I wanted to center the stories of those currently doing the work of establishing local food sovereignty from the grassroots. This is framed in contrast to dominant, elite narratives about modern American politics and food, which seek to undermine their hard work in order to maintain oppressive and exploitative power imbalances.

Positionality

As a person who was born and raised in New Orleans, these topics are very dear to my heart. I grew up getting my food from the groceries and markets around town, one of which I was able to interview for the project. My family and I were displaced due to Hurricane Katrina from August until December when I was in second grade, and we came back from our North Carolina relocation right before Christmas. My life was dramatically shaped by the storm, and sometimes it feels like it is hard to get through a day without thinking about it. The post-Katrina era has largely been characterized by New Orleans' recognition of its own precarity, both environmentally and politically. Growing up in this climate put me on a path to study politics from below, which I see as a foil to ineffective, discriminatory, and corrupt local and national politics.

This project for me has been almost equally about doing the research as it has been navigating my identity. Specifically, as a lot of my political views come from being a child during Katrina, I sometimes found myself looking for validation of my distrust of conventional power structures in the project participants, who were all significantly older than I am and have had a variety of other life experiences. I have tried my best to leave out unfair biases and to not project my own idea of New Orleans-ness onto the project participants. However, I also think my identity and experience, specifically as a person who experienced Katrina at such a young age and has been brought up in a city constantly trying to cope with its effects, is important to the narrative.

While I know that I experienced great tragedy along with the people of my city, I was in a very fortunate position to be able to leave and set up a new home somewhere else. I am a white, upper-middle class, cisgender, straight, non-disabled female. In a city bound in many ways by colonial ideals of social difference, my identity affords me great privilege at home, as well as in other places. It is with this privileged identity that I was able to feel so comfortable in the farmers market, a historically white and elite space of exclusion, where I encountered the majority of the project participants. My identity also grants me the ability to talk about the trauma of my city from its colonial histories of violence without being significantly retraumatized myself. These histories certainly did not affect me to the same extent that they affected more marginalized groups in New Orleans, especially the city's majority Black population, who faces the most explicit and acute discrimination. Throughout this process, the various privileges, nuances, and contradictions of my identity have undoubtedly affected the narrative of this project. I am cognizant of the fact that there is no such thing as an unbiased report, but I can only hope that I represented the history of New Orleans and the words of the project participants in a manner that was accurate and fair.

Thesis Structure

In order to tell this story, I start with Hurricane Katrina as an example of colonial violence. From the perspective that 'natural' disasters are anything but, I examine how the city's history as a colony set the groundwork for exacerbated destruction and trauma, and how its treatment afterwards only solidified feelings of otherness in city residents. I show how such acute injustice galvanized political will in the city, and coupled with negligence on the part of various government entities, led to a proliferation of grassroots efforts to rebuild the city. Food became the focus of many of these groups, as both a live-giving and culturally significant resource. The increased political agency of the post-Katrina era and the success of grassroots groups laid the foundation for modern New Orleans food sovereignty in creating space for projects combining food and community justice.

Next, I move to the interviews with the project participants. Using their experiences, I examine the current food sovereignty landscape of New Orleans. Here I encounter both tension and collaboration between the participants, various community members, and government entities. I use the participants' places within these relationships, in addition to their expressions of personal political ideals through food, in order to examine what it means to be politically active under a politically oppressive system. I use their visions of the future of the New Orleans food system, in addition to their business sustainability,[5] in order to explore what our local foodscape may become.

---

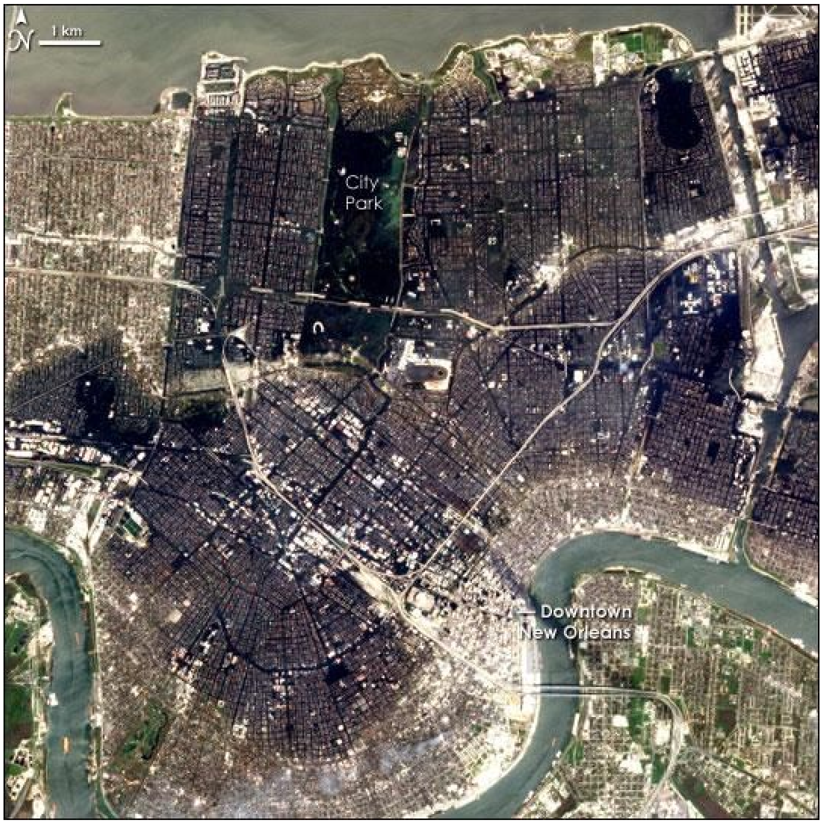
[5] Sustainability here meaning the ability to maintain their businesses, rather than environmental sustainability.

Lastly, I use the project participants experiences of working under the neocolonial capitalist system of government to explore what it means to reimagine power structures while still being subjected to them. I contextualize this within New Orleans histories, both during colonial times and the Katrina era, in order to see what becomes possible in our unique political and cultural landscape.

CHAPTER 1: KATRINA -- NEW ORLEANS EXPOSED

In order to examine current food sovereignty efforts in New Orleans, it is essential to have some understanding of the city's modern political scheme. I use the story of Hurricane Katrina, the histories that created its destructive effect, and the manner in which the devastation was handled to explore the New Orleans political matrix in order to expose the political workings of the city. Using secondary source material to frame the story, I hope to use the Katrina era as a backdrop through which neocolonial power relations become evident. Once an understanding of the city's neocolonial politics is achieved, it becomes possible to interrogate the possibilities of the New Orleans food sovereignty movement as an anti-colonial practice.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. The storm was a category three when it made landfall, with sustained winds of 127 mph (CNN Library 2019). It caused an estimated $161 billion in damage, making it the most expensive hurricane to ever hit the United States (Office for Coastal Management 2019). The storm also caused immense human damage, with an estimated 1,833 killed in Louisiana. Additionally, due to flooding in 80% of the city, nearly the entire New Orleans population of 454,000 were displaced (Zimmermann 2015). Research suggests that at least half of this population, representing 227,000 individuals, was displaced to areas outside of the city (Sastry and Gregory 2014, 3). Those who stayed faced a lack of resources, as water systems failed, food became scarce, and dry ground was hard to come by.



Satellite image of New Orleans after the storm. 80% of the city was submerged (Zimmermann 2015).

Katrina was an immense storm, so wide that it stretched across the entire Gulf of Mexico (Gibbens 2019). But while the storm was massive, it was not entirely unusual. Louisiana had seen nine tropical storms[6] and five hurricanes in the half a decade prior to Katrina. Two of those hurricanes happened the same year as Katrina, both in July and only five days apart ("List of Louisiana Hurricanes (2000–Present)," Wikipedia).[7] Hurricane Dennis, the stronger of the two, was the same category on the Saffir-Simpson Scale upon making landfall on the Florida panhandle. But Dennis only killed 15 people stateside (NOAA 2018). The Gulf States are no strangers to intense wind and rain during hurricane season. So what made Katrina different?

---

[6] Too strong to be regular storms but weak to be classified as hurricanes, tropical storms have maximum sustained winds between 39-73 mph. Storms with winds of 74 mph and above become named hurricanes (National Weather Service 2016).

[7] No contributor or date was listed in this only-only source, so the article title is followed by the website. Sources of the same makeup are cited in the same way.

It was not exactly the strength of the storm that imperilled New Orleans, but the weakness of local infrastructure by comparison. Extreme storm surge[8] placed pressure on the shoddy flood prevention system, causing breaks and overtoppings in many areas around the city. It was the widespread flooding, rather than just the damage from wind or rain, that caused catastrophic damage around the city. Drowning was responsible for 40% of Katrina-related deaths in New Orleans, and flooding caused half of property damage in the city (Brunkard 2005, 1; Amadeo 2019). While the storm did produce massive surges, it was not nature's sheer power that put the city underwater. The failure of the flood prevention system was caused by years of poor planning and neglect on the part of the various public entities. The system failed so badly that the American Society of Civil Engineers conducted an independent report in 2007 to investigate, finding that, "The levees and floodwalls breached because of a combination of unfortunate choices and decisions, made over many years, at almost all levels of responsibility," (The American Society of Civil Engineers 2007, v).

Examining the situation superficially reveals a lack of knowledge on the part of local and federal officials, as well as poor planning and maintenance by their engineers. As local activist Sandy Rosenthal put it, "The surge exposed engineering mistakes in the levees and floodwalls," (Zimmermann 2015). However, these "mistakes" were anything but accidental. Looking deeper into Katrina's destructive effects reveals legacies of colonialism which turned a bad storm into one of the nation's largest modern traumas. The largest local infrastructural issues were rooted in racist planning histories, and dependence on state funds in the city's history as a colony. While neocolonial violence can usually be hidden under carefully crafted popular narratives, the immense destruction following hurricane Katrina laid out everything at once on a global stage, making these realities impossible to ignore.

---

[8] Storm surge is the rise in sea level caused by a storm above the normal tide. It is essentially the water pushed on land due to the pressure of the storm. Storm surge is problematic in a number of ways. It goes against the normal flow of rivers out to the sea, raises pressure on local infrastructure due to a sheer increase in amount of water, and can send salt water from the Gulf into brackish and freshwater ecosystems (National Ocean Service 2016).

The Aftermath

One account described New Orleans in the wake of Katrina as looking as though a bomb went off (Bonfiglio 2012). What was once a vast network of historic buildings and various cultural groups became, "brown and gray and there was no green to be seen," (Bonfiglio 2012). The confusion was immense. Many people felt truly blindsided. Former mayor Marc H. Morial described the feeling as such: "In truth, words cannot describe the utter disbelief and heartache that I still feel," (Bullard and Wright 2009, xv) Hurricane season is usually filled with unpredictability, but this was no usual aftermath.

In the first place, it was incredibly difficult to assess the damage. With phone service widely disconnected, and the technologies of today not available to the public, communicating to those in the city relied largely on scant radio connection. To put it in context, Facebook at the time was only available to select college students, and iPhones did not exist (Phillips 2007; Farber 2014). Cellular technology was nowhere near what it is today, and the nearly 1,000 cell sites damaged cut off most major lines of contact. "Millions of telephone calls simply have not been able to get through," estimated the Director of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the following weeks, and only two AM and two FM broadcast radio stations of the original 41 were operable (Committee on Energy & Commerce United States House of Representatives 2007, 3). A briefing released on September 7, written by the same DHS official, described the consequence of the lack of communication:

> As I am sure you are aware, most of the communications industry sustained tremendous damage to their facilities in the affected area, and the damage has had a significant impact. The damage to the communications infrastructure hampered the rescue operations of emergency responders. Relief efforts and survivors are still struggling with the effects of the hurricane. Survivors lack information about relief efforts. People displaced from their homes do not have the means to contact their loved ones to let them know they are safe. And of course, survivors remaining in the affected area lack a reliable means of contacting the authorities and getting help in life threatening situations (Committee on Energy & Commerce United States House of Representatives 2007, 2).

For those inside and outside of the city, it was hard to say exactly what was happening. The lack of communication available caused widespread confusion and misinformation. Although the death toll ended up nearing around 1,800, then mayor Ray Nagin estimated 10,000 people had died. FEMA ordered 25,000 body bags to the regional morgue (O'Neill 2005). As late as November 21, the official death toll was still 500 below the current estimated amount, with more than 6,000 reported missing and unaccounted for (Johnson 2005). There was much uncertainty in the city, and it did not seem like everyone was rushing to help solve it.

Adding to the chaos was the painfully slow federal response and often contradictory reports at the various levels of government, leaving Americans with a lack of 'official' news as to what was occurring in the city and how to proceed themselves. The House of Representatives remarked the next year on the severity of the "red tape and general confusion over mission assignments, deployments, and command structure," of government agencies at the time (Bipartisan Committee to Investigatethe Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina

2006, 269). Locally, Mayor Nagin refused to order a mandatory evacuation of the city until the last minute, despite Governor Kathleen Blano calling for a state of emergency. The move reportedly came from a fear retaliation from tourist businesses, who would have to close under a mandatory evacuation. His decision imperilled citizens, many of whom could not leave without the help of transportation provided under a mandatory evacuation that is not present in a voluntary one.

In addition to his greatly exaggerated death toll prediction, Nagin has been criticized for saying the wrong thing and making undue promises. A major example is his "misleading mixed message" that if residents did not evacuate, "we will take care of you," (Brinkley 2006, 94). This pledge was not accomplished when his backup plan became the main plan, and residents crammed into the ill-equipped local football stadium, the Superdome. The stadium's 15,000-20,000 residents faced nightmare conditions, as the 'Dome' quickly flooded and ran out of food (Brinkley 2006, 94, 401). Finally, Nagin was indicted on 20 counts of bribery in 2014, stretching from his pre- to post-Katrina terms, landing bribes in exchange for a total of $5 million in city contracts (Smith and Hackney 2014). Nagin's clumsy speeches, poor planning, and blatant corruption demonstrated how he was an inadequate leader, worsen the experiences of citizens during an acute trauma.

Kathleen Blanco was the governor of Louisiana at the time. She was credited for doing some positive things, like declaring a timely state of emergency, facilitating traffic adjustments to aid with evacuation gridlock, and encouraging residents to be proactive about convincing their neighbors to leave the city (Brinkley 2006). However, she has been criticized for communicating Louisiana's needs poorly to Washington, filing bureaucratic forms instead of placing urgent phone calls, and failing to adequately specify the aid that would be necessary to get people out of the city and help those who stayed.

The various federal agencies involved also largely contributed to the confusion. On the day the storm made landfall, 28 official reports of breaches, breaks, and other failures were made, mostly by the DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Many of the reports conflicted with each other, and even contradicted news statements, saying “aerial surveys in New Orleans are far more serious than media reports are currently reflecting," (“Timeline: Who Knew When the Levees Broke,” NPR, 2006). The federal agency that received the most criticism after the storm was FEMA. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, FEMA, “urged all fire and emergency services departments *not to respond* to counties and states affected by Hurricane Katrina without being requested and lawfully dispatched by state and local authorities,” greatly slowing down rescue and relief efforts (FEMA 2005). Reports of FEMA diverting supplies, denying manpower, and interfering with private entities’ plans to evacuate citizens angered residents and the national public (Shane and Lipton 2005; Herbert 2005).

There were also reports of corruption throughout the agency, such as using funds for Katrina survivors for hotel stays and strip club visits. In one report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), an “independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress” as a "congressional watchdog," the agency found widespread misallocation of FEMA funds (“About GAO,” U.S. Government Accountability Office). GAO estimated that the, “range of improper and potentially fraudulent payments is from $600 million to $1.4 billion,” (Kutz and Ryan 2006, ii):

> FEMA improperly paid individuals twice for their lodging--paying their hotels and rental assistance at the same time. For example, at the same time that FEMA paid $8,000 for an individual to stay in California hotels, this individual also received three rental assistance payments for both hurricane disasters. Finally, we found that FEMA could not establish that 750 debit cards worth $1.5 million went to hurricane Katrina victims. We also found debit cards that were used for a Caribbean vacation, professional football tickets, and adult entertainment (Kutz and Ryan 2006, ii).

Corruption aside, FEMA’s director Michael Brown resigned after being widely criticized for having, “virtually no experience in handling disasters,” leaving in the midst of relief efforts and just two weeks after the storm (Spencer 2005 ;King and Malveaux 2005). Adding to the controversy, Brown spread gossip about the Executive that exposed the unethical handling of the situation by the President. He claimed the Bush administration acted differently in Louisiana than the other Gulf States facing relief efforts because Governor Blanco was a woman and his administration wanted to “rub her nose in it,” creating much controversy and contempt from the executive office (King and Malveaux 2005). Overall, the lack of communication between mid-level governmental entities, coupled with their entirely inadequate relief efforts, imperilled many across New Orleans.

