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"WE'RE BEING LEFT TO BLIGHT": GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND RACIALIZED SPACE IN KANSAS CITY

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RACIALIZED SPACE IN KANSAS CITY

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of
Kentucky

By
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

“WE’RE BEING LEFT TO BLIGHT”: GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND RACIALIZED SPACE IN KANSAS CITY

In this dissertation, I explore ‘green’ urban development and urban agriculture projects from the perspective of residents of an African American majority neighborhood in Kansas City—who reside in an area referred to as a ‘blighted food desert’ by local policy makers. In Kansas City, extensive city government support exists for urban agricultural projects, which are touted not just as a solution to poverty associated issues such food insecurity and obesity, but also as a remedy for ‘blight,’ violence and crime, and vacant urban land. Specific narratives of Kansas City’s past are used to prop up and legitimate these future visions for, and development projects in, the city. This dissertation lays out an argument for how, in Kansas City, the dominant narrative surrounding urban sustainability, agriculture, and history came to be constructed and informed by white voices, and documents how these narratives, primarily constructed by upper-middle class white local ‘foodies’, are harnessed to support green development projects that marginalize and displace people of color and the poor. Specifically, I draw on 26 months of ethnographic fieldwork to explore how this narrative was constructed and elevated in local policy circles, document the lived consequences of this whitened narrative from the perspective of residents of “food deserts,” and describe historical and current minority-led agricultural projects—which aren’t included in dominant accountings of Kansas City’s development. I also explore agentive actions of racialized groups in opposition to this dominant whitened discourse, documenting how one neighborhood council in Kansas City strategically utilizes urban food project funding to acquire other, more urgently needed, community resources. I bring light to important acts of resistance by some black and brown urban farmers, who explicitly work to shape city space by reinscribing spatialized histories of displacement and racism in Kansas City. In this project I understand racialization and representation as active, not passive, processes, that have the power to determine whose voices are heard, and who has power to shape city space and its use. By untangling the racialized construction of history and space, and drawing on narratives shared by oft-silenced groups, this dissertation project

contributes to scholarly work committed to disrupting hegemonic spatialized whiteness (McKittrick 2011).

KEYWORDS: Racialization, Urban Space, Green Development, Alternative Agrifood Movement, U.S. Social Policy

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May 8th, 2018

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a Saturday in May 2015, the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Missouri Department of Conservation co-hosted the “Grow & Tell,” a “Kansas City Urban Agriculture forum.” The forum that day drew well over 200 urban growers, institutional food purchasers, community-garden organizers, schoolyard garden practitioners, and non-profit actors involved in addressing urban poverty and hunger. Also in attendance were city officials—former mayors of Kansas City, Kansas, and Missouri, the assistant city manager of Kansas City, Missouri, representatives from the department of city planning and development, city councilmen for numerous districts across the Kansas City metropolitan area, and city officials involved in distribution of Kansas City’s EPA grant for brownfields redevelopment. The forum was billed as follows:

Grow & Tell is a one-day forum to share current information among non-profits, farmers and growers, and government partners about programs and projects in Kansas City related to urban agriculture and food policy, and to gather feedback on needs, priorities, barriers and trends in the urban ag community. The Forum is intended to promote access to healthy foods, productive use of surplus land, creation of local jobs and economic activity, and help foster public/private efforts to capitalize on opportunities created by the current momentum in urban agriculture.

I would later learn, during a conversation with the city manager, that the first iteration of the Grow & Tell occurred four years ago, and was then billed as the Kansas City Food Policy Conference. Though the agenda was broadly focused on food insecurity—as city officials had hoped to better understand how to support projects addressing urban hunger—“conversation just kept drifting back to urban agriculture, so that’s when we knew this was what folks in KC were really interested

in.” The forum that day began with presentations on city incentives and programs for urban growers—urban agriculture zone ordinances, urban water access grant programs, brownfield soil remediation funding, among others—followed by short presentations by local urban growers, meant to highlight the diversity of urban food projects occurring in the metropolitan area. Growers spoke passionately about their projects, a majority of which have sprung up over the past ten years, as interest in urban agriculture has taken hold in Kansas City. This interest has given rise to projects such as the food hub being developed in an abandoned amusement park in Kansas City’s industrial East Bottoms, numerous schoolyard garden programs, a faith-based non-profit that plants open-access fruit orchards in ‘neighborhoods of need,’ and the development of numerous farmers markets in areas of the city labeled ‘food deserts.’ Presentations on projects such as these were followed by lunch, and after lunch the crowd dispersed into breakout discussions on various topics surrounding urban agriculture—questions concerning access to capital and land for growing; water access and regulatory and policy barriers; market gaps and opportunities; and emerging trends in food policy and urban agriculture.

I slipped in to the breakout discussion on regulatory and policy barriers in urban agriculture, and joined a room full of people whom I would later learn to be formative voices in urban greening policy in Kansas City, and very influential in the urban food scene—the leader of a prominent nonprofit that encourages urban food production and consumption, a successful large-scale micro-green grower who owns a high-tunnel business, a local business mogul who has purchased and transformed numerous industrial sites into microbreweries, recycling factories, and

food hubs, and a woman who has founded and managed several farmers markets located in food deserts. All of these local ‘foodies’ were white, and, as I’d later come to understand, mostly upper-middle class, self-identified liberals. Also in the room were two older women, who both identified themselves—as we went around the room with introductions—as black urban farmers, growing food on the East (understood by those in Kansas City as predominantly low income, African American) side of the city. The first thirty minutes of discussion was mainly a back and forth between the ‘food leaders’ - who tossed out observations about how to help urban growers scale up, how to better match growers to institutional markets, and how to assist growers with acquiring land. Neferet—a pseudonym, as are the names of most others in this dissertation—one of the black urban farmers in the room, had been growing increasingly, visibly frustrated during the preceding discussion—fidgiting, sighing, and shaking her head. She suddenly interrupted the conversation and stated emphatically:

But growing food is related to *greater issues* for me. Access to food is a *human right*. I live in 64127 [A Kansas City zip code]. That is the most desolate area in Kansas City. These [farming] projects you’re talking about, the neighborhoods that do those projects get a lot of attention, because of that urban agriculture. They get a lot of resources. But 64127 has a lot of seniors and renters who live at poverty level. They don’t want to, and can’t, grow food like I do. So no one wants to fund projects in my particular area. I can go to Ivanhoe neighborhood, for example, and get all the money I need, all the land I need, but not in 64127. What do we do? I was living in 64127 since before the highway was built, and I remember when they stenciled those lines in and cut us out of the city. What are we supposed to do to get support?

In her interjection, Neferet tried to bring up several questions of great importance to her, and to other East side residents: How can we talk about urban food production and not discuss food as a human right? How can we discuss land

access and urban farms in the city and not discuss the racialized policies such as highway placement and disinvestment that created the vacant lots of land? Why do Kansas City neighborhoods with a high concentration of urban farms get more resources and praise than other neighborhoods? What can low-income communities do to receive the attention of local policy makers, when they lack the interest or means to engage in urban farming? After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, Danny, an investor in a food hub project located in an area of Kansas City he refers to as blighted, responded to Neferet:

Agriculture can show people how to grow. It can give them hope. How are people gonna know how or want to grow food if you don't show them? I remember when my neighborhood, Manheim, was a lot like your neighborhood. I was broke. I remember being worried that the repo man was gonna come for me that day. And one day I drove past an empty lot, and I stopped. I took a trowel and dug up weeds around this bench on that lot. And to this day that bench is clear. So even if you don't have control over your economy, or your social situation, you have control of your body and your time and your garden. You can do that.

Danny's response reframed Neferet's pressing concerns and questions about race, space, and justice, into matters of individualized action—if you're upset about the economic conditions in your neighborhood, start a garden. The concerns and questions that Neferet posed were later echoed to me by countless other East side residents of Kansas City. These questions, and the nature of policy-makers' and influencers' responses, are the central focus of this dissertation.

In this dissertation, I document how in Kansas City the dominant narrative surrounding urban sustainability, agriculture, and history came to be constructed and informed by white voices, and lay out an argument for how predominantly white, upper-middle class local 'foodies' became influential in shaping urban

greening policy agendas in the Kansas City metropolitan area. An outcome of this relationship is that foodie discourse so powerfully shapes thoughts about urban blight and poverty that all manner of concerns are steered back to a discussion of urban food production as a solution, and urban food production has thus become a key means for Kansas City neighborhoods to demonstrate ‘productive’ urban citizenship to policy makers. Further, this dissertation examines these urban greening policies and the projects they incentivize from the perspective of low-income, predominantly African American residents of Kansas City’s East side—those for whom these projects are intended to provide the most benefit. I provide historical scope to demonstrate that the current focus on incentivizing urban food production and consumption in areas termed food deserts painfully elides histories of urban food production and also racialized violence and displacement experienced by black and brown urban residents, and I argue that low-income urban residents find creative means to utilize the hegemonic focus on urban greening to meet their own, more urgent, needs. This ethnographic study of one, highly segregated, city’s focus on urban greening initiatives engages three main literatures: the anthropology of policy, the relationship between whiteness and urban space, and interdisciplinary studies of the alternative agrifood movement.

First, I contribute to the intersection of anthropological understandings of policy and alternative agrifood movements by laying out an argument for how one groups’ interests, in this case—local foodies—can come to be represented at local policy levels in influential ways. In this dissertation I refer to some upper-middle class, largely white, folks in Kansas City as local ‘foodies,’ in order to reference their

loosely shared set of ideologies which place value on local, organic consumption (Kato 2013; McClintock 2017). My argument adds to extant understandings of how non-government actors become powerful agents of the state in the vacuum created by neoliberal welfare rollback (Fischer 1997). It also contributes key insights to bodies of scholarship on alternative agrifood movements and local foodie discourse in the U.S., which have neglected structural analysis in favor of a focus on individual racialized ideologies.

Second, and relatedly, this dissertation contributes to critical whiteness studies and studies of whiteness within the alternative agrifood movement, as I craft an argument for how local foodie discourse can influence policy that can (re)produce white structural privilege. I argue that this policy is predicated upon understandings of urban space and history that elide the contributions, exploitation, and violent displacement of black and brown bodies. Policies created based on these misunderstandings of urban space, in Kansas City, inappropriately and inadequately address urban hunger and spatialized inequality. I demonstrate the effects of these policies on two key dimensions of Kansas City's urban greening initiatives—food charity disbursement and the local food economy.

Third, I contribute to alternative agrifood studies and the broader arena of food studies, by focusing on the agency of those targeted by urban food and food charity programs. I present narratives of black agency in Kansas City's urban foodscape in several ways—first, by demonstrating how food-insecure black and brown urban residents utilize inappropriate food-charity programming to meet their food needs, and second, by documenting how low-income residents of food

deserts strategically utilize urban greening projects to leverage support for other, more urgent community needs. But, as other anthropologists have argued (Abu-Lughod 1990), I write about resistance and agency in order to understand it as a diagnostic of power, and not to romanticize or merely celebrate human freedom.

I opened with a discussion of the Grow & Tell because it hits on a few key themes discussed in this dissertation. First, it highlights the extreme level of involvement local foodies have in crafting urban greening policy in Kansas City. Green infrastructure—a multipurpose strategy that “promises to produce healthy ecosystems while mitigating urban woes from crime to depressed real estate markets” is a growing, multibillion-dollar industry in the U.S., and is being adopted by major cities nation-wide (Safransky 2014:238). Over the past decade, community organizers, non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, and the city governments of Kansas City (KC), Kansas, and Missouri, have been increasingly involved in shaping the metropolitan area through urban greening initiatives, and increasingly, this has been attempted predominantly through projects promoting urban food production and distribution—because, as I argue in this dissertation, that’s where foodie interests lie. Significant federal funding streams such as EPA grants for the remediation of brownfields sites and federal stimulus dollars have been further leveraged, locally, to secure additional funding from myriad public and private stakeholders—all with the goal of addressing urban vacancy, disinvestment, and poverty. The vast majority of these programs focus on the majority African American, low-income East side of Kansas City—an area that experiences high rates of vacancy, and provides ample vacant land for urban farming initiatives. Kansas

City's Green Impact Zone program, brownfield redevelopment grants for the urban core, and Municipal Farm project—nearly 500 acres of city-owned property currently being redeveloped to include several large-scale urban farm initiatives—all direct federal funding into projects promoting urban food production, consumption, and distribution, because, as demonstrated in this dissertation, influential local foodies have played significant roles in the development and implementation of these green infrastructure projects.

A second reason I opened with the Grow & Tell vignette was to highlight the divergent understandings of race, space, and history at play in Kansas City—as evidenced in the interaction between Neferet and Danny. Understandings of blight exemplify this in Kansas City, as it is spoken of frequently and carries a number of different connotations. For example, the city's 2015 Urban Agriculture Zone Ordinance (Article VI) has facilitated the creation of numerous urban food projects, and was crafted with the input of an advisory team made up of several prominent local foodies. The ordinance offers significant tax incentives to qualifying small businesses, engaged in growing produce or livestock, that purchase and operate on blighted urban properties (Missouri 2015). Blight is loosely defined in the Urban Agriculture Zone Ordinance as a space of “economic and social liability” (Missouri 2015). Several local foodies spoke of blight to me obliquely, referring to it as any “undesirable” area that can be “eliminated” or turned into an “oasis.” Conversely, for some black urban farmers, blight was used as a verb, and signified America's historical legacy of legalized racism, actualized in urban spaces through restrictive covenants and racially-prejudicial zoning (Gordon 2008; Sugrue 1996). Neferet,

when I spoke to her after the Grow & Tell, told me in reference to preferential city government investment in a neighboring community over her own—“we are being blighted...they are leaving us to blight.” These articulations of blight point toward complex, divergent understandings of race, class, urban space, and history. In this dissertation I undertake the work of unpacking these divergent understandings, questioning what differing understandings of racialized city history mean for differing understandings of the city’s ‘green’ future.

Racialized City Space, Differently Understood

Scholarship analyzing the creation, and lived experiences of, racialized urban space informs this dissertation’s inquiry into urban greening policies in highly segregated Kansas City. Histories of racially-discriminatory urban policies have unevenly shaped U.S. cities and created racialized divides (Low 1996; Caldeira 2005; Checker 2011; Rothstein 2017); the raced and classed dimensions of such policies are naturalized and masked through neoliberal discourse that valorizes market-based development (Logan and Molotch 1987; Kennedy 2000). Development terms such as blight, referenced by Neferet and Danny, trace their roots to market-based models of urban planning focusing on “slum clearance” and “blight removal,” which have isolated the urban poor in enclosed and near-invisible communities (Smith 1996; Susser 1996; Maskovsky 2014; Harvey 2008). The consolidation of white, middle-class suburbanites who mobilized around right wing, racialized rhetoric of welfare queens, dangerous black masculinity, and the “cultural decay” of the urban centers of U.S. cities, emerging in the 1970s, supported and discursively intensified this spatial segregation (Davis 1986; Kingfisher 2002; Harvey 2008). Through these

human practices, discourses, modes of governance, and social relations, cities become racialized, and city spaces “bear the power of racial influence” (Wilson 2012:940; Schein 2006; Schein 2012).

Race is inscribed geographically in Kansas City, as in all U.S. cities, and is both relationally produced and understood—encountered differently by individuals of varying race, class, and gender positionalities (Kobayashi and Peake 2011; Drake 2014; Finney 2014). Urban greening initiatives do not operate on “clean slates”—such work rests upon a palimpsest of historical racial relations, written into city space, and understood and lived differently (Brown 2000; Wilson 2012). Histories of racially restrictive covenants, zoning, and prejudicial renting and loaning practices—combined with white flight, and the consolidation of whites in suburbs—have created clear boundaries of race, class, and privilege in city spaces (Gordon 2008; Sugrue 1996). In many ways, such as surveillance, the increasing “militarization” of the city, and discriminatory housing practices, whiteness is implicated in city spaces and works to regulate and patrol the urban poor, predominantly minorities (Davis 1990; Fiske 1998; Low 2009). These urban processes both reflect and enact racialization processes—historically specific ways categories of race and difference are created and inhabited—and can be seen as racial projects, through which racial order is organized and represented (Omi and Winant 1994). Anthropological study of the city has addressed this uneven, racialized inhabitation of city space by analyzing how class and racial identities are differently performed and built (Zhang 2008), how ways of moving within urban

space can be read as profound articulations of race and class (Notar 2012), and how uneven development is read and understood by urban citizens (Melly 2013).

I draw on scholarship that understands urban ‘ghettos,’ food deserts, and their inhabitants not as pathologized, but as created by the sociospatial demands of urban capital, discursively and politically. Dávila (2004:24) notes that conceptual linkages of culture and place are the result of “material inequalities and historical exclusions in housing policies, jobs, and services, that have long shaped ethnic and working-class enclaves throughout U.S. cities.” Documenting the discursive and lived creations of ethnic enclaves in the U.S., specifically writing about the creation of “Chinatown” in Vancouver, Anderson (1987:589) writes that these processes are “not a benign cultural abstraction but a political projection, through which a divisive system of racial classification” is structured and institutionalized. Drawing on Said (1979), Anderson documents how the political projects of discursively and geographically creating racialized space construct “their” territory and “our” territory, allow for the subjugation of racialized groups through discourse, urban planning, and social action, and “help the mind to intensify its own sense of self by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close and what is far away” (1987:583). Gregory (1998) documents the political agendas involved in shaping racialized space, illustrating how the historical construction of Black Corona, for example, was created by “complex power relations and practices that excluded its residents from fully participating in the political economy and life of society” (1998:53).

In working to conceptualize racialized city space, I am heavily informed by scholarship on black geographies. Scholars in black geography contend that market-based models of urban planning are better seen as “rational spatial colonization and domination,” in which profit is made from the “erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands” (McKittrick 2006:x). This literature takes seriously the acts of concealment, marginalization, and the creation of sociospatial boundaries, which, when unpacked, reveal how cities are organized to contain and compartmentalize racialized difference in order to support and maintain hegemonic white privilege (McKittrick 2006:xii). Attuned to black geographies literature, this dissertation is concerned with how ongoing spatial, racialized hierarchies are informed by racist historical paradigms (McKittrick 2006:xii).

Urban Governance and Studying the City

This dissertation, then, focuses on one city-wide attempt to use urban greening policies to address racialized inequality, in order to speak to larger issues of how racialized, uneven, urban space is inhabited, and how conceptions of such space affects urban development policy. Urban anthropologists have demonstrated that cities are good entry points to understanding processes of power—cities can be seen as “points of anchor” for understanding global and transnational processes that construct inequality (Sassen 2004a), and analysis of urban governance is an important facet of understanding U.S. citizenship today (Maskovsky 2014). Scholars have argued that cities are challenging notions of the nation as the most important site of governance, and posit that we must take this into account in ethnographic work (Holston and Appadurai 2009; Sassen 2004). In doing so, we must

conceptualize urban governance as broken along classed/gendered/ethnicized/racialized lines, as cities are a “honeycomb of jurisdiction” where citizens are governed in countless different ways, and the law is exercised heterogeneously (Holston 2009).

Just as cities must be taken seriously in understanding governance in the U.S. today, so too must third sector actors—as neoliberal capitalism and resultant federal policy changes over the past 50 years have profoundly altered the relationship between the state and NGOs, drastically changed the structure of public welfare programs in the U.S., and fundamentally transformed the form and function of the poor’s ‘safety net.’ Neoliberalism embraces privatization, marketization, and deregulation, and has vastly increased global inequality (Lyon-Callo 2004; Kingsolver 2002; Maskovsky and Kingfisher 2001). Domestic neoliberalism in the U.S., beginning in the 1970s, took the form of coordinated political activity and lobbying in the corporate sector, and the bipartisan roll back/privatization/dismantling of New Deal social services such as welfare, public health care, and public education (Goode and Maskovsky 2001:5). The U.S., and numerous other Western democracies, have, since the 1970s, worked on redefining their purviews away from providing for citizens and toward ‘empowering’ people to provide for themselves (Russell and Edgar 1998). This shift is facilitated by the redirection of public revenues to private enterprises, such as NGOs, whose contracts with the state for delivery of social services are not well monitored (Edgar and Russell 1998). As public policies move away from universal access and towards

privatized forms of assistance and trickle-down economics, new spatial patterns of poverty have emerged.

Works at the intersection of urban greening and urban governance (via city policy and third sector actors) have illustrated how these processes dovetail in the neoliberal U.S. city to create new kinds of green citizenship and subjectivities. Maskovsky (2014) argues that neoliberal projects of subjectification are constituted at the level of the grassroots in urban space, and are manifested via market-based assumptions of social value, productivity, and investment. Market-based models of urban “uplift” and renewal intersect often with urban greening and sustainability strategies, and have implications for understanding urban citizenship and rights claims. Jung and Newman (2014:24), in their pilot research on a new “ethical capitalist” venture—a Whole Foods in Detroit—promote understandings of “urban governance” as not just the exclusive domain of governments, but rather posit that “citizens internalize and informally govern themselves through a range of practices such as civic involvement, consumerism, and even the act of eating well.” Jung and Newman argue that Whole Foods’ involvement in the “moral economy” of Detroit illustrates that they, and other corporate actors, may seek to blur the boundary between global corporation and social movement, taking part in regimes of urban governance (2014). Sheller argues that the promotion of eco-mobility and related city policies, in Philadelphia, disregard racialized histories of space, and promote similar green subjectivity to that documented by Jung and Newman (2014). Sheller argues, “the rejection of automobility becomes a structured story about a kind of (white) urban citizenship that represents ‘good’ mobility for a whole generation,”

and ignores racialized transport inequality (2014:75). Such work highlights how race, class, and notions of citizenship are all imbricated in urban greening policies.

Thus, power cannot be assumed to be concentrated in the state, necessarily; it is vital to note the roles of state and private sector actors in developing the shape of city space and governing the lives of the urban poor. Today's cities, and their poor, are not under the surveillance/care of the state alone, but rather what Ruben (2001:435) terms the FIRE sector: finance, insurance, and real estate. In a circular way, the FIRE sector ensures that just as the urban poor find themselves losing the resources of the welfare state, cities face shrinking personal and business tax bases, and the development initiatives of the FIRE sector end up with a strong role in shaping the geography and lives of the poor. "Welfare reform, empowerment zones, tax increment financing, and a range of other supply-side and privatization measures," then, shape uneven geographies and welfare provisioning (Ruben 2001: 446). Anthropologists of NGOs argue that nation states are no longer obvious and legitimate sources of authority over civil society, and that the globalization of capitalism and power, decline of the state, and rise of nongovernmental organizations deeply impact how social scientists study power and politics (Fisher 1997). Social policy, globally, is no longer shaped solely by governmental bodies; the role of agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, multinational corporations, and NGOs must be taken into account (Okongwu and Mencher 2000). Literature from the anthropology of policy helps both theorize and formulate methodologies for studying this new role of government intervention, and its consequences for the

poor; as worldwide, non-state actors are fulfilling functions once reserved for the government (Wedel 2004; Stryker and González 2014).

Conceptualizing Whiteness in Green Urban Development

In understanding how race operates—ideologically and spatially—this dissertation draws on critical race theory and critical whiteness studies within it. Critical race theory (CRT), born in legal studies during the 1980s while anthropology was undergoing its “reflexive turn,” is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding race and class that has illuminated how popular and academic understandings of race and racism have been shaped by centuries of scholarship and legal/public policy (Harrison 1995). Baker (2010) highlights the dangerous role anthropology as a discipline has played in promulgating racism with an early focus on indigenous “culture” and African American racial pathology. Likewise, Muhammad (2010) illustrates how the statistical link between blackness and criminality was forged in hegemonic scholarly paradigms, and results in mainstream understandings of black urban America today.

Whiteness as an area of scholarship arose within CRT studies, and works to write race back into whiteness. There were early contributions to studies of whiteness from anthropologists of color (DuBois 1994, 1998, Hurston 1935, Hurston 1937; Davis et al. 1941). DuBois’ concept of double consciousness and “the veil” illustrates an early engagement with whiteness studies, arguing that African Americans are caught in differential power relations, being forced to see themselves “through the revelation of the other world...seeing themselves through the eyes of others” (DuBois 1994). Whiteness studies emphasizes that both white people and

people of color live racially structured lives (Frankenberg 1993). Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced, and “intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination” (Frankenberg 1993:1). Scholars locate the unmarked nature of whiteness in colonial discourse and domination, which created an unmarked white/western self and contrasted it with a marked, racial other (Frankenberg 1993:17; Hartigan 2005). Whiteness scholars have questioned how whites ideologically uphold dominance and privilege, arguing that institutional inequality is maintained by this hegemonic consciousness—and consequently, that investigation into these ideologies can help lead to their dismantling (Bush 2011:11).

Anthropologists have contributed important insights to whiteness studies, destabilizing scholarship that has, at times, crafted hegemonic/homogenous conceptualizations of whiteness, devoid of class analysis. Hartigan (2005) argues that whiteness scholars have often essentialized whites, and must work to understand how race is situated, localized, and changing (283). Dominguez (1986) complicates whiteness, for example, by theorizing the fluidity of race based on political forces. She illustrates in her case study of what it means to be Creole in Louisiana, that property, inheritance, and legal structuring have much to do with racial classification—Creoles are variously defined as white, black, or in-between depending on the political economic context (Dominguez 1986). Hartigan (2005) adds to this understanding of how race and class are co-constructed, and similarly links racial classification to political economy, tracing the concept of ‘white trash’ to the economy of slavery.

In working to understand whiteness I do not mean to reify race or phenotypic difference. Rather, by addressing whiteness, scholars work to unravel “a compilation of institutional privileges and ideological characteristics bestowed upon members of the dominant group in societies organized by the idea and practice of pan-European supremacy” (Bush 2011:3). This understanding of whiteness conceptualizes it as an institutionalized system of power, central to the development of the United States (Feagin 2009). In this framework, individual ideologies of those who benefit from white privilege are analyzed not as moments of individual bias, but in service of understanding the narratives and images that “emanate from and support systemic racism” (Bush 2011:3; Feagin 2009). Scholars have explored structural whiteness in the school system (Leonardo 2009), in the U.S. policing system (Burton 2015), and city planning (Shaw 2007).

A growing number of scholars have focused on the ways in which whiteness is embedded in the alternative agrifood movement (Hoover 2013), examining whiteness as manifested through a white middle-class habitus (Alkon and Mares 2012; Guthman 2008; Guthman 2012; Harper 2011; Paddock 2014), through efforts to “reach out and do good for others” (Slocum 2007; Guthman 2011; Lyson 2014), through whitened histories and romanticization of the agrarian (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Alkon and McCullen 2011; Kato 2013), and spatially, through the clustering of white bodies (Slocum 2006; Slocum 2012; Reynolds 2015). Scholars have also analyzed the food system as implicated in many “racial projects” (Omi and Winant 1994)—“political and economic undertakings through which racial hierarchies are established and racialized subjectivities are created” (Alkon and

Agyeman 2011:4-5). I situate this dissertation in conversation with other scholars of whiteness in alternative agrifood movements, but contribute a broader perspective by linking urban food projects and structural whiteness to the larger regime of the “global urban green growth machine” (Curran and Hamilton 2018:3). And, by writing as a biracial scholar of color, I contribute to the diversity of perspectives represented in this literature.

Urban Greening Initiatives as a Lens into Racialized City Space and Policy

In this dissertation I use the crafting, implementation, and perception of green infrastructure projects—specifically, in this context, urban food projects—in Kansas City as a lens into broader multifaceted understandings of race, space, and history in the city. Why do urban food projects serve as a useful lens into understanding diverse experiences of racialized urban space? Such projects are uniquely positioned to shed light on how policy makers and urban residents think about race and space (Slocum 2010), because in many ways food and the act of growing it has become an entry point for contemporary U.S. conversations around socioeconomic inequality and urban development. This is for several reasons: for one, hunger is a universal human physiological response that in many ways encourages empathy—Winne (2008:xxiv) argues, “complex social, political, and economic explanations may soar over our heads or simply hold no interest. But when we can feel the hurt, we respond.” But specifically, I locate the rise of food in such conversations/policy arenas in three global changes: the rise of alternative agrifood movements and resistance to capitalist alienation from labor, resultant increased funding lines for community food security related projects, and neoliberal paternal governance.

The rise of interest in using food as a means to address inequality and urban development must be situated within the growth in prominence of local food and alternative agrifood movements in hegemonic U.S. discourse. Gagne (2011) argues that alternative agrifood projects—specifically, farmers markets—actively address dominant capitalist ideology and address capitalist extraction in which consumer and producer both feel they are losing touch with the ‘reality’ of production, blurring lines between commodities and gifts. Similarly, Paxson’s (2012) ethnography of American artisanal cheesemakers illuminates how consumers and producers involved in this practice participate in reworking capitalist understandings of commodity and labor—artisanal cheese as an “unfinished commodity” provides value to consumers in its residual connections to the cheesemaker, the passion of the crafter is essential to the product (152). DeLind (2011) frames the alternative agrifood movement as “restoring a ‘pubic culture of democracy’ and engaging in the continual creation, negotiation, and re-creation of identity, memory, and meaning” (279). In these conceptions of the alternative agrifood movement, U.S. citizens are involved in shaping new politics of consumption that re-embed the market within narratives of social sustainability and resource management, and that contest the capitalist divorcing of labor and product (Bubinas 2011; Alkon 2013).

Because these politics of ‘good’ artisan food have risen to a national scale with local foodie activism and have been popularized in the writings of Michael Pollan, Wendell Berry, and others, many U.S. actors and activists have adopted the discourse/methodologies/promotion of local food within their own different social

movement contexts. Food becomes a means of addressing urban disinvestment in U.S. cities within urban greening initiatives, narrating and enacting alternative visions for schoolchildren (Bonilla 2014), spreading political beliefs such as Black Nationalism (McCutcheon 2011:178), and evangelizing (Bielo 2013). National and state organizations open increased lines of funding for community food security related projects, as the increasing popularity of such discourse raises the right to 'good,' local food for all in many policy discussions across the U.S. Reynolds (2014:242) writes that interest in local food over the past 15 years has resulted in nonprofit organizations, funders, city-governments, and national programs implementing policies and funding support specifically to expand food production and self-provisioning (see also Miewald and McCann 2014). The economic disinvestment of many postindustrial U.S. cities dovetails with these new funding streams to provide ample space for urban greening/beautification schemes and community food security programs. In addressing urban blight, "this movement is particularly gaining momentum now in many post-industrial cities that have lost jobs, population, and other resources, and have been affected by the recent housing crisis...urban agriculture in these cities has become a symbol of local reaction to two consequences of inner-city decline: urban blight and food deserts" (Meenar 2012:146). Thus, the national focus on the provision of local food can also be co-opted to illustrate/draw attention to civic unrest around racialized urban development, as activists take advantage of the increased publicity, funding streams, and focus on food.

The use of food to address inequality and urban poverty must be situated within understandings of neoliberal paternal governance. Food justice and community food security work fit well within the neoliberal project of self-subjectification—particularly, Shannon (2014) argues that the national focus on mapping and addressing food deserts constitutes a spatialized form of neoliberal paternalism that locate causes of poor health in environments, rather than in economic systems (see also Bedore 2014). Rosol (2012:240) situates community food security projects within the neoliberal project of welfare rollback and the rise of charity and nonprofit sector work (Poppendieck 1999), stating: food projects “can be understood as part of a distinct political rationality which aims at passing on state responsibilities to civil society.” Curtis (1997) furthers this argument, stating that economic and social changes over the past 15 years have left Americans unable to meet their daily food needs, and concurrent policy changes have shifted responsibility for food and income assistance from the federal government to states and the private sector, resulting in a “mixed welfare economy” and the rise of food projects and emergency food aid (209). Larchet posits that food projects work well within the U.S. neoliberal economy/ideology, as they allow for localized, pathologized problems, and individualized problem solutions—i.e., as Danny recommended, growing ones’ own garden to counter economic precarity and food insecurity (2014:401).

Field Site: Kansas City

Bifurcated by a state line, and encompassing both Kansas and Missouri, Kansas City houses over 600,000 residents: 55% white, 29% African American, and 19%

Hispanic or Latino, and holds a 22% poverty rate, higher than the national average of 14.8% (U.S. Census Quick Facts 2015) (Figure 1.1). Kansas City is comprised of both Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) on the West, and Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO), on the East, but for many reasons, it is more useful and appropriate to conceptualize the city as one complete metropolitan unit rather than as divided (Shortridge 2012:1). The city line has been utilized in industry ‘bidding wars,’ as Missouri and Kansas city governments tempt developers with tax incentives (Shortridge 2012:7); but for city residents, the state line is rarely spoken of as an important geographic landmark of the metropolitan area. However, some significant policy differences have affected urban greening initiatives on each side of the state line. For example, in some Kansas counties, the food tax is as high as 11%, meaning that many will choose, if possible, to shop for fresh produce on the Missouri side of the metro area, and farmers market vendor permits are much trickier to navigate in Kansas. These differences will be discussed further in later chapters, but in general, in this dissertation I refer to the Kansas City metropolitan area rather than the separate governments of KCK and KCMO.

Like other large American cities, Kansas City has witnessed dramatic growth in income inequality over the past five years, and the sedimentation of city pockets experiencing persistent poverty and hunger (Berube 2014). Food insecurity citywide, 14.2%, is slightly lower than the national average (Gundersen et al. 2016a; 2016b). However, in Jackson County, Missouri (the East side of Kansas City)—the vantage point from which this study analyzes urban greening initiatives—residents experience the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the metro area. 19%

of the population in Jackson County is food insecure, a rate that has risen one percent in the last year alone (Gundersen et al. 2016a; 2016b).

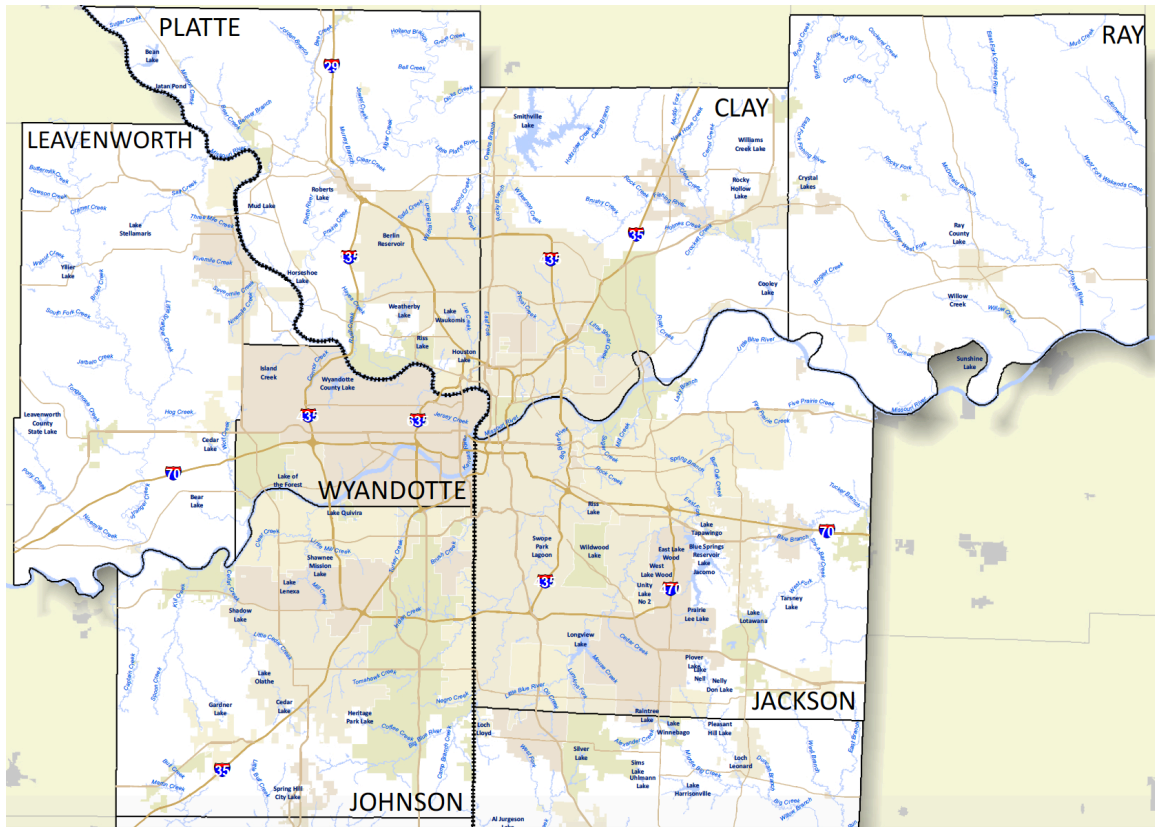


Figure 1.1 *Kansas City Metropolitan Area and the counties that comprise it. Kansas, on the left, and Missouri, on the right, are bifurcated by the state line in between Johnson and Jackson Counties. Map taken from Mid-America Regional Council.*

Kansas City serves as a uniquely appropriate site to study racialized urban space and green urban infrastructure initiatives. As I have already discussed, Kansas City has, over the past ten years, received increasing amounts of public and private investment in its green urban infrastructure initiatives. These initiatives receive bipartisan support within local urban governments and in hegemonic discourse. But while funding for urban food production has grown, via these green infrastructure initiatives, hunger has concurrently risen—particularly within metropolitan areas

such as the East side of Kansas City, that receive the highest number of urban food projects (Gundersen et al., 2016a). This indicates that such projects may not be operating in the ways policy makers intend them to.

Kansas City's starkly segregated space (Figure 1.2) with a history of racialized violence, makes it highly relevant for this dissertation's focus on race and urban green space. Histories of forcible racialized segregation have resulted in a boundary line running North/South in Kansas City—Troost Avenue—that separates the black East side of Kansas City from the largely white and affluent West side. African American exodusters—the name given to the first wave of African Americans who migrated North in 1879, following the Civil War— in the 19th century initially benefited from Kansas City's economy, finding work in meatpacking, flour milling, the railway and later, wartime industry. But they were excluded from white unions, and were first to lose their employment during economic decline, and were devastated by flooding and the advent of the automobile, which eliminated and/or relocated this industrial work in the 1950s (Sugrue 1996; Shortridge 2012). Post-industrial Kansas City grew increasingly segregated and economically divided as redlining and prejudicial lending concentrated poor African Americans to the East of the city, between Troost and Woodland Avenues, and “white flight” and blockbusting funneled whites into suburbs (Shortridge 2012; Gordon 2008; Sugrue 1996). Racially restrictive covenants championed by upper-middle class whites in Clay and Johnson Counties restricted poor African Americans from suburban migration, further concentrating poverty in Jackson County (Gotham 2002:40). Policy changes such as the Housing

Act of 1949 financed “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” projects in American cities (Pena 2006), and in Kansas City dislocated and/or demolished African American neighborhoods in service of Jazz district commercialization (Gotham 2002). Further deepening Troost as a racial dividing line—as Neferet noted— Interstate 70 and Highway 71 displaced and segregated African American neighborhoods, and Kansas City’s segregated schools, until 1955, used Troost as a barrier between white and black institutions (Schirmer 2002). Racialized policies were enacted so blatantly in Kansas City that in the 1930s, federal officials threatened to cut off funding to New Deal programs in Missouri unless racial restrictions on projects in Jackson County were lifted (Griffin 2015:69). Kansas City was one of the U.S.’ most segregated cities in the 60s and 70s, and remains on the top 10 list today (Schirmer 2002:97). In 1970, The Reverend James L. Betts, head of the Ku Klux Klan in Missouri, said that Kansas City was the best area in the state to recruit new members (Griffin 2015:141). In these ways and more, racial violence has consistently been enacted in Kansas City through policy, spatialized disinvestment, and concerted efforts of discrimination from white homeowners and powerful white supremacy groups.

Kansas City, importantly, has a storied history of black self-determination and mobilization against racial injustice. One of the oldest historically black colleges, Western University, was founded in 1865 on the Kansas side of the city, and Wheatley-Provident Hospital produced more African American medical specialists than any other U.S. city (Griffin 2015:38). In 1941, a wartime rally sponsored by the NAACP drew 5,000 black Kansas Citizens who fought for African American

employment in wartime industry (Gillis 2007). Black Kansas City residents rioted against the Kansas City, Missouri, local government in 1968 following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The city had refused to shut down in honor of Dr. King's funeral on April 9th, prompting peaceful protests and a subsequent violent response from the Kansas City Police Department (Griffin 2015). Today, a strong public discourse in Kansas City challenges racial inequality—public protests against issues such as the privatization of downtown area sidewalks, discriminatory policing in neighborhood grocery stores, and housing inequality are frequent and widely attended.

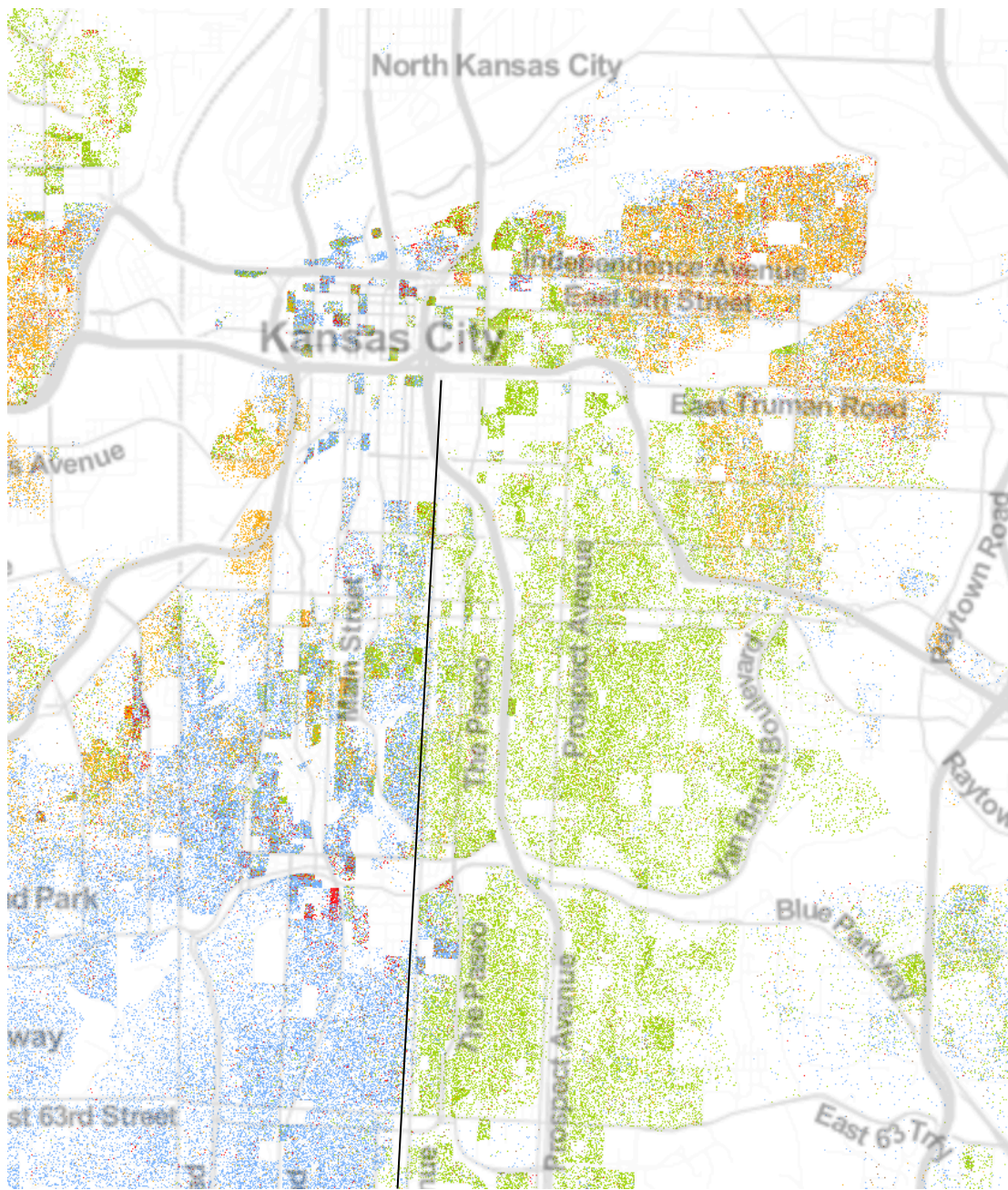


Figure 1.2 Racialized dot map of Kansas City's urban core—green dots represent black residents, white represent white, and yellow represent Hispanic. Troost Avenue, running North/South, neatly divides white and black Kansas City (Troost is highlighted in black). Map taken from The University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Racial Dot Map.

Methods and Approach

In this dissertation, I draw on participant-shared narratives, time, and movement through the city to inform my larger understandings of how green urban development policies are developed and experienced in highly racialized urban space. Anthropologists of the city have demonstrated that attention to such micro-moments can reveal important insights about urban governance—Ghannam (2002) illustrated in her work on state relocation of the poor in Cairo that participant understandings of space, place, and history can reveal important insights into conceptualizations of citizenship and relationships with the state (see also Zhang 2008). Examination of the daily experience of the poor in cities can shed light on macro-processes and the spatial, lived effects of policy (Thomas-Houston 2005; Schuller 2006). The methodology of this project was informed by these insights, and draws on a diverse ethnographic toolkit—26 months of participant observation, conducted between 2013 and 2017, 90 in-depth semi-structured interviews, social mapping, six focus groups, and archival research. Interviews and research were conducted under IRB approval from the University of Kentucky and from the University of Kansas. In order to protect participant identities, pseudonyms are used for individuals and organizations throughout this dissertation.

In some cases, most often for foodies, narratives from separate individuals have been compiled into one voice, both in order to protect anonymity and to place emphasis on structural violence rather than interpersonal violence. Part of the work of this dissertation is to illustrate how foodie understandings of race and place have informed policies that further marginalize people of color and the urban poor. In

order to make this argument, I draw on, and critique, foodie discourse, and foodie-informed policy. This discourse is not analyzed with the goal of vilifying individuals. Rather, I find it important to analyze this discourse as it supports a structural system of whiteness and white privilege. With this in mind, I often compile narratives of several white upper-middle class foodies into one voice, as my focus here is to understand the structure and policies this discourse creates, and not to focus on the individual ideologies one person might hold.

I use the identifiers 'Black' and 'African American' interchangeably in this dissertation, and always follow a research participants' self-identification. Both terms index complex racial, ethnic, class, political, and generational identifications (Thomas-Houston 2005); for example, several young, black, self-identified "politically radical" research participants found the identity of "African American" offensive, as it implied, like "Irish American," a chosen migration to the U.S.. Self-chosen racial and ethnic signifiers are never static; I do my best to represent research participants as they asked to be represented in this particular sociopolitical moment.

This dissertation focuses on, and in some ways implies, a black/white binary, as that binary is key to the racializing project in the urban food movement in Kansas City. While there is a significant Latino population and history in Kansas City (discussed further, briefly, in the following chapter), this dissertation undertakes the work of understanding how black Kansas Citians, specifically, are impacted by urban greening initiatives. I focus on black Kansas Citians because much of the "uplift" promised by urban greening initiatives is directed at black bodies and black

spaces. By highlighting the voices of black Kansas Citians affected by urban food projects, this dissertation undertakes the work of disrupting dominant white-led representations of urban space. Racialization (cf. Omi and Winant 1994), of course, is about power rather than biological identities. When I refer to black and white in this dissertation I am making reference to power relations rather than any inherent biological reality, and of course, individuals may identify in multiple ways.

I have been involved in different roles in the urban food movement in the Kansas City area since 2012, gradually transitioning from participant to researcher during that time. I grew up surrounded by family that cared about growing and eating ‘good’ food; my family in Bangalore, India produce Areca nut and coffee on large plantations; and my grandparents, in El Dorado, Kansas, grew vegetables on vacant lots, foraged for mushrooms and nuts, and sold their goods at farmers markets. When I went to college at the University of Kansas (located in Lawrence, Kansas, just a short drive south of Kansas City), I wanted to be a part of the food movement there, to link in to my family’s history. My experiences in that movement during my early twenties led to my research interests, and the focus of this dissertation. Joining in community garden workdays and local foodie potlucks in Lawrence and Kansas City left me feeling isolated—a majority of the folks involved in these circles came from privileged backgrounds, and were excited about ‘getting their hands dirty,’ and celebrating their new interests in the imperfect beauty of heirloom produce. These sorts of narratives didn’t resonate with me—in my family, we loved food, but the act of growing it was spoken about as hard, necessary work—it definitely was not something romanticized. Potluck dinners I attended were full of

vegan Indian-inspired dishes, and white local foodies explaining to me the myriad health benefits of coconut oil and turmeric. Discussions centered on color-blind narratives about the uplift that gardening programs could offer those experiencing poverty, mental illness, or homelessness, or those who were victims of the mass incarceration system. These collective experiences of marginalization within the local food movement led me to the questions that informed this project: why is the production and consumption of food touted as a solution to so many urban problems? Who is shaping this discourse and these policy agendas that draw on urban food production as a tool for economic uplift? How do other folks of color feel when presented with this narrative about food and agriculture that marginalizes or ignores their histories?

This past work, within the Kansas City area food system, provided a research-based social network that I drew upon and expanded during the 26 months of research for this project. This experience also positioned me in specific ways—as both an “outsider” and an “insider” (Narayan 1993; Chin 2006). In interviews and daily interactions, participants in this project variously indexed me as white, a person of color, upper-middle class, as someone who had experienced poverty, as an immigrant, and as a Kansan. Questioning and working to understand the sociopolitical context undergirding these various indexations of my identity was a key part of my fieldwork. For example, many white foodies I interviewed for this project assumed I was sympathetic to disparaging comments about people of color because of my light skin, and perceived class privilege—and would then highlight my minority status, asking me for advice in recruiting participants of color for their

programs. Several black interviewees immediately jumped into talking about white supremacy with me, unprompted, one stating “your people are no stranger to colonialism either.” While perceived insider status led to many painful moments, in which I felt I was made complicit in racist discourse, it also granted me access to a narrative that other researchers of color might have been excluded from (May 2014).

In my ethnographic practice, I was, and am, informed by anthropologists who have highlighted the messy work of collaboration in fieldwork (Anderson-Lazo 2016). I lived on the East side of Kansas City during this research, and engaged in partnerships and collaboration with multitudes of research participants, in sometimes shared, and often times contradictory, objectives—in these partnerships, congruence existed in that there were often shared questions about how culture and power operate (Anderson-Lazo 2016:476). Partnerships and engaged anthropological research took form in ways such as the sharing of research findings with area nonprofits, helping friends write grants and garner city support, and driving friends experiencing ‘food insecurity’ to the grocery store. This dissertation draws on my experiences and engagement at weekly garden workdays at community garden sites, myriad gardener training programs and classes, working for a small-scale farm at City Market farmer’s market, on nearly every Saturday morning for a year, attending events hosted by various urban food and urban greening organizations in Kansas City, attending monthly neighborhood council and housing meetings for East side neighborhoods, district meetings and other events hosted by the city to interact with urban residents, and attendance at farmers

markets throughout the city. Throughout the 26 months of research I enrolled in four separate locally-held nutrition classes offered by a local food aid agency, which in this dissertation I am calling Feast!. Feast! is a 7-week nutrition-education course that meets once weekly and provides participants with a free bag of groceries. I spent time riding public transport, and met individuals at neighboring Hyde Park Pool—the only free public pool in the metro area, heavily populated by Jackson County children and grandparents. I met and engaged with local foodies by participating in working group meetings offered by urban food nonprofits, planning coalitions for food nonprofit fundraisers, and other informal sites - such as happy hours, potluck dinners, and volunteer farm workdays.

