

Food Dignity

Successes and struggles in community food system action research

Christine M. Porter Assistant Professor, University of Wyoming

Sarita Daftary Director, East New York Farms!, Brooklyn, NY

Hank Herrera General Manager, Dig Deep Farms & Produce; C-PREP

Daryl Marshall Organizer and Youth Worker, East New York Farms!

Peggy McCrackin Citizen/organizer, FLV; research scientist, UW

Marty Neideffer Deputy Sheriff, Deputy Sheriff Activities League/Dig Deep Farms & Produce, Cherryland/Ashland, CA

E. Jemila Sequeira Coordinator, Whole Community Project, Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County, NY

Virginia Sutter Director, Blue Mountain Associates, Wind River Indian Reservation, WY

Gayle M. Woodsum, Director, Feeding Laramie Valley, ARI, Laramie, WY

American Public Health Association Annual Meeting

San Francisco, CA. October 29th, 2012

Presenter Disclosures

for Christine Porter, Sarita Daftary, Hank Herrera, Daryl Marshall, Peggy McCrackin, Marty Neideffer, Jemila Sequeira, Virginia Sutter & Gayle Woodsum

The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

Introducing Food Dignity

“Food Dignity: Action Research on Engaging Food Insecure Communities and Universities in Building Sustainable Community Food Systems”



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Welcome

In the face of soaring obesity and hunger rates, socioeconomic decline, and threats of peak soil and peak oil, many communities are making paths to a brighter future by building community food systems that aim to nourish everyone in current and future generations.

Starting April 2011, Food Dignity is a 5-year initiative to trace these paths taken by five US communities and to collaborate in mapping and traveling the most appropriate and effective roads forward for creating sustainable community food systems that build food security.

Partners

The Food Dignity team includes dozens of people at two universities, one "action-think" tank and five community-based organizations.

[> Read more...](#)

Vision

The Food Dignity initiative is in formative stages, but our current working vision is of a society where each community exercises significant control over its food system through radically democratic

News

Coming Soon! Watch this space for news and updates.

USDA /NIFA/AFRI Global Food Security: 5 years, \$5 million
Food Dignity project started April 1st, 2011

“Our project title signals both our **ethical stance** that human and community agency in food systems is an end in itself **and our scientific hypothesis** that building civic and institutional capacity to engage in sustainable community food system action will improve the sustainability and equity of our local food systems and economies.” (FD grant application 2010)

Food Dignity Premises:

- 3 billion people (43%) suffer from malnutrition.
- An industrial food system isn't sustainable.
- Movements for community food systems offer an ethical and practical alternative.
- We should invest in these systems and learn from those leading and implementing these initiatives.

5 +1 Food Dignity Case Stories

5 community initiatives (*with founding dates*):

- **East New York Farms!** (ENYF!), Brooklyn, NY (1998)
- **Whole Community Project** (WCP), Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County, NY (2006)
- **Feeding Laramie Valley** (FLV), Albany County, WY (2009)
- **Wind River Indian Reservation** (WRIR), WY (Blue Mountain Associates working on health there since 2005)
- **Dig Deep Farms & Produce** (DDF&P), Alameda County, CA (2010)

1 attempt at academic allyship to community partners

- Cornell University
- University of Wyoming
- Ithaca College
- (Center for Popular Education, Research and Policy)

Food Dignity Action-Research Design

- 5-yr “support package” to each community, \$300k:
 - community organizer (half-time)
 - steering committees
 - community research budget
 - minigrants for citizen action with “animators”
 - university-community liaison (FLV and WCP)
- 5 + 1 case studies including:
 - Photovoice
 - Interviews
 - File collection and coding
 - Participation & observation
 - Minigrant tracking
 - Garden harvest measures

5 short community stories

West to East

DDF&P

DDF&P team



“The team worked incredibly hard beginning in December, 2011 to convert that hillside into a productive 8 acre farm. They learned traditional, agro-ecological methods for terracing the hillside... planted a cover crop and an orchard of 150 fruit trees.” - Hank Herrera



City View Farm of DDF&P

DDF&P

Team packs and delivers 100+ bags/week, including People's Grocery "Grub Boxes"



Sam Faulkner tabling at DeFremery Park, W Oakland

Credit: Tommie Wheeler

Wind River Indian Reservation

Blue Mountain Associates, Inc. (BMA) Wyoming

The Sutters admiring produce grown by Coker Haukaas, market manager and minigrantee.