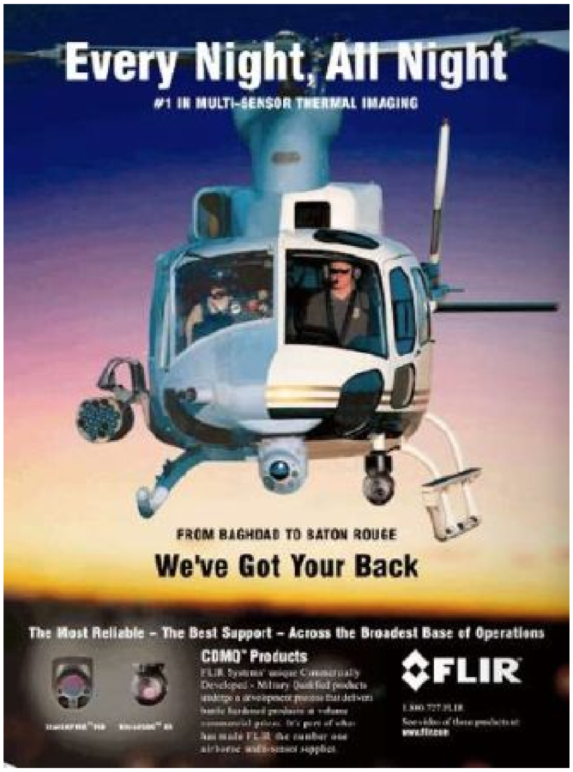
As far as the executive branch, George Bush played a large role in perpetuating the destruction of the city. The day after the storm, Bush was in San Diego celebrating VJ Day, a holiday marking Imperial Japan’s surrender which effectively ended World War II. Preoccupied with using the celebration as a platform to defend his choices in Iraq, the then President had hardly realized the situation in the Gulf South. He simply urged residents to postpone their returns home until emergency responders could attend to the situation, revealing a complete lack of knowledge as to who was in the city and how large the problem was (Kucher and Baker 2005). After San Diego, he vacationed on his Texas ranch until returning to Washington on Wednesday afternoon, flying over the city in what one news outlet would call an "imperial act removed from the suffering of the people below," (Bumiller 2005). An announcement that the majority of the city was under water allegedly reached the President the night before, though Bush's office denies receiving any such news until the following day (Bumiller 2005).

Bush had only authorized aid from the federal government, the other US states, and foreign nations days after the storm had passed, greatly slowing already lethargic federal relief efforts. Once the aid was finally authorized, Bush hardly made use of it. A joint report by the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, a nonprofit government watchdog, and the Washington Post noted that, "allies offered $854 million in cash and in oil that was to be sold for cash (Solomon 2007, 1). But only $40 million has been used so far for disaster victims or reconstruction," by 2007 (Solomon 2007, 1). The administration made various efforts to cover up for their failures. For example, when a shipment of Italian medical supplies became been "spoiled in the elements" due to disuse, a State Department official wrote to a colleague telling them to get rid of the evidence: "'Tell them we blew it,'... But she hedged: 'The flip side is just to dispose of it and not come clean. I could be persuaded,'" (Solomon 2007, 2).

Unfortunately, as Kanye West stated at a post-disaster benefit telethon, "George Bush doesn't care about Black people," (Shockroc1 2006). In fact, the racial makeup of the city greatly affected public officials' treatment of the city after the storm. Due to the 66% Black population in the city, governmental reports often pushed narratives of violence towards 'thugs' and ‘looters,’ drawing upon pre-existing stereotypes of Black people and implicitly blaming them for the chaos in the city (Casselman 2015). Governor Blanco contributed to these violent narratives with her warning to resource-starved residents who remained in the city, or as she calls them, “hoodlums”:

> These troops are fresh back from Iraq. They are well-trained, experienced, battle-tested and under my orders to restore order in the streets. These are some of the 40,000 extra troops that I have demanded. They have M-16's, and they're locked and loaded. When hoodlums victimize and inflict suffering on people at their wit's end, they're taking away our limited resources, or whatever resources we have, to save babies, or save children and to save good people. I have one message for these hoodlums. These troops know how to shoot and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary, and I expect they will (“Military Due to Move Into New Orleans,” CNN.com).

Black residents were often characterized as looters and thieves when they searched for sustenance and water around the city, while their white neighbors were described as ‘looking for food.’ Blanco took this portrayal and ran with it, creating an ‘us versus them’ dynamic between starving (white) children and their supposedly violent (Black) neighbors. Her encouragement of the troops to “shoot and kill” was appalling, especially as on-the-ground law enforcement was later documented shooting and killing six residents fleeing to safety (Chappel 2016). Even worse, US Army officers were following her orders, describing, “their highly militarized response to the Katrina disaster as an attempt to ‘take back’ New Orleans from African-American ‘insurgencies,’” (Graham 2010, 25). The DHS representative for New Orleans was no different, going so far as to describe looters as “cockroaches” that “needed to be dealt with," (Brinkley 2009, 275). The majority of the New Orleans population was treated with distrust and contempt, rather than compassion and kindness, showing that much of the unwillingness to respond to the situation was based in racial prejudice.


Every Night, All Night
#1 IN MULTI-SENSOR THERMAL IMAGING
FROM BAGHDAD TO BATON ROUGE
We've Got Your Back
The Most Reliable – The Best Support – Across the Broadest Base of Operations
COMO™ Products
FLIR

Advertisement "for helicopter infra-red sensors symbolizing the blurring between the military's efforts to use high-tech surveillance and targeting to dominate colonized cities 'outside' the nation and the militarization of the police's 'urban operations' in pervasive 'low-intensity conflict' within domestic cities (Graham 2010, 26).

The devastation laid bare all the travesties of racist planning and unequal development that had plagued the city since its founding, wherein some neighborhoods (usually poor and Black) were completely devastated, and richer, whiter ones were left with significantly much less damage. The same discriminatory systems that fostered the devastation of some communities over others were only reinforced by the government spending and other aid money that came to the city. While, "the majority of federal spending in the aftermath of Katrina ($75 billion of the

$120.5 billion in total spending) went to emergency relief," there was still much work to be done after the initial crisis spending had finally been authorized (Gardner 2018).

Major infrastructural problems like the levee breaks, as well as tourist draws like the French Quarter, were some of the first places to receive aid money and begin rebuilding. However, "the far more demanding and drawn-out — and far less camera-ready — rebuilding and resilience efforts were, on the other hand, relatively underfunded," leaving some communities to essentially fend for themselves in the face of one of the greatest tragedies the city had ever seen (Gardner 2018). As more money rolled in, "a desire to preserve the historic and profitable French Quarter exacerbated the damage and destruction of the poorest neighborhoods of New Orleans," as funding was swept away from the city's poorest and Blackest in order to preserve future economic gain (Dyson 2006, 26). This illuminates the disaster recovery approach that the United States has traditionally utilized, in which, "resources for disaster recovery address short-term needs. But they very often fall short of alleviating long-term systemic crises—the ongoing, everyday disasters of hunger and poverty, for instance," (Bonfiglio 2012). This is despite the fact that these "systemic crises" are often exacerbated in the wake of disaster, and that making progress against them would help with community resilience.

Additionally, the funneling of aid away from residents who were spatially differentiated as undesirable was an example of the disaster capitalism which plagued the city after the storm. As Naomi Klein notes in her book on disaster capitalism:

> By the time Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, and the nexus of Republican politicians, think tanks, and land developers started talking about "clean sheets" and exciting opportunities, it was clear that this was now the preferred method of advancing corporate

> goals: using moments of collective trauma to engage in radical social and economic engineering (Klein 2007, 9).

Not only were politicians and businesses neglecting to aid certain populations based on their own racist views, but they exploited their trauma for personal financial gain. Even worse, they attempted to use increases in capital as a guise for wiping away the city's Black population. At a meeting called by Nagin of "forty of the city's most well connected leaders," he describes the conversation as, "an 'insensitive purge' in which the group offered 'their visions of a *new* New Orleans where mint juleps would once again be the drink of choice in a bleached, adult Disney World-like city," (Nagin quoted in Gatz 2015, 35). While official minutes of this meeting do not exist, attendee James Reiss publicly stated that, "those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically," (Cooper 2005). The alliships formed between business and government post-Katrina not only deflected resources away from residents, especially poor and Black residents, but purposefully attempted to oust them from their city. Now that the labor of New Orleans' Black population had been done, with the city's economy and culture largely having rested on their backs, the racial and class elite saw Katrina as an opportunity to oust the underclass from the city they created.

The handling of post-Katrina relief efforts reinforced the view of many New Orleanians that our city essentially functions as a colony of the United States. While as a major port city we are a beneficial economic center, we were reminded just how much our majority Black population does not matter in the eyes of the state and political elite beyond its productive potential. It is important to include the local political elite in the oppressive state system, despite their belonging to the city, as power is often, “passed from a whtie colonial ruling class to a new, often non-white ruling class… with the result that capitalist relations of production and the related social inequities remain untouched in the neocolonial regime,” ((Taylor 1996, 19). Because of this, the political elite reinforces control by the colonial power despite having loyalties to the city. Under this system, “the resemblance to traditional colonialism is strong… reducing the development of those regions to that of dependencies and allocating the members of minorities to specific roles in the social structure on the basis of objective cultural distinctions,” (Taylor 1996, 20).

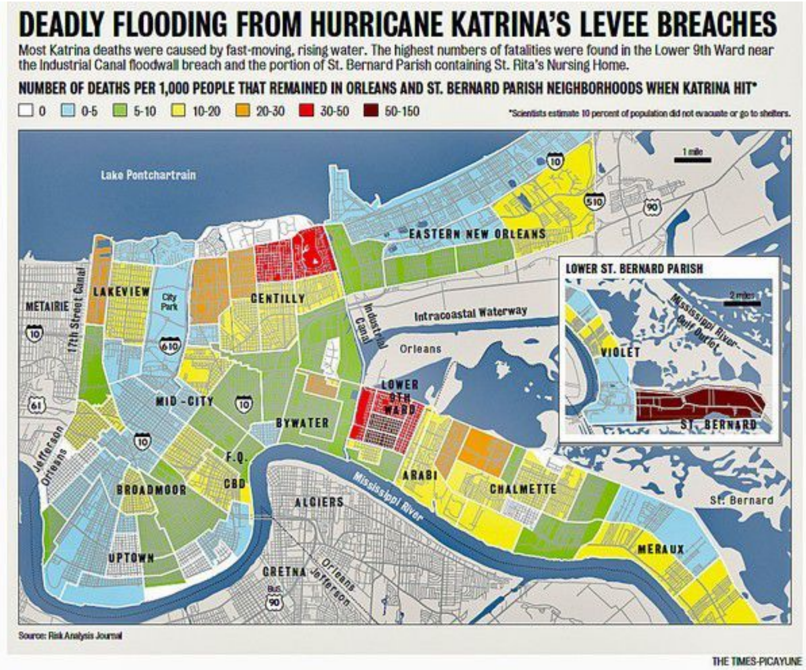
Additionally, a colonial system maintains the reliance of the colony on federal aid, despite funding being limited at best in peaceful times, and predictably absent in the face of disaster when massive spending is needed to recover. This rests upon what Mignolo would call “coloniality,” or a “logical structure of colonial domination,” that “enforces control, domination, and exploitation disguised in the language of salvation, progress, modernization, and being good for everyone,” (Mignolo 2005, 6). While the state could still excuse itself as being a figure of “salvation” due to aid money spent in New Orleans, the reality is that only a fraction of the funds that were pledged to our city actually made it here, and they came days too late. The way these meager funds were spent was hardly “good for everyone” or a marker of progress, as is evident in the treatment of the Black community in the city. Misguided actions of the political and economic elite therefore revived historical governmental distrust, present in the city since the days of continual colonial handoffs.

Adding to public official’s violent creation and handling of their constituents’ plight were the unfair media portrayals of New Orleans’ predominantly Black population. For example, coverage of looting in predominantly black areas post-Katrina echoed Blanco's biases, focusing on the supposed gang-related and immoral nature of the acts rather than the desperate search for food and water by stranded populations (Lee 2010). Many media sources also followed military narratives, attempting to paint the city as a site of urban warfare. One CNN report described how, "a fearful Friday has arrived in lawless New Orleans, with police snipers stationed on the roof of their precinct, trying to protect it from the armed thugs roaming seemingly at will through the flood-ravaged city." Describing the post-Katrina landscape in this way only contributed to the chaos, sanctioning state violence against Black residents by painting them as a violent 'other' in a wartorn, apocalyptic land.

Even well-meaning media lacked nuance in their approach to covering Katrina, painting New Orleans' Black residents as a monolith and reinforcing previously discussed ignorant narratives. Much media coverage, and thus the post-disaster aid projects it influenced,[9] focused on an East New Orleans neighborhood called the Lower Ninth Ward (LNW). The LNW was historically Black and working class, boasting the highest home-ownership rate in the city largely due to families' long tenures in the neighborhood and strong community relationships. The LNW faced significant flooding and property damage after two nearby levees breached and one was overtopped, causing the area to experience the most deaths of any in the city (Schleifstein 2009). However, the plight of the LNW was largely explained away by media as due to the fact that the LNW was "the poorest and lowest-lying neighborhood of the entire city," even though this was "by no means" true (Gratz 2015, 15). Stories like these largely erased the plight of the Black middle class, who was one of the hardest hit demographics and the slowest to return to its pre-Katrina numbers. Not only was it clear that many mass media outlets had no regard for Black lives in their treatment of Black people as violent and lazy individuals, but also in their lack of nuance in covering Black stories.

---

[9] Notable examples include the disaster tours and mission trips that frequented the Lower Ninth Ward, as well as the passive solar houses funded by Brad Pitt, which were concentrated in the neighborhood.


DEADLY FLOODING FROM HURRICANE KATRINA'S LEVEE BREACHES
Most Katrina deaths were caused by fast-moving, rising water. The highest numbers of fatalities were found in the Lower 9th Ward near the Industrial Canal floodwall breach and the portion of St. Bernard Parish containing St. Rita's Nursing Home.
NUMBER OF DEATHS PER 1,000 PEOPLE THAT REMAINED IN ORLEANS AND ST. BERNARD PARISH NEIGHBORHOODS WHEN KATRINA HIT*
0
0-5
5-10
10-20
20-30
30-50
50-150
*Scientists estimate 10 percent of population did not evacuate or go to shelters.
Lake Pontchartrain
1 mile
EASTERN NEW ORLEANS
LOWER ST. BERNARD PARISH
2 miles
Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet
VIOLET
ST. BERNARD
METAIRIE
17th Street Canal
LAKEVIEW
City Park
GENTILLY
Industrial Canal
Intracoastal Waterway
Orleans
LOWER 9TH WARD
MID-CITY
BYWATER
Jefferson
Orleans
F.Q.
CBD
BROADMOOR
ALGIERS
Mississippi River
ARABI
CHALMETTE
St. Bernard
MERAUX
UPTOWN
GRETNA
Orleans
Jefferson
Source: Risk Analysis Journal
THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Map depicting deaths following Katrina. The LNW was particularly hard hit, especially due to the two levee breaches and one overtopping in the neighborhood (Schleifstein 2009).

But middle-class dynamics are far less eye-catching than a suffering other, stranded on a roof as the water slowly rose. Many news outlets were far more focused on the trauma porn of dramatic shots of Black individuals, focusing on front-page shots rather than peoples' own stories of how their homes and livelihoods were affected. Additionally, trauma porn stories of Black people painted a scene of a dramatic, far-away other. This much better explained the federal mishandling of the situation to America's then 82% white population than stories of white residents would, as things 'like that' are 'not supposed to happen here.' Media approaches to covering the story largely reinforced colonial dynamics, attempting to paint the tragedy as belonging to the distant ‘third-world’ other so as to not undermine popular narratives of the rights, privileges, and dignities afforded to US citizens.

As the federal response was slow to even begin addressing the disaster, news media largely took on the role of interpreting what had happened. Because of this, “a ‘decentered media’ emerged in the wake of Katrina whereby presence on the ground coupled with a lack of immediately available official interpretations imbued the news media with the authority to speak,” (Jones 2011, 3). This allowed the media to shape the narrative of what had happened and craft public perception of the best way to proceed. In other words, the media became responsible for, “the politics of deciding on action to alleviate the suffering of distant Others and of determining the form action should take,” (Jones 2011, 4). In alternative media accounts of New Orleans as a simultaneously suffering and violent, poor, Black city, which relied on violent and monolithic portrayals of the city’s majority Black population, the media helped underwrite the monumental governmental failure.

While these narratives did not reflect the way the entire American public felt, with many still criticizing both media and governmental ethics, 54% of Americans approved of Bush’s response to the disaster in the first several days after (Roberts 2005). Overall, harsh inadequate media portrayals of the situation, inefficient aid ‘efforts,’ and a skewed public perception of the character of individual New Orleanians had the effect of disillusionment on the population. One musician based out of the Treme neighborhood discussed this feeling of exclusion from the state after the storm, saying,

> I was sincerely hoping nobody had never asked me to say the *Pledge of Allegiance* or play *God Bless America* or none of those dumb ass songs again, because I’m never gonna

> play it, because I don't feel like an American citizen. I know I'm not an American citizen in the eyes of the power that be (2016, "Faubourg Treme").[10]

And Andrews has every right to feel this way. Everything he grew up on was, as he repeated many times, "gone," and he lived in a FEMA trailer for almost two years, not receiving any meaningful aid from the agency to help bring his home back. Andrews does not feel like an American citizen because he has not been treated like one, especially when he and his neighborhood needed it most. Why should he play these songs hailing America when America is not for him? Why should he value his American identity when it was the people of his city and his neighborhood who helped themselves while the government in many ways ignored them?

There are many reasons the narrator of this documentary, along with many of its subjects, refer to New Orleans as "my city." In many ways and especially in the most ignored neighborhoods, New Orleanians feel like we had to help ourselves, like the government was absent during our city's greatest tragedy of this lifetime. "New Orleans: Proud to swim home," became a popular post-Katrina call. It frames disaster recovery as something we did alone, together only with our friends and neighbors. Many in the city feel that we should not have a need to receive scores of volunteers to build houses for four, five, eleven years later, and that if the government had done its job we would not be in that position. But for all the time our city remained saturated and in shambles, we did not abandon it.