In line with my commitments to engaged and collaborative research, much of the theorization used in this dissertation is driven by ethnography. For example, I avoid using the term “slave” in historical discussions in this dissertation because many black Kansas Citians I interviewed avoided using the term themselves, and found other ways to refer to slavery. This, I was told by several research participants, is because they did not want this enforced role to define their existence. While certainly not all black Kansas City residents would agree with this position, I avoid using the term slave in order to respect those who voiced their aversion to the term. Additionally, the use of the term “slave” erases the role of whiteness; for that reason, I follow Battle-Baptiste’s (2011) terminology of “captive African,” or “enslaved person” (as some U.S. historians have argued for, cf. Miller 2012) to maintain focus and emphasis on the structural violence inherent to this role (cf. Galtung 1969). My theorization of “urbicide” also emerged from

conversations during fieldwork, and that is discussed further in the following chapter.

This dissertation also incorporates data I collected while conducting thesis research for my M.A. from the University of Kansas. That research was conducted in Northeast Kansas City, and focused on a growing movement there of young Christian urban farmers who relocated into the urban core to reach out to racialized others and to evangelize through urban garden programming. For that project, I lived with a faith-based urban farming group and interviewed young evangelicals about how they used gardens as sites of evangelism. This previous work informs this dissertation in important ways. It has fleshed out my understanding of the multitude of various urban farming programs operating in Kansas City, and contributed to my understanding of the diverse motivations and origins of upper-middle-class white local foodie discourse around the production and consumption of food.

I have conducted this dissertation research in hopes of bettering, in small part, the way urban greening initiatives operate in Kansas City. Findings have been shared with stakeholders in Kansas City through a variety of forums—panel discussions, conference presentations, local news releases, and documents with policy recommendations provided to local government and nonprofits—which will be discussed in-depth in the concluding chapter.

Overview of Chapters

The chapters in this dissertation are arranged loosely in sections - chapters 2 and 3 focus on, first, elided histories of space in Kansas City, and then hegemonic

understandings of history held by those with policy-influence in Kansas City. Chapter 4 lays out how these whitened understandings of urban space turn into policy, and chapters 5 and 6 examine the effects of this policy on food charity programming and the local food economy in turn. Chapters 7 and 8 describe powerful acts of resistance to this hegemonic whitened discourse in Kansas City, exploring first how one neighborhood strategically utilizes green urban development grants to acquire funding for more urgent needs, and then how some black and brown urban farmers in Kansas City use their labor to (re)inscribe black geographies into city space. The dissertation's concluding chapter chronicles recent attempts to disrupt radicalized power hierarchies in Kansas City's urban food scene, and offers concrete suggestions for policy makers for more equitable green urban development.

Chapter 2: Historical Black Contributions to Kansas City's Urban Foodscape

In Kansas City, as in all U.S. cities, black bodies are routinely and violently displaced by city government, the real estate industry, and corporate interests in service of capital accumulation (Ruben 2001; Smith 1991). The displacements and violence enacted by this “growth machine” are naturalized within discourse of neoliberal urban development (Logan and Molotch 2007). Over the past several decades, this displacement in Kansas City has been enacted through green urban development infrastructure, as private companies leverage city support for projects that bring ‘sustainable’ development to ‘blighted’ urban space. This chapter documents the deliberate mechanisms powerful actors in Kansas City used to blight these spaces, often through purposeful disinvestment and removal of black occupants, to further urban capital accumulation. Further, in this chapter I discuss the significant contributions, often agricultural, black Kansas City residents made to these spaces—spaces where now, private and public entities draw on green urban infrastructure funding for their development interests, promote narratives of food desertification, and elide historical black and brown agricultural contributions to urban space.

While I focus specifically on racialized violence and displacement inflicted upon African American Kansas City residents, there are numerous other narratives that should be told. For one, Kansas City has a significant Latino/a community, which can be traced back to the 1830s. Mexican low-wage laborers were recruited by the railroad companies, transported into the city in boxcars, and lived primarily in communities along the rail lines, on the Kansas side of the state line. Kansas City’s

Latino/a population was particularly hard-hit by a flood in 1951; this displacement and labor exploitation—which continues today, as many larger peri-urban farms in Kansas City employ migrant laborers, Latinos/as among them—is unacknowledged in hegemonic discourse concerning Kansas City’s history.

In what follows, however, I lay out an abbreviated history of displacement as enacted in the Kansas City metropolitan area, from the 1700s to current day, placing emphasis on instances of black contributions to the city’s foodscape. The concept of “foodscape” emphasizes the spatiality of food systems, and has been used by scholars to draw attention to food production, retailing and consumption at a range of scales (Miewald and McCann 2014). The term is used here as a means of thinking through geographies and the politics of urban development as they intersect with food production and consumption (Miewald and McCann 2014:540). Using foodscape in this way allows me to broadly reference contexts in which food has been produced, consumed, and distributed in Kansas City. Temporally, I expand upon how foodscape has been utilized by other scholars—in this chapter, I think through historical sites and instances of urban food production and distribution, considering how that history intersects with the current use of space. I take into account, for example, that the infrastructural contribution of black laborers to industrial sites in the 1800s has shaped the current foodscape of Kansas City, as many industrial warehouses are now considered aesthetically valuable in green urban development projects. Lloyd (2010) documents this process in Chicago’s Wicker Park, for example, where sites of “post-industrial decay” first become aesthetically valued by artists, and are then capitalized on by cities—where these

disinvested spaces are newly realized as “edgy and glamorous,” and valuable tools for attracting “the creative class” (18). Acknowledging these labor histories, and the way they are capitalized on for current-day development interests, is important. This broad conceptualization of foodscape allows me to recognize the long history of significant labor contributed by black Kansas Citians to the metropolitan area.

Black Foodscapes; Disrupting White Public Space

I consider histories of urban displacement through the lens of black geographies. Black geographies “allow us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic” (McKittrick 2006:x). Black geographies in the U.S., “shaped by histories of colonialism, transatlantic slavery, contemporary practices of racism, and resistances to white supremacy,” are intimately connected to “practices of domination and deliberate attempts to destroy a black sense of place.” (McKittrick 2011:947). McKittrick writes that slavery, the “economized and enforced placelessness that demanded the enslaved work and thus be chained to the land,” normalized black dispossession and white landed supremacy in the United States (2011:949). Referring to black geographies, or a ‘black sense of place,’ is not a reference, however, to a homogenous way of seeing and existing in a place—rather, this lens brings into focus a “a set of changing and differential perspectives” that reference legacies of racial violence (McKittrick 2011:950).

McKittrick focus on one particular practice of place annihilation—urbicide (Berman 1987; Graham 2004)—and argues that it is a useful conceptual tool for

scholars working to make sense of the intersection of place, poverty, and racial violence in the U.S. (2011:951). Urban violence, urbicide, functions in such a way as to render specific human lives and communities as waste—acts such as blight renewal, the ‘cleaning up’ of slums, and the forceful displacement of marginalized populations make clear statements about whose lives matter in the city (McKittrick 2011; Davis 2006). In these ways, black geographies in the U.S. are deeply connected to uneven urban development, where the links between “blackness, underdevelopment, poverty, and place,” are calcified and naturalized through capitalist logic (McKittrick 2011:951). This chapter frames the histories of violent displacement in Kansas City through the lens of urbicide, in order to denaturalize the capitalist logic locally used to describe these processes.

The theoretical framework that guides this chapter, urbicide, emerged from conversations with black East Side Kansas City residents. Urbicide has most often been used by scholars of the Mideast (c.f. Crane 2017; Bayat 2012) in reference to the use of the city as an apparatus of warfare (c.f. Abujidi 2014), or “deliberate violence against the urban environment” (Crane 2017:188). East Side residents in Kansas City spoke to me in similar terms about the purposeful disinvestment in their neighborhoods—as acts of genocide and warfare, enacted by the Kansas City government. Bayat (2012:117) has written, of neoliberal Middle Eastern cities, that urbicide is enacted via the creation of zoning and expressways that “connect the elites’ work and leisure to their gated communities, leaving the rest to rot in poverty, crime and violence of slums.” I draw on and expand these extant uses of “urbicide” and argue, along with East Side Kansas City residents, that seemingly

apolitical urban greening practices are used as tools of violence to displace black urban residents and reshape the city for white elites (cf. Checker 2011).

The histories of space presented in this chapter were difficult to track down. Dominant narratives about the history of Kansas City—those produced for academic audiences and for the purpose of tourism promotion—are largely apolitical and color-blind. This is not surprising; space and its meanings are produced for certain goals and with benefits of a certain population in mind—the narratives shared here do not legitimate or lend support to those in power in Kansas City (cf. Razack 2002).

The institutional control of information, and the suppression of narratives documenting violence and displacement, is central to the creation of white public space (Page and Thomas 1994). As Page and Thomas (1994:112) argue, a central mechanism through which white public space—the material and symbolic places where racism is reproduced by the professional class—operates, is information control. Page and Thomas (1994:112) explore this question in the context of the nursing profession, arguing that white public space is reproduced in this field through the suppression of research central to the health of African-American populations. In Kansas City, information on black and brown contributions to the city economy is suppressed.

Many of the histories of space documented in this chapter were brought to my attention during moments of eruption during public forums. For example, during a panel presentation at the Kansas City Public Library—where the topic of discussion centered on the local revenue accrued by the Country Club Plaza shopping district—a young woman of color in the audience interrupted, and yelled out authoritatively:

“My Grandpa helped build the Plaza.” Eruptions like this one disrupt white public space, and evidence how important it is for marginalized urban residents of Kansas City to have their historic contributions, and exploitations, recognized in narratives of urban space. The remainder of the history presented in this chapter was pieced together from several locally published historical texts, and was fleshed out with census and archival data. Photos were unearthed with the assistance of local community activists and archivists.

This chapter’s goals are twofold—first, to disrupt hegemonic understandings of white public space (Page 1994), by documenting the elided contributions of black Kansas City residents to the area economy and agricultural industry. This point is made to provide context for discussions of food aid discussed in later chapters—spaces of historical black food production chronicled here are shown in later chapters to be sites currently labeled ‘food deserts,’ where racially-marked bodies have become a target for discourse surrounding ‘healthy’ eating and the promotion of personal food production. Second, in this chapter I lay out a history that demonstrates how Kansas City has profited from the violent displacement of black residents from sites of agricultural investment and labor. A majority of the sites discussed in this chapter are currently being (re)developed with green urban infrastructure funding—the specific mechanisms through which this funding has been leveraged, and operates, are discussed more in depth in Chapter Four of this dissertation. This chapter illustrates that displacement of black bodies, and exploitation of black landed knowledge, was a central, unacknowledged, component of Kansas City’s growth as a metropolitan area.

Specifically, this chapter describes the early era settlement and development of Kansas City, and discusses how the politics of slavery in Kansas and Missouri uniquely shaped the politics of the Kansas City metropolitan area. I outline black migration to Kansas City post-Civil War, and document, geographically, how black settlement in this period shaped the racial geography of Kansas City. The bulk of this chapter focuses on two sites within Kansas City, where, I illustrate, city governments have forcibly maneuvered black urban residents in order to serve capital interests. I illustrate how black agricultural labor built sites that are central to Kansas City's economy, and how black bodies were then forcibly removed from these sites, in Kansas City's historic Jazz district at 18th and Vine and the Rivermarket and West Bottoms industrial sites (Figure 2.1). The chapter closes with a discussion of the current landscape and investment in these areas of displacement.



Figure 2.1 Map illustrating Kansas City's urban core, with areas discussed in this chapter highlighted—the Jazz District/Vine Street corridor on far right, the Rivermarket area near top, and the West Bottoms on the far left. Map created in Google Maps by author.

McKittrick (2011:954) cautions that mere “descriptions of urbicide and racial violence actually contribute to the ongoing fragmentation of human relationships.” Repeated descriptions, by academics, of sites of violence and their victims, can actually be acts of violence in themselves, and can be seen as discursive colonization (McKittrick 2011; Mohanty 1991). Instead, analyses of racial and spatial violence—particularly analyses of urbicide—“need the enemy to be present in order for the urbicidal conceptual frame to move forward towards the end-of-suffering horizon.” (McKittrick 2011:954). Here, McKittrick emphasizes the need to name who enacts spatial violence in the city, rather than abstractly speaking about urban change; thus in this chapter, and the ones that follow, I go beyond bringing light to hidden

histories, and follow agents of change and political processes that have been part of silencing and marginalizing black Kansas Citians.

Early Displacements and Geopolitical Formations in Kansas City

The metropolitan area that today comprises Kansas City, located at the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers, was home to the Kansa, Osage, Otos, Pawnee, and Missouri nations when French traders ‘settled’ the area in 1822 (Gitlin 2010) (Figure 2.2). The Choutou family led this French migration into the area, and established a trading post on the North bank of the Missouri River, presently Northeast Kansas City (Shortridge 2012:10). This location facilitated easy contact with the area’s primary trappers, the Kansa (Shortridge 2012:10). This original settlement site became the Northern point of today’s racially divided Troost Avenue, named after Dutch doctor and slave owner Benoist Troost—the path, at that time, led to the Missouri River, and was used by the Osage Indians as a trade route (Griffin 2015:3). The Choutou family of fur traders brought captive Africans with them to their 200 acre working farm in current-day West Bottoms; by the early 1830s this Choutou settlement had attracted hundreds of other French-speaking settlers to the area (Shortridge 2012:11). The Osage Treaty of 1825 forcibly removed Kansas and Osage tribes from along the Missouri river to reservations in Central Kansas, beginning a series of displacements that would allow these French settlers to expand out of the West Bottoms and into present day Kansas City (Gitlin 2010).

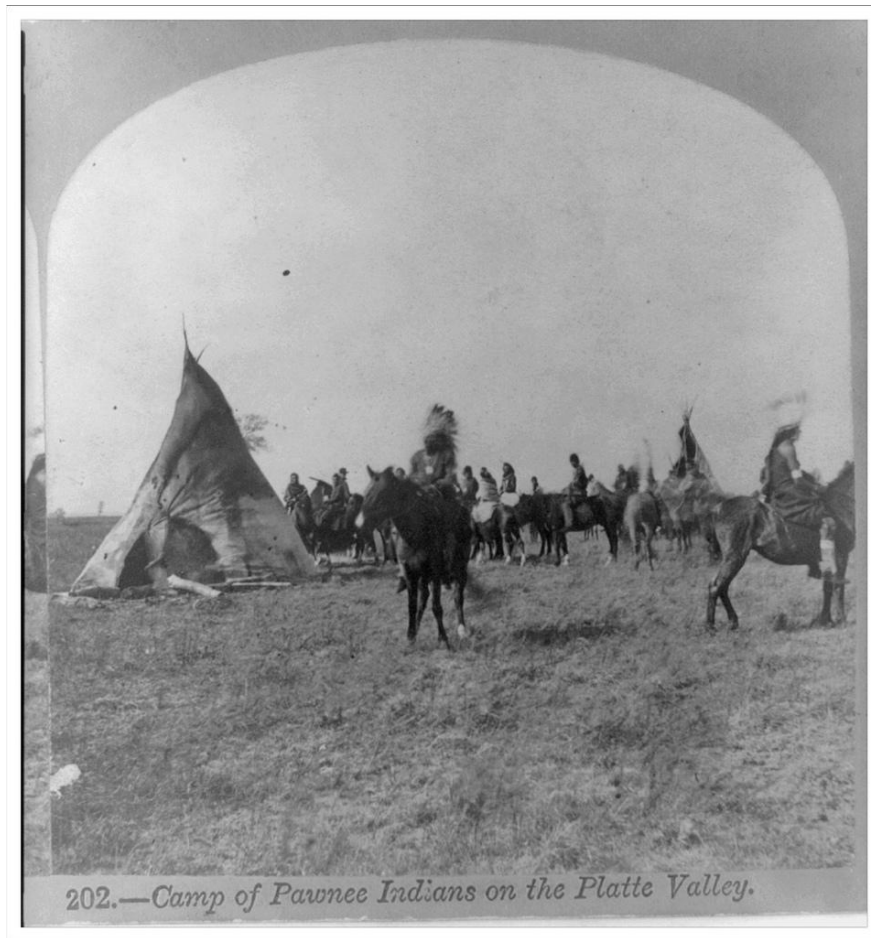


Figure 2.2 *Pawnee Indian Settlement, 1868, in Platte Valley—Northwest Kansas City. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

Kansas City grew; housing 2,500 residents by 1853, and then 4,000 by 1860, as white settlers and the laborers they enslaved migrated north to the fertile valley along the Missouri and Kaw rivers (Griffin 2015:4). Between the 1820s and 1840s Delawares and Wyandots were resettled from the region north of the Ohio River to settlements surrounding the Kansas River (Shortridge 2012:14). White settler residents of Kansas City's Westport—a trading hub and gateway to Oregon, Santa Fe, and California trails—grew the settlement's size and wealth with trade profits from Shawnee and other remaining tribal populations in the area (Shortridge

2012:15). White traders took advantage of the federal cash resettlement payouts given to these native groups, to trade and accrue capital for their growing city. This expansion was further facilitated by the forcible Indian removal written into law by the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, a violent displacement that uprooted 10,000 Native inhabitants to free up the land for the Westward growth of Kansas City (Shortridge 2012:20).



Figure 2.3, left 1868 photo of in-progress clearing of Delaware Street. **Figure 2.4, right** 1868, Another photograph of Delaware Street, illustrating the limestone bluffs that were demolished and cleared for downtown Kansas City. Both photos from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

Much of the migration in the 1850s into present day Kansas City came from Southern states—Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina—as farmers left intensively cropped plantations and sought fertile land (Griffin 2015:4). These farmers brought captive Africans with them, whose labor would be used, quite literally, to carve out the Kansas City downtown business district from the limestone Bluffs that surrounded the Southern end of the Missouri River (Shortridge 2012:44) (Figure 2.3, 2.4). A majority of the early, and often still existing, town infrastructure was built by the enslaved African population of Kansas City in the 1800s.

Enslaved Africans built, primarily, towns in current day Jackson County—the East side of Kansas City—including the infrastructure for Westport, downtown streets, and nearby Independence, Missouri (Griffin 2015:3). Enslaved Africans built the first Jackson County courthouse in 1827, and worked as blacksmiths and wagon manufacturers, facilitating further Westward expansion for settlers passing through Kansas City (Griffin 2015:4). Hiram Young, a captive African who bought his freedom in 1847, opened a wagon wheel and ox yoke repair shop in Kansas City, and employed 20 freed black men as his business grew (Gillis 2007). Because of agricultural slave labor, Jackson County was leading the state of Missouri in aggregate wealth by 1850—the area became a leading producer of hemp, as well as a site of production for tobacco, corn, and cotton (Griffin 2015:5). A majority of the large-scale farming operations in the Kansas City metropolitan area were located in Jackson County, and by 1860, the area housed nearly 4,000 captive Africans and 70 free black residents (Griffin 2015:4). The number of captive Africans in Kansas City, Missouri, was limited due to the proximity of free states—owning enslaved people was seen as riskier when they could escape to freedom without much of a geographic barrier—but slave owners still fought hard against Kansas abolitionists (those campaigning and fighting to end U.S. slavery), in an era known as “Bleeding Kansas.” This border war between Kansas free-staters (anti-slavery settlers) and Missouri pro-slavery forces was acutely felt in Kansas City, as it straddled the state line. By the start of the Civil War, seventy-some people had been killed during acts of border-violence, many in Jackson County (Griffin 2015:15). While Kansas City was uniquely divided in its loyalties, Jackson County, it could be argued, leaned

Southern—only six percent of Jackson County voted for Lincoln in 1860 (Griffin 2015:17). Many captive Africans in Jackson County were forcibly transported South during this time, as slave-holders tried to preserve their existing system of control—Larry Lapsley, an enslaved resident of Jackson County, recalled being quickly taken, along with other captive Africans, down to Texas in 1861 (Griffin 2015:28). Missouri outlawed slavery in January 1865, becoming the first state to begin the liberation process after the Civil War—largely because, as local political discussion at the time noted, the value of a captive African in Jackson County had plummeted (Griffin 2015:29).



Figure 2.5 *Early exoduster homestead, unknown family and unknown date. Taken in Nicodemus, Kansas, several hundred miles west of Kansas City. See further discussion of ‘exoduster’ in Chapter 1. Photo from Library of Congress Archives.*

After emancipation, Kansas City began receiving waves of black migration as exodusters fled the South in search of labor (Figure 2.5). In 1880 Kansas City's African American population had reached 55,000, and by 1890 that number had grown to over 132,000 (Shortridge 2012:53). Around a third of the 15,000 to 20,000 exodusters who fled Southern racial violence in 1879 wound up stranded in Kansas City when their travel funds ran out (Schirmer 2002:27). These refugees were initially housed south of Truman Road, between Charlotte and Virginia streets, and along the levee in northwest Wyandotte County in 'tent villages' (Griffin 2015:36). A more steady migration of African Americans into Kansas City occurred throughout the rest of the 1800s; Kansas City's African American population tripled between 1880 and 1910, despite a high rate of African American out-migration of the city during the same time (Schirmer 2002:28). In 1880, a majority of Kansas City's black residents were still living intermingled in wealthy white areas of town—as it was easier for servants to live near the estates in which they worked as domestic labor (Shortridge 2012:27). Residential location of Kansas City's black population changed significantly, however, from 1860 to the beginning of the 1900s, as labor demands and the opportunities available to newly freed captive Africans changed.

Industrial development began in Kansas City in the 1870s, as investors saw potential in the area's large amount of available acreage and its river proximity, which could be used both for transport and waste disposal (Shortridge 2012:5). Another big draw for potential investors was Kansas City's immigrant (Latino/a and Irish, predominantly) and African American population, which offered a large labor pool available to exploit for low-wage work. Construction of a system of radiating

railroad lines in 1865 linked Kansas City with other major U.S. hubs, and solidified the city as a site for investment. In 1871 Philip Armour and Charles F. Adams founded the city's first stockyard, an industry that would grow to be the second largest in the Nation behind Chicago, and would attract other packing companies and investment in the West Bottoms area of Kansas City (Shortridge 2012:36) (Figure 2.6; 2.7). Armour and Adams' investment also attracted other enterprises that used cattle by products as their raw materials, such as soap and fertilizer manufacturers (Shortridge 2012:37). Later, attracted by Kansas City's expanding railroad connections, manufacturers of agricultural machinery, furniture, and grain elevators opened warehouses in the West Bottoms as well (Shortridge 2012:39). Neither Armour nor Adams lived in Kansas City; this early trend of out-of-area involvement and profiteering in Kansas City real estate and urban development continues today (and is discussed further in Chapter 7). Adams would later write: "All the money I have made has been in dealing in real estate in Kanzas [sic] City" (Shortridge 2012:37). Armourdale stockyard would provide a 600% return on investment to Armour and Adams (Shortridge 2012:37).

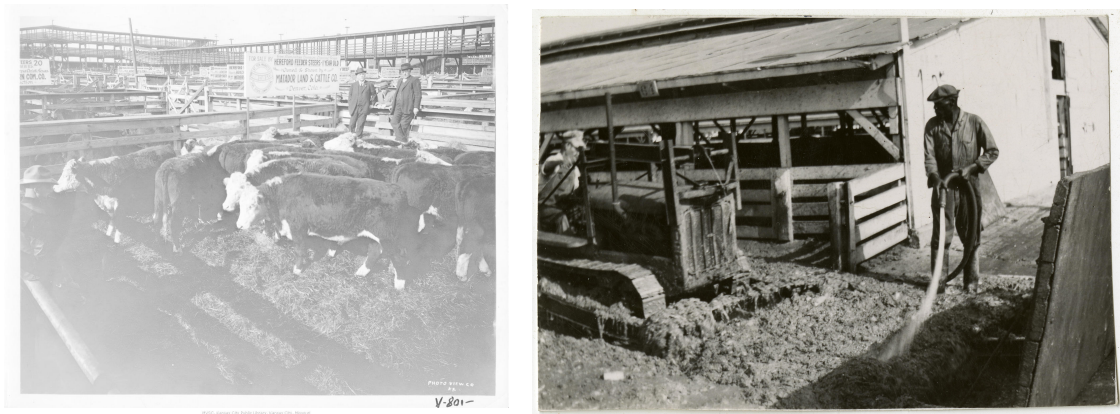


Figure 2.6, left *Stockyards investors in a cattle pen, unknown date.* **Figure 2.7, right** *Laborer in the stockyards, caption on back reads 'Clearing the hog pen.'* Both photos from *Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

The new labor opportunities in the Kansas City stockyards, railroads, and meatpacking district would have significant effects on the spatial realities of the city's African American population. Between 1880 and the first decade of the 1900s, Kansas City's African American population (which accounted for about 10% of the city, at that point) was largely centered in small neighborhoods built up around sites of low-wage employment—primarily in and near the West Bottoms (Schirmer 2002:32). While many African Americans involved in domestic work lived interspersed in white neighborhoods in downtown Kansas City, large concentrations of African American low-wage laborers took up residence in three main areas in the West Bottoms (Shortridge 2012:42). Quality Hill housed 15% of Kansas City's black population; 60% of whom worked in domestic labor nearby, while others farmed in their backyards to feed their families (Schirmer 2002:36) (Figure 2.8). In the West Bottoms, residences started out as camping communities, at sites where African American exodusters were able to find work, and erected shelters nearby with what limited funds they had remaining after fleeing the violence of the South. The communities that grew out of these refugee shelters were

described by white Kansas Citians as “shantytowns” and “shacks,” and given place names such as “Hell’s Half Acre,” “Belvidere,” and “Hick’s Hollow” (Shortridge 2012:42).

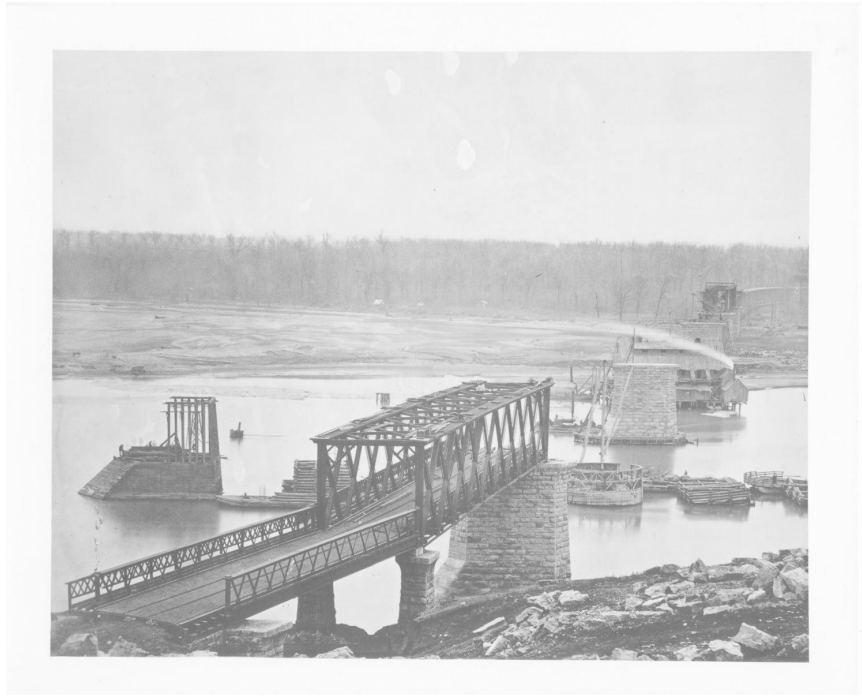


MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.8 *No date, estimated to be taken around 1900—a residence east of Troost and north of Truman Road. Depicts two African American residents tilling their backyard farm. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

Hell’s Half Acre, located squarely in-between the West Bottoms and Rivermarket areas, was the subject of considerable white public scorn. The roughly 1.5 square mile area, located on the South side of the Missouri river, took shape as Black, German, and Irish immigrants working on the construction of the Hannibal bridge in the 1860s settled into permanent residence (Schirmer 2002:34). Laborers who built the Hannibal bridge facilitated Kansas City’s expansion—the bridge

allowed for the first railway span across the Missouri River, connected Kansas City to the West and Southwest, and leveraged the influx of 13 railroad companies who would traverse through the metropolitan area (Miriani 2015:10) (Figure 2.9; 2.10). Without construction of the Hannibal Bridge investors would have never seen Kansas City as a viable trade hub. Hell's Half Acre residents were also among those to construct the nearby City Market, an agricultural emporium and farmers market, which grew from one commercial stall in 1857 to more than 60 in 1888 (Miriani 2015) (Figure 2.11; 2.12). Without construction of this infrastructure, Kansas City's economy would not have benefited from the revenue generated at this wholesale market, as farmers brought goods to Kansas City from Colorado, Mexico, and South America for resale (Miriani 2015).



MSOC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.9 *Hannibal Bridge, mid-construction, 1868. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*



Figure 2.10 *Pullman porters in Kansas City, no date. Black Kansas Citians often found employment in the burgeoning railway industry as Pullman Porters—this was considered a prestigious position. In Kansas City, white porter supervisors insisted that all black Pullman Porters be called by the name “George.” Photo from the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City.*



MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.11 Aerial shot of City Market—located in the Rivermarket region, 1900s. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections Kansas City Public Library.



Figure 2.12 City Market, 1906. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

Hell's Half Acre became more geographically dense around 1880, as another wave of refugee families, from Texas and Mississippi, arrived in Kansas City (Shortridge 2012:42). Housing conditions in the area were poor; while Armour and Adams were seeing 600% returns on their West Bottoms investments, the laborers who worked for them in the Kansas City stockyards and railroad industry were living in abject poverty, with an average of five individuals per household, in conditions that bred tuberculosis and pneumonia, with no clean water or sewage system (Griffin 2015:47). Toad-a-Loop (likely a mispronunciation of the early French-fur traders' name for the wolf-populated area) sat south of the West Bottoms, on the banks of the Kansas River, and was spoken of in public discourse as a site of rampant crime (Wilson 2016). Toad-a-Loop housed meatpackers and railroad workers, and was also the site of saloons and gambling houses that welcomed black and immigrant patrons (Wilson 2016). Toad-a-Loop was shorter-lived than other West Bottoms residential sites; expansion of the Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific railroads took up much of the remaining real estate in the area in 1890, and existing residents were displaced (Wilson 2016).

Black and immigrant low-wage laborers began to be pushed out of their residences in the West Bottoms in earnest in 1890, as investors bought up land and worked to expand stockyard and related industry in the area. The expansion of rail yards, stockyards, and packing houses encroached on already cramped living space, converting the West Bottoms into an entirely industrial site (Schirmer 2002:40). Concurrently, the City Beautiful movement took off in Kansas City in 1890 (discussed further in Chapter 7); a national movement in urban planning that

utilized parks, fountains, boulevards, and statues to cultivate economic growth and urban 'beauty' (Schirmer 2002). City Beautiful projects nationally, and locally, furthered segregation and the forcible removal of residents from low-income, blighted, neighborhoods; City Beautiful discourse and displacement directly mirrors the urban greening movement in Kansas City today—as Danny's comment, referenced in Chapter 1, about curing blight by digging up weeds, indicated.

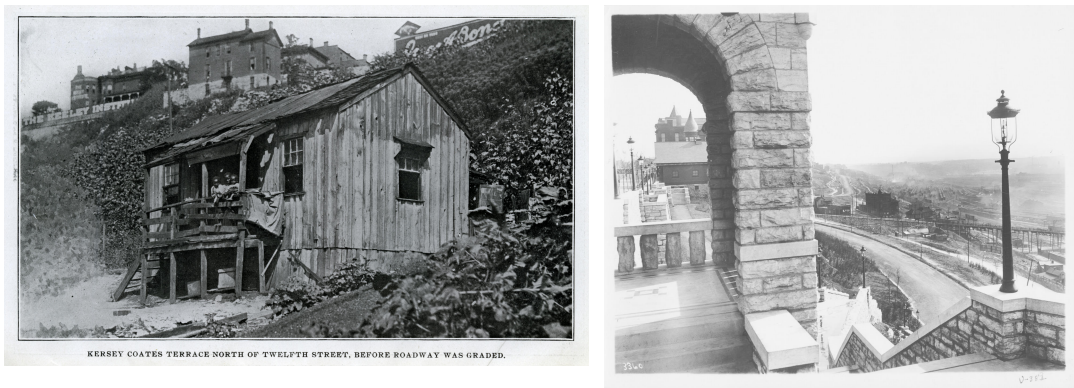


Figure 2.13, left 1890, a West Bluffs residence before demolition for West Terrace Park. This photo was taken for the purpose of proving 'blight,' in order to claim eminent domain. **Figure 2.14, right** Looking Southwest across the West Bottoms; a view from West Terrace Park in 1915, after primarily African American residents of the bluffs were displaced. Both photos from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

In Kansas City's West Bottoms, local City Beautiful planners George Kessler, William Rockhill Nelson, and Adriance Van Brunt demolished houses in the bluffs above the West Bottoms for West Terrace Park (Schirmer 2002:41) (Figure 2.13; 2.14). Black and Irish low-wage laborers living along O.K. Creek were uprooted for the new Union Railway Station (Schirmer 2002:17). A devastating flood in the West Bottoms in 1903 pushed out any lingering residential occupants of the area. Many of these low-income laborers attempted to settle along nearby Southwest

Boulevard, but commercial development picked up in the district and restricted the incoming residential population (Schirmer 2002:41). Black Kansas Citians at the turn of the 20th century found the housing opportunities available to them strictly regulated by the capital interests of local industry and urban ‘development’ projects.



MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.15 *Residences east of Troost, 1900. Though there are no identifiable persons or places in this photo, I have chosen to include it because visual depictions of African American life in Kansas City are difficult to come by; publishing this photo contributes to disruptions of hegemonic ‘white public space’ in media representations of Kansas City. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

Post-1900, an overwhelming majority of African American Kansas Citians moved into two East Side enclaves—the North End Hollows and the Vine Street Corridor. Houses on the East Side, between Troost and Woodland and 12th and 23rd, were bought on by speculation in the 1880s for the middle class market, but the

financial collapse of 1890 left contractors scrambling to find buyers for the more than 7,000 properties. Prices were dropped significantly in the area, and homeownership was also extended to black buyers (Shortridge 2012:86). Many in the black middle-class jumped at the opportunity to buy quality housing in what was then seen as an up and coming area of town (Figure 2.15). Black-operated schools in the area attracted families—Jackson County’s Hiram Young School, named after the ox yoke business owner, opened in 1874 and operated until 1934. The school operated what might be the first schoolyard garden program in Kansas City (Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.16 *Hiram Young School Garden, no date—estimated around 1935. Sign reads: ‘Public School Garden.’ The school was named in honor of Hiram Young, who bought his freedom and established his own wagon wheel repair business in Kansas City. Photo from the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City.*

Vine Street, in particular, became a hub of black social and economic life. The area was originally settled by an African American Reverend and his wife, the Sweeneys, who owned and operated a truck farm at the intersection of 18th and Vine

(Driggs and Haddix 2005:26). At that time 18th Street was a muddy, country lane that the Sweeneys lined with several acres of tilled fields, growing corn, tomatoes, and bell peppers. One block Westward, where Paseo Boulevard would later intersect 18th street, the Sweeneys cultivated a wild walnut grove, selling the hulled nuts locally (Driggs and Haddix 2005:26). The Vine Street area developed a major largely-black owned commercial district serving black clientele, and housed more than a dozen black churches—most of which moved from their original sanctuaries in the North end or West side to join the growing community (Schirmer 2002:41). More black schools opened in the area providing further incentive for black families to relocate: the first at 18th and Brooklyn, the Attucks School, and the second at 19th and Tracey, Lincoln High School (Schirmer 2002:41) (Figure 2.17). Vine Street housed the city's first movie theatre for black patrons—The Star, and an acclaimed black newspaper—The Call. Vine Street housed dry good stores, laundries, a fish shop, bakeries, bakers, cobblers, tailors, restaurants (Figure 2.18), a majority owned by, and operated for, the African American community (Driggs and Haddix 2005:26). A coalition of African American baseball team owners founded the Negro Baseball Leagues in the Vine Street Corridor, during a meeting at the Paseo YMCA, and the Kansas City Monarchs—an African American baseball league—drew crowds to the city to watch games (Figure 2.19; 2.20) (Driggs and Haddix 2005:26). 18th and Vine would come to be known as the Jazz district, as nightlife venues grew and musicians travelled to Kansas City to develop the area's specific style of bebop (Driggs and Haddix 2005:26) (Figure 2.21). 18th and Vine became known as a cultural Mecca for African Americans across the midwest, and attracted in-migration

to Kansas City (Driggs and Haddix 2005:26). In 1932, a black-owned credit union and co-operatively owned grocery store opened at 26th and Prospect, in the Vine Street Corridor (Young and Young 1950). By 1920, almost 40,000 African Americans lived in Kansas City, a majority in the Vine Street corridor, north of 27th and bordered by Paseo Boulevard (Shortridge 2012:88). In 1900 the East side of Kansas City was 29% African American, but by 1920 that percentage had jumped to 75 (Shortridge 2012:87).



Figure 2.17 *Lincoln School Kindergarten class, no date, estimated 1918. The school was located at 11th and Campbell Streets, and was demolished for construction of Highway 71. Photo from the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City.*



Figure 2.18 *The black-owned Blue Room Café, in the Jazz district at 18th and Vine. Photo from the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City.*



Figure 2.19 *Ballpark in the Vine district during a game, Kansas City Monarchs versus the Indianapolis Clowns, 1935. Photo from the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Kansas City.*



Figure 2.20 *Kansas City Monarchs baseball team, no date, estimated 1941. Photo from the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City.*



Figure 2.21 *Unidentified Jazz venue in the Vine Street Corridor, 1935. Photo from LIFE magazine.*

“Let the East Side go black”: Black Geographic Dispersal and City-Led Spatial Violence

The increasing geographic concentration, and thus visibility, of Kansas City's black residents over the first few decades of the 1900s led to concerted efforts at displacement and containment by city officials, real estate agents, and white urban residents. This increased attention was fueled by several widely read housing reports and analyses conducted by local welfare agencies in the 1910s—the *Report on Housing* (1912), *Social Prospectus of Kansas City* (1913), and *Our Negro Population* (1913), all located the cause of blight, poor health, and poverty in black neighborhoods (Fox Gotham 2002:36). Asa Martin wrote, in *Our Negro Population*, “there is the unsanitary condition of the streets and alleys in the Negro districts, which is due to a large extent to the negligence...ignorance and carelessness of the Negro in supplying the needs of his physical being” (cited in Fox Gotham 2002:37). Reports such as these institutionalized and gave weight to popular racist linkages between poverty, place, and race, and directly precede containment policies and violence enacted by city officials, real estate agents, and white urban residents.

However, this concern with controlling the spread and inhabitancy of black Kansas Citians was not a new phenomenon—since its inception as a city, Kansas City officials have worked to maneuver its black population to best suit the interests of whites. In 1855, white settler inhabitants of Westport lobbied the Kansas territorial legislature to redraw state lines—hoping that the intensely pro-slavery sentiments held in Kansas City could help turn Kansas into a slave state (a state where slavery would be legal) as well (Shortridge 2012:8). Politics had changed by the time the initiative was submitted, as Kansas had switched to a free state, where

slavery was outlawed—but the point is illustrative that from the start, control of black bodies and black labor was central to the formation and boundary definition of Kansas City. Later, as newly freed southern captive Africans—refugees—traveled north, they were met with hostility in Kansas City. The mayor of Wyandotte County, Kansas City, banned exodusters in April 1879, stating that they had received too many black people already. The mayor and local businessmen paid to have black migrants forcibly transported deeper into Kansas—many abducted and taken to Manhattan, Kansas, just to get them out of the newly developing city (Griffin 2015:38). It is not surprising that local government officials felt empowered to forcibly remove people of color from their state for ‘development’ purposes; merely 40 years prior the U.S. Government had authorized the violent removal of tribal populations from Kansas City.

Two additional waves of migration North to Kansas City between 1900 and 1920—as wartime industry, coupled with decreased need for farm hands, changed labor requirements and sent African Americans North in search of work—were met with increased attempts to control the space that black Kansas Citians occupied. Kansas City’s black population increased 72% over the first few decades of the 20th century, reaching over 30,000 residents by 1920 (Gibson and Jung 2005). The Vine Street corridor grew more densely populated, as racialized renting and loaning practices forced Kansas City’s African American population into a containable area. To cope with this forced concentration, residents built ‘jerry-rigged’ apartments, tacked on to tenement homes and jutting out into back alleys (Griffin 2015:51) (Figure 2.22). Black-owned businesses on Kansas City’s East side struggled, as banks

refused to grant loans, and producers and distributors overcharged black business owners for their goods (Griffin 2015:64). Kansas City began a trend of capitalizing on black cultural contributions, yet excluding blacks, that would continue into present day—white-owned Jazz clubs and music venues utilized black Jazz musicians, but denied entry to black patrons (Griffin 2015; Schirmer 2012). By 1910, Kansas City was facing more severe hypersegregation than other major U.S. cities, with black isolation rates higher than New York, Detroit, St. Louis, and Chicago; in 1915, one 22-block area on the East Side housed 4,295 black residents (Griffin 2015:51). It is important to link these purposeful displacements to black death—lack of clean water and forced geographic concentration led to high rates of pneumonia and tuberculosis in the Vine Street Corridor; in the mid-1920s the black mortality rate in Kansas City was worse than in New York and Chicago (Griffin 2015:52).



MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.22 *A house at the 1700 block of Troost—illustrates that housing conditions became more cramped during the first several decades of the 20th century, as racialized renting and lending concentrated African American residents East of Troost. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

As housing conditions became overcrowded in the Vine street corridor, black Kansas Citians attempted to spread the boundaries of their community and white Kansas Citians responded with force—both physically and via policy. By 1940, 71% of black Kansas City residents lived between Troost and Jackson Avenues on the East Side; nearly 90% of people of color in the city lived in segregated neighborhoods (Griffin 2015:79). When this growing community tried to push further south past 27th street and east past Troost into whiter neighborhoods, they were met with violence. City officials, as Colby writes, “drew a boundary right down the middle of the city along its longest north-south thoroughfare, Troost Avenue...Let the east side go black,” (Colby 2012:77). Every zip code, census tract, voting ward, and, until recently, every school district, was split along Troost (Griffin 2015:80). The North/South boundary line of Troost was purposefully developed by city officials, and reinforced by the real estate industry, as a dam against Western black migration. The Kansas City School District reorganized its districts *each year* to keep black schools black, and white schools white; every public school east of Troost Avenue was 90% black by the 1970s (Griffin 2015:86). Racial violence during the time of school desegregation is an oft-discussed topic among Kansas City East side residents who were in school during the 70s. One black East side resident, who was in grade school during desegregation, wept during an interview as she told me “Every day after school those kids would gang up on me. They’d spit in my hair. Call me names.” Another African American woman shared, “Oh it was bad. Kids would line up outside the school and say ‘go home niggers,’ every morning,” and emphasized that she and others actually felt fear of physical violence, stating, “My

cousin, she was as light [skinned] as you, but even she was bullied so bad she carried a knife with her to school. She was scared.”

The real estate industry, banks, lending institutions, and developers redlined Kansas City with Troost; black Kansas Citians found it impossible to buy or rent outside of the East Side’s Jackson County. Banks denied home loans to black Kansas City residents for decades—in 1977 alone, \$642 million dollars was written in home mortgages in Kansas City, but less than one percent of this number was issued to home owners East of Troost (Griffin 2015:81). White homeowners, with, it could be argued, city support, began a series of bombings on black homeowners as they sought to move into historically white middle-class neighborhoods during the 1920s (Schirmer 2002:106). Beginning in 1923 and ending around 1927, black homeowners—primarily those moving westward near Troost Avenue—were subjected to mob violence, bombings and death threats. One neighborhood experienced seven dynamite attacks in one year alone (Shirmer 2002:101). No deaths or major injuries occurred as a result of this violence, but arson and bombings led to many black families losing newly purchased homes, or being forced to move out of fear (Griffin 2015:80). The local NAACP chapter attempted to bring a case against the city for complicity with these acts of violence, citing evidence that police failed to make arrests, and left threatened houses unguarded to allow attacks (Schirmer 2002:101). While housing-related violence that occurred in cities like Chicago and Detroit corresponded with times of housing shortage, in Kansas City this rash of attacks coincided with a period of housing construction; violence occurred not as a result of competition for finite housing, but rather as a result of

black residents trying to penetrate historically white neighborhoods (Schirmer 2002:106).

The practice of utilizing racially restrictive covenants to segregate urban space was perfected in Kansas City by developer J.C. Nichols, and further restricted black mobility in Kansas City. Between 1910 and 1940 Nichols acquired land and created several exclusive developments throughout Kansas City—the Country Club Plaza, Mission Hills, and Prairie Village. Membership in Nichols’ neighborhood associations was mandatory upon buying a home, and all members were legally required to enforce racial restrictions (Griffin 2015:61). Nichols ensured that in Kansas City, racially restrictive covenants were self-renewing, meaning that the process of reforming these restrictions would be difficult (Griffin 2015:61). As the black population grew in urban Kansas City, whites fled—many to Nichols’ restricted suburbs; aided by block busting enacted by local real estate agents (Griffin 2015:61). Nichols’ model was copied nation wide; he worked with President Roosevelt to design the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which ensured that government-backed home loans would be denied to black neighborhoods (Griffin 2015:62). The work of enforcing racially restrictive covenants was also taken up by white homeowners; the Linwood Neighborhood Home Association started a metropolitan-wide effort to apply racial restrictions across the city, to “keep Negroes where they are”—an effort which included circulating threatening letters to black families looking at homes in Linwood Neighborhood (Fox Gotham 2002:45). The success of Nichols’ exclusive suburbs, and their subsequent reinforcement by

white Kansas Citians, is indicative of how strongly felt white segregationist attitudes were at this formative time in Kansas City's spatial development.



Figure 2.23, left *Laborer in downtown Kansas City, 1930. Figure 2.24, right* *View of the racially-restrictive Country Club Plaza, at the intersection of Mill Creek Parkway and 47th Street, 1945. Green space and walkability for white shoppers was an integral part of J.C. Nichols' design. Both photos from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.*

Nichols' Country Club Plaza, an open air shopping district—46% of which is dedicated to greenspace—became central to Kansas City's economy and downtown development. The area where the Country Club Plaza would be developed sits in central Kansas City, Missouri, just north of East/West flowing Brush Creek. Nichols bought the 40 acres he would later develop into a luxury shopping district from an African American hog farmer, who had used the land for several decades, and claimed a black-only park—Razor Park—through eminent domain (Scanlon 2015). Black laborers were among those enlisted to build Nichol's open-air, Spanish architecture-inspired, shopping district (Figure 2.23); and were simultaneously written into racially-restrictive deed covenants that kept them from establishing businesses or buying a home in the up-and-coming area. The ability to

establish oneself in the Plaza led to the success of many small businesses; the Woolf Brothers clothing shop, for example, relocated to the Plaza from Leavenworth, Kansas, and became one of the most profitable luxury clothing outlets in the Midwest (Scanlon 2015) (Figure 2.24).

Urban renewal and highway development in the 1950s and 1960s offered the next wave of displacement for black residents in Kansas City. Nationally, urban renewal was guided in local contexts by the interests of real estate boards who favored 'slum' clearance in downtown areas and private development over the creation of affordable housing. Eighty million dollars of mostly federal urban renewal funds were spent on 18 projects in Kansas City from 1953 to 1970, locally called 'negro removal' projects (Griffin 2015:83). Nationally, black residences accounted for more than 70% of those destroyed in urban renewal projects (Griffin 2015:83). Locally, the 54.2-acre Attucks Project worked to clear out predominantly black neighborhoods adjacent to downtown Kansas City, prepping the area for tourism development, and Highway 71 was routed through mostly black East side neighborhoods—Ivanhoe, Beacon Hill, and Key Coalition—displacing more than 10,000 urban residents, and plummeting the housing values for those residents that remained, whose homes were now located very close to roadways (Griffin 2015:84). Highway 71 would cut through the site of numerous historic black-owned businesses, such as Black Hawk Barbecue and Beer Garden at 1410 East Fourteenth. The highway was named after the first black city council member in Kansas City office, Bruce R. Watkins, in an unsettling attempt to appeal to displaced black Kansas Citians (Shortridge 2012:144). The small quantity of public housing that was built

during this period was strictly segregated, in direct violation of federal civil rights legislation (Griffin 2015:84).

The Current Landscape

Today, nearly all of the African-American majority East Side of Kansas City, and historic places of African-American residence like the West Bottoms area, have been zoned for renewal and development (Figure 2.25). Urbicide historically enacted via City Beautiful redevelopment, redlining and racialized lending practices, and bombings is today enacted via urban renewal zoning. City and 501c3 partnership efforts, such as those offered by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) of Kansas City, heavily promote private investment and development in these areas of displacement and violence, offering incentives that “help to reclaim embattled neighborhoods by encouraging investment and removing blighted conditions that make neighborhoods unsafe or uninviting” (EDCKC 2014). Partnerships between the Kansas City, Missouri, city government and the EDC have resulted in programs like the Chapter 353 Program that enables private developers to acquire property in these areas via eminent domain, and offers 100% tax abatement for the first ten years of property ownership; 15% for the next five (EDCKC 2014; Shortridge 2012:165). Urban renewal zoning has incentivized the creation of numerous multimillion-dollar luxury apartment complexes, which leverage city support by arguing that their investment addresses the blight of the urban core. Public discourse against the development of unaffordable housing is strong; a recent panel discussion, which included prominent KC landlords, on the high rate of evictions and unaffordable housing in the urban core drew around 300

urban residents, many of whom used the question and answer portion of the event to publicly shame the developers, by asserting for the audience how their actions had caused displacement and violence.

