

## **INTRODUCTION – Tanya Denckla Cobb**

Second day of the symposium for which we know will be a rich experience of dialogue and learning. First, I want to do something important. I want to acknowledge the space where we are gathering. We are here in the heart of the University of Virginia. And we know that the landscape and many of the buildings around us were shaped and built by enslaved people. We are on land of indigenous people who lived and traded in this region. And what I want to do is I want to set the intention for this symposium to be a space where we come with open minds, open hearts, with respect and compassion, and a learning spirit so that we may together approach the long legacies of harm perpetrated against our fellow human beings through colonization, slavery and discrimination, so together we may create a space for building understanding and exploring possibilities for righting irreparable wrongs and food justice and sovereignty. I'm going to ask a couple of logistical things which is to try and silence your phones. And we have a hashtag, #uvafoodjustice we would love if you post and tweet today as the event goes on.

It is now my privilege to introduce our keynote speaker, Malik Yakini. Malik Yakini is co-founder and Executive Director of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. This network operates a seven-acre urban farm and is spearheading the opening of a co-op grocery store in Detroit's North end. Yakini's views the Good Food Revolution as part of the larger movement for freedom, justice, and equality. He has an intense interest in contributing to the development of an international food sovereignty movement that embraces Black communities in the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa. We are grateful, very grateful that Malik Yakini has joined us in Charlottesville to help set the framework in this thinking that what we call what is this food sovereignty. Without further ado, let's give a warm welcome to Malik Yakini.

## **Keynote - MALIK YAKINI**

Good morning. How is everyone? It's wonderful to be in Charlottesville. In fact, it's wonderful to be anywhere. It's wonderful to be alive on the planet and I'm giving thanks for that. Maybe I'll take this off of this. [removes mic from stand] So, I always begin whenever I have the chance to talk publicly by first giving praise to the creator. And people conceptualize the force that gives order to the universe in various ways. And so, I'm not trying to impose any way my conceptualization of that on you, but for my own centering, I have to begin with that because that's the platform that I stand on, it allows me to be bold and fearless. Secondly, I always have to give praise to my ancestors, both those ancestors and African-American people share collectively and those in my own particular bloodline that it into inspire me. I want to bring greetings from the City of Detroit and greet you in the official Detroit greeting and this will freak her out, but in Detroit the official greeting is, "What up, dog." You got that? All right. I want to thank Tanya and also Alexandra and Mike and all other folks who helped put this event on. I'm always honored when people invite me, because I don't operate by anybody's script so it takes a certain amount of bravery for people to invite me to an institution, because sometimes I'm not sure what I'll say myself, and I sometimes say things that are not politically correct. And so, I'm always honored when people take the risk to invite me and actually put a microphone in my hand.

I also want to big up to my sister, Karen Washington over here. I don't know if you heard Karen yet. She's saying no, no, no, but I have to big her up. Karen Washington - I call her the godmother of urban agriculture in the United States but she's out of the Bronx, New York, and she's currently running a farm with some other women, and also she was the primary founder of the Black Farmers & Urban Gardeners conference which is in its eighth year this year which is taking place in Durham, tomorrow night, Saturday and Sunday, and I would be remiss if I don't acknowledge her presence in here. I'm inspired by her actions and unapologetic boldness. I also want to big up a brother who I heard about and some people have been trying to connect us, but I met him last year, brother some people call him Zebo, Renard who runs the Vanguard Ranch. Stand up so we can see who you are. They need to know who you are because they need to be buying stuff from you and support what you are doing. And so, he's been doing this work for a very long time. He's been a pioneer. And just in a short conversation last night, I'm inspired by your longevity and integrity. I also want to say that I represent an organization, the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, and although I'm the Executive Director of the organization and have the privilege of traveling around the country and talking about our work, I'm representing a group. I'm not speaking as an individual. And while I'm talking to you right now, there are staff members that we have that are working in our farm. And so, again, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge those people working in a field right now pulling tomato plants out of the ground and putting beds to work as I'm working my jaw muscles.