Community organizing after the storm was difficult. As late as July of 2006, 254,502 had not yet returned from their homes, representing over half of the New Orleans population (Plyer 2016). Those that remained first had to secure their own means of survival before they could aid others or begin the hard work of rebuilding their communities. But despite the difficulty of the task, many residents stepped in to help, creating a formidable force of social change in the city in addition to increasing quality of life. In her article on post-Katrina social movements, Rachel E. Luft notes that the grassroots movement immediately after Katrina, “rejects disaster exceptionalism and seeks to recontextualize threat, hazard, and trauma in the daily conditions faced by disenfranchised groups,” (Luft 2009, 500). She says this first happened through large groups orienting themselves toward hurricane response, after which smaller groups addressed “specific areas of chronic social problems that interact with disaster (Luft 2009, 501). One example of this is the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans, who served 51,178,222 pounds of food representing 47,815,000 in the post-Katrina period (National Volunteer Service, “The Power of Help and Hope After Katrina by the Numbers: Volunteers in the Gulf”). By donating food Second Harvest added to the immediate safety and wellbeing of people in the city, while also addressing historical disparities in food access which were only made worse by the storm. As demonstrated by Second Harvest, community-led aid took on multiple tasks at once. Communities attempted to attack social ills while the city’s infrastructure had been leveled, building more equal and resilient systems rather than waiting for the old ones to be rebuilt by the government and its allied outside funding.

---

[10] Source cited with date and title because it is a film.

Overall, the pain and destruction after Katrina was largely caused by colonial legacies in New Orleans. Unequal spending both on a federal and local level caused the levees to break and overtop, perceptions of the population caused an inefficient and ineffective governmental response, and a historical denial of resources put the population who had to stay behind in dangerous conditions. While resource sovereignty would better prepare a community to take care of itself, especially in the face of disaster when a resilient system is essential, a colonial logic makes a place reliant on the colonial caretaker. In other words, there is a lack of sovereignty designed into the US system that is imposed upon places the state views as its colonies. Both the rhetoric of media and the actions of the federal government in the aftermath of Katrina made it clear that New Orleanians had never been extended the same rights as other important US cities: "Indeed, this abandonment [by the US government in the aftermath of Katrina]... 'fits poorly' into the narrative of the universal privilege of US citizenship," and, in fact, "what hurricane Katrina made evident in August 2005 was that the periphery persists in the heart of the metropole," (Saldaña-Portillo 2007, 504). Because of this, locals were forced to create their own means for survival after Katrina. When the government largely refused to give aid beyond heavily publicized infrastructural failures and projects which would create future economic gain, people-to-people actions are what constituted the largest recoveries in the aftermath of the storm.

New Possibilities Through Food

An odd sort of silver lining to this horrible, life-altering disaster was the opportunity for a clean slate. Amid the destruction of floodwalls and historic buildings, less-flashy, more life-giving and culturally significant resources had also been wiped out: "There were no grocery stores, food vendors or gardens. Fishers were lost, their boats wrecked and farmers had no crops," (Bonfiglio 2012). When most of our businesses had been totally levelled by the storm, we had no choice but to start over. Governmental ignorance of the situation provided New Orleanians the unique opportunity to step out from under the weight of the colonial matrix. In New Orleans, where food is a central and almost religious part of daily cultural life, the reinvigoration of food systems was a logical first move in this progression. The few restaurants that remained open were seen as, “a beacon of hope," and eating traditional dishes were described as being “affirming because it meant that all had not been lost," (Bonfiglio 2012). Food becoming accessible again not only represented an important step towards being able to inhabit the city again, but was a sign that the culture of New Orleans was still alive, a beating heart buried somewhere under feet of water and rubble.

Many of the most successful efforts at the reinvigoration of the food system aimed at establishing food sovereignty. Poppy Tooker, a New Orleans food historian and prominent public figure, “talked with regional farmers and vendors about supplying fresh food to restaurant chefs rather than rely only on national food distributors,” (Bonfiglio 2012). She was instrumental in helping local businesses reopen, using her money and influence to reorganize a system that had lost some of its resilience in an increasingly globalized network. Additionally, groups like the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition (LNWFAC) operated on a more neighborhood-specific scale (Passidomo 2013, 86). Based out of one of the hardest hit areas in New Orleans, the organization focused equally on establishing food sovereignty networks in the LNW and reclaiming the post-disaster efforts at neighborhood rebuilding from exogenous white groups. LNWFAC’s s “food action plan” sought to flip vacant lots into community gardens that doubled as gathering spaces. Demonstrating the political power of food, the group procured sources of healthy, readily available food in a historic food desert, provided a sense of agency to residents in the neighborhood, and established spaces to organize this renewed political energy. It is important to note the political activity specific to poorer and Blacker neighborhoods, which after facing the most destruction during the storm had the most to gain. New Orleans’ Black residents were in many ways spearheading the solidarity movement, organizations in the Lower

Ninth Ward achieving great success (Gratz 2015, 14). Passidomo argues that “their efforts constitute a ‘political moment’ (Becher, 2012), which enacts substantive change through (1) mobilizing people who don’t consider themselves to be especially political; (2) developing inhabitants’ personal commitments and abilities to access power and; (3) changing the function, purpose, or interest of local institutions to better meet residents needs,” (Passidomo 2013, 231). In the creation of food sovereignty in their areas, residents became increasingly involved in the politics of their own space. Individuals like Tooker and groups like LNWFAC subverted colonial logics through their efforts. They sought to counter the unequal development that had increased the destruction of certain areas during the storm, both on a neighborhood and regional level, and restructured local foodways to foster long term resilience and justice.

Thanks to the help of driven residents, slowly but surely, the New Orleans foodscape began to reemerge, even if at first “some chefs used coolers for refrigerators,” and “café registers put the farmer's name on an envelope in order to pay for their food products,” (Bonfiglio 2012). These efforts not only represented an important sense of a culture that had not been lost, but allowed communities to remake corrupted national systems into less constraining, more empowering local ones. As “most of these efforts to re-establish a local food system have come from grassroots people,” New Orleans residents demonstrated how people-to-people solidarity can redefine historic systems of governmental control and oppression (Bonfiglio 2012).

While post-disaster solidarity has been documented in many places, the extreme unwillingness to give up the city represents something uniquely New Orleanian. For all his problems, Mayor Nagin described this process well:

> The city is unique in its structure, its history. But it's unique, more importantly, because of the people. And the people are ready to come back. As a matter of fact, some of the last extractions we're doing, people don't want to leave. They're saying, 'We're not giving up on our city.' This city will recover. And it will be a better, new New Orleans (Dakss 2005).

The people of New Orleans are strong. They are as resilient as they are stubborn, as caring and compassionate as they are rebellious and free. With this project, the story I want to tell is of the heart of the people of New Orleans. I have never been in a place so alive as New Orleans. I have never been in a place so unique. And while the stories of colonial violence and governmental oppression are central to our history, so is our passion and our drive and our lust for life. I want to add to the literature that changes the narratives we lost control of during Katrina. I want to show an agentive body that knows its worth and does not hesitate to put those feelings into words, actions, songs, and plates. After Katrina, the people of New Orleans are what saved the city. Their love for their complicated, difficult, beautiful place; their unyielding commitment to culture, community, and justice. Just as it is impossible to understand present-day New Orleans without understanding colonialism, Hurricane Katrina, and their enduring legacies, it is impossible to understand New Orleans without first knowing its people.

After Hurricane Katrina, the population of New Orleans largely took matters into their own hands, attempting community rebuilding projects when government entities did not adequately address the situation. In a place where many people feel far more responsible for the fate of the city than the applicable governmental entities, a locally sovereign model is an appropriate and increasingly socially acceptable model for governance. Food is a logical first step in attempts at sovereignty due to its importance in life in New Orleans, and its previous use as a community-building tool in the post-Katrina era. Now that food has been contextualized within its history of community uplift and solidarity, it is possible to examine its modern applications for community justice.

CHAPTER 2: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN NEW ORLEANS

Food, New Orleans, and Community Change

Long before Hurricane Katrina, food became the lifeline of New Orleans. Food has been closely tied to New Orleanian identity for hundreds of years, starting with the city's multi-cultural evolution by way of its thriving market ecosystem. Food sovereignty as a tool for community justice makes sense in New Orleans, due to its historical importance to life there and the success of recent organizations which tackle social justice through food. This chapter will both demonstrate food sovereingty's current applications within the city, and lay the groundwork for analyzing its potential to change the foodscape in the future. This will be done using primary source data from individual interviews of seven New Orleans food sovereignty practitioners. Participants' use of food in their work allows them to articulate their political selves.

Introducing the Participants

Being born and raised in New Orleans, I knew a little in advance about some of the organizations I interviewed. For instance, I had grown up going to the Tuesday farmers market up the street from my house. My mom and I would walk down on Tuesdays during the summer. She would get fresh vegetables for dinner and I would get a snowball, a New Orleans shaved ice delicacy, with natural flavors from local berries. Years later, it was here that I encountered Stacy, Morris, Cheryl, and Steven.[11] The mother of one of my good friends took me around the market and introduced me to the sellers she was closest with, which helped me to establish a connection and a sense of familiarity with the people I talked to. It was through my curiosity of the market -- this living, breathing food hub that had meant so much to me as a child -- that I got to talking to

---

[11] Steven is a pseudonym for one producer at the Tuesday market who wished to stay unnamed.

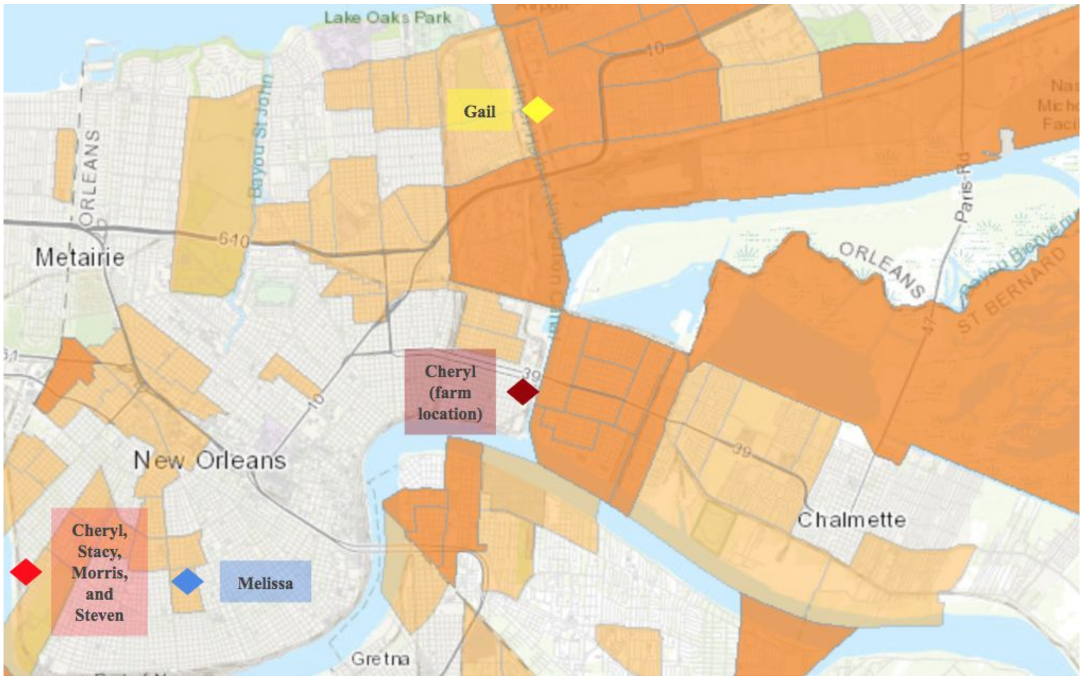
Richard McCarthy. An old friend of my uncle's, he had worked with my grandma during his long tenure as a director of the Crescent City Farmers Market Umbrella. My boyfriend's sister recommended I look into Melissa Martin's Mosquito Supper Club, whose restaurant is equidistant between my house and hers. Lastly, hoping to expand my range outside of Uptown New Orleans, I contacted Gail Womack, who I had written about in a previous paper about environmental justice after the storm.

For my first interviews, I went to the market an hour before close, when the foot traffic slows tremendously in the summer heat. In my time with the participants, I got to know more about their work, as well as their motivations. Stacy, who mainly sells fresh jams and milled grains, is carrying on a legacy left by her father along with the help of her brother. Family, along with the joy of being in the market space, is her main motivation. A white woman in her sixties, Stacy goes back and forth between her Baton Rouge home and the Tuesday market in Uptown New Orleans. Morris got into the business of selling cheese after he married his wife. A plot of land had been in her family since 1895, and it had always housed animals for personal consumption. The pair decided to make it into a business nine years ago. He sells his products in hopes of providing the public with a healthy option, as opposed to the "factory food" available in grocery stores. Morris is a seventy-one-year-old Black man from Mississippi, where he and his wife sell at three markets in addition to the market where we met. Lastly, I talked to Steven. A thirty-nine-year-old white man, Steven started farming after dropping out of a PhD program on the Sociology of Food. Now in his forties, Steven has a very different perspective on farming than when he first got into the business. While he used to feel like he belonged to a larger movement, as he has continued his practice, he decided collaboration with individuals who are interested in doing similar work at any given time is a better strategy. He sees farming as more of a lifestyle than an occupation, and thinks of it as admirable work. As a produce vendor, his wares also rotate with the seasons, but I took home a couple of squat, round eggplants. As my first three interviews, these helped introduce me to life in the market system, as well as the experiences of the people behind the market stalls.

That same day at the market, I met two women who run an urban farm, and agreed to meet them at their plot of land in the Bywater neighborhood the following week. It was there that I interviewed Cheryl, who started her farm in November 2017 with her wife Annie. Both are white women from the Northeast, and both in their late thirties. Annie is more experienced in the business management side, but Cheryl likes the science and everyday repetition of growing food, as well as the farm's potential as a community entity. She seeks to interact with the community as much as possible, and to share the bounty of their small urban farm with her neighbors. Their produce varies with the season, but at the time of our interview, the two were known for their microgreens and tiny, "fairytale" eggplants.

The three remaining participants are not producers, but I was interested in the way they engage with food sovereignty in their own ways. Gail Womack, a Black woman in her mid-sixties, started her food pantry 21 years ago. A self-proclaimed "woman of God," Gail runs her pantry without judgement and seeks to serve her community to the best of her ability. Having been in a situation where she had to rely on food pantries in the past, Gail knows how important that source of sustenance can be in the life of an individual. She performs her service with dignity and grace, hoping to provide people with a sense of hope and agency when they are experiencing hard times. As a restauranteur, Melissa Martin created a new model of eatery wherein the food available dictates the menu. A white woman in her early 40's, Melissa is from the small Cajun town of Chauvin, Louisiana (Willis 2016). Her main goal is to support the community of local producers in order to keep the local food economy intact, with her grandmother's recipes as the vehicle. Melissa's work is profoundly local. She seeks to defend the culture of South Louisiana, which is losing its grip to globalization and modern development. Richard McCarthy deals with similar questions of cultural specificity and change in his work as the Executive Director of Slow Food USA. He is a fifty-four-year-old white man. A native New Orleanian, Richard co-founded the Crescent City Farmers Market Umbrella in 1995, whose largest market is the Tuesday market where I met Cheryl, Stacy, Morris, and Steven. Intrigued by the cultural peculiarities of our post-colonial city, Richard sought to turn private space into public according to the European tradition that governs our city. With a corporate parking lot as the initial site, the Market Umbrella drew on New Orleans' colonial traditions of a thriving market economy and vibrant public culture as a way of creating social justice in the city.

Regardless of their motivations and wares, each of the four producers at the farmers markets disrupts the national food chain by providing something more local. According to the food sovereignty standards proposed in the Declaration of Nyéléni, the four participants craft healthy and culturally appropriate food while using sustainable methods. They "put the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations," as much as possible, and some even seek to offer new alternatives to the dominant model (Via Campesina 2007). They take part in a process which Richard describes as, "possibly the lightest expression of food sovereignty, in that consumers and producers are coming together almost like co-producers to regain some control over food in their lives." As the director of the market, it is fair to say that Richard takes part in this process as well, as he helped envision and enact the market system in which the producers participate. By putting the needs of the community of producers over everything with her restaurant, Melissa also abides by the codes set forth in Nyéléni. Lastly, by disrupting patterns of discrimination in the food system that benefit markets and corporations, Gail takes part in local food sovereignty by delivering food to her low-income neighbors through her pantry.


Lake Oaks Park
Gail
Bayou St John
ORLEANS
Metairie
610
10
Cheryl (farm location)
New Orleans
Cheryl, Stacy, Morris, and Steven
Melissa
Gretna
Chalmette
ORLEANS
ST BERNARD
Paris Rd
39

Map depicting participant's locations around the city in relation to food access. Orange areas are low-income designated census tracts. The lighter orange does not have a grocery store within 0.5 miles (ERS and USDA, "Food Access Research Atlas).

Talking with the project participants made it clear to me that there are many sides to food sovereignty. However, the biggest thread in all of my research was *community*: the relationships I have with the people around me that helped tie me to the participants; the relationships the participants already had with each other; their relationship to the community of their recipients; their relationships to the broader community. The ability of food to weave through communities and bind people together in certain relationship structures is of key importance in New Orleans. I found that providing nourishment and support to those around them was central to the mission of everyone I interviewed. However, due to the constraints of our neoliberal capitalist economy, most of the participants have to compromise on either their ideological goals or the ability of the community to take part in their vision. This lack in one area or another of their ideal business model produces contempt, sometimes towards certain groups in the community for not participating, or otherwise towards the government for precluding that support. Participants sometimes feel alone or unseen, as while they are supported by vocal subcommunities, they rarely find city-wide recognition. Despite facing serious obstacles along the way, all of the participants find ways to continue on with their work. Their stories demonstrate that understanding how relationships function within and without communities is essential to understanding food sovereignty efforts in New Orleans.

