

(NOT) JUST FOOD, BUT JUSTICE



Larger Questions:

When you think of food insecure communities, what do you think of? What do the people look like? What are they wearing? Where are they located? What are they doing? Where do they come from? Why do you think that came up for you? Lean in to the possible discomfort of identifying factors.

How are these programs identifying and addressing root causes of food injustice? What are the challenges and assets in the communities these programs are organized by or based in? How could you, as an individual, or as part of your different communities, support the work?

How can Jewish text, ritual, and tradition inform the creation of sustainable practices?

APPETIZER:

"FOOD MEDITATION, ADAPTED FROM *GOD IN YOUR BODY*"

Jay Michaelson

Jay Michaelson is a rabbi who is well known for writing about Judaism and LGBTQ+ issues, and has been published in the Washington Post, Forward, and the Daily Beast.

Food meditation is a very simple practice, just waking up to the body, to fulfill the injunction of *v'achalta, v'savata, u'verachta* (you will eat, you'll be satisfied, and you'll bless) with the same intensity our ancestors might have had.

1. Begin by tearing off a piece of the challah at the center of your table. First, feel the food with your fingers, and gaze at it with focused attention. What does it feel like, or look like? Smell the challah, and notice what effects doing so has on your body. Does your mouth water or tingle, your stomach rumble? What other physical responses are you having?

2. "Check in" next with the heart. What desires do you have? Are you hungry? Nauseated? Thankful? Or, maybe, do you think this practice is maybe not for you? Whatever the "feeling-tone" of this experience is, just note it attentively, without judgment; stay with it for a couple of breaths, and see if it shifts, or intensifies, or ebbs.

3. Think of all the conditions necessary to have created this food. The four primordial elements of fire (sun), water, Earth, and air; the genetic information in the plants (or animals), you are holding a small storehouse of the sun's energy, and water from a cloud. Allow the poetry of this simple piece of food to be felt, in your body. It's easy to be cynical or sarcastic. It's harder, and more rewarding, to cultivate a moment of sincerity.

4. Now, consider for a moment all of the people involved in bringing this food to you. Farmers, truck drivers, factory workers, store keepers-- there are hundreds, if not thousands, of people whose labor created the simple occasion of this food arriving in this moment. Take a moment to consider them; imagine what they look like, how hard they are working to support themselves and their families, the economic system that creates the conditions for their labor.

5. Place the food in your mouth, but before chewing and swallowing, experience the tactile sensations of the food on your tongue, the feeling of the mouth watering. What happens to your whole body when you put the food in? See if the taste shifts in different parts of the mouth. You might keep your eyes closed for the duration of this practice, simply to focus your attention on what's going on

As we move on through the meal, try to maintain the attentiveness that you've cultivated in both eating and our conversation. Make your actions and words mindful, not automatic. We have a finite number of hours on this planet -- why not be as awake as possible for each of them?



ENTREE OPTION 1:

FIGHTING FOOD WASTE: 412 FOOD RESCUE

FRAMING:

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's 2016 survey, "41.2 million people lived in a food-insecure households." In other words, 28.3 million adults and 12.9 million children lived in households where, at some point during the year, one or more members did not have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to lead an active, healthy life. Within those households, individuals feel the impact of food insecurity in many different ways; parents skip a meal to make sure their children have enough to eat, food is supplemented through governmental and non-governmental assistance, or families rely on basic and limited diets. For 6.1 million out of the total 15.6 million food-insecure households, food insecurity becomes so severe that people must¹ reduce or miss meals.

These statistics are horrifying and humbling. Millions of people are living in hunger in the United States of America. For every given or chosen family that gathers around Thanksgiving dinner tonight, there are many who approach another meal with trepidation, anxiety, and hopelessness. But understanding the scope is just a first, critical step. The numbers do not tell us how to act effectively and thoughtfully against hunger. Next we must listen and learn about the root causes and solutions to food

TEXT ONE: "Redirecting the Waste Stream : Meet The App That's Saved 1.5 Million Pounds Of Food To Date, Interview with Leah Lizarondo"

Marisa Dubecky, Interview of Leah Lizarondo, *Bust*.²

Jay Michaelson is a rabbi who is well known for writing about Judaism and LGBTQ+ issues, and has been published in the Washington Post, Forward, and the Daily Beast.