Coauthor: Dr. Virginia Sutter

BMA: Minigrantees



“This is my son and daughter, the beginning of our starter plants. They enjoy doing these; it’s important to include your family in the projects so they learn these things.” – Kathleen Thomas (received a minigrant for gardening)

BMA: Minigrantees

Tim Thomas showing three varieties of Indian corn



Sharing seeds and preserving the harvest



09/14/2012 AM 08:28

photo credit: Kathleen Thomas

photo credit: Jim Sutter, BMA

BMA: Farmers Market



The Thomas' stand at the Wind River Indian Farmers Market, hosted by BMA and in its 2nd full year. Most minigrants vend there.

Feeding Laramie Valley: Labonte Park Community Garden



Credit: Feeding Laramie Valley

Coauthor: **Gayle Woodsum**



Gayle sharing carrots with my daughters

A first step towards the goal of a community garden in every city park.

Our Laramie Garden

Two front-yard communal gardens...
... and a third on the way.



Supported with an FLV minigrant

Coauthor and front yard gardener: Peggy McCrackin

FoodDignity

FLV: Sharing the Bounty

Summer 2012: collected and distributed 6,475 lbs of “the best of what we have,” worth \$14,000.

Including filling orders from residents of Laramie Senior Housing.



Whole Community Project:

Tompkins County, New York to Detroit: Food Policy Tour

Coauthor: **Jemila Sequeira** (center)
with steering committee members
touring D-Town Farms, Detroit



WCP

“We experienced a profound understanding of the possibilities in Tompkins County... a peaceful future living in a healthy community dedicated to equity and welcoming to all people into the process of creating a food system where the all people experience dignity.” – Jemila Sequeira



© Ithaca.com, Ed Dittenhoefer

Charity Hicks of Detroit speaking at Tompkins County Food Justice Summit, Sept 22, 2012



East New York Farms! Brooklyn



Credit: Tony Yancey for ENYF!



10/12/2012 02:47

Coauthor:
Sarita Daftary

Coauthor: **Daryl Marshall**, convening steering committee

ENYF! Sweet minigrants



Credit: Tony Yancey for ENYF!

Gemma Garcia's
beekeeping workshops



Credit: ENYF!

+ 1 case study:
between the edge and the fringe

doing the action research



Eric McPhail, Extension agent, farming and ranching programs

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Extension

E.g., Two kinds of research stories

| | A Dominant Narrative | Food Dignity |
|------------------|--|--|
| <i>Expertise</i> | Professionals, academics, institutions, study | Also citizens, communities, associations, experience |
| <i>Ethics</i> | Last: used to apply knowledge gained about truth | First: used to decide what we want to know and how we will try to find it out |
| <i>Knowledge</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Must be written-Generalizable-Scientific method | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Can also be oral, visual-Maybe transferrable-Also stories |

Academics on the Fringe



RODALE
INSTITUTE™

ORGANIC PIONEERS SINCE 1947



Cornell University
Department of Horticulture

Academics on the Fringe



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Cornell University

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Cornell University
Department of Plant Biology

Academics on the Fringe



Cornell University
College of Agriculture
and Life Sciences

SEARCH CORNELL:

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Education Studies and Teacher Preparation

Communities on the Edge



FIGURE 2 Distribution of people of color by census tracts. Interstate 580 in red.

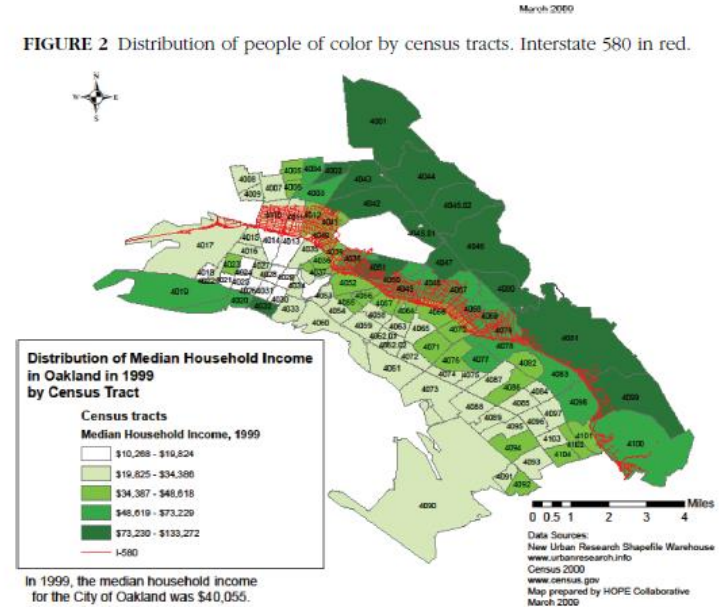
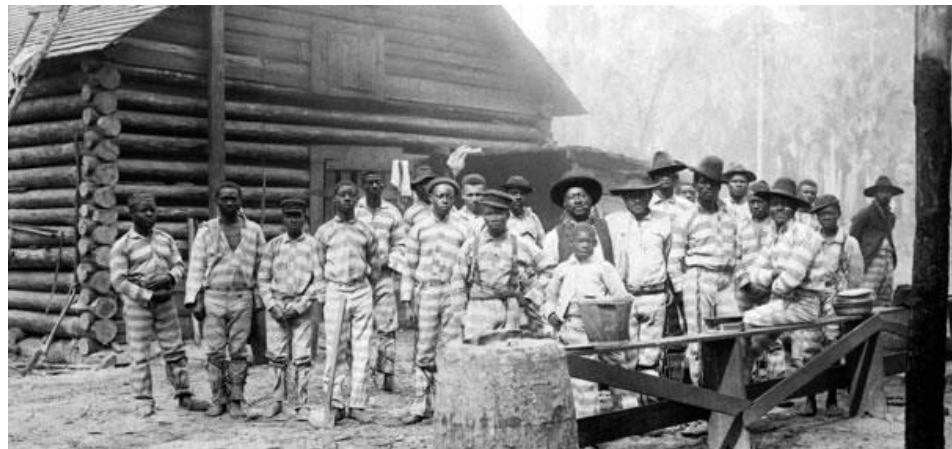