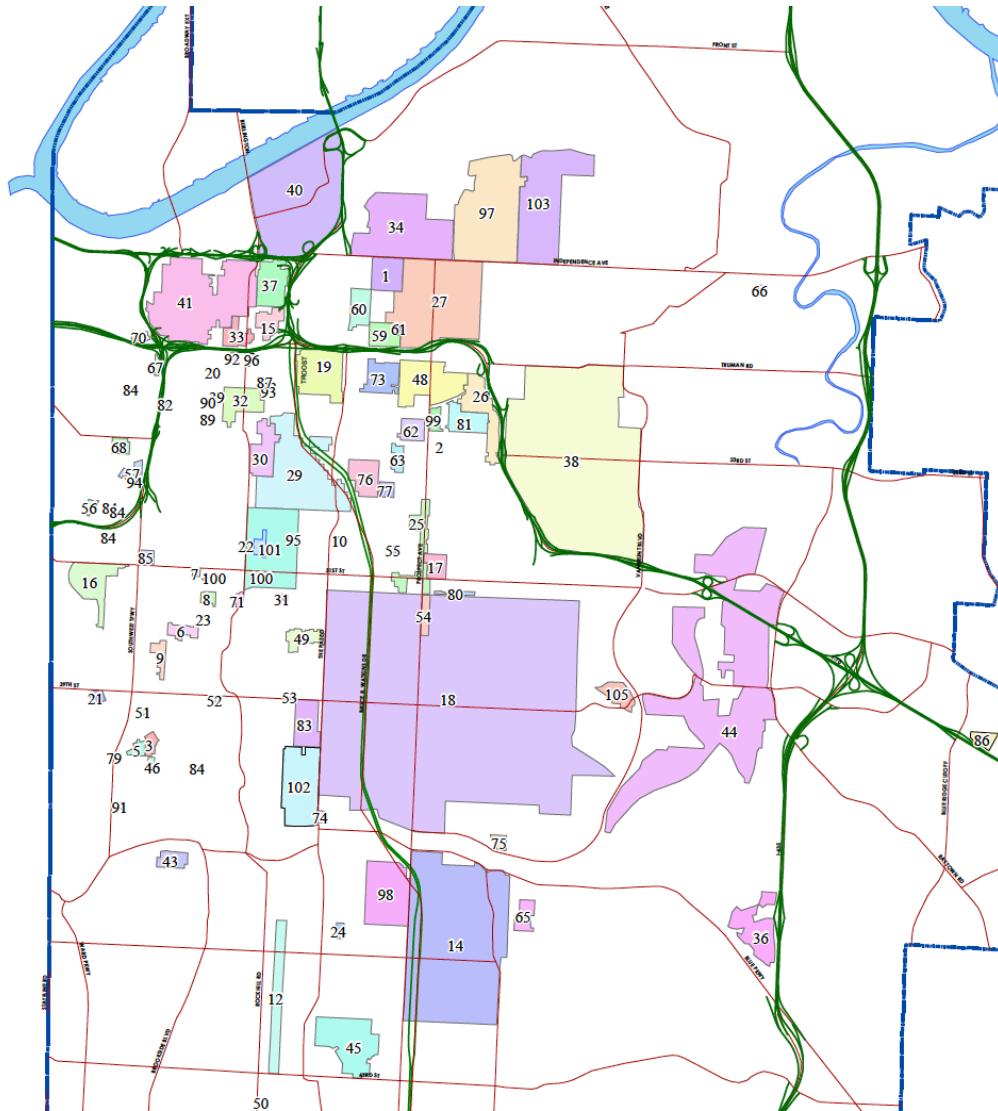


Figure 2.25 Map of designated urban renewal areas in metropolitan Kansas City, illustrates that the East side, West Bottoms, and Rivermarket areas—all historic areas of African American residence—have been zoned for renewal. Map from Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City.

The River Market neighborhood was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, and consequent city tax incentives via urban renewal zoning and federal and state grants—totaling \$100 million public, and estimates of one billion in private—went in to redeveloping this area as white public space (Miriani 2015:22). City Market, located in the River Market district, now has over 180 outdoor stalls and attracts 600,000 shoppers and visitors per year. On summer weekends, yoga classes are offered on the City Market lawn. One recent \$59 million dollar River Market development project, a 276-unit multi-family complex boasting ‘energy-efficient’ units, drew on urban redevelopment funding and the area’s blight designation to earn a 10 year tax abatement (EDC 2015); average rent in the River Market area is \$1,400 dollars for a one-bedroom loft. The 19th century architecture built with black and brown labor has attracted the development of these high-end lofts, which in turn furthers Kansas City’s growth as a destination city for upper-middle class white millennials.

The urban core of Kansas City has been receiving a huge influx of white 24- to 34-year olds over the past five years and is written about as one of the best cities for recent college graduates (Gose 2014). Conversely, racialized dress codes at KC-area nightlife spots and many bars’ refusals to play rap or hip hop—because, as black Kansas Citians note, they do not want black patrons—have combined to encourage an exodus of young black professionals from the city. A KC Star article in September 2017—“Is KC social scene for whites only? Young blacks say they’re ‘tolerated,’ not welcomed”—notes that many black millennials are choosing instead to move to Dallas and Atlanta, and other diverse cities.



Figure 2.26 *Photo of Jazz District commemorative mural at 18th and Vine, photo taken by author.*

The Jazz District, within the Vine Street Corridor, has also received a huge amount of redevelopment support from public and private sources in Kansas City. \$20 million was appropriated to the area in 1989, funding the American Jazz Museum and the Negro Baseball Leagues Museum; and \$100 million more has been appropriated since—funding roadway infrastructure, Jazz festivals, continued museum funding, a community center, renovations of the old Paseo YMCA, and expansion of exhibits at the MidAmerica Black Archives (Janovy 2016). What has been spoken of to me often, during conversations with East side Kansas City residents, as the “touristification” of the Jazz district, of Kansas City’s “Black Wall Street,” has not managed to address the history of disinvestment in and depopulation of the area (Figure 2.26). Between 1954 and 2007, the area lost 84% of its population (Martin 2016). Highway 71’s cut through the district makes it geographically isolated, and disinvestment in the black-owned businesses in the area has left the Vine Street corridor bereft of industry. The first black high school in

Kansas City, the Attucks school, is underway to becoming an “arts and culture hub”—the city accepted a bid from Chicago-based artists to turn the abandoned school into a co-working space and gallery, turning down a bid to return the site to its original use as a high school (Collison 2017). In 2018, Kansas City Missouri officials further divested Vine Street corridor residents’ political power by overturning the ability of a neighborhood to have a say in liquor licenses and business development in the area—an act that singles out and suppresses voices in a historically black neighborhood, and does not affect development decisions in other entertainment districts in the city. In what local residents are calling an act of voter suppression, historically black churches have had their voices discounted, as city officials, contrary to the opinion of Jazz district churches, believe that granting liquor licenses and developing new bars will help ‘develop’ the area.



Figure 2.27 A microbrewery in the stockyards district—Stockyards brewing company. Photo taken by author.

In 1951, a second devastating flood in the West Bottoms shut down Kansas City's meatpacking industry and changed the course of development for this river-adjacent site. Stockyard animals drowned, houses were swept off of their foundations, and oil company fuel canisters started widespread smoky fires in this mid-century flood; around 9,000 residents were evacuated from flooded areas, only around 3,000 ever returning (Shortridge 2012:122). Today, the West Bottoms' abandoned industrial warehouse sites are populated by high-end antique stores and flea markets, distilleries and microbreweries, New American farm to table restaurants, and speakeasies (Figure 2.27). Many of the historic buildings still feature triple-segregated entrances, now unmarked—one each for White, Black, and Latino laborers (Campbell 2014). A City of Kansas City, Missouri, Community Improvement District (CID) sales tax is funding a green infrastructure overhaul of the West Bottoms. A key component of this green plan is bikeable pathways, in order to encourage the development of more high end rental housing in the area, chiefly marketed toward 20-something members of Kansas City's creative class. In 2015, the first luxury apartment complex in the West Bottoms, Stockyards Place, was completed—a studio apartment in the complex costs \$1,600 dollars a month. The project received a 50% tax abatement for entering a blighted zone of the city.

A historical analysis of industry, development, and displacement, as I undertook in this chapter, says multitudes about for whom city officials work to make space inhabitable. Dominant narratives of Kansas City's history write out historical exploitations of black laborers; white public space is enforced by this denial of local displacement and violence. Infrastructural contributions made by

black laborers—such as Hannibal Bridge and railway construction—facilitated the very expansion and economic growth of Kansas City. Yet the city prioritizes housing development, in the form of high end, luxury amenities, for the incoming creative, largely white, class in these places of uricide, where black residents have been forcibly displaced—and draws on an apolitical history of such space in order to make it attractive to incoming millennials. In Kansas City, black low-wage laborers build city space, and then are forcibly pushed out—as city officials and local capital interests see more value in such spaces when they are devoid of residents of color.

Further, in 2018, green urban infrastructure initiatives that seek to address blight, and disinvestment, elide the fact that blighted spaces were often highly cultivated areas of the black foodscape, before black residents were purposefully removed in favor of increased capital accumulation. Discussions of Kansas City's food deserts, today, do not include discussion of, for example, the black hog farmer displaced for Country Club Plaza, or the large-scale truck farmer at 18th and Vine. The histories presented in this chapter, of agricultural contributions made by black urban residents, will provide useful context to inform discussion of food deserts and food aid in Chapter 7. The following chapter, Chapter 3, documents how this white public space is upheld and reinforced in current day, by white local foodies—who promote this narrative of urban space in Kansas City that denies the economic and agricultural labor of minority residents.

Chapter 3: Creating White Public Space in the Urban Food System: Institutionalized Understandings of Race and Space in Kansas City

On a Saturday night in September 2017, the largest, and arguably most influential, local food-centered nonprofit—which I am calling Grow KC—held their annual fundraiser dinner at the historic City Market open-air farmer’s market. This year the event, titled ‘Dig In!’ drew several hundred local ‘foodies,’ who paid \$125 per plate to support Grow KC’s programs—which include grants and infrastructural support for small-scale urban farmers, administering the distribution of a federal matching grant for SNAP recipients, and policy advocacy in relation to the local, urban, food system. Local chefs—all white men—are selected each year to craft the event’s farm to table menu; diners were lured in for the 2017 event with promotional advertising that read: “When you ‘Dig In,’ you help somebody else dig out of unhealthy food choices and food deserts!” As diners feasted under the open-air market pavilion on family-style servings of risotto, braised rabbit, pickled beet and carrot salad, a promotional video played on a large projector screen—produced by Grow KC, and designed to outline the history of the organization, and highlight what they see as the positive changes they have enacted in Kansas City’s food scene. This year, I had volunteered to be a server for the event. I watched the video as I poured Amigoni wine for guests—a local company that grows and ages its grapes in the West Bottoms, where black low-wage laborers lived half a century before, as they worked in the stockyards. As the video began, an uplifting piano score accompanied sweeping shots of Kansas City’s skyline, first showing urban vacancy before panning over to aerial shots of urban gardens and greenspace. Nancy, a

pseudonym, the white, 50-something executive director of Grow KC, spoke over the piano:

When I first came to Kansas City from being on the East Coast, one of the things I did was drive all over Kansas City, both sides of the state line, looking for land that I could farm as an urban farmer. And what struck me was just how much vacant land there was—and vacant land that really, most of us don't see as we drive by. Today, what I see when I drive around, is I still see vacant land, I see a lot of it. But I also see farmers that have taken up vacant lots and are producing absolutely beautiful fruits and vegetables to feed people.

After Nancy's voice faded out, Mark Holland, the mayor of Kansas City, Kansas, came on to the screen. What does he think about the work that Grow KC does, he was asked, and why should we support small-scale urban farmers? "It's really fantastic," Mayor Holland says, as the video image panned to show gardeners in the local refugee agricultural training program, "It's using urban land that is available, that we need to put to good use, into productive use. And it's giving people a skill, and healthy food—in some of the areas that are the deepest food deserts that we have." The video cut back to Nancy, who stated: "We have the ear of our policy makers, we can influence the policies that make productive greenspace in the city something that becomes part of our everyday lives."

My research confirmed Nancy's statement about the influence of her nonprofit. In Kansas City, city officials across both sides of the state line, influential philanthropic donors, and other parties involved in urban development listen intently to the green urban infrastructure agendas outlined by Grow KC. Grow KC and several other local food-focused nonprofits have become leading voices in the metropolitan area, shaping discourse and action around how policy makers address urban vacancy and food insecurity. Because of this, Nancy's understandings of urban

space and hunger are important—the fact that urban vacancy, to her, signals the potential for urban food production matters, because her reading of urban space will influence people like Mayor Holland, who will craft policies that affect the outcomes of urban space and food insecure urban residents. This chapter examines examples of dominant discourse on urban agriculture, while paying keen attention to the insurgent discourse of another history of urban agriculture in Kansas City, and another interpretation of ‘vacant’ land.

While Nancy was “struck” by just how much vacancy exists in Kansas City, and notes that “most of us don’t see [it] as we drive by,” a majority of the African American East side residents of Kansas City I spoke with brought up vacancy and disinvestment in their neighborhoods, often within minutes of our first meeting. Conversations with strangers I met at the bus stop, acquaintances, and interviewees about vacant lots, the industry that formerly existed there, and the particulars about how that industry went out of business, were an inescapable part of living on the East side for me. In her interviews with African Americans about their engagement with nature, Finney (2014:xv) writes that for many, “their map of the world...demanded a particularly fine-tuned compass that allowed them to navigate a landscape that was not always hospitable.” Likewise, Kansas City residents of color are particularly attuned to the purposeful acts of disinvestment in their communities (cf. Lipsitz 2007). What does it mean that in Kansas City, the most influential ways of knowing urban space and urban hunger are those shared by white voices, and white readings of city space? How do white local foodies like Nancy come to their understandings of urban space? In this chapter, I explore more

deeply the ideologies about urban disinvestment, hunger, and poverty that guide the nonprofit work of foodies like Nancy.

Specifically, in what follows, I first discuss extant scholarship on whiteness and white local foodie ideology, and then focus on two in-depth interviews with prominent, upper-middle class, white, local foodies in KC. I draw on Nancy and David's words—whose sentiments were echoed by other white foodies—to illustrate the metaphors, images, and narratives that work to support whiteness and systemic racism in the urban food movement in Kansas City. Nancy, the influential leader of Grow KC, is a self-identified white, upper-middle class, staunchly liberal, woman; David, also a pseudonym, operates a community garden and founded a farmers market in Northeast Kansas City, is an often-invited and influential speaker on hunger in Kansas City, and identifies as white, a political moderate, and a Christian. I draw from narratives from one religious and one secular foodie *not* to imply any binary or divide in thought. Rather, I do so to illustrate the diversity of positionalities that exist among Kansas City foodies, and also the prominent overlap of core ideas about race and urban development, regardless of religious or political affiliation.

This chapter draws on a Foucaultian understanding of discourse, in that I theorize how power is exercised within discourse, and investigate the relationship between language, action, social institutions, and law (Foucault 1977). Methodologically, I look at “discourse” broadly conceived—in this chapter I draw on conversations held at public events, on public message boards, in news and archival data, and in interviews that the participants understood to be public. I place

emphasis on public discourse, rather than private, as this dissertation is situated from the vantage point of East Side residents of Kansas City—who, most often, only have access to public instances of ‘foodie’ discourse. The following chapter (Chapter 4) explicates how people like David and Nancy came to be influential in policy-making circles in Kansas City, and illustrates the effects these ideologies have when they inform urban greening policy.

Local ‘Foodies’ and White Public Space

Foodies, as an identity and a social movement, arose in the U.S. at the beginning of the 21st century as national discourse and prominent media personalities popularized and valorized the production and consumption of ‘local,’ ‘healthy’ food. Concurrently, a whole host of alternative agrifood movements such as the anti-GMO movement, the Slow Food Movement, and the concept of the 100-mile diet all furthered national focus on our food and how it is grown. These movements often invoke a privileged sense of white agrarian ‘tradition,’ and cultivate the development of pre-industrial, artisan products. As Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* was published in 2006, and Kingsolver, Hopp and Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* in 2007—to name several influential food movement texts—local foodies began a sort of institutionalization, with popular and academic readings available to shape the discourse. This movement institutionalization helps explain why the ideologies shared by diverse foodies in this chapter, and more broadly within Kansas City, are remarkably similar. In comparison to global agrarian movements, such as the Food Sovereignty movement, the local food movement in the U.S. is largely made up of whites with economic privilege, and focuses on

market-based modes of food system change rather than larger scale critique of neoliberal privatization and demands for landed independence (Aistara 2011; Clendenning, Dressler, and Richards 2015). The whiteness and white privilege of the local food movement has been extensively critiqued and analyzed by other scholars (cf. Guthman 2008; Alkon and Mares 2012; Harper 2011; Hoover 2013).

Studies of whiteness are not a new phenomenon, nor are they unique to academia. As hooks (2009:89) notes, African Americans have “from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another ‘special’ knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people,” a strategy designed to “help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society.” This reversed gaze has been, and is, forcibly protested by those holding white privilege. Enslaved Africans, for example, could be punished for appearing to observe whites they were serving, and today, discussions of whiteness are oft countered with colorblind assertions of universal subjectivity (hooks 2009:92-93). This refusal of whiteness to be seen serves a powerful function—to allow that black and brown subjugated ‘others’ think critically about whiteness is to disrupt the fantasy that those who are imagined to be “subhuman” “lack the ability to comprehend, to understand, to see the workings of the powerful” (hooks 2009:92). Refuting the existence of whiteness and white privilege allows whiteness to seem common-sense (hooks 2009:94). This chapter, and the one that follows, work to disrupt white ideology and policy that has been painted as common sense. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 deal with “representations of whiteness in the black imagination,” (hooks 2009:91) and document how black

Kansas Citians manage and navigate this hegemonic white privilege in urban greening initiatives.

In using the term “whiteness,” I am not seeking to reify a historically contingent, highly contextual category of difference (Nayak 2006). Rather, following scholars in critical whiteness studies, I conceptualize whiteness as an institutionalized system of control that is central to the development of law and space in the United States (Mills 1997; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Razack 2002; De Genova 2007; Feagin 2009). Whiteness, as analyzed here in this chapter, is a structural system of domination, and gains power by “normalizing common events and beliefs, giving them legitimacy as part of a moral system depicted as natural and universal” (Kobayashi and Peake 2000: 394). Structural whiteness has been theorized as obscured by seemingly race-neutral words, actions, or policies—“from the...subjects of debate that comprise political campaigns to the placement and funding of freeway projects...a set of institutional routines and ‘white cultural practices’ are evident in establishing and maintaining privileges generally associated with being white” (Hartigan 1997: 496). Structural whiteness manifests bodily, for example, as a preferential and rewarded normative appearance, and spatially, as “landscapes that conform similarly to ideals of beauty, utility, or harmony...predicated upon whitened cultural practices.” (Kobayashi and Peake 2000:394). Individual narratives shared in this chapter are not meant to be presented as individualized moments of racial bias; racism includes, but is not just, these moments of prejudice. Rather, in this chapter, I analyze these ideologies as building blocks that can amass to create and support a system of control.

Structural whiteness draws on and promotes specific understandings of space. The “national mythologies” of white settler societies, such as the U.S., “are deeply spatialized stories” (Razack 2002:3). For white settlers, historically, lands could be legally deemed uninhabited if the people who lived there were “not Christian, not agricultural, not commercial, not ‘sufficiently evolved,’” (Razack 2002:3). Globally, there exists a long lineage of dehumanization as justification for white land-grabs. In colonial Latin America, claims that in Indians there was “no activity of the soul,” that they were “degraded men” not to be regarded as fellow humans, supported Spanish acquisition, exploitation, and murder of land and its indigenous residents (Galeano 1971). Likewise, 18th Century Europeans who arrived in present-day Australia claimed *terra nullius*—nobody’s land—as discursive and legal support for colonization, though an estimated 750,000 aboriginal inhabitants had been living on the continent for likely more than 50,000 years (Connor 2005).

Current development discourse in the U.S. draws on white settler ideology as well; as Stovall and Hill (2016) cite in the case of Detroit, false narratives of emptiness and abandonment have facilitated white land grabs and capital accumulation. Alkon and McCullen (2011) argue that foodies, specifically, draw on a “white farm imaginary,” which romanticizes a spatial, agrarian narrative specific to whites, while ignoring “Native American displacement by white homesteaders, the enslavement of African Americans, the masses of underpaid Asian immigrants who worked California’s first factory farms, and the mostly Mexican farm laborers who harvest the majority of food grown in the USA today” (945). These spatial

imaginaries grant power and privilege to some, and elide the significant contributions and histories of others (Slocum 2007). The framework of ‘white public space’ is useful for understanding the concrete daily actions, made by individual actors that enforce and uphold whiteness as a structural system of domination. The white public space framework emphasizes “the social construction of institutional spaces and refers to the implicit and explicit practices, beliefs, and values that govern behavior in them” (Brodkin et al. 2011: 545). Page and Thomas (1994:111) define white public space as any material or symbolic place where racism is reproduced, and posit that we can identify and analyze the processes that produce this space by attuning to the particular “devices that routinely, discursively, and sometimes coercively privilege Euro-Americans over nonwhites.” White nurses uphold white public space in their profession, for example, by registering fewer black nurses, ignoring clinical studies on black health, and focusing on individual rather than systemic causes of poor health (Page and Thomas 1994:112). In this chapter I listen to foodie discourse in order to understand how the narratives they support about urban disinvestment and poverty might uphold white public space within urban greening initiatives.

Teach a Man to Fish: Neoliberal Personal Responsibility and Gardens as Urban ‘Order Maintenance’

David was born in Utah, in 1981, and told me he grew up in “a pretty normal suburb.” A tall, lanky brunette, David lives in khaki pants and is almost always, when I see him, grinning from ear to ear. As a kid, he was “entrepreneurial minded,” and started a lawn care business at the age of 14—“by the time I was 16, I could make

\$600 dollars in a day,” he said. When it came to growing food, he was not really interested. His grandmother had a large garden in her backyard, and David was given most of the worst garden chores, like picking green beans. “It’s itchy, and so hot, and you’re at the table snapping off the tops and bottoms of green beans for what feels like forever—it wasn’t my favorite,” he laughed.

It was not until he had children of his own that David really started to cultivate an interest in growing his own food, and much of that interest had to do with his children’s health. David told me that his family has a long history of ADHD, and many of his relatives are on medications. “For me, it made no sense for me to put my child on Aderall, what is basically cocaine, and then having to increase the dose as he got bigger.” He got a book called “Ritalin Free in 18 Days,” which told him and his wife that an all-organic diet free of processed food would help treat their son’s ADHD. It worked, and soon after the family tilled up a spot in their backyard to garden and bought their own chickens to raise. Not too long after, he had founded both a community garden and a farmers market in his neighborhood in Northeast Kansas City, in order to help other families eat an all-organic, local, diet as well.

While David was drawn to the local food movement because of its perceived health benefits, he feels passionate about its potential to address a number of other problems he identifies as occurring in his neighborhood. David lives in an area of Northeast Kansas City where roughly 54% of the population identifies as African American, and 41% experience poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). He moved his family into the area because there were a high number of vacant lots available to

farm. When I asked him to explain to me, in his own words, what led to disinvestment in this area, he told me:

There was a strong community here—maybe forty years ago?—maybe more like 100 years ago. But some time ago that community of people—I think it's called white flight— that strong community of Italians left. They ran for the hills. They wanted to find better places for their kids. What made 'em leave all at once? I don't know. But once they left, the community fell apart. The folks who have means move out, and the folks that don't end up getting caught here in the only place they can afford to live. But the people with leadership skills move on, so there's nobody to lead the community to a better way. So what we have now is a population of people—40% of 'em are on disability—and they have time on their hands.

David's understanding of disinvestment in the Northeast is incomplete. While he knows that white flight occurred, he does not acknowledge, or is not aware, that this migration was a purposeful effort on behalf of real estate agents and city governments, enacted via blockbusting and racialized lending, to contain and disinvest in black, urban communities (Lipsitz 2007). David also does not talk about the racialized hiring practices, policing, and incarceration systems that have worked throughout the second half of the 20th century to further deplete these communities (Harrison 2013). For David, an intense focus on neoliberal individuality, and in individuals' ability to change their communities, characterizes much of his understanding of urban disinvestment. When I asked him what factors he thinks contributes to crime and poverty in neighborhoods such as his, and how he thinks those issues can be addressed, he continued this focus on community:

As the government gets too big it takes the heart out of things—it takes the heart and the accountability out of things. It used to be that people had to—if they wanted help—they had to stick with the person who was going to help them, and people took care of their own. If their uncle, or brother, or cousin was acting up, they told them about it and they were on their way out. Now everybody's uncle, brother, or cousin is on the street and nobody cares

because the government's taking care of them. So there's no accountability and when the person blows it over here, they can go over there and get help—no one holds 'em to the line so they never grow up, and then now you've got a bunch of ten year old adults running around. So I think you can't mandate love—as much as we want to love the poor, its got to be done by individuals and not the government, because the government enables the poor.

For David, community gardens can be sites that encourage 'community,' and enforce accountability. His statement mirrors neoliberal global development discourse; particularly programs that encourage "empowerment" and vilify "dependency," often in discursive service of explaining state retreat from providing necessary social services. In Cape Town, South Africa, for example, Miraftab (2010:249) illustrates how state discourses of empowerment justified waste collection schemes that relied on unpaid labor—municipal governments argued that "payment" was delivered to laborers in the form of empowerment and the self-satisfaction of holding a job.

David stated, about his neighborhood, "it's hard to care about something that no one else cares about. When people start caring it's easier to care again." He told me that since the inception of his community garden, crime has gone down in the neighborhood about 80%—"when you're present in your community, the chances of violence are lower,"—and people have started to paint their houses and pick up trash. In some ways, David's understanding of the role his community garden plays in the community is similar to ideologies that support broken windows policing, an "order maintenance" policing philosophy that prioritizes surveillance of low-level 'quality of life' violations over violent crimes, and has been critiqued for the harm it has inflicted on black communities (Orisanmi 2015:38). Telling me about two blocks

near his home that were currently being cleared for production, as an urban farm, David stated:

A real benefit to those lots going into production is that it opens that space up—you can really see the garden, see the neighborhood. It all becomes much more open and it's easier to have eyes on the ground. You know, it's harder to have people steal from you when you don't have brush covering everything!

For David, urban 'beautification' will bring urban uplift. He went on to tell me about another instance of broken windows policing, via urban agriculture: David described a vacant lot at 19th and Central—"it used to serve largely as a dumping ground for trash, for people....it was awful," —where he and a few church friends planted several apple and peach trees. "As soon as we planted fruit trees there, nobody dumped anything. I tell people it was like a light switch, just on and off. We planted, and all of a sudden no dumping, no trash, now it's like a park." These sentiments were echoed by numerous other local foodies; one 60-something white urban gardener, at a community garden on the East side, once shared with me that her favorite part of gardening was that it allowed for "keeping a watch on people" in a crime-ridden area.

Another benefit of urban food production, according to David, is education. Guided by the impact dietary change has had on his family, David constantly works to make sure his neighbors know about, and care about, eating local, organic, produce. David worked at a food bank for a few years in his early twenties, and some of his formative ideas about the urban poor, and their diets, were developed during that time:

I noticed that a lot of [food bank patrons] were people that were having to get low sodium [canned goods]. They have all these health issues and for some reason they don't see that the reason they have issues is because [they're] eating all this junk, and even if [you] just went out and gardened in a small spot, that would be helping your health. There was such a disconnect.

David's understanding of dietary problems among food bank patrons does not take into account that poverty is associated with these diseases; and more specifically, regardless of poverty, people of color are more likely to be afflicted with diseases such as hypertension and diabetes—a fact which has more to do with racism than genetic predisposition (Dressler 1993). Continuing, David told me that “when I was growing up I cooked all the time with my mom and my grandmother,” but now “there's a lot of people in their twenties and thirties that don't eat vegetables at all.” One issue David experiences at his farmers market, which operates weekly during eight months of the year, is that he sometimes receives pushback from customers about his vendors' high prices. When I asked David what he thought about these affordability issues, he responded by pivoting the topic of discussion back to nutrition:

I feel like if you're feeding your family nutrient dense food, if you're feeding them high quality food, you go to the doctor less. My family hardly ever has to go to the doctor. I can't remember the last time any of my children were sick. You can save money that way. So I just think....I mean, I look at people whose children have just mega allergies and all these problems, and I'm kind of just like, there's gotta be some truth to it that you are what you eat. So if you're paying for really good organic produce, and it's nutritious—food that's grown in soil with a lot of organic matter has nutrients, and you get to eat all that fruit that has all those nutrients, it's really great. That's what I want for my family. I don't want somebody's produce that's covered in nitrogen or other sprays.

Here, David turned from a discussion of affordability of food—which could have centered on the high costs, both monetary and time-wise, of procuring and

cooking fresh produce, let alone organic produce (Guthman 2003)—to a discussion of how making the ‘choice’ to buy organic now, will save customers money on doctors bills later. Numerous studies indicate that economic capacity, opposed to spatial proximity, increases the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in low income families (Alkon et al. 2013), and others indicate that it is more useful to link poor health outcomes to the conditions of poverty, rather than individual dietary decisions (Singer 1994). David instead places the blame for health inequalities on parents who “didn’t spend their food dollars wisely.” While this perceived ignorance at the farmers market has caused David a lot of frustration, he tells me that the community garden is a place that can educate neighborhood residents about the value of organic produce:

We get a chance to teach children where their food comes from. The garden is a place for learning where our food comes from, which we’ve become completely disconnected from. And if you grew up in the city and never got a chance to go to the farm, then you don’t know. So there’s educational components and nutritional components. It makes a huge difference. My goal is to see the needle move in terms of health outcomes in our neighborhood. That’s my goal. I wanna see health outcomes change for struggling folks—a drop in obesity and diabetes, stuff like that.

David continued, telling me that you can’t just provide a garden without the educational component. At his community garden, he provides this outreach by talking with the gardeners, advising them on what to grow, and how to eventually cook it—“a lot of them like to grill, and that’s healthy, its easy enough to throw any veggie on the grill.” Tying in this discussion of affordability and education into food deserts, David stated:

In this neighborhood it is very much an educational process. It’s almost like, if this was a food desert, or if it wasn’t, the result would be the same because

of the lack of education. So it doesn't matter—if we're in the hood and we're next to the grocery store, or if we're in the hood and the nearest grocery store is five miles away—either way, everybody's eating potato chips. But if you can hit the kids early enough with education in the garden, show 'em how cool it is, you can have some influence on their life before you can't have any influence at all.

In contrast to what he sees as ignorance in urban minority populations, David romanticizes ways of life and areas of the world where people still “live off the land.” David, and many other local foodies I spoke with—particularly those who had spent time abroad with mission trips—idealize ‘agrarian’ cultures. “In other places in the world, agriculture is like a necessity that you learn and pass on,” he says. A few years ago, he spent several months in Uzbekistan on a mission trip, and David told me that he really admired how people there took several hours for lunch, and “always shared their food with each other.” “I loved that. I loved that slower paced lifestyle. They cared about what they ate. They cared about spending time with their family and friends and coworkers,” he added.

When I tried to discuss race explicitly, as we shifted our discussion to means of addressing inequality in urban food work, David became uneasy—he avoided eye contact with me, and the conversation did not last too much longer. It is often like this when I broach race and racialization with foodies in KC; as Bonilla-Silva (2006) notes, a key mechanism through which whiteness functions is this race-avoidance and ‘color-blindness.’ For example, when I asked Alice—a church friend of David's, who runs a program that places fruit tree orchards in low-income communities of color—about how she thinks about racial inequities in her work, she told me: “I'm gonna be really honest with you. I do think race layers in to this whole thing, but I'd

be lying if I told you I'm really thinking 'where are the Latinos and how do I go help them?'" When I asked David about how he thinks food insecurity overlaps with racial inequality, he responded "there's about a quarter of a million people in our Kansas City metro area that fall under the food insecure designation, and they come in all colors. Emergency assistance is important to all of them." This theme of pivoting race-specific discussions back into the general need and poverty experienced by urban residents was a common one in my discussions with white foodies.

David told me that he thinks his community garden and his farmer's market make the neighborhood a better place—"less kids are joining gangs, more kids are having a brighter future," he said. He thinks he sees less hunger in his community, and less "dependence on others." Guided again by his experience working at a food pantry, David told me "that was important work, but it wasn't changing behavior, it wasn't changing the amount of need." Growing food for his family changed his own life, changed the course of life for David's son with ADHD. So, he decided, the same change could occur for others: "there's that old adage—give a man a fish, he can eat for a day, and teach him how to fish, and he can eat for a lifetime. So the idea is: can we teach that underserved population how to grow their own really healthy food?"

"You are what you eat": Race Avoidant Discourse, and Bettering One's Health Through Food Dollars Wisely Spent

Nancy is middle aged, and can nearly always be found wearing sturdy Carhart overalls. She grew up in central Kansas, and disliked the conservatism so much that she left immediately after school, and headed to the West coast—where

she apprenticed on a number of different farms for around a decade. There, she was heavily influenced by food activists such as Alice Waters, and the success of farm-to-table initiatives in the area—exemplified by Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California—and started a few small programs dedicated to promoting local-food production and distribution. In 1995 she moved back to Kansas City, where land was more affordable than the West Coast, and grew food, sold food, and worked in restaurants for another decade. In 2005, she co-founded Grow KC with a fellow farmer-friend. Grow KC staffs a couple-dozen local foodies and runs several main programs—programs which Nancy said “are all designed with the intention of getting more good food grown in city neighborhoods and more good food eaten in city neighborhoods...these programs all sort of layer in food access, community development, quality of life changes, and public health.” These programs include a two-acre ‘demonstration’ farm that trains apprentices and generates revenue via sales at Kansas City’s most exclusive and expensive farmers market—Brookside Farmer’s Market, administration of a SNAP doubling program at Kansas City farmers markets, a small grant program for urban growers, and co-operating a refugee agricultural training program, along with Kansas City Jewish Vocational Services. While I will go into the specifics of these programs more in-depth in the following chapter, here I wish to talk about what brought Nancy to this work and how she sees herself addressing urban hunger and inequality in Kansas City.

For Nancy, addressing hunger is a means of addressing other systemic inequities. She told me:

I believe that...one of my firmest beliefs is that we all have a right to eat local food that’s culturally appropriate for us, regardless of our socioeconomic

status. And I feel that not having access to that is one of the major killers of hopes and dreams, quite literally. You can take it back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs—food is one of the foundational needs that you have to have met, it literally fuels everything else, down to your biology. I mean, you are what you eat, and I very firmly believe that. If you're not getting the right fuel, then you're so sick that you're missing work and all this income....so addressing food, I feel like that's one of the ways we can start to address these other facets. There's no 'oh, if you fix this, then it fixes everything else,' but I do feel like addressing food is really important.

Nancy's statements here, 'you are what you eat,' echo David's thoughts about how local food consumption is vital in addressing urban health disparities. While Nancy considers herself a staunch liberal, and often publicly advocates for the retention and expansion of government welfare programs, she and other foodies concurrently espouse a neoliberal fixation on individual consumption, and its ability to address systemic problems. Laura works closely with Nancy at Grow KC, and over coffee one day she told me about what attracted her to her work in food systems—which presented a complete departure from her career in pharmaceutical sales. Laura explained,

So I spent five years hawking drugs for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Going in and out of doctors offices everyday for five years, seeing what happens when people have zero connection to the food they eat, the food they put into their bodies, and seeing what that looks like when its extrapolated out over a lifetime. We're talking about a three year old that weighed 120 pounds and was type 2 diabetic. Or a 94 year old that had lost all of their limbs but one, due to complications of type 2 diabetes, and had multiple stints, and bypass surgeries...so you know, these disease states that in a lot of ways can be preventable if the solution were less focused on the pill at the end or on the response to health issues, and sort of looking at it more proactively. So that's what turned me, personally, toward saying 'okay, my calling is definitely earlier on in the solution timeline somewhere.' And I did a whole lot of soul searching and figured out the very root of it—I kept asking myself where does this start, where does this start, and I kept backing up, and backing up, and it came down to knowing where your food comes from. So I ended up volunteering out at [Grow KC's demonstration farm], and that turned in to two years there farming and spending another two years

farming elsewhere, and learning all about sustainable vegetable production inside of the city, and learning about how food systems work and how they're broken, and the work that's being done to try to fix them in a very grassroots way, especially in Kansas City, and it all makes a whole lot of sense to me.

Laura, like David, has witnessed health inequities, and has come to the conclusion that a focus on diet and individual consumption is one of the best ways to improve the lives of those experiencing poverty. While, for many of the low-income black and brown East side residents I spoke to, lack of jobs, and a minimum wage that drastically undervalues their labor, was voiced as the most salient factor affecting their lives, Laura, David, Nancy, and other white foodies, have identified food as the most pressing issue in the lives of the urban poor. While most foodies I talked with acknowledged that fresh produce can be expensive, and understood that food sold at outlets in 'food deserts' is often priced higher than food sold at suburban grocery stores (Becker 1992; Horning and Fulkerson 2014), the issue of affordability is often dismissed, and discussion is shifted back to growing one's own food. For example, at a happy hour event benefitting Grow KC's work, Nancy cheerfully told me, when I offhandedly mentioned to her that the price of eggplant at the Sunfresh grocery store nearest my apartment is triple what eggplant costs at the same grocery chain in the suburbs, "growing your own eggplant is nearly free"—a comment that draws on classed privilege to deny the incredible time and labor costs involved in growing one's own food.

Like David, Nancy thinks that a focus on food production and consumption addresses a number of other urban problems, not just nutrition. Talking about the growth of urban agriculture in Kansas City, Nancy stated:

It's absolutely wonderful. Over the last ten years urban agriculture has exploded, not just in Kansas City, but in areas all across the country. It's really inspiring and surprising in some ways, but in others, it makes a lot of sense—in the last ten years we've seen a lot of economic downturn, a lot of economic hardship. We've seen the number of vacant lots grow and grow. Urban gardens are a way to eliminate blight. They turn blight into neighborhood oases, and they make neighborhoods more attractive. To see lots that were a blight by anyone's standards be used as gardens is amazing. People are taking vacant space and making it absolutely beautiful and abundant.

These comments echo David's sentiments about urban gardens as 'order maintenance' policing—instead of questioning the purposive decisions that city governments and the real estate industry made to create blight, conversation is shifted onto how to beautify blight, with the underlying assumption that this beautification will lead to other areas of improvement as well. Beautification was mentioned to me by a lot of foodies—"it's *such* a great way to beautify the urban core," Constance, a retired nonprofit executive director who lives in J.C. Nichols' racially-restricted Mission Hills suburb, told me one spring afternoon as we volunteered together to clear brush from a community garden on the East side, "I just think when there's some vacant land, there should be some food growing!" Nancy reinforced this idea, telling me during our interview that Grow KC "[sees] urban agriculture as a web that helps make our city stronger."

I shifted topics in my interview with Nancy, and asked her about Kansas City's racialized landscape—in what spaces and places does she see a racial divide in the city? Is she cognizant of the divide at Troost? Nancy told me that Troost was originally built somewhat wider than the other streets, and that this was to facilitate the transport, via truck, of fruits and vegetables grown on farms East of Troost. I pushed the conversation, and asked "did race and class play into this division you're

talking about?” She shook her head: “not so much. That came later. It was more the move away from agriculture in general that created that divide.” The conception of history that Nancy presented to me is messy and confusing, and avoids explicit mention of race. There were in fact farms East of Troost, like she mentions, but they were large-scale plantations, where captive Africans harvested the fruits and vegetables that would have been transported down Troost Avenue. Racial divisions were inherent to this city landmark from its inception, and have been upheld into the present day. I asked Nancy, explicitly, how does racial inequality intersect with urban food systems? She told me, “Well, we see food insecurity in urban areas because so few people have a connection with where their food comes from. 100 years ago everyone grew their own foods and vegetables. Now, everybody has a different idea of what food even *is*—is it fruits and vegetables, or is it junk food at the gas station?” She continued,

I will also say that I’ve noticed a difference generationally. Older African Americans still have familial ties to agriculture, and had somebody in their family who knew how to cook and all the rest...I will say that in the 20 years I’ve been having conversations in Kansas City with African Americans there has been a big drop in that familial connection. And so there’s a number of what I’m coming to think of as lost generations, where they really just have no exposure to real food, to agriculture, to food production. It has been really startling to me over the years to see that drop in [connection]. My hope is that dynamic is going to get mixed up through the school gardens that are happening, through community gardens—there we can kind of interrupt that dynamic.

Nancy was more willing than a majority of the foodies I interviewed to speak about race frankly; she shared with me a number of assumptions about ‘real’ food, and who chooses to consume it. Also layered into Nancy’s comments was the assumption that only people who grow food themselves care about their diet or

nutrition. She continued, and in her next statement, paralleled several statements made by David—where he turned a discussion of racialized inequality experienced by African Americans into one about ‘agrarian’ cultures. Nancy told me about her friend Hank, a black farmer in his 80s, stating:

It’s funny, over the years his racial views have gotten even more polarized. Anytime I see him he makes a point of reminding me that if he and I had been talking like we were, standing as close as he were, he could’ve been lynched—you know, he grew up in rural Texas, in an agricultural community. One of the things I like about our refugee community in Kansas City is that these people, for most of them, farming is something that has respect and value. They’ve got emotional baggage about their refugee experience, but its not so much about farming. So I feel like they are present in farming in a way that is pretty miraculous, and its great to work with them.

Later in my research, I would interview Hank and learn that he didn’t just grow up in an “agricultural community.” He grew up amidst violence, as his family sharecropped and were unable to leave because of the threat of economic, and physical, repercussion. So, much like David, Nancy finds affinity, and comfort with, ethnic minorities that supposedly enjoy growing and distributing fresh produce as much as she does. While foodies perceive Southeast Asian refugees as having less ‘emotional baggage’ than African Americans, this is not necessarily true—and white privilege is equally implicated in the displacement and violence afflicted against both populations. This affinity translates into an increased amount of foodie-led programs addressing refugee populations from Southeast Asia, and an avoidance of working with African Americans.

Nancy is unwilling, however, to translate her transparency about race into her work at Grow KC. When I asked her how she addresses racial inequality in her work, she responded:

Our language around it is sometimes...it's the Midwest, it's Kansas City...sometimes you get further by not naming something directly. And you know, I would say that while we're not direct about race, we are more direct about economic injustice, and we do a lot of food access work. We work with a diverse array of groups across the metro. And we've got some mini grant funds that we prioritize giving to high need communities, which are generally lower income communities, inner-city communities...communities of color.

For Grow KC, race is addressed indirectly—through conversations about economic injustice, through unspoken granting decisions that favor people of color, through networking with 'diverse' communities. In their work, Nancy, and other white foodies, often use phrases such as 'urban' and 'inner-city' to refer to African Americans (cf. Bonilla-Silva 2006). Nancy continued, telling me about how and why, she thinks, urban agriculture in Kansas City has become a 'whiter' movement, using Grow KC's annual mini-conference, Farmers and Friends, as an entry point to the discussion:

The first time we held our annual Farmers and Friends meeting, 15 farmers were crammed into our little tiny space over at [the demonstration farm]. That was a really, really, diverse group. As the event has grown and more people have shown up, the diversity has gotten a lot less—it's gotten a lot more middle-class. Most of it is that those early farmers, they got connected, they set up their relationships, so to some degree they don't need to come network. Some of the groups, like the Hmong, they're a somewhat closed off community. Also—our biggest challenges in the years to come is that we need to help smaller scale farms get going. We need to turn them into mid-sized and larger. History and experience argues that that's going to be a more educated, whiter group of people who have more comfort with taking out loans, dealing with institutions for financing and the rest. We are at the early stages of figuring out how do we help these growers scale up? How do we help them figure out financing and equipment appropriate for larger scale? So we want to really deliberately work on those barriers with this specific group of people.

Several things stand out about Nancy's discussion of how Grow KC works to address racialized inequality in their work. First, she speculates that their events are

whiter because people of color have established their own networks, and/or are 'closed off.' Second, she says that white individuals have 'more comfort' taking out loans and dealing with institutions necessary to scale up their farms. Here, Nancy could have discussed historical, and current, racialized lending and discrimination in banks, the real estate industry, and the USDA, that might prevent farmers of color from scaling up (Harvard 2001). Instead, she discursively turns issues of racial inequality into issues of comfort and ease. This idea was echoed to me by numerous other foodies, who often told me they invited people of color to their events but they would not show up, and asked "how do we make them feel comfortable enough to come?"

'Foodie'-Created White Public Space

While it would be incorrect to classify the urban agriculture 'movement' in Kansas City as a cohesive one, many of the white upper-middle class foodies I spoke with shared remarkably similar ideologies about urban hunger and poverty, and the racialized histories of urban space. These ideologies held true across political and religious divides—while David confided in me that he helped vote President Trump into office, and Nancy proudly votes for Democrats down the ballot, in discourse surrounding local food production and consumption they overlap in neoliberal ideologies of personal accountability, 'voting with your food dollars,' and valorization of entrepreneurship. For many local foodies I spoke with, this idea that food can be personally transformative came from their *own* personally transformative food experiences—such as David improving his son's health with organic produce, Nancy's experiences 'coming of age' on West coast farms, and

Laura's years witnessing health-related inequities in the U.S. healthcare industry. These experiences and others place food at the forefront of many foodies' political ideologies—many foodies shared their hopes with me, that if others could have personal experiences with food, if they 'put their hands in the dirt,' they would be transformed in the same way.

In worrisome ways, local foodies in Kansas City use race-avoidant strategies in both their personal and work lives, falling back on language of blight, and outright dismissal of race as an issue—an assertion that the problems facing African Americans are not any different than the problems faced by all urban poor and people of color. Urban blight is not recognized as a structural creation to meet the needs of the urban growth machine (Moloch 1976); urban blight is discussed as created by individual disinvestment in the 'beautification' of space. White public space is created by foodies in these dismissals—in the assertion that Troost is merely an agricultural barrier and not a racialized one, in the discursive enforcement of the idea that health inequities are the result of food dollars poorly spent, in the discomfort and avoidance of associating with black Kansas Citians who carry too much "emotional baggage" about agriculture, and in the policing of communities of color via "eyes on the ground" in urban farms and gardens. White public space is created when policy makers in Kansas City listen to those who "think there should be some food growing" when they see a vacant lot, and dismiss those who ask about why that lot was disinvested in in the first place. This white public space results, as I show in the following chapter, in urban greening policies that further marginalize and displace people of color in Kansas City.

Chapter 4: Getting a Seat at the Table: White Local 'Foodies' and Green Urban Development Policy

This chapter documents the ways whiteness takes up space in Kansas City through green urban development initiatives. A series of events, exemplary of this process, center around the Kansas City 'Food Leader' meetings. Beginning in fall 2017, a group of Kansas City 'foodies'—including Nancy and David—began hosting what they termed 'Food Leaders' monthly meetings. I attended several of these meetings, and heard second hand about others, from friends who had themselves attended. These meetings were initially held at the home of one Grow KC staff member, and invitations were spread by word of mouth, to people that these original founding foodies considered to be 'food leaders' as well. As a result, the first three to four of these meetings were attended entirely by white, upper-middle class, farmers, local-food eaters, food charity executive directors, and high-end chefs. The lack of diversity did not go unnoticed; I was told by a 'food leader' who was included at these initial gatherings that monthly, one attendee would raise the question—"how do we get more diversity in this room?"—and then discussion would move on, the question left unanswered.

The food leader meetings were held, the organizing collective stated, with the goal of charting a new path forward for the local urban food movement in Kansas City; an almost entirely white, upper-middle class group came together to define this path. I was told by foodies that the purpose of the event was to "meet over food and about food;" to "identify opportunities in the food movement and create new ones;" and to meet and share food visions with other influential actors in the KC food scene. The first few meetings were entirely white. For the January 2018

meeting, the founding food leaders made a concerted effort to broaden and “diversify” the invitation list; attendance jumped from around 25 in initial meetings, to around 100. Still, all but two of the attendees were white; none would describe themselves as lower than middle-class.

At the January 2018 meeting this path forward was defined and drafted. The meeting was held in Danny’s greenhouse—the wealthy owner of a microgreen business and high tunnel company, who reframed Neferet’s concerns at the Grow and Tell—and attendees were served vegan Indian dishes, cooked by several white male chefs who own high-end farm-to-table restaurants in KC. Attendees at this event, during the roundtable discussion, identified what they saw as the most pressing challenges and potential opportunities for growth in the urban food ‘movement.’ These ideas were then drafted into a document titled “Strategic Framework for Adaptive Change in Kansas City’s Regional Food System.” This document was then sent out by email to several hundred, mostly white upper-middle class, local foodies, as the food leaders asked for others to sign on and support their identified goals. The email, sent out by a young white woman who runs a food hub in Kansas City, on behalf of the self-identified food leaders collective, read: “We agree we are at a point where significant change can come, and we wish to guide that change...please sign on to the letter to confirm your support toward developing a comprehensive framework for our regional food system.”

The end result of the meetings will be powerful: this group of white local foodies have defined, and are seeking funding for, *their* vision for Kansas City’s local urban food system. The “Strategic Framework” document has been submitted as a

proposal for partnership with the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City; the food leaders will meet with the Health Care Foundation sometime in 2018, and will likely acquire funding for their project goals. The core food leaders have a consistent track record of acquiring funding from this foundation for their individual food-oriented non-profits.

The proposal submitted to the Health Care Foundation outlines a list of goals and challenges for the local urban food system that does not include any racialized or class-based barriers for urban food producers or consumers. The document outlines a vaguely stated goal for “community-driven engagement,” involving “participants from diverse sectors within the food system” and “national experts,” with the goal of building “regional political and cultural will to advance specific policy change.” The challenges facing the development of a “strong regional food system,” as identified by food leaders, are listed as follows:

- Niche market development for healthy food
- Overcoming financial barriers
- Polarized divisions between conventional and organic farmers.

The “Strategic Framework’s” assessment of the current foodscape in Kansas City and proposal for ‘further progress’ are devoid of any explicit mention of racialized barriers in the food system; quite possibly, in part, due to the fact that only two people of color were included in these conversations, and no one experiencing poverty or food insecurity was consulted. While financial barriers are identified as a challenge, the food leaders’ expanded explanation of this challenge in ‘Food Leader’ meetings clarified that the focus is placed on farm business profitability. With this statement, food leaders are referring to helping already

successful urban farmers scale up, so that they can earn more than \$50,000 dollars a year.

A social media post, made by one of only two black attendees to the January Food Leaders meeting, offers insight into the lack of ‘diversity’ at these meetings. The post was made by Andre (a pseudonym), a black farmer who has been selling food in the Kansas City metropolitan area for more than a decade. His post reads:

I am at a KC farmers meeting with pretty much everyone in KC that grows food and a few chefs. Event is catered by Farmhouse, Belfry, and Webster House chefs, who are also in attendance. I wish there were more brown faces here. Networking. \$\$\$\$. What can I do to get you involved?