So, I want to acknowledge the staff, members and supporters of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. And one of the reasons I always do that is I'm absolutely convinced that the only way we are going to kind of get ourselves out of this tremendous mess that we find ourselves in is if we work collectively. And so, I'm absolutely an advocate of organizations. We have a lot of people that I call free radicals. They shun being in organized setting. But I think the only way you fight systemic oppression is by being organized. So, I want to acknowledge the organization that I work for.

So, there are several things I want to talk to you about, but I actually don't think I'll be able to get through everything that I wanted to talk about in the time that's allotted. So, I'm going to try to trim down what I had planned to say, hit on some of the essential points.

Maybe I'll start by just giving some reflections on my short time here in Charlottesville. I've only been here less than 24 hours. And of course, Charlottesville has been in the national news over the last 14 months or so. And so, it's a pleasure to be -- actually be here and see some of the places that I saw on the news last August. But I do have to say that I'm highly disturbed by the continuing reverence paid to the founder of this esteemed institution, Thomas Jefferson. And some people while they hold him in very highest esteem - I don't. So, I want to be clear about that. I don't hold slavers in high esteem, those who enslaved my ancestors, and I don't hold pedophiles in high esteem. Certainly, by today's standards Thomas Jefferson would probably be appearing before some grand jury, and I'm sure all in the room know the story of Sally Hemmings. Also, I had the chance to see, I think it was on Main Street as I was being taken to the hotel I'm stage at, a monument to William Clark of the famed duo, Lewis and Clark. And

on the monument, it said, "Conqueror of the Northwest." And so, I just want to encourage you, as I know has been happening so far, to work to dismantle those symbols of imperialism and colonialism that continue to exist throughout the South and continue to raise up people who were colonizers and people who participated in the genocide of the indigenous people of this land, raising them up as heroes. So that's part of changing the narrative. And if we begin to get people to think in a way that will lead us to freedom and justice and equality, we can't continue to praise those conquerors and colonizers. Everybody with me? Okay. I just want to check in.

I want to check in with you periodically just kind of feel the temperature in the room. And, also, in case any all of you plan on jumping on me afterward, Karen told me she got my back. Okay. One of the things I think we have to do, and I'm going to talk about food, but I want to talk about it in a larger context, because food is not disconnected from society in general. And sometimes we talk about the 'Food Movement' as though it's this thing that existed in and of itself. Right. But food is connected and intersects with every society in society. So, I'm going to talk about food and talk about it around about way initially. And one of the things I want to encourage us to do is resist the trend of becoming ahistorical. And I'm so glad Tanya pointed out some of the things in the introduction when she talked about colonization and enslavement. I think maybe she took a look at my notes because those were three things I planned to hit on. But we can't talk about the current food system without understanding that, number one, we are in essentially a settler colony. That the United States was founded by people who came from Western Europe, created colonies which then achieved their independence from the mother country. You know, some colonies, colonizers come and don't want a presence, they extract the labor and resources. In some places like Africa and the United States, the colonizers come with the purpose of stage in a long-term. So, what we are living in, is a descendant of a settler colony. And the land was forcibly taken. There were people occupying all of North America. And the land was taken by force. The United States government participated in official campaigns to remove indigenous people from the land. And it is now occupied mostly by white people, but by some people of color as well. We also can't overlook the fact that the tremendous wealth that the United States has, and for that matter the tremendous wealth of the western world, is based in large part upon the labor of enslaved Africans. And agriculture played a tremendous role in that, particularly cotton. And not only did the South benefit from the production of cotton, but also the insurance companies and the shipbuilders and many other industries in the North were able to extract tremendous profits as a result of the cotton industry that was spearheaded or was driven by the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans. For that matter, the entire Western world you might know that the Industrial Revolution in many ways was fueled by cotton production. In fact, cotton mills in England were one of the things that spurred the Industrial Revolution. And about 80% of that cotton at various times came from the southern United States. So sometimes it kind of trips me out when people say why do black people think they should get reparations? Because the entire Western world is built upon labor that we have never been paid for.

