



CENTER FOR FOOD SYSTEMS
AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Five pieces worth reading + a few more important reads

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VT Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation

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As we reflect on the recent and unnecessary deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and the countless others, and given the ongoing violence and oppression Black people face in the United States, we have centered this week's readings on racial justice in the food system. These readings focus on the work and experiences of food system scholars and farmers of color that are engaged in the development of sustainable, community food systems as a strategy for resiliency and resistance. The readings highlight racial justice organizations whose mobilization efforts uplift Black farmers and communities. We hope these readings will help inform and encourage you to stand up and act for racial justice.

As the Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation, we recognize what so many others have rightfully pointed out before: *food justice is racial justice*. The work of food systems and community transformation must encompass and acknowledge racial equity at every level. We assert with our whole being that Black Lives Matter. By saying Black Lives Matter, we are committing to actively engaging in the work of being anti-racist as a predominantly white team.

Recognizing this, we are organizing a summer Racial Equity in the Food System Learning Circle Series to demonstrate our commitment to these movements and cultural change for social justice. We hope you will join us in June, July, and August (and beyond) for community discussions on the intersections of racial justice and food systems work. We will send a save the date for these gatherings shortly. In the meantime, please take care of yourself and those around you.

In solidarity,

The Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation

***Want to See Food and Land Justice for Black Americans? Support These Groups* by the Civil Eats Editors**

This is a compendium of Black-identified organizations pursuing food and land justice and it felt appropriate to include it given current events. Visit this resource to find out about the advocacy and activist organizations pursuing this important work.

Civil Eats Editors. (2020, June 2). *Want to See Food and Land Justice for Black Americans? Support These Groups*. *Civil Eats*. Retrieved from: www.civileats.com/2020/06/02/want-to-see-food-and-land-justice-for-black-americans-support-these-groups/

***We Don't Farm Because It's Trendy; We Farm as Resistance, for Healing and Sovereignty* by Ashley Gripper**

This essay follows the roots of Black-led organizations in agriculture. Gripper explains her growing connections with Black agricultural resilience and resistance and describes the danger Black communities face in losing control of their own narratives and, specifically, in the co-optation of the urban agriculture narrative “by white liberals and academics” (n.p.). Gripper traces the history of Black communities’ ties to land and to agricultural production from the end of the Civil War through the present and describes contemporary resistance movements that advocate for land sovereignty.

Gripper, A. (2020, May 27). *We don't farm because it's trendy; we farm as resistance, for healing and sovereignty*. *Environmental Health News*. Retrieved from: www.ehn.org/black-farming-food-sovereignty-2645479216.html?rebelltitem=1#rebelltitem1

***I'm a black climate scientist. Racism derails our efforts to save the planet* by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson**

In this piece, Johnson discusses the ways that racism negatively impacts the potential contribution of people of color in stopping and reversing climate change. In her article, Johnson asks, “How can we expect black Americans to focus on climate when we are so at risk on our streets, in our communities, and even within our own homes? How can people of color effectively lead their communities on climate solutions when faced with pervasive and life-shortening racism?” (n.p.). She describes the ways that racism has impacted her capacity to contribute to her field as a scientist. She asks the reader to “consider the discoveries not made, the books not written, the ecosystems not protected, the art not created, the gardens not tended” (n.p.) in considering the myriad damaging ways that racism impacts the lives of people of color and their capacity to contribute to their fields given the pressing need for them to resist racism before all else. This piece is a compelling read and we highly recommend it!

Johnson, A.E. (2020, June 3). *I'm a black climate scientist. Racism derails our efforts to save the planet*. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/03/im-black-climate-scientist-racism-derails-our-efforts-save-planet/

***People of Color are at Greater Risk of COVID-19. Systemic Racism in the Food System Plays a Role* by Nadra Nittle**

We're recirculating this article this week as a reminder that Black Lives Matter. Here, Nittle explains how systemic racism is intertwined with the racialized morbidity and mortality rates of coronavirus. According to the article, data shows that Black people make up roughly 34 percent of coronavirus deaths despite representing only 13.4 percent of the population. This article discusses social determinants of health, including injustices in the food system and explores the way food, class, and race intersect in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Nittle, N. (2020, May 5). *People of Color are at Greater Risk of COVID-19. Systemic Racism in the Food System Plays a Role*. Civil Eats. Retrieved from: www.civileats.com/2020/05/05/people-of-color-are-at-greater-risk-of-covid-19-systemic-racism-in-the-food-system-plays-a-role/

***Race and Food are Intertwined. Here's How We Can Do Better* by Hannah Wallace**

This article captures elements of a speech given by Ricardo Salvador, senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and director of UCS's Food and Environment Program. In it, Salvador offers a reminder of the insidious nature of the institutional racism pervasive within our food system and asks, "Is it possible to create a new food system that does not rely on exploitation?" (n.p.). Salvador makes the case for food systems reform by recounting several committed actions that we must take to create change. These committed actions appear in a bulleted list in this article and are absolutely worth reviewing, along with the entire message. This piece, though it's from 2017, is a definite must-read for our current political climate.

Wallace, H. (2017, October 20). *Race and Food are Intertwined. Here's How We Can Do Better*. Civil Eats. Retrieved from: www.civileats.com/2017/10/20/race-and-food-are-intertwined-heres-how-we-can-do-better/

More reading, among many, but we wish to highlight the following:

Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement

By Monica White

<https://uncpress.org/book/9781469643694/freedom-farmers/>

Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.

By Ashanté Reese

<https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/black-food-geographies-the-book-that-will-always-be-prominently-displayed>

The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience and Farming

By Natasha Bowens

<https://newsociety.com/books/c/the-color-of-food>

Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land

By Leah Penniman, Karen Washington (Foreword)

<https://www.farmingwhileblack.org/>

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