In his post, Andre points out that the event offers a valuable chance to have your voice heard and represented in policy decisions. He also indicates that the event is a great networking opportunity, particularly for growers looking to create contracts with local chefs (the racialized dynamics of these contracts are discussed further in Chapter 6). Other black growers responded to Andre’s post, stating that they did not know about the event, some commenting “No one told us,” and one black woman, who owns a local-food centered small-business, stated: “You know how I feel about those people.”

While I cannot definitively say what any of these commenters meant, their statements echo concerns and problems that I have heard from other black farmers I have interviewed—social isolation from influential group meetings, such as the Food Leaders, and distrust of, and thus reluctance to attend meetings with, white upper-middle class foodies. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 focus in-depth on these understandings of urban greening initiatives, and foodies, from the perspective of black East Side residents. In this current chapter, I elaborate on the influential ways

these largely white-only groups, such as the Food Leaders meetings, have shaped green urban development policies and discourse in Kansas City.

Welfare Rollback and 'Foodie'-Led Social Services

While in the previous chapter I discussed the discursive underpinnings of 'white public space' created by foodies in urban greening initiatives, this chapter analyzes how this discourse translates into concrete policy. Thus, this chapter continues Chapter 3's focus on white public space, this time turning from an analysis of those who create the space, to an analysis of the specific mechanisms through which that space is maintained. I focus on green urban development initiatives that "routinely...privilege Euro-Americans over nonwhites" (Page 1994:111). As Kobayashi and Peake (2000:393) note, racism is diffused through a wide range of sites and processes; the white space it produces allows some to "enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions, and...by *occupying space* within a segregated social landscape."

Neoliberal capitalism and welfare rollback have combined in the U.S. over the past half century to create ample vacant room for foodies to occupy in urban policy making arenas. Today, NGOs and nonprofits function as a major force in the lives of the poor, as public revenues for social services are redirected into these private enterprises, and power in disbursing welfare is no longer concentrated in the state (Edgar and Russell 1998; Okongwu and Mencher 2000). This shift in funding does not accompany a shift in oversight; now the programmatic efficiencies of many of the private enterprises that comprise our social service system are only loosely monitored (Edgar and Russell 1998). The Health Care Foundation, for example, is

one nonprofit that plays a major role in the lives of the urban poor in Kansas City, distributing \$4.5 million annually in “safety net” grants to smaller organizations in the metropolitan area, a number of whom apply for funding for sites of urban food production, arguing that this facilitates the creation of ‘healthy communities.’ This privatization of social services has further disempowered the poor, and removed them from a direct relationship with the state (Goode and Maskovsky 2001)—those experiencing poverty often now find their first line of support and contact to be nonprofit charity providers, such as David once was, when he worked at a food pantry. The poor in Kansas City are, arguably more so than other U.S. cities, at the behest of this nonprofit charity system; Kansas City ranks 5th nationwide in a study of cities where nonprofits are largest in terms of size, influence, and financial capacity (Charity Navigator 2010).

While NGOs or nonprofits are idealized as spaces in which “people help others for reasons other than profit or politics,” in practice this is far from true; third sector actors are neither disinterested, nor apolitical (Fischer 1997:442; Schuller 2012). Nonprofit actors like Nancy, David, and those employed by the Health Care Foundation play a huge role not just in the circulation of welfare capital in cities, but also in shaping hegemonic discourse and social policy agendas concerning the urban poor. The ideological underpinnings of much of these third-sector programs center on a belief in the free market as the most efficient means of guaranteeing social welfare, where the ultimate goal is not assistance, but “the acculturation of the poor to the rules of the market” (Goode and Maskovsky 2001:7; Sanchez-Otero 1993; Kingfisher 2007). In the arena of urban-food, for example, this

manifests as neoliberal ‘empowerment’ programming, such as farming entrepreneurship programs for ‘underprivileged’ black youth, and programs utilizing the cast-offs of capitalism’s inefficiencies, such as farm gleaning programs that redistribute produce deemed by grocery stores and high end consumers as aesthetically unacceptable to the food insecure. Programmatic foci such as these further the depoliticization of structural problems into technical problems that can be addressed via the capital-based mechanisms of nonprofit programming (cf. Ferguson 1990; Rosol 2012). Such entrepreneurship and empowerment programming ignore, for example, the mass incarceration system that destabilizes the home lives of many black youth and the inadequate minimum wage and affordable housing crisis that leave many unable to afford fresh produce.

Within this context of welfare rollback and neoliberal ‘roll out,’ (Peck and Tickerell 2002), understanding, more concretely, how third sector actors’ ideologies crystalize into policy, is vital. In this chapter, I explore this question in one specific context—urban greening initiatives in Kansas City. In what follows, I first briefly sketch the national context that allowed foodies to garner political clout, and then broadly outline the foodie-led nonprofits in Kansas City that are influential in urban greening initiatives. I then discuss one specific instance of local policy change in Kansas City, in order to demonstrate how foodies draw on racialized and class-based social networks and privilege to petition for change. Then I outline specific foodie crafted and influenced policies concerning urban land use and food insecurity in Kansas City, demonstrating that foodies have powerfully shaped local ideas about land use and zoning in ways that support white public space in Kansas City. I close

by looking at counter-discourses shared by other policy-makers in Kansas City, who voice frustration with the constraints of the foodie land use framework.

Who's Present at the Table? Influential 'Foodies' in Kansas City

Nancy, the executive director of Grow KC, told me that when she first sat down with elected officials in 2005, on both sides of the state line, to discuss her vision for the city, she was laughed at. “Urban agriculture? Ha, ha, goats in the city,’ and so on. It was just totally not part of their framework,” she said. Real estate agents even implored city officials to ignore her proposals, concerned that urban agriculture would bring down property values.

Now, however, extensive city government support exists for urban agriculture as a key mechanism of green urban development in Kansas City. “There’s been an extraordinary developmental process for them,” Nancy told me in a 2016 interview, referring to the metropolitan area city officials. More broadly, there is hegemonic support for—evidenced through discourse throughout the city celebrating urban agriculture—and capitalization upon urban agriculture initiatives. For example, real estate agents and landlords now draw on farmers markets and urban gardens to raise property values and rent, locally and nation-wide (this is discussed further in Chapter 7; see also Curran and Hamilton 2017).

Part of that change came through persistence—Nancy kept scheduling meetings to explain her goals—but it also came through friendship. Nancy told me that she, David, and several other foodies became close with several city council people, particularly one involved in urban land zoning and brownfields fund distribution. Convincing *friends* that urban zoning that allowed backyard chickens

would also benefit the urban food insecure—one of the first policy changes that came about via foodie involvement in Kansas City—was much easier than convincing an elected official whom they barely knew.

Also key to local foodie influence was national discourse valorizing the local food movement and ‘healthy’ eating that arose in the U.S. at the beginning of the 21st century, and the subsequent institutionalization of the movement discourse and ideologies through foodie texts, conferences, and hegemonic discourse (this was discussed further in the previous chapter, Chapter 3). This movement, for the most part, receives bipartisan support. Programs such as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI), pushed through Congress by a bipartisan group in 2014, supports ‘food movement’ goals by funneling money toward farmers markets and small-scale farmers, and speaks to conservatives as well—whose voter base has a historical concern with ‘welfare queens’ (Goode and Maskovsky 2001:7)—as it ensures that SNAP recipients are spending their food dollars on ‘healthy’ choices. First Lady Michelle Obama’s revival of the White House garden in 2009 enforced this national-level adoption of the food movement, and discursively enforced the idea that growing your own produce can be a curative for poverty-related diseases like obesity and diabetes. Within the context of a national-level normalization of food movement ideologies, Nancy’s proposal that urban agriculture be utilized extensively in urban development took hold in Kansas City.

In 2005, when Nancy co-founded Grow KC, the only other local food-focused nonprofit in the area was an organization that published a yearly organic farmer directory. This organization focuses on connecting organic producers to consumers,

and does not involve itself in any policy-advocacy. Grow KC, in contrast, is explicitly focused on changing hegemonic understandings of urban space and what it should be used for (namely, agriculture). Nancy told me that at Grow KC:

We've done, over the years, tons of stuff that is about public education, cooperative planning, envisioning neighborhoods, envisioning the city, challenging people to think about different models than the rest—and we've done that through conferences, workshops, our annual Farmers and Friends gathering. So we've done a lot to stir the pot, make people think—and think not only about their specific situation, but think more in a systems way.

Grow KC works to accomplish these goals through a diverse array of programs. They offer yearly mini-grants to small-scale urban growers, run a demonstration farm (a high production, small, organic farm in Wyandotte County, where they also train apprentices), and are opening a second urban demonstration farm in Jackson County sometime in 2018. Grow KC operates a biannual “Urban Grown” tour, which highlights urban farms and gardens in the metropolitan area. In 2016, the tour featured 31 sites. The tour serves as a key mechanism for engaging policy makers in their work. Grow KC dedicates one day of the tour to personally guiding elected officials around the urban gardens. Grow KC administers a large FINI grant for the Kansas City metropolitan area, providing oversight and managing the distribution of SNAP-doubling benefits. Their most prominent program is a refugee agricultural training program, which they co-operate with Jewish Vocational Services. The three-year farm training program provides language and marketing skills to newly arrived refugees. This program is located beside the region's oldest housing project, where residents—almost all African American—refer to the site as a plantation. Many people of color referred to Grow KC, throughout the duration of

my research, as run by, and for—despite its claims that their programs help the urban poor—the white, upper-middle class.

In 2007, a non-profit focused on affecting food policy in the Kansas City metropolitan area—which I am calling the Hunger Coalition—was founded through a large philanthropic donation, and is today highly active in affecting urban policy in KC. A family foundation “had a ton of money and needed to spend it,” explained Nancy, and funding efforts to address food insecurity seemed like a good idea. Because of this huge capital influx, free of the oversight or strings like grant funding would bring, the Hunger Coalition has been able to use its funds freely in ways that have been hugely influential with policy makers and upper-middle class foodies in KC. Nancy told me:

So they had meetings and did things that no other nonprofit possibly could do. Like, they would have meetings at one of the best restaurants in town, they would pay for everybody’s meal—they would like, basically, hand out a free \$40 dollar meal and get everyone in the room, because it was [a high-end local Italian restaurant] and they wanted to eat. And then they’d talk to them about food and growing food, and of course most of us couldn’t possibly afford that. So that’s how they got people that were somewhat more mainstream, more in the sort of traditional and corporate worlds to pay attention and start showing up. That was an important dynamic.

Drawing on philanthropic donations to fund conversations about food insecurity and policy change was read by many of the foodies I spoke with as an unequivocally good, charitable, act. Many told me they saw it as a productive use of wealth. However, it is also an unacknowledged and highly privileged means of conveying policy agendas. This influential means of facilitating policy change occurs outside the bounds of the democratic process. In contrast, the food insecure urban poor—who were not included in these lunch time policy agenda setting meetings—

must rely on voting in city officials whom they hope will enact legislation that positively affect them. They have no means of influencing the policy agendas of those who attend these lunches.

The Coalition's goals are "to advocate for the Greater Kansas City food system and promote food policies that positively impact the nutritional, economic, social, and environmental health of Greater Kansas City." They accomplish this primarily through lobbying. Current issues include lowering the food tax and changing mobile vending laws in Kansas, and campaigning for Senior Farmers Market Nutrition funding in Missouri. The Hunger Coalition also works to mobilize upper-middle class foodies around food-access related issues, primarily via monthly working group meetings. For the past three years, those groups have been the Food Desert working group and the Grocery Access Taskforce working group. At these meetings, individuals working on, or curious about, these topics are invited to come share progress and requests for assistance. I have attended these meetings nearly every month, for two years, and they are consistently attended by predominantly white, upper-middle class foodies.

The Hunger Coalition is run by individuals from a nonprofit I am calling Healthy Communities KC—an organization that emphasizes cultivating 'healthy' bodies through the creation of 'healthy' urban environments (this focus on obesogenic environments has been critiqued, as researchers argue that this focus on environment should be shifted to a focus on economic conditions, cf. Shannon 2014; Guthman 2011). Founded in 2005 through a philanthropic donation from a retired physician who was worried about childhood obesity, Healthy Communities KC's

mission statement asserts that “When our neighborhoods support healthy habits, we are less likely to suffer from obesity...heart disease, and poor mental health,” and of their work, states: “to make a lasting impact, we shape policies that improve our food system and physical surroundings, and ultimately, the places where we live, work, learn, and play.” The Hunger Coalition works toward these goals with programs that provide incentives to restaurants for purchasing local food, farm-to-school training for teachers and advocates, and urban walk-ability assessments.

While Grow KC, the Hunger Coalition, and Healthy Communities KC are the foundational and most influential foodie-run, policy-focused nonprofits in Kansas City, there are several other food organizations that deserve mention. A faith-based nonprofit I am calling Our Daily Bread was founded in 2011 by a group of suburban Kansas Citians who had become “deeply concerned for the growing number of hungry people and [were] seeking a way to provide them more sustainable, nutrient-rich food.” Our Daily Bread plants orchards across the city, in places labeled food deserts and vacant lots, in order to “feed the hungry.” Having planted around 150 orchards in the metropolitan area, Our Daily Bread is often cited—by local policy makers and in dominant discourse—as a key player in providing for the poor and for reshaping urban space. The program recently secured partnerships with the Parks and Recreation departments in Kansas and Missouri that will allow them to plant orchards on city-owned properties. Also significant in Kansas City’s urban landscape is a nonprofit I am calling Kansas City Grower’s Club—an organization that offers very low-cost membership, seeds, compost, and backyard gardening classes for low-income gardeners and small-scale farmers. Kansas City

Grower's Club also offers infrastructural support and guidance for schools or businesses who wish to incorporate a vegetable garden into their landscaping; administers \$100,000 dollars of KCMO city funding, yearly, for water audits for small-scale growers; and offers a small grant system for gardeners and farmers who need help with water catchment systems or municipal water line installation.

Kansas City Grower's Club is viewed by many in Kansas City as truly diverse; the organization is utilized by a high number of low income gardeners and people of color, who are chiefly attracted by the low-cost vegetable seeds. Also significant is a gleaning organization I am calling The Pantry, which mobilizes foodies to harvest second-best produce from area farms which is then distributed to the food insecure via various food pantries and programs across the metropolitan area.

Finally, a number of individuals—primarily upper-middle class, white male business owners—are influential in shaping discourse and action in urban greening initiatives in Kansas City. Several wealthy local businessmen who are involved in 'green' capitalist ventures and commercial organic farming, and investors in numerous industrial-site 'revitalization' ventures are influential within foodie policy circles. Vocal chefs, such as those who catered the Food Leaders' meeting, were among the first to create a farm-to-table restaurant niche in Kansas City. Several successful, white, high-production organic farmers in the urban area and a number of farmers market managers also formed part of this influential core group. While living in Kansas City, I witnessed all of these foodies called in to discussions with city officials, repeatedly, to share their thoughts and means of addressing food

insecurity and urban vacancy, even though their products and services are by and large created for, and only accessible to, the upper-middle class.

How, exactly, do foodies advocate for policy change once they are called in to these spaces? What narratives do they draw on to make the argument for urban agriculture as a key mechanism of urban food security and ‘beautification’? Briefly, in the following section, I outline one instance of policy change—here, concerning farmer’s market codes—to illustrate how foodie ideology becomes policy. After that, I turn to a discussion of the specific green urban development policies that these foodies (and the nonprofits they run) have influenced and helped craft.

Advocating for Farmer’s Markets: Arguing the Value of Farmers Markets as Vital for Food Security, Urban Economic Growth

In July 2018, at the height of farmer’s market season in Kansas City, two local businesses that operate at two urban-area farmer’s markets were shut down by the health department—an incident that sheds light on how one’s ability to strategically leverage influential social networks is more influential than actual laws and regulations when it comes to ‘success’ in the green economy. One of the businesses, a small yet high-end locally-sourced bakery, has a physical store-front in the wealthy Brookside neighborhood, and also sells coffee and pastries—like their \$4 dollar homemade toaster pastries—at the Brookside Farmers Market. Brookside Farmer’s Market is the oldest in the metropolitan area. It imposes strict nearly-organic requirements on its vendors, and it is praised and heavily trafficked as a weekend outing by Brookside residents. It is also known throughout the city as the most wildly expensive place to buy eggs. The second business that was shut down was a flavored snow cone business, run by a 10-year-old East Side youth. He sells

cones of fresh-made shaved ice with bottled syrup for \$1 apiece, weekly at an East Side farmer's market. The young business-owner raised money for a cash register, ice-shaving machine, and other infrastructural costs by doing odd jobs around his neighborhood. Both the bakery and the snow-cone business were shut down during surprise health department visits to their respective farmer's markets, and both were charged in violation of processed foods codes. The bakery was told they had prepared their baked goods without proper certification, and the snow cone business was told, similarly, they had not prepared their ice in compliance with health codes. For both businesses, the codes violations involved food preparation codes grey areas—Missouri allows prepared products to be sold at farmer's markets without being cooked in a certified kitchen, under what is called Cottage Law, but Kansas City, Missouri's city health department requires all goods to be prepared in a certified kitchen. Missouri law should technically supersede this city requirement, but health department officials, in practice, enforce this law inconsistently and unpredictably. Refuting codes violations depends a great deal on a producer's ability to contest the citation and argue that their practices are in line with health department codes.

While the bakery owner is prominent within foodie circles, and locally-respected by white foodies because the business sources consistently from urban farmers, the snow-cone business owner—hugely popular on the East Side—could not draw on any influential social networks. The 10 year-old's snow-cone stand was shut down permanently, as neither he nor his mother had the means to address the code violations, and within the broader 'food scene' in KC no one mentioned or

discussed the demolition of his business. However, a group of foodies went to bat for the bakery, a group that included several influential local farmers, market managers, and Brookside Market vendors. They formed a coalition to change the city's farmer's markets codes to allow the bakery to continue selling their products at market.

This coalition of foodies drafted a set of complaints, reached out to a representative from Healthy Communities KC to help facilitate, and set up a meeting with officials from the Kansas City, Missouri, Health Department—a meeting that I was invited to attend as well, as some foodie friends thought I might learn valuable information about regulatory barriers for urban farmers. The Health Department was likely amenable to hearing foodie concerns and scheduling such a meeting, given the long history of collaboration and involvement foodies have with the Kansas City city governments. During this meeting, the foodies argued that the KCMO health department codes had not been enforced consistently over time, causing confusion, and that the codes made no sense. Because the bakery can no longer sell at the Brookside Market, the coalition argued, the Brookside Market's traffic and economic viability has been reduced. Farmers markets, they argued, depend upon product variety to draw in and retain customers. Thriving farmers markets, they continued, are vital to downtown Kansas City's image and economy—people moving back into the urban core shop at these markets; Brookside, as a community, gathers around this market. The coalition drew on and leveraged their economic contributions to Kansas City's urban economy to have their case heard.

During this meeting, other farmer's market managers brought up other codes issues they had found frustrating. Laura, a market manager at an East side farmers market (who had previously been a market manager for a farmers market in the Northeast) interjected halfway through the meeting to mention how vital cooking demonstrations are to a market's success. Cooking demonstrations, and offering free samples for customers to taste, are game-changers, she said. Farmers sell more produce, and food insecure customers, she argued, learn how to cook with fresh food: "low-income families don't really know how to cook the food we're selling. It's really important to show them," she said. However, current codes require either individual vendors to pay for sampling permits, or for samples to be prepared at a stationary sink that has undergone a strict inspection—this just is not financially feasible, she said, at her market. Although numerous studies, and Chapter 5 of this dissertation, indicate that food-insecure individuals are often quite adept at cooking well with limited means (Minkoff-Zern 2012), Laura's argument was well-received by those in the meeting—who, though they would likely describe themselves as racially and ethnically diverse, were on the whole an upper-middle-class privileged group.

From this meeting, and several follow-up meetings, a number of policy outcomes emerge. First, the coalition has not been successful as of yet in getting the Health Department to change their farmer's market codes, as this would be a lengthy and labor-intensive process on the part of the city. Instead, the Health Department has agreed to increase education and outreach involving farmer's market codes, so that all vendors are better aware of what is required of them. A

specific codes inspector was assigned to the Brookside Market, and a get-to-know-you meeting between the inspector and the vendors was scheduled, partially in order to help the bakery better understand how to bring their business back into health department compliance. Laura was more successful in her goal of addressing and changing sampling permits. Because of her statements at the meeting, the Health Department offered Laura a variance for her East side market, allowing her to offer samples to customers without the costly expenses and time involved in setting up a certified market kitchen. Laura tells me, regarding her victory, “If you’re gracious to city officials, just like you’d be gracious to cops, you get what you need.”

Though Laura probably did not mean to, her reference to interactions with police officers highlights important facets of the coalition’s meeting with the Health Department. Just as interactions, and their outcomes, with police officers are highly racialized (Johnson 2003; Balko 2013; Burton 2015), so too are these interactions with city officials. In their ability to petition the Health Department for a meeting, foodies draw on a wealth of unacknowledged racialized social capital and privilege (Bourdieu 1984; Glover 2004). This privilege, combined with the city-wide valorization and promotion of foodie ideology, allowed the coalition to approach the Kansas City Missouri Health Department and identify, define, and suggest solutions for urban problems—ultimately reaching success in affecting the change they wished to see. In the following section, I discuss in turn specific foodie-crafted policies concerning urban space and urban hunger.

Cultivating Urban Investment: Urban Agriculture Zoning, 'Blight,' and 'Revitalizing' the Urban Core

"Blight" has become central to hegemonic understandings of, and green urban development projects in, urban space in Kansas City. I argue that this conception of space as blighted is dangerous, and due, in large part, to foodie influence. While the term is used in many city ordinances, nationwide, I examine it here as it is used in urban greening initiatives. I also examine blight designations and discourse as a continuation of historical projects of segregation and racial control, such as redlining and discriminatory urban zoning (Sugrue 1996). Much like these historical processes, this discourse of blight functions in 21st century urban greening initiatives to displace black bodies from urban space deemed to be of economic value (cf. Safransky 2014).

The groundwork for significant urban-agriculture related policy changes in Kansas City was laid with several foodie and KCMO city government collaborations during the end of the first decade of the 21st century. A city official in the KCMO city government told me that she was really impressed with a foodie that she met and became close with when they petitioned city officials on both sides of the state line to loosen restrictions on urban chicken coops. She was particularly impressed by the foodie's ideas about urban greenspace, and their solutions to urban hunger. They had continued working together after the chicken ordinances had been changed, and the foodie—along with representatives from Healthy Communities KC—had brought up the idea of revisiting all of the urban ordinances restricting urban food production. The city official encouraged the foodie to collect their ideas and petition the city. The foodie, along with representatives from the Hunger

Coalition, Healthy Communities KC, and Grow KC drafted changes to local ordinances restricting urban agricultural activity and, in consultation with city officials, presented these to the KCMO city government; they were passed in 2010.

These urban agriculture ordinance changes, chiefly, operate to ease restrictions on urban farm businesses, even as the ordinances were heralded as a solution to urban hunger, disinvestment, unemployment, and the supposed dissolution of ‘community.’ Kansas City, Missouri, has always allowed “crop agriculture” in residential neighborhoods—it has never been illegal to grow and eat your own food in the metropolitan area. A flier published by the city and Grow KC, explaining the ordinance changes, states that:

There was a need to bring the codes more up to date with what is actually happening on the ground in city neighborhoods...[These codes] help communities reap the benefits of urban food production: [offering] increased access to home-grown healthy produce, economic opportunities from the sales of agricultural and horticultural products, employment and learning opportunities, and the creation of productive, community-building green space in a rapidly changing city landscape.

The ordinance states that gardeners can now sell produce to their hungry neighbors, growers can offer apprentices to community youth, and residents can run small-scale CSAs for their local social networks; but, while the codes are marketed as a panacea to a number of urban ills, they were never mentioned to me by small-scale backyard growers, or any urban residents of color. Many gardeners and small-scale farmers of color I spoke with told me they actively avoided even looking at city ordinances and health codes regarding their work; they have, and will continue to, grow food and distribute it. This reticence to engage with city oversight of their work is not surprising, given the historical state discrimination against black

farmers and the displacements (discussed in Chapter 2) of black urban residents who grow their own food (Benson 2012).

Those who did tell me about these ordinances, and how they paved the way for their small-farm businesses in the urban core, were white, upper-middle class, and were selling their produce not within food-insecure neighborhoods, but to high-end restaurants. Though these code changes were championed by local foodies and city government as solutions to urban hunger and blight, in effect they paved the way for food-secure white urban residents to create and expand profitable urban farm businesses. A number of white foodies bought low-cost, so-called blighted, land in the urban core of Kansas City to start farm businesses shortly after 2010, when these ordinance changes were passed.

The most significant introduction and institutionalization of blight discourse in urban greening initiatives in Kansas City is in Article VI of Kansas City, Missouri's, Urban Development ordinances—the Urban Agriculture Zone Ordinance. The conceptualization and implementation of this locally-significant ordinance was guided by the all-white, upper-middle class voices of Kansas City foodies. In 2010, around the same time that *The Omnivore's Dilemma* was published, and national discourse was promoting urban sustainability and local food initiatives, a Missouri Senator, Jason Holsman, took an interest in urban food production and consumption and formed a joint committee on urban farming to investigate the issue further. This committee consisted of five senators, five members of the House of Representatives, and a subcommittee including eight representatives from urban farming or sustainable agriculture organizations. The committee held four public hearings

across the state of Missouri in 2010. One was in Kansas City, where area stakeholders in urban agriculture came to speak about the role, and their desired future role, of urban agriculture in the city.

Senator Holsman's joint committee on urban farming published a report, and proposed state-wide zoning ordinances, as a result of these conversations with local foodies in Missouri cities. The report indicates that these meetings with area stakeholders in urban agriculture persuaded the committee that legislation supporting urban food production and consumption was badly wanted in Missouri. As a result, Senator Holsman proposed a Missouri House Bill that would instate a state-wide urban agriculture zone ordinance. While this was ultimately voted down, Senator Holsman would later reintroduce the bill in Kansas City, and along with foodie support, get it passed in local city law.

In numerous ways, the public hearings held by the joint committee on urban agriculture would prove to be hugely influential in Kansas City urban policy, in particular. Minutes from these meetings note that foodies voiced interest in zoning that facilitates increased land access, urban land environmental remediation for safe food production, and increasing food access for food insecure residents through urban food production. These foodie-identified interests are all current-day urban policy foci in Kansas City, largely because of the political clout foodies carry in this space.

The most significant foodie-crafted policy concerning urban space, the Kansas City Urban Agriculture ordinance, was passed locally with the support of a partnership between Senator Holsman and white local foodies. Senator Holsman

had been impressed with the foodies he'd met there who were working to spread urban agriculture across the metropolitan area, and he wanted to partner with them to get an urban agriculture zone ordinance passed in the city. City Councilman Scott Wagner, the Assistant City Manager, and representatives from Grow KC, the Kansas City Grower's Club, Our Daily Bread, The Pantry, and the Hunger Coalition met with Senator Holsman to sketch a Kansas City-specific vision for urban agriculture, and to draft an urban agriculture zone ordinance that would support this future goal.

A member of the city government told me that part of their shared goals, they realized, was to draft urban agriculture policies "to really incentivize people to come back to the urban core, to blighted areas, to use urban agriculture to do that." For many of the black East side residents I spoke with, this statement would be viewed as settler colonialism (Safransky 2014), as it is, in effect, similar to historical global claims of *terra nullius*—a zoning law that allows a white-only commission to identify areas of urban space that they see as vacant and deteriorating, and to incentivize the in-migration of wealthier, predominantly white, urban residents to 'develop' the space. One black East side resident told me, in response to another white upper-middle class urban farmer buying land in his neighborhood: "They see so much value in our land. They see wealth beneath it, above it, and every place in-between it."

An Urban Agricultural Zone (UAZ), as defined by these foodies, is an area designated by the local government to:

promote food production as a healthy strategy; create new land use opportunities for unused land; increase positive economic activities in blighted communities; [and] facilitate and support surrounding housing and business development.

These goals are accomplished through economic incentives—namely, lowering property tax and sales tax rates for businesses that propose to grow, process, or distribute/vend local produced products in blighted urban space. Individuals or businesses who apply for a UAZ will present their case to the Urban Agricultural Advisory Commission—a board that includes Nancy, David, and several other local foodies—and if they receive the designation, they will gain a 25-year property tax abatement. They are also eligible to apply for discounted water rates.

There are no direct incentives listed for urban residents who live near the incoming UAZ business, other than potential employment opportunities (though the business is not required to create more than one job, in order to apply for a UAZ), and increased ‘access’ to locally grown and processed ‘healthy’ food (despite the fact that physical access does not equate with actual access, or affordability). In fact, local communities near UAZs may be actively disadvantaged—all taxes from the sale of agricultural products within a UAZ are collected and deposited into a UAZ-specific fund, to contribute to future urban agriculture projects, meaning that already-divested urban tax bases are further depleted (cf. Gordon 2008).

The Advisory Commission of foodies had a significant influence on the resultant bill, which went into effect in April 2014, particularly via its blight discourse. In the ordinance, “blight” is defined as,

An area of the City which the City Council determines that by reason of age, obsolescence, inadequate, or outmoded design or physical deterioration has become an economic and social liability, and that such conditions are conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, crime, or inability to pay reasonable taxes.

The ordinance requires the applicant to document blight, which the Advisory Commission will then verify. By giving a white, upper-middle class board the ability to geographically define the urban core and “blighted” areas in need of ‘beautification’ and development, the UAZ continues centuries of black displacement in Kansas City—historically witnessed via the City Beautiful movement, confiscation of property via eminent domain, racialized highway (dis)placement, and redlining. A member of city government told me that they left the definition of blight ‘vague’ on purpose because “we didn’t want to impose constraints on people who already have a lot of constraints placed on them.” In practice, however, this vague definition of blight—defined on a case by case basis—facilitates development in any urban area the Advisory Commission deems to be blighted, based on their racialized and class-specific readings and interpretation of city space (Finney 2014). The signifiers of “blight” listed in the UAZ definition—physical deterioration, conditions conducive to ill health, inability to pay reasonable taxes—are discursively naturalized as urban conditions, rather than as the result of purposive racialized discrimination.

African Americans in Kansas City are subjected to a number of policies that “blight” their neighborhoods: labor markets that are less likely to hire them than white applicants (Sugrue 1996), continued racialized renting and loaning practices, and purposive state policy that prevented black accumulation of generational wealth, resulting in higher rates of poverty (Oliver and Shapiro 1997). These racialized acts of violence and myriad others combine to push them into lower housing stock in geographically contained swaths of the city, which are then identified as blighted, and are cleared for more ‘productive’ use—a process which is

masked with the seemingly apolitical discourse of ‘ending food desertification,’ and ‘promoting healthier urban communities and lifestyles.’

Additionally, UAZs are only eligible to be created on “underutilized urban parcels,” which in effect translates into the identification of “underutilized” space as primarily low-income African American occupied space. “Underutilized urban parcels” are defined in the ordinance as vacant or “economically obsolescent, outdated or failing,” which is further explained as a parcel of land that is located in a census tract having a poverty rate of 20% or greater, on in a tract where at least 33% of the population live more than one mile from a supermarket. This notion of urban productivity, which is predicated upon and reinforces white public space, finds the most value in creating urban areas for the ‘creative class,’ who create and circulate capital in state-preferred ways (Lloyd 2010). It denies the creativity, contributions to the urban economy, and resourcefulness of the urban poor, who are displaced from ‘underutilized’ space (Wilson and Keil 2008). Residents of ‘economically obsolescent’ space prop up post-industrial urban economies by holding down two, three, or four low-wage service sector positions at a time; this is a huge contribution to the city. In Chicago, for example, the low-wage service sector is estimated to constitute more than 30% of local revenue generation (Wilson and Keil 2008: 843).

One intended outcome of the Urban Agricultural Zones, as stated in a workshop presented to urban farmers on the issue, is to “facilitate and support surrounding housing and business development.” They are quite likely to do so, if ‘development’ refers to an increase in rent for nearby residents; as Joassart-Marcelli

and Bosco (in Curran and Hamilton 2018) found in their analysis of the San Francisco housing market, landlords and real estate agents capitalize upon farmers markets, community gardens, and urban farms to both market their properties and raise their value (101). While home owners, who can afford increased property taxes, might appreciate this aspect of urban agriculture, over 50% of East side residents—where a majority of urban gardens are placed, in Kansas City—are low-income renters (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). A similar process to the urban renewal agenda identified by Joassart-Marcelli and Bosco in San Francisco is occurring in Kansas City: for example, a 3-bedroom home at 42nd and Forest is advertised by its realtor on Craigslist as “Located directly across the street from Mannheim Park Community Garden!” and has had a \$100-dollar rent increase over the last year. It is common for rental listings in Kansas City to advertise the property’s proximity to nearby farmer’s markets and community gardens; rental properties near Grow KC’s newly built urban farm, at 39th and Gillham, are already drawing on their proximity to the amenity by advertising it in their listings.

The idea that urban agriculture can combat blight is common in policy circles now in Kansas City. In 2016, Kansas City, Missouri, city staff attended a green urban development design program in DC. There, they workshopped their idea to rehabilitate the now-abandoned municipal jail land into a sustainable greenspace. This EPA-funded greenspace redevelopment plan includes two large-scale commercial, organic farms. A comprehensive redevelopment plan for the urban core, East of Troost Avenue, began in 2016—spearheaded by KCMO city officials, and several nonprofits: Greater Kansas City LISC, Urban Neighborhood Initiative,

and the Mid-America Regional Council. This \$25-\$40 million redevelopment program has dedicated \$200,000 for one specific neighborhood to combat blight by expanding its community garden and urban garden activities; as the program report notes, the hope is that this will “cultivate a local, vibrant economy.” At a local foodie panel, invited speaker, Kansas City Missouri Councilman Scott Wagner said that in his “formerly blighted” Northeast Kansas City community, urban agriculture has sparked a lot of change:

[The city] looks at urban agriculture as a way to create economic development, create jobs. We have at least 5,000 pieces of property, vacant property, that we have control of. We can use urban agriculture there to move toward job development, economic development—that is our future.

In contrast, African American East Side residents of Kansas City frequently voice understandings of blight as analogous to historical state-led projects of racialized violence such as redlining, discriminatory urban zoning, and Jim Crow. In interviews or walks around urban space, black urban residents would point to crumbling buildings and tell me “*they* totally blighted that.” During public meetings where white speakers would use the term “blight,” my black and brown companions would mime quotation marks and roll their eyes. A friend of mine once asserted: “*blight* is a word of white supremacy.” All of these black urban residents indicate that for them blight and “blight designations” are just another tool for racialized control. This counter-discourse, in which black Kansas Citians disrupt hegemonic apolitical understandings of blight, is discussed further in Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

Cultivating 'Healthy' Bodies in the Obesogenic Environment: Farmers Markets and Bus Stops as Tools against Urban Hunger

A second key outcome of foodie involvement in local policy is a focus on urban space as obesogenic, and a discourse that promotes urban food production, distribution, and consumption, as a remedy. A University of Missouri-Extension report, "Urban Agriculture: Best Practices and Possibilities," draws on interviews with Kansas City area foodies and city staff, and summarizes the minutes of the Urban Agriculture Joint Committee community hearings in four Missouri urban areas. This document offers insight into ideas that developed in KC during the early 21st century about using urban agriculture to address food insecurity. Minutes from the 2010 Kansas City foodie input meeting indicate that food insecurity, affordability, and access were not discussed at all (Hendrickson and Porth 2012); discussion instead centered on increasing land and water access for farm businesses. However, the report, summarizing the interviews and community hearing data, places emphasis on the ability of urban agriculture to address urban hunger. This fact is significant, because this report was presented to urban sustainability directors in Columbia, Kansas City, and St. Louis, Missouri, to guide green urban development infrastructure in each city.

A section of the report on "Healthy Food Access," initially provides a nuanced view of the concept of food deserts, noting that Missouri officials should understand that the term has been debated, and that urban residents have protested it, arguing that it paints their communities as "wastelands devoid of people, hope, or wealth" (Hendrickson and Porth 2012:24). However, the report then suggests that food desert residents

...may also fear that cities will adopt strategies that work solely to attract grocery stores...without considering other options that may make the community more food secure, including incubating food businesses to promote community economic development or redeveloping empty green lots as green spaces for recreation as well as healthy food production.

The document then continues on, stating that urban agriculture can be used to address food access, and that easing zoning restrictions on agricultural production, and incentivizing SNAP-dollar spending at farmer's markets, are two ways that cities can draw on this green urban development infrastructure to improve food security (Hendrickson and Porth 2012:24). In Kansas City East side neighborhoods, grocery stores are badly wanted, and vocally requested. The Ivanhoe neighborhood campaigned for years to bring an Aldi's grocery store to 39th and Prospect; several homeowners refused to move for the parking lot development, and neighborhood residents repeatedly attended hearings to provide public testimony and encourage Aldi that their business was wanted. Regardless, in Kansas City—arguably, partially because of these early foodie discussions and reports—considerably more emphasis is placed on incentivizing urban agriculture and farmers markets as a solution to urban hunger than is placed on leveraging the development of urban grocery stores.

In the decade after this report was shared with city officials, several key foodie and KCMO and KCK collaborations related to food-security emerged. In 2011, Jackson County allocated \$40,000 dollars toward The Pantry for its programs that partner with urban farmers to share second-best produce with food pantry users. In 2013, Wyandotte County established a water grant program to encourage and

support food-insecure urban residents to grow their own food, and reached out to Healthy Communities KC for help in administering it.

And importantly, in 2012, Healthy Communities KC and the Hunger Coalition partnered with elected officials to develop a “Healthy Food Access Resolution.” This resolution codified the city council’s support of the Hunger Coalition as a “key partner in building a healthy, sustainable, accessible and economically beneficial food system,” and established a strong interdepartmental support of the Hunger Coalition’s work. The resolution lays out their combined intentions to:

- Improve access to healthy food...in under-served communities by identifying and establishing incentives, zoning efforts, and other policies to establish and support farmers markets and to increase the number of full service grocery stores
- Identify and adopt land use policies and zoning regulations that encourage citizens to produce as much food as possible at home, in community gardens and urban farms
- Educate and empower citizens to responsibly grow and distribute food to Kansas City, Missouri, residents, institutions, and businesses
- Support diversified production and distribution within all communities by creating new economic opportunities and initiatives that encourage investment in food and farm production, processing, and distribution
- Support educational programs that inspire and empower the community to make healthy food purchasing decisions
- Evaluate transportation projects that offer safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections between residential neighborhoods and community gardens, food pantries and community kitchens, and farmers markets.

This resolution seems harmless, but it develops and institutionalizes a programmatic focus on ‘empowerment,’ encouraging the poor to provide for themselves, and places great emphasis on creating green urban infrastructure that better links the poor to food charity outlets. When one considers that instead, a resolution could be drafted that outlines goals to provide an affordable minimum

wage and develop a transportation infrastructure that better links public-transport dependent urban poor to their jobs, the energy that is directed toward empowerment and paternalism toward ‘food dollar’ spending looks likely to further displace and marginalize black and brown residents.

No one experiencing urban food insecurity was consulted during the drafting of this “Healthy Food Access Resolution—if they had been, the focus of this resolution might look quite different. During a monthly meeting at an East side neighborhood coalition, the Kansas City Grower’s Club gave a presentation on their small water grants program. A black woman I was sitting closest to laughed, leaned in, and whispered to me: “I don’t care if I have to starve, I pay my house payment. The roof over my head comes first. Where’s the grant to help me with that?”

Several notable food-insecurity programs were developed, with nonprofit and city collaboration, in the years after this resolution was drafted. A focus on monitoring and controlling nutrition in racially-marked bodies characterizes many of them. They are all also propped up with the ideological fallacy that proximity to ‘healthy’ produce creates healthy bodies (cf. Guthman 2012). This claim has been repeatedly refuted by food desert scholars (Alkon et al. 2013). In Kansas City, for example, even the creation of farming season-extension infrastructure—such as high tunnels—is championed as a solution to food insecurity. At a Healthy Communities KC workshop on local food businesses, I was told, “for food deserts in particular, these season extension projects are so important. We can extend the amount of time fresh food is brought into these areas, the amount of time people get to be *near* fresh, healthy food!”

Foodies have become highly significant players in the lives of the urban poor, as they are distributors in charge of a multi-million dollar federal food assistance grant. In 2017, a coalition of nonprofits, including Grow KC, applied for and received a 5.6 million-dollar matched Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant from the federal government. This grant, implemented in Kansas City via Grow KC management, doubles SNAP-recipient dollars when they are spent at specified grocery outlets. While the ideological core of the grant stems from national-level neoliberal paternalism, in which the diets and morality of the poor are closely monitored (Guthman and DuPuis 2006), local-level discourse and implementation of the grant reveal important insights into how food insecurity is positioned within the framework of urban greening initiatives in Kansas City. In the Kansas City metropolitan area, in 2017, a FINI matching grant was available for use at 55 farmer's markets and 51 grocery stores. In 2018, the grant funds will be available at 30 farmer's markets and 50 grocery stores. I was told by some within the grant implementation meetings that this change entails pulling funding out of several regularly attended, but low-volume, senior farmer's markets, and instead placing funding in several Whole Foods grocery stores in south suburban Kansas City—an executive decision that led to several employees quitting, no longer wanting to be associated with the project.

While many low-income East side SNAP recipients I spoke with shopped regularly at Family Dollar, Dollar General, Save-a-Lot, and Aldi's—low cost, small, full-service stores that mostly offer canned-goods—the FINI grant is not being rolled out at any of these locations. This is likely because the grant requires the

shopper to spend at least one dollar on ‘locally produced’ products before the savings will be applied, and none of these stores possess the economic or infrastructural capacity to purchase local produce. As a result, the grant assistance does not meet food insecure shoppers within their already-existing food networks.

The grocery stores where the FINI grant is offered are subject to intense scrutiny; foodies in KC often express worry that the grant will be ‘misused.’ During a Food Deserts working group meeting in early 2017, a representative from Grow KC came to explain the grant process and roll out to other foodies. Martha, a representative from The Pantry, raised her hand to ask: “But, is there a way, at grocery stores, to make sure that the money isn’t spent on non-food items? Will a [fruit] roll up be counted as fruit?” The Grow KC representative assured her that the markets and grocery stores will be required to follow National Institute of Food and Agriculture guidelines on fruit and vegetable classification. Martha’s sentiments, a concern that food-insecure aid recipients wouldn’t know how to spend their aid dollars wisely, was commonly voiced to me by local foodies, and contributes to the intense paternalism—partly necessitated by federal granting guidelines—that structures the roll-out of food charity in Kansas City.

One of the most baffling food-insecurity projects that emerged out of foodie collaboration with city officials is the Grocery Shop with Ride KC project. Born out of Hunger Coalition Grocery Access Task-force working group meetings, the project involved around a year of research into how to improve grocery store access for food-insecure Kansas City residents. Again, without the input of food-insecure Kansas Citians, the working group settled on a path forward—creating a list of

recommendations for both the Kansas City Area Transport Authority (KCATA) and those who use public transit to reach the grocery store, on how to streamline the grocery shopping experience. Funding and support for this project came from the Wyandotte County Kansas unified government, several Wyandotte County health-focused nonprofits, KCATA, and the Hunger Coalition. During a presentation to the Hunger Coalition about the inception of the project, their research project, and findings and recommendations, Katie, the white, mid-twenties project leader of the all-white team, told us they ‘realized’ that a lot of people were using public transit to get to grocery stores, and so they have been visiting bus stops and assessing how improvements could be made to infrastructure there. One outcome of the project was a list of recommended repairs to metropolitan area bus stops that was submitted to KCATA with a statement that there was a need for improved sidewalks, ADA curbs, and signage. Their main project, however, we were told, is a signage collaboration and marketing project, created in partnership with KCATA, that would roll out at 10 pilot locations at the end of 2017. “We’re really excited about this collaboration, and what it can do,” said Katie, “We’ve developed signage that promotes healthy food and consumption, and lets people know they are welcome to use the bus system to shop for groceries.” Katie then passed around a copy of the signage that will go up at KCATA sites in the city—the signage includes directions to the closest full-service grocery store, and includes a bulleted checklist: “Double check your shopping list; Use insulated bags; Use a pull cart,” and includes a link to the Hunger Coalition website, where, Katie tells us, visitors can find “pedestrian friendly healthy recipes that are lightweight, affordable, and low-calorie.” More

signage is also being developed with the funds raised for this Grocery Access Task Force work—that signage will be posted at bus stops as well, and will list, Katie said, farmer’s market hours, some healthy eating tips, and WIC information.

The “pedestrian friendly healthy recipe” website, linked to on KCATA bus stops, uses language that painfully paints those experiencing food insecurity as incompetent. The website offers a free printable meal planning template, intones: “Make a list (and stick to it),” and tells shoppers: “Healthy ingredients don’t have to be expensive or heavy,” before linking to a list of recipes including: “healthy chocolate delight,” posted just before Thanksgiving 2017. A narrative included with this recipe cheerfully tells low-income shoppers that the ingredients for this recipe will fit heavily in one bag, or comfortably in two; and that “Yes, the holidays are a time for us to indulge and enjoy celebratory foods, but these recipes prove that we can do that without ‘breaking the bank’ on money spent or calories consumed.”

This collaboration between KCATA and the Hunger Coalition highlights several painful themes. First, it draws on and furthers neoliberal paternal rhetoric that asks the poor to better manage their own bodies and health, while ignoring and denying economic constraints (Guthman and Dupuis 2006). For many urban poor, ‘junk food’ or low-cost sweets are one way they can treat their children or themselves, when they live under socioeconomic constraints that constantly necessitate saying ‘no’ (Fielding-Singh 2017). To suggest that these families combat higher rates of poverty-related health diseases by replacing pecan pie with a sugar-free chocolate dessert at Thanksgiving dinner denies the root cause of suffering for the urban poor, and places the onus back on individual self-regulation. It also denies

the importance of familial traditions and cultural heritage, which may include holiday sweets. Finally, the project denies the ingenuity and resourcefulness of those experiencing food insecurity in the urban core, likely because no one experiencing food insecurity was consulted for the project. Katie thinks that her project will “let people know” that they are welcome to use the bus system to shop for groceries—the urban poor already know this, and have developed sophisticated means of transporting themselves, via bus, social networks, and otherwise, to food (Alkon et al. 2013, Page-Reeves 2014; the agency of the urban food insecure is discussed further in Chapter 5).

Counter-Narratives and Conclusions

Foodie narratives about blight and hunger, and the ‘uplift’ and ‘empowerment’ that policies incentivizing urban agriculture can bring, are widespread in Kansas City policy circles, upper-middle class social groups, and in dominant media representations of the city. However, this does not equate with unequivocal acceptance of these ideologies; throughout this research I spoke with a couple of policy makers and foodies who voiced reticence about using urban greening initiatives as a tool for urban welfare provision. However, most often, these privately shared concerns did not translate into publicly advocated-for policies.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I scheduled an interview with a Kansas City, Missouri councilperson, whose name is not included here in order to protect their anonymity. I had heard this councilperson speak at a number of neighborhood events—the grand opening of an East side YMCA, neighborhood coalition

barbecues—and their community meetings are always heavily attended: consistently drawing 30 to 40 district residents.

When we met, I talked with the councilperson about the rise of urban agriculture in Kansas City, and policies that incentivize their creation as ameliorative of food insecurity. I asked, is ‘food desert’ a useful analytic for you or for 3rd district residents? They responded with an emphatic “no,” and continued,

To get on the ballot in Kansas City, you gotta get petitions signed. So when I was trying to get on the ballot in 2015 [to be voted into City Council] I stood outside of a grocery store in Brookside—which is not in [my] district, but it is voter rich. A high number of African American women who did not live in the neighborhood close to [the grocery store] were signing my petition. They had zip codes from my area. To an extent, the food desert conversation just doesn’t really speak to the end run consumer—you know, they’ll travel to the good grocery store that’s over there, or you shop by work, what have you.

This councilperson has a nuanced understanding of urban food insecurity. As they noted, studies have indicated that low-income consumers will find the means necessary to travel to the lowest cost grocery stores, with the produce they prefer, rather than shopping at locations within a closer proximity to their home (Kato and McKinney 2015). I asked: If ‘food deserts’ aren’t as much of a priority for his district’s residents as public discourse would leave one to believe, what is?

Segregation is, and the vestiges of it that express themselves in education, crime, health care—it is so cleanly delineated in Kansas City, along the line of Troost. I have grave concern about it. I think it’s something that holds us back gravely, and it’s something that we haven’t really tried to address. Our districts are all still lined up along Troost. How we incentivize things are all divided along Troost. My first week on the council I opposed a development plan that excluded neighborhoods to the West of 71 Highway towards Troost, and I said ‘Why are you making the division at the highway?’ and they said ‘Well it’s just a natural barrier.’ I think we fail to capture just how strong of a ‘natural’ barrier we’ve allowed it to become.

This councilperson voiced fear at how ingrained and naturalized these man-made divisions—such as Troost Avenue and Highway 71—have become, through discourse and policy. Political constraints play a large role in hampering council-peoples’ abilities to address these racialized divides head-on; but intense local focus and funding streams centered on green urban development as a solution to urban blight and food insecurity also redirect policy foci away from structural issues. When talking with me, the councilperson was unsure that local policy could address food insecurity in a meaningful way—“we’re kind of playing whack-a-mole...chasing a problem that exceeds local government’s ability to solve.”

Local ‘foodies,’ however, are certain—and vocal about their certainty—that urban food production, distribution, and consumption can address urban disinvestment and hunger. This foodie certainty and persistence, in Kansas City, has offered policy makers a ready-made, bipartisan approved urban development plan—one that also speaks to secular and religious urban residents, and is, because of nation-wide discourse, seen as an unequivocal boon to urban space. While other city officials have told me they regard urban food production as “a palliative, at best” for food insecurity, hegemonic support and welfare rollback that made space for foodies in urban welfare provision has resulted in this becoming the metropolitan area’s chief means of addressing hunger. The following chapter, Chapter 5, considers these dominant paradigms for addressing food insecurity from the perspectives of the urban poor.

Chapter 5: “Don’t you know you live in a food desert?”: Food Charity Programming and the Lived Realities of Seeking Food Aid in Kansas City

Matt, a young, blonde reporter stepped in-between raised garden beds in an East side urban garden in June 2015, and addressed the camera: “Urban gardens have been sprouting up in Kansas City. A lot of people are finding it’s a great way to grow some food and save some money on their food bills!” The news segment aired the week before Grow KC’s Farm and Garden Tour—a popular metropolitan-wide event, in which local farm-businesses, community gardens, and backyard gardeners open up their homes to show off the diversity of production methodologies occurring in the city. In preparation for the tour, Matt interviewed community gardeners at Oak Park Community garden—the camera panned to show an urban garden-space full of gardeners, all weeding and preparing the space for the tour: “they’re hoping for a lot of visitors, hoping to maybe inspire others to start their own garden, maybe feed their hungry neighbors” said Matt. He walked over to Tom Winston, an African American man who we were told is a 92-year-old community gardener at Oak Park. Matt asked “Tom, how long you been gardening over here?”