But even after formal slavery, formal channeled slavery ended in 1865, black people have still been systematically excluded from the mainstream economy. And so, all of these things are related to what we are discussing today, that is how we move from slavery to food

sovereignty. We can't move to food sovereignty if we are ahistorical. And part of what the system tries to do is we are ahistorical so that led to the factors we have now. So, it's extremely important we have a deeper understanding of American people and the role of African descent have played in, not only the development of world civil lags, but have played in the development of the Western world and the Western economic dominance. So much of this exclusion of black people from the mainstream economy was enforced by violence and terror. You might have heard of a woman named Ida B. Wells. Raise your hands if you heard her? Most of the people in this room, that's good. Maybe because I'm in an academy. So, you might know around the turn of the last century she was a famous anti-lynching crusader and journalist. And she was for a long time based in Memphis. And there was a large cooperative movement developed by African Americans in Memphis around the turn of the last century where black people were galvanizing our collective wealth to build all kind of stores that we owned and collectively derive benefit from. So many of the lynchings that occurred in that area around that time period were lynching of people who were building these co-ops and trying to build an alternative economy. So, I just want to be clear that this exclusion of black people from the mainstream economy has been done by violence and terror.

And also, finally, one of the things that we have to watch out in terms of this push to have us become a historical is that this lack of historical understanding envisions the role that the black people have played in creation of the American food system. And that includes everything from the types of foods that we are consuming. In fact, there is a tremendously important book called "Black Rice" by a woman named Judy Carney that talks about the fact that the commercial cultivation of rice in the United States in the South Sea islands of Georgia and South Carolina happened as a result of the ships carrying enslaved Africans from West Africa to the so-called Western hemisphere. And let me just pause and explain why sometimes I'll say things like "so-called." Because many of these terms that we have accepted are based in a Eurocentric notion of the world. So, when we talk about things like the Western hemisphere or the Middle East, this is defining geography in relationship to Europe. And so, part of creating a just food system in a just world is decentering Europe in our craniums. So, in the so-called Western hemisphere, these ships would come from West Africa, and you might know sometimes called the triangular slave trade, because they would start in Europe, come to West Africa, then come across to either the Caribbean in South America or North America and drop these enslaved Africans to work on plantations.

Although I studied the slave trade, I never thought about the fact if there was a ship with 300 Africans coming across the Atlantic Ocean, there has to be a tremendous amount of food to feed those enslaved Africans for four, six weeks, or however long that trip took. And so, one of the foods, initially what the enslavers tried to do was bring food from Europe, have it stored in the holds of the ships. They would kidnap enough Africans when the ship was full, they would set sail. But what they found often while they were waiting import for enough Africans to be captured, sometimes that food would spoil. They also found that the Africans didn't like the food that was coming from Europe. And so, from the viewpoint of the enslavers, a dead African had no economic value. And so, they tried another scheme which is beginning to buy foods in west Africa that the enslaved Africans were already used to eating, and foods that could be stored for long periods of time like casaba, sorghum, and also rice. And so, what

happened is they would buy the rice that was un-hulled, you might see pictures, some of you people might be from Africa seeing women use mortar and pesto, sometimes where they pound grain. So, there is a skill that's necessary to be able to pound rice to get the hull off of it without breaking the grain of rice. So, they would buy rice that the hull had not been taken off of yet because it can store longer. Then, on the ships they would have African women who they enslaved for this purpose, they would go to village that were rice-growing villages that had these women that had the skills and, on the ships, they would process the rice and cook it. So, in evidently when they got here to the Western hemisphere, so-called, they would have some of that un-hulled rice that was left over and that would be the seed that would be sold to planters in South Carolina and Georgia. So, the cultivation of rice began with the seed rice that came from west Africa. In all fairness, Native Americans and the indigenous had rice, but it was wild rice using canoe, not the cultivation we saw in South Carolina and Georgia. This is how the role of the African people have been in the food system. But also, the Europeans didn't know how to grow rice so they began to target villages that knew how to grow rice and enslave them that knew how to cultivate the rice. So, in many ways the Africans told the enslavers to do the rice. There are many other ways and I would encourage you to read the books by Judy Carney and also Jessica B. Harris, excellent book called "High on the Hog" that outlines some of the roles that chefs play. For example, that dirty rotten enslaver George Washington had a black chef who prepared food for the white house. And as well as Thomas Jefferson. And so, Jessica B. Harris in her book kind of talks about that and both the way the food was prepared and the tools that were used to prepare that food were influenced highly by African foodways. So, all of these things are things that we have to study so that we are not ahistorical and what we need to do to transform it.