The difficult thing about food waste is almost half of it happens at the retail level, where each instance of waste is small and unpredictable. So it's difficult to recover this using traditional trucking logistics. Couple that with the fact that waste management costs are so low (it's very cheap to dump things in landfills), and the easiest option is to just throw things out. Now let's focus on the end of the food chain. These are the following issues around food waste. We throw out food that we do not need to while people go hungry and the food in landfills contributes to climate change. The result is that food is the number one thing in America's landfills, and it contributes more to climate pollution than all of the cars in Georgia. Approximately \$1,500 per year is lost by a 4 person family on wasted food.

That's where 412 Food Rescue comes in. We developed an app that aggregates food retailers who have surplus food, nonprofits that need the food, and most importantly, people who want to do something about hunger and the environment...The social growth of our app has made us one of the fastest-growing food recovery organizations in the US, which I think is reflective of the fact that all of us want to act. We just need to be shown how we can do it, and even better, how we can do it in the context of our everyday lives. 412 Food Rescue's mission is to prevent perfectly viable food from entering the waste stream. Founded as a direct response to the disconnect between food waste, hunger and environmental sustainability, 412 Food Rescue partners with food retailers (grocery stores, food distributors, restaurants, etc) and a growing network of #FoodRescueHeroes (volunteers) to rescue surplus food and redirect it to nonprofits that serve those who are food insecure.³ To date, 412 Food Rescue has rescued over 1.7 million pounds of surplus food from entering the waste stream. Instead, this surplus food has reached individuals and families who struggle with food insecurity and has eradicated hunger in some communities.



Leah Giselle

¹ "Household Food Security in the United States in 2016," Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew Rabbitt, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service..

² "Meet The App That's Saved 1.5 Million Pounds of Food to date," Marissa Dubecky. *Bust*.

³ [412 Food Rescue Website.](#)

TEXT TWO:
Volunteer Floyd Hughes, 412 Food Rescue

"Generosity is infectious. One time we were unloading a van of bread and the manager of the organization had a line of people helping us as we passed bread from the van to their building. Someone on the street walked by and asked if we were giving away bread. One of the people helping to unload said "I don't think so." The manager of the organization quickly responded "Oh, we most definitely are" and began passing out bread to people on the street; some of those who received it began giving their bread to others (I would have to say this was one of the highlights as well). When people donate their time, which is one of the most valuable things we have since it cannot be earned back, it inspires others to be generous as well. "



Floyd Hughes (right)

Nonprofit partner: Debbie Baumiller, Senior Center Coordinator from NAMES (Northern Area Multiservice Center)

"Working with 412 Food Rescue has improved the quality of health and life for many of our consumers, and we look forward to continuing our great partnership. Not only would they be helping fulfill a dire need in their community, but when you volunteer with 412, you get to meet like-minded and love-filled people and personally see the good you're helping to accomplish. It can't get better than that!"



TEXT THREE:

Leviticus 19:9-10 and Isaiah 58: 6-7, 10

The passage from Leviticus 19:9-10 lays out the practice of “peah”, and Isaiah 58 is read on the holiest day in Judaism, Yom Kippur, when Jews traditionally fast and pray

Leviticus 19:9-10

(9) When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. (10) You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. (10) You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

ט) וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אַרְצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ לַקְצֹר
וְלִקְט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט: (י) וּבְרִמְךָ לֹא תַעֲוִלֵּל וּפְרֹט בְּרִמְךָ לֹא
תִלְקֹט לְעֵנִי וְלִגְר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Isaiah 58: 6-7, 10

(6) No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock fetters of wickedness, And untie the cords of the yoke To let the oppressed go free; To break off every yoke. (7) It is to share your bread with the hungry, And to take the wretched poor into your home; When you see the naked, to clothe him, And not to ignore your own kin. (10) And you offer your compassion to the hungry And satisfy the famished creature— Then shall your light shine in darkness, And your gloom shall be like noonday.

ו) הֲלוֹא זֶה צִוּם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ פִתְחֵי חַרְצֻבוֹת וְשַׁע הַתַּר אֲגַדּוֹת
מוֹטָה וְשִׁלַּח רְצוּצִים חֲפְשִׁים וְכִל־מוֹטָה תִּנְתַּקוּ: (ז) הֲלוֹא
פָּרַס לְרַעֵב לַחֲמֶךָ וְעֵנִיִּים מְרוּדִים תִּבְנֶה בַּיִת כִּי־תִרְאֶה עָרֹם
וְכִסִּיתוּ וּמִבְשָׂרְךָ לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם: (י) וְתַפֵּק לְרַעֵב נַפְשֶׁךָ וְנַפֵּשׁ
נַעֲנֶה תִשְׁבֹּעַ וְזָרַח בְּחֹשֶׁךְ אוֹרְךָ וּפְלִתְךָ כְּצֹהַרִים:

Guiding Questions:

What does it mean to talk about hunger in the context of Thanksgiving, a holiday that is filled with overabundance? How does a feeling of scarcity and limited resources impact our approach to ensuring we have enough to eat? How does it impact our approach to ensuring that everyone has enough to eat?