Community Relationships

Overall, the main goal I found in common between my research participants was uplifting the community. For Mosquito Supper Club (MSC), that meant, “first and foremost, the goal is to bring together a community of people’s work on a plate.” She aims to support the community of fishermen, growers, farmers and millers in Cajun Louisiana. Her second goal: “to try our best.” MSC founder Melissa Martin sees her “extreme socialist restaurant” as a “very expensive art project,” a place where she can take creative liberties in order to tell the story of being Cajun, and to shine a light on the culinary traditions of South Louisiana. Melissa works closely with local producers to craft family-style meals, served at a community table in an old New Orleans home. “We sort of threw the restaurant model against the wall,” she says, in order to bring diners together in a way that benefits the community. Through her hard work and dedication, Melissa manages to pay all her employees $15 an hour at minimum, limit food waste by serving a set menu, and compost and recycle as much as possible, all while "religiously" supporting local producers (Mosquito Supper Club, "Our Impact"). Part restaurant, part social collective, MSC allows Melissa to surround herself with food while supporting her community.

Another organization that seeks to uplift a certain community is Love in Action Outreach (LiA). As a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit, the food pantry solely exists to serve the community. Gail wants her pantry to be run with the heart of ministry, not the mind of business, saying, "I wanted Love in Action Outreach to be different. I wanted it to be a place where like a beacon light in the community where you can come and you wouldn't be judged by anything. The only thing that we're here to do is serve you." During the month that I talked to her, Gail's organization served 2,400 households, which represented nearly 6,000 individuals. Her impact on the community is undeniable, with hundreds lining up in anticipation every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Like MSC, LiA is a different model of food pantry. LiA was the very first client-choice pantry set up in the city. For Gail, this means that,

> A person didn't just drive up and pick up a box and go home, and have corned beef hash and black-eyed peas and something else and the kids ate none of that. Now when you come in you can choose. You can make that choice so that puts power back into your hands to choose what would be most beneficial for your family.

The client-choice model allows food-insecure people to better care for their families while adding to their sense of agency, a feeling which can be hard to come by when you are left without means and forced into the downward spiral of poverty. Additionally, this notion of culturally relevant food is a building block of sovereignty as outlined by the Declaration of Nyéléni (Via Campesina 2007). While getting people access to food in general can be crucial for food security, the agentive and elective aspect to the client-choice model takes steps towards sovereignty. With her pantry Gail provides an important basic need to the community while putting power, even in a seemingly small decision, back into the hands of the people.

Cheryl of River Queen Greens (RQG) also sees the community as being central to the mission of her business. “Since we’re here and we have a presence in the community,” she explained, “I think it’s important to interact with the community… I think it’s just important to share.” But sharing the bounty of the farm with her neighbors is only part of the equation. Following their upcoming move to a larger piece of land in another part of the city, RQG hopes to use that site as a community gathering space. The owners want to offer up parts of the green space to people who do work in the community. This work does not necessarily have to do with farming, but is rather for anyone hoping to “improve any of the many ills of that they might see in society.” Their vision of using private land as a semi-public community space is an important reach at sovereignty in more areas than just food. Like LiA and MSC, the women behind RQG do not just farm. They take part in a new breed of farms which function as both profit centers and spaces of community wellbeing.

As far as community wellbeing at the market site, many of the participants feel immense support from the market community. Cheryl thinks the market does a good job of trying to attract a broader customer base, referencing the programs that match SNAP dollars and attract breastfeeding mothers to the markets. And the producers’ opinions are important, because their support of the market and each other is crucial to keeping the system going. In talking about the other sellers around her, Stacy said, “we help each other. From the minute we get here we help each other set up their tent.. Whatever it takes to make that day happen.” Morris conveyed that he feels support from his neighbors at the market, and that he prefers to shop there because the food is fresher and less processed than what he can find at most stores. He buys most of his vegetables from the stall next door, and his bread from the tent across the way. “I love my bread,” he said with a smile.

Going beyond just the Tuesday market, Cheryl feels support from the network of people involved in agriculture at a variety of levels that she has encountered since starting her business.

> I think there’s a really great network here. We’ve met a lot of great growers, even on a backyard scale, or people who are thinking more about those supports like compost. We’ve become friends with a lot of other growers here and they’re the first people that I turn to to ask questions. Everyone’s very generous with their knowledge, which I think is so important in making this an actual thriving community and a possible career choice. We’ve been really pleased and surprised, actually.

She feels that the South Louisiana agricultural scene has thrived in the past five to ten years, and is encouraged by the excitement. In addition to Cheryl, scholars have noted this boom in activity, saying, “following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, civic participation in New Orleans bloomed, including a rise in urban gardening activities throughout the city,” (Kato, et al. 2014, 1833). In fact, connecting the agricultural excitement perceived by Cheryl to increased efforts at self-determination is important in contextualizing the post-disaster landscape of Katrina. It becomes especially pertinent when thinking about New Orleans as an area where, “new public awareness of food insecurity in the city helped to facilitate a political and social climate in which the framing of urban gardening as a safeguard could garner stronger support than before," (Kato, et al. 2014, 1835). As discussions of the future of food continue, the energy in the small farm community will be essential to maintaining the integrity of local food systems.

Complicating the picture of food as an agent of social change are the significant demographic shifts in the rebuilding phase post-Katrina. In this time, "the majority of urban gardening projects… are led by individuals who are not originally from New Orleans or from the neighbourhood where the project takes place," with a great number of project planners being white and well-educated (Kato, et al. 2014, 1835). Being white, well-educated, and from elsewhere, Cheryl and Annie are of this cohort. However, their efforts to build dialogue between their farm and the community around them separates them from many such urban gardens, whose lack of self-awareness often leads to their inability to establish community support (Guthman 2008, 440). Such white spaces of saviorism often come with, "the intention to do good on behalf of those deemed other," which "has the markings of colonial projects, in that it seeks to improve the other while eliding the historical developments that produced these material and cultural distinctions in the first place," (Guthman 2008, 436). Keeping these colonial dynamics of power at the front of their minds, RQG acts as an allied community entity, making sure to both "share the bounty" of their production and to allow use of the space for meaningful community dialogue and social gathering.

As far as community support of the participants, many at the farmers market feel most backed by their customers. Morris feels that his customers are his ultimate supporters, and many of them are repeats every week. While I was talking to him, one man stopped by just to say hi. Cheryl shared the same appreciation for her consumers, who she said are "pretty enthusiastic, which is great." Stacy makes sure all her customers feel appreciated. To everyone that walks up to her booth, she says, "thank you for supporting our market today, we appreciate your business." In the small-market experience, it is no wonder the customers are so excited. Coming face to face with their clients means producers can form close relationships with their customers. Like Richard said, this means the two can become like "co-producers." It is this dynamic that allows Morris to stock more of his 'Southern Gentleman' soap, his best seller, as people repeatedly express their interest in it when they come to his stall. This relationship building quality also extends beyond the market. Stacy revealed to me how Mrs. Holly, my friend's mom who took me around the market, helped her and her husband when they were both in Baton Rouge together after the storm. Taking into account all that markets are up against, these social relationships become even more important. Social bonds have been proven to be a key factor in resilience, and the relationships that make up the backbone of this market system are no exception (Zautra 2014, 2). Steven has seen this process of community support unfold since he started selling:

> I definitely have swayed more to the power of the consumer to change the local food system than the government. The more people that come to a farmers market, the more farmers, and I've seen it happen over the past ten years when there's ebbs and flows. People who have the power to come to a market and buy a product, and it's not going to be immediate but over time there's going to be more farmers.

The social relationships the undergird the market system have a profound effect on the ability of markets to continue functioning. When customers and farmers connect, they create a system of mutual support which helps reinforce local food traditions and social relationships.

The producer-consumer proximity that the system provides creates a social dynamic that has largely been removed from the dominant foodscape in America, something which Richard was cognizant of in his founding of the market: “the thing that we were interested in was the potential for civil society to rub shoulders with political power and economic power, and that we could build some social cohesion and a social space where people could imagine our lives being different.” He says this social cohesion is especially exciting in New Orleans, where our European colonialism has created much greater comfort with public space as a place of social interaction than in other parts of the country. It is especially exciting given the history of markets as the main site of these social interactions, and the revival of a tradition so important to the city with the explosion of the CCFMU.

The city’s use of public space for social change is pertinent considering Friedmann views a redefining of ‘the public’ as essential in toppling the latest food regime. She says we are entering, “a new political era characterized by a struggle over the relative weight of private, public, and self-organized institutions. The key issue, therefore, for food and agriculture, and for reshaping governance at allscales, is democracy. That implies rethinking the meaning of *public*,” (Friedmann 2005, 259). The market system, according to Richard, can be a first step in this process, as it allows people who would not normally be in contact to navigate the space together. He sees the markets as a place where, “Black farmers from Mississippi can rub shoulders with white farmers, and also could rub shoulders with Latino farmers from Independence, Louisiana, and rub shoulders with urban high end chefs who are shopping there.” This “intentional aggregation of people who otherwise would never know or trust or like one another” allows for trust-building across communities, in addition to discussion and formation of new ideas.

Melissa taps into this history of social cohesion with her restaurant on a smaller scale. In her Supper Club, which is fundamentally Louisianian, she has diners sit together at a communal table. “I wanted people to talk to each other,” she expressed. “I like bringing people together. And I like being able to put all those ingredients on their plates.” There is no better way to serve the food of Louisiana than at a table full of chatting and laughing, and it is clear that her model works from the rave reviews. Just as the farmers at the market feel great support from their customers, Melissa also says her diners are her biggest fans. She feels encouragement from “people who have known me for a really long time and understand that I am doing what I say I'm doing right. You know, people who have come in from around the country who have dined. From our guests.” The ability of her restaurant to pull people from a variety of backgrounds to one table shows the power of Cajun cooking, and the heart Melissa has put into her work.

Mosquito Supper Club is inside a traditional New Orleans house, adding to the sense of community imbued in the restaurant’s values (Mosquito Supper Club “Mosquito Supper Club”).

However, with every vision comes people who cannot see it. As far as the reasons for a lack of community support of local food, many participants blamed miseducation. According to Melissa, “There's a whole educated class of people that understand food, but there's a whole class of people that just don't get it.” She described to me the frustration she often feels when her partner, a former English professor turned lawyer, brings home milk and meat in bulk from Costco. The products he brings home are often from far away, or filled with additives and chemicals to help them maintain appearance and flavor throughout their extra-long shelf life. He calls her a xenophobe for not wanting food from far away, but she says she cannot support a system full of flaws and inequality: “As I get older and I see what systems are failing so bad, and the way people see themselves, and the way they buy groceries and SNAP. I just can't understand [why people would support this system].”

Melissa perceives this educational difference in her parents as well. She says her parents have never bought a fish in her whole life. As fishermen they pull their living out of the water, but, “they're still the same people that when I bring local milk they're scared. They can't make the connection it. I mean, it just totally evades me.” Despite being tied so intimately with one form of local production, they insist on eating the mass-produced version of another. Melissa’s anecdotes about her rural, producer parents and her urban, professional managerial partner display that this ‘miseducation’ appears in people from a variety of different positionalities.

While Melissa’s stories point to distrust of local food systems as opposed to the heavy processing of national schemes, Morris cites a different sort of miseducation as the reason more people do not support local food. He sees contemporary American food culture as being “wrapped around convenience -- fast, quick, in a hurry.” He thinks because people are so unwilling to compromise on convenience, or “what we *think* is convenient,” that people outside of the usual cohort do not show up to markets. Because of this, he feels the markets do not touch a wide enough audience, but not for lack of trying.

> What we have is top-quality, not convenient… it’s a big disconnect culturally… the market moves around different days of the week to touch different neighborhoods, but still within those neighborhoods, not everyone comes to the market to shop for whatever reason. I just don’t see it changing.

While he believes greater education about the health benefits of local food would help the problem, he does not see it as a total solution. Guthman would take what Morris observes and turn it into a question of not what the people cannot see in the market, but what the market cannot see in the people who do not come. Perhaps, “more could be done to understand how neighborhood residents react to such projects, yet in ways that do not damn one group’s eating practices nor evangelize about another’s,” (Guthman 2008, 433). She also mentions how one of her students participating in community field work “concluded that the insistence on alternatives may well reinforce a sense of exclusion and stigmatization – as if residents of food deserts are not even deserving of what others take for granted: a Safeway,” (Guthman 2008, 441). This conclusion points to the fact that without consulting a community, simply placing a market in a location may not actually be the best way to contribute to the neighborhood food scheme. In fact, by removing agency from those who live there, it risks negatively affecting sovereignty. While Morris’s concerns about a culture of convenience are valid, they prompt deeper questions as to why people are not connecting with the market space.

As for how to fix the problem, Melissa calls for a “reprogramming of the mind.” She thinks we have to be “really honest about the way to grow our food, and have to sort of get on board” with producing things more ethically and on smaller scales. She says she sees this happening more and more with the younger generation, “but then there's the older generation. They're tired you know. They are doing things the way that they did, and they continue to do it because they’re still just trying to pay their bills.” Again, the bottom line comes to bear on ideology. While older people are generally more stuck in their ways, perhaps they would be more inclined to change if they were not so pressed up against economic walls. Cheryl similarly sees a shift in attitude towards how we get our food: “I think people are becoming more aware of the footprint of food grown across the country, grown out of season… I think there’s a rising interest in seeing producers pop up in any given community, and we’re interested in being one of those producers.” She says she wants to be a part of a larger conversation that, “exposes some of the darkness behind the food system,” and through that process help people find ways to restructure and rethink food.

Steven, on the other hand, was very deliberate in expressing that education is only part of this issue. “People talk about how we need to educate people to eat better foods,” he remarked, “and I’m like, well, that’s a much bigger problem than, like, them not choosing the right food.” For him, it all ties back to inequality. Guthman takes a similar stance to the the sometimes “messianic” quest of food politics, saying,

> The mission of correcting eating practices is kept ideologically separate from the fact of US capitalist development, much of which is founded on the devaluation of racialized

> labor, most manifestly in the food and farming sectors, that made many who work(ed) in that sector dependent on cheap food (Guthman 2008, 433).

She notes that activist projects which do not shift their focus, “from the particular qualities of food and towards the injustices that underlie disparities in food access,” reflect a limited view of what is possible in the future of food (Guthman 2008, 442). If unequal capitalist development is what drives people towards certain food sources, no solution can be complete without a thorough interrogation of capitalism and its inherent inequalities.

Adding to this discussion are the tensions the participants felt between their ideological goals and their economic bottom line. Capitalism is structured both to produce inequalities and to prevent those in lower class standings from disrupting the ability of the rich to get richer. The maintenance of the status quo therefore precludes meaningful community work, which seeks to undermine these disparities. This is evident in the experience of the project participants, who all felt they had to make sacrifices in order to continue their inherently political work. These sacrifices either reduced business viability for the sake of political goals and maintaining the project’s original vision, or forced cuts to access and inclusion in order to continue performing the work in the first place.

The Community Versus the Bottom Line

While the goal of uplifting the community was a common one, the economic bottom line often got in the way. When asked what the goals of his organization were, Steven at the Tuesday market said,

> To make a living! I mean of course we have a philosophy that we want to adhere to, but, I mean, the goal of any business is to make a living… at the end of the day the goal is to maintain the business so that tomorrow we still have a business.

He says he does not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides on his land, and he does not exploit labor or use large machinery. Other than that, compromises sometimes have to be made in order to maintain his livelihood. His says his compromises on ideology as opposed to price are likely different from that of some of the other vendors, who use the market as a supplemental or retirement income rather than as their livelihood: “It’s their retirement income or their side income so your perspective about what’s going on, it’s very different.” Steven cannot make changes that might benefit his project vision but raise his prices because it represents his primary income. While he started out trying to closely adhere to his ideology, “whether you like it or not, you definitely become more hardened over time and less romantic about things.”

MSC makes compromises in the opposite direction as Steven, sometimes sacrificing price and accessibility instead of ideology for the sake of keeping her business afloat. Melissa appreciates the way she is able to support producers in her community, and represents a line of support in keeping the local food system going. However, this is an expensive task. “As an artist,” she described to me, “I run this restaurant the way I want to run it. I had to charge a very high price here. And so if you're a regular person, like, you would want to be able to enjoy this kind of thing, but you can't afford it.” She says she would never turn anyone away who could not afford it, “but the fact of the matter is that those people are never going to ask.” For Melissa, access has largely gone to the wayside in favor of upholding her community.

RQG is facing a similar issue. Cheryl says they could definitely be doing more to improve their accessibility, which will be a goal as they expand. In the meantime, she explained, they are selling nutritious and fresh food, but not “sustenance food.” Summing up the dilemma between business and what she wants for the farm, she says,“we focus on salad greens and microgreens things that we know have a higher profit margin on a very small scale. And I think it’s definitely great from a business standpoint, but it’s not, like, what feeds people.” Ideally, soon they will be able to grow more stable crops on a larger scale, “and then hopefully have a way to channel them not just to the farmers market where only people with means are able to buy them.” Until then, Cheryl wrestles with this discrepancy between her vision for the farm and what she is able to do with it.

RIVER QUEEN GREENS
new orleans
RIVER QUEEN GREENS
fresh veggies grown in the bywater
www.riverqueengreens.com
MESCLUN MIX $5
ARUGULA $5
BABY LETTUCE $5
SALAD TURNIPS $3

Cheryl’s wife Annie with their greens at the Uptown farmers market.

Even in the founding of the Crescent City Farmers Market Umbrella (CCFMU), an organization currently at the height of its success, some things had to be compromised because of funding needs. Richard explained to me the tension between the opportunities that commerce brings to an idea and the limitations it poses.

> We did crazy, wonderful things, but we can only do so much because of limited resources. And because we were actually operating within the setting of commerce, we were able to bring along some pillars of society that otherwise would not be interested in social justice work. And yet the limitation was commerce. There are only so many farmers, there's only so many hours in the day that we could operate. There is only so much capacity because nonprofits struggle to even exist.