So, I mentioned earlier creating a just food system is linked to social justice generally. Again, food justice doesn't exist independently in the larger society. So, our struggle to create a just food system has to be tied to our struggle to create justice in general. The reality is that the food system intersects with every other system. It intersects with transportation. It intersects with urban planning. It intersects with education. And we have to begin to see how it intersects with policing. So, we have to see how we have to work intersectionally to create justice in all of these systems in order to have a just food system.

Likewise, this idea of food sovereignty is linked to people having sovereignty in general. People have to have the ability to exercise self-determination, to determine what is in their own best interests, and to determine how those best interests are realized in order to shape a food system that functions in their own best interest. So, to the extent we have communities where ideas are imposed on them from the outside, which is what typically happens in communities of color throughout the United States, if that's happening, then we can't have food sovereignty. We have to empower communities, so they can exercise self-determination in order to have the ability to create a food system that reflects the will and aspirations of the people in those communities.

So, to create a just society and a just food system, there are several big issues that we really need to grapple with. And the first of these big issues is probably the most difficult, social justice issue that exist and that's the issue of landmen and let me preface my remarks by saying

that the idea of land ownership is a European construct. This idea that you can own part of the earth. This idea that if you have enough money, you can buy an island, and then you can pass that island down to your descendants, or you can buy a lake and own this lake and pass it down. This is an idea that really grew out of European feudalism where there were wealthy landlords that had enclosed the commons, then required other people to pay taxation to them. So, the settler colonists who came here to what we now call the United States from England, France, and Spain, came from societies where this notion of being able to own the land, if you had enough money, was something that was part of their consciousness. And it's something that still most of us accept uncritically. But that's not a universal concept that you can own the Earth. Who do you go to? Who do you petition to get ownership of the earth? Who has that right to dole out that right to other people? For me, it's a ludicrous concept. But at the same time, given that we live in a capitalist society and one of the pillars is this private ownership, the only way that farmers can have ownership is by owning the land. And it's one of the paradoxes we hold when we try to navigate the state that we live in and the more idealized state we would like to see. And similarly, I'm giving this idea of holding contradictions, many of us know that money in the United States which used to be based on being backed by gold or being backed by silver is no longer backed by anything. And so really at this point it's a confidence game. And so even though there is very little legitimacy in the American system, I have a few dollars in my pocket. So, we have to learn how to grapple these ideas and hold contradictions as we are trying to move from where we are to where we would like to be. About you this idea of ownership and access to land is key. In fact, it is probably the essential issue that we have to grapple with in we are going to have a fair and just food system.

Right now, in the United States something like 99% of farmland is owned by white people. There is statistics that show that in 1910, I think, black people owned maybe 9 million acres of land in the United States and now we are down to something like a million. I don't remember the exact statistics, but there has been tremendous loss of black-owned farmland. The reality, and let me be clear to you that I come out of and am still part of what some people call the black nationalist movement or pan-Africanist movement. And one of the concepts that really was forwarded by that movement is that land is the basis of all power. That it's from the land that resources are extracted, that modern society is built on. It's on the land that the vast majority of food is grown. And, you know, that's not to discount there are roof top gardens and vertical gardens and things that people are beginning to use now. But, still, the vast majority of food on Planet Earth is grown on the land. It's from the land that we get many of the fibers that our clothing is made from. It's from the land that we get the materials that our houses are made from. And so, if we are really talking about creating a food system that is just, that we have to figure out how we redistribute land so the communities that have been historically oppressed and historically excluded from the mainstream economy have access to land in order to grow food and build community and wealth. Now again this is the most difficult of the social justice issues because it really involves taking land from people who own it, so-called own it, and redistributing it to those that are landless. And that's a very difficult prospect. Because those, of course, who own vast swaths of land will not voluntarily give it up because they think it's the right thing to do. So, we have to make a decision.

