

# The Kids Table: A Report Conceptualizing Youth Empowerment and Food Planning Methods Through the Case Study of the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition

by  
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## ABSTRACT

There is an ageless saying directed towards youth (young adults aged 14-19) that continues to define and dictate their lives. Youth are our future. Yet, many governmental and planning institutions overlook the prospect of integrating the voices of youth, particularly of color, within decision-making processes that directly affect them and their communities. Youth should have the power to make key decisions around food security in their lived environments. In this thesis, I reveal the potential impacts youth can have when given adequate support and resources in the planning level - through the prospect of food system and planning.

Building on my former thesis, existing research, case studies, historical analyses and analyzing data from my client partner, the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC), this thesis: 1. Delves into the history of youth rights and engagement in the United States; 2. Brings to the forefront the tools of food through the analysis of food planning and its empowering attributes in the community; 3. Shows the impact youth have had on their respective community foodscapes with a primary focus on Mattapan and the MFFC; 4. Builds a framework on the crossroads of food planning, youth empowerment and community decision making; and 5. Calls to action institutions of governance and higher education to not only involve youth within urban food system decision making models and designs, but to also support youth and food organizations aimed at improving the landscape and lived environments of their communities.

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### **My Thesis Committee:**

Dr. Holly Harriel, Shavel'le Olivier, Enjoli Hall, and President Michael Sorrell

### **My Family:**

Mom, Marie, Gagnessiry

### **My Boston Families:**

MIT Sport TKD, CW/TBos, DUSP, 159 Erie, NH4, My Senegalese Brothers

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## INTRODUCTION

Trust Children. Nothing can be more simple or more difficult. Difficult because to trust children, we must first learn to trust ourselves, and most of us were taught as children that we could not be trusted.  
-- John Holt, *How Children Learn*<sup>1</sup>

Youth<sup>2</sup> are our future. The denotation of this phrase is a result of the continued idea that youth possess an "innocence" and "energy" that is unlike the older members of society<sup>3</sup> - and are thus able to dream and be creative/out of the box when it comes to living. However, throughout the modern era, youth have had a profound impact on the world. Youth have been at the forefront of movements and innovation, with the access for social mobilization heavily decreasing throughout the years allowing youth the opportunity to leverage the advent of new communication and social media technology to connect with people from all walks of life, across the world.<sup>4</sup> Despite all of this, youth, particularly of color, have continued to be a population overlooked by many planning and governmental entities.<sup>5</sup>

If youth are the future, why aren't they (at the very least) at the urban planning table amongst the older and more senior officials in charge of designing the communities for which these youth call home? Are youth able to make decisions that benefit their communities' food systems? How can we empower youth and community engagement? Why is it imperative for us to empower youth and give them a space to be able to engage with community level decisions? These questions, in conjunction with my previous study on the power of food and its importance within planning<sup>6</sup> has led me to wonder if there is a true link that can be made between food, youth, empowerment and liberation within the discourse of planning and governance.

If youth really are our future, we would be listening to them, and formulating lived and built environments around their dreams. We would be integrating them into institutional decision-making processes around the design and planning of the communities they live and develop in. This thesis will recommend ways that youth **CAN** be our future.

### RESEARCH FOCUS

The primary focus for this thesis is to understand why youth are not included in the planning decision making processes for the neighborhood of Mattapan in Boston, MA. As a hypothesis, youth are generally not empowered enough to act and currently do not have a route to act because of their limitations in power. Through this report, there will be evidence showing how Mattapan youth can immerse themselves in these processes through the nexus of food systems planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Holt, *HOW-CHILDREN-LEARN-JOHN-HOLT.Pdf*.

<sup>2</sup> Youth are to be defined as the population of Generation Z between the ages of 14 and 19. In this thesis we are primarily focusing on youth of color (see in definitions section).

<sup>3</sup> Older members of society are to be defined as the populations below Gen Z, particularly Gen Xers and Baby Boomers, between the ages of 42 and 78 -- as they hold the most socio-economic and political power currently (see in definitions section).

<sup>4</sup> Chen, "How Faces of Social Movements Come to Be."

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, "A Voice at the Table."

<sup>6</sup> Fall, "The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.Pdf."

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

To get a sense of the status quo, and why youth are not included in planning decision making processes, we must first look at Freire. The late Paulo Freire, a former educator and philosopher from Brazil curated the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in the late 60s as a way of empowering youth and educators to liberate themselves from the oppressive systems that continued to disempower and dehumanize them, particularly in the regimes of government that exiled him.<sup>7</sup>

### **Oppression and Critical Consciousness**

Paulo Freire's critique provides us with an in-depth overview of the class struggles of an oppressed populace. Curated while he was in political exile from Brazil's military dictatorship, Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to shed light on his experiences in governance and teaching in prior to his exile<sup>8</sup> and how the world operated on this ideology of oppression.<sup>9</sup> He perceived the status quo as being oppressive, defining oppression as the active state of violence and exploitation by an actor in power, through the dehumanization and disempowerment of another actor.<sup>10</sup> It is through this pedagogy, in which we can make sense of the phenomenon of oppression, that continues to control youth's lived experiences and environments.

Freire's critique allows for us to see the historical reason why youth are unable to have autonomy over their interests and choice. Youth lack conscientização.<sup>11</sup> Conscientização refers to the ability to have a critical consciousness in the status quo, a way of regaining humanity and being able to affect the world and reality of the oppressor by perceiving one's own socioeconomic and political stance. By possessing the ability to question your humanity and positionality ("reading your world")<sup>12</sup>, the oppressed will not only be able to have Conscientização but will be liberated of the oppression that continues to control their livelihood. For it is this oppressive societal structure, or what Freire posits as the "banking concept"<sup>13</sup> that institutions (the oppressors as Freire points out) utilize to indoctrinate their subjects (the oppressed).

### **Banking Concept**

The banking concept is a key framework that allows for us to clarify the relationship between institutions and youth, and why youth are unable to get Conscientização. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire primarily uses this concept to describe the modern education system, equating students as being oppressed, and the educational institutions as being the oppressors.<sup>14</sup> The key to the banking concept is what Freire describes as the prescriptive relationship between students and these institutions.<sup>15</sup> Educational institutions impose their influence, knowledge, and power onto students. And students, because of their lack of authority and Conscientização, are forced to receive and store these influences and knowledge in a patient manner, memorizing and repeating rather than critiquing,

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<sup>7</sup> Sociología en la Red de la UNJFSC, "Entrevista a Paulo Freire, El País, 19 de mayo de 1978."

<sup>8</sup> Gomes, "Paulo Freire."

<sup>9</sup> Gomes.

<sup>10</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>11</sup> Freire.

<sup>12</sup> Bentley, "A Brief Biography of Paulo Freire."

<sup>13</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>14</sup> Freire.

<sup>15</sup> Freire.

reflecting, and transforming themselves based on their own consciousness.<sup>16</sup> In the case of youth and adult interactions, the banking concept not only relates to the education systems, but also towards oppressive systems with power dynamics that result in the altering of Conscientização -- in particular, the US food system.

### **Institutionalization and Food**

The banking concept can be connected to food, providing us with an in-depth connection with how food institutions have continued to subjugate and oppress populations dependent on them -- youth. Freire's critique on institutionalization in the classroom provides us with a wonderful framework around the make-up of standardization-based pedagogies. The US food system is a standardized pedagogy much like its education, for which we can find the impacts of the banking concept on the oppressed. People take for granted food access, and it is because what feeds us are oppressive, controlling food institutions that operate on a model restricting non-Eurocentric idealizations around food practices in the United States -- also known as food oppression.<sup>17</sup> In particular, the monopolization and Euro-centrist basing of food has led to markets not being representative of the theme of food and culture being "cosmopolitan in microcosm...[detracting] from the perspective of critical cosmopolitanism or urban planning."<sup>18</sup> By prioritizing a particular diet onto the masses, and subjecting their power over the populace, we can see the banking concept at work. Furthermore, it is through the act of self-sustenance, and the power of politics with food, Gastropolitics, in which we can see the achievement of Conscientização from youth.

### **GASTROPOLITICS IN HINDU SOUTH ASIA**

To get a sense of the social relations and politics around food, we must first look at Appadurai. Arjun Appadurai, anthropologist and current Goddard Professor in Media, Culture and Communication at New York University<sup>19</sup> curated *Gastropolitics in Hindu South Asia* in the early 80s as a way of unearthing the role of food on social organization and conflict in Southern India.<sup>20</sup> This ethnographic study did not only serve to map out these roles in Southern India, but it provided a framework for future research and other case studies all over the world, through the idea of Gastropolitics and gastro-relations.

### **Gastropolitics**

Arjun Appadurai's *Gastropolitics in Hindu South Asia*, provides us an in-depth overview of food and its political powers, related to the social relations it evokes and the sensory impacts it brings to populations.<sup>21</sup> Appadurai defines Gastropolitics as the "conflict or competition over specific cultural or economic resources as it emerges in social transactions around food".<sup>22</sup> Appadurai's work highlights the political characteristics of food and its potential as a vessel for youth to employ as a tool of engaging themselves within decision making models.

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<sup>16</sup> Freire.

<sup>17</sup> Freeman, "Fast Food"; Nijjer, "Food Oppression."

<sup>18</sup> Duruz, Luckman, and Bishop, "Bazaar Encounters: Food, Markets, Belonging and Citizenship in the Cosmopolitan City: Continuum: Vol 25, No 5."

<sup>19</sup> Appadurai, "Arjun Appadurai » BIO."

<sup>20</sup> Appadurai; Matta and García, "The Gastro-Political Turn in Peru."

<sup>21</sup> Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia."