He says the markets are a very imperfect thing. Because they are a reinvention of an old way of life, crafting them to fit in with the modern food scheme is very difficult. CCFMU managed to stay afloat, but the comparatively high prices in a grocery-dominated landscape chip away at accessibility at the market-style venue. Coupled with, "the fact that we were iced out of food stamps for ten years," the market's high prices have led to the perception of the space as exclusionary and being mainly for wealthier, whiter people. Trying to pin down this elitism, anti-racist food scholar Julie Guthman describes how, "alternative food institutions have tended to cater to relatively well-off consumers, in part because organic food has been positioned as a niche product, even obtaining the moniker of 'yuppie chow,'" (Guthman 2008, 432). While Richard acknowledges the real shortcomings of the model and how they have contributed to a "mythology of elitism" surrounding the market, he makes it clear that, "that's not because that's what we wanted, but because there were real barriers."

Yet this perception of the markets as exclusionary is a tough one to shake. Many of the people I interviewed had qualms with the accessibility of the markets. Despite supporting the organization and buying much of the food for her restaurant there, Melissa views the markets as “very boujie.” She sees their great social potential that Richard speaks about, saying that she views the markets as “places that build social trust,” but that it is a “double edged sword. Only that whoever shows up can be part of that.” Stacy also talks about problems with who is coming to the market. She noted the initial success of programs for low-income seniors and breast feeding mothers, but said she does not continue to see people once they stop receiving the coupons. She also wishes there was a program for the average citizen, which points to the fact that the market is not accessible to the average person. When Morris was asked where most people in New Orleans get their food, he responded, “I really don’t know because we don’t see the majority of them at the markets, that’s for sure!” He thinks a cultural disconnect between the average person and the vision of the market is to blame, namely a want for consumer convenience that the market skimps on in the name of quality. Cheryl also struggles with the public perception of the markets as a place not for the average person.

> It’s definitely more elitist, like it definitely skews white and wealthier. It’s kind of like a privilege to shop there. But I don’t know how you get around the stigma of markets being too expensive or seen as this exclusive thing that’s like, for the gentrifiers or for people with disposable incomes instead of what it used to be, which is where you buy your groceries.

Unfortunately, finding a place to buy your groceries in the current food landscape is anything but apolitical. Richard wanted it to be so much more than, “just transactions that deliver food. We're interested in changing social relations or changing social structures." But political and economic barriers got in the way. It is in this space between being a revolutionary community entity and a symptom of the status quo that the market remains today.

To understand the difficulty of establishing a thriving market ecosystem, it is necessary to understand the basic structure of the modern American food system, specifically the rise of the grocery store. This is because the landscape of large grocers, and the economics and politics that created it, have made radical food systems hard to come by in the modern United States. With the emergence of large agribusinesses that feed into big-box grocery stores, largely to feed growing suburban populations alimentary and imagined class needs in the time of white flight, the utilization of agriculture as another form of mass wealth accumulation has shaped the food system into one of efficiency rather than quality. In predictable fashion, this efficiency has largely meant increased inequality. As highly-processed, nutrient-poor foods became heavily subsidized, they became the cheapest option both to produce and consume. While more resourced communities may be able to afford healthy foods, which are expensive by comparison, this is not true of every household. Economically vulnerable groups are often left with no choice but to rely on such subsidized foods, leading to declines in health in many low-income and minority areas. In fact, the doctors and epidemiologists behind a 2016 study showed that the government subsidizes foods it would not advise eating under its own dietary guidelines, and that more than half the calories consumed by their participants came from federally subsidized foods. They also found that these food had largely negative impacts on the health of individuals (Siegel 2016, 1124). This agreement between the government and large corporations to produce cheap, readily available food is what shapes the American food system today. When walking down the lanes of a conventional grocery store, which can sometimes feel like walking miles, it can be difficult to find items that you know are produced locally, without the exploitation of labor or the environment, that are also good for you.

Friedmann would call this corporate-government alliance a “food regime,” in which agriculture is used strategically in the development of the global capitalist economy (Friedmann 2005, 227). She discusses how food regimes are functioning when their consequences begin to seem natural, and its structure seems to work without rules (Friedmann 2005, 232). This has happened with the modern grocery store, insofar as many people struggle to see an American foodscape without it. This is evidenced by popular calls for health food stores, as a restructuring of the agricultural system in a way that promotes health would either include all grocery stores or eschew the large store model entirely. Retailers such as Whole Foods and Sprouts have gained increasing popularity within the last decade due to greater demands for nationally available healthy food. However, Friedmann warns that the incorporation of selective social justice issues into the current system will simply reproduce the status quo under a new, socially progressive facade:

> Just as ‘‘a coalition of enlightened capitalists, middle-class reformers, and militant labor movements brought us not socialism but welfare capitalism’’ (ibid. [Sandler], p. 49), so the coalition of environmental, consumer, and fair trade movements promises not reorganization of society around the central value of enhancing ecosystem integrity, but green capitalism. If successful, it promotes a new round of accumulation as a specific outcome of the standoff between ‘‘conventional’’and ‘‘alternative’’ food systems (Friedmann 2005, 231).

She calls this emergent phenomenon the "corporate-environmental food regime," under which large corporations still control the food system with government help, but under an environmental guise (Friedmann 2005, 231). Evidence of the lack of changemaking of green grocery stores can be seen in their perception as spaces for the rich and white, due to their prices, which are still high in comparison to traditional large grocers. Additionally, the spaces are raced as white due to the fact that many organic certified farms which serve these health grocers treat their products better than they treat their labor (Shreck et al. 2006, 439). Nonetheless, Friedmann asserts, "we are due for a new food regime, if there is to be one," (Friedmann 2005, 229). It is in the context of the grocery store paradigm which fails to provide for the majority that spaces for food sovereignty become even more important. As the current system only restructures and reinforces inequality, many search for a more inclusive and equitable future for American food.

The time has come to envision a new food system. But if the market space is so flawed as a revolutionary space, then what could be better? Richard talked about the possibility of going to scale and bringing farmers to grocery stores, but said he was unsure if he would want to see farmers or their products there. "I am not against it," he offered, "I just think the business model probably is going to screw over farmers and it is a real problem." Here we encounter a different side of the same coin. As has already been demonstrated, the corporate-government alliance prevents farmers from selling fresh produce at affordable prices in small markets by underwriting large agribusinesses and processed food companies distributing to grocery stores. On the other hand, Richard thinks supermarkets would take profits from small farmers by marking up their items in stores in order to extract surplus value, essentially acting as an unnecessary middle-man. Even in the best case scenario, he described to me, groceries would be asking people to pay more for small batch items, which could never compete with their subsidized shelf neighbors, especially in hard economic times. He proposes the answer might be rethinking how we go about changemaking by executing more explicitly political moves through food.

> Some of us are really interested in much deeper questions. This is where maybe what's next becomes what's more political, what's more controversial. But part of the problem is the subsidized industry of cheap products. And unfortunately you know you talk about that you end up sounding elitist. We think people should pay more for food. It's not that, it's that industrial crap food is underwritten but quality food is not. And so there is a nutritional issue, but a much deeper question is not just food access it's food sovereignty.

At the end of the day, the forces of capitalism that are constraining peoples' buying power are the very same that allow for cheap food from giant corporations to become the dominant food scheme. If politics are the problem, the only way to solve the issue is to become more political. A powerful way to bridge the gap is to begin to explore food sovereignty as a political tool for reshaping our world as we know it.

In order to examine sovereignty, it is necessary to attack the systems that preclude it as a possibility. Steven asserted that we have to think about the systems that put people in positions where they are unable to obtain their basic needs. He said, "when we talk about health or food or all these things, for me, it's all about inequality. And whether that's income inequality or educational inequality, then you have to see all these other things as consequences to that inequality." In his view, lack of food access is merely a symptom of inequality. Like Richard, Steven thinks we are asking the wrong questions in regards to getting healthy food into the community. He described how public health programs often pick at these symptoms, rather than getting at the issues that cause them. "To me, there's too much thought in public discourse talking about trying to alleviate public health problems by giving someone ten dollars to come to a farmers market every year. I think that's kind of a waste of money." He thinks attacking root causes would be a better policy direction that would produce better results, but quick-fix programs are much more appealing to the public. Cheryl feels the same, saying although she supports the market's programming, "it's a lot deeper than just, like, having coupons at the market."

Sunchokes
$5
Turmeric
$6 /box

Some of Steven's products at the Uptown farmers market, which he drives in from Jackson, Mississippi.

Scholar Julie Guthman describes a similar process to what the project participants noted, wherein instead of focusing on structural inequalities, many discussions of access hinge on food, "operating under the assumption that knowledge, access, and cost are the primary barriers to more healthful eating," (Guthman 2008, 432). These foci are implications of a neoliberal worldview, in that the focus is on the individual to solve the problem rather than the system that created it. Richard's method of not being afraid to be controversial would certainly help attack the root issues Steven, Cheryl, and Guthman talk about. However, it would be a much more difficult and fraught path than simply installing markets in acceptable (white, wealthy) spaces, a politically palatable path that Richard describes as a "non-threatening commercial avenue."

Following this American ideology of individualization, the biggest lack of support that participants named in the community came from people who did not get what they were trying to do. While Melissa feels immense support from her diners, she noted that she often feels alone. "Sometimes I feel like I'm just floating out here and that I'm crazy," she described to me. "Or like I'm doing all of this but it's at the detriment of being able to retire. Or is it at the detriment to reality. I'm trying to do something that there's really out there, right? I feel very alone in that." Gail feels this lonesomeness sometimes too. She said there are people that do not understand her joy or her interactions with the people she serves, but that overtime she has realized not everyone has to.

> It's personal between me and God. People say 'you're too soft, you're stupid, you let people get over on you.' But this food does not belong to me. Every can, everything that's back there, he has provided that. That's his provisions. If you're not telling me the truth about your means and what you need, if you steal, that's between you and God! It's not my pantry!

For Gail, her pantry is about performing God's work through her hands. What sets her work as ministry apart from business is a commitment to her love for people, rather than the "red tape" of profitability. She says this model has allowed her to stay open for as long as she has: “I’ve been riding up and down this street for years and I’ve seen for-profit business closed down, they don’t last past a year or two years. This is a non-profit that God has allowed to operate for 21 years.” Both Gail and Melissa share the sentiment that most people put profitability before community-focused work, and that makes them feel alone in the community. The small but vocal groups that give them support are what helps keep them going.

Adding to the tension between ministry and business, Gail finds that the large and profitable enterprises in the neighborhood are not doing their part. She talked about Banner Chevrolet, a local Chevy dealership which has been in the area for more than 30 years (Banner Chevrolet, “New Orleans Chevrolet Dealer, Banner Chevrolet”). At the very least, she says, they should be interested in her work from a profitability standpoint: “I don’t have them come in and say, you know [how can we support you?] -- you can walk from here to there -- because if somebody bought a car, believe me, when that car note has to be paid, they’re going to come get food if they’re running short.” In her opinion, they should be very interested in pantry due to its impact in the community. She thinks a community partnership could benefit them both. As for why they stick to themselves, Gail cited self-interest. She says people will pay hundreds of dollars to attended dinners where they can sit next to people who might be able to benefit them, but, “when you come here, you’re dealing with people that may not ever be able to give back or do anything to help you continue.” While she would appreciate more support from entities such as Banner and sees networking as a potential fix to this problem, she says she does not have time to be “rubbing elbows in the streets. You see how busy I am!”

Gail does receive assistance from a variety of large businesses in the community other than Banner. Out of her community partners, several are food producers, namely Luzianne and Community Coffee. However, it is worth noting how, “some social groups may live in close spatial proximity to sites of food production but face structural and institutional barriers that render food from these sites largely or wholly inaccessible for them,” (Edelman et al. 2014, 920). While these two corporations contribute to her efforts, they cannot replace the systemic assistance that she requests and does not receive.

As noted by Guthman and felt by all of the project participants, food has the ability to change people. It provides sustenance and nutrition, but also adds joy to life, can reinstill a sense of agency, can change perspectives on health, and bring communities together. Food can also separate groups, differentiate communities, and be used as a tool of suppression. Food can either be used to reinforce the status quo, or to cause a disruption in patterns of injustice. In a variety of ways, the participants all use food to reproduce a certain ideology on the community. With ideology and the potential of food in mind, the next section explores the relationships of participants to the government. I found this relationship to be incredibly fraught, with attitudes toward the public sector ranging from relatively positive to incredibly negative, and often with a mix of both for individual participants. The distrust of many government entities present in my participants also resonates with the broader culture of governmental distrust found in many of New Orleans’ sub communities. In the way that each person works with and against the different levels of government through their efforts, these multiple and contradictory qualities of food politics continue to unfold.

Relationships to the Government

Overall, the project participants expressed mixed feelings towards the government. While all could cite a few positive examples of laws or programs, many could not explicitly voice that they felt support from the public sector. Cheryl was at the most positive end of the spectrum as far as government approval. She welcomes government involvement in the local food system when it is done well, saying she appreciates the NRCS-funded the hoop house on her property, and likes the USDA's loan program for smaller farmers. Cheryl feels "great" about the government being involved when they provide grants or technical assistance to small farmers, but says that, "it gets complicated when you have larger-scale rules and policies that are applied kind of without forethought to small farmers." "Overall, I like the government involvement," she explained. "In a kind of weird way they are invested in helping farmers thrive, but it's not always straightforward."

Explaining this, she referenced the Food Safety Modernization Act. Cheryl sees it as a mostly "logical and intuitive" program, but with a few major flaws. Her concern with the law is that it will require a lot more work for small farmers, who do everything themselves. She says small producers do not necessarily have time to make sure they are following the multitude of new procedures required by the legislation, or the resources to change their ways. This comes in contrast to agribusinesses, which have employees devoted to keeping up with new legal standards and the capital to easily make changes to their system. On top of that, legislation can often be confusing, packed with legal jargon and riders that small producers have to wade through themselves. "I think though often well-intentioned, the government doesn't always understand the nuances of running a small business or a small farm," she said. Lawmakers being out of touch with small farmers can lead to policies which hurt small farmers but leave large agribusinesses relatively unphased, further tipping the scales of power between small and large producers.

Feeling the effects of these confusing pieces of legislation, Stacy goes back and forth on the government's presence in local food. When I asked her if she felt supported by the government in her business, she responded, "sometimes yes, sometimes no, it just depends." She said she is "not really sure the programs really do that much." Stacy also noted that although they are lax with some regulations, they constantly change the rules of others. This makes it difficult for small farmers to keep up with the miniscule but enforced policy changes, further emphasizing the distance felt between small producers and their legislators that Cheryl brought up. In fact, one of Stacy's biggest struggles right now is, "trying to stay on top of what's organic and what's not." This is a distinction that is important to keep as she mainly sells at farmers markets, where the clientele often care a great deal about labels like organic, even though they might not understand the political nuances of such categories nor what is involved on the production side.

Stacy also noted how "they're so lax with some regulations and rules and stuff," that she can never be certain what will be heavily enforced, and what was merely a political play that will never come to fruition on the ground. She described how some of the programs feel out-of-touch with the actual makeup of the small producers in the community. "Some of the programs they come out with, it's just really all about fresh fruits and vegetables, so it doesn't pertain to me," she explained. "Most of them don't pertain to me because I'm not, you know, selling a fresh fruit or a vegetable." Facing a lack of programs that seem to apply to her business, Stacy can feel lost in the shuffle. The complicated landscape of federal and local food policy often leaves small players feeling confused and frustrated, which is unfortunate considering many would take all the help they can get. Although the government sometimes comes up with “ludicrous” programs, she tries to stay positive. “You know, I think it’s a learning process for all of us.”

The dynamic described by Cheryl and Stacy of legislators being out of touch with on the ground work brought to mind the story of the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition (LNWFAC). In their article on political gardening in the post-Katrina era, Kato et al. describe LNWFAC’s radical governing structure, in which “‘only Lower Ninth Ward residents had decision-making powers in regard to the food plan,’ while representatives and professionals in the areas of planning, business and food, and local government were invited to ‘serve in support and advisory roles,’ (Kato et al. quoting LNWFAC 2013, 7). While LNWFAC welcomed government involvement, they made it clear that the participants were the ones who decided the rules. This community-first model would rid small farmers of many of the frustrations cited by Stacy and Cheryl, by creating laws based on collaborative efforts which are grounded in lived experience. The model also represents a major step towards food sovereignty, in which the wants and needs of those producing come before political and economic agendas. By redefining power relationships and centering the ideas of those who produce, governance models based on sovereignty could ameliorate the dissatisfaction of small farmers by bringing them closer to the decision making process.

Shifting further towards the dissatisfied end of the spectrum, we encounter Melissa. She noted a similar conundrum to that posed by Stacy, in which the government can pass laws that seem good for local food, but she is not sure how applicable they actually are. In expressing her feelings on a recent law, she said:

> I mean they passed the law a couple months ago which I thought was good, which was that any restaurant serving seafood has to put the origin on their menu. So, this is a really great thing for the shrimping industry in Louisiana, which has been destroyed by foreign market shrimp. But then it's like, how is that going to be policed, you know?

While the transparency of restaurants required by the law could mean increased demand for local shrimp, there are over 1,000 restaurants in New Orleans today, thereby requiring a lot of manpower to enforce the rules (McNulty and Adelson 2018). Additionally, even if this does represent a win for local fishers, the law does not apply to the growing number of supermarkets in the city, many of which are branches of large national chains with established seafood networks all over the globe (Thompson 2015). Melissa's skepticism that the program will not do what it should is worth noting, as it points to her general distrust in the legislative system. While some government policies are enforced but constantly changing, others that are steps in the right direction seem like they will be ineffective.

The turbulent policy landscape added to existing distrust of the government in many of the project participants, though they seem to wish it was not that way. Melissa summed it up by saying, "I would say I don't feel like the government's much help. But maybe I'm missing something, you know?" While she wants the government to do right by its people, she realistically does not see that happening the majority of the time. Melissa noted that while Louisiana has an array of natural resources,

> Louisiana is run by capitalism and greed and money right now. So to actually put that system in place and to say 'oh people should be eating good food' or 'oh people

> shouldn’t be breathing cancer.’ Yeah it would be great if we could do it. But it's, you know, it's like pulling teeth. We have to get rid of a lot of fucking Republicans first.