Part of what our organization does is we are really trying to radicalize the food movement. Because we don't think that you can, as my brother said last night, "put a band-aid on an amputation." Right. That's not going to get it. And that's not to say that we shouldn't be involved in these kind of incremental reformist efforts, because I think those are necessary steps towards the larger change that needs to be made, but ultimately what we have to be about is about a shift in power. And fundamental to that shift in power is the shift in land ownership and land access in the United States and throughout much of what we call the Western world.

One of the other big issues that we have to grapple with is disrupting the concentration of wealth in the hands of already wealthy white men. Our organization is explicitly anti-capitalist. I know some of you probably think capitalism is a really good idea. We don't. We don't think it's a good idea for human beings or for the planet. And part of what happens is there is a certain logic within capitalism that is self-replicating. For example, if let's say sister Karen from the Bronx decides she wants to build a food distribution center. And let's say this food distribution center cost a million dollars. I don't think she has a million dollars in the bank. Do you? Okay. She doesn't have a million dollars in the bank she can withdraw.

So typically, what happens when communities want to do these projects is they have to go to some lending institution. And so lending institutions have criteria for making loans. And one of the criteria they have is what is the collateral that the person has so that they default on the loan we can take that collateral and not, when I say we, I'm talking about the lending institution, so that they, let me say they, not we, so that they can take that collateral and not lose. The bank is not going to lose. That's how this game works. And so, if she doesn't already have a million dollars or something worth a million dollars or somebody who has something worth a million dollars who is going to co-sign for her, she's not going to get the loan. On the other hand, let's take -- Let's pretend some wealthy white dude, let's call him "Wealthy White Dude." So, Wealthy White Dude goes to the bank, and maybe he has \$2 million, and he has maybe a million dollars' worth of property and some other stuff, and Wealthy White Dude goes to the bank and wants a million-dollar loan and he has the collateral. So Wealthy White Dude is what they call in the finance world more "capital-ready." So, Wealthy White Dude gets the money and now has more wealth. Karen doesn't get the loan and she's struggling trying to figure out "how do I get the people in my neighborhood to put in \$10?" So she's doing that that might take 20, 30 years. Meanwhile, Wealthy White Dude builds what he wants to build and goes back to the bank and gets more hand more. Self-replicating system. Basically, the way it works if you have wealth already, you are better position to get more wealth. If you don't have wealth, you don't have nothing coming. That's how it works.

So, given that capitalism and racism intersect in American society, what this does is it continues to concentrate wealth in the hands of usually already wealthy white men. And so, if we are talking about a just food system, which is connected to having a just society, then we have to disrupt in a fundamental way the continued concentration of wealth in the hands of already wealthy white men. What you all think?

The central dilemma, another big issue, that we are faced with in the food movement is: how do we create a food system that provides high quality healthy food to everybody

regardless of their income, regardless of their so-called race, regardless of their geography? Because the reality is there are a lot of poor white people who are hungry too, right. So, this system doesn't really care about, you know, white people either, you know, to tell you the truth. It cares about profit. So how do we create a food system that provides access to high quality healthy food to all regardless of their class, regardless of their geography, whether they are living in Appalachia or living in New York City, regardless of many of the factors that influence whether or not the community you live in has access to high quality food? How do we make sure that's a human right? And that's kind of the position our organization stands on, as a right of being a human being on the planet you have the right to access to high quality food. How do we provide that while simultaneously providing a fair wage to people who work in the food system? This is a difficult dilemma. Because most of us think that we are already paying too much for food. Right. And so many people think that the solution to this problem is to lower the price of food so that everybody can afford it. But the reality is that we are paying, many of the costs of the food we are buying are externalized. For example, we know much of the food in the United States is raised by migrant workers who are often paid deplorable wages, subjected to all kinds of abuse. And so, if we were to pay them what they were actually worth, the cost of the food would rise. It seems counterintuitive, but part of being able to have a fairer food system is really us paying more for food. But the problem is that many people can't afford to pay more for food. And so, we have to link the struggle for food justice with the struggle to make sure that everyone has a livable wage. We can't approach this food thing in isolation. We have to approach it with creating social justice in general.