<sup>22</sup> Appadurai.



It is not sufficient to just map out food systems, one needs to also look at people's relationships with the food, and the social implications of it with human relations. Food is a powerful tool, entrenched within the fabric of social consciousness.<sup>23</sup> We are not only controlled by the way we access food, but also by the way we consume and interact with it<sup>24</sup> -- with food relations and its impacts providing, another prime example of the banking concept of food. Appadurai asserts that the ability to convert one's lived environment into food reveals the true characteristics of food being a powerful vessel.<sup>25</sup> Food is a "social fact",<sup>26</sup> or a concrete part of society and its meanings. Food being entrenched within societal meanings provides us with a glimpse into the relationships that get affected by it -- and in the case of this paper, the relationship between youth and food institutions.

### **Food Conglomerates and Their Gastropolitics**

Food conglomerates<sup>27</sup> overwrite their business models and goals onto youth, taking advantage of youth, parent and power relations in the home and youth consciousness to succeed. This is due to, as Appadurai points out, food being a vital media of contact between humans, for which society regulates and controls the dynamics of relationships and contact.<sup>28</sup> Food institutions have the autonomy and power of choice, they can regulate and control relationships -- and directly impact the Gastropolitics of communities and of households. Specifically, with marketing strategies and advertising directed towards youth around their products, food institutions can greatly influence the household, through the act of influencing children's thoughts and behaviors, by encouraging youth to "pester" and encourage their elders to obtain the products they desire.<sup>29</sup>

This is primarily because of the impact of relations between the parent and youth in the status quo, and the ideals of being a successful parent and reducing conflict.<sup>30</sup> This is particularly dangerous for households of color,<sup>31</sup> as they are forced to adhere to the Eurocentric marketing ploy of these institutions, with the Gastropolitics of family dynamics around cultural empowerment being adversely affected. Specifically, instead of households of color eating food that is connected to their heritage and empowering themselves around these models, they are forced to eat at these fast-food institutions, because of the desires of their young and the marketing that influenced their youth's consciousness. It is when youth resist these approaches and embrace their critical consciousness (Conscientização), where we can truly see the power of food as a vessel of engagement.

By making the connection between Freire's concept of Conscientização and Appadurai's concept of Gastropolitics, food and its relationships can be seen as a powerful vessel for youth to use to be able to liberate themselves from the oppressive landscapes present in their lived environments. Specifically, the ability of one to choose and make sense of how food is created and affecting their culture and consciousness is a key example of how food production (when one is in control and empowered around it) grants the oppressed Conscientização -- autonomy over their critical consciousness and most

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<sup>23</sup> Eng et al., "Critical Consciousness of Food Systems as a Potential Lifestyle Intervention on Health Issues."

<sup>24</sup> Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia."

<sup>25</sup> Appadurai.

<sup>26</sup> Appadurai.

<sup>27</sup> Food conglomerates are food organizations that control and hold stake in different industries and businesses as a way of lowering market risks. For instance, McDonalds is a fast-food conglomerate that operates in the real estate sector and is one of the largest real estate companies in the world with a portfolio of more than \$42 billion dollars (see in definitions section).

<sup>28</sup> Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia."

<sup>29</sup> LoDolce, "Food Marketing to Children"; Smith et al., "Food Marketing Influences Children's Attitudes, Preferences and Consumption"; Story and French, "Food Advertising and Marketing Directed at Children and Adolescents in the US."

<sup>30</sup> NPR Staff, "Giving Ice Cream For Breakfast."

<sup>31</sup> Households of color should be defined as those headed by someone who identifies as Hispanic or as some race other than White (see in definitions section).

importantly over their humanity. This can be seen within Appadurai's examples of Gastropolitics and conflict, particularly within the household,<sup>32</sup> as mentioned above.

Conflicts related to struggle and humanity represent an autonomy and a point of empowerment for youth within these conflicts. This is because, when youth grow older and make sense of the world through these life struggles and traumas, they harness the power of Conscientização and therefore can make concerted efforts to engage themselves within the food system in a manner that is empowering -- sparking liberation from the oppressive systems that keep them in a cycle of oppression and trauma.

## **FOOD APARTHEID IN THE UNITED STATES**

### **The History of Food Oppression in the United States**

Throughout its history, the United States has been rooted upon and has thrived on a food system designed around a model of oppression.<sup>33</sup> Food was used as a tool of control and subordination specifically for populations of color that did not fit the Protestant and European image of society. This is known as food oppression.<sup>34</sup> However, it is difficult to identify food oppression as a "social wrong and to redress because it stems from a combination of market forces and government policy".<sup>35</sup> This is important to keep in mind, because throughout the history of this nation, oppressed populations had their food systems affected by outside factors such as government policy and planning around market production, forced relocation and community placement.

Food oppression is directly correlated towards the dehumanization and genocide of people of color and on the other hand, the cultivation and foundation of the identity of White America.<sup>36</sup>

One of the first key instances of food oppression in the United States was through the planned relocation and the genocide of the continent's indigenous peoples. The forced acquisition of the Indigenous peoples' lands, resources, and customs as a method of spreading the expansionist agenda of the country has led to the extermination and genocide of the indigenous population, and their food systems.<sup>37</sup> The list of genocidal and oppressive policies made by the United States towards the Indigenous communities on the peninsula range from the forced takeover of their lands and peoples, their extinction of groups that were opposed to this takeover, to the forced assimilation of their peoples.<sup>38</sup> In particular, manifest destiny, and the white settler belief of being the "rightful owners of the entire North American continent"<sup>39</sup> led to the deliberate elimination and extinction -- by the US Army -- of the bison, the most crucial food source of the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains.<sup>40</sup>

Another key instance of food oppression in the United States surrounds the foundations of the agricultural market, through slavery. It begins with the planned enslavement of communities that specialized in a specific food crop, such as the Gullah and Geechee peoples in South Carolina, whose ancestors were enslaved because they specialized in rice cultivation, a crop of abundance in the

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<sup>32</sup> Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia."

<sup>33</sup> Epperson, "Tracing Food as a System of Oppression from Contemporary U.S. Food Apartheid Back to the US-North American Slave Era"; Freight Farms, "The History of Our Food System Is Rooted in Racism"; Roots of Change, "Food Justice & Racism in the Food System."

<sup>34</sup> Food oppression is a form of structural subordination that builds on and deepens pre-existing disparities along race and class lines (see definitions section).

<sup>35</sup> Freeman, "Fast Food."

<sup>36</sup> Painter, "Opinion | How the Real History of Whiteness Undermines the Myth of White Supremacy."

<sup>37</sup> Luger, "Colonization Destroyed Native Food Systems."

<sup>38</sup> Drexler, "Research Guides"; National Geographic, "The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears"; Rambøl, "Hunger on the Trail of Tears."

<sup>39</sup> Lowndes, "Why the US Army Tried to Exterminate the Bison."

<sup>40</sup> Lowndes; Rambøl, "Hunger on the Trail of Tears."

Carolina region.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, throughout the institution of slavery slave owners used food as a method of control, with food often being scarce and non-nutritious, and the enslaved often getting the scraps and leftovers of ingredients that would otherwise be uncomfortable or inedible for consumption.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as a result of policies connected to the racialized zoning of urban areas by the HOLC in the 1930s,<sup>43</sup> to the white flight of populations from urban areas and the redlining of Black communities of color<sup>44</sup> and to the interstate highway act and highways<sup>45</sup> Black populations faced the destruction of their communities and sense of place, but also food insecurity.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, a key instance of food oppression in the United States can be found through the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, a governmental intervention that barred Chinese immigrants from entering the United States and led to a plethora of labor laws and violence. These all arose due to xenophobic fears connected to the market takeover by the Chinese population. As a result, Chinese restaurants and food businesses were not only heavily scrutinized but their operation during this period incited race riots, boycotts, labor laws, barring licensing from government agencies, policing and more.<sup>47</sup>

Ironically, despite the general dynamic shift and the social and political addressing of the wrongs of enslavement, the market continues to benefit from this model of oppression through the guise of "undocumented citizenship" from immigrants whose origins are in the Global South, South American and African alike. The undocumented working population carry the current agricultural backbone of the United States, with immigrant farm workers making up an estimated "73% of agriculture workers in the United States...a \$1.053 trillion industry".<sup>48</sup> Despite this, undocumented people face the most food insecurity,<sup>49</sup> unable to get eligibility from governmental programs like SNAP, because of their status.

Communities of color were active in the construction and foundation of the United States. However, they were forced to abide by infrastructures and built oppressive structures that dehumanized them and belittled their attempts at making a living in the country. To this day, these communities are food oppressed, having to resort to different cuisines and ingredients from their heritage/cultures as result of assimilationist doctrines<sup>50</sup> and urbicidal<sup>51</sup> policies endangering their lived environments. They were put at a deficit to be able to push forward the goals and the interests of White America -- also known as food apartheid.

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<sup>41</sup> "THE GULLAH GEECHEE - Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor"; "The Surprising History Of Rice In The US And The Gullah People Who Made It Possible | Lowcountry Gullah."

<sup>42</sup> Martyris, "Frederick Douglass On How Slave Owners Used Food As A Weapon Of Control"; "Slave Food."

<sup>43</sup> Shaker et al., "Redlining, Racism and Food Access in US Urban Cores."

<sup>44</sup> Gross, "A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America."

<sup>45</sup> Epperson, "Tracing Food as a System of Oppression from Contemporary U.S. Food Apartheid Back to the US-North American Slave Era."

<sup>46</sup> Agyeman, "How Urban Planning and Housing Policy Helped Create 'Food Apartheid' in US Cities"; McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place"; Shaker et al., "Redlining, Racism and Food Access in US Urban Cores."