Tom: “Oh, I’ve just been here for three years now.”

Matt: “Yeah? And what are you growing?”

Tom: “Oh, just broccoli, beets, onions, carrots, and tomatoes.”

Matt: “Why? Why are you doing this?”

Tom: “Well for one thing, I need to get out and do something. And if I do this, at least I’m doing something I know how to do. See, I’ve been farming since I was 8, 10 years old.”

Matt: “So you know how to grow these seeds!”

Tom: “Yeah, I know how. In the slave camp we used to do this too.”

Matt: “You were in a slave camp?”

Tom: “Yeah.”

Matt: “Oh my goodness, that’s terrible.”

Tom: “Yeah it was. Down in Mississippi.”

Matt: “Well now you’re here, and it’s gotta be rewarding to be able to eat fresh healthy vegetables every single night!”

While Tom is not old enough to have actually been enslaved, he could be referring to a labor camp or myriad other sites of exploited black labor—the historical accuracy of his comment is less important than the emotional pain he wished to express. Matt, the reporter, moved on from this uncomfortable interaction with Tom to interview a Grow KC staff member, whom he asked: “Why are you hosting this tour?” She responded, “You know, I participate in this because I absolutely love it. Watching communities come together, watching people come together, around something that is so central to the human race—food and eating. That’s what inspired me.”

There are several points that I hope to illustrate by narrating this moment of public discourse on urban agriculture and food insecurity. First, while the Grow KC staff member asserts that people can come together around food, that food is central to the human race, Matt and Tom’s interaction is exemplary of why this is not true. Food is not a common language: while many white Kansas City residents might draw on family narratives about gardening as patriotic duty—as with Victory Gardens—or might think of neatly ordered English kitchen gardens when they imagine the act of growing food, for many Kansas City residents of color, the act of growing food is intimately linked to forcible migration, violence, unpaid or underpaid labor, and alienation from land and product. There is also, of course, intense heterogeneity of opinion within this simple binary that I have just implied—lower-income white families with histories of tenant farming might today react painfully to hegemonic discourse about the joy of gardening, and getting one’s hands dirty; several black East side residents I spoke with had mixed, sometimes positive, family

memories and narratives about sharecropping. These histories undergird myriad differing emotional associations with food and the act of growing it.

A second point I wished to make by sharing this narrative, the point central to this chapter, is that food charity programming in Kansas City is incredibly, painfully out of step with the lived realities of those seeking food aid. Regardless of personal food and agriculture histories, and regardless of a local context in which city officials and the real estate industry have displaced or demolished sites of African-American agriculture—such as the Hog Farm at Brush Creek, or the Sweeney’s Truck farm at 18th and Vine—food-insecure Kansas Citians who seek aid are ‘assisted’ by being taught to grow their own food, and by being taught to identify and select ‘healthy’ food for their diets. The fact that Tom says he was forced to learn how to grow food in a slave camp in Mississippi is disregarded—at least Tom can grow and enjoy healthy produce every night now. This narrative draws on and reproduces pathologies of the urban poor, and denies the state’s complicity in abducting land, resources, and stability from black Kansas Citians.

This chapter documents how Kansas City nonprofits maintain a forceful focus on bringing food into ‘food deserts,’ teaching the urban poor how to grow their own food, and training the poor to eat ‘healthfully’—a programmatic focus that arose during the same period of time that the urban greening movement took off in Kansas City. The chapter begins with a discussion of Kansas City’s historical legacy of violently managing the agricultural labor and diets of its black residents in areas today known as food deserts, before turning to a discussion of how current day food charity programs continue this violence and control. I outline the major

programmatic foci of food charity nonprofits in Kansas City, and focus heavily on one program—which I am calling Feast!—that provides a model copied by numerous other local food charities. Drawing on participation in four, separate, seven-week-long Feast! classes, I counter dominant narratives circulated about the urban poor by drawing on the experiences of food-insecure black Kansas Citians. I argue that food charity programs are a small part of low-income urban residents’ strategies for navigating KC’s urban foodscape, that many of those targeted as ignorant about healthy fresh produce are actually already growing or acquiring their own fresh vegetables locally, and that food-insecure individuals rely on a wide-ranging toolkit of ways to acquire affordable food that they enjoy.

Historical Regulation of Black Bodies and Black Diets in Kansas City

White Kansas Citians have been forcing African Americans to grow food in food deserts for centuries in Kansas City. While today these state biopolitics are recast as ‘empowerment’ programs within green urban development schemes, this historically took the form of agricultural slave labor and sharecropping (Foucault 1977; Guthman 2009). In his nearly 200-acre working farm in the mid-1800s in today’s West Bottoms, bordered by Holmes street on the East, Broadway on the West, Independence Avenue on the South, and topped to the North by the Missouri River—James Hyde McGee worked captive African labor to reap profits from the land (Austin 2017). Hyde McGee used his wealth to buy over 1,000 acres in the Kansas City area—land that houses, in 2018, downtown economic hubs such as the Kansas City Convention Center, Kauffman Center for the Arts, and the Crossroads Art District—some of which was cultivated by captive African labor (Austin 2017).

The current-day Troost corridor, which would later be developed through purposive policy into Kansas City's racialized divide, was bought up by millionaires in large tracts of land during the 1800s. The Jackson County area between 23rd and 31st streets, and Locust and Paseo became known as "Millionaire's Row," where large mansions abutted open-acreage: here, captive African labor was used to grow hemp for trade, and to cultivate kitchen gardens for whites (Shortridge 2012:53).

This physical control of black bodies through forced agricultural labor was, after emancipation, replaced with control via sociological survey and welfare agency research into black food dollars and diets. For example, early sociological focus on urban pathology drew on theories of social disorganization, and suggested behavioral fixes as a solution to urban poverty (cf. Burgess 1925, Drake and Cayton 1945, Lewis 1966). Locally, in Kansas City, numerous sociological surveys were funded by local welfare agencies as the city's black population rose; most notable was Asa Martin's *Our Negro Population*. Martin's survey was enacted with the goal of understanding high rates of black death in Kansas City—actually attributable to racism, experienced through lower housing stock, crowding, and racialized access to health care—and argued that the source of this problem could be found in deficiencies in black diet. This work of categorizing and labeling 'problem' populations helps the state give credence to their preferred solutions, setting the ground for policy by making its problem seem "common sense" (Hacking 1991). Martin chronicled the percentage of income black families in Kansas City, in 1912, spent on food; for many of the poor, this ranged from 50% to 38% (Martin 1913: 66). Martin judged his data to likely be faulty, as he believed the black women he

surveyed likely did not accurately account for the food dollars they spent, and he interviewed butchers and grocery store owners in black neighborhoods to get a more 'accurate' understanding of the food black families were buying (Martin 1913:67).

Martin suggested that at least 25% of black Kansas Citians in the 1910's were "underfed," and located the cause of this, partly, in "the lack of economy in management and of wisdom in the buying of food," and added "In 95 per cent of these cases there is also evidence of exceptional expenditure on drink" (Martin 1913:67). Martin (1913:68) continued, stating that many poor black families cannot—will not, he implied—afford an oven, and thus "everything must be fried" or purchased from a bakery: "the food so prepared is unhealthful, and in the second, very expensive." Martin's study echoes national-level efforts to locate the causes of poor health and suffering in individualized, racialized pathology (Fox Piven et al. 2002), and mirrors much of the current-day discourse in food charity programming, as I demonstrate in this chapter.



Figure 5.1, left 1880, an advertisement for Boston Shoe Store in Kansas City, Missouri
Figure 5.2, right 1880, an advertisement for J.F. Schmelzer & Sons Sporting Goods Store in Kansas City, Missouri. Both photos from the Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

Along with sociological racism vilifying black diet, popular culture in Kansas City often drew on depictions and mockery of black diet and stereotypes of black food to maintain white public space. Advertisements for food-unrelated businesses—such as a shoe store and a sporting goods store—commonly drew on depictions of African Americans clinging to watermelons (Figure 5.1; 5.2). The trope emerged in the U.S. post-emancipation—as many newly freed captive Africans secured economic independence through the cultivation and sale of watermelons (Black 2018). White Americans racialized the watermelon in public discourse, and associated it with ideologies of laziness, childishness, and uncleanness to undermine its associations with emancipation and black self-sufficiency (Black 2018). Watermelons were used to denigrate black freedom on a city-wide scale in

1922—when the mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, scheduled a watermelon-eating contest for black children, as part of his free summer picnic (Schirmer 2002:150). Instances such as these make it impossible to disassociate current-day food charity focus on black diet and nutrition from state-sponsored efforts to manage and contain racially-marked bodies.

It is also important to note that nationally, scientific understandings about healthy food and bodies have been shaped by white discourse. The Body Mass Index (BMI) calculator, which is still widely utilized by doctors, social service workers, and within food charity programs in Kansas City, was developed with white bodies in mind, and has been shown to be inaccurate at best when used on racialized bodies (Jackson et al. 2009). Likewise, dominant understandings of healthy food, such as milk—which is incorporated into USDA recommendations for a healthy diet—privilege one culturally-specific form of eating at the expense of other food practices; around 70% of African Americans have some level of lactose intolerance, and are thus in no way able to access this recommended diet (DuPuis 2002; Slocum 2010). Understandings such as these—‘scientific’ understandings of health conducted by whites that draw on studies of white bodies—prop up the food charity programs that address food insecure, black Kansas City residents.

The act of growing food and eating it is highly constitutive of racialized identities and their politics, both in the U.S. as a whole and locally in Kansas City. It is vital to consider, given how personal food production is a widely sanctioned proscription for food insecurity, that historical attempts at black autonomy and agrarianism have been met with violence and discursive erasure. African American

food traditions have either been co-opted (such as how ‘Soul Food’ has been white-washed and rebranded under a banner of Southern gentility, cf. Witt 2004), or elided—such as the erasure, from popular health food discourse, about the fact that kale was brought to the U.S. by captive Africans. Black liberation movements, such as MOVE in Philadelphia, that emphasized back-to-the-land philosophies—celebrated among white U.S. residents in the 70s—were branded as violent by the state, and, in the case of MOVE, literally bombed (Boyette and Boyette 2013). A Kansas-City specific history of state-sponsored violence against black self-determinism, especially in regards to food and food security, exists as well. In 1969, the Kansas City Police Department collaborated with the FBI to destroy Black Panther food stores—to be distributed via school breakfast programs and to food insecure black Kansas Citians—and, more broadly, to arrest members and discourage support and membership (Griffin 2015:108). The Black Panthers’ free breakfast for children program, once disassociated from black liberation, would provide the model for all federally-funded school breakfast programs nationally, and within Kansas City, today (Heynen 2009).

Within this context—in which a historical legacy of forced, unpaid agricultural labor, sociological and scientific racism concerned with containing black bodies, discursive co-optation and erasure of black food traditions, and state-led violence against black food-security efforts all inform ‘black geographies’ in Kansas City—I examine current day food charity programs. In the following section, I examine the form and function of these programs before analyzing them from the perspective of black, food-insecure Kansas City residents.

“We have forgotten how to grow food in the urban core”: Food Charity and ‘Food Deserts’ in Kansas City

As I outlined in the previous chapter, food charity in Kansas City is managed by organizations and actors from within the local food scene, ‘foodies,’ which leads to a focus on promoting the production, distribution, and consumption of local produce as a key mechanism for solving urban hunger. Foodie-led organizations that are particularly active in addressing urban food insecurity include the Hunger Coalition, the Pantry, and Our Daily Bread. The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City can also be considered active in this movement; they provide funding for a number of specific foodie food insecurity programs originating in these three organizations. In this chapter, I outline a national curriculum implemented locally by the Pantry, but there are other notably local foodie projects that address food insecurity. Various initiatives, such as a large-scale schoolyard garden program, Missouri house bills that incentivize the donation of fresh produce to local food pantries, and local efforts led by the Hunger Coalition to decrease the high food tax in Kansas—but *only* on fresh fruits and vegetables, preferably local—illustrate that attempts to control the diets and bodies of the urban poor are strong both historically and currently.

The framework of food desert is used by foodies in KC to narratively prop up and support programs that align with their green urban development agendas. Narratively linking urban food projects to food insecurity initiatives allows foodies to secure funds from a wider variety of agencies, often from healthcare-focused ones, for the development of things like community gardens, mobile grocery stores, and urban orchards to ‘feed the poor.’ A Hunger Coalition promotional video,

discussing a grant it received for soil improvements in local urban gardens, states: “We have forgotten how to grow food in the urban core—healthy soil makes healthy plants makes healthy kids!” In this way, even the distribution of compost is celebrated as an effort against food insecurity. The Health Care Foundation funds hobby-gardening classes in East side neighborhoods as a means of feeding the urban poor, continuing the national trend of using market-based efforts to help the poor “properly govern themselves or manage themselves as subjects” (Lyon-Callo 2004:110).

This focus on ‘food desertification’ and nutrition education persists, even when met with head-on opposition. For example, one East side neighborhood hosts monthly housing meetings—in which neighborhood members vet new development, with an eye toward the creation of more affordable housing, and strictly regulating the influx of urban farms and gardens. Affordable housing is a major crisis in Kansas City; the East side in particular faces additional compounded problems, as much of its housing stock is more cheaply bulldozed than renovated. After one of these housing meetings—where a white potential urban farmer was met with neighborhood scrutiny as he presented his plan to acquire land—a local foodie who runs her own successful urban farm snapped at me, “Why do they care so much about housing? Don’t they know they live in a food desert?” In discursive ways such as this, and through policy and funding focus, foodies redirect more pressing neighborhood concerns back to the issue of healthy food production and consumption.

Coincident with the promotion of urban food production is a focus on nutrition, and ‘educating’ the urban poor in how to eat in ways conducive to good health. A Health Care Foundation blog post advertising one of its new grantees—a Spanish-language nutrition education course—states that Latino immigrants in Kansas City “face chronic health risks often made worse by their limited knowledge of nutrition.” Numerous scholars have documented the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and nutrition knowledge of the urban poor, and have indicated that a focus on the economic conditions that create poverty would be more effective in improving nutrition in the U.S. (Page-Reeves 2014). Yet in Kansas City’s food charity paradigm, as in other nonprofit spheres, it has become taken for granted that “decisions about production, appropriation, and distribution of the local surplus will remain in the hands of a few,” and efforts to address food insecurity take the form of neoliberal self-empowerment and the redistribution of capitalism’s waste (Lyon-Callo 2004:47). As a result, a large amount of time and money is spent on ineffective programing that is found by participants to be demeaning (cf. Kingfisher 1996) and does nothing to address the root causes of food insecurity. I outline one such program, a nationally-replicated model I’m calling Feast!, below.

Feast! Curriculum

Feast! (a pseudonym) is a nutrition-education curriculum developed by Feeding America, offered for free to nonprofits across the U.S. Locally, Feast! is administered by the Pantry, and funded in partnership with BlueCross and BlueShield Insurance. Feast! in Kansas City is taught primarily by young, white, female Americorp volunteers—who administer the 2-hour long weekly classes for

seven weeks. I attended four cycles of this class; each time the curriculum and lesson plan remained the same. Each Feast! class, weekly, begins with goal setting and accountability—each participant is asked to make one dietary and one physical goal for the week—and then the class reads through that week’s curriculum packet, completing activities such as quiz questions, fill-in-the-blanks, and crosswords out loud. The curriculum packet also includes weekly stretches and exercises, which the class is led through by the instructor. Afterward, the class instructor passes out copies of the recipe the class will be cooking together—each week, the Feast! class cooks and eats a ‘healthy,’ low-cost meal or snack—and the cooking tasks are divided up. After cooking, eating, and cleaning, the Feast! instructor will ask the class quiz questions based on that day’s curriculum, and ‘prizes’ of leftover cooking materials—half onions, partially used cans of tomato paste—are given to the winners. Each class ends with distribution of bagged groceries—a large paper shopping bag full of canned vegetables and fruits, typically a box of cereal and a bag of pasta, mac and cheese and other boxed mixes, and a loaf of bread. Participants are also given a sack of fresh produce from the Pantry’s partner-farms, when the class falls during garden season, and when available, participants are also given seed packets to grow their own food. If participants arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, they are not allowed to receive that day’s groceries—a rule that I saw enforced often, as many Feast! participants I met worked at fast food restaurants, and their shifts never ended at a consistent time.

Feast! works to administer different “self-governing practices” weekly (cf. Lyon-Callo 2004), and is consistently perceived by Feast! participants as

paternalistic; curriculum packets were often met by Feast! participants with laughter, scoffing, and shared jokes. During week 1, participants were asked to calculate their BMI and set goals for the class—such as eating more leafy greens each week, or taking a walk every morning. In week 2, participants were ‘taught’ about food-borne diseases, and were walked through—and forced to practice, for a grade—how to wash their hands properly. Week 3’s curriculum covers how to read a food label, and offered shopping tips that can help participants save money on groceries, such as “eat before you go so you do not shop hungry.” In week 4, participants were taught about the warning signs and management of heart disease and diabetes; a fill-in-the-blank exercise ‘taught’ participants to look out for trans fats: “Limit saturated and _ _ _ _ fats!” Week five discussed media messaging about food, and asked participants to learn to discern what terms like ‘natural,’ ‘real,’ and ‘healthy,’ mean. In week 6 participants were given calorie charts for popular fast food restaurants and asked to calculate the calories and sodium of their favorite meals. The final week, week 7, covered physical activity and how to work it into participants’ days.

Some Feast! instructors seem to understand that this program is limiting and often insulting. One instructor, in particular, would slip in comments during class about how childish the curriculum was, and would acknowledge larger forces at play in food insecurity by discussing minimum wage stagnation. However, the majority of the instructors I encountered through Feast! seemed unaware of, or complicit with, the stereotypes of the poor conveyed via course curriculum; relatedly, actors in other state and private welfare disbursement circles have been

shown to assume the majority of their clients are “bad,” deceitful and manipulative (Kingfisher 1996:99; Edgar and Russell 1998).

The very ideological basis of Feast!—that increasing nutritional knowledge will increase the health of the urban poor—has been undermined by qualitative research suggesting otherwise. Tepper et al. (1997) find that nutritional knowledge plays a modest role in food choices, and Mancino and Kinsey (2008) find that more immediate concerns—such as hunger and stress—are stronger predictors of food choices than nutritional knowledge, across class divides. Likewise, Rose (2014) finds that low-income women in Detroit are highly knowledgeable about nutrition, but are forced to make food purchases that contradict their nutritional preferences because of time and transportation constraints. Policy makers have, in many ways, overestimated the effects of nutrition education on health behaviors.

I participated in Feast! four separate times between 2015 and 2018; each class was held at a different location, with different participants, and a different instructor, though the curriculum remained the same. Through Feast!, I met, and spent weekly time with (both inside and out of class), 31 food-insecure Kansas City residents, around three quarters of whom would describe themselves as black or African American. I was always the youngest class participant, aside from the course instructor—a majority of Feast! participants in Kansas City are between the ages of 30-80. In each Feast! class I took, there was always one grandmother taking the class to acquire groceries for their child and grandchild—I was told by a few women that their children worked full-time and didn’t have time to participate in the course, just to get the free groceries; participants are not allowed to bring children

to class. Around 60% of the food-insecure Feast! participants I met were women, and the course was always led by female instructors—this is not surprising, as the burden of both food acquisition and nonprofit welfare work falls disproportionately to women (Kingfisher 1996). I took Feast! classes held at an East side public library, a low-income housing complex in North Kansas City, a low-income senior living center, and a community center on the East side. Conversations relayed in this chapter primarily occurred during class, or while driving fellow-Feast! participants to the grocery store or doctor’s appointments. This chapter is also informed by conversations with Kansas City residents outside of Feast! classes—the topic of food insecurity and how it is portrayed in hegemonic discourse is an oft-discussed topic in the East side of Kansas City, and strangers and acquaintances would frequently start discussions with me on the subject.

Refuting Feast!: “We used to grow food but the USDA fucked us over”

Despite hegemonic discourse suggesting that food deserts are a central concern of the urban poor, a majority of the food-insecure black East side residents I spoke with dismissed the applicability of this concept to their lives. I was first made aware of how prominent this disconnect was locally in 2015, when the local public radio station, KCUR, broadcast a series of interviews with influential urban farmers in Kansas City—one of whom was a black farmer, and long-time resident of the Northeast, who said in the interview—“I’ve just been told [the Northeast] is a food desert. I didn’t understand ‘food desert’ when I first got into this, but there’s not a supermarket within a 50 block square radius in this area which I live in. So now I

know what a food desert is.” The reporter responded incredulously, “You lived there and that wasn’t something that you thought about?” The farmer replied,

Nah. I guess, for me...we always, when my parents were living, and my mother and my grandmother—they all canned. My grandmother had a little small garden on the side of her house. My mother would grow tomatoes and okra, just particular things on the side of the house where the water comes out of the gutter, so they didn’t have to water. We didn’t think of it as a food desert because my father was a hunter, a fisherman. I never thought of it as a food desert.

In his statement, the farmer rejects a characterization of his neighborhood as one of lack. His family has always grown food in the area, has always preserved food for later use, has always utilized existing resources—like gutter water—in ecologically-thoughtful ways. Public discourse discursively creates an idea of food desert residents as devoid of agency, and draws on visual depictions such as corner store shelves stocked with brightly colored junk food to paint a bleak picture of the urban foodscape. This farmer, however, had no idea he lived in a food desert; this hegemonic depiction of urban life did not accurately reflect his experiences, and belied the incredible resourcefulness of his family.

I met numerous other black East side residents who grew their own food—and had been growing their own food in the city long before it became fashionable as part of green urban development. During research for this dissertation, I tended raised beds at a number of community garden plots across the East side of the city. This meant that I was often walking around city space with a tote bag full of produce I had just harvested, that I made several weekly trips to Home Depot during the summer to purchase items like tomato cages and seeds, and that the trunk of my Honda Civic was stuffed full with a large hay bale, which I used as mulch. Almost

daily, low-income black East side residents would comment on these items or my presence at these places, as they themselves grew their own food, too. A member of janitorial staff at a local community center, who once walked past while I was checking my tomatoes for pests, stopped to identify blight on my plants' leaves. A court-ordered community service volunteer, helping build a gazebo at one of my community garden locations, once called out to me—"Your peppers are looking good, but not as good as mine this year!" A pair of old women waiting at a bus stop to catch a ride to Walmart explained to me that the nasturtium seeds I was carrying would one day make edible flowers, that would "look lovely on a cake." Once, at a monthly neighborhood meeting for an East side community, an elderly black woman who noticed my garden gloves announced to me: "I grow food in two and a half gardens. My momma bought several pieces of land when I was young, and we grow food on them for our community. We give it all away. That's just something we've always done." And on my way home from this meeting a cashier at a CVS on Troost pointed toward the chard sticking out of my tote bag, mimed smelling a good meal, and said "I smell fresh, fresh vegetables! Maybe I should pick greens from my garden tonight, too!" These daily utterances and assertions of personal food production stand in direct opposition to discourse that asserts that black Kansas City residents have forgotten how to grow food in the urban core. While many East side residents I spoke with did desperately wish there were more affordable full-service grocery stores in the urban core, a vast majority of them felt that the food desert framework denied their agency and actual lived experiences.

Because the Feast! curriculum so often denied these historical legacies of food production in black neighborhoods, black food-insecure participants in this program frequently made a point to counter this narrative, and assert that they did know how to grow food and had been doing it for years. Once, while slicing cherry tomatoes for that week's lunch—a cold pasta salad with avocado and olives—our Feast! instructor told the class, “these are cherry tomatoes, you can find them at pretty much any grocery store—.” A mid-fifties African American woman interrupted her sharply, “We know what they are. My mother sure could grow them, too.” In a different Feast! class, the previous year, a middle-aged black woman yelled at our Feast! instructor as she told us how to plant the kohlrabi seeds she was passing out, “I know how to do that. My family farmed a couple hundred acres in Arkansas. We used to grow food before the USDA fucked us over.” Another week, while Feast! participants and I cooked a mole sauce to pour over ground pork and brown rice, I brought up my concern about pork, saying I had always been scared to cook it, because my grandmother said it could harbor worms. Our instructor interrupted me and said “That’s not right, no, its a very clean meat.” The rest of the class participants all yelled out at once: “No, they eat anything, that’s why so many religions don’t want us to eat pig;” “You gotta be careful with pork;” and “They’re a nasty animal.” Our instructor pushed back—“these are old wives’ tales.” To that, an older black participant snapped at her, “they eat *anything*. We used to have pigs and they are disgusting, just like chickens.” Another participant chimed in: “I can tell you that chickens are every bit as dirty as pigs. We had chickens growing up and they will eat whatever you give them.” These assertions disrupt the white public space of

the food charity programming, as low income urban residents push back against depictions of their communities as spaces of lack and speak against representations of their families as ignorant about healthy, fresh food.

While many black East side residents have histories and current-day practices of growing food, they do not celebrate this self-sufficiency as a viable alternative to state-sponsored support; some black East side residents did use the framework of food desert when we spoke, but often to highlight structural policies that created the 'desert' and food insecurity, and to highlight areas where the state has failed to support urban residents. This usage is similar to how Neferet- used 'blight' to highlight policies that disinvested her community. This stands in direct contrast to how food desert is utilized by foodies, who use the term as a descriptor of a place, not as an inquiry into structural inequality. This was particularly apparent in one specific interaction, between a Feast! participant and a Feast! instructor, during the iteration of Feast! that I took when it was held at a public library. The cohort enrolled in this course was small—there were only about seven of us who consistently attended class, a group that included a young black man who wanted to one day become a chef, a white mother who I'm calling Candice and her 30-something daughter who had both just been diagnosed with diabetes and wanted to learn more about its management, a Latina grandmother and her grand-daughter—both great chefs, but who told me they were having a hard time affording groceries after a string of job losses in the family, and a middle-aged black woman—who always wore skirt suits and had her hair neatly pulled back—who I am calling Sherene. While I, and many other, class participants, often displayed visible signs of

offense at course material, Sherene always seemed doubly injured and angry at the fact that she had to sit through this curriculum to receive groceries. Each week, she would refuse to participate when our instructor would call on her to answer questions, and she would sigh, huff, and roll her eyes during particularly patronizing course lessons. One week, when we were all asked to go wash our hands, and return back to partition up the cooking assignments for that week's recipe—pizza pasta salad—Sherene stayed in the bathroom, and did not return to the kitchen area until we were halfway through cooking, at which point she refused to accept any cooking tasks. As we cooked, she sat, raised her eyebrows, and watched.

The class session in which Sherene finally spoke up, and addressed the topic of food deserts, is the week our instructor—who I'm calling Mona—'taught' us about obesity and causes of poor health. Our class met in a private library meeting room, where we all gathered around a square grouping of tables and read over our curriculum packets together. The first page of that day's packet contained an illustration of a line graph—chronicling the trends in overweight and obese U.S. citizens over the past century. The chart demonstrated that most recently, the number of overweight Americans has gone down, but the number of obese Americans has risen (the chart ignored, and did not discuss, how poverty manifests as obesity in the U.S., and more often afflicts communities of color; cf. Alkon et al. 2013). Mona explained, "This trend has a lot to do with eating out, and the rise of processed food." We turned the page of our packet to find a BMI chart, and as Mona started to walk us through how to find our number, Candice interrupted her: "Have you ever noticed, it's the things that are healthy that cost more money, though?"

Mona sighed, and said “I know. I know. But not oatmeal—old fashioned oats are very healthy and very cheap.” Candice continued, “I don’t want oatmeal though. I used to love shredded wheat. Hot, in the morning with milk—my mom used to give me that before school. But now, shredded wheat has frosting on it, you know? And if you want the one that’s unfrosted and called ‘healthy,’ its two times as much as the frosted stuff. How is that fair?” Sherene suddenly spoke up, sharply, for the first time in four weeks of class: “Food we don’t want and food we can’t afford. That gives a new definition to the term food desert doesn't it?”

Sherene’s interjection on food deserts says a lot. For one, it indicates some of the specific reasons why Feast! is so painful, and offensive, to her—the class emphasizes ‘making do’—curriculum covers how to rinse off canned fruits to remove excess sugar and make it ‘healthier,’ discusses how to modify family-favorite recipes to utilize the cheapest items at the store, and emphasizes choosing the cheapest healthy option, such as oatmeal, instead of your favorite healthy option, such as Candice’s shredded wheat. Sherene does not want to be taught how to make do, and likely has utilized creative strategies to make do for years. Sherene likely resents the fact that she has to sit through proffered strategies on making do, to receive a bag of groceries that she desperately needs, when she would much rather have the economic freedom to make her own food choices (cf. Page-Reeves 2014). Sherene’s comment also refutes common usages of food desert to point toward the need for increased access to grocery stores in the urban core—Sherene doesn’t want increased access to stores, or free bags of food; in her statement she points toward an abundance of food options already within her spatial proximity.

Sherene’s comment highlights dissatisfaction, voiced to me by other low-income black urban residents of Kansas City, with how their city is being developed in ways that clearly exclude them, are not meant for them, and are not affordable to them. In this way, Sherene uses food desert to index this top-down control of development from which she is excluded. Many low-income black East side residents I spoke with refuted the conceptual framework of food desert because of this, and because it led to hegemonic understandings of their communities as barren—when in fact they have long been populated by resourceful, ecologically-mindful, residents.

Refuting Feast!: “I don’t want anything that’s in those bags”

Feast! participants are highly knowledgeable about how to acquire food that they understand to be nutritious and healthy, and are often far more insightful than the Feast! instructors about how to utilize meager WIC, SNAP, and food charity benefits—because they have been making do with these programs for years. During Feast! classes, I frequently witnessed participants using and sharing creative means for stretching food dollars. Participants in several Feast! courses shared with me their yearly plans—one woman had mapped it out in a back page of her pocket calendar—for utilizing food aid. Participants are only allowed to take Feast! twice in any given year; I spoke to numerous participants who planned to take Feast! in the spring and then in the fall—the 14-weeks total of food aid provided a number of non-perishable items, such as weekly jars of peanut butter and bags of pasta, that could be stretched throughout the year. To supplement these items, numerous Feast! participants visited myriad food charity sites to acquire food items that they liked to eat—for example, a black food-insecure woman in her 60s who I am calling

Betty told me that she went weekly to a church on Prospect street that “gives out the best bread, the good artisan stuff,” and that she came early on Mondays to the senior center she frequented because that’s when they distributed frozen food items, “you can get good stuff, like Hungry Man, sometimes,” which, she explained to me, “there’s a lot of salt in that, but protein too.” These strategies for feeding oneself and one’s family throughout the year take incredible time-management and resourcefulness; a creativity and agency which is denied in popular discourse regarding the urban poor (Wilson and Keil 2008). As other scholars have shown, for many of the urban poor, supplementary and emergency food programs are incorporated as “permanent, multidimensional food provisioning strategies” (Stanford 2014: 23).

Feast! participants, despite food-insecurity and economic precarity, often vocally dismissed and refused food aid that was not suitable in their family diets. One week, during a series of Feast! classes I took at an East side community center, our instructor—who I am calling Pam—walked us through making vegetarian chili. As we cooked it, my classmates—an entirely African American group, all over 50—critiqued the dish: “I don’t want to eat that. Where’s the cornbread?” “Maybe if it had some beef? My kids wouldn’t eat that without beef.” “I know it’s supposed to be vegetarian, but I need meat. Maybe shrimp. Shrimp would be good.” Through comments such as these, Feast! participants reject their implied passivity in the transfer of knowledge between instructor and food-insecure student—they know how to cook these meals and they know how they’d prefer to eat them. At the end of class, when Feast! participants are presented with pre-packed grocery bags, trades

are common. Feast! participants are not allowed to look in the sacks, or trade what's in the sacks, during class; such trades often occurred in the hallway outside of where class had occurred, after our instructor had left the building. One week, for example, after Pam left the room, one Feast! participant called out: "I don't want cabbage, who'll take this?" An African American woman in her 70s reached for it, and told us that she'd use it to make a slaw. I held up a box of frosted flakes—no one wanted it; later, on our way out, we all left our frosted flakes in the community center's donation box. An elderly African American man, whom I am calling Terry, held up a bag of millet and laughed, saying "No!" No one else wanted the millet, so I took it from him, though I had never cooked with it and was not sure how. As we continued our trades, one of the oldest class participants, whom I am calling Bernice, stood up and tied on her head scarf, getting ready to leave, and said; "I don't want anything in that bag. I'm just going to walk to the store. You all can take it." Terry asked her if she was sure, as he dug in her bag for peanut butter, and she responded: "I don't want cabbage, I don't eat cereal, and I'm not going to start today." The food given to Feast! participants is collected from large Feeding America donation bins—found in the lobby of nearly every grocery store in the metropolitan area—promotions such as discounted amusement park tickets often encourage suburban shoppers to donate canned goods. On several occasions, I have been told by Feast! participants that they will drop off unwanted food items, received in class, back into those bins; canned green beans are the universally most unwanted item in Feast! grocery bags, and are often donated back to the Pantry by food-insecure Feast! participants.

Feast! participants are often, but not always, skilled or decent cooks—an ability that is denied in the language utilized in class curriculum, and in hegemonic discourse in Kansas City. Some farmer’s markets in Kansas City have applied for and received Health Care Foundation funding for programs that ‘teach’ urban residents how to cook with fresh produce—as increasing ‘awareness’ and knowledge is often spoken about as the way to increase farmer’s market attendance and capital flow. Narratives shared by food-insecure Feast! residents refute this understanding of the urban poor. While cooking lunch together as a class, I witnessed food-insecure urban residents demonstrate kitchen skills and comfort—such as a Latina grandmother who neatly rolled basil before chopping in a chiffonade, or Donna, a black woman in her 40s who was receiving disability payments and had limited mobility, quickly and efficiently dicing a bag of onions from her seat in her wheelchair. This skill was often ignored by Feast! instructors, who, while class participants cooked, walked around and corrected our ‘errors’—this took the form of chastising participants for measuring with slightly rounded, rather than strictly leveled, tablespoon-fulls, or correcting participants who were cooking with time-honed techniques—such as personal understandings of how long to sauté onions or beef—rather than following given recipes to the minute. This paternalism was most obviously refuted during one particular class at the community center—as class participants cooked, a middle-aged African American man came by to grab a bag of bread out of the food pantry located behind us. Pam, our class teacher, called out, “Why don’t you join us and learn how to cook?” The man replied laughingly as he

strode out of the kitchen, “Honey, my mom raised me in the deep south. I know how to cook. I could cook you if I had to!”

While participating in Feast!, I was exposed to food-insecure individuals who had highly developed social networks—utilized to acquire the cheapest, most desired, food items. This network meant that instead of utilizing the most spatially-convenient grocery outlet, food-insecure individuals often travelled outside of the urban core to visit full service grocery stores that they knew to both have lower prices and carry the variety of product they require (see also Barnes 2005). During class, Feast! participants would quite often end up discussing prices of various food items at area grocery stores, highly aware of where the best deals could be found, engaging in rigorous price surveillance (cf. Carney 2014). An interaction between our instructor, Pam, Michael (a mid-fifties African American man), and Donna, exemplified this as we discussed where to find strawberries. Our snack recipe for the day was jicama with pureed strawberry sauce, and no one in class knew what jicama was or where to get it. Donna said, of the recipe: “Getting fresh fruit is too hard, Pam, it’s too hard to get something like jicama over here on the East side.” To this, Pam responded sympathetically but paternalistically, “I know, I know - it’s tough because you’re in a food desert. Don’t you know you live in a food desert? But you can absolutely substitute canned fruit here in this recipe.” Donna snapped back, “But I want *fresh fruit* and it’s hard to get those. Fresh fruit. Fresh fruit. There’s too much sugar in that can stuff” and Pam attempted to offer a solution: “Have you tried the Rollin’ Grocer?” Michael chimed in about the Rollin Grocer, a mobile grocery store that sometimes makes stops outside of the community center, adding: “Yeah

they have bananas at 59 cents a pound. 59 cents! At Price Chopper in Brookside you can get 'em for 39 cents a pound—" "You gotta be able to get there, though," said Donna, "even better is Roeland Park—you can buy the brown bananas there for 10 cents a pound." Laura, a young black woman, chimed in, "That truck just isn't the same, anyway. They have everything on the South side, you can get everything there, and the stuff in that truck isn't fresh." "There's a grocery store coming this year to Prospect," said Donna; "No," said Michael, "It's groundbreaking this year and opening in 2018." "Well until then, I've got my granddaughter to drive me to Price Chopper in the Southside every month," said Donna.

Contrary to popular discourse, and foodie understandings of the urban poor, Feast! participants have keen understandings of where the best available produce is located, and have highly developed mappings of the urban foodscape, which they draw on to discern the most affordable grocery outlets. Many of the Feast! participants I met enjoyed cooking for their families, and utilized all available social networks and charity resources—a task which takes considerable work—to find the produce and items that they most liked eating. Carney (2014) has theorized this time and expertise as "food work," primarily enacted by women, and argues that this labor is extremely undervalued, and near impossible to enact alongside the long hours required by low-wage jobs. One useful outcome of Feast!, in my experience, was that it provided an expanded social network for food-insecure urban residents, who utilized these new connections to find new transportation mechanisms. For instance, it was ascertained early on within each Feast! cohort which participants had cars or access to family members with cars, and inquiries would be made—

“where do you live? When are you heading to the store?”—and requests to ride along to grocery shop, would be made. While the food aid and nutrition education were not always helpful to Feast! participants, for many, the networking and solidarity opportunities were meaningful outcomes of the class.

Refuting Feast!: “I worked in a packing house for 30 years, I know how to handle meat”

Feast! course curriculum and the way it was conveyed offered painful dismissals of structurally violent forces that shape food insecurity; these dismissals were frequently and forcefully called out and corrected by food-insecure participants. In small ways, Feast! participants assert their agency, and call attention toward the structural forces which have combined to make them in need of food charity programming. For example, when Pam, a course instructor, asked Terry, an elderly African American man, to set a goal for the seven-week course, he responded: “My goal is to get a quarter of a million dollars. Then I can eat what I want!” Assertion of knowledge, skill, and structural forces that have subjugated them, were common in black Feast! participants’ comments to white Feast! instructors. Once, for example, during a lesson plan about food safety, Bernice, an elderly African American woman, reminded our white-middle aged instructor Pam of her white privilege. Pam walked us through our lesson for the day, which included instructions for how to safely defrost and cook meat, how to safely store food, and how to wash one’s hands, and then asked us to mime washing and drying our hands together, as a class. Pam added, we should dry our hands with paper towels, then turn the faucet off and open the door with that same paper towel, in order to keep our hands clean. Bernice chuckled to herself, and Pam asked her what

was funny—to which Bernice responded: “I cleaned houses for people like you for a long, long time. You don’t have to tell me not to touch those bathroom doorknobs.” Later, when we had moved on to proper protocol for defrosting meat, Pam thought she would surprise Terry, who looked like he was ignoring the lesson, with a quiz question: “Terry, do you know which way to defrost? Should you do it on the counter, or under cold water, or in the microwave?” Terry, an elderly African American man with broad shoulders, looked visibly insulted at having been asked this question, and snapped at Pam: “Woman, I worked in a packing house for thirty plus years. I know how to handle meat.” Pam, and other instructors, certainly do not mean to insult Feast! class participants; instructors are given only nutritional training, not structural or sociological training, before beginning class, and are often young—straight out of college. But uncritical transmission of culturally and historically tone-deaf ‘nutrition education’—education which ignores that participants such as Bernice and Terry labored in underpaid and precarious domestic and food-processing positions in Kansas City’s segregated labor market for decades—is felt as incredibly marginalizing by food-insecure participants.

Another notable instance of class participants reminding Feast! instructors about structural inequality occurred when I took Feast! at a senior assisted living complex in North Kansas City. Our instructor at this location, a white middle-aged woman I am calling Patti, was leading us through a lesson plan on obesity and obesity-related illnesses. Our information packet for the day contained a worksheet, which we worked through together as a class, which asked us to list the causes of obesity on a left hand column, and the hazards of obesity on the right. Patti listed

out some suggested causes of obesity—overeating, inactivity, and then called out—to our almost entirely African American class of 10—what are some hazards of obesity? Class participants shouted out: “heart problems,” “diabetes,” “you can lose a leg,” and finally one class member—a black woman who walked with a cane—said “hey, but we get all of that because we’re black, too, though.” Patti responded, well, with diet and exercise you can “give yourself a fighting chance,” and the woman again retorted: “but being black makes us get some of those things, and the only hospital I can afford is ‘dead man’s hospital.’” Here, she references Research Medical Hospital, commonly referred to as one of the worst hospitals in the metropolitan area. Patti tried to move the class along, stating: “Okay, turn to page four. Let’s calculate our BMIs,” to which an African American man said “I read that that isn’t a good indicator of my health.” Patti snapped, “Well, no, we’re gonna use it and it works fine for us.” Here, Feast! participants rightly bring attention to the fact that racialized inequalities make them more likely to be subjected to certain diseases (Dressler 1993; Albritton 2013). They highlight the fact that unequal access to healthcare makes it harder for them to manage these diseases they are disproportionately disposed to (Page 2006). They protest that the indicators of health, promoted in Feast!, do not accurately account for all of the socioeconomic forces in their lives.

Feast! participants also often referenced and brought attention toward the fact that they were under much stricter economic constraints than the Feast! instructor would acknowledge. During one class’ cooking segment, a day during which we were making ‘lady bug pizzas’—english muffins, cut in half, and topped with pesto,

cheese, tomato, and black olives—our instructor, a mid-20s white woman I’m calling Laura, told us “I always buy the block of cheese instead of pre-shredded cheese. It’s just so much cheaper, and it spreads and melts easier!” Carla and Joan, two black-middle aged women who had been attending the class together, as friends, scoffed. Joan said, “at least you have a choice. We’re not even allowed to buy the shredded cheese.” Laura was confused, and asked who was keeping them from buying the cheese they wanted. “Shredded cheese has additives that they say aren’t good for babies. You have to buy the block cheese. Block cheese is a WIC food.” While Laura likely has the time to shred cheese, and enjoys saving money, for Carla and Joan, taking time away from parenting to shred cheese likely feels like an imposition. The extensive time, paperwork, and procedures involved in obtaining WIC in the first place are difficult for the urban poor to manage (Page-Reeves 2014). Likewise, during a Feast! class at a community center, participants and I had a long discussion of making do while experiencing poverty. Bernice told us, as we ate the vegetarian sloppy joes we had cooked in class that day, “There was one time, when I had three boys to feed, and all I had in the fridge were some biscuits, a pound of ground beef, and a can of sloppy joes. I cooked up that beef, I put in the sloppy joe sauce. I put the biscuits in the oven, and then we poured on the sloppy joes when they were done. That was so good. And it fed us all.” Terry laughed, “that’s nothing,” and added, “When I was growing up there were 12 of us. 12 of us plus my momma and dad, and we had one chicken to split. I would kill that chicken in the morning, pluck it, and we’d have it for dinner. One chicken for all of us!” Stories such as these served, in part, as a way for food-charity recipients to demonstrate to Feast! instructors that

they were under great constraints—had been for quite some time—and had developed sophisticated means of dealing with these barriers without the help of foodies.

Paternalism and the “Public Spectacle” of Nutrition Education

African American Kansas City residents have a storied history of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness in a racialized food landscape, built high with roadblocks restricting their agency and access. Racialized urbicide, enacted by powerful white Kansas City residents—which has resulted in the displacement of black farms and gardens, the disinvestment of historically black neighborhoods and businesses, and hyper segregation and urban inequality—undergird the very need for food charity in the urban core. These acts of violence are unacknowledged, and food charity paradigms designed to assist victims of this violence focus instead on techniques of “self-making,” in which the racialized urban poor are asked to identify causes of poverty, and their solutions, within themselves (Lyon-Callo 2004:154). These programs present a continuation of historical efforts to quantify and contain black bodies and black diets in Kansas City. Feast! has inspired other similar models of food charity programming in Kansas City, and likely other U.S. cities. Locally, numerous foodie-led nonprofits offer classes, programming, and farmer’s market events that exchange groceries for the participation of food-insecure residents in nutrition education. In the case of Feast!, such programming denies the historical and current acts of self-sufficiency by the urban poor, disavows their ability to judge and monitor their bodily health, and elides purposeful acts of disinvestment experienced by the poor—enforcing, instead, unwanted and inaccurate frameworks,

such as food desert, in order to locate the cause of their suffering. Studies have indicated that the vast majority of those who receive Food Stamps “feel their own need as a personal failure rather than, or often as much as, a reflection of structural dynamics over which they have no control” (Page-Reeves 2014:13). While the Feast! participants I encountered often forcefully asserted that they had been subjected to violent structural policies, many of those seeking food aid experience doubled-forces of blame and stigmatization, as both they and food-charity workers blame themselves for their poverty.

A significant amount of time, energy, programmatic development, and money—state and private—is appropriated toward food charity programming like Feast!, though studies have indicated they become long-term strategies for survival, rather than temporary assistance such as they are intended (cf. Fox Piven et al. 2002). Comparatively, unconditional cash transfer programs—common state-led strategies for poverty reduction in ‘developing’ countries—are on average 20% cheaper, comparatively easier to administer, and have been shown to offer the same or better nutritional outcomes as food-based programs (Hidrobo et al. 2014; Cunha 2014). Foodies express great concern about the food choices of low-income urban residents—best illustrated by a comment made by Martha, an employee at the Pantry, about a SNAP-dollar doubling program: will they be able to spend that money on fruit roll ups? However, studies in rural Mexico, and a recent experimental cash-transfer program in New York city, demonstrate that assistance recipients do not spend this money on tobacco or alcohol (Cunha 2014; Miller et al. 2015), and instead spend money on “more and better food,” with the result of

preliminary findings of health improvements (Paes-Sousa et al. 2010). Cash transfer programs are also mindful of the time-constraints faced by the urban poor—who in this study often rushed out of work to make it to Feast! on time, and struggled to find childcare during class hours—and acknowledge agency and the ability of the urban poor to judge what food is best for their families. Instead, in large part because nutrition education, teaching the poor to grow their own food, and farmer’s market vouchers fit in with foodie plans for city space (and are heavily incentivized and funded at a national level), models like Feast! inappropriately and inadequately address food insecurity in Kansas City. Unconditional cash transfer programs are unpopular in the U.S., despite their proven successes, where the “public spectacle” of welfare recipients’ subservience is required (Fox Piven et al. 2002:27). Fox Piven et al. (2002:27), for example, discuss a proposal in the late 1980s to put welfare recipients to work in the streets, scrubbing cobblestones, where those who passed by would be given a “lesson in the degradation awaiting anyone who...did not work for wages.” In being forced to publicly acquire and demonstrate skill in ‘healthy’ consumption in order to receive food aid, today’s food insecure are enacting a “public spectacle” for the benefit of donors—who paternalistically worry that their dollars will be ill-spent—and for the broader public, who learn that aid is never given freely, not even to victims of purposive state violence.

Chapter 6: “We know we’re being treated like tokens”: Black Urban Farmers Navigating and Contesting Structural Racism in Kansas City’s Local Food Economy

Adrienne, a short black woman who wears her hair in braids, was born and raised in Kansas City; one morning as we shared donuts and black coffee at Lamar’s on Troost, she told me that she had grown up in a “back to the earth-type” of family. She was raised vegan, and her parents grew every bit of food they ate—canning and preserving for the winter, and barely needing to purchase anything at the grocery store. In her early 50s, Adrienne decided to try her hand at selling her extra produce. She knew how to grow food. Every spring for the past several decades, she and her sons had tilled up their backyard and put the space into use for intensive vegetable production. “Local food” was taking off in Kansas City. More and more restaurants were listing the small-scale urban farmers they partnered with in lists displayed prominently at the top of menus, on chalkboard signs propped up outside on the sidewalk, and cross-advertised on Instagram, where restaurants would tag photos of local Kansas City farmers holding up brightly colored produce. Adrienne had heard that you could make shockingly good money if you secured a restaurant contract, but she had been nervous to approach any of the local farm-to-table establishments. So far, she sold to her neighbors and family on an inconsistent basis. One fall season, she told me, an early frost forced her to finally try approaching chefs:

One year, I think it was November, we had a cold snap, and I had this whole bunch of tomatoes that hadn’t ripened yet. And it was like this mad rush to get all these tomatoes off the vine. Turns out I had 400 pounds of green tomatoes, right? Well, black folks like green tomatoes, we like to make chowchow and all that—but I still had too many. I started going around to the small, locally-owned farm to table restaurants and I looked pretty rough, you know, I’d been

harvesting all day. And I remember this one place, a pretty popular one. I walked into their kitchen with a box of tomatoes, in my overalls, and they were like “*No, we don’t need anything from you. We don’t need anything you have.*” So I said okay. I went to another place, and I’ll tell you the name because they were so cool—Succotash—and they were like “Yeah! We’ll take ‘em!” There were ten heirloom varieties. They liked that. But, they sold them as an East Side fried green tomato plate—a soul food sort of deal...so on some level we know we’re being treated like tokens. And for now that’s okay, its working okay for now. There may come a time when it’s not gonna be okay, but I can deal with it for now.

Adrienne’s encounter was not exceptional in Kansas City—I spoke with numerous black urban farmers who had experienced systemic racism in the urban food movement, particularly in local food sales. Even though Adrienne’s upbringing means that she shares a lot of ideologies about food and ecological stewardship with white, upper-middle class ‘foodies’ in KC, her racialized and class positionality still separate her from market-based opportunities available to white farmers. She was unable to sell her produce to upscale markets until she marketed her products as a racialized commodity, a ‘token’ of East side entrepreneurship for upper-middle class white consumption at a restaurant in the gentrifying Hospital Hill neighborhood. While there are farmers of color who earn a significant income from urban farming, particularly the farmers in Grow KC’s refugee agricultural training program (a model in which refugee status is an integral aspect of product marketing), on the whole, white farmers in Kansas City are much more likely to ‘scale up’ and earn a stable income than black farmers. This chapter examines the root cause of this inequity, untangling the racialized structural barriers that black urban farmers face in Kansas City’s local food economy.