She said that if the government were to make certain things illegal, that process would start immediately, and “the food would get healthier around us.” However, even though those in power have the ability to adjust certain parts of our food system, “all those changes don’t get made because I believe that the rich are happy where they are, and they don’t care about the poor and people's accessibility to food.” In her opinion, the system would be different if the people in power did their jobs with more empathy and accountability.

Morris feels that the government’s support of large producers is very much intentional. He noted that food’s relationship to politics is one of control, saying, “it’s a big deal. You control the food, you control the people.” Should small producers dominate the food landscape, a far greater degree of democracy would make up our food system. This is far from the current reality, and, Morris says, not in the interest of those in power. He detailed to me many ways in which small producers are discouraged from existing in the current food system. One way is through a lack of subsidies for small producers: “it’s hard to get grants and everything because those guys get everything.” By those guys, he means the large producers that have more influence on the government. According to Morris, much of that influence is bought. When I asked him why he thinks the government is unsupportive of small farmers, he said,

> To be honest with you, we can’t lobby, and we can’t get support if we can’t get the lobbies on our side. We don’t support campaigns… there’s not enough of us so we don’t produce enough revenue to collectively support any party or particular political idea.

Morris's perception of the government, according to how he speaks of the relationship between large producers and representatives, is one of extreme distrust. He views this relationship as being fueled by nothing but money and want for power. He said he feels so lost amidst the policy and politicking that, "sometimes it feels like you're lost in the water without an oar." Morris feels alienated by a government which he views as corrupt and unjust.

Although she is not a producer, Gail feels similarly burdened by poorly thought out government policy. Gail does not receive any federal aid for her pantry, largely because her applications are not accepted. But she says "the cool thing" about not receiving federal aid that her funding does not come with any income guidelines. She explained to me that some federally subsidized items, like USDA donated corn, would come with a maximum income guideline. If an individual made anything above that amount, Gail would not be allowed to give them the can of corn. However, since she does not abide by the same rules, "I would be able to substitute those items and still have the person leave with the items they need."

Since she runs her pantry without judgement and knows that there could always be more happening than meets the eye behind the scenes in someone's life, the income guidelines that limit federal funding do not mesh with her personally philosophy for her work. But beyond matters of personal opinion, Gail explained to me how the federally stipulated maximum income per household is so low that you can still be struggling intensely to survive if you surpass it. "I went to work every day and I was so broke," she told me, but the federal guidelines precluded her from taking part in certain social services. She broke down the numbers for me:

> Their monthly income has to be below $1,316 and their yearly income has to be below $15,782. Well, if you look at $1,300, and I found this some time ago, is that not everyone

> qualifies for food stamps, not everyone qualifies for a housing voucher. And even if they qualify for housing, they might not get it. So imagine you get $1,300 a month and you had to pay rent. Just say your rent was $700, that only leaves $500 and some change to do everything else -- pay the utility bill, buy your groceries, do whatever. It's not enough

While Gail will not go so far as to say the system is flawed, she does think that, "it doesn't take into consideration what a person might be going through." This guideline does not effectively count for the amount of dependents a person has, structural barriers like transportation or compounded lack of access to medical care, or situations of trauma or disaster, just to name a few. This is particularly important in a place like New Orleans, where many jobs are in the hospitality or restaurant industry and see periods of ebb and flow coupled with layoffs and rehires, and storm and flood events that prevent people from going to work and damage property are frequent. There are no concessions for life's trials when you have federal guidelines, she says, "because they're looking at how much you make and not looking at how much it costs to live for that particular individual." Similar to the other participants, Gail feels distanced from an out-of-touch government, and does not receive all the aid she needs because of this strained relationship.

Richard also felt that the government was unsupportive of his vision when he helped found the Crescent City Farmers Market. Knowing that what they were proposing was unusual for its time, he and his colleagues did their due diligence. "We did all the things you're supposed to do," he said. "You know we spoke with people at City Hall at different departments of government and worked with city council and the mayor's office and the health department. I even found some cooperation in the Department of Agriculture." They thought they had done their jobs and appeased every governmental agency they had to appease, until they were informed of a major hurdle:

> And it was about three weeks before opening day in 1995. And we got word from the State Department of Health that they will oppose the opening of the farmers market now because the product is -- three weeks before! -- because the products on sale that we that are advertising are dangerous and essentially a pathogen. 'And we will we will have you know selling food out in the open is dangerous.' We were all a little stunned. The ancient mechanism of public markets in which a competing band of independent vendors sell the fruits of their labor in a public setting has been around forever. New Orleans he used to have a robust 32 market strong system set up by the Spanish. I mean we were all like 'are you kidding me?' Had they gotten lost on what's going on around the world and around the country to revive the world's public markets? Well, the State Health Department was covering their asses.

Richard and his team felt blindsided by the sudden disapproval of one government entity among the many they had contacted, who had at least begrudgingly approved their plan. They felt that this governmental entity was massively out of touch with a movement that was already happening, and was changing the landscape of food availability around the world. What's worse, they felt like the government was covering itself at the sake of an important aspect of local culture that Richard and his team were hoping to revive. "I mean all of this was like we were operating in the dark ages," he described to me. "There was no expertise in food handling procedures other than this very highly regulated industrial world view that treats a large factory like a small mom and pop operation." This rogue governmental agency was attempting to make a decision that would undermine local food culture and further privilege the large scale producers that imperil it. All of a sudden, they had vendors and time spent and money on the line, and had to scramble for a plan to fix it.

In the end, that plan came in the form of a legal loophole. The city Health Director at the time, Brobson Lutz, came up with the idea of using the state-level fairs and festivals exemption to ward off the Health Department. If Richard and his colleagues could get City Council to pass a resolution saying that the market was a recognized fair or festival, "it would basically send a signal to the State Health Department to lay off us." Luckily, they were able to make it happen with the support of a few key players, and although the department wrote a letter voicing their disapproval and saying they were not liable, the market was allowed to operate. The State Health Department left them alone for five years until they introduced meat, seafood, and liquid dairy, at which time they appeared again. After another session of convoluted politicking involving a variety of private and public entities, it was determined that the markets would continue to operate under the festivals and fairs state exemption to certain food regulations. This is where the markets lie today. Richard says that the "grey space" where the markets continue to exist, "is an example of the kind of public policy being directed by creative social enterprise, and on the grounds that it does not necessarily change actual legislation or rules, but it provides a social space in which to operate." He thinks that this carved social space feels very normal for New Orleanians, and that although it directly conflicts with the "hyper legal model of the industrial food system," that it makes sense for us culturally to have our social and political interactions create space for changemaking policy.

Because no one had done the heavy lifting that Richard and his colleagues had done in Louisiana, Morris has had to deal with the government disrupting traditional foodways during his participation in the market system in Mississippi. He and his wife decided they wanted to expand from selling goat cheese to goat milk, but they did not know something that seemed so simple and logical would prove so difficult for them. Because they were the first in Mississippi to attempt to sell goat meat to the public, they faced an uphill battle in getting the government to sanction their business practice.

> We fought with the agricultural commissioner and finally we had to physically threaten him to go to court to get him to agree to give us a license to sell the meat because he had never seen this before… traditionally people just go out and slaughter it and that’s that. But we wanted to try to get it into the supermarkets and sell it legally, but they didn’t want to take a chance on anyone becoming ill and they didn’t see any benefits from doing it the old fashioned way.

Given that Morris often works eighteen to twenty hours a day, the time spent having to create a legal opposition to a rule that did not exist for other livestock was detrimental to his work and his health. Just like Richard, Morris was simply trying to apply a traditional food practice to a modern system of food legislation, and he faced significant obstacles. As in the case of many others, Morris’s story illuminates how the unique cultural qualities of the Gulf South are at once a weakness and a downfall. In a state system that overlooks certain parts of the country, such as the economically disinvested South, cultural practices are not incorporated into greater policy schemes. This causes plight for small producers, allowing larger ones to move in and thrive, further removing wealth from impoverished places as capital is concentrated in the hands of the few large producers. Morris said that given the circumstances, he would say that the system is flawed "to the max," and that he feels like he is "lost in the wilderness without a compass." He does not see this changing, at least until a time when, "we can become larger and people decide that they want to consume what we produce on a large enough scale" for small farmers to gain some political power. It is no wonder that after his experience, Morris responded emphatically that he does not feel supported by the government. "Absolutely not."

When people feel unsupported by the government, they look to other entities to fulfill their needs. Steven says this burden often unfairly falls on the farmer. I asked him about his relationship to food sovereignty, he responded, "I think you're talking about issues that are outside the realm of the farmer. When we're talking about food sovereignty or health or anything in that realm of public health and disadvantaged groups, I think it's a governmental issue." As a natural, no-spray farm, he feels that people often conflate his work with other issues. While he thinks practices like his are valuable and important to the local food system, it cannot be solely up to small farmers to be the changemakers, nor is it feasible.

> It's the other entities that have to collaborate with farmers to work towards those goals. Farmers cannot be the only driver because it's impossible. Especially at the size we are now. Farmers can't do work like that. That's work for another entity and most likely a public entity.

Like Morris noted earlier, the lack of power in the hands of small farmers means that they cannot be the sole forces of change in a community. He sees the future as one of collaboration between multiple groups, who leverage their power and their ideas in different ways in order to get things done. Steven sees the coordination as the job of the government. However, when I asked if he thinks this process will unfold anytime soon, he responded, “of course not.” He also said that as a small, natural farmer, he definitely does not feel the government is on his side. “I don’t think that needs to be elaborated.”

On the other hand, although Gail is able to make significant change in her community, the lack of institutional support she receives leaves her feeling like the elected officials care more about being re-elected than taking care of their constituents. “To be honest with you,” she said as her shoulders fell, “I don’t feel like I get enough support.” As I noted earlier, Gail serves 2,400 individuals a month, which represents nearly 6,000 people when the families they take care of are accounted for. She explained, “I should have city officials -- because that’s their constituents -- I should have them knocking on the door and saying ‘Gail, what is it that we can do to help you better serve our constituents,’ you know? ‘This is my district, I want to see what goes on in my district.’” If anything, the inability of those in charge of her district to recognize her actions represent negligence on the part of public figures, as Gail fulfills an important public need that is largely unsatisfied by federal and state programming. When they closed their books last year, they had 8,800 records of individuals that had been in at least once and been served during the year.

> If that many people know that we’re here, why is it that people that are over this district, be it city level, the state level, or the federal level, why is it that you don’t know who’s impacting that many people in the area that you have oversight over?

She thinks that leaders should be held accountable for not knowing what is happening in their communities. If a disaster or trauma affected nearly 9,000 people a year in one district, it would be major news. So where is the support for a struggling private entity that creates the same amount of change? Apparently, the answer is nowhere to be found. Despite the large amount of derelict and expropriated properties in the neighborhood, Gail pays $3,000 dollars a month on her small warehouse and attached storefront.“Why is a non-profit paying that amount of money when you’ve got buildings that are not being used all over the city?” Gail has asked city council repeatedly to use buildings that are vacant such as old schools, but they never worked it out with her. “There’s no reason for that. There’s no reason for that.” In a variety of ways, Gail is overlooked by her local government.

Inside Gail’s warehouse. Summer heat risks spoiling products and endangers workers’ health.

Going beyond the local government, Gail has felt bothered by the federal government in the past. Today is no exception: “If you think politics is the federal government then we’ve had our issues with the federal government, and I mean, that’s no matter who’s in office. Right now it's to a higher degree because you know that it's targeted." She says that racialized practices have hurt her relationship to the government, as policies increasingly target certain minority groups in a far more explicit way than before. In the face of such political change, which can feel scary and even devastating, Gail said she admires Millennials for their strength and ability to speak truth to power. She says Millennials have a lot of fresh ideas, and that they,

> … want to be in a place where they aren't so reliant on the government on any level, so you can speak your mind and not feel held hostage. The older generation is like, 'oh no, I can't say this because I'm afraid they may cut this off or cut that off.' They are looking for their children to have a greater sense of how to be independent so that when people are going through their political woes like we are right now that you're not so dependent on the government.

What was particularly striking to me was her comment about older generations being afraid to speak up for themselves because they risk the government pulling out of essential social services. This relationship is not one of a people to its benefactor, but of hostages to their keeper. In Gail's eyes, the younger generations have seen the fear and desperation produced by reliance on an unreliable government, and they try to insulate themselves from it as much as possible.

An unignorable detail in the story of governmental relationships is the fact that Gail is closing her doors after more than twenty years of service. "That's 2,400 individuals without this particular location to go to," she said. "They are already disappointed, once I said I was stepping down and the word got out." She feels like closing the doors is something she should have done a long time ago, saying,

> As long as I continue to do what I'm doing nothing will ever change. Because it's just like, 'oh, she's tired, she's hot, she's complaining, but she's not going to close!' But once the doors are closed then some somebody is going to understand what we were doing here what the impact was, you know, how many peoples' lives were being changed as a result of it, and made easier. But as long as I continue to operate the way we operate and it's just not going to happen. And I'm not doing it to punish anybody, I'm doing it because it needs to be done.

Despite all the work she has done and all the lives she has impacted, Gail knows that her pantry is no replacement for systematic change. What's more, she feels like she is providing a crutch for the city to do nothing substantive about truly beginning to tackle poverty in the city. In talking to Gail, it was clear that this decision pained her, but that she did not know what else to do. A pantry of historic firsts, with many years of hard labor and love at its core, Love in Action received so little support that it became an unsustainable operation.

Though several of the project participants tried to stay positive about their relationship to the government, many of my conversations delved into conversations about distrust and despair. I found that although some were initially hesitant to critique governmental support of their businesses, many ended up speaking on extremely negative things they have had to go up against as far as government involvement. These conflicting viewpoints can be conceptualized by Trauger, who insists that, "food sovereignty may implement its radical vision within the existing structures of the modern liberal nation state by working with, against and in between its juridical structures by reworking the central notions of sovereignty: territory, economy and power," (Trauger as quoted in Edelman 2014, 920). This process is complicated and confusing, and it is no wonder that small players are left feeling frustrated. Each participant has sought to intervene on the liberal nation state, and each in their own way. In a framework that does not account for this, and certainly seeks to undermine it to the best of its ability to maintain the status quo, each effort towards sovereignty becomes differentiated and isolated. It is only by combining forces and building power against the state system that participants in food sovereignty will find some solidarity, and it is there that the most meaningful progress can be made.

In thinking about the future of food and sovereignty in New Orleans, participants' current governmental relationships shape perceptions of what is possible. While some see the ability for collective action at the expense of government control, some believe that the process is too complicated or too difficult to reach the end goal. The participants' ideas of the future of New Orleans food sovereignty both help define how they view their current relationship to the government and the community, and shine a light on important lessons from their current practice.

Visions for the Future

Equally as important as how they viewed their present relationships to the community and the government, I was interested in how the project participants envisioned the future of the New Orleans food system. As could have been predicted by their variety of positionalities and life experiences, the participants held a variety of opinions on whether or not New Orleans could see a food sovereign future. Stacy thinks that everyone should be thinking about food sovereignty. "I mean it's important for all of us. No matter what your background is we all need food." She sees the market as a "microcosm of [food sovereignty] that could definitely be expanded." However, she remains skeptical, saying, "It's not gonna happen. It's way too much of an undertaking." Nonetheless, Stacy will continue selling her wares at the markets, upholding the legacy of her father while caring for each customer who comes her way: "they make it worth it."

Morris also remains wary of sovereignty. While he thinks it would be good for small farmers, he does not see consumers getting on board with a hyper-local model of food production. "People are going to go with what's convenient for them. It's a consumer problem." He thinks unless people learn to prioritize quality over convenience, consumer culture will limit the future of our food system. Also like Stacy, he will continue to sell at his four markets, and will maintain his love of food. "I think food is a bloodline," he said to me, "the main stream or the main river that keeps everything going. It's very important to me." Morris looks forward to continuing to educate the public on the importance of healthy food.

Goat Cheese
We Accept
Visa/Mastercard

Morris tending to his goods at the Uptown farmers market. His cheeses have no preservatives, are nutritionally rich, and contribute to his philosophy of healthy living.

Melissa cited a few examples of alternative markets she has seen that she feels work better than our current system. One market in Asheville, North Carolina that she particularly liked was set up not according to aesthetic standards but nutritional ones. “It’s not set up commercially visually,” she described. “It’s set up to feed yourself. There’s large things of vegetables. It’s not, like, pretty, or staged. It’s just ‘here’s where the food is.’ And it’s just what is essential. There’s no processed stuff, but it’s just like the basic things that you need.” She thinks that accessible food hubs will become increasingly important moving forward, and while she likes the farmers market she believes that accessibility barriers will prevent it from becoming the dominant model. As far as locally, Melissa loves the Holly Grove Market, in the Holly Grove neighborhood of Uptown New Orleans. “I think Holly Grove was a really great start,” she said, because, “I could go and it wasn't a farmer's market. It was always there. It had set times.” The reliable hours of Holly Grove make it one of these more accessible locations that Melissa sees as essential. Her dream is for everyone to be able to access healthy, locally available food, a barrier which even she sometimes cannot surmount. “I get all this local food but then I go home and I have no food. And I have no say in my health, getting the stuff that's shipped across the country. You know, it’s difficult.” Lastly, she thinks that more people will have to learn how to farm, which requires both education and a genuine desire to cultivate the land, something she does not think many people will do. She sees system change as a possibility, and seeks to change as much as she can with her restaurant, but thinks that politics will get in the way of substantive change.

Steven also sees the current system as almost too large to tackle. When I asked if he could see a sovereign future for the city, he told me, “I can’t imagine one frankly.” He thinks this is not just a New Orleans problem, but a general problem with the urban built environment.