<sup>47</sup> Chow, "How The White Establishment Waged A 'War' On Chinese Restaurants In The U.S."

<sup>48</sup> "Immigrant Farmworkers and America's Food Production - 5 Things to Know."

<sup>49</sup> Camargo, "Food Insecurity among Immigrants in the U.S | Immigrant Food"; IRC, "Fighting Hunger among Newcomers in the United States | International Rescue Committee (IRC)"; Khimani, "Food Insecurity: It's Only The Surface Of A Sea Of Inequality."

<sup>50</sup> Rambøl, "Hunger on the Trail of Tears."

<sup>51</sup> Urban + Genocide = Urbicidal, a way of understanding planned violence to the city.

## The Three Symptoms of Food Apartheid in the United States

There are three ways that food apartheid can be seen in the community level: food desolations (colloquially known as food deserts)<sup>52</sup>, food superfunds (colloquially known as food swamps)<sup>53</sup> and food mirages.<sup>54</sup> These are direct symptoms of the infrastructural elements of food oppression and food apartheid.<sup>55</sup> To view these symptoms, singularly, as being the main issue of communities of color in this country is a fatal flaw -- as it is mis-acknowledging the institutionalized forms of oppression and racism that have affected these communities historically and to this day.<sup>56</sup> This is why it is imperative that food apartheid is discussed rather than just food desolations or food superfunds or food mirages.

First, food desolations are places that have lack of access to affordable, culturally relevant, nourishing, and healthy food.<sup>57</sup> Many use the colloquial term frequently but fail to account for the foundational and infrastructural connections it has towards the communities that experience it. This is directly correlated to the gastropolitics of food conglomerates, as food superfunds are places for which these organizations can thrive - due to their lack of competition, and the needs of the community.<sup>58</sup>

Second, food superfunds are “areas with a high-density of establishments selling high-calorie fast food and junk food, relative to healthier food options”.<sup>59</sup> This is also correlated to the practice of redlining, and more specifically supermarket redlining, a practice in which supermarkets refuse to open in low-income Black communities of color and relocate their stores to areas of more affluence.<sup>60</sup>

Third, food mirages are places that have access to food, but for which most of the community (typically low income) cannot afford. This can lead to residents and community members needing to travel long ways to obtain “affordable, nutritious food”.<sup>61</sup> This is directly correlated to the highway movement in the United States. While it brought the modernization of roads and travel, increasing commerce and trade, the Interstate Highway system has disproportionately segregated communities of color from key access points towards healthy living, with access to food.<sup>62</sup> Despite there being food, because of these planned interventions, it is difficult for these communities of color to be able to have access to food that is nutritious, delicious, and filling.

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<sup>52</sup> Food deserts as a colloquial term is incorrect, as deserts are naturally occurring ecosystems that are beneficial to many communities and organisms. Instead, I opt for the term 'food desolations' as it accurately depicts the sorrow and direct destruction of the built environment for which the oppressed occupy and live in -- at the hands of institutions and conglomerates because of their interests (see definitions section).

<sup>53</sup> Food swamps as a colloquial term is incorrect, as swamps are beneficial towards the livelihood of ecosystems and the communities that they are in. Instead, I opt for the term 'food superfunds' as it accurately depicts the toxic places and situations occupied by the oppressed because of institutional and conglomerate interest, and their need for a long-term response to heal, reconcile and forge ahead (see definitions section).

<sup>54</sup> Fall, “The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.Pdf.”

<sup>55</sup> Brones, “Food Apartheid”; Stray Dog Institute, “What Is the Difference Between Food Apartheid and Food Deserts?”

<sup>56</sup> Brones, “Food Apartheid”; Stray Dog Institute, “What Is the Difference Between Food Apartheid and Food Deserts?”

<sup>57</sup> Alexis, “Food Deserts.”

<sup>58</sup> Freeman, “Fast Food”; Holleran, “How Fast Food Chains Supersized Inequality”; James et al., “Do Minority and Poor Neighborhoods Have Higher Access to Fast-Food Restaurants in the United States?”

<sup>59</sup> Cooksey-Stowers, Schwartz, and Brownell, “Food Swamps Predict Obesity Rates Better Than Food Deserts in the United States.”

<sup>60</sup> Eisenhauer, “In Poor Health”; Zhang and Debarchana, “Spatial Supermarket Redlining and Neighborhood Vulnerability.”

<sup>61</sup> Breyer and Voss-Andreae, “Food Mirages.”

<sup>62</sup> Buttigieg, “Transcript: Secretary Pete Buttigieg Remarks on Launch of Reconnecting Communities Program - Birmingham, Alabama | US Department of Transportation”; Nicome, “Op-Ed”; Valentine, “‘The Wrong Complexion For Protection.’ How Race Shaped America’s Roadways And Cities.”

Food has its roots in many parts of the lived environment.<sup>63</sup> The fact that it is a tool of control and power makes it such a provocative topic to engage with. If institutions and planners have been able to use food as a tool of control and power, can youth in these oppressed communities be able to use it to redress and start to heal from infrastructural harm? The short answer is yes.

## **HISTORY OF YOUTH RIGHTS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITHIN PLANNING AND DESIGN**

### **The Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution is a period in which the rapid technologization of the world greatly impacted the development and speed of processes and systems that contributed towards the sustenance of the world's populations. Industrialization drastically affected the way we view food, and planning in the community - from affecting its production/processing technologies, the transportation of foods, the price of foods and its storage.<sup>64</sup> One population that directly contributed to these changes and have been drastically wrought by the changing landscape of the world at the time are youth. Throughout the United States youth, particularly teenagers, worked tirelessly to be able to support their families and destinies in a host of new roles, including but not limited to, miners, textile and garment workers, industrial era farmers, millers, delivery workers.<sup>65</sup> But most of all, they worked to keep the systems in place that kept the country up and running intact. The coal that powered the railroads that not only continued to transport people all over and across the country, the textile goods also that continued to clothe the average American, the mills that continued to pump out millions of metric tons of goods, such as wheat, that continued to feed the greater population — this list goes on. The true essential workers of the industrial revolution, youth re-built this country and captained its transition from the industrial age into the modern age, performing blue collar tasks and jobs that the average citizen would refuse.<sup>66</sup>

It is important to focus not only on the youth labor movement but on education and its impacts on the youth population at the time. Most students in the Industrial Revolution were youth with an economic and social (which at the time not only involved popularity but race, family lineage etc.) means of getting an education. But students in an industrial model of education were and continue to be oppressed under a model of production and capitalism.<sup>67</sup> This population not only contributed to the rapid modernization of this country but were swept and forced as its benefactors and caretakers, under the false pretense of learning and growing up.

### **Youth Rights**

However, the concept of youth rights did not become apparent until the middle to the end of the industrial revolution, as youth across the country faced many comorbidities related to work and living, from squalid workplace conditions, low salaries/financial and social compensation, to the lack of access to the technologies they themselves were developing/assisting in its operation with. In many cases, they would have 11-to-16-hour days<sup>68</sup> for which they were forbidden to partake in activities that did not

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<sup>63</sup> See *Key Recommendation: Frameworks of Food* for more insight.

<sup>64</sup> Amorim, Laurindo, and Sobral, "On How People Deal with Industrialized and Non-Industrialized Food"; Driver and Health, "Industrialization of Agriculture"; Fall, "The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.Pdf."

<sup>65</sup> "Jobs for Children during Industrial Revolution"; Schuman, "History of Child Labor in the United States—Part 1"; The Museum of Tolerance, "Child Labor During the Industrial Revolution."

<sup>66</sup> Schuman, "History of Child Labor in the United States—Part 1."

<sup>67</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>68</sup> Beck, "Child Labor in the Industrial Revolution"; The Museum of Tolerance, "Child Labor During the Industrial Revolution."

involve their current occupation, and on top of the squalid conditions, suffered abuse.<sup>69</sup> The concept of youth rights did not materialize until the work of ‘muckrakers’<sup>70</sup> like photographer Lewis Hines or journalist John Spargo, who wanted to uncover the conditions of child labor in the US.<sup>71</sup> At around the same time, the idea of cityscapes and master planning for populations in urban areas became popular and more known<sup>72</sup>-- and it is from this point in history where we first can see the involvement of youth within planning and design.

### Youth in Planning and Design

Traditional Urban Planning is a highly oppressive, and technocratic practice, often involving authoritarian planners and government officials (particularly rich/well-off white male elders) dictating and controlling the landscapes, built, and lived environments of communities and populations across the United States.<sup>73</sup> At this time however, youth were just seen as being another population that needed to be controlled. With many planners and designers at the time primarily focusing on centering the youth experience around education and schooling, they prioritized shutting away students into the banking concept of education in America<sup>74</sup> — aiding the rapid technologization and modernization of this country on the backs of newly founded corporations and conglomerates.<sup>75</sup>

A traditionally oppressed population, youth of color currently do not have the power to make decisions on the community scale.<sup>76</sup> Traditional Urban Planning excludes youth engagement outright -- failing to consider their needs and interests in making their neighborhoods and livelihoods better. It was not until urban planner, author and educator, Kevin Lynch’s 1977 foray into the integration of youth into design *Growing Up in Cities*, in which we could see an attempt by planners in the United States towards integrating the urban youth perspective. Lynch’s work revealed how imperative it was that planners and governments started to consider the perspectives of youth, showing how youth not only had the ability to perceive their environments, but to, through participatory methods of design, design their lived environment.<sup>77</sup> This work has led to the rise of thought in the crossroads of urban design and youth perspective, with support and research done by UNESCO, and other works such as — Roger Hart’s 1992 *Ladder of Participation*<sup>78</sup>, Dr. Louise Chawla’s *Report on Growing Up In Cities*, the APA’s 1999 *Youth Participation in Community Planning*, Karen Malone’s 1999 *Growing up in cities as a model of participatory planning and ‘place-making’ with young people* and Kathryn Frank’s 2006 *The Potential of Youth Participation in Planning* — pushing forward and providing models that engage the concept of

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<sup>69</sup> Beck, “Child Labor in the Industrial Revolution.”