How can we examine food waste from a racial justice framework? What about the effects of food waste (lost money, climate change, ect.)? How can you incorporate this understanding of an efficient food system in your own life? What is the relationship between food waste and hunger? How is 412 Food Rescue making the food system more just?

How does this biblical model for providing food make sense in our modern society?

ENTREE OPTION 2:

WOMEN FIGHTING FOR SUSTAINABILITY: EXAMINING GRASSROOTS AGRICULTURAL SOLUTIONS

Read the following quotes out loud. Ruth, Natasha Bowens, and the Black Urban and Gardeners of Pittsburgh each created or examined grassroots structures that address the land ownership and food insecurity in their communities. How do these women organize their communities through their transformative solutions?

TEXT ONE: Ruth and the Fields of Boaz

In the book of Ruth, the titular character starts with a choice. In the wake of her husband's death and bereft of any family patriarch, will Ruth remain with her Judean mother-in-law, Naomi, or return to her Moabite family to remarry? Ruth makes the radical choice to pledge her life to Naomi, her people Israel, and her God. However, as two widows who just uprooted their lives, Ruth and Naomi did not have a source of

Ruth 2:2-3, 9, 14-15 ⁴

(2) Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness." "Yes, daughter, go," she replied; (3) and off she went. She came and gleaned in a field, behind the reapers; and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech's family. (9) Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them. I have ordered the men not to molest you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of [the water] that the men have drawn." (15) When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, "You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, (16) but you must also pull some [stalks] out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean. and not scold her."

רות ב'ב'ג', ח'ט'

(ב) ותאמר רות המואביה אל־נעמי
אלכה־נא השדה ואלקטה בשבלים אחר
אשר אמצא־חן בעיניו ותאמר לה לכי בתי:
(ג) ותלך ותבוא ותלקט בשדה אחרי
הקצרים ויקר מקרה חלקת השדה לבעז
אשר ממשפחת אלימלך: (ט"ו) ותקם ללקט
ויצו בעז את־נעמי לאמר גם בין העמרים
תלקט ולא תכלימוה: (ט) עיניך בשדה
אשר־יקצרו והלכת אחריהו הלוא צויתי
את־הנערים לבלתי נגעך וצמת והלכת
אל־הכלים ושתתי מאשר ישאבו הנערים:
(ט"ז) וגם של־תשלו לה מן־הצבתיים
ועזבתם ולקטה ולא תגערו־בה:

TEXT TWO: "The Color of Food: America's Invisible Farmers"

In her book, "The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience and Farming," Bowens explores the intersections of race and food through the stories of farmers of color and her own family history in agriculture. 18 of the 30 people that she profiles in the book are women. Freelance investigative journalist Annamarya Scaccia interviews writer and food justice activist, Natasha Bowens.

Natasha Bowens. Civileats.com. April 14, 2015. ⁵

At the height of Black farming in the U.S., a million farmers owned almost 17 million acres of land. Between 1920 and 1996, however, Black land ownership dropped by 70 percent and in 2012, there were only 44,000 Black farmers in the nation. Thanks to evidence uncovered in a landmark lawsuit *Pigford v. Glickman*, we now know that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) denied credit and benefits to Black farmers and gave preferential treatment to White farmers, essentially forcing Black farmers out of agriculture. By 1992, the number of Black farmers in America had declined by 98 percent.

But that's not all. Across the board, people of color are under-represented in today's agricultural landscape. According to the latest USDA agriculture census, Latinos make up 3.2 percent of today's farm owners, American Indians or Alaska natives make up 1.8 percent, Black or African people make up 1.6 percent, and Asians constitute less than 1 percent. These are the kinds of facts that propelled me to write *The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience, and Farming*. When I joined the food and agricultural movement as a woman of color, I was immediately struck by the glaring racial

⁴ | [Ruth 2:2-3, 14-16](#)

⁵ | "The Color of Food: America's Invisible Farmers." Natasha Bowens, Civileats.com. April 14,

“Farming is Feminist: A Q&A with ‘The Color of Food’ Author, Natasha Bowens”

Annamarya Scaccia. Annaryas.com. January 21, 2015. ⁶

Our conversations would run from family histories to historic discrimination in their communities; land love and loss; barriers to successes; and traditional foodways they are trying to preserve in their communities. So many topics ran out like roots from these conversations... but many of them centered around land, power, resilience, community, and culture, which was how I decided to organize the book, with an additional section dedicated to women and young farmers.