Adrienne's experience resonates historically, and on a national level—reflecting broader forces of discrimination that have affected black farmers in the U.S.. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discrimination against African American farmers, a case brought to court, and won, in a class action lawsuit, has irreparably shaped the socioeconomic opportunities available to black farmers in the U.S. The suit, *Pigford v. Glickman*, alleging racial discrimination against African American farmers in USDA allocation of farm loans and assistance in the 1980s and 1990s, was settled for more than two billion dollars in 1999 (Benson 2012:117). Discrimination continued following this court decision; the USDA failed to notify affected parties that they could apply for settlement payouts, and crafted a near-impossible process that required claimants to produce numerous documents and records backing up their claims of discrimination (Benson 2012:117). This process included requiring black farmers to prove discrimination by tracking down white farmers who had applied for and received assistance from the same benefit program, and who had “...the same acreage, the same type of crop, the same credit history, and who had received a higher payment or better treatment” (Benson 2012:119). The USDA has spent nearly \$330 million in public funds challenging these claims, with the outcome that less than half of the compensatory funds have been paid out, and 31% of those eligible for compensation have been denied (Benson 2012:119; Schneider 2013). In 2010, Congress appropriated \$1.2 billion more to these discrimination claims, as 70,000 black farmers claimed that had not had their cases heard; studies through 2008 have illustrated continued discrimination enacted by the USDA (Schneider 2013).

Discrimination against black farmers should not only be conceptualized as differential loan allocation; as Adrienne's story indicates, discrimination happens in insidious ways through interpersonal interaction. Scholars have indicated that any real accounting of national-level discrimination against black farmers is hindered by our inability to quantify these racialized interactions (Thurow 1998). Such racial discrimination occurs even within racially 'equitable' policies, as such policies are enacted by myriad individual actors with their own ideologies. For example, discrimination against black farmers can occur in ways such as: charging a higher interest rate to black farmers; offering information about special programs—such as reduced loan rates or disaster assistance—but only to 'favored' farmers; assisting favored, white farmers with government paperwork; granting loans to black farmers but purposefully delaying payout until summer, long after the loan was needed to start spring production (Schneider 2013). These national processes are reflected and (re)enacted locally within racialized access to local food markets in Kansas City.

Additionally, the concepts of "local food," and "local food markets" are fraught with racialized and class-based complications. Discursively, with lived effects, the "local" food movement is painted as upheld by white farmers for white consumers. Much like Benson (2012) illustrated within the tobacco industry, with the erasure of the crops' plantation history and migrant laborer involvement, local small-scale urban food production—an arena with a diverse history—has been whitewashed, and incorporated as part of the production of a specific white foodie identity. Weiss (2011:456) points toward some of the implications this has for black involvement in

local food markets—in North Carolina, for example, African American hog farmers reject categories of “local” and “cooperative,” even though their practices can be categorized as such, and resist outreach from extension agents. The uneven adoption of such market categories indicate that local is “not simply an existential condition of being in a place, it is a specific orientation to how space is produced” (Weiss 2011:456)—an orientation that has significant implications for the racialized operation of the local food economy.

Why does racialized inequality in agriculture and the local food economy matter, locally, in Kansas City? Green urban development discourse currently heralds urban agriculture as an equal opportunity occupation that provides a stable income and involvement for all in the burgeoning green economy in Kansas City. This discourse is (re)produced at a number of scales. A “Food Hub Feasibility” study conducted by Grow KC, Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, the Hunger Coalition, Healthy Communities KC, and several green, urban, development-focused architecture firms advertised that there is high demand among food-buyers in Kansas City, and stated that there is \$177 million in unmet demand, in Kansas City, for local produce (Kansas City Food Hub Working Group 2014). Capacity studies such as these further city-level efforts to promote green urban development, and urban food production as a viable means of creating urban job growth. Kansas City residents are repeatedly told—in media celebrating the success of local urban farms, and in daily discourse—that urban farming can provide a livable wage. David, for example, the white, East Side farmer and farmer’s market manager discussed in Chapter 3, once gave a presentation at a Jackson County 3rd district community

meeting to recruit urban residents for a farmer training course he was helping sponsor, where he said:

We're holding a beginning farmer class—a SPIN farming class, which is intensive farming on small plots—and working with our Kansas City farmers this year to be more productive, so they can actually supplement their income or replace their income with urban farming. SPIN farmers in Canada and the United States—they're making anywhere from \$20,000 to \$100,000 dollars a year, urban farming. And so we want you in the inner city to learn how to do that too. We want the 3rd district to have the best GMO-free, locally grown, organically grown, sustainably grown produce to feed their families at a good price. And the money that purchases that produce will be put back into the local community. It's gonna be great.

In reality, most urban farmers in the U.S. make significantly less than \$10,000 dollars per year; Dimitri et al. (2016) find that a majority also must rely upon supplemental income or inherited wealth. While studies have not analyzed urban farm income in relation to race, structural inequalities likely result in even lower incomes for urban farmers of color. David's discourse also denies that historically, black farmers have been divested of land and wealth, and have been met with violence—structural and physical—when their businesses have succeeded (Oliver and Shapiro 1997). Junius G. Groves, for example, a captive African born in Louisville, Kentucky, who travelled to Kansas City as an exoduster after emancipation, would grow to be known as “The Potato King,” only to have his farm and home set afire by the Ku Klux Klan three times. Groves saved money while working in the stockyards, and eventually was able to purchase 80 acres of land west of Kansas City, where he became a major produce distributor, after reportedly growing more potatoes than any other farmer in the U.S. (Kansaspedia 2012). When Groves became a millionaire, began building 20-room, electric equipped homes, and

selling tracts of land to other black farmers, the local KKK began a series of attacks, setting fire to his home and property, which resulted in his loss of fortune (Kansaspedia 2012). Historical violence such as this is not considered in David's assertion that black urban farmers can make \$20,000 to \$100,000 in the urban core.

The racialized and class-based dynamics of the alternative agrifood movement have been extensively analyzed (Slocum 2007; Guthman 2008; Guthman 2011; Alkon 2009; Alkon and McCullen 2011), but not from the perspective of production and distribution. This chapter contributes to this interdisciplinary literature by analyzing the extensive barriers black urban growers face in the local food economy, within the context of green urban development infrastructure that heavily promotes urban food production. In this chapter I first discuss some of the extensive infrastructural costs associated with urban food production and distribution, often noted as negligible by upper-middle class white farmers who draw on generational wealth. I then examine how racialized social network access affects sales/distribution routes available to urban farmers in Kansas City, and conclude by analyzing the unrecognized forms of black food entrepreneurship and extensive networks for local food distribution in Kansas City.

Generational Wealth and Racialized Access to Farm Startup Capital

An accounting of start-up costs for an urban farmer has to be understood within the context of racialized governmental policies that denied African Americans the right to accumulate wealth and own land. Public discourse, today, celebrating the incredible affordability and availability of vacant urban land to farm parallels homesteading discourse and policy in the 1800s, such as the 1862

Homesteading Act which disbursed acreage to white settlers in the hopes that they would 'cultivate' and 'tame' the land. Captive Africans were, by law, not able to own property or accumulate assets until the Southern Homestead Act in 1866 provided legal basis and incentives for black land ownership (Lanza 1990). By 1910, whites owned more than 99% of all property in Kansas City (Griffin 2015:51)—an early foundational monopoly that makes it difficult for black land accumulation to occur today. Though federal policy now allowed African Americans to apply for land through the Homesteading Act, racialized discrimination—such as 'black codes,' state laws that denied black asset accumulation—in land allocation kept black farmers from fully realizing its benefits (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:15; Lanza 1990). Public opinion also stood in opposition to black land ownership; a white Southerner quoted in Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, responded to a question on the merits of black-owned farms: "Who'd work the land if the niggers had farms of their own?" (Myrdal 1944, cited in Oliver and Shapiro 1997:15). Between 1940 and 1974, the number of black-owned farms fell 93%, from 681,790 to 45,594 (Daniel 2013), a result of USDA discrimination described above, individualized discrimination enacted by white Southerners, such as the one quoted by Gunnar Myrdal, and a number of specifically-racialized economic policies, described below. Today, African Americans comprise less than two percent of U.S. farmers (Daniel 2013).

Segregation, redlining, and racialized lending combined to drastically reduce black Americans' abilities to accumulate generational wealth, since a key mechanism that allowed white U.S. citizens to become upwardly mobile was home ownership and home value appreciation (Massey and Denton 1993). Whites have

benefited from the massive equity buildup made possible by Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policies that facilitated their entry into home ownership; today, a majority of young white homeowners receive financial assistance from their parents—parents who were able to accumulate generational wealth because of these FHA policies that restricted black home ownership (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:145). Racially restrictive covenants enacted via FHA policy continued, legally, into the 1950s, and the practice continued informally afterward. This policy has created spatial realities of white suburbanization, and black urban cores (Gordon 2008). African Americans who own homes face unique racialized disadvantages: it is much harder for black applicants to get approved for mortgages (a 1991 study finds that banks reject black applicants twice as often as whites); mortgages offered to black applicants include significantly higher interest rates than those offered to whites; home-repair loans are more often denied to black applicants; and black-owned housing stock in urban communities do not rise in value nearly as much as homes in white communities (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:175). Today, the U.S. tax codes further privilege whites—who have historically been facilitated in asset accumulation—and disadvantage asset-poor African American citizens (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:174).

These barriers to asset accumulation are compounded with specific racialized policies that have a significant impact on the ability of black U.S. citizens to build and maintain successful enterprises. Black entrepreneurs in the U.S., until the middle of the 20th century, were limited to a restricted African American market, to which white-owned businesses also had access (Walker 1986). Black

entrepreneurs were excluded from lucrative mainstream white markets, which has today resulted in a higher preponderance of small-scale, rather than large-scale, black-owned businesses (Walker 1986). Black business owners have been systematically blocked from low-interest government-backed loans, and barred from other means of wealth accumulation that white business owners have access to (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:22). For example, several states had laws blocking African Americans from investing in the stock market up until the early 20th century (Oliver and Shapiro 1997:48). Racialized discrepancies in credit-card issuance have important implications for understanding entrepreneurship. For example, whites often receive cards with higher credit limits, and lower interest rates than African Americans do (Williams 1996:352). Those white entrepreneurs offered competitive cards with interest-free grace periods can use these incentives to invest in their businesses, while applicants of color, who receive lower credit card limits and less added perks, do not receive the added benefit of this business asset.

These racially discriminatory policies that privilege white U.S. citizens have an enormous impact on the ability of African Americans to participate in the local food economy. Black urban farmers typically start their farming enterprises with less generational wealth and familial financial support, a decreased likelihood of being approved for a low-interest rate business loan or credit card, and significantly decreased likelihood of being hired for a low-wage job to support themselves while they establish their new farming business (Pager et al. 2009), a strategy used by many white urban farmers. African Americans are also forced to operate within a racialized real estate industry that is more likely to rent or sell urban land to urban

farmers with ‘white’ sounding names than stereotypically ‘black’ sounding names (Turner et al. 2013). These racialized employment and entrepreneurship dynamics contradict David’s assertion that any urban farmer can make a living growing food in Kansas City and highlight the problematics of national-level celebration of the potential “green jobs” that can be created by green urban development in post-industrial U.S. cities. (cf. Alkon 2012).

Infrastructural support for urban agriculture businesses is vital, as start-up costs are varied and expensive. Knowledge acquisition is expensive in and of itself. In Kansas City, apprenticeship programs and workshops that are widely regarded as having trained the most successful urban growers are costly to participate in. One apprenticeship program—which includes farm planning workshops held by area experts, and offers (requires) 40-hour unpaid work weeks with host farms in the Kansas City area—costs \$500 dollars to enroll in, and demands a time commitment that would be difficult to balance with a paying job, or child care. Apprenticing, and other variations of unpaid manual labor, are valuable currency in the Kansas City food economy. Apprenticing with a respected urban farmer will set a new farmer up for success in local grant applications and in sales network connections. While some apprenticeships pay a low-wage salary (most often around \$3 dollars an hour), the hardship imposed by unlivable wages with no benefits is not recognized within the foodie community. For example, when I discussed the difficulty of acquiring affordable farm training, a white middle-aged foodie responded to me: “Why don’t people just go apprentice with Stony Crest [urban farm]? It only pays ten dollars an hour but you get to work with rockstars.” Such discourse assumes that in-training

farmers will be able to supplement their income in other ways, or rely on family assistance during this time—as many young, white, new urban farmers do. This is not to say that self-made urban farmers are not common, nor successful; rather, apprenticeships are a valuable currency, bringing respect and legitimation to a new farm-business entrepreneur, but are costly to participants in ways not always visible even to those offering the apprenticeships.

Land acquisition also poses a barrier for beginning urban farmers. While the Land Bank offers vacant plots of land for often around \$100 dollars, and popular foodie discourse incentivizes the idea of buying a ‘fixer-upper’ and its conjoined vacant lot to farm on, the infrastructural investment in making such homes livable, and such land ready to farm, are high. Racialized lending continues today, and makes it significantly more difficult for African Americans to receive home improvement loans. Preparing urban land for farming requires soil testing (a service offered by the University of Missouri Extension, which costs around \$15 for a basic test, or significantly more if a land-owner worries about arsenic or other urban pollutants); soil amendments (compost and fertilizer, necessary to start high production SPIN vegetable farming—this can cost around \$3,000 to \$5,000 dollars for a quarter acre, or around 3 urban lots, with medium-grade compost); and tilling and land clearing (processes which are labor intensive if carried out by oneself, or expensive if hired out). Water infrastructure is possibly the most expensive addition to a vacant lot an urban farmer needs to make. Installation of a water line is necessary (otherwise, one must carry or transport water from their house, or ask a neighbor near the farm if you can tap into their line) and expensive, costing several

thousands of dollars. The city government offers water grants to urban farmers, administered through the Kansas City Grower's Club, but applicants must demonstrate that they have already grown on the plot for at least one season—meaning that farmers must struggle through one farming season, piecing together water sources, before receiving assistance. Farmers who attempt to farm communally-shared land (such as in community gardens) or borrowed land (offered up, often, by elderly neighbors who have no plans for its use) run into costly problems. I spoke with several black urban growers who grew food to sell at market on numerous community garden plots, across the city—sometimes as many as four—meaning they would drive to four different urban locations, almost daily, to water and check on their crops. One farmer told me how at one of her community gardens, a fellow gardener froze the water pipes by leaving them on over the winter—a problem which the city did not come to fix until June, at which point her spring crops had died and she lost out on nearly two months of profits at the farmer's market. Another had his garden flooded when a fellow community gardener forgot to turn off the water hose. Farmers who do not own their own land lose autonomy over their market production, which has a drastic effect on farm profitability.

The infrastructure involved in produce preparation, storage, and transport is also highly expensive. Urban farmers have to consider where they will wash produce before market (many, who can afford it, build wash stations near their crop fields), the added water costs of vegetable processing, where and how to store produce before market, packaging for products, and transport considerations (such

as a large cooler, or a cooled-trailer, so that produce does not wilt before reaching its market). Availability of a large walk-in cooler is one of the most valuable farm assets, because it allows farmers to harvest and process vegetables on a more manageable schedule (instead of harvesting right before market, so vegetables will be their freshest), and allows farmers to scale up (as many black urban growers I know could not grow more vegetables than would fit comfortably in their home fridges). A less expensive alternative to a professional walk-in cooler, advocated by many farmers I spoke with, is a shed with a high-powered air-conditioning unit installed inside of it. While this is a lower-cost option, the start up expense involved in buying a shed, an air conditioner, and paying for a constantly-running sub-zero cooling bill can be an extravagant cost, especially for those who have not received any income from their urban farm as of yet.

Other infrastructure costs include season-extension products—such as hoop houses, high tunnels, and green houses. While they are not necessary for an urban farmer, they offer a significant market advantage; farmers with high tunnels can plant crops earlier in the season, and be the first to bring certain products to market. USDA high tunnel grants are advertised locally, and foodie-led workshops assist farmers in applying for this infrastructure. But the grants offered are matching grants and reimbursements, meaning that farmers will have to have several thousands of dollars available for this expense before applying for a grant. Farmers unable to afford these costs have told me they feel embarrassed about asking for help, or for assistance with low-cost alternatives. For example, at one of the SPIN farmer training classes David co-hosted, the topic of discussion centered on

low tunnels—essentially mini high-tunnels, only several feet off the ground, that provide minor weather and bug protection, vital in protecting against locally-devastating squash bugs, for instance. One white farmer in the room, a woman who had recently left a high-income marketing career to buy peri-urban land to farm, told us how she had found a “cheap” low tunnel kit—\$400 dollars for around a thousand square feet. A black urban farmer sitting next to me, a middle-aged man who had been farming small-scale for several years, whispered, “would hula hoops cut in half work, covered with sheets?” and declined to ask this question to the group, when prompted by the course instructor. Foodie discourse denies that these costs are prohibitive (in this case, glossing over the fact that several decades in a high-paying career could allow some farmers to draw from stores of wealth that are out of reach for minority farmers) and creates a privileged space in which farmers unable to afford basic infrastructure feel ashamed, and unable to seek outside assistance.

Later in this chapter, I discuss the racialized barriers that affect black farmers in restaurant sales. In contrast to the restaurant market, farmers markets are spoken of in Kansas City as a market accessible to all, even hobby farmers; this is untrue. Farmers who earn a consistent profit at farmers markets meet considerable infrastructural costs in order to do so. While a farmer can sell uncut produce at market without having any certification, other market products and services—that often lead to higher market earnings—can cost quite a bit. Vendor fees to sell at the city’s most trafficked and profitable markets, such as City Market, can be several hundred dollars per market day, or around \$15 dollars, for smaller East side

markets. Some markets, such as City Market, require vendors to have proof of up-to-date car insurance, as their cars will be on market property. Vendors need to apply for a market sales permit through the health department, which costs \$25 dollars per year. Additional permits and inspections are required if a farmer sells eggs or meat. It is often recommended that farmers apply for food liability insurance, as a customer illness can be a costly mistake. One of the cheapest food liability insurance plans costs around \$300 dollars per year. Offering a free berry or radish could result in higher sales, but if farmers wish to offer samples of their produce to customers, they either need to sell at a market that has been certified to offer samples (meaning, they have an inspector-certified sink and kitchen on site), which often means vendor fees will be higher, or they need to apply for a sampling permit themselves, in which case they need to illustrate that they have a working sink, gloves, tongs, and other food service materials. Additionally, I have been told by local farmers market managers that farmers sell more at market when they offer produce priced by weight, rather than priced per piece. In order to sell produce priced by weight, farmers need to purchase and pay for inspection of an N-chip certified scale, a piece of equipment that starts at around \$250 dollars. Farmers need to bring sufficient cooling mechanisms for their products at farmers markets—which are often located on tarmac in parking lots, where heat is reflected back onto produce. Without adequate ice and cooling (ice at such a scale that it needs to be bought by the bag, rather than created at home in trays), produce appears limp and is less likely to be purchased. In addition to all of these regulatory and safety costs, infrastructural investment in market aesthetics is a costly endeavor that

consistently leads to greater farmer profit. Higher-earning farmers have invested in farm logo and branding development, large banners for their farm stand, table cloths, decorative jars and baskets to display their produce, and consistently carry a large variety and volume of produce—this kind of bounty attracts customers. Offering a high volume of a wide variety of products involves, of course, infrastructural investment and labor in developing a diversified farm, or the social networks to partner with farmers who offer products you do not, such as honey, which you offer to sell for a cut of the profit. During another SPIN farming class, a black urban farmer highlighted this issue. David instructed the class on farmers market displays, stating: “All of you have flat displays. You need to elevate produce. You need to have potatoes spilling out of tipped over buckets!” A black urban farmer sitting near me whispered to those of us sitting near her, “I can’t get abundance. I have two raised beds, and in each I have 12 plants. I can’t grow enough to spill out of buckets.” While abundant farmers market displays may seem easy to achieve, creating this abundance—and sometimes leaving with all of it, now wilted and unsellable, on slow days at low-traffic markets—involves costly infrastructural investment.

Value-added products sell well at farmers markets, and can set a farmer apart in a market setting, but certifications and safety regulations make this an unaffordable route of entrepreneurship for many black urban farmers. If, for example, a farmer—or, really, any urban resident—wanted to sell canned jams and jellies at market, they would have to write down the recipe exactly as they plan to use it, and send it to Kansas State University for safety testing and certification. This

certification costs \$300 dollars per recipe. Additionally, Kansas City, Missouri laws require any value-added product sold at market to be cooked in a certified kitchen—meaning that cooks will either have to pay to have their home kitchens brought up to code and certified, or they will need to travel to, and rent out (the average rate for a daily rental in Kansas City is \$100 dollars), commercially-available certified kitchens. A recent one-day workshop in crafting safely canned acidified foods to sell at farmers markets, offered by the University of Missouri, had a registration cost of \$375 dollars—a special discounted rate offered to urban growers in Kansas City. Sometimes, David told us at a SPIN farming class, depending on what you’re selling—for example, cookies might be considered low-risk—your farmers market manager might let you sell value-added products that have not been prepared in a certified kitchen. He told us, however, that this is something you undertake at your own risk, and shared a story about one of his vendors—who sold cookies and donuts—who was caught by a surprise inspector visit and forced to throw out all of her baked goods. I spoke with a number of African American women, in particular, who had been told by friends and family that their baked goods would sell well at market, and had looked into doing so, only to be discouraged by the high prices of certification involved. These experiences undermine hegemonic public discourse that portrays small-scale urban food production as a profitable career opportunity available to anyone in the urban core.

Finally, while certainly not necessary, organic production methodologies—and organic certification—are highly valuable for an urban farmer, and a highly expensive designation to earn. Farmers with organic certification can access a more

elite consumer base and garner a much higher price for their product. Many chefs at high-end restaurants look specifically for organic certified produce. Farmers who can document that they farm with organic practices can sell at Brookside Farmers Market—one of the most elite and profitable markets in Kansas City. But to gain organic certification, farmers have to account for land use practices for the past three years, demonstrate, and keep records showing, that every input in their farm—even straw—is certified organic, perform lab tests on water used on their farm, and pay around \$350 dollars for an organic certifier to come and inspect their farm. Farming organically offers a huge market advantage for urban farmers, but is financially out of reach for a majority of the black and brown urban growers with whom I spoke.

Racialized Social Networks as a Barrier to Profitability in the Local Food Economy

Racialized barriers in the local food economy do not only take form in economic expenses; social networks, and racialized access to specific, profitable social networks, are an unacknowledged aspect of urban farm business success in Kansas City. Urban farmers who attend social events and workshops hosted by powerful foodie-led organizations, such as Grow KC, the Hunger Coalition, and Healthy Communities KC, gain access to discounted or special rate farm equipment, opportunities for collaboration with other farmers, and access to potential sales networks. For example, one urban grower, who operates a small urban garden consultancy business, told me how when she first started out, she had a hard time affording starter plants for the gardens she was hired to design. She had friends,

however, at Grow KC, and they shared extra transplants left over from spring production at the refugee agricultural training program with her. The next year, her friend at Grow KC told her to come by their greenhouse near the end of winter and pick out exactly what she wanted, for free. “It can be so expensive, but when things are donated like that, it’s really nice,” the grower told me. Donations such as this one can make or break an urban farm business in its first few years, and are predicated entirely off of a farmer’s ability to cultivate relationships with white, upper-middle class foodies. In the following section I first outline how these relationships are cultivated at foodie networking events, and lead to farm profit. I then turn to a discussion of how these racialized relationships impact farm-to-restaurant sales.

Networking Events, Civil Rights, and Intersectional Farmer Identity Politics

Grow KC’s yearly Farmers and Friends meeting—dubbed the ‘white farmers and friends meeting’ by many black urban growers in Kansas City—is the site where many of these valuable connections are made. While many foodie created and occupied spaces can provide valuable connections, I focus here on the Farmers and Friends meeting because it is often spoken about in Kansas City, and is particularly racially-divisive. Farmers and Friends is a one-day conference, held at a church in the wealthy Brookside neighborhood in Kansas City, that attracts urban growers, local chefs, local foodies who have connections with local chefs and food distributors, and foodie-led nonprofits. In the morning, attendees are invited to present information pertinent to local growers, distributors, and purchasers. I have witnessed the advertisement of classes, discounted farm equipment rental, and farmers market managers notifying growers of new regulations. Small-scale

transplant producers—who grow organic, heirloom produce varieties that have been acclimated to the local growing climate—advertise their products at discounted rates, products which are highly valuable in a local market that demands unique varieties of vegetables. These producers grow specialized transplants in a greenhouse or under grow lights, a costly and skilled labor many small-scale growers do not invest in, and are difficult to find if you do not meet them in person at events such as Farmers and Friends.

A new, small-scale, high-quality organic compost producer advertised their products at Farmers and Friends in the spring of 2018, and offered steep discounts for those who mentioned Grow KC when they called to place an order. In informal ways as well, this event is valuable: for example, farmers or foodies who own expensive equipment, such as chainsaws and soil excavators, often agree to share or loan these items with farmers they meet at Farmers and Friends. Connections are made that allow farmers to collaborate and offer a diverse range of products through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, in which customers pay a lump sum for a weekly offering of produce, and a large variety of product is expected. One black farmer who runs a small community garden in the Northeast, for example, told me that she had been trying to acquire compost for her low-income neighbors, who were trying to grow food in their backyards, but it was not growing well: “they needed good quality compost that would make their gardens grow better.” She attended Farmers and Friends a couple years ago, one of only three black farmers in attendance, and sat in on a discussion on soil health moderated by a woman who owns an organic compost company in Kansas City:

I sat through her session, learned some things, and stayed after. We got to talking, and by the time I was done telling her about my neighborhood she was almost in tears, saying 'Oh, we gotta help out!' So that's how it started. She was my liaison and made it happen. Now we have this free compost day every year, and they provide it all.

Connections such as these are highly valuable for urban farm businesses, or in the case of this farmer, in supporting low-income neighborhood activities and goals.

As the term in circulation "white farmers and friends" implies, many black urban growers I spoke with did not want to, and/or did not feel welcome to, attend foodie networking events such as this one hosted by Grow KC. This is for a number of reasons—for one, numerous foodies have themselves voiced to me discomfort in speaking about agriculture with African American growers. This is evident, for example, in Nancy's statements about how uncomfortable she is made by her black farmer friend telling her that not too long ago, he would have been lynched for talking to her (discussed further in Chapter 3). White upper-middle class foodies feel more comfort with those who have unequivocally positive associations with agriculture, and actively seek out conversation and connection with these individuals, avoiding conversation with those who might have painful or mixed associations with the activity. Several black urban growers told me they felt this white foodie discomfort and inability, or unwillingness, to speak about broader structural inequalities affecting them made it difficult to network in these circles. One black grower told me he did not like attending these events because "they're liars. There's no organization in this city that deals with black hunger, yet they all say they do." Another black urban grower, who runs a small peri-urban farm and

considers himself friendly acquaintances with several white foodies, told me how painful it was to engage with them in more than surface-level conversation, stating:

They ['foodie' friends] tell me when they buy a house, and they've all bought houses East of Troost. And it hurts me, literally. It's like ouch—I can capitalize on the fact that all these black folks pushed down property values enough to make it accessible to me. And purchasing this house and farming in its backyard will ensure my equity and probably push out neighbors in the process. You wanna come to my new house?' And I've kind of learned to limit my exposure and not react in rage, because it's not healthy.

This grower, Marcus—a pseudonym—indicates how black geographies (McKittrick 2006; 2011) are intricately woven into all of his interactions with white local foodies. Though they share ideologies about the importance of organic food production and diverse ecologies, the fact that these foodies draw on urbicide and black dispossession to further their urban farm business goals creates an unbridgeable divide for Marcus.

Another issue for some black urban growers is that an overwhelming majority of these prominent foodies, who host and attend these networking events are women, and a sizable number of them identify as lesbian or queer. Marcus once shared with me that he considered one of the most dangerous people in the world to be a “kind white woman,” whom he said had historically inflicted the most violence on black people. Several black urban farmers told me that in their interactions with these foodies—in person at networking events, and online, interacting with them via Facebook and Instagram—they speak vocally and assertively about women's rights, and LGBTQIA rights, while rarely speaking about racialized police violence, housing inequity affecting black urban communities, or any other civil rights discussion that affects people of color. Bob, a middle-aged African American

aquaponics farmer who sells at several East side farmers markets, spoke to this issue as we drove together to the seed supply store one spring morning. I had asked him if he would be attending a Grow KC happy hour that evening—an event that provides a good opportunity to network with, and potentially sell produce to, chefs. In response, referencing the fact that Grow KC is run by several self-identified queer, feminist women, Bob replied:

Feminists and the gay community have *never* cared about our issues. The thing is, the Civil Rights movement, Dr. King's push for civil rights, that got take up by so many people—the gay movement, the feminist movement, whatever—that it took attention away from the plight of black people in America. That's just not right. That's not right.

Bob highlights a disjuncture voiced at national levels (cf. Kearl 2015). For some African Americans, the comparison of the gay rights movement to the civil rights movement is felt as an unfair one that minimizes the struggles faced by black Americans. As several black growers pointed out to me, this is felt as even more frustrating when those making the comparison are drawing on white privilege, are upper-middle class, and hold leadership positions. These intersectional tensions highlight debates about the interlocking forces of class, race, and gender—debates that have been argued within the context of the women's movement, for example, as women of color have pushed back against purely gendered understandings of women's oppression (hooks 1981; Ware 2015).

This issue is highlighted in local discussions among black urban growers about *Pigford v. Glickman*, and USDA treatment of 'minority' farmers in the past several decades. Numerous black urban farmers voiced frustration to me that farming grants often classify white women as minorities, eligible for minority farmer

support. The USDA Farm Service Agency offers a number of micro loans for those who identify as minority farmers; meaning, for the USDA, they self-identify as women, African Americans, Alaskan Natives, American Indians, Hispanic, Asian, or Native Hawaiians. Neferet, the black woman who founded Sacred Life Urban Farm, once told me in response to being told that a local white woman—an upper-middle class retiree—had received one of these loans: “she thinks she’s disadvantaged, huh?,” drawing on and referencing her own double—racialized and gendered—discrimination (cf. Collins 2000). Another black urban grower, who I am calling Arnold, who farms in his backyard and sells within his neighborhood, told me, in response to me asking why he did not attend Farmers and Friends that year,

Well, I’m gonna answer that like this: you know the Pigford v. USDA? Black people won that. Money was set aside to increase their ability to farm. Because of USDA discrimination against us. Now, because of inclusion, also included in ‘disadvantaged’ populations are white women. Also included is sexual orientation. So 400 years of discrimination on black people, now that money gets filtered out. We have to compete on an open playing field with other ‘minorities’ for attention. That’s why I don’t want to go to their [Grow KC’s] event.

While his understanding of how Pigford settlement money is disbursed is inaccurate (money set aside for this settlement is disbursed through a highly specific and strict compensatory process, described earlier, for black farmers) that is not the main point Arnold is trying to make with his statement. Arnold feels that the specific violence enacted upon black U.S. citizens is dismissed when he is lumped together into the category of minority along with other groups that have faced discrimination. As a result, it is painful for him to attend networking events with people he considers to be more privileged than him, but who are nevertheless

eligible for minority farmer assistance. This disjuncture between understandings of history, civil rights, and intersectional identity (Collins 2009) combine to create ‘white public space’ (Page 1994) at networking events for urban farmers in Kansas City, spaces that make some black farmers feel unsafe. One black farmer told me, “I want to get my information out to other people, but I don’t want to talk to those people [white ‘foodies’]. When I didn’t have tomatoes or onions for my CSA, it would have been nice to know a farmer who I could get surplus from. We’re so isolated and cut off.”

These contradictory understandings of privilege, oppression, and intersectional identity cannot, and should not, be compared—it is neither possible nor useful to analyze who has been discriminated against most. Rather, these debates are important because they point toward the fraught process of rights-claims for systemically disadvantaged populations, and are informed by U.S. histories of those in power suppressing class consciousness and uprising through the pitting of minority groups against one another (for example, this is evident in the ways wealthy white slave-owners worked to create hierarchies of difference between captive Africans and poor whites) (Hartigan 2005).

Selling to Chefs: White Privilege in Restaurant Labor and Farmer Sales

Restaurant contracts are highly lucrative for urban farmers, and also highly racialized and class-based arrangements. Farmers growing young specialty greens or microgreens, in particular, can find restaurant sales to be their most profitable outlet. A half-pound bag of arugula, for example, might sell at a farmer’s market for around three to five dollars, but can be sold to a restaurant for \$16-\$18 dollars a

pound. Because high-end restaurants often prefer young greens for salads and plate decoration, urban farmers who exclusively grow greens for restaurants can also see a quicker turnaround on their profits; the crop can be planted successively throughout the season, and there is less waiting time for it to come to full growth. These sales can also, but not always, be more consistent than farmers market sales—if a farmer cultivates a good relationship with a chef, that chef will collaborate with the farmer to grow specific produce as their menu changes seasonally and will give the farmer a good idea of how much produce they can expect to sell per week in each season. This sort of reliability is nonexistent in farmers market sales. Farmers who sell to high end restaurants also, often, have their farm name prominently displayed on the menu; some restaurants also host ‘meet our farmer’ dinners, in which diners are invited to mingle with farmers over cocktails—an arrangement that often leads to diners later seeking out these farmers at farmers markets, or signing on to be CSA members. If a farmer is successful in arranging a sales contract with one high-end farm-to-table restaurant, it is likely that this reputation will make it easier for them to sign another contract with another restaurant. Because of all of these reasons, restaurant sales are one of the most highly regarded, stable, and lucrative marketing avenues for urban farmers in Kansas City.

Accessing this market, however, is a highly racialized affair. Without a personal connection to the chef, it is nearly impossible for a farmer to create a sales contract with a restaurant. Often, these personal connections are created by applying for, and working in, server positions in high-end restaurants. In Kansas City, numerous

young urban farmers work front-of-the house positions at these farm-to-table restaurants for several years while setting up their farms, then approach the chef or restaurant owner, with whom they are often collegial at that point, to create a market outlet for their produce. Restaurant labor, however, is often racially segregated. Servers in Kansas City have told me that white men are more likely to earn server positions, and people of color are more likely to end up working in the back of the house, or as busers. Marcus, a young black urban grower who has sales contracts with several brunch cafes in Kansas City, told me about his experience waiting tables at high-end restaurants:

I worked at this [high-end farm-to-table restaurant on the Country Club Plaza]. It's the bourgeoisie for sure. And I applied to be a server—most of the restaurant jobs I've had have been front of the house. I waited tables at [a mid-range farm-to-table restaurant] for a little bit. But somehow, there, they didn't want me to be the front of the house. They had a lot of French items on the menu—mussels, and frites, and some other stuff. I took a few French classes in college, so I could correctly pronounce this stuff. And in my interview I was like 'hey, your menu has some French stuff. I can pronounce all that.' And one of the managers interviewing me kind of laughed. I didn't get the feeling that they believed me. And then I realized that they really didn't believe me, because I was hired for the back of the house, and all the white servers up front were like 'hey, can you tell me how to pronounce this?'

While cultivating relationships with chefs and restaurant owners often requires a more prestigious front-of-the-house position, these positions are more often given to white applicants, regardless of previous serving experience. In addition, an overwhelming majority of the chefs and owners of farm to table restaurants in Kansas City are white, upper-middle class or wealthy, men. Philip, a black man in his thirties who apprenticed with Grow KC, and was currently apprenticing with a highly profitable white male microgreen farmer at his

greenhouse, spoke to this issue, and explained to me further why he could not, and did not, create sales contracts with chefs at these restaurants:

At [the farm business I am apprenticing in] they have about 75 contracts with area top-notch restaurants. So on harvest day, we harvest and package stuff and, and they have a big table where [the farm owners] lay out all the orders, and I see all these restaurants. And the fact that they have these accounts is because they're on a first name basis with the chef at one of these restaurants. And they're texting the chef at these restaurants—is opal basil okay, or do you need the Genovese? And so they're on a very personal relationship with these chefs. I would already always assume that these aren't particularly the kind of people that know two black people, much less know one that they're in business with. Much less know one that they're on a first name basis with, that they can text with. And I've worked fine dining, and I guess I could have tried to make an effort to get my local organic produce in there—all those restaurants buy parsley, oregano, basil, and thyme several times a week. I can do that for them. But the dynamics of fine dining are the dynamics of the United States—the hierarchy is color coded, and is reinforced through violence. There's no blood, but there's lost hours, there's verbal abuse, sexual abuse, all of this. Being on a first name basis with those folks is not something that I'm interested in, much less feeding their clientele.

Philip highlights how personal connections are vital to the cultivation of secure, profitable, restaurant contracts for urban farmers—being comfortable enough with a chef to text back and forth inquiries about basil varieties is vital to this business relationship. Moreover, Philip does not want to cultivate close relationships with chefs at these lucrative markets in Kansas City, some of whom vocally self-identify as Republicans. For Philip, a self-identified black liberation farmer, it would be ideologically at odds with his social justice concerns and commitments to sell to white local foodies. White upper-middle class farmers who are able to create close relationships with upper-middle class white chefs are privy to vital market information. One white farmer told me he knew to grow and sell three rounds of arugula cuttings before pulling out the plant, because arugula gets

spicier with each cutting and his friend, a chef at a high-end restaurant, told him he liked spicier salads with new greens. Another farmer, who holds contracts at several farm-to-table restaurants, told me that he knew which greens to grow and offer to chefs at new American restaurants, because his time working as a server at these establishments taught him which types of greens were favored because they held salad dressing the best. A white woman farmer told me once that her friend, executive chef at a high-end farm-to-table restaurant, gave her a sales contract as they met over coffee one day, when he asked: “grow me something weird for this salad I’m planning,” giving her the freedom and security to experiment with vegetable production as she knew she had a market for the item no matter what. In these ways, entrepreneurship in Kansas City’s local food economy is intimately linked to the ability, and desire, to cultivate close relationships with white, upper-middle class foodie men.

Restaurant contracts are even somewhat difficult for white, upper-middle class farmers to secure—a discourse that is drawn on, and promoted by foodies in order to elide the racialized barriers that exist to effectively exclude black farmers from this market. Without friendships, or social obligation, many chefs even at high-end restaurants are unwilling, or unable, to pay the high price per pound requested by small-scale urban farmers. I asked Anna, a white woman in her 50s, who owns and operates a peri-urban farm with her husband, and who helped teach the SPIN farmer classes, if she thought there were any specific racial barriers for black farmers in the local food economy, and she responded:

No. I think it’s all about the produce, not the color of the people. I mean, if you have amazing produce, I don’t think people care what color you are. I mean, it’s

hard for any of us to sell to chefs—they just don't get the value of what we do. It's not about your color.

While it is difficult for farmers, white and black, to reach out to and create social networks and sales networks with chefs—who face financial and infrastructural constraints that make accepting local produce an extra chore—there are specific barriers in place making this process nearly impossible for black farmers. In Kansas City's local food economy, a farmer's identity is part of their sales package. Foodies are drawn to purchase local food because of a desire to 'know where their food comes from,' and by ethical imperatives that are informed by specific whitened understandings of agriculture and U.S. history (Alkon and McCullen 2011). White bodies, and white farmers, accompany a marketing pitch and sales narrative that draws on romantic imagery of the white yeoman farmer, and resonates with this specific foodie narrative. Black bodies, and black farmers, do not index this idyllic picture. Sean, a young, black, small-scale farmer who manages a garden program at East High School, highlighted this discrepancy, in a verbal disruption of white public space at a SPIN farming class. Interrupting a white urban farmer, who was discussing how he and his partner schedule restaurant deliveries throughout the week, Sean snapped:

You keep telling people on the East side that you and your partner make \$10,000 dollars every summer selling vegetables and that we can too. I'm gonna need you to stop doing that because we're not white, and we can't just go into a restaurant and be like 'buy my beets, buy my carrots, buy my onions,' like you.

Here, Sean highlights that the perception of bodies which create locally-grown produce is an undivorceable aspect of the value of that produce. His body, a black

body, does not carry the same value or currency that a white farmer's body would. The narrative that accompanies his body, one that indexes an economic system predicated on the forced exploitation of agricultural slave labor, imbues his produce with a different, less favored, value than a white farmers would—which would index a “white farm imaginary,” of white homesteaders and Westward expansion (Alkon and McCullen 2011). Sean's statement echoes the experience Adrienne shared with me as well—while both she and the white farmer Sean interrupted often wear overalls, have hands crusted with dirt at the end of a workday, and presented chefs with high quality, locally, organically, grown produce, the white farmer's positionality added a value to his product that her blackness did not. This idea that their undeniable blackness made it more difficult to sell produce to white chefs was commonly voiced to me by black urban farmers in Kansas City.

Black Sales Networks in Kansas City

While black farmers face systemic, institutionalized, and interpersonal racism in Kansas City's local food economy that make scaling up their farm businesses difficult, they are often selling in expansive networks that are unrecognized in hegemonic discourse painting the urban core as a food desert. These social networks and systems of support have developed—much like the social networks used to access food, discussed in the previous chapter—within an economic system that marginalizes non-white food producers. Black urban growers sell often in farm stands—set up on their own front lawns, in front of gas stations and local cell-phone shops, through church networks and on Sunday service, and often via Facebook (growers will post when they have, or expect to have, a crop ready, and will ask

Facebook friends to name their own price and delivery time and place). Marcus operates what he calls a BSA—black supported agriculture—in which he sells solely to black friends and relatives, delivering weekly baskets of produce from his farm for an income-dependent sliding scale. One black urban professional told me that his grandfather owned and operated a farm south of Kansas City for nearly a decade, selling produce to neighbors, and taking meat orders for hogs and chicken that he would raise and butcher himself. When his grandfather grew too old to care for the large farm himself, he started a small game-meat business in Kansas City, off the radar of the health department. His grandfather would hunt for game on the outskirts of the city, collecting raccoons, pheasant, pigeon, and rabbit, and would drive up and down Paseo in his truck with a sign that read “Coon Man”—a slur for African American of which his grandfather was unaware—and included his number. His grandfather would get countless calls daily, he told me, and drove around the metropolitan area delivering game meat until his health no longer permitted it.

In innovative ways, as they have been, and are, excluded from formal sales networks, black entrepreneurs have flourished in the “local” food economy. Black entrepreneurship has existed long before white local foodies developed an interest in knowing where their food came from. I met numerous black urban residents who bought produce on a semi-regular or regular basis from small-scale black growers; in this way, vast amounts of urban-grown produce circulates in Kansas City ‘food deserts’ through the entrepreneurship and community engagement of black farmers. These forms of entrepreneurship are unrecognized contributions to the

local food economy, and creative responses to a white economy that through policy and discrimination works to exclude black growers and black-owned businesses.

Chapter 7: “Productive” Green Urban Citizenship and the Strategic Utilization of Urban Agriculture Policy to Meet Community Needs

Rose Hill (a pseudonym), a neighborhood in Jackson County, Missouri, is organized and led by Rose Hill Neighborhood Council (RHNC), and has been highly successful in garnering city and private support for infrastructural development, largely due to their promotion of themselves as a ‘green’ neighborhood, committed to projects that encourage ‘healthy’ urban living. Nearly a decade ago—cognizant of the fact that embracing green urban development would be viewed positively by Kansas City policy makers—RHNC founded a community garden for Rose Hill residents, started offering monthly gardener/farmer training classes in their community center, and established their own farmers market. Rose Hill’s farmers market, community garden program, and gardener training classes are often mentioned—in the media, in opinions shared by city council members, and in hegemonic discourse in Kansas City—as proof that the neighborhood is *different* than other urban neighborhoods: this discourse proclaims, Rose Hill is trying to make do with what they have; Rose Hill takes pride in its community; and Rose Hill deserves support because they try to take care of themselves.

RHNC does work diligently to improve the neighborhood, and is one of the most active neighborhood councils in the metropolitan area. RHNC is faced with the difficult task, however, of listening and responding to a diversity of ‘community’ perspectives, as Rose Hill’s promotion of itself as a green neighborhood has begun to slowly gentrify the area. In 2010, the Kansas City Land Bank, created in consultation with Healthy Communities KC, began offering up low cost ‘fixer uppers’ and vacant lots—explicitly marketing this opportunity to prospective urban farmers. A vast

majority of this land is located east of Troost, much of it in Rose Hill, where hypersegregation, racialized lending practices, and systemic disinvestment have created a vast amount of vacancy (Figure 7.1). This has led to an influx of primarily young, white, middle to upper-middle class individuals—many hoping to start urban farming businesses—who can here afford to acquire a larger property than would be financially feasible anywhere else in the urban core, and who are drawn specifically to Rose Hill because of its vocal promotion of green urban infrastructure. As a result, Rose Hill, a historically black neighborhood, is changing. The African American population in Rose Hill, originally concentrated in this area east of Troost Avenue, through purposeful city and real estate segregation tactics, has dropped from 96% in 2000, to 86% in 2010, and 82% in 2016. Still, nearly a quarter of Rose Hill's population lives on less than \$10,000 dollars a year; 30% are classified as living in poverty.

These changes have been met with conflicting feelings from long-term Rose Hill residents. One spring morning, I joined two life-long residents of Rose Hill in taking a break from weeding our community garden plots. My fellow gardeners, two black women in their 60s who I am calling Agnes and Martha, had been growing food and flowers at the community garden for several years, selling excess produce to their neighbors and family, and sometimes selling at the Rose Hill Farmer's market. Martha, a retiree, spends her free time with her grandchildren; Agnes supplements a part-time janitorial job with income from her produce sales. We sat on a sun-warmed metal park bench in a small park right across the street from our community garden—a space two-city blocks long, where dozens of neatly arranged

raised garden beds are surrounded by a hip-height metal fence. The park includes a brightly colored swing set, surrounded by neatly manicured garden beds. As we watched several children playing in the small park, I commented on how nice it is to have this amenity in the neighborhood, to which Agnes responded: “We had to beg for everything you see around us, and we’re very proud of that.” A young mother of one of the children jogged up to us with an empty water bottle, and asked if there was a water fountain nearby. “No,” Martha sighed, “unfortunately not.” I asked, is the city not willing to put a fountain in? And Martha replied, “No, they aren’t required to because this is a private lot that [RHNC] built themselves. It would cost \$90,000 dollars to install one on our own,” and added, cheerfully, “It’s nice though, isn’t it? This park looks like it’s in Overland Park.” Here, Martha is referring to a wealthy, overwhelmingly white, city located in the southern, Kansas side of the Kansas City metropolitan area. This statement launches Agnes into a story, which she recalled quietly, with frustration in her voice: “One time I was here and a white man in an SUV drove by and said to me ‘This park looks too nice to be here.’ I responded ‘Now what does that mean?’ and I kept asking it, and he flustered.” She laughed, “He sure won’t ask anyone a question like that again.” Agnes laughed, and shared her own story: “Some white people came by the other day, to look at the house next to mine—you know, there’s that vacant lot there too and they wanna farm it. This guy comes to me and says ‘You need to paint your house.’ And I said ‘Excuse me? Will you pay for it?’” Martha gasped: “I hope they don’t move in.”

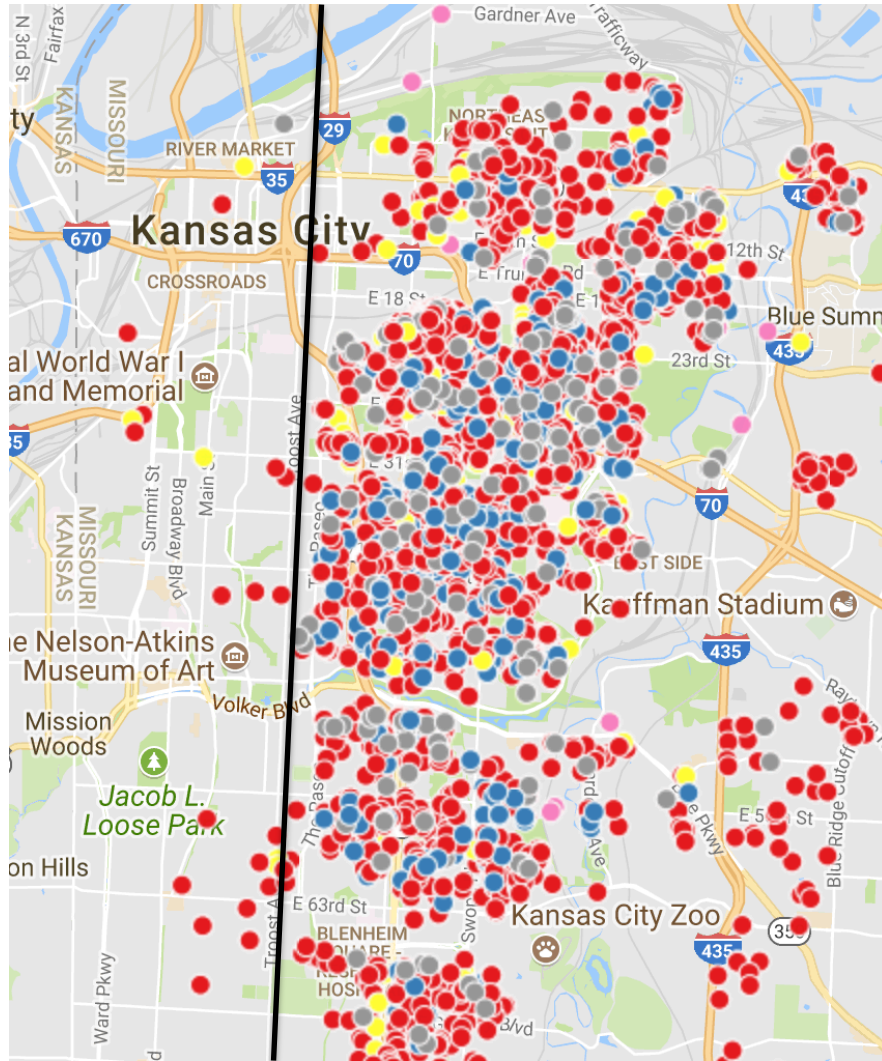


Figure 7.1 Map illustrating available Land Bank properties in Kansas City in March 2018; red dots indicate vacant land, blue indicate residential vacant land, yellow indicates commercial vacant land, and grey indicates unclassified land. A North/South line highlights Kansas City’s racial boundary line, Troost Avenue; a majority of the vacant land advertised to prospective urban farmers is located East of Troost in predominantly African American neighborhoods. Map created by author in Google Maps.

In this chapter, I argue that green urban development discourse, promoted and shaped by foodies, has so powerfully influenced understandings of ‘productive’ urban citizenship that neighborhoods in Kansas City are forced to adopt and promote the movement’s goals in order to receive city and private support.

Neighborhoods in Kansas City that start, and promote, urban garden programs are much more likely to be viewed positively and offered funding for neighborhood development projects. But while these green urban amenities—such as Rose Hill Park and community garden—are desired by, and utilized by neighborhood residents, they also invite outside investment, the in-migration of those whose very presence might raise rents, and racialized critique about who actually deserves such development, as evidenced in the comment made to Agnes: “this park looks too nice to be here.” Rose Hill’s boundaries are already large—the neighborhood encompasses five different zip codes, and includes nearly 6,000 residents—and the in-migration of white urban farmers makes it even more difficult for RHNC to listen and respond to a diversity of community opinions and needs. In this chapter, I explore how RHNC creatively navigates a city environment that privileges green urban development, balancing neighborhood desires for green amenities with concerns about green gentrification and working to listen to a diversity of opinions in a gentrifying neighborhood, where it is acknowledged that the influx of white residents brings both development and displacement. This chapter examines how these tensions are managed.