FIGURE 3 Distribution of median household income in Oakland in 1999. I-580 in red.

The New Jim Crow

Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

MICHELLE ALEXANDER



Slavery by Another Name

The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II

DOUGLAS A. BLACKMON

Chickens and Pigs

“For many of us ‘the project’ may be only one of our many ‘projects’ but for many of our community partners maybe there really is only one project and maybe they are living it daily...

Maybe these things cannot be properly addressed as long as the story and struggle for Food Dignity is merely a project for some people and a way of life for others.”

–academic partner

A large, vertically oriented oval filled with a light orange color and outlined in a darker brown. It is positioned on the left side of the image.

Us

A large, vertically oriented oval filled with a light pink color and outlined in a darker brown. It is positioned on the right side of the image.

Them



“The Community”

**Leaders,
gatekeepers**



academic “fringers”

Academics

(Not) belonging

“I’m in this no man’s land between community and academia.” – (semi-academic)

“I’m a double outsider, too academic for communities and too community for academics. I don’t belong anywhere.” – Hank

“I’m still confused about if and where I fit into Food Dignity... I struggle with where I fit, if anywhere, in this world.” – (student)

“Hank’s words about being a double outsider resonate deeply with me.” – (academic)

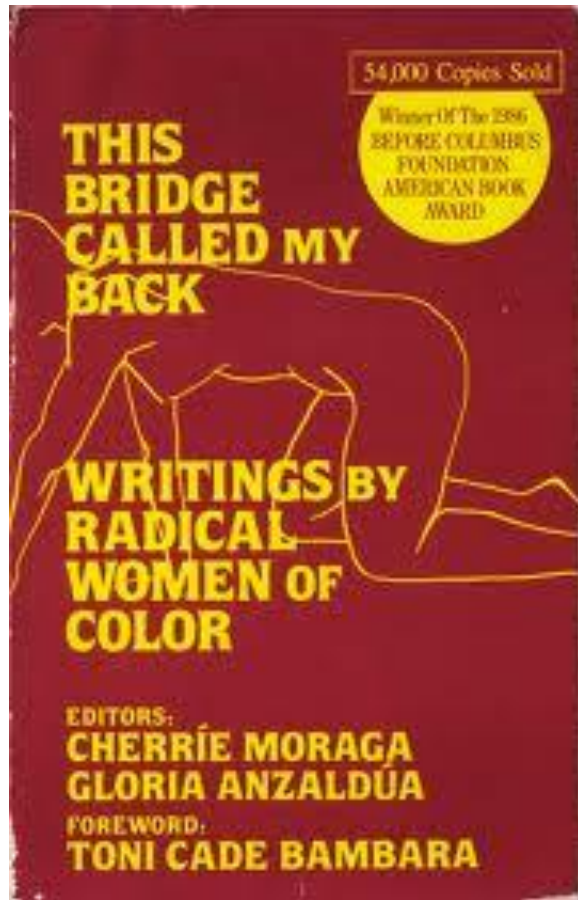
“It’s not a no man’s land. It’s a non-existent land” – Hank

Us

Can we bring it into
existence?

Them

What do we need to get there?