For people of color, The Color of Food is about reclaiming our agrarian identity. It's purpose is to remind us of all the less-visible communities that steward the land and the foodways and farming practices we carry. [...] Women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of food justice in our food system... Women, as the primary providers of food for our families, feel the impact of food access and availability more significantly. I met many women who actually began farming or fighting for food justice in their communities simply because they felt it was the only way they could feed their children or ensure their kids were getting healthy foods. [W]omen like Jenga Mwendo who started the Backyard Gardeners Network in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans and is leading a community food policy council to combat the lack of food access in the neighborhood... Women leading the food justice movement for farm workers, like those in the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida, can tell you about the countless stories of sexual harassment and unfair wages the women who are growing

TEXT THREE: “Continuing The Legacy Of Black Farming, And Bringing Natural Healing To Homewood's Youths” and “Returning to the Land: Urban Gardeners Hope to put Vacant Lots to Good Use in Homewood”

The Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers Cooperative of Pittsburgh (BUGS FCP) “revives and continues the tradition of black farmers begun after Emancipation in the 1860’s and imparts the gardening and agricultural skills many people in the community have to others to keep that tradition alive.” It addresses the dire food desert problem in many majority-black communities by making fresh food available to people who have limited transportation options.

Virginia Alvino Young, WESA. June 30, 2017 and Jake Flannick, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. August 4, 2017. ⁷

A grass-roots group of gardeners and community activists is turning two overgrown lots in Homewood into an urban farm, seeking to expand access to healthy food and improve the collective well-being of this once-fertile neighborhood.

6 & 7 | “Farming is Feminist: A Q&A with ‘The Color of Food.’ Author, Natasha Bowens,” Annamarya Scaccia, Annaryas.com. January 21, 2015.

The group, called the Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers of Pittsburgh Cooperative — or BUGS, for short — is preparing to cultivate the neglected land with all kinds of organic fruits, vegetables and herbs, including peppers, squashes, cabbage, collard greens. BUGS works to improve quality of life and create economic stability in the black community, promoting urban agriculture and natural healing as integral to such efforts...

There’s a history of challenges for African Americans working to take care of their community, including farmers, according to Bey. “This is nothing new,” she said. “After slavery, a lot of our ancestors who were sharecropping would have their crops burned down by the Klan, so they started farmers’ associations.” Bey [says] contemporary Pittsburgh farmers face their own set of challenges. “As black gardeners and farmers, we needed to come together to work together to share work days for sweat equity. ... We found that in Pittsburgh, a lot of us weren’t sitting at the table who were black, and we needed to fight institutionalized racism that exists even in urban agriculture,” she said. “Growing your own food, putting your hands in soil, is one of the most revolutionary things you can do,” said Raqueeb Bey, the group’s founder.

Homewood has one of Pittsburgh’s highest crime and poverty rates, and its streets are rife with blighted and vacant lots. Although it is home to a couple of farm stands, regular access to healthy food is limited...it has no local grocery, only corner stores where wholesome food is scarce. Nonetheless, efforts to restore the economic and social fabric of the community have taken root, including gardening projects and youth outreach and senior programs. Next to the entrance of Westinghouse High are 10 raised garden beds fashioned from recycled plastic.⁸ Using land in Homewood for growing food and green space is neither novel nor idealistic. Years ago, fruit trees and gardens abounded here, Ms. Harris-Yates said. Reviving a more agrarian-minded community, she said, rests largely with younger generations. “We’ve always grown food,” Ms. Harris-Yates said. “We’re just re-creating what was already there before.” She is a program manager for the BUGS group and is overseeing the Homewood project. Tucked along Monticello Street, a residential side street in Homewood North, the two lots stretch over a total of 31,000 square feet.