<sup>70</sup> ushistory.org, “Muckrakers.”; Muckrakers are journalists and photographers who uncovered the horrors and injustices of American life in the early 20th Century.

<sup>71</sup> Contrera, “The Searing Photos That Helped End Child Labor in America”; LOC, “About This Collection | National Child Labor Committee Collection | Digital Collections | Library of Congress”; Nehs, “Child Labor Exposed”; ushistory.org, “Muckrakers.”

<sup>72</sup> Artibise, “A Brief History of Urbanism in North America.”

<sup>73</sup> Agyeman, “Urban Planning as a Tool of White Supremacy – the Other Lesson from Minneapolis”; Allick, “When Cities Are Built for White Men | The Walrus”; Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*; Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City*; Johnston-Zimmerman, “Urban Planning Has a Sexism Problem”; Yiftachel, “Planning and Social Control.”

<sup>74</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>75</sup> Freire; Schrager, “The Modern Education System Was Designed to Train Future Factory Workers to Be ‘Docile.’”

<sup>76</sup> Barth and Olsen, “Are Children Oppressed?”; Finigan-Carr and Sharpe, “Beyond Systems of Oppression.”

<sup>77</sup> Frank, “The Potential of Youth Participation in Planning”; Lynch, *Growing Up In Cities*.

<sup>78</sup> See Fig 1.

youth engagement within the built environment, and more importantly within planning and governance.<sup>79</sup>

### **A CONCEPTUAL MODEL AROUND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

Youth aren't empowered because of three reasons; community development not considering the experiences of youth, the oppressive systems of education/youth development and the lack of engagement.<sup>80</sup>

First, community and urban development fails to consider the experiences and voices of youth in planning discourse and decision making. Second, education and youth development efforts are limited in scope and oppressive in nature. Not allowing youth to think consciously and critically about their lived experiences and positionality leads to a deeper cycle of oppression through Freire's banking concept. Lastly, engagement is limited. Youth are not given the space to be able to grow and make changes within their lived environments. This is often since they are seen disparagingly in the context of decision making. And from the perspective of institutions, financial, political, and social engagement is rare when it comes to supporting youth and food systems in these communities. More effort is needed to ensure that people, organizations, and governments are engaged with the concept of empowerment, critical consciousness within youth and food systems planning and more importantly, developing a praxis (a model of communication and collaboration between the two entities, youth empowerment and institutions)<sup>81</sup> that pushes forward a better food and youth future for these communities. better food and youth future for these communities.

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<sup>79</sup> Chawla, "Growing up in Cities"; Frank, "The Potential of Youth Participation in Planning"; Hart, "Children's Participation"; Malone, "Growing up in Cities as a Model of Participatory Planning and 'place-Making' with Young People"; Mullahey, Susskind, and Checkoway, "Youth Participation in Community Planning (PAS 486)."

<sup>80</sup> See Fig 2.

<sup>81</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **EXPLORATORY RESEARCH**

An exploratory research methodology is a research approach towards a new topic and field of study.<sup>82</sup> It involves the use of qualitative techniques like secondary sourcing and case study research as a way of clarifying the problem. With a specialized topic, this research style is necessary.

Within the exploratory research methodology, I approach understanding and grounding the topic of youth empowerment at the crossroads of food systems planning and the lived environment through a combination of: *case studies* (Food for Growth in Buffalo, NY, WE Over Me in Dallas, TX and the Vigorous Youth in Boston, MA); *historical analysis* of youth rights and youth developmental methods; and *philosophical analysis* of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Arjun Appadurai's Gastropolitics in Hindu South Asia.

### **PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH**

Self-definition is the first step. Don't let others define you and your community. You must define yourself first on the road towards social justice and community development.

-- Mel King, *Fmr. MA State Representative, Community Organizer, Educator*

Within the pedagogical research methodology, I have primarily focused on being able to not only engage myself within the field of youth and food work through a *mixed methods "client based" approach* that utilizes a data collection method and an ethnographic analysis of the Mattapan community, but I have also prioritized a practice of reflection. Because reflection and action that transforms the world.<sup>83</sup> Freire furthermore posits that it is not enough for people to come together in dialogue to gain knowledge of their social reality (Conscientização), but that people need to act together in critical reflection upon their environment to transform their environment.<sup>84</sup>

Praxis and reflection are key towards being able to understand more about one's positionality and how it affects practice and research. Self-reflection brings out the best urban planner and researcher within us and is key towards finding the true meaning of what Mel King postulates as Self-Definition - finding a true understanding of one's morals and intent. Without either of these reflexive practices, the work I am currently presenting loses not only its credibility, but it loses its efficacy and drive. Henceforth, I have fallen on these two qualitative methodologies to be able to communicate this thesis better.

### **SUMMARY**

These research methods have allowed for a deeper dive into the niche topic area around the prospect of youth engagement through food systems planning within their community's decision-making processes. Exploratory research as a method has built a foundation for me to explore these fields, through historical analyses and philosophical analyses. Pedagogical research as a method has allowed for me to be able to ground myself within these topics and to reflect upon my positionality as a researcher, student, and community engagement worker.

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<sup>82</sup> "Exploratory Research."

<sup>83</sup> Freire.

<sup>84</sup> Freire.



# FOOD EMPOWERMENT PROFILES

## FOOD FOR GROWTH: A COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM PLAN FOR BUFFALO'S WEST SIDE

**Organization Name:** Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP)

**Location:** Buffalo, NY

### **Background + History**

Started by neighborhood residents on Buffalo's West Side in 1992 and incorporated in 2000, the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) is a non-profit urban farm located in Buffalo's West Side.<sup>85</sup> For over 30 years, MAP has worked within the West Side neighborhood of Buffalo to help to revitalize the neighborhood.<sup>86</sup>

In the Fall of 2003, graduate students under Dr. Samina Raja, and connected to Ms. Diane Picard (executive director) and MAP proposed a new food system plan for the West Side neighborhood of Buffalo. The residents of the West Side neighborhood of Buffalo were not food secure, and through an extensive survey, this planning studio in the University of Buffalo revealed the many food disparities in Buffalo's West Side Neighborhood.<sup>87</sup> Fresh nutritious foods were difficult to find, or absent from West Side food stores, food stores overcharged residents despite the quality of food being subpar because of the location and scarcity of food in the West Side neighborhood -- even though "40% of residents within the neighborhood lived in poverty".<sup>88</sup> In addition, youth were caught in this slippery slope, since 50% of families with children aged 18 and younger in 2000 lived in poverty.<sup>89</sup> To make matters worse, transportation access was poor, and comfortability with transportation methods (i.e., walking to the store) was low due to crime or the lack of maintenance on sidewalks in the neighborhood.<sup>90</sup> Poor public transit has made access to food stores outside of the neighborhood difficult, even though there is a low rate of access to an automobile (43%).<sup>91</sup>

### **Mission Statement + Goals**

The mission statement for MAP is "to nurture the growth of a diverse, accessible, and equitable local food system, promote economic opportunities, and empower youth through social change education."<sup>92</sup> Their vision is imagining a community in which youth, and their families, "have adequate access to fresh, healthy and culturally appropriate foods, and where people of all incomes have economic opportunities, where vacant lots are transformed into productive green spaces, and where youth and their families are engaged in their communities".<sup>93</sup>

The goal of the University of Buffalo team is "to achieve food security through the creation and sustenance of a community food system".<sup>94</sup> This ensures that the quality, nutritious, affordable, and culturally acceptable food is always available and accessible to the residents of the West Side through a

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<sup>85</sup> MAP, "Mass Ave Project."

<sup>86</sup> Almeida et al., "Food For Growth - A Community Food System Plan for Buffalo's West Side."

<sup>87</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>88</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>89</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>90</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>91</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>92</sup> MAP, "Mass Ave Project."

<sup>93</sup> MAP.

<sup>94</sup> Almeida et al., "Food For Growth - A Community Food System Plan for Buffalo's West Side."

local, sustainable, and socially equitable food system.<sup>95</sup> They lay out a four-branch plan, with methods of strengthening Buffalo's West Side community food system:<sup>96</sup>

- 1) Enhancing local food production through sustainable land use planning
- 2) Promoting food-based economic development
- 3) Increasing transportation access to food
- 4) Promoting youth development through food-based projects

Specifically, their fourth branch brings out the crux of why promoting youth development and food should be held in the same conversation. They explain that through educating and involving youth “in the promotion of food security and a community food system, [it ensures] that the future residents of the West Side [will] have an appreciation and knowledge about growth and preparing food”,<sup>97</sup> with Growing Green “proving that children can play an important role in the maintenance of community gardens and the growth of urban agriculture”.<sup>98</sup>

### Structure and Governance

<u>Manhattan Avenue Project Organizational Chart</u>	<u>U of Buffalo Organizational Chart</u>
MAP Board Ms. Diane Picard - Executive Director MAP Staff MAP Youth!/Growing Green Youth	U of Buffalo University of Buffalo's Department of Urban and Regional Planning Dr. Samina Raja - Professor Authors of the Report - Graduate Students in her Studio Practicum

### The Results of the Project

MAP's Growing Green Program is an offshoot of the work and initiatives MAP and the University of Buffalo had when introducing youth and youth development into the community food system -- to address the growing land vacancy, high youth unemployment, and food security needs of the community.<sup>99</sup> Since its beginnings in September 2001 as a pilot,<sup>100</sup> the Growing Green Program has empowered youth in the West Side neighborhood, creating 650 jobs for them, and helping 95% of the participants in the program graduate from high school and enroll in college<sup>101</sup>. Outside of the community, MAP has a huge footprint, "developing models for sustainable urban food production and youth leadership, increasing healthy food access throughout Buffalo, and building partnerships to promote regional food system development".<sup>102</sup>

In turn, the empowered youth have been able to educate "thousands of community residents, school children, and policy makers about how localizing our food system will benefit people, the planet,

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<sup>95</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>96</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>97</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>98</sup> Almeida et al.