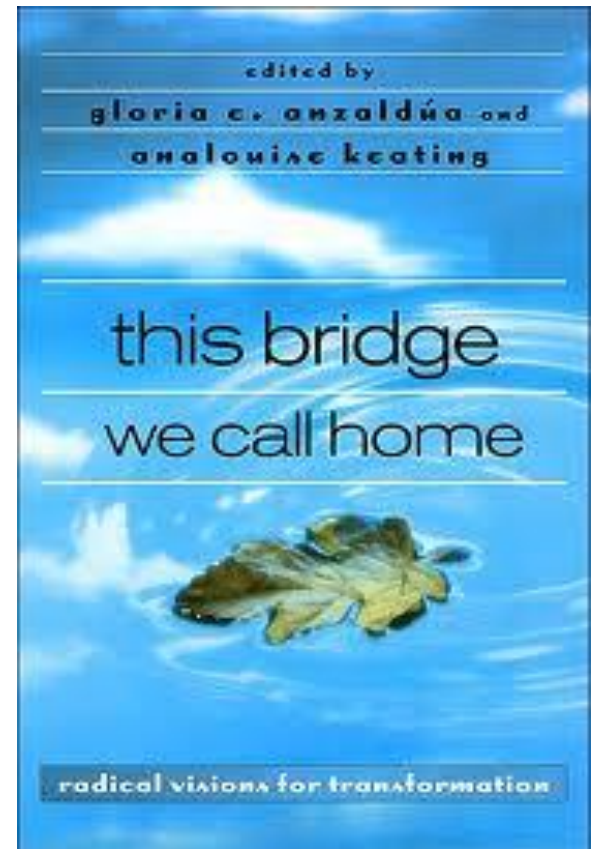
1981



El Mundo Zurdo

The Vision

1981: p193



2002

What do we need to get there?

The need:

- for public acknowledgement
 - for safety and nurturing
 - for control
 - to be vulnerable
- from *Dignity: the essential role it plays in resolving conflict*
Hicks 2011: 186

The image shows the front cover of a book. The title 'dignity' is written in a large, blue, serif font at the top. Below the title is a decorative horizontal line with a central flourish. Underneath the line, the subtitle 'The Essential Role It Plays in Resolving Conflict' is written in a smaller, orange, serif font. At the bottom of the cover, the author's name 'Donna Hicks, Ph.D.' is printed in a black, serif font. The background of the cover is a light beige color.

dignity

The Essential

Role It Plays in

Resolving Conflict

Donna Hicks, Ph.D.

FD Strategies

- Working from the heart and soul as much as from the head.

(hope, empathy, courage, love & anger)

“Dignity is something that does not reside in one’s head. Dignity walks in the heart.”

- *Zapatista leadership declaration, 1995*

FD Strategies

- Heart and soul
- Time together



FD Strategies

- Heart and soul
- Time together
- Waiting for invitations
- Coauthoring, copresenting, codesigning

| Date | Crop type | Weight (ounces) | Food Use | | | Notes |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| | | | Eat | Store | Share | |
| 8/13 | Scallions | 2.8 oz | X | | | |
| 8/14 | Lettuce | 6.7 oz | X | | | |
| 8/14 | Italian Parsley | 3.7 oz | | X | | Freeze Raw |
| 8/14 | Turnips | 17 oz | | X | | "ditto" turnips |
| 8/14 | Rhubarb | 22.3 oz | | | X | (enjoy, Peggy !!) |
| 8/17 | Rhubarb | 40 oz | | | X | |
| 8/20 | Beets + Leaves | 26.8 oz | | X | | Leaves in salad now |
| 8/20 | Scallions | 3.1 oz | | | | |
| 8/20 | Turnips | 20.2 oz | | X | | |
| 8/20 | Kohlrabi | 11.6 oz | | X | | |
| 8/20 | Chard | 7.2 oz | | X | | |
| 8/20 | Rhubarb | 42 oz | | | X | |

Team GROW harvest data



Copresenting at WPHA, 10/12

FD Strategies

- Heart and soul
- Time together
- Waiting for invitations
- Coauthoring, copresenting, codesigning
- \$300,000 subaward to each community partner
- Bridge people
- “I’d like our work to be not just community-based research and not just service-learning pedagogy, but movement building.” –academic

Roles for Public Health Professionals?

All of the above plus:

- Focusing on food environment change instead of individual behavior change. Including:
 - Educate public about environmental impacts on health and health behaviors and about disparities in these environments.
 - Support community food organizing and development. E.g., fostering small scale food businesses, community gardens, low-input food production, cooking cooperatives.
- Re-examining our roles and positions in monitoring and maintaining food safety.

Thank you!

Food Dignity is supported by Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant no. 2011-68004-30074 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (www.fooddignity.org)

Christine: christine.porter@uwyo.edu

Hank: hank@c-prep.org