Student gardeners from Westinghouse will get exercise and learn more about growing fresh food, but the space is also meant to encourage mental healing. In addition to things like yoga and meditation, Harris-Yates wants to bring “care farming” to the space. Its benefits are two-fold, she said. First, the simple act of working in the soil. “Because when one is nurturing that plant, they’re nurturing themselves,” she said. But they’ll also grow a variety of herbs and plants to consume for natural healing, which Harris-Yates said can address a variety of conditions, like post-traumatic stress,

8 | “Returning to the land: Urban gardeners hope to put vacant lots to good use in Homewood.” Jake Flannick, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. August 4, 2017

Research suggests that gardening, and even the presence of green space, can have positive physiological and psychological effects. “We know our community has experienced a lot of trauma,” said Ms. Harris-Yates, who grew up in Homewood. An herbalist and an energy healer with a background in Western psychology, she has created a therapeutic farming program for children that is intended to deepen their relationship with the natural world.⁹

Healing begins with a connection to the soil, Harris-Yates said, and her students will be able to provide the produce, medicinal herbs and plants she wants all of Homewood to experience. “We play in dirt, and we teach children how to play in dirt, and we teach adults how to play in dirt,” she said. “It’s not going to kill you, you can always wash

Guiding Questions:

What are Ruth’s, Bowens’s, and BUGS’s relationships to the land? What are the similarities and differences in their attitudes and approaches to ensuring food security? What’s the significance of these women rooting their food justice work in their own communities and traditions?

What are underlying values that inspire their actions? How do their lived experiences inform their approaches? What does the ability to produce food mean for them and their communities? Who has ownership over them? What powers do they need to fight against?

In the Ruth portion, Boaz mentions twice that he has ordered his workers not to harass Ruth, and in the Bowen interview, harassment is mentioned again. How do misogyny and food justice intersect? What are other ways that sexism affects food justice work?

How does the work of BUGS resonate with you? Raqueeb Bey cites historical needs for Black Farmers Co-ops due to racism and hate, in what ways do you think racism still affects growing food?

ENTREE OPTION 3: ADDRESSING FOOD GENTRIFICATION AND CULINARY APPROPRIATION

FRAMING:

In this option, you will explore how communities approach food from different ethnic and cultural traditions, particularly white communities. What are the guidelines we can make for ourselves to explore foods and not supporting food gentrification? How does racism play out in the way we eat?

TEXT ONE: #FoodGentrification and Culinary Rebranding of Traditional Foods

By Soleil Ho, *Bitch Magazine*, January 23, 2014 ⁹

Since the beginning of January [2014], Whole Foods has been screaming it from their Facebook pages, corporate blog, news affiliates, and tastefully designed signage: “Collards are the new kale!” While at first glance this just seems like a flash-in-the-pan and downright lazy line of ad copy, its casual, trend-focused language raised red flags among some people. When Mikki Kendall, a Black feminist and writer who tweets as Karnythia, began riffing on the laughable idea of Whole Foods and their customers “discovering” a vegetable that had been a staple of working class Black and White Southern Americans’ meals for centuries, the hashtag #foodgentrification was born.... Though the health benefits of such foods are well-documented, their trendiness within majority populations tends to result in a generally unhealthy outcomes for their cultures of origin....the price of that food item inflates to meet the surge in mainstream demand for it..

The central and sustaining drive behind the #foodgentrification conversation is an overwhelming sense of fear: fear of being unable to feed one’s family, of losing access to traditional foods, of being priced out of toxin-free produce, of one’s food being alternately shamed and fetishized depending on commercial whims, of having one’s history repackaged and sold. It comes down to a waiting game; many of the participants in this conversation voiced resignation over the possibility that their food would be next. If anything, the crucial importance of #foodgentrification lies in the way it enables participants to expose a particular piece of economic inequality that operates with a glossy, do-gooder façade. It’s difficult to avoid feeling like you’re not complicit in systems of food insecurity after reading through the hashtag, and the

⁹ Full article: <https://bitchmedia.org/post/foodgentrification-and-culinary-rebranding-of-traditional-foods> , Soleil Ho, *Bitch Magazine*, January 23, 2014

TEXT TWO: Welcome to Pittsburgh, where white people open "90's Style Hip-Hop Fried Chicken" spots in the gentrified hood

By Damon Young, Real Smart Brothas, May 09, 2017¹⁰

If this weren't a real thing that was really actually happening, the concept of a 90's style hip-hop fried chicken restaurant created by White people in the hood would make for a cute and clever Chappelle or Key & Peele skit... White people seem intent on proving they're able to create realities far more absurd and ridiculous than any fiction. Which is why East Liberty — which used to be a Black Pittsburgh cultural nexus but is rapidly morphing into Yinzer Williamsburg — will soon be home to "The Coop," which promises to be an "urban, street style type of place" serving fast casual fried chicken, according to Adam Kucenic (the owner).