Specifically, I first provide historical scope for green gentrification in Kansas City, discussing a number of black-led movements against their displacement for green amenities, while situating this chapter within anthropological literature on green/environmental gentrification. I then turn to a discussion of RHNC as a case study for how neighborhoods in Kansas City creatively leverage green urban development projects to acquire funding for other, more urgent community needs. I

do so by first discussing the inception and role of RHNC's community garden and farmers market, outlining how such programs have increased city and private support for the neighborhood. I then share narratives from RHNC staff, who work to ensure that existing low-income Rose Hill residents are not displaced by these developments. I close with a discussion of whose narratives are left out, exploring how the abjectly poor in Rose Hill are excluded and marginalized by green urban development in their neighborhood, despite RHNC attempts at inclusivity.

City-Led Green Urbicide: Furthering 'Green' Development by Protecting White Rights

RHNC takes great pains to resist the displacement that accompanies their green urban development schemes since historically, Kansas City has a storied history of violently displacing black residents for parks and other green urban amenities. Many public amenities were historically, both in Kansas City and nationally, racially exclusionary and discriminatory. One function of the parks movement, notes Cranz, was to provide space for immigrants and lower-class U.S. citizens to assimilate, by rubbing shoulders with the wealthy (1982: 201). In contrast, municipal governments and park boards historically used greenspace to pacify black communities in times of social unrest and riot (Cranz 1982:201).

With the "City Beautiful" movement, park creation became a tool of black displacement. A majority of the local exclusionary green amenities constructed in Kansas City were built between 1893 and 1915, as part of the "City Beautiful Movement" (Shortridge 2012:62). During this time, a coordinated system of 2,050 park acres, linked together with 26 miles of landscaped boulevards, were used as a

mechanism to displace low-income black Kansas City residents from areas of the metropolitan area the city government wished to further develop (Shortridge 2012:62).

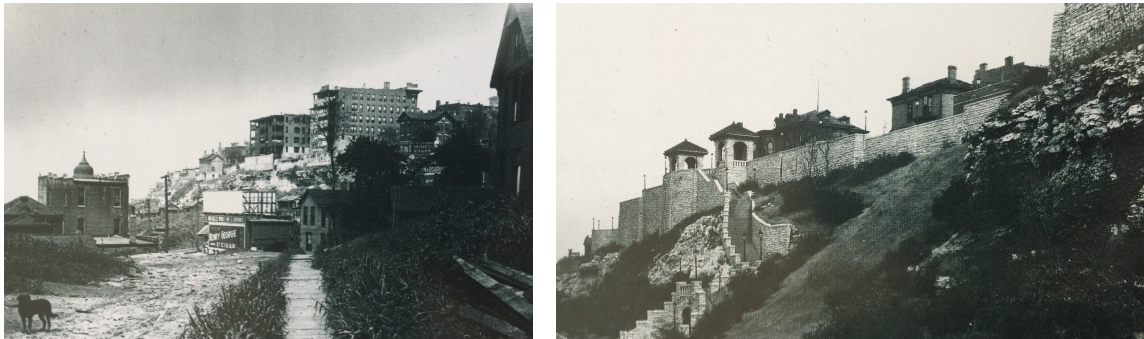


Figure 7.2, left 1900, *The West Bluffs*—an area largely inhabited by low-income black Kansas Citians. Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department have described this photo as illustrating “an unredeemable eyesore” (Mobley and Harris 1991:4). Both photos courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri, Parks and Recreation Department Archives. **Figure 7.3, right** 1921, *The West Bluffs* after demolition for “City Beautiful” development, newly developed as West Terrace Park.



Figure 7.4, left No date, *black-owned residences before demolition for Kansas City’s boulevard, the Paseo*. Both photos courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri, Parks and Recreation Department Archives. **Figure 7.5, right** No date, *the Paseo after resident-displacement, built to improve urban walkability and greenspace*.

This development occurred under the guise of providing urban beauty, clean air, and an increase in neighborhood land values (Shortridge 2012:62). Black low-wage laborers were displaced from the “blighted” West Bluff residences for West Terrace Park (Figure 7.2, 7.3); “shanty”-dwellers, low-income residents living south of Westport, were evicted for the construction of Penn Valley Park. Even middle-class African American homes were labeled “blighted” and razed for the North/South running thoroughfare, the Paseo, an ornamented boulevard dotted with manicured trees and shrubbery (Figure 7.4, 7.5)(Schirmer 2002:16-17). The Hyde Park neighborhood, a then-white community directly west of Troost, was “beautified” and landscaped in 1897, as white home owners complained to city officials about ‘squatters’ living in a ravine along Gillham Road; black low-income residents were pushed east of Troost to turn this space into Hyde Park and Gillham Park (Mobley and Whitnell Harris 1991).

Urban renewal funding in the 1950s and 1960s continued the displacement of black bodies enacted via City Beautiful development during the turn of the 20th century. 80 million dollars, two-thirds federal-funded, were spent on 18 urban renewal projects in Kansas City from 1953 to 1960 (Griffin 2015:83). More than 5,100 acres were redeveloped in Kansas City during this time, displacing an estimated 1,783 black urban residents and business owners—nationally, African American residences accounted for some 70% of all those destroyed for urban “renewal” (Griffin 2015:83). In Jackson County, a black neighborhood that whites called “Nigger Neck” was destroyed to create McCoy Park, part of local tourism development for the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (Griffin 2015:84). The

Harry S. Truman childhood home and historic site, where captive Africans had been recently enslaved for agricultural labor (Figure 7.6, 7.7) was again a site of violence during 1950s urban renewal. African American residents of current day McCoy Park had their homes and farms dismantled to create public greenspace and 'historic' monuments (Figure 7.8).

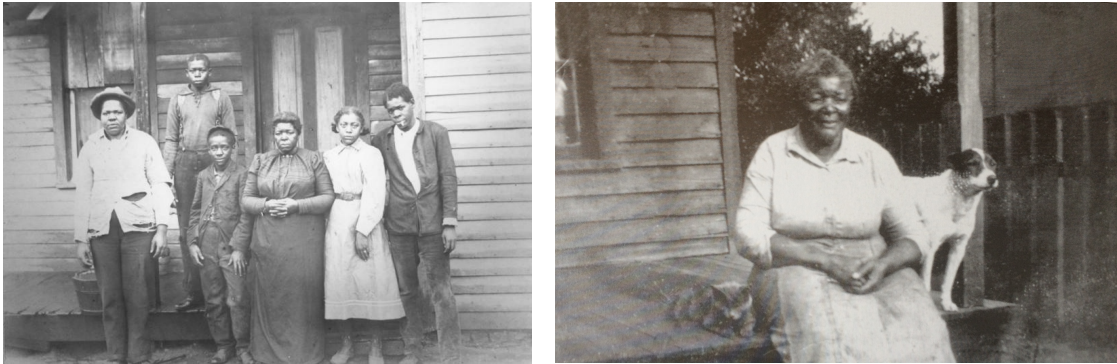


Figure 7.6, left 1890, a family identified as captive Africans enslaved—and later, after emancipation, hired—by the Harry S. Truman family on their Grandview Farm in Jackson County, Missouri. Photo from Harry S. Truman Library and Museum. **Figure 7.7, right** No date, Caroline Simpson Hunter—born as a captive African, and enslaved as a cook for John and Martha Truman on their Grandview Farm. The Trumans also held captive Africans on Lykins farm located in current day Westport, Kansas City Missouri. Photo courtesy of William and Annette Curtis.



Figure 7.8 1961, Israel Cooper—pictured in his backyard farm in Jackson County, Missouri—speaks with an urban renewal fieldworker. Cooper died while urban renewal was enacted in his neighborhood; his farm and other nearby homes were demolished for a city park adjacent Harry S. Truman Library and Museum. Photo courtesy of William and Annette Curtis.

Kansas City's greenspace, created on sites of black displacement, was then often racially-restricted: available to whites only. In 1918, informal "park watchmen," a coalition analogous to today's "neighborhood watch groups," ejected Mrs. Julia Morrison from the Paseo Parkway, adjacent to the black residential area, the Jazz district, telling her "You niggers are not going to light in this Parkway between Ninth and Twelfth streets" (Schirmer 2002:83). When Mrs. Morrison brought the issue to court, members of the Kansas City Board of Parks and Recreation denied that they had ordered segregation of the park, and refused to take corrective action (Schirmer 2002:83). Public participation in enforcing racial

segregation in greenspace was celebrated in Kansas City. For example, an article in *The Sun* in 1914 congratulated two white men for getting black patrons to leave Electric Park, a small amusement park formerly located at 46th and Paseo, stating: “These two men are always handy when wanted. It will be remembered that they broke up the attendance of Colored people at Electric Park...and brought about ‘jimcrowism’ in many other public places” (Schirmer 2002:84). Parks were blatantly used by wealthy developers and neighborhood associations to provide a “buffer” against black encroachment on white communities; a practice J.C. Nichols advocated when he surrounded his Country Club Plaza with a green expanse (Schirmer 2002:112). This practice was copied by neighborhood associations—most notably in conversations between the Linwood Improvement Association (LIA) and the city government. LIA, bordered on the north by Troost and Spring Valley Parks—which were at that time, in 1926, occupied by low-income black families, requested that the Kansas City Board of Commissioners for Parks and Boulevards kick out the black residents and combine the parks into one solid boundary of greenspace (Schirmer 2002:112). LIA argued that the park should be created “on account of the encroachment of negroes,” and also requested that area surrounding the park be converted into greenspace as well, to expand this boundary: “for fear Negroes, or some schemers helping Negroes may by hook or crook cross over the park” (Schirmer 2002:112). The proposal was not successful, but only because several white families, who would have been displaced by the greenspace, petitioned it (Schirmer 2002:112). The city government worked to support white communities and their green goals by contaminating black ones; in 1926, the city installed its first

major garbage dump at 21st and Vine, in the thriving black community in the Vine Street corridor (Schirmer 2002:123).

These acts of urbicide enacted via the creation, and/or withholding of, greenspace, have a history of being contested by African American Kansas City residents. In 1924, Kansas City's Board of Parks and Boulevards set aside certain tennis courts, picnic grounds, and baseball diamonds specifically for use by African Americans—black Kansas Citians protested this segregation, and the municipal court sided with them, only with the result that KC Parks and Boulevards worked surreptitiously, arranging for non-city affiliated white Kansas City residents to hang unofficial “whites only” signs in Kansas City parks (Schirmer 2002:150). In Swope Park, African Americans were restricted to “Watermelon Hill,” a section of the park located adjacent to the Kansas City Zoo entrance—I have been told by long-term Kansas City residents that white zoo visitors would often gawk at Watermelon Hill as if it were another zoo exhibit (Figure 7.9) (Griffin 2015). In 1927, a group of black Girl Scouts wandered out of Watermelon Hill and were threatened by white park attendants. Black Kansas Citians protested and petitioned the park board—protests that resulted in only nominal change (Schirmer 2002:151). In 1951, the NAACP backed three black Kansas City residents who were denied entrance into Swope Park's whites-only pool, a case that was won in the U.S. District Court (Griffin 2015:95). In response, the city shut down Swope Park Pool for three years. When they finally reopened in 1954, now open to white and black patrons, many whites stayed away—attendance dropped by more than 60% (Figure 7.10, 7.11, 7.12) (Griffin 2015:95). These protests, in which black Kansas Citians asserted their right

to greenspace, continued well into the 20th century. In 1963, sixteen activists marched into racially restricted Fairyland Park at 75th and Prospect and refused to leave; the activists were arrested and jailed (Griffin 2015:97). Today as well, black Kansas City residents assert their right to green amenities—as Agnes evidenced in her push back against the white visitor to Rose Hill, “what do you mean this park looks too nice to be here?”



Figure 7.9 1933, Photo of the annual picnic at Watermelon Hill, in Swope Park. Photo from the Missouri State Archives.

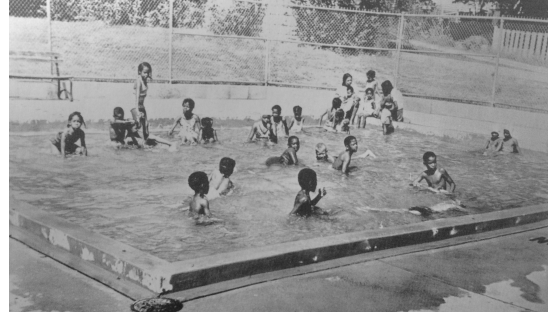
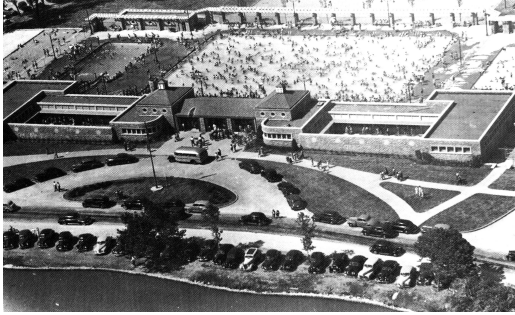


Figure 7.10, left 1940, segregated whites-only Swope Park Pool. Photo from the Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department Archives. **Figure 7.11, right** No date, one of the only public pools in metropolitan Kansas City available for African Americans to use during segregation. Located at 27th and Woodlawn. Photo from the Missouri State Archives.



MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 7.12 No date, boys swimming in one of Kansas City's public fountains. Because of strictly enforced Jim Crow laws and segregation, Kansas City's African American residents have had to strategically work to access greenspace and outdoor recreation opportunities readily available to whites. Photo from Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

Green Gentrification and Productive Urban Citizenship

In recent years, the impact of supposedly apolitical green urban development infrastructures has been no less violent than these early, blatant, acts of segregation and displacement enacted via the creation of greenspace. As Gould and Lewis (2017:1) argue, “greening whitens.” Environmental and food justice efforts have often been at odds with the stated needs of marginalized communities, as ‘sustainable’ development planners have ignored the role that their work can play in gentrification (Curran and Hamilton 2018:5). In this process of “green gentrification” or “environmental gentrification,” the creation of green goods ultimately increases environmental inequality, as the new amenity drives up property values and physically displaces ‘indigenous’ residents and attracts higher income, whiter, populations (Gould and Lewis 2013:114). Thus, “without focused public policy interventions, environmental improvements tend to increase racial and class inequality, and decrease environmental justice” (Gould and Lewis 2013:114; see also Curran and Hamilton 2018). Green gentrification is particularly insidious because it operates under “the seemingly a-political rubric....of urban environmental justice,” compounded, locally in Kansas City, with rhetoric proclaiming that green urban entrepreneurship is accessible to all (discussed, and disproven, in Chapter 6 of this dissertation). Even more dangerous is the specific co-optation of green justice rhetoric to support capital accumulation; as Gould and Lewis (2017:152) explain, the “global urban green growth machine....profits from urban environmental problems and their solutions.” Much of this growth is not green at all, and rather draws on “a thin veneer of environmental consideration to

keep the ecologically unsustainable game of limitless economic growth alive, while deepening social inequality” (Gould and Lewis 2017:115).

Recent scholarship has explored how low-income, marginalized communities have resisted green gentrification. Central to community concerns is the question: “must they reject environmental amenities in their neighborhoods in order to resist the gentrification that tends to follow such amenities?” (Checker 2011:211). Curran and Hamilton (2018:16) document, in the context of Greenpoint, New York, how the conjoined struggle of long-term residents and recent gentrifiers around environmental cleanup created an equitable process of change within the neighborhood. This process, termed “just green enough,” involves a strategy explicitly focused on resisting speculative development, and focused solely on environmental remediation for existing residents (Curran and Hamilton 2018). RHNC is unique within these case studies, as they purposefully utilize green development projects such as urban farms and gardens to receive development funding and to profit from the influx of capital-rich new urban residents, while concurrently working to mitigate the anticipated effects of gentrification.

In the neoliberal U.S. city, third sector urban governance dovetails with green development initiatives to create new kinds of green citizenship and subjectivities. Neoliberal projects of subjectification are constituted at the level of the grassroots in urban space, and are manifested via market-based assumptions of social value, productivity, and investment (Maskovsky 2014). Market-based models of urban “uplift” and renewal intersect often with urban greening and sustainability strategies, and have implications for understanding urban citizenship and rights

claims. Jung and Newman (2014:24), in their pilot research on a new “ethical capitalist” venture—a Whole Foods in Detroit—promote understandings of “urban governance” as not just the exclusive domain of governments, but rather posit that “citizens internalize and informally govern themselves through a range of practices such as civic involvement, consumerism, and even the act of eating well.” Jung and Newman argue that Whole Foods’ involvement in the “moral economy” of Detroit illustrates that they, and other corporate actors, may seek to blur the boundary between global corporation and social movement, taking part in regimes of urban governance (2014). Sheller argues that the promotion of eco-mobility and related city policies both disregard racialized histories of space, and promote similar green subjectivity to that documented by Jung and Newman (2014). Sheller argues, “the rejection of automobility becomes a structured story about a kind of (white) urban citizenship that represents ‘good’ mobility for a whole generation,” and ignores racialized transport inequality (2014:75). This scholarship on urban sustainability and greening and urban governance has important implications for understanding how gentrification works, as a process, and intersects with urban citizenship. In Kansas City, specifically, this process is particularly fraught, as green citizenship has become recognized as one of the most productive, and rewarded, forms of urban citizenship—yet enacting green urban development projects often leads to gentrification and displacement. In the following section, I discuss how this process is managed in the context of one East side neighborhood, Rose Hill.

“Rose Hill Grown”: Cultivating Perceptions of Personal ‘Green’ Responsibility and ‘Productive’ Urban Citizenship

In 2016, I volunteered to help staff the welcome desk, along with several long-time Rose Hill residents and community gardeners, at the Rose Hill Community Garden for Grow KC’s biannual “Urban Grown” tour. This experience shed light on the dichotomy between how Rose Hill Community Garden is viewed and utilized by Rose Hill residents and how it is presented to visitors and policy makers. Grow KC’s biannual “Urban Grown” tour is an opportunity for Kansas City metropolitan area urban farmers and gardeners to show off their unique methodologies for growing food in the city. Farmers and Gardeners open their growing spaces up for public tours during one weekend in the summer; foodies and urban residents meet new urban growers, learn ‘where their food comes from,’ and celebrate urban food production in Kansas City. Importantly, Grow KC also arranges for city officials and influential Kansas City residents to tour a select number of these gardens, in an effort to further convince policy-makers of the importance of urban food production and consumption. Because of its high profile in Kansas City, this event serves, for some neighborhoods, as an opportunity to demonstrate their self-sufficiency and ‘beautification’ efforts in the urban core.

In 2016 the event was held in June, and I joined two African American Rose Hill community gardeners in staffing our welcome desk on an already hot summer morning. We sat under a white tent, handed out fliers to visitors, and led any interested visitors on tours of the garden. A majority of the Urban Grown tour visitors are white local foodies from suburban areas surrounding Kansas City’s

urban core. An “Urban Grown Guidebook,” printed by Grow KC with biographies and photos submitted from participant farms and gardens, described Rose Hill

Community Garden as follows:

[Rose Hill Community Garden] is a grassroots community initiative that aims to empower residents of the [Rose Hill] community of Kansas City, Missouri to grow healthy fruits and vegetables [Rose Hill Community Garden] combines education and resources for growers as well as coordinating community garden locations, facilitating a network of residents selling foods through farm stands, and running a farmers' market. The [Rose Hill] Children's Garden and Scouts Sprouts consists of seven raised beds in which [Rose Hill] youth are learning to grow. The [Rose Hill] Boys and Cub Scouts are involved from the beginning and they are taught, not just about the benefits of good, healthy food, but they are encouraged to share the information with their friends, families and neighbors. The [Rose Hill Community] Garden continues to serve this urban-core neighborhood by demonstrating fruit and vegetable production on an old vacant lot. The plots have been adopted out by residents of the neighborhood. Growers are growing for market, community and for families. The Lena & Nina Memory Garden is a unique hybrid of a rain garden that also provides culturally relevant produce, cutting flowers for to be sold at market and is utilized as neighborhood beautification.

The text is accompanied by a photo of young black girls wearing high top sneakers and tending greens in an urban garden plot—from what I can tell, the photo was not taken in Rose Hill’s Community Garden. This narrative, one that draws heavily on neoliberal rhetoric of personal responsibility, guided the interactions my fellow welcome-table staffers had with garden visitors. For example, one of my fellow tour guides and community gardeners, Betty, an African American woman in her 60s, started every tour interaction with: “These are community plots where we grow food to feed our hungry neighbors.” This rhetoric, however, was not personally reflective of how they themselves, life-long residents of Rose Hill, interacted with the garden. At the start of our shift staffing the welcome table I asked Richard, a 40-year-old African American man who had started growing in the community garden several years ago (primarily with the goal of growing

produce to make salsa) to give me an example of how to lead a tour. Even though I had been growing in the garden with Richard for several garden seasons, I wanted to make sure that I was describing the garden in a way that a Rose Hill native would approve. Richard walked me through the raised garden beds dotting the two city blocks that make up Rose Hill Community Garden and discussed aspects of the site as we passed them; walking past the “Scouts Sprouts” garden, two long wooden and cement-block raised beds, Richard said flippantly: “I think the Boy Scouts take care of these, but who knows. I think they made omelets with this stuff [vegetables] once.” As we neared a small U-shaped native plant garden—the Lena and Nina Memory Garden—at the corner of one of the lots, Richard told me, sarcastically, “apparently we grow *culturally appropriate* food in that, not sure what that means, but there’s some onions there I think.” I asked Richard who dedicated the garden—which is named in honor of Lena Horne and Nina Simone, influential African American women—and he said: “I have no idea who those people are.” Richard’s description of the garden is more reflective of other Rose Hill Community members than Betty’s was. A majority of the urban gardeners I spoke with at the Rose Hill Community garden were food-secure, simply gardening as a fun retirement activity, and were unconcerned with the sociopolitical stated aims of the garden, evidenced in the Urban Grown description of the site.

Rose Hill Community Garden was founded in 2010 after RHNC applied for, and received, a federal grant aimed at supporting “healthy community” projects in ‘food insecure’ urban areas. While RHNC had not heard from any community members interested in urban food production, there was great focus on urban agriculture

within the city—foodie-led nonprofits such as the Kansas City Grower’s Club, Our Daily Bread, and Grow KC could offer them infrastructural support in building a community garden, and offered educators available to come teach urban farming classes. The choice to use grant funding in support of urban food production, distribution, and consumption seemed easy—other neighborhoods that had founded community gardens were being covered in the news, and were spoken of highly. The farmers market, held weekly May through September, was founded soon after the garden was built. “Rose Hill Grown,” a series of monthly gardener/farmer training classes, open to the public, began a year later—with instructors from The Kansas City Grower’s Club and Grow KC.

For a majority of Rose Hill Community members, the community garden is not—as advertised—a positive force in their lives. For many, it is not even on their radar. A RHNC staff member who founded the garden program told me that her initial excitement about the program dissipated when she began to recruit Rose Hill residents for the garden programs: “We canvassed the neighborhood, we put fliers out, and we had less than 10 people show up at the first meeting. They were all over the age of 80. And they did not want to grow food, they just wanted to get food.” She continued, telling me that she learned that a lot of this reticence stemmed from racial politics:

The old folks said, ‘Been there, done that, don’t wanna do it again.’ With the 20, 30, 40 year olds it was ‘I’m not a slave, I’m not a share cropper, I don’t do that kind of work, I can go out and buy my own food thank you very much.’ And a whole lot of others were like ‘It’s hot, its dirty, its buggy, I don’t want to do that.’

For many in Rose Hill’s historically African American neighborhood, urban food production indexes painful black geographies of land dispossession, exploited

labor, and violence (cf. Guthman 2008). They do not want to grow their own food, rather, they want access to affordable locations to buy their own food. RHNC did find some individuals, however, interested in growing food—in their first year, the community garden drew 16 growers, only three of whom were residents of Rose Hill. RHNC staff tell me that individuals—upper-middle class, a majority of them white—come from “as far as North Kansas City to as far south as Olathe,” both areas that would necessitate a 30-minute drive, to grow food in the Rose Hill Community Garden. In recent years this has changed, however—a majority of the gardeners in the community garden are now African American Rose Hill residents. None, however, would call themselves food insecure—as they are described in RHNC grant applications—and those who sell extra produce at market do so as a hobby, to supplement full-time salaries or retirement savings. Similar demographics are seen at “Rose Hill Grown” classes—white suburbanites drive into the urban core to take classes on season extension and garden planning with black urban residents. One suburban visitor to Rose Hill told me, as we walked out of a pest management class held at Rose Hill Community Center, “I just love coming here to learn, it’s so inspiring to see people make do with what they have!” So while painful racialized histories keep many black Rose Hill residents from participating in “Rose Hill Grown” programs, these same histories—and imagined narratives of neoliberal self-sufficiency—are a draw for white upper-middle class suburban Kansas Citians.

The discrepancy between “Rose Hill Grown” programs as advertised and as actually utilized is most evident in its farmers market. The farmers market is quite small—comprised of around six or seven vendors per week, around half of whom

are growing produce within Rose Hill. Other vendors represent wealthier, whiter, larger-scale urban farms from outside of the neighborhood. A market DJ is hired weekly for the event, and often plays R&B music; some weeks, RHNC funds a cookout, offering free hamburgers and hot dogs. An RHNC staff member told me, about the farmers market: “the neighborhood is not supporting it like we thought.” This is evident in SNAP dollar data for the market. While Grow KC’s SNAP doubling incentive is available at Rose Hill Farmer’s Market, low-income customers are not utilizing it. There have been several years in which, over five months of operation, the market has only received around \$10 to \$20 dollars in SNAP money. After receiving a grant to put up a billboard, advertising the market on highway U.S. 71, foot traffic increased even more—but not among Rose Hill residents themselves. “We’ve had a lot of outside folk come in. Getting people from [Rose Hill] to start wanting to shop here on a regular basis is still an obstacle,” an RHNC staff member told me. The absence of Rose Hill community members is for several reasons—for one, many have told me they cannot afford the produce sold there, regardless of whether or not their SNAP-dollars (if they have them) are doubled. One black Rose Hill resident and market vendor told me that her friends have expressed interest in shopping at the market but say they cannot afford the produce, and finding transportation there is tricky, as they do not have cars. Additionally, some RHNC staff members have speculated that there is an element of embarrassment. At such a small market, SNAP usage will be made visible to ones’ neighbors, and many SNAP recipients are ashamed of the fact that they receive assistance. As a result, Rose Hill Farmer’s Market’s customer base is largely middle to upper-middle class, a sizable

proportion of whom are outsiders to the area, who drive in with the intention of ‘supporting’ Rose Hill residents by circulating their food dollars in the urban core.

RHNC staff members are not oblivious to the fact that the Rose Hill Community Garden, Farmer’s Market, and training classes have a limited, and somewhat critiqued, role within the neighborhood; rather, these programs are strategically utilized and deployed to receive city praise and support. As an RHNC staff member told me, “Our market is in the red year after year, so as a *market*, strictly defined, it is absolutely failing.” He continues, telling me that the market serves a larger purpose:

It’s a bargaining chip, it’s a farce. It’s used as leverage. We get all these policy makers and city officials coming through here—you remember, I told you I was giving a tour to the State Health Commissioner last week?—they come down here because they think we’re *really* fixing things you know. And I say, ‘Oh yeah, we have these health programs and free health screenings,’ and they go, ‘But what else?’ and I say ‘Well, we have this farmer’s market that feeds the poor in our community, and we have these community green spaces,’ and oh they *love* it. So yes, it functions as a source of community pride and cohesion, but the market isn’t a *market*. And the training program doesn’t help people make money, or feed their families. It isn’t doing what we say it does. But it’s really meaningful for people in some other senses.

So while RHNC staff recognize the limitations of this garden programming, and a majority of Rose Hill residents do not utilize or benefit from it, “Rose Hill Grown” and other green programs are a “bargaining chip” with high value to the neighborhood. For example, since the inception of its garden programs, Rose Hill has received recognition and support from a number of private and public sources. Several large philanthropic organizations in the City have gifted Rose Hill development funds and infrastructural support to expand their community center and staff offices. Rose Hill was nominated for, and received, a KC Green

Neighborhood Award—which accompanies free access to city clinics and workshops, new green street signage heralding the accomplishments of the neighborhood, funding for a neighborhood sustainability project, and recognition in city and media discourse. Rose Hill representatives have been invited to speak at city events, as an example of productive urban citizenship and self-sufficiency, and the neighborhood has been featured in national urban farming magazines as a “transformational community.” Rose Hill received a grant from the Missouri Department of Agriculture for community garden expansions; when the grant inspector heard about the green developments in the neighborhood, he told RHNC to encourage Rose Hill residents to apply for their grants—they would love to fund people in this community, they said. Similarly, the NRCS matching grants for high-tunnel implementation are given, I am told, with preference to Rose Hill applicants, as the USDA representative in charge of the program has been so impressed with the neighborhood. In these ways, public demonstration of ‘green productivity’ through vocal promotion of their urban food production and distribution programs has garnered Rose Hill quite a bit of state and private support.

Rose Hill’s neighborhood council works strategically to balance the support that comes in for green development to suit the other, more urgently stated needs of neighborhood residents (this is discussed further below, in the following section); however, its promotion of itself as a green community has led to its image as a new frontier for urban farming, and its receipt of a high number of young, white foodies hoping to start farming businesses. Growing food in Rose Hill, and including that in your marketing—as many of these farmers do—is a valuable currency that helps

sell your product; proclaiming that your business is part of ‘urban revitalization,’ ending ‘food desertification,’ and urban ‘beautification’ is highly regarded in Kansas City. As of 2018, at least ten white, middle to upper-middle class, urban farmers have bought land within Rose Hill intending to start farm-businesses. These farmers benefit from racialized home repair and mortgage lending that disinvested in black neighborhoods like Rose Hill, pushing down housing values and leading to a large number of low-cost homes for purchase. The close proximity of Highway 71—the placement of which displaced low-income black families and geographically isolated black Kansas Citians to the East side of the city—has been cited by many of these urban farmers as a boon, as they can advertise their farms as being located a short distance off of the highway, meaning customers can potentially drop by their farms on their way home from work.

A young white couple, prospective land-purchasers hoping to start a native wildflower nursery in Rose Hill, exemplify these issues. Those who wish to purchase land in Rose Hill are required to come make a presentation to the Rose Hill Housing Council; the council is comprised of RHNC staff members and is open to neighborhood residents as well. The council includes mostly long-term Rose Hill residents with a diversity of positionalities, including urban farmers; it is not diverse in terms of class status. A majority of the council members are middle to upper-middle class. I listened in as a young woman I am calling Tracy pitched their business plans to this council in early 2017:

We’re looking to start our own native wildflower nursery, and we’re looking for about an acre and a half to three acres. Getting that much land is a challenge, so we have one potential site within your neighborhood and the others we’re considering are more rural. But we’re attracted to [Rose Hill], and want to be

located in [Rose Hill] because of the food initiatives you guys have going on, and the fact that you have put so much work in already in cleaning up the neighborhood. We really like the idea of being in the city, and just trying to expand this urban agriculture idea that [Rose Hill] is passionate about. We know that a lot of our customers would be coming from the Brookside area, and also Johnson County, Kansas—those are the people who are buying natives currently, and some of them might not want to drive through the ‘hood, if you will. I feel like being right along 71 helps that issue—they can just, if they’re not comfortable driving through inner city, Kansas City, they can just get right off the highway. There’s a lot of bad rep [about the inner city], and I know some of it is real, but I’m hoping that some of it is not, too. It sounds like [Rose Hill] is really starting to clean up and we’re really attracted to that. We hope you guys would be interested in having us in your neighborhood!

Tracy’s statements illustrate that Rose Hill’s prominence as a neighborhood that supports green urban development has a direct relationship to its gentrification, as it encourages the in-migration of white urban farmers. Several of Tracy’s comments—about safety and her wealthy, white customers not wanting to drive through the “hood”—were met with side-glances among the council members, and several rolled eyes. While the council approved Tracy and her husband’s preliminary request for land, in private conversations they told me they disagreed with her racially discriminatory understandings of the urban core, yet knew that her presence in the neighborhood could possibly bring more foot traffic and revenue to the Rose Hill Farmers Market and other local businesses. In the following section, I discuss how RHNC works to mitigate the damage caused by Tracy and other gentrifiers, utilizing the influx of green urban development funding to reach more urgent community-stated needs and goals.

“I’ve been to Detroit and I don’t want [Rose Hill] to look like that”:

Strategically Leveraging Green Urban Development Funds

RHNC staff—the majority of whom live within Rose Hill—worry about letting green urban development interests ‘overtake’ the neighborhood; they have instated several mechanisms for Rose Hill-resident feedback and input in their neighborhood development decisions. Monthly neighborhood meetings are heavily attended, and offer a chance for resident feedback and requests for assistance. This chance to speak up is utilized by many attendees, whom I have seen voice concerns about trash on their block, illegal dumping, inadequate sidewalks and street lights, and pose questions about home repair assistance. RHNC committees—beautification, crime and safety, youth, and housing—are organized and run by RHNC staff members, and attended, regularly, by a large number of Rose Hill residents. RHNC implements, every few years, large-scale neighborhood feedback surveys—going door to door, mailing questionnaires, and incentivizing residents to come in to the community center for interviews—in order to better understand neighborhood concerns. A recent set of focus group interviews with Rose Hill residents, facilitated by RHNC, found that while several residents cited the farmers market as a boon to the community, they stated that the ‘greatest issues’ facing the neighborhood were not food insecurity, but rather affordable housing, ‘slum-lords,’ lack of jobs, and control over neighborhood development, as indicated by several participants’ concern over “new businesses moving into our community.” Thus, one of RHNC’s main programmatic foci is the creation of affordable, quality rental housing and the promotion of home ownership within Rose Hill.

RHNC staff are vocal about their concerns that urban agriculture, and those who promote it, will eclipse these other stated, more pressing, community needs. An interaction between white foodie farmers and black long-term Rose Hill residents exemplifies this tension and concern. I missed attending the monthly RHNC housing committee meeting in May 2017; one morning, in the Rose Hill Community Garden, two fellow gardeners—white, urban farmers who each run their own farm-business within Rose Hill—caught me up on the discussion that they had had there the previous night. One farmer, whom I am calling Trey, told me: “Oh man, I wish you had been at the housing meeting last night—it was a watershed moment. Three people came in with ag proposals, and after they had presented, the committee just went: ‘Is this really the way we want to go?’” Trey continued, telling me that one of the committee members had recently visited Detroit for a conference, and was adamant that she did not want similar development in Rose Hill: “She said, ‘I’ve been to Detroit and I don’t want [Rose Hill] to look like that.’” Post-industrial Detroit has recently witnessed the rise of several large-scale urban agriculture projects, as outside investors—and some Detroit residents—draw on vacancy and disinvestment to create farms and agricultural distribution centers. While such projects often have stated goals of addressing food insecurity and urban poverty, RHNC staff members have privately critiqued such developments—stating that they distract from the creation of affordable housing and the influx of businesses that could offer jobs with a livable wage. And, historically and currently, green developments have been built specifically to displace black populations. Mason, the second white urban farmer who joined Trey in narrating the housing committee

events to me added, “Some people just don’t get it. They don’t know what urban agriculture can do. I mean, I guess let’s not even talk about social justice, eco-security or food insecurity!” Mason’s comments exemplify why RHNC works so concerted to contain and control the spread of urban agriculture initiatives in their neighborhood. While Trey and Mason unequivocally view urban food production as a positive addition to cities, and a resource for urban residents, RHNC staff worry, as do long-term Rose Hill residents, that these green urban developments accompany outside investment, lack of control over neighborhood development, and the eclipsing of major neighborhood issues such as lack of housing and jobs.

To both draw on the increased attention and revenue that the influx of white urban farmers affords them, and to mitigate their influence on decision-making processes in the neighborhood, RHNC staff place extensive focus on housing policy in their programmatic efforts. One major way that Rose Hill accomplishes this is through discretion over land use, which they gained after petitioning the Land Bank for assistance. Rose Hill was able to purchase hundreds of Land Bank properties and vacant lots, located within the bounds of their neighborhood, for a reduced price. Rose Hill was also successful in negotiating discretion over land use on lots and homes that they did not purchase; those interested in purchasing Land Bank properties must first come and present their business or home plan to the RHNC housing committee, at which point the committee—and any present community members—will vote to accept, dismiss, or modify the proposed plan, and will present their decision to the Land Bank. While the Land Bank is not required to

follow RHNC's recommendations, in practice they often do—sometimes denying applications for home purchases that RHNC has flagged as potential irresponsible land-lord situations.

RHNC has used city favor and support to acquire funding for the development of affordable housing projects and senior living, based on the stated needs of long-term Rose Hill residents. A combination of city grants and loans facilitated the creation of numerous affordable housing projects and low-income senior homes within RHNC within the past ten years. Additionally, through collaboration with Legal Aid of Kansas City, RHNC brings a housing lawyer to their monthly neighborhood and housing committee meetings who offers free assistance to those working hoping to purchase housing within the neighborhood— housing stock which often has complicated title history and legal complications. RHNC offers a minor home repair program that provides low-cost and sliding-scale assistance to low-income Rose Hill home-owners needing to repaint their homes, replace roofs, or accomplish other costly tasks; this program works to provide support to those historically disadvantaged through racialized lending (Oliver and Shapiro 1997).

RHNC works to educate low-income home owners within the neighborhood about opportunities widely-known within foodie circles—such as the fact that Rose Hill is designated as an Urban Renewal area, where home and land owners are eligible for 10 years of tax abatement. At one RHNC monthly meeting, staff passed out tax abatement applications, and told those who could not afford the application fee that they would figure out how to help them pay it, stating: “outside investors and flippers *do* know about these opportunities, and you should too. Because they

will take advantage of it.” This fear of, and protection against, outside urban agricultural investment interests was made very apparent at a RHNC monthly meeting in January 2018. At the meeting, attended by roughly 50, primarily African American, Rose Hill residents, two presenters had given presentations about potential developments and businesses they wanted to start within the neighborhood—one of which was a small urban farm. At the end of the meeting, an RHNC staff member spoke about these developments to the residents:

Recently I’ve been getting a lot, a lot, of calls inquiring about properties in [Rose Hill], wanting to do projects like this. Calls from those who live outside of our neighborhood. I want you all to know that this is because of the hard work you have put into our community over the years. But to keep this neighborhood in line with how we’d like it to grow, we need to do several things: if you do not have a will passing on your home to your children, call me and I will help you write one. Otherwise, your property can pass on to anyone, not just someone from the neighborhood. If you have a vacant lot next to your home, buy it. That is important. Buy it. I can help you figure out how to do that as well. If we do these things we can shape how the neighborhood grows.

In his statements to Rose Hill residents, the RHNC staff member emphasizes how valuable local property is, as gentrification and speculative investment begins within the neighborhood. Make sure you have control over your property, and make sure you acquire any vacant land near your property, he cautions, because if you do not, somebody else will, and you won’t have any control over what they do with that asset. In these ways, RHNC staff work to increase neighborhood investment and control over urban space, as an increasing number of white urban farmers begin to recognize value in Rose Hill’s land.

Debates and contestations over appropriate land use are apparent at a larger scale as well, as RHNC staff vet new development proposals in housing committee meetings. For example, while white prospective urban farmers are usually

welcomed into the neighborhood—as Tracy was, earlier, despite her racialized rhetoric about urban space—their land acquisition is strictly controlled and monitored. One white urban farmer, who approached the housing committee with a plan to purchase two houses and eleven vacant lots, has been strictly supervised—likely because he plans to acquire a greater volume of land than any other urban farmer in Rose Hill so far. After the farmer presented his plans to the committee—which include a personal farm, and land he hopes to develop into space available for co-operative farming with other Rose Hill residents—the committee insisted he attend monthly RHNC community meetings and other events, such as block parties and cookouts, so that he “gets a feel for what the community is like and what they want.” Later, at another housing committee meeting, this farmer attempted to volunteer for a subcommittee to help a land bank lawyer on title-work for neighborhood homes—a position he was denied, sharply and quickly. While white urban farmers are in some senses welcomed into Rose Hill, and invited to be involved in community events, in other ways their presence is strictly contained and regarded warily by long-term residents.

This curtailment of urban agriculture projects and investment in Rose Hill is illustrated in RHNC’s reception of a large philanthropic gift and development proposal from a local philanthropist and architecture firm, in 2017. The proposal was made at a Housing Committee meeting in October—a middle-aged white man wearing a dark blue suit carried in a tube of rolled architectural mock ups, and presented, out of the blue, a philanthropic gift to RHNC. He told the committee, and the ten gathered neighborhood residents in attendance that night, that he came on

behalf of an Executive Director of a local nonprofit. This ED had purchased an abandoned church within the boundaries of Rose Hill, and wanted to offer it free of charge, along with five years of paid utilities, to RHNC. The ED had heard what a great job Rose Hill was doing, and how they had a “thriving” community garden, and decided he wanted to help. “We’re envisioning a space for a food pantry and health screenings,” he said, “and there’s land in the back for a garden and another farmers market.” As the man continued, telling the committee that they were undergoing renovations right now, updating the bathrooms and kitchen, one RHNC staff member interjected: “A lot of those services you’re offering, we already provide. We have a food pantry. We offer health screenings. We don’t need another garden. We give people enough of that stuff.” Another RHNC staff member added, “What about a computer cafe or a coffee shop? We don’t have a lot of computers in homes in this neighborhood, and that could be a really useful service.” All of those in attendance murmured in support of that idea, and residents nodded their heads, but the man in the suit retorted: “Well the zoning for that would be different. The [ED] wants it to be a community space, because otherwise it would cost quite a bit more to get it rezoned for the purposes you’re discussing.” RHNC staff responded: “Well, how about you suggest to your ED that he can come to the next community meeting and the next housing meeting as well, so he can actually hear what the neighborhood wants. We need other amenities, we need internet cafes and the next level of services, not handouts.” Even though green urban development is encouraged and enforced through hegemonic discourse, grant funding streams, and philanthropic interests, Rose Hill advocates for other, more urgent community needs—here,

internet access, so that residents can search for and apply for jobs. In this instance, the ED's philanthropic donation was rejected, and RHNC denied the right of outside investors and donors to identify and 'serve' neighborhood needs.

Representing a 'Community': Narratives of Unrepresented Rose Hill Residents

While RHNC works quite hard to advocate for community needs, many voices and perspectives are left out of their decision-making processes. Rose Hill's expansive boundary—five zip codes and 6,000 residents—complicates any clear understanding of 'community,' an already problematic term that implies homogeneity in an extremely heterogeneous group (cf. Thomas-Houston 2005). Data from a recent resident survey illustrated that nearly 60% of those living within Rose Hill neighborhood boundaries had no idea they were part of the Rose Hill community. Rose Hill experiences high rates of transience, as low-income renters relying on unreliable or nonexistent paychecks become caught in cycles of eviction and migration. This transience likely contributes to a lack of neighborhood identification; making sure that Rose Hill residents identify as a community is a state that RHNC believes is highly necessary to achieve in order to protect land use and future decision-making about the neighborhood's development. Further, as one black East side resident pointed out to me, it is difficult for residents to identify as a community when they have been forcibly—through racialized lending, red-lining, and block busting—pushed into an area of the city they never purposefully chose to live in. "It's not a community, it's a state-regulated ghetto," this resident told me, speaking about his East side neighborhood, "how can you call it a community when people are forced to live there?"

The concept of community development is fraught with assumptions about who exactly is included in the community; often, in Rose Hill, neoliberal ideas about productive citizenship are reconstituted at the local scale, and in the dismissal of the neighborhood's "undeserving poor" (Katz 1989). This concept of undeserving poor draws on racist and sexist images created of welfare recipients (Netback and Cazenave 2001), and marketizes the idea of social worth (Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Morgen and Gonzales 2008). While RHNC is more cognizant of, and more proactive against, speculative land grabs resulting from 'green' urban development than other neighborhood councils, they rely on a strategy promoting home ownership, 'broken windows' policing, and neoliberal self-help rhetoric in order to do so. This strategy marginalizes those experiencing the most acute poverty in Rose Hill, for whom home ownership is out of reach—and for whom even the 'affordable' housing developed within the neighborhood is economically out of reach. One Rose Hill resident told me, during a conversation at the bus stop, "[Rose Hill] sucks for renters. They do not like renters here." Instead of any concerted effort to develop programming for this most economically disadvantaged population, Rose Hill works to displace them from their ranks (cf. Maskovsky 2014)—many of whom move into North Kansas City or farther east to find low-income rental housing. This adoption of personal responsibility rhetoric—evidenced through its urban garden programs and classes aimed at teaching the poor to grow their own food, and through discourse promoting home ownership—is what garners Rose Hill city-wide praise and support.

Regardless of lack of programmatic support for the most economically disadvantaged Rose Hill residents, even those excluded from RHNC's community planning processes still strategically utilize green urban development within the neighborhood, much like RHNC does. A new, glass-walled two-story community center and gym recently opened, in 2016, in Rose Hill, and I attended festivities held for its opening celebration. A step troupe from a local high school performed, city councilmen cut a ribbon tied across the community center doors, and Rose Hill residents were served catered barbecue and cake. RHNC staff played a role in bringing the new community center into the area—bidding for the construction by drawing on examples of their neighborhood's commitment to 'healthy' eating and urban beautification. The community center and gym fits in well with Rose Hill's branding of itself as a green healthy community; the landscaping around the new development reflects this as well, including several raised garden beds and a community orchard. On my way out of the opening day celebration, I walked alongside a young black woman, who told me her name is Marcy (a pseudonym). She wore a dark blue hoodie, and was attempting to carry six stacked paper plates—piled with barbecue and cake from the catered lunch—under her chin. I offered to help her carry her food, and she thanked me—she lived right across the street, so it would not be too much to ask, she said. I commented on how nice the new facility was, but how I was disappointed that I could not afford a gym membership there—the sliding scale rate would still be more than \$60 dollars a month. Marcy responded while shaking her head: "Yeah I can't afford that either. But, I hope these other black folk don't mess it [the community center] up," and added "they're always messing

things up. I've been watching them build this place for three years, waiting patiently." I asked her what she meant, and in her response, she illustrated how diverse actors, many of them often depicted without agency—who historically were subjected to displacement and violence through the creation of greenspace, are capitalizing on green urban development: "See that brown house? That's mine. My mom bought that for \$20,000. As soon as this community center and garden raise [housing] prices in my neighborhood, I'm selling this damn house and moving to Florida."

Chapter 8: “We can change the landscape”: Reinscribing Black Geographies into City Space via Urban Agriculture

Darian wore a bright green and yellow hand-woven African-fabric tunic—on his feet, crocodile-skin cowboy boots; a 10-gallon cowboy hat sat atop his shoulder-length dreads. He held a microphone and bellowed out to a school gymnasium packed with black and brown Kansas City residents, who had come out on a Sunday evening in July to hear about a new initiative, the Troost Co-op. The Troost Co-op proposed to buy large swaths of vacant property on the east side of Kansas City on which to farm. The property the co-op proposed to buy was in an area of the city that experiences high rates of vacancy and poverty, and is predominantly occupied by African American residents. Darian yelled to the crowd of around 200, “We haven’t had space for our community since they tore down Black Wall Street, and it is time to take that space back again.” Darian pointed a laser clicker at the screen behind him, pulling up a PowerPoint slide with data on vacant properties in Kansas City: “This city has over 5,000 vacant properties and lots. We have roots as a food hub. Y’all used to work in the stockyards. Y’all used to make all the food for this city. We taught America agriculture—cotton, tobacco—we taught them that, and we can take it back.” The crowd cheered as Darian finished, clapping sharply to emphasize each word: “If we plan on playing in this country, we need to play by the rules that are here. And right now, we don’t own nothin’. We buy all these lots, and we can change the landscape of Kansas City. Own and control. Own and Control!”

This chapter explores oft-marginalized understandings of city space by exploring how some black urban farmers—like Darian—in the Kansas City metropolitan area are purposefully using urban agriculture to draw attention to,

and contest, how racism has been historically spatialized in the city. Specifically, I demonstrate how black urban farmers actively contest their erasure within dominant, whitened, green urban infrastructure discourse by both discursively and physically reclaiming black spaces. In Kansas City, urban agriculture initiatives have been embraced as a hegemonic means of urban development and third sector poverty alleviation—with increasing streams of funding and bipartisan political support for projects such as urban farm infrastructure building, schoolyard gardens, community gardens, and farmers market development. While African Americans, and many other people of color, have a long history of urban food production, the local urban food movement within Kansas City is largely a whitened one; white, upper middle class-led food projects receive the lion’s share of discursive and monetary support. One of the U.S.’s most segregated cities, Kansas City’s African-American majority East Side now faces additional pressures of ecogentrification (Curran and Hamilton 2012). As city policy provides tax incentivization for urban agricultural projects on “blighted” space, and white upper-middle class farmers move to acquire land, an increasing number of black Kansas Citians are purchasing and farming on land—simply to retain control over urban space, as numerous policies work to divest this control from them.

In this chapter I first discuss how these actions can be theorized as a sort of “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2009); as Ghannam (2002) illustrated in her work on state relocation of the poor in Cairo, research into how marginalized groups understand space, place, and history can reveal important insights into conceptualizations of citizenship and relationships with the state (see also Zhang

2008). The bulk of this chapter consists of the narratives of black urban farmers in Kansas City who contest spatialized whiteness and work to reclaim historically black space—reinscribing black geographies of “colonialism, transatlantic slavery, contemporary practices of racism, and resistances to white supremacy” into city space (McKittrick 2011:947). I argue that black urban farmers in Kansas City see their work as political acts of resistance to whiteness as written on city space within the urban food movement—an understanding that offers new insight into how people of color respond to spatially hegemonic whiteness in U.S. cities.

Insurgent Citizenship; Countering Geographies of Dispossession

Whiteness is implicated spatially in Kansas City in myriad ways, often, as I have shown, through urban greening initiatives. Black bodies that move through Kansas City are racially coded as belonging in certain spaces and not others (Brahinsky et al. 2014; Thomas-Houston 2004)—a process that is discursively enforced through racialized narratives of “ghetto” and “blight,” which erase historical processes of spatial creation and instead tie landscape to racial ideology (Anderson 1987; Wacquant 1997). “Cartographic whiteness” is surveilled and policed in the militarized city, not just by agents of the state, but by urban citizens who define and enforce the invisible norms—encompassing behavior, dress, and appearance—that come to define urban space (Fiske 1998; Anderson 2014). Black urban residents of Kansas City encounter cartographic whiteness in the privatization of downtown neighborhood streets—where, historically, newly freed captive Africans tended small urban farms, in the commercialization of places of historic black entrepreneurship, such as the Jazz district, in the whitewashing in

dominant discourse of the urban food movement, which denies their historical participation, and in hegemonic narratives of 'food desert,' which paints urban spaces as sites of lack. Black Kansas Citians today involved in growing food—urban farmers and gardeners—are acutely affected by this hegemonic whiteness, as their racialized experiences are marginalized and denied both city-wide and within the urban food movement.