"Cities aren't sustainable and they're not built in a way that's compatible with food systems that are entirely local," he asserted. Steven went on to add that food cities like Portland and Austin that appear to be hyper-localized are just an "illusion. Guess what? Walmart and kroger and all those places are booming business, and there's still most people shopping in those types of stores." He said we should be wary of what seems like a large amount of support for local food, but is really just "a small pocket of people." He does see the potential for some incremental change:

> Now could New Orleans get better? Of course they could, anybody could. It's not an impossible task to say, 'can we increase local food by 5 percent or 10 percent in the next five to ten years?' Yes, that's very easily doable. But are you going to eliminate giant stores that ship in food from wherever, who are paying their labor $1 a day to pick their tomatoes? No! They're not going to do that, not in the way in which US cities are structured or world cities possibly.

Steven sees the restructuring of our food system as needing a remaking of our entire urban geography. Like Melissa, Morris, and Stacy, he sees this as likely too great a task to surmount. When I asked Cheryl if she thought she was contributing to food sovereignty, she responded, "I hope so." She said a large part of sovereignty to her is "just that it exists in your community," so her efforts at making RQG a present community entity represents her efforts in the sovereignty realm. She said she thinks seeing a food sovereign New Orleans is "definitely possible." She noted the increase in attention given to small farmers in the past several years, both through governmental programs and general public excitement. Like Melissa, Cheryl thinks teaching more people to farm would greatly increase sovereignty in the future. A system in which farming is a viable career choice would be a great start, and she says she sees that process beginning in New Orleans.

> In Massachusetts you can live in Boston and work on a farm right out of college that pays you enough to live in an urban area, which is where a lot of younger people want to live, so it's kind of another career option. And I think that's starting to happen here… There's a lot of interest and excitement, and I think there's starting to be a lot of institutional support, so I think it's pretty promising.

Some of the biggest obstacles Cheryl sees are infrastructure related. Trying to start a community of small farmers in a landscape still scarred by the plantation economy can be a difficult task. She says that no one really specializes in seeds or soils for this area since that is not its history of growing style, which in a large-scale farming landscape is dominated by monocrops and harsh soil practices. However, "I think as more of us start growing, we start to build a network of knowledge and resources and I think that becomes very valuable as the next cohort of beginning farmers comes, to say, 'well that didn't work for Cheryl and Annie, so I'm not going to do that.'" Building networks of support and investing in that community will bring a strong network of small farmers to the area, greatly increasing prospects of food sovereignty. She also sees food as becoming important to other movements, such as resilience against climate change and combating food shortage, "so you know, kind of anything and everything worth happening always happens around food." Overall, Cheryl's view of the future of food in New Orleans is refreshingly hopeful.

Gail also sees a food sovereign future in New Orleans. She says it will be hard work, and require individuals who are willing to put in the time to see their ideas through. On top of that, she advocates for “selling the idea” in order to form community partnerships and alliances. Her vision of sovereignty is based on community power. Gail says those involved need to have community meetings to find out who is interested, “who can bring what to the table, who’s willing, because we all can’t do everything. But let me know what you can do. Talk to your friends, find out what they can do, shine a spotlight on it so that more people are aware.” She sees potential in the derelict lots and other unused spaces in her neighborhood, saying that even the overgrown lot behind LiA could become a garden that helped stock the warehouse.

> Just suppose that we actually cultivate that land in this lot and fence it up and actually grow our own food and let that be another added resource in the community, rather than letting them stay there where people are being penalized and they’re not even going to ever pay for it. That way, we can put fresh food into the food pantry, we’ll know what pesticides we’re using, we can control it. We can grow some things that are uniquely cultural for this particular area. We could even form an alliance with the Vietnamese community that we have out past Michou, find out some of those products that they’ve got, exchange, barter, sell, whatever. And then get to the point where we can have better control and be more sovereign over what we consume.

Gail’s vision of transforming unused space into a community entity represents everything that sovereignty is supposed to. Her vision for a radical grassroots network of producers that do not abide by laws of the formal economy is inclusive and restorative.

For Richard, the future of local food will involve a lot of dialogue between producers and consumers, reflecting those close personal relationships and traditional applications of public space that he appreciates about New Orleans. He says that although the CSA model has access issues in terms of the upfront cost, “the model itself does express very intentional desire to share in the risk between the producer and the consumer.” Additionally, he thinks,

> The most kind of exciting growth is in the community assets that may be held privately. I think what you see here is the growth of a kind of articulated Afrocentric food movement where Black farmers, Black restaurateurs, with the addition of Latino farm workers, are expressing their identity and role in the ecosystem of food. And that's creating conversations about narratives and ideas that I don't know what it's going to lead to.

Richard says these questions of narrative, identity, and agency will be fundamental to food sovereignty efforts moving forward. Food sovereignty represents a grab at power in which, “farmers becoming active protagonists in their lives and in their marketing rather than just a cog in the wheel,” and also allows for “the potential for low income shoppers to become active protagonists” in their food choices.

Richard at the CCFM in 2005 (Caponetto 2005).

All of the participants see food sovereignty as something they would want for the future of New Orleans food, but some struggle to see it as a feasible reality. Despite not necessarily believing it will happen, each participant noted something they could do in order to make strides towards sovereignty, or noted existing work which they see as impactful. The ideas of the future that food sovereignty practitioners hold is incredibly important, given that they are the ones on the front lines of this food movement. Their willingness to explore the idea despite having some skepticism was encouraging, as it demonstrated to me that people are willing to take risks and involve themselves in revolutionary food politics. Now that participants' vision for what the future may hold has been established, their efforts can be better contextualized within the history of New Orleans. Placing ideas in their social and political context reveals possibilities for even greater progress, as standing cultural values, social norms, and political systems can be utilized to increase project viability.

CHAPTER 3: DOMINATION, DISASTER, AND DETERMINATION

Now that the sorts of food justice efforts being made in the city have been established, they can be better situated in the context of a neocolonial, post-disaster landscape. Tying current food justice efforts to the city's history will allow for the examination of its potential future.

The ability of food to aid in disaster situations demonstrates its potential as a vehicle for social change. Richard described how food came to take a central place in the rebuilding effort after the storm.

> Things got exposed as you had said and you know it revealed the power structure. It revealed the maldistribution of resources and wealth. I mean it flooded almost everywhere so, I don't, I mean, I think rich people also suffered and got flooded out and their lives were destroyed. But they had the resources with which to rebound. Poor people did not, you know. It's so clear. So neighborhoods that did not rebound quickly voiced, like, 'well what about us? Why don't we have, you know, why can't we reinvent who we are? And why don't we have a grocery store?' So you know food access issues became front and center.

As residents took back the narrative of what was happening in their home, attempting to make in the process Nagin's "better, new New Orleans," food remained a powerful expression of identity. New Orleanians link their identities to culinary practices in many ways, and for this reason both attempts at normalcy and hopes for a better future largely manifested in cuisine. Issues surrounding food were especially important to those neighborhoods hit hardest by the storm, as measures of food access were clear indicators of structural descrimination and governmental neglect. Food was also of central importance to those who evacuated and were displaced. For evacuees, the foods they missed after Katrina tied them to home, and helped them identify themselves when all seemed lost. In describing the situation of those who were able to evacuate, Richard said, “where people landed, what they said they missed the most was food. And so, that’s the thing, the key identifier of ‘who are we?’ It was the foods we missed.” Food is central to the identity of New Orleanians, and because of this it was central to helping them regain a sense of what was lost after Katrina.

Contextualizing modern food sovereignty within post-Katrina food schemes demonstrates how food is a tool for articulating the political self. In thinking about how residents described community needs and the things they missed about home through food post-Katrina, current New Orleans communities can also use food to advocate for what they want their future to look like. The way that Morris centers health in his dairy is one example of this. He sees an industrialized foodscape in which processed food caused a deterioration in population health, and wants his business to provide a counterpoint to such “factory food.” This concept is also evident in Stacy’s work. Her main motivation is upkeeping her family’s legacy through her farm. Her wish for more market programs involving “regular people” speaks to her focus on family values, and her dream of the market as a space the average person to carve out a living if they so choose. Yet another example is how Cheryl’s hope fo resilient neighborhoods formed by a strong sense of community is apparent in her use of her land as a community gathering space. The ways that those contributing food sovereignty develop their practice is directly reflected of their personal political identities.

As demonstrated by the pieces of the participants’ identities which were expressed through food, the strongest tie I found between the participants was their commitment to their community. Each one named involvement one subcommunity or another as a main motivation, and commitment to community repeatedly showed up in practiced food sovereignty. While the relationship between participants and the various subcommunities in New Orleans was not always perfect, with participants expressing distrust of those who did not ‘get it’ or actively support their endeavors, the tether to a community of supporters, family members, friends, and neighbors who made it all worth it was always present. Additionally, most of the participants wanted to expand their support base to the broader New Orleans community, both in order to sustain their businesses and because they thought their work would better the lives of the greater community.

The importance of community to participants’ work is relevant within preexisting community norms in New Orleans. Participants wanted to see their efforts reflected in not just their own communities where they performed their work, but the New Orleans community at large. While this sentiment is not unique to New Orleans, the social dynamics of the city, which make such a large-scale impact feasible, are. Expressed most powerfully in the modern era during Katrina, the city’s history of solidarity and social norm of community interaction give space to work from the grassroots. In New Orleans, food lends well to these grassroots efforts. This is because of its importance in the lives of locals, and its history of prominence of public space, which began with informal selling on the street or in markets during colonial times. The longstanding tradition of combining food, social mixing, and community solidarity set the groundwork for the modern food sovereignty movement in New Orleans, which is more likely to succeed due to the city’s cultural context.

In a cultural context of local solidarity, the participants' relationships to the government were often fraught. Their attitudes ranged from very positive to very negative, with much space for lived experience in between. Many felt severe contempt towards a specific government official or entity, such as the President, the local Republican party, or a district representative. The theme of government distrust in our conversations points to a system with deep flaws. Tracing the history of New Orleans back to its founding, Chitimacha land was colonized by the French, then ceded to the Spanish under a treaty, later ceded back to France, and last sold to the Americans. The city, while seen as valuable for its port, was a political afterthought, tacked on for economic gain and traded around to negotiate treaties. This contributed to a feeling of difference between locals and their governing body, who often did not subscribe to the same cultural value system. In more recent history, government mistrust has remained with some locals in regards to the federal system, which they do not feel included in due to low relative marks in regards to the other states (such as low education rates) and general cultural differences. Skepticism also exists at the local level, especially due to rampant local corruption and rapidly degrading infrastructure.

In the context of federal neglect and local corruption, it is no wonder participants felt such distrust towards the government. Most of the participants lodged a significant complaint with one government entity or another: Richard's comments on how a few New Orleans families run the show; Melissa's distaste towards city and state politicians who put political ties and thinly veiled bigotry over the needs of the people; Morris's and Stacy's feeling lost in an ever-changing policy landscape, rooted more in negotiation between lawmakers and large private entities than in progress; Gail's anger towards local politicians who do not know what is happening in their own neighborhood. Although the faces are different, the corruption, dependencies, and large economic monopolies that characterize Louisiana's past also shape its present. The various ways that the participants worked with and against the government illuminated the opportunities and contradictions present in the New Orleans political scheme.

The fact that Cheryl is the only non-local and the one who felt the most positive about government intervention is telling. Even though she has a very intentional practice, doing as much as she can to incorporate the desires of others in her neighborhood, she still comes from a vastly different perspective due to her background. Coming from Massachusetts, a state far less removed from the heart and imaginary of the metropole than Louisian, it is no surprise that some of her views would differ from the beliefs the other participants subscribed to. Cheryl's story shows how demographic change, much of which was brought on by Katrina, has the ability to radically alter community-based work based. An influx of new opinions on what is good or bad for the city may not be rooted in local realities, whether or not they have merit. This concept can be further conceptualized in the city's colonial history, as with each new colonizing power, a new set of people and their cultural biases attempted to make the city their home.These differing opinions make sovereignty more complicated, as residents must decide who and on what grounds their communities are made for.

Overall, most participants said they would like to see a more food sovereign New Orleans, but did not think it was possible under current conditions. Their continuation of their projects despite pessimistic views of the future demonstrates both their commitment to their community and their belief in their ideas. However, an expectation that the government will not support them enough to sustain their project long term, or that it will directly intervene to stop their work, shows the limits of the neocolonial governmental system. Examples of long-standing support issues include the government's removal of what little funding they provide or their arbitrary and harmful rules for aid, demonstrated by the case of Gail. Short term interventions can be seen in Richard's continued battle with the health department, or the promotion of big agribusiness over small producers which Steven and Morris discussed. If projects led for and by citizens are not able to seek their ultimate outcome due to failures on the part of the state, it bears asking who the government is actually for. This oppressive system often produces distrust of other community members who may not support the projects, invoking a neoliberal ideology of division in which individuals blame themselves or each other for the structural problems brought on by the state. In reality, not only is the government to blame for not providing adequate social infrastructure for its citizenry, but the lack of support necessitates such community justice projects in the first place. If enough individuals banded together, then changes would be much more likely. Local solidarity has been a proven method of community improvement, most notably in local Katrina relief efforts. The storm reminded New Orleans that its people could be responsible for their own fate. They just have to remember.

While the future of politics and community justice remains contested in the city, projects that aim at food sovereignty pull on social histories and become more possible in the process. Revolutionizing the future of food will not happen overnight, and it certainly will not happen within a neocolonial, capitalist system, but the participants' work represents important steps in the right direction. Through the ways in which they disrupt national food patterns in order to center a personal ideology, participants in New Orleans food sovereignty actively shape the future of New Orleans food according to locally crafted social ideals. As food sovereignty demonstrates, food production and consumption must be culturally relevant, and food systems should be defined by the people they impact. The participants' ongoing pursuit of their goals, effects on the community, and ability to shape the city's future demonstrate how the principle of cultural relatedness in food sovereignty creates possibilities for progress, even in an oppressive neocolonial context.

REFERENCES

"About GAO." *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, https://www.gao.gov/about/.

Alkon, Alison Hope. *Black, White, and Green: Farmers Markets, Race, and the Green Economy*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Alteri, Miguel A. and Víctor M. Toledo. "The Agroecological Revolution in Latin America: Rescuing Nature, Ensuring Food Sovereignty and Empowering Peasants." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38, no. 3 (2011): 587-612. doi: 10.1080/03066150.2011.582947.

Amadeo, Kimberly. "State Ranking by Education." *The Balance*, Dotdash, 25 June 2019, https://www.thebalance.com/state-ranking-by-education-4589755.

Amadeo, Kimberly. "Why Was Hurricane Katrina so Damaging to New Orleans, and the World?" *The Balance*, Dotdash, 25 June 2019, https://www.thebalance.com/hurricane-katrina-facts-damage-and-economic-effects-3306023.

The American Society of Civil Engineers Hurricane Katrina External Review Panel. "The New Orleans Hurricane Protection System: What Went Wrong and Why." *ASCE*, Wayback Machine, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20110807184732/http://levees.org/2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/American-Society-of-Civil-Engineers-What-Went-Wrong-ERPreport-1.pdf.

American Sugar Cane League. "Industry Info." *American Sugar Cane League*, https://www.amscl.org/industry-info/.

Banner Chevrolet. "New Orleans Chevrolet Dealer, Banner Chevrolet." *Banner Chevrolet*, https://www.bannerchevy.com/.

Barnett, James F. Jr. 2007. *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. https://books.google.com/books?id=wIq6wImc2s0C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina. *A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, 15 Feb. 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf.

Bonfiglio, Olga. "Re-Building New Orleans With Food." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 17 Apr. 2012, http://www.huffpost.com/entry/foods-impact-on-rebuildin_n_1280103.

Brasted, Chelsea. “How big were New Orleans' Super Bowl protest parties? Let us show you.” *nola.com*, 4 Feb. 2019. https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/article_9ccf9028-4de2-51dd-a7ca-d8b2731cb90e.html.

Brinkley, Douglas. 2006. *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. New York: Morrow. https://archive.org/details/greatdelugehurri00brin.

Brinkley, Douglas. “How New Orleans Drowned.” *Vanity Fair*, 17 Oct. 2006, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2006/06/brinkley_excerpt200606.

Bullard, Robert Doyle, and Beverly M. Wright. *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Westview Press, 2009. Online edition.

Bumiller, Elisabeth. “Bush criticized over storm response.” *The New York Times*, 2 Sept. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/02/world/americas/bush-criticized-over-storm-response.html.

Business Report Staff. “The Land Barons.” *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*, 1 Feb. 2009. https://www.businessreport.com/article/the-land-barons.

Casselman, Ben. “Katrina Washed Away New Orleans’s Black Middle Class.” *FiveThirtyEight*, 24 Aug. 2015, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/katrina-washed-away-new-orleanss-black-middle-class/.

Caponetto, Robbie. “Foodways winner: Richard McCarthy.”Birmingham: *Southern Living*, 2005, https://www.southernliving.com/travel/1203-heroes-mccarthy.

CBS News. “Murder map: Deadliest U.S. cities.” *Columbia Broadcasting System*, 2019. https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/murder-map-deadliest-u-s-cities/63/.

Chappell, Bill. “5 Former New Orleans Police Officers Plead Guilty Over Danziger Bridge Killings.” 20 Apr. 2016, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/474973779/5-former-new-orleans-police-officers-enter-guilty-pleas-over-danziger-bridge-kil.

Clendenning, Jessica, et al. “Food Justice or Food Sovereignty? Understanding the Rise of Urban Food Movements in the USA.” *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33, no. 1 (2015): 165–177., doi:10.1007/s10460-015-9625-8.

CNN Library. “Hurricane Katrina Statistics Fast Facts.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 30 Oct. 2019, https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/23/us/hurricane-katrina-statistics-fast-facts/index.html.

Committee on Energy & Commerce United States House of Representatives. *Written Statement on Hurricane Katrina by Kenneth P. Moran*. Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives, 7 Sept. 2007. https://www.fcc.gov/document/written-statement-kenneth-p-moran-director-office-homeland-security-0.