That said, this is a free-ish country... And there's nothing inherently wrong with a White person launching a fried chicken spot in a still mostly Black neighborhood. Plus, fried chicken's stereotypical connection to Black people has never not been the most peculiar stereotype ever because 1) loving fried chicken isn't a bad thing and 2) everyone loves fried chicken because 3) fried chicken is fucking awesome... But remember way back when? When you first read the title of this piece, and said "Wait. Um...WTF?" And then read some more just to make sure that the sheer absurdity of the title reflected a thing that was actually happening? Those feelings exist because you're aware of that historical connection between Black people and fried chicken. And you're also aware of the salmagundi of racially, culturally, and politically charged feelings that exist whenever Black residents and businesses are displaced or priced out of historically Black neighborhoods. And that context allowed you to immediately instinctively recognize that the concept behind that restaurant in that specific location is a terribly insensitive idea.

[...] Whenever something like this happens, there's a tendency to dismiss the act as tone deaf. This is perhaps the most optimistic way of assessing these situations, as it implies that the person's heart was in the right place, but they're just oblivious to the factors and histories making their decision a gauche one...This concept was addressed on the University of Maryland panel Panama and I were on a couple weeks ago. The infamous #PepsiLivesMatter commercial was brought up... And the more we talked about it, the more we started leaning arrogance. That the type of people behind Pepsi's misfire know that what they're doing is vulturizing the culture, but just don't give a fuck. [...]

TEXT THREE: An Interview with Winona LaDuke

Sarah van Gelder, YES! Magazine, Jun 17, 2008¹¹

Winona LaDuke and White Earth Land Recovery Project¹²

Environmental justice and indigenous rights activist, Green Party Vice Presidential Candidate and writer, Winona LaDuke founded the White Earth Land Recovery Project in 1989 to recover land that was originally a part of the White Earth Indian Reservation land base and to revive cultural practices like the cultivation of wild rice. Born to a Anishinaabe father and to a Russian/Polish Jewish mother, she continued her parents' legacy of fighting for social change.

"I've worked in my own community since 1981. We tried waiting for the federal and state government to take care of things, and if we had not taken action, we would still be waiting and I'd probably have a big ulcer from complaining, or kvetching as we say in Yiddish. We decided instead to put our hearts and minds together...

After the harvest, we have a big feast, and we dance and tell stories. The anthropologists watched us, and they didn't like that. They said we would never become civilized because we enjoyed our harvest too much. We did too much dancing, too much singing.

When you no longer enjoy your relationship to your food, to your plant relatives, to the harvest, to the dancing and singing—when you end up with a harvest that has no relationships or joy, I think that must be the mark of civilization and industrialized

¹⁰ | Full article: <http://verysmartbrothas.com/welcome-to-pittsburgh-where-white-people-open-90s-style-hip-hop-fried-chicken-spots-in-the-gentrified-hood/>, Damon Young, Real Smart Brothas, May 09, 2017

¹¹ | "An Interview with Winona LaDuke," Sarah Van Gelder. YES! Magazine. Jun 17, 2008.

¹² | [White Earth Land Recovery Project](#)

TEXT FOUR: “Michael Twitty, Black Jewish Foodie, Talks ‘Culinary Justice’”

Nirit Ben-Ari, Forward.com, December 20, 2014 ¹³

[Michael] Twitty, 37, grew up in Washington, D.C. A cook and culinary historian, he is African-American, openly gay and a skullcap-wearing Jew. He’s been teaching in Hebrew schools for 12 years, preparing boys and girls for their bar or bat mitzvah in Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist synagogues. Twitty also takes part as an actor in historical reenactments at Southern plantations, dressed in slaves’ clothing and cooking like his ancestors did. Confused about his identity? He will do little to put you at ease, because this is who he is; if you can’t handle it, you don’t interest him.

In his own kitchen in Washington, Twitty likes to fuse the two cooking traditions that define his identity. “I use old Jewish recipes... [but] I mix it all together. When I make kugel, I use peaches – peach kugel. Because my grandma made peach cake and all that stuff. So I make the kugel with peaches. It’s just a way of making sense of yourself.” The idea of writing a history of Southern food came to him after he heard about a book of recipes created at the Theresienstadt concentration camp, written by women imprisoned there who wanted to preserve their cultural heritage for future generations. “I thought, why don’t we have a cookbook that speaks to the legacy of enslaved people?”