McKittrick (2006:4) writes that often, “the only recognized geographic relevancy permitted to black subjects in the diaspora is that of dispossession and social segregation,” and most of the time, when scholars write that city spaces “bear the power of racial influence” (Wilson 2012:940), the reference is to the violent influence of whiteness. This chapter contributes to extant understandings of racialized urban space by exploring the ways black urban residents in Kansas City understand and contest dominant whitened understandings of city space—turning away from discussing processes of dispossession and segregation, and instead focusing on how black urban residents themselves attempt to create city space that bears the power of *their* racial influence. Fisk (1998:69) writes that city space is cut through with lines that “blacks cannot cross and whites cannot see.” The farmers in this chapter work to highlight these lines of racial violence through the act of cultivating food.

Scholars have argued that cities are challenging and replacing notions of the nation as the most important site of citizenship (Holston and Appadurai 2009; Sassen 2004a); 20th century urbanization has produced huge urban peripheries of poverty and inequality, where new citizen power and social justice—alternative,

insurgent citizenships where the poor demand the rights to lives of dignity—have taken shape (Holston 2009). Sassen (2004b:61) writes that in the U.S., everyday political actors are constantly—as witnessed with the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s—working to incorporate new citizen rights through “street level politics.” This claim-making, enacted by marginalized subjects, is most legible in cities—where extremes between poverty and affluence are starkly juxtaposed (Sassen 2004b). Additionally, in a neoliberal U.S. context where “power is increasingly privatized, globalized, and elusive,” these alternative forms of civic involvement and claims to rights in the city contain the possibility of directly engaging those with power, and changing local contexts (Sassen 2004b:64). This chapter explores the actions of black urban farmers in this context of street-level political action, while still acknowledging the powerfully violent forces of urban governance that affect the lives of racialized urban citizens.

Contestations of Spatialized Whiteness in Kansas City’s Urban Food Movement

For many of the black urban farmers I spoke with, agricultural production on historically black owned land was an important and meaningful consideration when choosing sites to farm. Greg, a marketing executive and father of two, took up farming as a way to honor his avid-gardener grandmother’s legacy, and to spend time with his sons. Around 2010, he began taking urban farmer training classes offered by area nonprofits, researching companion planting and water catchment systems, and bought four vacant city plots in the historic Jazz district, at 18th and Vine Street. In addition to its fame for birthing Jazz legends such as Charlie Parker, the area between 12th and 18th on Vine was a hub for black businesses, known

locally as “Black Wall Street.” But blockbusting and redlining pushed African Americans to the East of the city in the 1950s, and a city-led ‘revitalization’ project—which demolished and rebuilt the area in service of tourism—led to a mass exodus of African American residents from the Jazz district during the second half of the 20th century (Schirmer 2002). The Jazz district, which formerly encompassed six city blocks, is now confined to one block on Vine, where new museums and murals commemorate the black industry that has since been displaced. Greg explained the history of the area to me, as we walked the perimeter of his land at 18th and Vine, which borders a low-income senior housing complex:

At 12th and Vine, you had that vast quantity of flower shops and dress shops and restaurants—all the amenities of residential high life. That was destroyed. Now you’ve got the strip and these museums—the Negro Baseball League, and the Jazz Museum. Those are the major businesses down here. That mural? There’s nothing behind that façade. It’s a long billboard that shows an impression of old musicians and restaurants and things that used to be, and they’ve given us just one block now.

Greg is developing what he hopes will be a more meaningful mural for a wall bordering his farm plots—he has been distributing questionnaires about its design to nearby residents, some of whom have remained at 18th and Vine throughout the changes brought by its ‘development,’ and the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders whose school sits across the street from his land. He told me that just the fact that he owns land, that he has increased the amount of black-owned land in the Jazz district, is important to him—whether or not his farm is monetarily successful.

Likewise, Hank, the 80-year-old farmer who Nancy critiqued for his increasingly “polarized” views of racial inequality, attaches meaning to the history of land, and the very act of owning land. Hank grew up in a small town south of

Houston, Texas, where his family sharecropped, and moved to Kansas City as a young adult to teach grade school, a job he held for 35 years. From a young age, Hank told me, he had liked the idea of cultivating soil and growing his own food. When he retired from teaching in 1990, the school told him they would keep him on the substitute teachers list, but Hank had decided to farm: “I said don’t ever call me. I’m gonna start digging in the ground.” Today, Hank owns 8.5 acres in North Kansas City, a site he chose because he had been told that historically, a stop on the Underground Railroad had been stationed there. The land also sits near the site where Western University once stood—a historically black college established in 1865, which struggled during the Great Depression and closed in 1943 (Schirmer 2002). The farm overlooks Quindaro Townsite, a settlement established by abolitionists in 1857 as part of the resistance to stop the westward spread of slavery; escaped slaves from Missouri were often linked into the Underground Railroad through Quindaro Townsite (Schirmer 2002).

Apart from the history of the land, it matters to Hank simply that he owns it. I visited Hank on his farm on a hot June morning—he had already been up for hours, tilling several acres to put in a couple hundred peach tree saplings. As he walked me around his land, and showed me how he had pruned his trees to make the fruit easy to pick, Hank told me about how he had decided he wanted to own a farm after watching his father manage a farm: “I grew up on a farm. And when I finished high school I found that the love of farming maintained everywhere I stopped—everywhere I ever stopped I had a garden.” Hank continued, and linked his desire to own land to racism he had experienced in his childhood:

Grew up in segregation, where they said ‘get back, shut up, we don’t do that for y’all,’ and what have you. I was 12, and I told my daddy, ‘If it ain’t but two jobs out there, I’m gonna have one of ‘em. If it ain’t but two houses in America, I’m gonna own one.’ So as of that day I’ve done that. I’ve owned at least 12 houses. I buy land with my money. I’ve bought over 700 acres of land in my life.

After putting in a bid at auction on his 8.5 acres in Kansas City in 1972, his bank—which had agreed to loan conditions—went up in flames. Unable to secure another loan, the title company told Clive “Oh no, we can’t help,” and said he had 36 hours to raise the \$35,000 dollars for the land. Clive called his friends and family for loans, and showed up at the title office the next day: “That lady, she said ‘What can I do you?’ I said well I came to sign those papers. She said ‘You mean to tell me you raised \$35,000 dollars?’ I said ‘Black dollars.’ She turned bright red. I said it again, ‘Black dollars bought your land.’ Clive’s statements are powerful locally, but also on a national scale—his words resonate with arguments made by the Buy Black Movement, which advocates African-American-controlled financial capital and land ownership as a means of political autonomy. Black Nationalist religions, such as the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church and the Nation of Islam, for example, have also long argued that control of food and land are central to black self-sufficiency and autonomy (McCutcheon 2011).

For another black urban farmer, the cultivation of soil health on her farm is deeply entwined with blackness, and artifacts of black presence in Kansas City’s urban landscape. Neferet—who chose early in her twenties to take a Kemetic name, a move that ties her to ancestors in Egypt—grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, in a family heavily involved with the Black Panther Party. While the Black Panther Party has been depicted by the U.S. Government and media as militant, solely concerned with

white supremacy and police brutality, the organization was, and is, largely preoccupied with developing social programs and providing basic community needs for black U.S. citizens who have been dismissed, and unprovided for, by the state (Sbicca 2012). Most notably, for example, this occurred with the Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children Program (Sbicca 2012). Her family's association with the Panthers, Neferet told me, instilled in her the cultural and political significance of food in efforts for black autonomy.

Neferet's understanding of black land ownership and dispossession in the U.S. factors heavily into her decision to farm in Kansas City. Black individuals who have owned and farmed land, in Neferet's understanding, have historically been able to better resist economic downturn and racism:

Those people who were black farmers, that have land, they recovered very nicely from the reconstruction period in America. It was not just sharecroppers—the stereotype of what people think of when they think of black farmers. They didn't know that there was a depression. They had their hogs, their animals. They went out hunting. They always had their farm resources and they lived prosperously. But there is this history of trying to destroy African American people that have land—if I were a black shop owner, or black grocery owner, I would be lynched, they burnt down their farms. There have been a lot of prosperous African Americans that were destroyed.

Neferet farms on the African American majority East Side of Kansas City, on one city block named Sacred Life Urban Farm. When I visited her farm, she was growing herbs, peppers, kale, cabbages, and squash in her front yard, and was farming corn and beans intensively on the large lot adjacent to her home. Neferet told me that the health of her soil meant everything to her: "It's a strictly natural organic compost that I use. There are worms, coffee grounds, leaves, grass cuttings, barbershop hair, kitchen scraps from my neighbors and black-owned restaurants,

lawn care clippings, and other kinds of community contributions from the black urban landscape.” For Neferet, nourishing her land with the contributions of black neighbors and black industries strengthens her soil and attachment to urban space.

Growing historically significant crops on black-owned space, and selling them in hegemonic white spaces, was a powerful act of resistance for many of the black farmers I met in Kansas City. On his land at 17th and Vine, Greg grows African tree collards, mustard greens, African sugar cane, and red foliated cotton—which he displays decoratively in vases when he sells at farmer’s markets. Customers buy it from him for novelty, or for cosmetic purposes—many women buy it, he told me, as an organic makeup remover. Darla, a 35 year-old woman who grows food in her backyard to supply her organic vegan catering business, held up a fistful of collards when I first visited her home, in the middle of a discussion about the recent ruling that no charges would be filed against the police officers who shot Alton Sterling: “This is the true form of resistance. Took a long time to realize that the anger and hatred I felt gave them my power. Now I see, hear, release, then head to the garden. My way of protesting.”

Twenty of the 35 black urban farmers I interviewed in Kansas City have grown cotton—though each of them grew it for different reasons, many grew cotton as a means of identifying and publicly asserting the role of African Americans in U.S. agriculture. Hank, for example, chose cotton as his first crop during his first year of production on his land in Northeast Kansas City. When I visited his home, he had proudly hung a large framed photograph of him and his brother, both leaning against a freshly picked bale of cotton, on the wall of his kitchen. For comparison, I

only met one white farmer in Kansas City who had grown the crop. Sean grew up in Johnson County, an affluent suburb of Kansas City, where his family worked cleaning houses and repairing cars for white neighbors. His family migrated to Kansas from Mississippi, and often talked openly, Sean told me, about their agricultural history—his grandfather sharecropping, his great-grandfather’s death while working on a plantation in Kentucky. After becoming heavily involved with the Kansas City Green Party, Sean started farming aquaponically in his basement and growing food in raised beds in his backyard. When I met him, Sean was working as urban farm manager for East High School—a historically black high school on the East Side of Kansas City—encouraging minority students to pursue careers in agriculture. At East High school’s greenhouse, Sean grows several varieties of cotton, African Moringa tree, and tobacco:

For me, it’s preservation of culture. We’ve been so involved, it might be a painful history, but I think a lot of times our history gets white washed, and it gets exploited. I wanna grow tobacco, I wanna grow a lot of cotton, just to show this is what it looks like. Just to connect, to show this is ours. Cotton—we grew that. That’s one of the hugest, biggest commodities in America.

Captive African cotton production, on lands forcibly taken from native inhabitants, allowed U.S. cities to accumulate wealth, and facilitated global trade (Baptist 2014). Cotton, produced and harvested with captive African labor, was central to the U.S. economy—between 1803 and 1937, it was the leading American export (Baptist 2014). Donna Morris, owner of Salt of the Earth farm in Northeast Kansas City—a market garden and garden training site for area teens—lines the perimeter of her urban farm with cotton plants. “When we started growing cotton that was a bit of a controversy; of course, the stigma attached to cotton. But I told

the kids—“nobody is lashing your back on this, so you should feel proud about growing and picking the cotton you grow.” Donna and her teen volunteers sell the cotton at the Zona Rosa Farmers Market—located in an exclusive shopping district in an upper-middle class, largely white, gated community in North Kansas City. “We took our cotton transplants to market and it was just a hit—you wouldn’t believe what they’ll pay for ‘em,” Donna laughed.

Other black urban farmers choose to verbally assert their historical presence in Kansas City’s agricultural landscape while in white spaces, effectively discursively disrupting white public space. A notable example of this occurred at Grow KC’s annual Farmers and Friends Meeting—an event referred to by some black urban farmers, as noted earlier, as the “White Farmers and Friends Meeting.” The first time I attended the meeting, held in February 2017 in a Presbyterian church in the affluent Brookside neighborhood, there were only around ten black or brown participants, including myself. The rest of the 200 or so attendees were white, upper-middle-class, farmers, local food advocates, or avid farm-to-table diners—most were dressed in Birkenstocks, brightly colored shawls, Lulu Lemon fitted athletic jackets, and bandanas. After attending a morning panel on food waste in the local food movement, I joined the rest of the conference attendees in eating our potluck lunch. After filling my plate, I joined a table that included four employees of Grow KC, all 30-something white women, a woman in her 50s who does not farm but enjoys and advocates farm-to-table dining, and Arthur Davis—a 60-year-old black urban farmer, who owns land in Northeast Kansas City. One of the Grow KC employees remarked happily on the pickled quail eggs, which one of the conference

attendees had brought to share. The giver, however, had placed a sign in front of the eggs with his name and number, stating that more eggs could be bought for \$15 dollars a dozen. I laughed at that, and remarked to the group that a dozen of those eggs is not even as big as one chicken egg, so it is a high price to pay. The local food advocate reacted sharply to my laughter. She responded by saying that raising those quails had taken a lot of time, and that the eggs were a delicacy. She asked the other women at the table if they had eaten the quail egg salad at The Antler Room, a relatively new upscale restaurant that sources from a select few organic urban farms in Kansas City. As the women began to praise their spring menu offerings, Arthur interrupted angrily:

All these restaurants you're talking about—people like me were not allowed in those restaurants. We couldn't eat there. But back in the day we were supplying them with what they sold. They made us come around the back door. They used to ask us boys to climb the Chouteau Bridge to grab them young pigeons for their French food. They wanted young ones, but just when they were getting heavy chests, and we were to bring them down to their back doors. At the base of the bridge, we could collect quail eggs and sell those too. We didn't get \$15 dollars a dozen for those, I'll tell you that.

Conversation at the table stopped abruptly after Arthur's statement. By voicing his historical contributions to the high-end farm to table dining scene, Arthur disrupted 'white public space': he insisted upon the consistent contributions of African Americans to the local food economy in Kansas City, and contested his, and others', erasure within this space by white local 'foodies.' Arthur's assertion, "We didn't get \$15 dollars a dozen for those," forcefully highlights that black Kansas Citians have been engaging in activities and industries currently promoted by 'foodies' and green urban development agendas for years, and have not received fair pay or recognition for their labor.

Reclaiming Dispossessed Space

Another dominant theme among black urban farmers in Kansas City is a focus on reclaiming dispossessed black spaces. Exemplary of this is an organization I am calling the Troost Co-op—whose first recruitment meeting was described at the beginning of this chapter. Troost Co-op was organized by five Afro-centrist farmers and activists in the summer of 2016, as a result, one of its founding members told me, of “all this discussion on black lives matter.” Marcus, a pseudonym, a 35-year old son of Arkansas sharecroppers, is well respected on the East Side of Kansas City—in addition to helping found the Co-op, Marcus runs an after-school program for local boys, which focuses on science and leadership education through aquaponic farming. Marcus also runs Nile River—a community greenhouse and aquaponics system at 27th and Prospect, situated squarely in one of Kansas City’s most economically depressed neighborhoods. Nile River—named to reference the fertile areas on the Nile river banks, farmed, as Afro-centrists like Marcus argue, by Africans, not Egyptians (Harrison 2018)—opens its street-side gardens to its neighbors, who commonly, as I have witnessed, harvest from the garden to feed themselves and their families.

Marcus was trained by Growing Power’s Will Allen—a well-known former basketball player who farms on a large scale, aquaponically, in Milwaukee, and focuses on community infrastructure development. Marcus brings a similar focus to his work—and during my discussions with him, he always emphasized how both traditional agriculture and aquaponic farming can be vehicles to improve cities in ways beyond just food security.

For Marcus and the other Co-op founding members, the inception of Troost Co-op is intimately linked to racialized police violence in U.S. cities. After being introduced at their first Co-op recruitment meeting, I reached out to Marcus, and the other founding members Adama, Lisa, and Darian. The next week, we got together at a local black-owned organic juice restaurant, and I asked them to tell me about the inception of the project, and their goals for it in the future. Marcus told me that after reading some Black Lives Matter discussions on twitter, he approached his friends with the idea for the Co-op:

I just felt like this energy was not being used correctly. People here needed to be doing something. And one of the most abundant resources we have here in Kansas City is land, so why not use it? Urban agriculture reduces our dependency upon outside sources. So the Co-op helps us shift away from protesting and move into action.

In 2006, there were 5000 vacant and deteriorating houses in Kansas City, and by 2010 there were 10,900—almost all of them located east of Troost Avenue (Shortridge 2012:177). The USDA identifies nearly all of the land between Troost and Woodland Avenues (the East Side of Kansas City) as a food desert (USDA 2015). The classification of this area as a ‘food desert’ facilitates grant funding for individuals hoping to buy land for agricultural use—locally, Kansas City’s tax incentives, such as the Urban Agriculture Zone ordinance, encourage settler-colonials to farm or raise livestock on ‘blighted’ urban space. Vacant land on the east side of the city is easy to come by, and given away relatively cheaply; many lots can be bought from the Kansas City Land Bank or Homesteading Authority for less than \$100 dollars—important to note is the fact that the Land Bank was established in 2012 in Kansas City through city collaboration with the foodie-led Hunger Coalition,

supposedly to help facilitate urban food production for food-insecure residents east of Troost. In conjunction, however, these two incentives have resulted in a high number of upper-middle class, white-led urban agriculture projects situated in low-income, African-American majority neighborhoods. This sort of “urban pioneer” gentrification (Smith 1996) was acutely felt by many of the black East Side residents I spoke with, and spurred numerous black urban farmers to buy land before white, upper-middle class farmers could acquire it.

Lisa, a young, 20-something woman who often wears large wooden Ankh-shaped earrings, spoke to this frustration with land loss on the East Side of Kansas City: “I’m here [participating in the Co-op] because I believe in the liberation of my people. There is a mission to get our people, our land, our bodies—a deliberate mission, and I’m here for our autonomy.” Adama, a tall man in harem pants, who—in addition to helping run Troost Co-op—operates a yoga studio with his wife, nodded and agreed with Lisa: “A city that controls my food, my land—that city controls me.” Adama directly addressed city policy that incentivizes white land grabs on black-majority East Side land, stating:

The Urban Agriculture Zone Initiative—on the surface it’s used to fix these land problems, but at the end of the day it’s more like a plan where someone said: ‘okay, how do people who classify themselves as white acquire more wealth and power within communities inhabited by people who classify themselves as nonwhite?’ So we see the end result being the same thing that’s been propagated over the past 400 years. That’s how *they* use ‘blight.’ When *we* use the word blight, specifically when I use the word blight, I use it to describe areas that, to our community, have no “value”—areas we don’t see any value in. Troost Co-op *makes* the community see value in the land. In America, that’s all we’re taught to value—40 acres and a mule. And we’re a people, like other melanated people around the world, who are inextricably tied to the land. We want to use that. That’s what we’re addressing.

Here, Adama touches on several issues: for many black East Side residents, green urban development policies such as the Urban Agriculture Zone Ordinance, are seen as merely a continuation of urban projects that work to preserve white public space and displace and marginalize people of color. Adama argues that such development uses “blight” as a designation to facilitate easy access to black owned or occupied land. Troost Co-op addresses this violent city policy by acquiring land through city supported incentives, for city-sanctioned use, but for the purposes of black autonomy and resistance. Adama and the Co-op members draw on logic that argues: if land is made most accessible for agricultural use, then they will acquire land for agricultural use before others can do the same, and extract value out of their communities. Acquiring land in this way does not mean that the Co-op imagines providing for the welfare of black Kansas Citians through food alone; Troost Co-op founding members envision myriad ways this project could contribute to community health and autonomy. For example, founding members are discussing how to arrange for Co-op members to be covered under group insurance—a conscious effort to find ways to offer health insurance to those who cannot afford it.

Troost Co-op is a model of black resistance witnessed elsewhere in the U.S. as well—most notably in the Nation of Islam’s Muhammad Farm. Wallace, an African American urban farmer in his 60s, and member of the Nation of Islam, told me more about their political and religious goals in relation to land acquisition. Wallace, who farms on the East Side of Kansas City in three consecutive city lots, told me that he originally started doing so because the Prophet Muhammad “told us to take our mouths out of the white man’s kitchen.” Drawing on years of donations from Nation

of Islam members, the group purchased 1,556 acres in Southwest Georgia, and have plans to purchase more land in the Mississippi Delta—Wallace told me they are just taking back what should have been theirs, land on which captive African labor was extracted for decades. Watermelon and cotton are two of the main crops grown on Muhammad Farm, an act which indexes the post-emancipation liberation of captive Africans who ran watermelon farms (Black 2018).

In Kansas City, the Troost Co-op hopes to enact resistance to a state-controlled landscape and food system by farming large swaths of land in the urban core of Kansas City—partly for market sales, partly for redistribution within Co-op membership, and partly for public consumption and grazing. Adama showed me their preliminary mock-ups of several urban lots—they are still waiting for approval from the Land Bank to go ahead with their plans, but are securing membership fees, tools, and transplants in the mean time. For one farm location—labeled Orchard A—they are hoping to grab three adjacent lots, located right behind a bus station. The plans involve an open ‘neighborhood grazing orchard’ directly adjacent the bus stop seating, with apples, pears, peaches, bush cherries, figs, raspberries, and blackberries. Behind that will be a fenced garden to raise produce to sell at market—the plan is to plant figs, jujubes, hazelnuts, and chestnut trees. Adama flipped through their plan book, showing me similar orchard layouts at different locations all along the East Side, many near bus stops or strip malls—places where primarily low-income public transit users can enjoy shade trees and free produce. Co-op members will be required to contribute a small amount monetarily, or put in a specified number of labor hours on one of the farm lots, and in return will receive

produce and a share of the market sales. “Black restaurants will buy our produce. They’ll be forced to,” Lisa added. “That’s why the Black Panther movement was so successful—because they said you do not have a business in our area if you are not going to give back to the community.” Adama chimed in, “We can just tell them [restaurant owners]—‘We’re buying food. Might as well be buying our own damn food, grown on our own damn land.’”

Some of Troost Co-op’s plans for the city overlap with foodie green urban development plans, but are instead encountered and discussed by black urban residents in a highly positive manner. For example, Our Daily Bread plants orchards across the metropolitan area—primarily in black and brown neighborhoods—but was often derided by the black East Side residents I spoke with, who saw the orchards as a paternalistic hand out. Much like Our Daily Bread, Troost Co-op envisions an East Side populated with fruit-bearing trees and greenspace. However, intentionality and optics separate the two visions. I sat down with Keisha, a Troost Co-op member who contributes a portion of her monthly paycheck to infrastructure building for the non-profit, to discuss why the Co-op’s orchards are so much more well-received than Our Daily Bread’s:

I think it has a lot to do with the presenter. When you have somebody who probably doesn’t look like them, going in there, trying to tell them this is what you need to do—that’s shutting it down immediately. I can very much say, in our minds its like...you’re an overseer. It may seem like, ‘oh who would really think that way?’ But coming from where we have been, you know, as people of color, that’s just how it is. So when they come in and try to ‘offer’ us stuff, it’s like ‘no thank you.’

Keisha’s comments highlight, importantly, that East-Sider derision of white-led green urban development policies is *not* a rejection of their attendant ecological

principles. Many low-income black East Side residents spoke thoughtfully to me about how they privilege holistic understandings of health and land stewardship, and both Chapter 5 and this current chapter illustrated that there are a diversity of black-led community food security projects occurring in Kansas City. However, city and foodie-led green urban development infrastructures index centuries of state-led control of black bodies, diets, and communities, and draw upon pathologies of the black urban residents as deficient, as incapable of understanding or enacting the best use of their land. Troost Co-op speaks to the wealth of black urban residents who care about urban ecological health, greenspace, and increasing food security for their community—but desire these changes uncoupled from white public space and white racial hegemony; and also draws those passionate about black liberation, and creating ‘black geographies’ in the city.

The Street Level Politics of Cotton Production; Disrupting Hegemonic Spatialized Whiteness

Street level political action is accomplished by black urban farmers in Kansas City in a number of ways—centrally, these farmers undertake the political work of making histories of violence visible. Though typical understandings of civic action and rights-claiming are envisioned as participation in protests, formal petitions to law-makers, and ballot-casting, this work of highlighting state-sponsored violence against black urban residents can, and should, be seen as civic action as well. By using urban agriculture to highlight areas of city-led disinvestment, histories of exploited captive African labor, and racialized segregation and violence, black urban farmers draw on a currently-favored medium—green urban development—to

critique and protest their unequal treatment as urban citizens. Growing cotton in the urban core, for example, is a powerful political statement that demands: see me, remember what the state has done to me, and see that I have a right to this city, too. In such ways, black urban farmers in Kansas City undertake the important work of creating “counter-geographies” to hegemonic spatialized whiteness that “disrupt the sanitized landscape of national forgetting” (Razack 2002).

In other ways, as witnessed in the Troost Co-op, black Kansas City residents use established and condoned methods of urban development—green urban infrastructure—to enact black liberation and Afro-centrists goals for urban space. While one could theorize the Co-op’s land acquisition as simply part of typical urban growth, I argue that this should also be seen as street level politics. As Darian noted—if “we plan on playing in this country, we need to play by the rules that are here,” which, he notes, means land and capital ownership. In this way, the Troost Co-op utilizes the capitalist logic that dominates in U.S. cities to further their own political goals of black liberation.

However, not every black urban farmer in Kansas City would identify with black liberation politics, or would identify their work, or the act of growing cotton, as street level politics. People do not automatically share a political project simply because they have experienced shared histories of violence (as Thomas-Houston 2005 discusses well). This chapter has focused on shared moments of public, political disruption in the urban food “movement” in Kansas City, but it is important to note that intense heterogeneity of thought exists among black urban farmers. Among those I interviewed, for example, there were strong generational and class

divides that informed their views, especially about political strategies for bringing about social change. Despite those differences, black urban farmers often shared critiques of white privilege and urban development. For example, while I once witnessed Philip (a young black-liberation farmer discussed in Chapter 6) and Alfred (a 50-something retired corporate lawyer who bought vast swaths of land West of Kansas City to grow soybeans) arguing over their differing opinions on black lives matter activism, they ultimately found common ground when discussing how they “always have to protect their land from white folks.” In this chapter I focused on these shared contestations, though it would be incorrect to call them collective or cohesive, in order to highlight how black farmers are undertaking the work of disrupting the whiteness of the urban food movement.

The street level politics shared here are happening nationally, as well, at a number of scales. These histories of urban land dispossession, urbicide, in Kansas City that affected the black urban farmers in this study can be understood as a small part of national, historical efforts to displace, and erase, black presence in the American landscape. As I noted, black nationalist religions and social movements have been undertaking the work of disrupting white public space for quite some time—reclaiming land, and drawing attention to histories of purposive state-led violence against black Americans. The work of highlighting and disrupting the ways in which white supremacy has constructed history and city space is enacted in smaller ways, as well, in myriad social movements across the U.S. Black urban farmers in Kansas City disrupt spatialized hegemonic whiteness along with protestors in Southern cities who tear down monuments to slavery and in concert

with protesters against racialized police violence in urban space—all of whom claim their roles in constructing U.S. space, and their right to define its path forward.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

When national and local news sources celebrate the rise of green urban development projects in Kansas City for promoting food security, improving the health and quality of city life, and creating “dynamic aesthetically pleasing cityscapes” (Crupper 2008), they ignore the historical contributions—and exploitations—of minority groups in urban food production. Food deserts in Kansas City have long been occupied by ecologically resourceful urban residents, who have contributed in myriad ways to urban greenspace: cultivating hog farms in Kansas City’s marshy swamps; tending, harvesting, and distributing products from urban fruit and nut trees; making use of storm water runoff to tend urban kitchen gardens; and hunting and selling urban game meat, when racially excluded from conventional food distribution markets.

Foodies involved in developing green urban infrastructure are not informed by this history. They draw on misunderstandings of urban space which ignore the black laborers who built city infrastructure and were pushed out of desirable city space; which understand obesity and other poverty-related illnesses as a result of ignorance, undereducation, and poorly-spent food dollars; and which contend that urban disinvestment is the result of people simply not caring for their environment. The foodie lens suggests urban food production and distribution as a solution to these problems: grow food in formerly occupied lots that purposeful racialized development turned into vacancy; ‘teach’ black urban residents how to cook food that is ‘good’ for them; invest in urban orchards to make people want to invest in their communities again. Massive funding and energy are mobilized to support

these seemingly innocuous solutions to major urban problems. It is easier, and more profitable, for all parties involved to imagine that urban orchards will address urban poverty, than to question and work to address racialized violence enacted through the police state, real estate industry, and global urban growth machine.

It matters that those in charge of urban development—an increasingly broad group, as welfare rollback makes space for third-sector governance—understand and acknowledge this history. It matters that policy makers acknowledge that the history of urban space they draw on was constructed and informed entirely by white voices. It matters that those in charge of distributing development dollars in urban space have an accurate understanding of the racial violence that has been, and is, enacted in cities. Such understandings are the difference between viewing ‘blight’ as a tool the state has used to displace populations and extract value from land, (a current manifestation of a long lineage of white attempts to justify land grabs) and viewing ‘blight’ as a mere descriptor, a way to pinpoint an area of the city that needs more trees. This matters to low income people of color—who wish not only to have their histories acknowledged, but to have a voice in decision-making processes for urban development. As scholars in black geographies highlight (McKittrick 2006; 2011), the erasure of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and land is purposeful spatial colonization with the goal of profit. Green urban development projects today in Kansas City are predicated on white settler colonial understandings of ‘productive’ land use and vacancy—understandings that primarily see value in land when black and brown residents are removed from it, naturalized with neoliberal discourse about productive investment and capital

accumulation (Stoval and Hill 2016). In this dissertation I have illustrated how actors in green urban development actively profit from erasure of landed history, in promoting and drawing on an apolitical understanding of urban space.

The decision to utilize urban food production and distribution as a chief means of addressing food insecurity and urban vacancy was never a ballot measure. East side residents were never given the opportunity to tell policy makers whether or not they approved of this use of urban space, or to voice feedback on whether or not this method of improving food security would work for them. No one voted Nancy, David, or any other foodie into office, yet these individuals are effectively involved in urban governance, and in utilizing urban food projects as a key mechanism of welfare distribution. Neoliberal welfare rollback and the space it creates for third-sector governance (Fischer 1997) is dangerous precisely because seemingly apolitical means of shaping city space—such as urban greening—are allowed to take hold, to serve the interests of an elite few, without oversight or research into their effects. For instance, the fact that hunger has risen, concurrently, with the rise of urban food production and distribution projects on the East side of Kansas City should concern policy makers. But foodie insistence on their efficacy, combined with the national public and private support for green urban development, masks these programmatic failures.

Structural whiteness and white privilege upholds urban food projects with important effects on not just welfare provisioning, but also on racialized urban economies. In Kansas City, white public space predominates in green urban development projects and has racialized implications for who can participate in (re)

development plans for city space and city economy. Small-scale urban food production is a significant, meaningful practice for many foodies because it addresses capitalist alienation from labor—by hyper-focusing on the methods of production, the essence and labor of the ‘maker’ is imbued in the product and provides it with value (Gagne 2011; Paxson 2012). This economic reenvisioning does not exist in a color-blind vacuum. In fact, racialized and class-based understandings about the worth of a product’s ‘maker’ might be even more pronounced in a local-food economy. Using urban food production to address urban disinvestment then, becomes a highly racialized affair in which the raced and classed positionality of urban food producers has profound implications for their success in the green economy. While organizations like Grow KC herald the “diversity” of the local food movement, and prominently display photos of black and brown growers on their advertisements and grant applications, growers of color in Kansas City consistently make less than white growers. Several black growers in KC have told me they have lost money during farmer’s market days, as they made so few sales, yet their presence at the market is celebrated and capitalized on by white foodie-led organizations.

In this dissertation I have also shared the creative maneuvering and agentic actions of those subjected to white public space in Kansas City’s green urban development projects. Neighborhood councils strategically use the enforced language of green urban development to demonstrate urban citizenship, and acquire urgently needed support. Myriad marginalized actors in Kansas City undertake the work of disrupting white public space and asserting alternate,

corrected, histories of urban space—this is evident in the way Feast! participants educate their instructors about poverty and racialized urban history, and in the work of black urban farmers, who remind Kansas Citians that they taught America how to farm. I shared these moments not in order to blindly celebrate human agency (Abu-Lughod 1990), but rather as illustrative of how marginalized urban residents can make bad policies work for them—as a diagnostic of how power works, and is navigated.

Below, I discuss one instance of the disruption of white public space, undertaken as part of this dissertation’s commitment to engaged ethnography. I close with a discussion of policy recommendations, and ways that city governments and policy makers could support green urban development in more equitable ways.

Confronting White Public Space: Institutional ‘Diversification,’ Tokenism, and Dismissals of Alternate Narratives

In the fall of 2017, a group of young, diverse urban farmers and I coordinated and hosted a panel event: “Critical Conversations on KC’s Local Food Scene.” The event was hosted with the goal of disrupting the dominant narrative, constructed by white voices, surrounding urban sustainability, agriculture, and history in Kansas City. Our panel included a young urban planner (a first-generation Mexican immigrant to Kansas City), a young black farmer and activist, an African American woman who runs an urban garden program at a homeless shelter, and the owner of the oldest (dating from the turn of the last century) African-American owned farm in Kansas City. The panelists discussed what “blight” meant to them, talked about the history of black land dispossession nationally and its local effects, shared

thoughtful considerations about how to address food insecurity, and shared their concerns about capitalism and the role of nonprofits in city welfare provision. Every comment shared by panelists was linked in its assertion that discussion of food and diets should be tied to larger issues—systemic poverty and inequality, racialized violence, disinvestment in specific urban areas. The panel event drew a large crowd of around 50 foodies—an entirely white audience that worried the panelists, one of whom commented before the event began, “Shit, it is white in here.” During planning for this event, the organizers and I had experienced difficulty in recruiting panelists because of the potential whiteness of the audience—farmers of color that we approached told us they were worried about the repercussions of voicing their opinions honestly in front of influential foodies. Our panel was quite self-conscious in front of the all-white audience that day, which included representatives from all of Kansas City’s foodie-led nonprofits. The discussion they shared in front of the audience that evening was a much more subdued version of the opinions and experiences they shared privately, in preparatory meetings before the panel.

Our panelists were correct to worry about disrupting white public space. After the panel discussion had concluded, we opened up to questions from the audience—at which point, influential foodies began to attack the perspectives that had been shared by the black and brown panelists. Nancy, the director of Grow KC, spoke angrily:

So I’m looking at the history of the local food movement, I think that there’s a lot of work that’s happened that hasn’t been recognized here. I’m thinking specifically around [a Latina/o focused healthcare nonprofit] organizing their own folks, educating their own folks, I’m thinking about some of the Hmong growers I know who are educating their own folks. Those kinds of engagements in specific grounded communities is what’s ultimately going to

change our food system. I wanna offer that there is more than just this group in the local food movement. So characterizing the local food movement as just this group is diminishing of other people, who in fact are working quite hard in their own communities, and who didn't show up to this event because they're working in their own communities. I agree, our meetings are white. You look at any group of social community activists and it's either white women, or its African American women, or it's Latina women. And that's just the characteristics of who gets involved, by and large, I would say. And so in this movement we've got mostly white women. I don't look out and see a purely white local food system in Kansas City. I see, as I move through my world, a very diverse, constantly mixed group of people, all engaging in a whole variety of ways. And some of them are recognized by the mainstream, and some of them aren't.

In this comment, Nancy minimizes and inappropriately reframes several of the concerns about racialized and class-based inequality in Kansas City's urban food movement, voiced by the panelists. First, she turns the onus of (mis)representation back onto the panelists—in their statements about feeling marginalized by the whiteness of the urban food movement, these panelists, Nancy argues, are themselves ignoring the “diversity” of farmers involved in urban food production. The whiteness of food movement leadership, Nancy argues, is because white women are the ones who get involved—a statement that ignores the historical leadership of black and brown U.S. citizens in food movements, such as in La Via Campesina and the Black Panther Party's food program. Nancy displaces any responsibility for inclusivity by arguing that minority communities helping out “their own folks” is how our food system will change. One panelist, the young black farmer, responded:

I think you made a good point about recognizing work that's already been done, and it made me think of the Black Panthers in Kansas City. I mean, they started the food program at St. Mary's on 12th and Brooklyn. The church is still there, but they're gone. They're actually in jail or killed by the state. So me thinking personally about black people in this areas' efforts to transform their realities, their food system—we run into violence. We run into radical politics. We run into oppositional politics. We run into the limits of electoral politics. So it broadens out all of a sudden into imagining another way to live in the city—

what does that mean? It broadens out into a revolutionary project, like we can't just grow food. Food was a major part of what the Panthers were doing—so was education, so was housing, so was access to health care. But they recognized that none of these programs can actually work if we have an oppressive system that seems to be intent on killing us...through our diet, through numerous ways. That's kind of what your comment brought up for me.

Here, Nancy's micro-concerns about the food system, and people of color working to support their own communities, are placed in the context of macro forces. The farmer reminds Nancy: black people who have attempted self-determination and self-sufficiency have been targeted and killed by the state. There are larger concerns than food and 'green' urban development at play in the lives of urban residents. Soon after this comment was made, another panelist raised concern that Grow KC's upcoming farmers and friends meeting would now cost \$5 dollars to attend, stating, "I can't help but think that makes it less inclusive, and really restricts who has access to that information and those networking opportunities, because so much of the work we do is based on who you know." A Grow KC member stood and snapped, sarcastically, in response,

I am thrilled to be here, and thank you for this conversation. There is a big table of [Grow KC staff] here. Put your feet underneath it for a minute. I think it's awesome that you're bringing this up, I'm all for tension and drama. I think you have some vendetta for [Grow KC]. I think you have all had opportunities to engage with people positively, and you're not putting your feet underneath that table.

This incident, and the comments made by Grow KC staff members, point toward the difficulty of unpacking and dismantling white public space in urban greening projects. Critiques of structural inequalities are read as personal attacks, requests for white foodies to acknowledge privilege are read as denigrations of an individual's hard work, and demands for change are met with allegations of

incivility. This response resonates with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s statements about the danger of the 'white moderate': whom he states stand in the way of racial justice by being "more devoted to 'order' than to justice," and through unwillingness to recognize that activists are not creators of "tension and drama," but rather "bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive" (King 1963).

The panel and its aftermath offer useful insight into how those with power and influence react when whiteness, and structural white privilege, is confronted. In the months following the panel, several foodie nonprofits—Grow KC, Our Daily Bread, and Healthy Communities KC—have responded to these critiques by increasing institutional 'diversity' on their boards of directors, and in promotional advertising and fundraising events. This attempt at diversifying their organizations relies solely on phenotypic diversity, ignores class-based and other diverse positionalities, and serves as "a paradoxical reinforcement of racializing practices that Otherize in very selective ways for the intended purpose of fighting historically inherited systemic patterns of inequality" (Dominguez 1994:335). Increased tokenism of farmers of color has followed this event as well; at several charity fundraisers, black farmers have been called on stage in front of white donors to "share their struggle." Events, such as one hosted by a foodie-led nonprofit at a local distillery feature "farm fresh tamales, Kansas City soul food, and locally-sourced Choctaw corn mush," and proclaim: "All it takes to discover Kansas City's diverse cultures and rich food traditions is finding a dinner table!" These acts draw on the false idea that increased *visibility* of black and brown Kansas City residents is all it takes to create equity.

Several foodies from urban-greening focused nonprofits have approached me, following this panel, with requests for help ‘diversifying’ their organizations—requests that illustrate, combined with this increased tokenism, a profound misunderstanding of the issues presented by the panelists during “Critical Conversations on KC’s Local Food Scene.” Foodies have asked me to provide feedback on their websites, the language their organizations use, and to offer insight on why more food insecure people of color do not attend opportunities they host for collaboration and feedback. Such requests, well-meant, miss the point: instead of asking how to better include people at the table, the question should be—why are we discussing this issue at the table in the first place? Rather than using community feedback to redefine their goals and projects, foodies have asked: how do we get you to support the areas of focus we have already identified? This is perhaps most evident in the recent bankruptcy of a local foodie-led business, a mobile grocery store. At a working group meeting hosted by Healthy Communities KC, the grocery store’s founder spoke about the failure of her business—a truck filled with groceries that parks at various spots throughout the city each week:

We’ve just gotta teach people to shop with us. You know, it’s like people have their routines and however inconvenient they are they don’t want to change them—even if they have to take this bus and transfer to that bus line, or whatever, it’s their routine and they don’t want to change it. People are like ‘I already have my shopping habits.’ Well we just need to teach people how to shop with us.

Comments shared with me by food-insecure Feast! participants (in Chapter 5) would indicate that shoppers choose to shop elsewhere because of the mobile grocer’s high prices and low variety. But rather than asking why low-income, food-insecure customers would rather take a more inconvenient route to purchase

groceries than shop at her truck, the foodie places the onus of blame on them: they do not know how to shop; we need to teach them to shop with us. This forceful reframing of issues, when faced with urban residents who voice more pressing concerns, back into the paradigm of food projects and urban greening initiatives, made engaging in activist and applied ethnography difficult and frustrating. Such attempts at advocacy and systems change did not prove effective in the ways I had hoped. Engaged fieldwork took different, but still valuable, forms for me—through driving food-insecure friends to the grocery store they most preferred, taking friends without cars to the emergency clinic when they fell ill, helping prospective urban farmers write grants, and through facilitating, and participating in, visible disruptions of white public space, such as the one that occurred at the panel event. Throughout fieldwork, I was committed to legitimating and asserting the disregarded narratives of black and brown Kansas City residents whose labor has been exploited for profit without recognition. Making space for these stories, and sharing them whenever possible, was a meaningful way in which I disrupted white public space in Kansas City.

Policy Recommendations

By discussing and critiquing white public space in urban greening initiatives I do not mean to disregard the benefits urban residents garner from urban food production, distribution, and consumption. Many of those I spoke with in Kansas City found working in their gardens, selling occasionally at farmers markets, and eating local, fresh food to be incredibly fulfilling activities. Urban garden space made available to low-income people of color, via Kansas City Grower's Club, provided a

space for some—who were unable to afford mental healthcare—to practice mindfulness, to spend time in nature—rare, in segregated city space that limits the availability of greenspace in low-income communities (Heynen 2003), and to continue favored family traditions of growing food. It allowed some growers to connect with religious traditions and mandates, such as calls to agrarianism within the Nation of Islam, and to enact political commitments, like the statement made by growing cotton and the importance of food production for some black nationalist farmers in Kansas City. The Troost Co-op’s proposed urban gardens are a source of pride for many of those involved in it; and black urban residents who run charity programs that use urban gardens to provide for the hungry find their work to be locally important and meaningful. For these reasons, it would be inaccurate to paint any binary conception or understanding of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ urban food projects. Urban residents can find value in some aspects of urban food projects that in other ways, such as green gentrification, might inflict violence on urban space.

What I do mean to suggest is that urban food projects do not function as adequate or useful long-term measures against food insecurity, and that when used as part of urban development infrastructures they further racialized urban inequality. Greenspace, available for community decision-making and use, is a necessary component of cities—but greenspace must be created with racial and class-based equity in mind. As scholars within studies of green gentrification have argued, sustainable urban development can be enacted, but practitioners must “hardwire social equity into the design of a project” and instate policy mechanisms that limit speculative investment (Curran and Hamilton 2018:228). Urban

development cannot be enacted equitably through the use of race-avoidant discourse (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Racial inequities need to be acknowledged, and placed at the forefront of urban policy.

Positive efforts to address food insecurity in Kansas City should be supported, but should be accompanied by attempts to provide a livable wage to urban residents. Healthy Communities KC occasionally undertakes the work of lobbying for, and supporting bills that would better the lives of those experiencing hunger—such as those which would expand the Kansas TANF safety net, decrease the Kansas food sales tax from 7 to 5.5 percent and would offer income tax credits to incentivize grocery store development in food deserts. This work—which importantly understands the value of safety net programs in the lives of the urban poor—should be expanded. Such work, advocating for the states’ responsibility in providing for the poor, often runs up against national-level conservatism and neoliberal pushback. For example, Kansas City, and St. Louis, have both over the past year passed voter-approved measures to raise the minimum wage to \$10, and eventually \$15, dollars an hour. Missouri state law, however, overturned these decisions, and ruled that cities cannot force businesses to offer more than \$7.70 an hour to low-wage laborers—a move that resonates nationally, as tens of other states have overturned local voters’ decisions to provide livable wages. While social movements to raise the minimum wage and move toward a living wage are relatively strong in Kansas City—the Fight for \$15, for example, has a long local history of activism—foodies largely stand apart from this discourse supporting a living wage. Rather than falling back on neoliberal strategies of self-help to combat food insecurity, influential

foodie-led organizations could vocally support Fight for \$15, and other efforts of those who are vocal against the right of conservative state governments to roll back local rights. It is not naive to think that foodie support of such issues could result in change. Foodies devote considerable time, energy, and discourse in support of urban food projects, with the result that they have been incorporated into local development schemes; similar support, lent to the cause of a livable wage, could result in meaningful outcomes.

‘Radical’ reenvisionings of food charity schemes are possible. As I argued in Chapter 5, cash transfer programs are significantly cheaper, easier to administer, and offer the same or better results in terms of health outcomes than paternalistic foodie nutrition education courses (cf. Hidrobo et al. 2014; Cunha 2014). The research I undertook in Kansas City indicated that urban gardens do not significantly improve food security; promoting them as if they do is inaccurate and ineffective urban policy. While food charity services are important stop-gap measures in the lives of the urban poor, the paternalistic decision-making about what foods they receive adds another level of unnecessary and painful oversight on the diets of the food insecure—who are already surveilled and constrained by federal welfare programs. As studies show, cash transfer recipients often spend food dollars on ‘healthy’ food choices, and on improving the diets of their children (cf. Peas-Sousa et al. 2010). Envisioning a city in which food charity takes the form of strings-free cash transfer, with potential urban garden space and infrastructure offered to those who want it, paints a picture of a more just urban environment.

Importantly, Kansas City could institute greater oversight and accountability on measures such as the Urban Agriculture Zone. If third sector actors are going to be utilized as an extension of the state, local governments can institute community advisory councils and other increased accountability measures—an important measure, as nationally, at the federal level, accountability and transparency are decreasing drastically. Local actions such as these can be powerful criticisms against national trends toward privatization, concentrated monopolies of wealth, and decreased state accountability to the public. Urban Agriculture Zone (UAZ) recipients receive tax breaks for providing jobs and urban food security. They should be required to document their contributions in these arenas. The UAZ advisory commission, which currently consists solely of foodies should include context-dependent neighborhood residents of the proposed development site. UAZ's should be required to create more than one job—UAZ investors could even be encouraged to offer higher than minimum wage for the labor opportunities they create. If UAZ recipients purport to provide food to food-insecure residents, their efforts to do so should be documented. Sliding scale food fees could make it possible for land and capital-divested urban residents to afford the food produced in their neighborhoods, meaning that in small measure, the value from their land will not be completely extracted. By increasing oversight in these ways, city officials could combat speculative investment in the guise of pseudo-development and 'community' building, with the ultimate outcome of increased involvement and commitment of oft-marginalized urban citizens in civic government.

One step forward, that would potentially increase urban residents' control of city space, is city and nonprofit adoption of the community land trust model. Community Land Trusts can take many forms—state or third-sector led—and ensure that low-income community member needs are accounted for through the promotion and creation of affordable housing, often alongside the creation of community gardens and greenspace. Community land trusts, as a model, were brought to the U.S. by civil rights leaders in the 1960s (Davis 2014). Envisioned as a way to assist black share croppers, resist the eviction and discrimination against black Southerners who fought for civil rights, and to provide high quality affordable housing, community land trusts began with the purchase of thousands of acres of land in Georgia, and have been copied in small diverse models throughout the U.S. (Davis 2014). Trudeau (2018) illustrates that this process can result in both sustainable development and affordable housing, drawing on examples of a land trust in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Land Trusts can take myriad forms—from a nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that manages urban land and farming infrastructure for low-income urban residents, to a defunct privately held land-trust in Kansas City's Vine Street corridor that has been locally disparaged for misleading urban residents. Land Trusts would still require great amounts of oversight and continual reassessment of whose voices are being heard, who constitutes the 'community' of advisors, and whose needs are being represented and addressed. In Kansas City, a community land trust with broad resident participation could have a say in what urban agricultural projects are started in their neighborhoods, and could ensure that all urban development accompanies the creation of affordable

housing—so that agricultural projects enhance urban space, rather than displace urban residents. Importantly, thinking about urban development through the lens of community land trusts reinvisions the process of urban decision making and space use, and expands the boundaries of who is and is not included in plans for city space.

Marginalized urban residents have, for centuries, rejected dominant whitened narratives, and attempted to render visible their own histories. Through cotton production, the cultivation of dispossessed urban space, through verbal assertions of presence and importance—such as those that occur at Farmers and Friends, and during Feast! classes—black Kansas Citians have shifted the narrative about who controls knowledge, power, and history in their city. While I have focused on the contributions, and exploitations, of black Kansas Citians in urban space, there are numerous other suppressed narratives of urban life that deserve to be shared. Minority groups in the city have myriad narratives and relationships to food production that white foodies ignore and deny. Analyses of these acts should not stop at mere celebration of agency—these narratives deserve representation at policy levels, and in decision-making processes for urban development schemes; any attempt at creating equitable urban space demands it.

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Publications

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- 2016 "Evangelizing in the Garden: Conservative Christian Efforts to Convert Non-Believers via Urban Agriculture in U.S. Cities." *Anthropologies* 22 (8).
- 2015 *Review of Alternative Food Networks: Knowledge, Practice, and Politics. Gastronomica* 15 (3): 85.

- 2015 *Review of Black, White, and Green: Farmer's Markets, Race, and the Green Economy. Agriculture and Human Values* 32 (1): 155-156.
- 2013 Drafted the following articles, included in *Finding Your Niche: A Marketing Guide for Kansas Farms*, Cole Cottin, ed. Whiting, KS: Kansas Rural Center: Retail: Selling at Farmer's Markets; Retail: Agritourism & On-Farm Sales; Selling through Internet or Mail Order; Selling to Institutions; Selling to Foodhubs; Cooperative Marketing.