Cooper, Christopher. "Old-Line Families Escape Worst of Flood And Plot the Future." *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 Sept. 2005, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB112614485840634882.

Dakss, Brian. "Death Toll Will 'Shock The Nation.'" *CBS News*, 6 Sept. 2005, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/death-toll-will-shock-the-nation/.

Dyson, Michael E. 2006. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Books.

Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Food Access Research Atlas*. https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/.

Edelman, Marc, et al. "Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. 41, no. 6 (2014): 911–931. doi:10.1080/03066150.2014.963568.

Farber, Dan. "When IPhone Met World, 7 Years Ago Today." *CNET*, CNET, 9 Jan. 2014, https://www.cnet.com/news/when-iphone-met-world-7-years-ago-today/.

FEMA. *First Responders Urged Not To Respond To Hurricane Impact Areas Unless Dispatched By State, Local Authorities*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security, 29 Aug. 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20120714045017/http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=18470.

Fisher, Andrew, and Saru Jayaraman. 2018. *Big Hunger the Unholy Alliance between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups.* Anarbor: The MIT Press.

Friedmann, Harriet and Philip McMichael. "Agriculture and the State System: The Rise and Decline of National Agriculture." *Sociologia Ruralis*, 29, vol. 2 (1987): 93-117. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9523.1989.tb00360.x.

Friedmann, Harriet. "From Colonialism to Green Capitalism: Social Movements and Emergence of Food Regimes." *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development Research in Rural Sociology and Development*. 11 (2005): 227–264., doi:10.1016/s1057-1922(05)11009-9.

Gardner, Karen Karen Gardner. “Ten Years after Katrina, New Orleans's Food Pantries Struggle to Stay Afloat.” *The New Food Economy*, 20 July 2018, http://www.newfoodeconomy.org/new-orleans-food-pantries-struggling/.

Gibbens, Sarah. “Hurricane Katrina, Explained.” *National Geographic*, 16 Jan. 2019, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/reference/hurricane-katrina/#close.

Glennie, Charlotte and Alison Hope Alkon. “Food justice: cultivating the field.” *Environmental Research Letters*, 13 (2018): 1-13. doi: 10.1088/1748-9326/aac4b2.

Graham, Stephen. 2010. *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*. London: Verso. https://libcom.org/files/Graham,%20Stephen%20-%20Cities%20Under%20Siege.%20The%20New%20Military%20Urbanism_0.pdf.

Gratz, Roberta Brandes. 2015. *We're Still Here, Ya Bastards: How the People of New Orleans Rebuilt Their City*. New York: Nation Books.

Gray, Margaret. 2014. *Labor and the Locavore: The Making of a Comprehensive Food Ethic.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Guthman, Julie. “Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice.” *Cultural Geographies*, 15, no. 4 (2008): 431–447. doi:10.1177/1474474008094315.

Harvey, Daina Cheyenne, Yuki Kato, and Catarina Possidomo. “Rebuilding others' communities: a critical analysis of race and nativism in non-profits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.” *The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 21, iss. 8 (2016): 1029-1046. https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2015.1064100.

Henderson, Thomas Paul. “State–peasant movement relations and the politics of food sovereignty in Mexico and Ecuador.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44 (2016): 33-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1236024.

Herbermann, Charles. 1913. *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, New York : Robert Appleton Co. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1017058.html.

Herbet, Bob. “Sick and Abandoned.” *The New York Times*, 15 Sept. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/15/opinion/sick-and-abandoned.html.

Hislop, Rasheed Salaam. “Reaping Equity: A Survey of Food Justice Organizations in the U.S.A.” MS diss., University of California, Davis, 2015. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1695282787?pq-origsite=gscholar.

History.com Editors. “The French in New Orleans.” *History.com*, 21 Aug. 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/the-french-in-new-orleans.

Hsu, Spencer S. “Leaders Lacking Disaster Experience.” *Washington Post*, 9 Sept. 2005, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/08/AR2005090802165.html.

Hutchings, Richard M. and Marina La Salle. “Archaeology as Disaster Capitalism.” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 19 (2015): 699-720. doi 10.1007/s10761-015-0308-3.

Hyndman, Jennifer. 2011. *Dual Disasters: Humanitarian Aid after the 2004 Tsunami*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.

Ibarra, J. T. et al. “When formal and market-based conservation mechanisms disrupt food sovereignty: Impacts of community conservation and payments for environmental services on an indigenous community of Oaxaca, Mexico.” *International Forestry Review*, 13, no. 3 (2011): 1-20. doi: 10.1505/146554811798293935.

Johnson, Kevin. “6,644 are still missing after Katrina; toll may rise.” *Nation*, USA Today, 21 Nov. 2005, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-11-21-katrina-missing_x.htm.

Jones, Bradley A. “Hurricane Katrina, the Politics of Pity, and the News Media.” PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011. https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/89727/braajone_1.pdf%3Bsequence=1.

Jones, Terry L. 2007. *A Louisiana Journey*, Salt Lake: Gibbs Smith. https://books.google.fr/books?id=rn4p-eFL6oMC&pg=PA115&dq=louisiana+code+noir&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=Jzq6VO-MOcOxaZaqgJAB&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=louisiana%20code%20noir&f=false.

Jonsén, M. Windfuhr J. 2005. *Food sovereignty: towards democracy in localized food systems.* Warwickshire, U.K.: ITDG Publishing.

Kato, Yuki, Catarina Marie Passidomo and Diana Harvey. “Political Gardening in a Post-Disaster City: Lessons from New Orleans.” *Urban Studies*, 51, no. 9 (2014): 1833–1849. doi:10.1177/0042098013504143.

Kemp, Roger. 2010. *Documents of American Democracy*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.. https://books.google.com/books?id=JHawgM-WnlUC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Kendall, John Smith A.M. 1922. *History of New Orleans*, New York: The Lewis Publishing Company. https://books.google.com/books?id=w-YxAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

King, John and Suzanne Malveaux. "FEMA director Brown resigns." *CNN.com*, 12 Sept. 2005, https://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/09/12/brown.resigns/.

Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, New York: Metropolitan Books.

Knueven, Liz. "The typical American household earns $61,000 a year. Here are 15 states where the typical resident earns even less." *Business Insider*, 19 Aug. 2019. https://www.businessinsider.com/poorest-states-in-the-us-by-median-household-income-2019-8.

Kucher, Karen and Debbi Farr Baker. "Bush marks anniversary of World War II's end with comparison to post-war Iraq." *San Diego Tribune*, 30 Aug. 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20060301213556/http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20050830-1209-bn30bush3.html.

Kutz, Gregory D. and John J. Ryan. *HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA DISASTER RELIEF Improper and Potentially Fraudulent Individual Assistance Payments Estimated to Be Between $600 Million and $1.4 Billion*. Washington, D.C.: Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, 14 June 2006. https://www.gao.gov/assets/120/114055.pdf.

Lafaye, G. R. L. 1918. *A Map of the Vieux Carré with the Suburbs, Faubourgs, and Plantation Sites which to-day constitute a part of Greater New Orleans*. Map in JPEG format from Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4d/Neworleansbook_Greater_New_Orleans_Map.jpg.

Lane, Emily. "Public corruption in Louisiana 'can't get much worse,' says outgoing FBI New Orleans director." *nola.com*, 3 Nov. 2017. https://www.nola.com/news/crime_police/article_57acfae9-b8d2-5f1e-b695-d711920ff1b5.html.

Lapiere, Richard T. 1928. "Race Prejudice: France and England." *Oxford Journals* 7 no. 1 (Sept. 1928) 102-111. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3004554.

Larino, Jennifer. "See 300 years of population, racial changes in New Orleans." *nola.com*, 13 Apr. 2018. https://www.nola.com/news/politics/article_e723fe1f-621b-5c03-81ee-e80e15e27637.html

Lee, Trymaine. “Rumor to Fact in Tales of Post-Katrina Violence.” *The New York Times*, 26 Aug. 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/27/us/27racial.html.

“List of Louisiana Hurricanes (2000–Present).” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, last edited 30 Nov. 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Louisiana_hurricanes_(2000–present).

Logsdon, Dawn, Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Nelson et al. 2016. *Faubourg Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*. New Day Films, DVD.

Louisiana Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism. “Antebellum Louisiana Ii: Agrarian Life.” *Louisiana Office of the Lieutenant Governor*, 2018, https://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-museum/online-exhibits/the-cabildo/antebellum-louisiana-agrarian-life/index.

Luft, Rachel E. “Beyond Disaster Exceptionalism: Social Movement Developments in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.” *American Quarterly*, 61, no. 3 (Sept. 2009): 499-527. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27735005.

McDonald, Robert A. “Independent economic production by slaves on antebellum Louisiana sugar plantations.” *A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 12, no. 1 (2008): 182-208. doi: 10.1080/01440399108575028.

McMichael, Philip. “A food regime genealogy.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36 (2009): 139-169. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150902820354.

McNulty, Ian and Jeff Adelson. “How many restaurants does New Orleans have? We counted, and counted, and counted…” *nola.com*, 16 Jun. 2018, https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/eat-drink/article_fc7deeff-088a-5b68-a395-9320e48ce07f.html.

Mignolo, Walter. 2005. *The Idea of Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

“Military Due to Move Into New Orleans,” *CNN.com*, 2 Sept. 2005, https://www.cnn.com/2005/WEATHER/09/02/katrina.impact/.

Monbiot, George. “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems.” *The Guardian*, 15 Apr. 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot.

Mosquito Supper Club. “Our Impact.” *Mosquito Supper Club*, http://www.mosquitosupperclub.com/.

Mosquito Supper Club. “Mosquito Supper Club.” *Mosquito Supper Club*, http://www.mosquitosupperclub.com/.

National Hurricane Center. *Costliest U.S. Tropical Cyclones Tables Updated*. National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, 26 Jan. 2018. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/news/UpdatedCostliest.pdf.

National Volunteer Service. "The Power of Help and Hope After Katrina by the Numbers: Volunteers in the Gulf." *Volunteer.gov*, https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/katrina_volunteers_respond.pdf.

National Weather Service. *Tropical Definitions*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, 4 Dec. 2016. https://www.weather.gov/mob/tropical_definitions.

Office for Coastal Management. *Fast Facts: Hurricane Costs*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 7 Oct. 2019, https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/hurricane-costs.html.

O'Neill, Ann. "Grim Signs of Katrina's Staggering Toll." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Sept. 2005, https://www.cnn.com/2005/US/09/08/katrina.missing/index.html?iref=mpstoryview.

Passidomo, Catarina Marie. "Right to (feed) the city: race, food sovereignty, and food justice activism in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans." PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2013. https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/passidomo_catarina_m_201312_phd.pdf.

Passidomo, Catarina Marie. "Whose right to (farm) the city? Race and food justice activism in post-Katrina New Orleans." *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31, iss. 3 (2014): 385-396. DOI:10.1007/s10460-014-9490-x.

Pelling, Mark and Kathleen Dill. "Disaster Politics: Tipping Points for Change in the Adaptation of Sociopolitical Regimes." *Progress in Human Geography*, 34, iss. 1 (2010): 21-37. doi: 10.1177/0309132509105004.

Phillips, Sarah. "A Brief History of Facebook." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 25 July 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia.

Plyer, Allison. "Facts for Features: Katrina Impact." *The Data Center*, Nonprofit Knowledge Works, 26 Aug. 2016. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/data-resources/katrina/facts-for-impact/.

Roberts, Joel. "Poll: Katrina Response Inadequate." *CBS News*, 8 Sept. 2005, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-katrina-response-inadequate/.

Rose, Donald, J. Nicholas Bodor, Janet C. Rice et al. "The Effects of Hurricane Katrina on Food Access Disparities in New Orleans." *American Journal of Public Health*, 101, no. 3 (2011): 482–484. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2010.196659.

Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. 2007. “From the Borderlands to the Transnational? Critiquing Empire in the Twenty-First Century.” In *A Companion to Latina/o Studies*, edited by Juan Flores and Renato Rosaldo, 502-512. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing.

Saltman, Kenneth J. “Schooling in Disaster Capitalism: How the Political Right Is Using Disaster to Privatize Public Schooling.” *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (2007): 131-156. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23479021.

Sastry, Narayan, and Jesse Gregory. “The Location of Displaced New Orleans Residents in the Year After Hurricane Katrina.” *Demography*, 51, no. 3 (2014): 753–755. doi:10.7717/peerj.6447/supp-2.

Sauder, Robert A. “The Origin and Spread of the Public Market System in New Orleans.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 22, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 281-297. ISSN: 0024-6816.

Schleifstein, Mark. “Study of Hurricane Katrina's dead show most were old, lived near levee breaches.” *nola.com*, 28 Aug. 2009, https://www.nola.com/news/weather/article_35741734-68e1-575e-86d0-29366eed38e5.html.

Shane, Scott and Eric Lipton. “Stumbling Storm-Aid Effort Put Tons of Ice on Trips to Nowhere.” *The New York Times*, 2 Oct. 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/02/us/nationalspecial/stumbling-stormaid-effort-put-tons-of-ice-on-trips-to.html.

Shockroc1. “Bush Doesn't Care About Black People.” *YouTube* video, 0:10. 17 Apr. 2006, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIUzLpO1kxI.

Shreck, Aimee et al. “Social sustainability, farm labor, and organic agriculture: Findings from an exploratory analysis.” *Agriculture and Human Values*, 23 (2006): 439–449. doi:10.1007/s10460-006-9016-2.

Siegel, Karen R., et al. “Association of Higher Consumption of Foods Derived From Subsidized Commodities With Adverse Cardiometabolic Risk Among US Adults.” *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 176, no. 8 (2016): 1124-1132., doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.2410.

Slocum, Rachel. “Whiteness, space and alternative food practice.” *Geoforum,* 38 (2007): 520-533. http://sites.middlebury.edu/gsfswhitepeople/files/2016/09/slocum.pdf.

Smith, Matt and Deanna Hackney. “Ex-New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin guilty after courtroom 'belly flop.'” *CNN*, 14 Feb. 2014, https://www.cnn.com/2014/02/12/justice/louisiana-nagin-convicted/index.html

Solomon, John and Spencer S. Hsu. “Most Katrina Aid From Overseas Went Unclaimed.” *washingtonpost.com*, 29 Apr. 2007, http://www.heal-online.org/katrina.pdf.

Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha. “Tribal History.” 11 March 2014, http://www.chitimacha.gov/history-culture/tribal-history.

Steinberg, Martin H. 2001. *Disorders of Hemoglobin: Genetics, Pathophysiology, and Clinical Management*, New York : Cambridge University Press. https://www-cambridge-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/core/books/disorders-of-hemoglobin/34CA27FF445ABBBB21512FD855F7EC33.

Stonich, Susan C., Jerrel H. Sorensen and Anna Hundt. “Ethnicity, class, and gender in tourism development: The case of the Bay Islands, Honduras.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 3, iss. 1 (1995): 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669589509510705.

Squires, Gregory D. and Chester Hartman. 2006. *There is no such thing as a natural disaster: Race, class, and hurricane Katrina*. New York: Routledge.

Sweeney, Kathryn A. “THE BLAME GAME: Racialized Responses to Hurricane Katrina.” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 3, iss. 1 (2006): 161-174. doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X06060115.

Taylor, Patrick. 1995. “Rereading Fanon, Rewriting Caribbean History.” In *Postcolonial Discourse and Changing Cultural Contexts: Theory and Criticism*, edited by Gita Rajan, Radhika Mohanram, 17-32. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=jjUx_k1Y43oC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q=patrick%20taylor&f=false.

Thompson, Richard. “Makin' groceries: Number of stores in New Orleans returns to pre-Katrina levels.” *nola.com*, 24 Aug. 2015, https://www.nola.com/news/business/article_1fff3147-c7cb-55b1-82c7-2b012b9da88d.html.

“Timeline: Who Knew When the Levees Broke.” *NPR*, 10 Feb. 2006, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5200940.

Tooker, Poppy. 2009. *Crescent City Farmers Market Cookbook*. New Orleans: Marketumbrella.org.

“Topic: Food Security.” *International Food Policy Research Institute*, http://www.ifpri.org/topic/food-security.

U.S. Department of Commerce and National Ocean Service. *What Is Storm Surge?* National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, 4 Sept. 2016. Https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/stormsurge-stormtide.html.

Via Campesina. “Declaration of Nyéléni.” *Nyeleni.org*, 27 Feb. 2007, https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290.

Voit, Kelsey A. *Sewing Collective Liberation: Framing Food Movement Work with Racial Justice*. B.S. thes., University of Louisville, Kentucky, 2017. http://www.kelseyvoit.com/sowing-collective-liberation-framing-food-movement-work-with-racial-justice.html.

Waring, George E. Jr. 1886. *La Nouvelle Orleans en 1728*. Map in JPEG format from University of Texas Libraries, Austin, TX. https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/new_orleans_1728.jpg.

Willis, Monica Michael. "Bayou Benediction: A Taste of Chef Melissa Martin's Mosquito Supper Club." *Modern Farmer*, 28 June 2016, https://modernfarmer.com/2016/06/melissa-martin-mosquito-supper-club/.

Zautra, Alex J. "Resilience Is Social, after All." Resilience Solutions Group LLC, 2014, pp. 1-29., https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38787256/Chapter_Resilience_is_social__afterall.pdf?response-content-disposition=inline; filename=resilience_is_social.pdf&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A/20191106/us-east-1/s3/aws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20191106T214128Z&X-Amz-Expires=3600&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=05949364a311815fbd88d271135a0935c24bfcc841ab5e6c350505e2f3e48449.

Zimmermann, Kim Ann. "Hurricane Katrina: Facts, Damage & Aftermath." *LiveScience*, Future US Inc, 27 Aug. 2015, https://www.livescience.com/22522-hurricane-katrina-facts.html.