I ask Twitty to explain how the food he studies connects with his African American identity. “It symbolizes our rural roots, and older people [in the African-American community] are very proud of that, because their parents could feed them,” he replies. “And they could feel healthy, they ate healthy, from the garden, your food was fresh, you know where it came from, it couldn’t help but be organic. But the tables got turned and we became ashamed of our roots in the South. We told ourselves we want to be urban people. We lost land, we lost money, we started to get sick and stressed out and we started to lose the connection to nature. What is West African dance about? The connection of the body to earth, to the universe. You can’t have it if you’re not on the land or connected...I advocate eating and being in balance. You are not going to give up fried chicken, you’re not. You are going to have it once, twice a month. But if you’re going to do it, don’t do it from a box or from a fast-food place. Make it the way your

Twitty is particularly incensed by privileged young whites who make cultural capital out of the black heritage. “...Black people struggle to self-express and sell our unique visions while others ape and appropriate the cultures we have created and when they package it right – become outrageously wealthy and established.” Elaborating further on this subject in our conversation, Twitty puts forward another of his themes: “culinary justice.” “I saw people using the food culture in ways that were inappropriate. Taking everything but the burden; everything but the part of the story that deals with complex issues...So we have to really begin to look at marketing a people’s heritage and what that means. When Sean Brock [a successful white Southern restaurateur] runs around saying he discovered the African roots of Southern cuisine, like nobody before him,

Guiding Questions:

What is the trend of food gentrification and how does it relate to urban gentrification?

How does marketing a vegetable as a new trend impact communities where it is part of their cultural tradition?

How does racism play out in the way we eat?

How do we walk the line of being inclusive, while not appropriating the culture of others?

What are the guidelines we can make for ourselves to explore foods and not supporting food gentrification?

Has American Jewish food been adopted by or even appropriated by the broader American culture? (think about challah, matzah balls). How does appropriation and gentrification occur differently with Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian and other Jewish culinary traditions?

In what ways can ignorance of cultures’ traditions around food contribute to food gentrification?

ENTREE OPTION 4: FOOD WORKERS' RIGHTS

TEXT ONE: “The Workers Who Pick Your Summer Berries Are Asking You Not To Buy Them”

Natasha Varner, PRI's The World. July, 18, 2016 ¹⁴

Go into any grocery store this time of year and you're sure to find an abundance of neatly packed cartons of blackberries, blueberries and strawberries. For many it's a hallmark of summer. Beneath the sweetness of these berries, though, lies a bitter labor dispute that has been roiling for years at Driscoll's, the world's largest distributor of berries — the ones you find at Costco, Target, Whole Foods and host of other grocery stores.

The conflict came to a head last week in Washington state, when farmworkers and their families marched alongside hundreds of supporters on a usually sleepy country road about an hour north of Seattle. With bullhorns, musical instruments, honking cars and chanting — “Wage theft is not OK, Sakuma has to pay” — the loud procession made its way to the family-owned Sakuma Brothers berry farm and packaging plant. The workers, many of whom are undocumented indigenous Mixteco or Triqui from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, were marching to commemorate the third anniversary of their dispute. Organized by the independent Familias Unidas por la Justicia (Families United for Justice), protesters rallied for a continued consumer boycott of Driscoll's berries and to put pressure on Sakuma Brothers to sign a contract allowing union representation for seasonal farmworkers.

“Farmworkers are the people who are most oppressed in the social and labor ladder,” the group's president, Ramon Torres, wrote in an email, translated from Spanish. He and a growing number of farm worker unions across the nation are hoping to change the way workers are treated. In a statement on their website, the union alleges that Sakuma Brothers is guilty of “systematic wage theft, poverty wages, hostile working conditions, and unattainable production standards.”

(14) You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. (15) You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it; else he will cry to the LORD against you and you will incur guilt.