<sup>99</sup> MAP, "Mass Ave Project."

<sup>100</sup> MAP.

<sup>101</sup> MAP.

<sup>102</sup> MAP.

and our local economy"<sup>103</sup> -- developing a praxis of conversation and learning between youth and the adults and institutions in charge of maintaining the community.<sup>104</sup> Lastly, youth have been highly satisfied and empowered by the work they have done as a part of this program, as it has impacted "their overall understanding of the food system and empowers them to advocate for change in the food system [helping them] identify their strengths and build from them".<sup>105</sup>

By answering two great needs within the community (youth empowerment and food access/security), and by centering youth voices of color voices of color and their empowerment, MAP was able to reinvigorate and save Buffalo's urban foodscape from failure -- with their youth breathing new life into West Side community affected by the harmful effects of planning and food apartheid. Growing Green Youth were empowered to make their foodscape in Buffalo look different, and it was only through the support and the belief in them of being "integral to their community"<sup>106</sup> that they were able to liberate themselves from the harms they faced in the community, envision a better future for their community and act on ensuring that these visions came to light.

## **WE/Me FARM: A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS PLAN FOR DALLAS'S SOUTHERN SECTOR**

**Organization Name:** Paul Quinn College

**Location:** Dallas, TX

### **Background + History**

Paul Quinn College is a historically black college founded on April 4th, 1872, in Austin, TX by a group of preachers in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, dedicated towards educating freed slaves and their offspring trades (blacksmithing, carpentry and leatherwork).<sup>107</sup> Paul Quinn College acted as an academic haven for black students excluded from other institutions of higher education in the pre-Civil Rights era -- focusing on vocational training but offering courses in theology, English, Latin, music, and math.<sup>108</sup> However, as the times came and new schools opened in the community, the academic standards and facilities of Paul Quinn lagged the other schools as it was unable to receive sufficient funding to improve.<sup>109</sup> In the early 60s, Paul Quinn College was in danger of closing its doors. But a powerful dean, William Milton Collins helped revitalize the college, and ushered a new era for Paul Quinn, establishing a new education department and creating an accreditation process that helped their academic program improve.<sup>110</sup> This greatly impacted enrollment and development at the college, allowing for its expansion into the community of Waco. With the hopes of revitalizing campus lived experiencing and broadening the scope of the market for the college, Paul Quinn moved from Waco, TX to where it is currently at, Dallas, TX in 1990.<sup>111</sup>

At his inauguration in 2007, President Michael Sorrell assumed the post with Paul Quinn College in hard times. The school's enrollment had plummeted, alumni donations had dried up, there were a host of infrastructural issues present, and the school was in debt.<sup>112</sup> As a result, President Sorrell took

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<sup>103</sup> MAP.

<sup>104</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Glass, "On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education."

<sup>105</sup> Mize, "Massachusetts Avenue Project: Urban Farming and Job."

<sup>106</sup> Almeida et al., "Food For Growth - A Community Food System Plan for Buffalo's West Side."

<sup>107</sup> Paul Quinn College, "Mission, Vision & History - Paul Quinn College."

<sup>108</sup> Nelson, "Paul Quinn College."

<sup>109</sup> Nelson.

<sup>110</sup> Nelson.

<sup>111</sup> Nelson.

<sup>112</sup> Freemark, "The Reinvention of Paul Quinn College."

matters into his own hands, and repurposed the football program into an urban farm -- a move that sparked controversy in a state known for its football programs.<sup>113</sup> This was one of the key steps that President Sorrell took, to revitalize and bring up Paul Quinn College. His model of excellence, with the WE Over Me farm, his policies around dress and his vision of empowering youth to be leaders within their communities and on campus led to the vibrant, thriving college we see right now.

**Mission Statement + Goals**

The Mission Statement for Paul Quinn College "is to provide a quality, faith-based education that addresses the academic, social and Christian development of students and prepares them to be servant leaders and agents of change in the global marketplace".<sup>114</sup> Paul Quinn College's ethos and way of practicing this mission statement is through the WE Over Me program. As quoted from the website, "forged through times of struggle and strife, our students make the world a better place by centering this: The needs of the community supersede the wants of the individual".<sup>115</sup>

**Structure and Governance**

<u>Paul Quinn College Organizational Chart</u>	<u>WE/Me Farm Organizational Chart</u>
President Michael Sorrell Academic Faculty/Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial Aid Officers</li> <li>- Dean of Students/Alumni Affairs</li> <li>- Interim Development Director</li> <li>- Director of Personal and Career Development</li> <li>- Academic Advisors</li> <li>- Site Coordinator/Case Manager</li> </ul> Students	Work Program Dean Work Program Supervisors Farm Director Farm Assistant Director Paul Quinn Student Workers

**The Results of the Project**

After repurposing their football program in 2010, President Sorrell and Paul Quinn are not only empowering their youth to learn farm practices and grow food, but they are providing them with a developmental edge many other youths of color don't have regarding the ability of farming and cultivating crops.

President Sorrell said that to enact change, being in a "non-profit" mindset is not enough. There is no autonomy around this model, especially for communities oppressed by the very same systems (keep in mind built by them but not for them) that are offering them these "support funds". The funds and support being given never come from pro-bono, or with a generous mindset when it relates to institutionalization -- because we live in a business economy, where there are expectations around giving and receiving.

Thus, a model around self-sufficiency and a continued homegrown developmental process around food systems and decision making on the urban community scale is necessary towards being able to ensure the best future for a community. We as planners in these institutions of power need to

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<sup>113</sup> Freemark.

<sup>114</sup> Paul Quinn College, "Mission, Vision & History - Paul Quinn College."

<sup>115</sup> Paul Quinn College.

understand this — the fact that we are agents of change, yes, but only just agents. We aren't the change itself, the communities and most importantly the youth are. And until we truly consider and integrate their voices and values into the plans, policies and practices we have - change won't come.

This is the key to why Paul Quinn College is successful. They operate a self-sustaining model of food planning through their WE Over Me Farm, that empowers youth to be able to engage themselves within the food system of Paul Quinn College and Dallas. Youth within this model have Conscientização and therefore are empowered to not only take up farmhands and maintain their school and environment, but they are also maintaining their souls, heritages, and critical consciousness, from organizations and conglomerates that would have otherwise forced them to sacrifice their health and well-being to survive.

# **THE MATTAPAN FOOD & FITNESS COALITION**

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH COORDINATING**

What first introduced me to the idea of youth harboring the power to make concerted decisions was intriguingly not my experience at DUSP or with any of the community organizations I have had the privilege to work in, but my time as a high school student at MIT with the MIT Introduction to Technology and Engineering Sciences program (MITES). As a student at MITES, I felt liberated. I was finally being given the support and help that I needed to be able to figure out my interests and passions. I felt safe, and comfortable, in an environment that allowed for me to grow and develop mentally to be able to enter myself into the world of STEM. As an inner-city youth, with the inability to engage myself within these resources, being able to finally have access to them through this program allowed for me to reflect upon my position at the time and fueled a desire within me to engage myself more within the topic of empowerment and engagement. It goes to say, that I would not be here without this = and that I would not have come to these conclusions about youth empowerment had I not been given the resources to do so.

As a potential first step towards attempting to figure out what youth empowerment meant to me after my freshman year of, I applied to be a teaching assistant and residential assistant at MITES, and MOSTEC. Through my experiences of helping teach mechanical engineering basics to these high school youth, I came to find out how important and imperative their remarks on the world and on their situations at home were -- and how in this space they were not only able to spread their wings out and be whoever they wanted to in a safe environment, but still do their part for their communities, from the simple act of working diligently with a cause to improve their homes. This lit a fire within me, as I had just begun my studies within Urban Studies and Planning at the Institute, but I was not able to realize the potential of integrating myself in work that propelled the youth experience until this past summer, when I worked as a Community Engagement Intern for my current place of employment, the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition.

I reached out to one of my former supervisors from my first internship as an Advocacy and Community Engagement Intern at the LivableStreets Alliance, an advocacy organization dedicated towards ensuring that Massachusetts communities in urban areas have streets that are not only livable, but livable and functional - through coalition building between nonprofits and organizations, advocating and policymaking in government, and diagnosing issues at hand with surveying methods.

My current supervisor, former co-worker at the time, Shavel'le, was a pivotal part of the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC). Founded by 2006 by Dr. Vivien Morris, and a group of Mattapan residents concerned about the health of the Mattapan community,<sup>116</sup> the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition is a non-profit community organization dedicated towards ensuring that Mattapan has access to healthy foods, health-based programs, health education and youth programming. However, at the time of interning with the LivableStreets Alliance, I only knew of the MFFC as an organization dedicated towards a vision of a healthy neighborhood of Mattapan.