(יד) לא־תַעֲשֶׂה שְׂכִיר עֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחֲיֶיךָ אִם מִגֵּרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצְךָ
בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ: (ט"ו) בְּיוֹמָו תִּתֶּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא־תִבּוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי
עֲנִי הוּא וְאֶלְיוֹ הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא־יִקְרָא עֲלֶיךָ אֶל־יְהוָה
וְהָיָה בְּךָ חַטָּא:

TEXT THREE: “In Florida Tomato Fields, a Penny Buys Progress”

Steven Greenhouse, New York Times. April 24, 2014 ¹⁵

Not long ago, Angelina Velasquez trudged to a parking lot at 5 each morning so a crew leader's bus could drop her at the tomato fields by 6. She often waited there, unpaid — while the dew dried — until 10 a.m., when the workers were told to clock in and start picking. Back then, crew leaders often hectored and screamed at the workers, pushing them to fill their 32-pound buckets ever faster in this area known as the nation's tomato capital. For decades, the fields here have had a reputation for horrid conditions. Many migrant workers picked without rest breaks, even in 95-degree heat. Some women complained that crew leaders groped them or demanded sex in exchange for steady jobs. But those abusive practices have all but disappeared, said Ms. Velasquez, an immigrant from Mexico... the Coalition of Immokalee Workers has pressured growers that produce 90 percent of Florida's tomatoes to increase wages for their 30,000 workers and follow strict standards that mandate rest breaks and forbid sexual harassment and verbal abuse.

The Fair Food Program's standards go far beyond what state or federal law requires, mandating shade tents so that workers who request a rest break can escape the hot Florida sun. Remedying a practice that Ms. Velasquez abhorred, growers must clock in workers as soon as they are bused to the fields. Every farm must have a health and safety committee with workers' representatives, and there is a 24-hour hotline that workers can call, with a Spanish-speaking investigator. Under the program, tomato pickers may receive an extra \$60 to \$80 a week because of the penny-a-pound premium. That means a 20 to 35 percent weekly pay increase for these workers, who average about \$8.75 an hour...

“This is the best workplace-monitoring program I've seen in the U.S.,” said Janice R. Fine, a labor relations professor at Rutgers. “It can certainly be a model for agriculture across the U.S. If anybody is going to lead the way and teach people how it's done, it's them.” Since the program's inception, its system of inspections and decisions issued by a former judge has resulted in suspensions for several growers, including one that failed to adopt a payroll system to ensure pickers were paid for all the time they worked. A series of prosecutions has highlighted modern-day slavery in the area — one 2008 case involved traffickers convicted of beating workers, stealing their wages and locking them in trucks. “When I first visited Immokalee, I heard appalling stories of abuse and modern slavery,” said Susan L. Marquis, dean of the Pardee RAND Graduate School, a public policy institution in Santa Monica, Calif. “But now the tomato fields in

¹⁴ | “The Workers Who Pick Your Summer Berries Are Asking You Not To Buy Them”
Full Article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/business/in-florida-tomato-fields-a-penny-buys-progress.html?mcubz=0>, Steven Greenhouse, New York Times. April 24, 2014

¹⁵ |

Guiding Questions:

In a profession where the hours are long, wages low, and labor hard, why does the Greenhouse article tout progress as being made a “penny a pound”? Are these wages fair? What about the benefits like shade tents, and breaks, are these enough?

What are ways that social justice activists can bridge the wage gap between genders, races, and ethnicities?

Why would there need to be passages protecting the rights of farm workers in Deuteronomy? Why would there be equal protection for “a stranger in one of the communities of your land?” How does this passage ring today, given the other articles above?

Currently, groups such as the Driscoll berry pickers and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers are working independently outside of government frameworks. Do you think that this is a strength from groups like Familias Unidas por la Justicia (Families United for Justice) or do you believe that government backup is essential to create a stronger movement?

DESSERT:

Option A: In Jewish tradition, a meal concludes with Birkat Hamazon, giving thanks to God for the food you have just consumed. If it is your custom, we invite you to give thanks through the traditional framework at the end of the meal. Otherwise, turn to someone at your table and give thanks for something they did during this meal, this week, or the time you have known them.

Option B: In Judaism, there are particular prayers to give thanks for vegetables and grains, whose very language remind us where our food comes from, as well giving thanks for the wide variety of the foods that we eat.

Vegetables:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the ground.

Grains:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא מִיְּבֵי מְזוֹנוֹת.

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei minei mezonot.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates varieties of nourishments.

Conclude by reflecting on the following questions together:

How does learning inform your understanding of the impact of your service? How could service without intention adversely affect the populations that you serve with?

What injustice are you trying to uproot through volunteering?

How does food waste and food injustice contribute to the broken food system? How can we as social justice activists educate people on these issues?

Take a moment to look at your next steps document on your table. In what ways can you get involved tomorrow, next week, or next year?