When preparing for my undergraduate thesis around food planning, its many powers and usages as a cultural and sensory tool and its merits within the field of planning, I reached out to Shavel'le for some guidance related to food empowerment and its many connections to the community. Through our meetings, I grew fond of the work the MFFC were doing in Mattapan, by not only putting this amazing neighborhood on the map for people to appreciate and love it more, but by centralizing youth (the Vigorous Youth) within their mission of making the community healthier. The Vigorous Youth are a cohort of youth aged 14-21 that are employed over the summer by the MFFC. With the desire

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<sup>116</sup> MFFC, "History."

to learn more about the ways that youth were able to lead a model of sustainability, health, and food access in Mattapan, I began working as a student intern over this past summer at the organization.

When I first arrived, Mattapan was homey. The ride down from Cambridge was difficult, but it was worth it. Orientation with the Vigorous Youth showed me how amazing, competent, and innovative the youth were -- from our brief discussions about zoning rights and different architectural styles to learning more about each of their interests and how working at the MFFC would propel them towards being able to achieve them. It was made clear to me the true care many of these youth had when it came to Mattapan. Every summer, the Vigorous Youth oversee three components of the MFFC, Mattapan on Wheels (a free youth-led day of biking that is committed to bringing visibility towards bike access, bike safety and the visibility of biking in Mattapan - with youth organizing and planning, and leading bike repair workshops), the Mattapan Farm Stand (where the youth partner with the Brookwood Community Farm, and sell produce to Mattapan at a reasonable, discounted price) and finally their work maintaining the Kennedy Playground Children's Garden and Woolston Street Community Garden, (where they clean out the garden of its weeds, and plant seedlings that lead to the growth of produce for the communities in Mattapan). I highlight the general programs the Vigorous Youth operate to not only show how driven and full of impact the youth are, but also how multifaceted the issues of Mattapan are, and how imperative it is that we have many ways of integrating the voice of youth within each of them. For this report however, I am primarily focusing on my experiences with the youth around food access and justice.

The two experiences in which the Vigorous Youth were able to organize over food this past year when I joined was at the farmstand and at the farmers market. Prior to this past summer, youth were able to work in maintaining and organizing the Kennedy Playground Children's Garden as well as the Woolston Street Community Garden - not only tending to the crop.

### **Vigorous Youth Led Farmstand<sup>117</sup>**

On Thursdays, from around 12PM to 6PM in the middle of July to the middle of August, Vigorous armed with veggies and fruit from the Brookwood Community Farm, one of MFFC's partners, held a farmstand outside of the Community Health Center on Blue Hill Avenue to sell healthy food, share programming from other non-profits in the community dedicated towards the health and safety of Mattapan residents - some examples being, BOND of Color, Boston's Organization of Nutritionists and Dietitians of Color or Consult LeLa, a community engagement firm dedicated towards bringing civic engagement into the public realm and helping communities envision their built environments or even a few moments where we invited local trainers to lead a fitness session outside. There was a reap of benefit from the farmstand, youth not only were able to get a hold on running the farmstand, but Mattapan was able to get access to healthy and fresh food from a local farm. But moreover, food and the collection of it made this all possible and worth it.

### **Results from Vigorous Youth Work in Farmstand**

At the end of the summer and in four days of farmstand work (a month of farmstand), there were 57 customers, with 247 units of produce sold. Items sold include Zucchini, Basil, Cucumbers, Onion, Collard Greens, Swiss Chards, Squash, Kale, Tomatoes, and Melons. More importantly, the Vigorous Youth felt (other than with the prospect of there being language barriers) that the work that they did was a "good experience" and a good bonding experience between other youth and the community.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> See Fig 3.

<sup>118</sup> MFFC, "Home." (Data referenced from an in-depth program evaluation by Dr. Kayleigh Ward and Professor Laura Senier in Northeastern University)

### **Vigorous Youth Run Farmer's Market<sup>119</sup>**

The second experience is the farmer's market. On Saturdays, from 9am to 2pm (accounting for the Vigorous Youth setting up), the Vigorous Youth along with some adult volunteers helped run the farmer's market across from the Burger King in Mattapan, along Cummings Highway. The farmer's market is considered a hub for Mattapan residents, particularly residents of elderly status unable to secure a financial means of purchasing the produce, grain, and legumes they need to be able to live well. What makes our farmer's market so special is that it is not only a place for residents to be able to get fresh and healthy food, and for farmers to be able to market their produce to the public but it is a place where residents can obtain subsidies for fresh food, get information about governmental food assistance programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and statewide programs like HIP (Healthy Incentives Program), have access to health education and supplies, access to youth programming and recreational equipment and also, get information about initiatives related to Mattapan around transit redesign on Blue Hill Ave and the trolley. This is where the Vigorous Youth shines the brightest -- they are not only creating a rapport with farmers while selling, that allows for them to learn more about the farming processes and the marketing of goods, but they are also at the front of the stalls with the experts in the other areas of the farmer's market, connecting with the community around their pursuit of health.

### **Results from Vigorous Youth Work in Farmers Market**

In 2021, the MFFC celebrated 15 years of dedicated service to the community of Mattapan. In these past two years, the MFFC's farmers market were able to, through their food access and nutrition initiative, host 6 community cooking classes, provide 180 summer meals to youth, provide 35 garden plots for community members, distribute a total of 27,040 \$2.50 and \$5 Farmer's Market Coupons, which aided in the support of seven farming partners -- of \$86,287, and serve 6,309 customers (more than half of which were Mattapan residents)<sup>120</sup>.

### **Vigorous Youth: The Future of Mattapan**

Being able to take part in this work showed me how beautiful, strong-willed, intellectual, and savvy the Vigorous Youth are -- and how important they were in ensuring that Mattapan residents have access to a bevy of information about health in the community. This is all through the vessel of food and food events, with the MFFC playing a pivotal role as the stewards of the community health and fitness wise. The lack of these amazing youth and their perspectives in some of the planning and advocacy meetings I've been in with other organizations and governmental entities shows how short-sighted and unaware adults and organizations are of the population of youth. It was the combination of my work with the Vigorous Youth this summer and this realization that has propelled me to pursue this thesis project. Because the Vigorous Youth of the MFFC not only deserve more awareness but also routes for them to be able to follow their interests and make their communities a better place.

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<sup>119</sup> See Fig 4.

<sup>120</sup> MFFC, "Home." (Data referenced from 2021 Annual Meeting and 2022 Farmers Market data)



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

From what has been shown, there is still a considerable amount of work that needs to be done to ensure that youth have the tools necessary to feel empowered enough to be able to engage themselves within community decision making processes. With my outlining of the history of youth rights and the recent history of the integration of youth perspectives within urban planning, the first step forward needs to be one that is focused on creating a foundation and a stepping stone for future thought in this space to be able to take off from. The works of Freire, Holt, Lynch, and youth centered organizations in realizing and centering the value of youth perspectives helps anchor us into the field, but further insight and thought is needed within this field to create a bulletproof case for youth critical engagement.

Second, before delving into general actionable steps that have the possibility of changing the physical landscape of youth engagement, there needs to be a shift in the philosophies and the mindset related to youth and their capacities of engagement within the sphere of development and planning. More specifically, the tendency to belittle, diminish the value of and look down on youth and their perspectives proves to be one of the main hindrances in their development, and in the ability of communities to be able to have actionable steps towards improvements in the lived environment.

Third, in a period where institutions have a huge sphere of influence over communities and their development, institutions are obligated to support youth programs and communities. Specifically, in the case of higher educational institutions, university control or the "amount of control an academic institution has and its effects on the populations that these institutions are connected within"<sup>121</sup> directly correlates with the availability of housing and food in the communities for which they are a part of. These communities, unable to adapt and adjust to the rising socio-economic costs of living, face community disintegration, increasing housing costs, gentrification, and food apartheid".<sup>122</sup> With a lens on the impacts institutions have on food systems and food apartheid, youth in cities have specifically been at the forefront of ensuring that their communities are able to liberate themselves from this food apartheid. But without the support that they need, it is difficult for them to reach their goals. These institutional impacts directly impact youth development, and the institutions behind these effects have the "power, means of resource and capital to cater towards the needs of these populations"<sup>123</sup> so they have the means to act and spread their resources to ensure that youth have a say in how their community looks and is planned/designed.

Lastly, this is what needs to be done, to ensure that youth can enter within these decision-making spheres in their communities:

- 1) Reaching for Self-Sustenance in the Community
- 2) Integrating and Involving Youth in Community Meetings Around Topics Related to Food Systems
- 3) Legislation Building Around Support for Youth Organizations and Youth Civic/Planning Engagement
- 4) Education (Around Food Systems/Reflective Exercises)
- 5) Planners and Institutions Creating Pipelines for Youth to Grow
- 6) Participatory Design + Financing
- 7) Braiding Together Like a Chain: Coalition Building/Community Organizing
- 8) Repurposing of "Unused" Space or of Owned Space

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<sup>121</sup> Brown et al., "The Jaws of the Institutional Elites: An Analysis on the Socioeconomic Effects of Academic Colonialism on Communities Surrounding Universities."

<sup>122</sup> Brown et al.

<sup>123</sup> Brown et al.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MATTAPAN FOOD AND FITNESS COALITION**

Youth hold the key to our salvation in urban foodscapes throughout the US. Organizations who have centralized youth experiences around food have shown promise in this crossroad, with neighborhoods being positively impacted by their movements/efforts. The Buffalo and Dallas case studies shed light into the success of integrating youth development efforts within food systems planning, and its effects at engaging youth within decision making models in their respective communities.

Food for Growth is an example of how institutions of higher education can actively support and help non-profit organizations with their missions of ensuring a healthy and youthful space of politics in their community around food systems planning. WE Over Me is an example of these institutions of higher education empowering their youth to make decisions and impacts that greatly benefit their communities, while liberating these youth from the banking concept of support and resources -- allowing for them to follow their dreams without worry. Based on the general next recommendations listed above and the case studies shown, here are recommendations for the MFFC (some of which they are currently working towards):

First, beginning to integrate and involve the Vigorous Youth in community meetings around design and food security. This could be through a formal position, like a trusted youth coordinator or steward, at first but eventually with more youth having the ability to enter themselves within these conversations and directly affecting it.

Second, using Mel King's model of Braiding Together Like a Chain, from his 1981 *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development*, coalition building and community organizing with other like-minded groups. Coalition building with other organizations and coalitions and community organizing are two keys towards ensuring that the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition can have a strong stance in the city. With a strong foundation, youth will be able to effectively develop and engage themselves within decision making processes, as they will have the resources and support to do so.

Third, developing youth programming around food security in Mattapan, as well as a leadership and mentorship component that focuses on uplifting youth, and getting them to the places that they envision to go to. Pushing forward a model of self-sustainability around these components would bolster the critical consciousness of the Vigorous Youth while ensuring that the organization has a strong model for future years.

Fourth, leveraging and extending partnerships. With schools, with places of higher education, with the government – being able to spread word and show the effectiveness of integrating youth voice and experiences within planning discourse and the need for a unifying image of ensuring that their voices are heard, and their experiences are validated.

Fifth, eventually expanding the mission of the MFFC and Vigorous Youth throughout Mattapan would be a prime step for the organization and in being able to integrate Mattapan youth voice into Mattapan planning discourse.

### **KEY RECOMMENDATION: THE FRAMEWORKS OF FOOD**

A key recommendation should be to look at food as you would a "Swiss army knife", as a multitude of meanings and tools to understand the lived environment. This is because, at the crossroads between urban planning and the everyday experiences within communities, food offers unexplored opportunities to empower communities, and to understand their heritages and cultures.<sup>124</sup> Food's

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<sup>124</sup> Fall, "The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.pdf."

impact on our lives is multifold, as a necessary product for survival, a tool of empowerment, a medium into a plethora of cultures, heritages and lived experiences, as a language and as an art.<sup>125</sup>

Food is who we are.<sup>126</sup> What we eat, how we eat, where we eat and why we eat all influence and affect us. It is what builds our consciousness and our sense of living. Food is such a pivotal and powerful tool, unbothered by the concept of age and maturity -- a tool that youth can be able to harness and develop without judgment. The case studies from Buffalo and Dallas as well as the work being done currently in Mattapan show how imperative it is to be able to look at food in multiple lenses to be able to understand one's lived environment. In my previous work, I curated a model around food that sheds light into the multidimensionality of food, which in many ways also reveals how food moves in the present day and its impact on relationships:

### **Food as a Necessity**

Food is a necessity. Everyone needs it to survive. There is no reason to look up why it is so important – from being in the womb, food has kept us alive and strong. Without access to it, we face death. Everyone should have a right to food, given these points, and it is important that we consider food's importance in helping us keep up with other processes in life, and in being a foundation for many families, and communities around the world. Many countries, including the United States, do not recognize a right to food.<sup>127</sup>

### **Food as a Tool of Power and Empowerment**

Food is a tool of power. From my mother to the community chefs cooking up a storm in food banks to the head chefs of Michelin Star restaurants, a cook/chef/culinary artist possesses the power to impact the people they are serving. Even before these amazing people get their hands on the food they make, the people who cultivate, raise, and catch the ingredients are the single most important people in this food ecosystem.

Food is a tool of power and control, for planners and governments to use to directly affect the populations under them. From the controlled extinction of the bison in the United States by the US government in correlation to their genocide of cultures and peoples indigenous to the Americas, Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward, to even modern religions and their relations to food,<sup>128</sup> there have been several times that ruling governments have purposely impacted their community members through the medium of food.

In the case of present-day planning, we live in a food apartheid<sup>129</sup> -- as there remains: a prevalence of food desolations (colloquially known as food deserts),<sup>130</sup> food superfunds (colloquially known as food swamps)<sup>131</sup> and food mirages particularly in marginalized, POC dominant, low-income areas in the United States.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Fall.

<sup>126</sup> Schulz, "Eat Your Words."

<sup>127</sup> Riches, "The Right to Food, Why US Ratification Matters"; UN, "Third Committee Approves 11 Drafts Covering Use of Mercenaries, Women in Rural Areas, Unilateral Coercive Measures amid Sparring over Right to Food | UN Press."

<sup>128</sup> Lowndes, "Why the US Army Tried to Exterminate the Bison"; Norman, "Food and Religion"; Smil, "China's Great Famine."

<sup>129</sup> Fall, "The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.Pdf."

<sup>130</sup> See definitions section.

<sup>131</sup> See definitions section.

<sup>132</sup> Agyeman, "How Urban Planning and Housing Policy Helped Create 'Food Apartheid' in US Cities"; Breyer and Voss-Andreae, "Food Mirages"; Brones, "Food Apartheid"; Cameron, "Geography of Urban Food Access"; Curley, "Food Swamps and Food Deserts in Poor Communities"; Sevilla, "Food Apartheid."

### **Food as a Culture and Heritage**

Food is a medium into the cultures and heritages of the lived experience. Historian Abigail Carroll, author of “Three Squares: The Invention of the American Meal” says that “Food is an amazingly fertile window into culture...but it’s one that we just take for granted and we overlook. And it’s just embodied with so many meanings”.<sup>133</sup> The process of food creation, and consumption has been etched into stone throughout the history of human civilization, and Carroll’s quote further puts into perspective the cultural relevance food has had on our histories. Food is crucial to our cultural survival, and not embracing its many impacts towards the survivability of an individual or of communities culturally, is a form of cultural genocide.

### **Food as a Language**

Food has also been seen as a language, a medium for community members to use to express and emphasize their, cultural significance amongst a city with a plethora of other communities,<sup>134</sup> a language used by community members to connect with each other and to other communities,<sup>135</sup> a language used by community members to feel connected to their heritage, histories and culture, and a language by community members to communicate and bond with others.<sup>136</sup>

### **Food as an Art**

Finally, food is an art. Making food for people, whether it is for yourself, your close family members, your customers or for a huge community is a learned art. Food provides a medium for cooks/chefs/artists to have an outlet for emotional and social turmoil. Food brings people together. Food has greatly impacted other art forms. These are just a few of the many examples of food proving itself as an art form. It is important however, that we consider access to this art form, as there are different cultural perceptions of flavors, food, and cooking within this framework (including by not limited to secrets relating to the cooking of dishes, gender norms, division of labor, recreational time availability, scarcity, resource access).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Siers-Poisson, “Historian.”

<sup>134</sup> Steel, “Sitopia.”

<sup>135</sup> Dunbar, “Breaking Bread”; Giordano, “Pull up a Chair.”

<sup>136</sup> Dunbar, “Breaking Bread”; Giordano, “Pull up a Chair.”

<sup>137</sup> Fall, “The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.pdf.”

# CONCLUSION

## LIMITATIONS

As a result of time, resources available and guidelines, this study did not explore the importance of funding this work. With a focus on funding, this report would have had a strong showcase of youth representation and experience telling, quantitative data points related to the economic impacts of youth of color in these food systems, and access to more research related to the topic of youth empowerment within community food systems.

This work only sets a precedent for research in this area. It is exploratory in nature: diagnosing the issues that have led to the lack of youth empowerment within decision making processes in their community food systems. Future work should address a component of sustainability around food and youth empowering organizations, like the Manhattan Avenue Project and Paul Quinn College. With a study devoted towards the practical application of solving these shortfalls, we may be able to realize the true impacts youth can have on their community's food systems when they are at the decision making table.

## TAKEAWAYS

The impact youth historically have had on their communities have been profound, from their skills in the workforce, to their insight and energy. Despite this, planning organizations and other developmental institutions have fallen short of integrating these youth perspectives and voices into community level decision making processes. Food provides us with a lens to see these positive impacts in the status quo. It also provides youth with autonomy and empowerment, as they develop a critical consciousness that immerses themselves within community struggles -- warranting their ability to positively impact food systems within their communities in decision making processes. For Mattapan youth to be able to be engaged and involved within decision making processes in Mattapan, we must empower them with the power of self-sustaining food programming -- aimed at developing these youth and putting critical tools in their hands to be able to drive positive change within the neighborhood.

The philosophies and frameworks highlighted in the literature review show the importance of not only considering youth as being a population able to gain a sense of empowerment towards liberation, but it also reveals the political influence and power of food, revealing how malleable yet influential food can be as a media. Moreover, from the case studies and my work with the Vigorous Youth at the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, we can find that with proper support and empowerment from adults and institutions that youth can not only gain a critical consciousness of their positionality when it comes to planning matters in their community, but that they are able to make considerable changes in the way their communities look, positively impacting their friends and family through a plethora of outcomes from access to fresh food to education to ensure that their community (slowly but surely) is self-sufficient and self-conscious about its health and power.

To connect with my previous work, one of the takeaways from Cassandra Campbell, the co-founder of Fresh Food Generation, a Caribbean influenced restaurant and food caterer in the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, says we as a populace have "fallen into the trap of fast, quick, not real cheap food and that it is important that one is able to take the time to take single [and fresh] ingredients and to put it into a blender, and make it into a sauce...and love what we do".<sup>138</sup> What I find intriguing, is that the concept of love has departed from the food scene -- and it is this concept in which youth that are determined to improve their communities can really take advantage of and use it to their benefit. Being able to do this affirms their need to be in decision making processes on a community scale, for it is love,

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<sup>138</sup> Campbell, Interview with Cassandra Campbell, Co-Founder of Fresh Food Generation.

optimism, empowerment, and critical consciousness that triumphs over the chains of oppression and subscription.

It is imperative that planners and institutions pride themselves towards developing systems that are inclusive of all perspectives and that are active towards ensuring a healthier, sustainable and more liberatory future for all. Because as planners, we have an obligation to empower marginalized groups, allowing them to have a means for self-expression and to confront marginalization to liberate these groups from oppression.<sup>139</sup> It is through the support of youth and awareness of the impacts food systems have in community planning that we finally may be able to not only "to heal the wounds caused by centuries of hate, negligence, inequality and inequity",<sup>140</sup> but also ensure through a model of youth empowerment and development, a more secure and bright future for all communities. Because youth **TRULY** are our future.

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<sup>139</sup> Harvey, "The Right to the City."

<sup>140</sup> Fall, "The Seasoned Pot - Exploring the Multidimensionality of Food at Its Crossroads with Planning and Its Impacts on the Community Model.Pdf."

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# APPENDICES

## DEFINITIONS

### **Youth**

Youth are to be defined as the population of Generation Z,<sup>141</sup> between the ages of 14 and 19. In this thesis we are primarily focusing on youth of color.

### **Older Members of Society**

Older members of society are to be defined as the populations below Gen Z, particularly Gen Xers and Baby Boomers, between the ages of 42 and 78 -- as they hold the most socio-economic and political power currently.<sup>142</sup>

### **Food Conglomerates**

Food conglomerates are food organizations that control and hold stake in different industries and businesses as a way of lowering market risks.<sup>143</sup> For instance, McDonalds is an example of a fast-food conglomerate.<sup>144</sup>

### **Households of Color**

Households of color are to be defined as those headed by someone who identifies as Hispanic or as some race other than White.<sup>145</sup>

### **Oppression**

Oppression is to be defined as the active state of violence and exploitation by an actor in power socioeconomically, as to interfere with a population's vocation to be human. The oppressed are often in a hyper-visible state by society and its oppressors - visible and human only when they engage with the dominating practices of the oppressed and invisible in other cases,<sup>146</sup> creating points of trauma in the community.

### **Food Oppression**

Food oppression is to be defined as "a form of structural subordination that builds on and deepens pre-existing disparities along race and class lines".<sup>147</sup>

### **Food Apartheid**

A built system of oppression in the lived environment that involves a prevalence of food desolations (colloquially known as food deserts)<sup>148</sup>, food superfoods (colloquially known as food

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<sup>141</sup> Brunjes, "Age Range by Generation."

<sup>142</sup> Brunjes; Visual Capitalist, "Generational Power Index."

<sup>143</sup> Chen, "Conglomerate."

<sup>144</sup> McDonalds, "McDonald's U.S. Real Estate | McDonald's"; Williams, "How McDonald's Became One of the Largest Real Estate Companies in the World."

<sup>145</sup> Hermann, "In Nearly Every State, People of Color Are Less Likely to Own Homes Compared to White Households | Joint Center for Housing Studies."

<sup>146</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place."

<sup>147</sup> Freeman, "Fast Food."

<sup>148</sup> See definitions section.

swamps)<sup>149</sup> and food mirages in marginalized and low-income communities of color in the United States.<sup>150</sup>

### **Food Desolations**

A replacement and response to the critique of the term 'food deserts'.<sup>151</sup> Food desolations are places that have lack of access to affordable, culturally relevant, nourishing, and healthy food, inextricably linked to race, power, and money.<sup>152</sup>

### **Food Superfunds**

A replacement and response to the critique of the term 'food swamps'.<sup>153</sup> Food superfunds are “areas with a high-density of establishments selling high-calorie fast food and junk food, relative to healthier food options”.<sup>154</sup>

### **Affirming Humanity**

The innovation we need is 'technology of the hearth.' Technology comes from the earth. In that word is “art” which is technology and “ear” which means listening. Really listening means a willingness to change. When you listen in this way to someone else, you affirm their humanity.<sup>155</sup>

-- Mel King, *Fmr. MA State Representative, Community Organizer, Educator*

The late Mel King emphasizes to be human and to understand someone else's being, one needs to not only acknowledge of the knowledge and craft of living and struggle (art and its connection to technology and the earth) but one needs to be active in listening and understanding/or trying to understand someone else's positionality on this planet -- soulfully. This is when humanity shines brighter than the oppressive nature of societal living.

### **Empowerment and Self-Efficacy**

Empowerment is to be defined as the "oppressed" population in question having the power to liberate themselves from the chains of oppression and gain a critical consciousness.<sup>156</sup> Self-sufficiency and empowerment go hand in hand with self-efficacy most often leading to empowerment. Being self-sufficient is a byproduct of knowing that one's abilities are seen and is powerful enough to allow for others to understand your positionality and drive (empowerment).

### **Engagement**

Engagement is to be defined as the ability of the “oppressed” to use their struggles and power to see to it that change (related to access of power) occurs in their lived environment<sup>157</sup> The corporatist

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<sup>149</sup> See definitions section.

<sup>150</sup> Agyeman, “How Urban Planning and Housing Policy Helped Create ‘Food Apartheid’ in US Cities”; Breyer and Voss-Andreae, “Food Mirages”; Brones, “Food Apartheid”; Cameron, “Geography of Urban Food Access”; Curley, “Food Swamps and Food Deserts in Poor Communities”; Sevilla, “Food Apartheid.”

<sup>151</sup> Caruthers, “Native American Food Insecurity | Feeding America”; Nargi, “Critics Say It’s Time to Stop Using the Term ‘Food Deserts’”; Rivera, “Should We Still Be Saying ‘Food Desert?’”; Sevilla, “Food Apartheid.”

<sup>152</sup> Alexis, “Food Deserts.”

<sup>153</sup> Elton, “Please Don’t Call It a Food Swamp”; Rivera, “Should We Still Be Saying ‘Food Desert?’”

<sup>154</sup> Cooksey-Stowers, Schwartz, and Brownell, “Food Swamps Predict Obesity Rates Better Than Food Deserts in the United States.”

<sup>155</sup> Pennloh, “Mel King.”

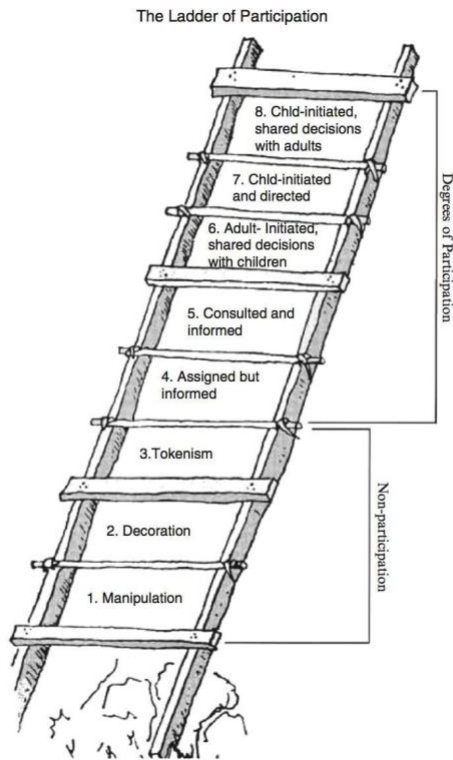
<sup>156</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>157</sup> Freire.

way of warranting engagement revolves around the practices we have now - restricting access to engagement by age. Instead, engagement should be warranted by struggle, be it: racial, socio-economic, political, class etc. Being oppressed and in a life of struggle warrants engagement.

**FIGURES**

**FIG 1: Ladder of Youth Participation**



**FIG 2: Conceptual Model**

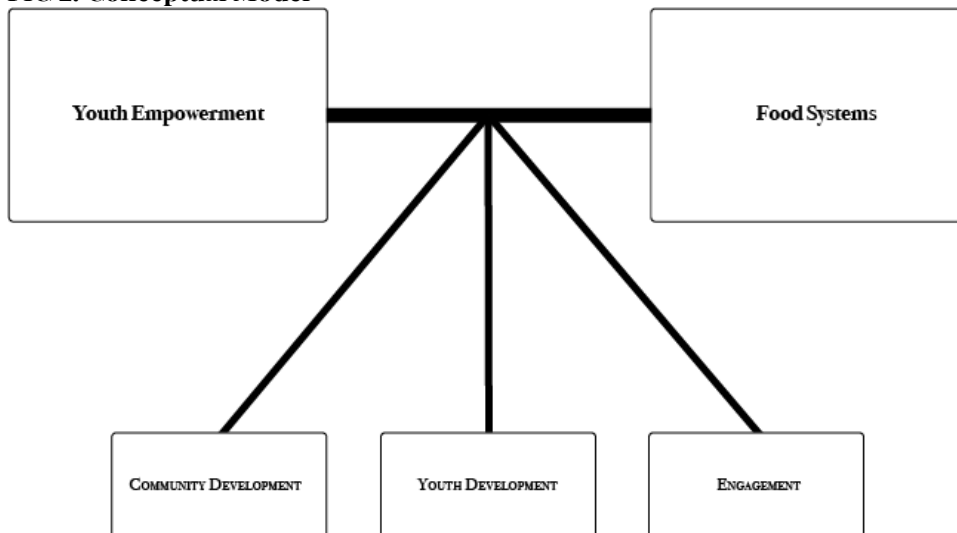




FIG 3: MFFC Vigorous Youth Farmstand Flyer



FIG 4: MFFC Farmers Market Flyer