Finally, one of the big issues that we have to grapple with is what I call unleashing the divine feminine. I am a reforming misogynist. And I say reforming because I'll be working on this the rest of my life. And part of the reason I publicly own this is I want white people to publicly own your system in white supremacy. So rather than pointing fingers, I'm going to tell you what I'm working on. This is the thing as a man in American society that I'm working on getting rid of all these antiquated notions that suggest men are capable of leading, that men should be paid more for doing the same work as women, that women are emotional and we can't trust them to lead. All these kinds of ridiculous notions. I'm working on getting all this stuff. And I'm much better than 30 years ago when I started to work on it, but I'll continue to work on it for the rest of my life.

So, I want white people to embrace the tremendous work you have to do to get rid of the notions that will suggest that white people are superior. And these notions are embedded so deeply in our consciousness sometimes you can't see the ways that they manifest.

And this idea of white superiority is coupled with eurocentrism. For example, what day of the week is it today? Thursday. What does that mean? Thursday. So why are we calling the name of the days of the week after European deities. We don't call this 'Ogunsday'? It's like a deep mind job that's been done on us where we don't question these things. We grow up someone says it's Wednesday, Thursday, Friday we won't think about it, but every time we say that we are calling for certain energies. So, I want white people to feel comfortable to embrace the tremendous amount of work that you have to do to get rid of centuries of mind games that have been played on you.

You know, that's the thing about system of oppression and white supremacy, not only does it under develops black people and people of color but white people too. Because it suggests that is your knowledge of the world, your particular cultural experience is sufficient. In fact, you could have a PhD, go all the way through school and all kinds of letters behind your name and know almost nothing about African people or people of color and considered to be an educated person. And so, the system of white supremacy under develops white people as well. Because it doesn't allow you to learn from the rich cultural experiences of black people and people of color throughout the world. So likewise suppressing women and suppressing the feminine energy under develops all of us.

I can say for myself growing up in Detroit, where we had to kind of take on a macho persona just to survive in the streets, you know, not to get jumped on and beat down, that sometimes like I say the mass becomes the man and becomes hard to distinguish what is this fake macho persona I'm putting on to survive and what is my real understanding of what that is? And oftentimes we have an unhealthy mask of this. So, sometimes white people underdeveloped by supremacy, they are undeveloped by patriarchy. So, to be full human beings not only do we have to unleash the divine energy in manifesting in gender and making sure women not only have equality but promote women leadership, but also if men are going to be whole, we have to unleash that part within ourselves.

How much time do I have? About ten minutes. Okay. So, I'm going to try to say a lot. Maybe what I'll do, I'll go to this PowerPoint and tell you a little bit about the work we are doing in Detroit. So, I live in Detroit, and in 2008 we wrote the Detroit Food Policy and somehow, we were able to get the city council to unanimously policy. So, it's the official policy of the city of Detroit. Although I have to say it's a wonderful document sitting on shelves gathering dust. So, one of the lessons is policy is not enough. You to have the political muscle to actually make these things happen. We also as a result of that started the Detroit Food Policy Council which I had the privilege of chairing for the first two years. And which continues to exist to have its own legs and own staff and funding sources. And what have you. We run a youth program called the Food Warriors Youth Development Program where currently two sites we teach young people to raise their gardens and teach them about food justice and how to be advocating in their communities. And working on a huge project called the Detroit Food Commons where we are building a building on the main street of Detroit which will house the Detroit people key operate, grocery store, as well as three incubator kitchens, a community meeting space, and moving the offices of our organization into that building.

But the thing that we are probably best known for and the thing that we do is the most labor intensive is we operate Detroit largest farm which is called D-Town Farm. So, I want to quickly go through this PowerPoint and talk to you about the work we are doing on our farm. So, in 2006 when we started our organization, we were guided by the view and we continue to be guided by the view that the most effective moments grow organically out of the communities that they are designed to serve. One of the things that the system of white supremacy does is suggest to white people that they have the obligation and responsibility to go and save other people. And if any of you have those notions let me dispel that and say we

are not looking to be saved. Okay. We are not looking for saviors. And the solutions to our problems lie within our own communities. In fact, the solutions to the problems of any kind lie within that community. And its issue being able to unleash and manifest that genius that exist within that community. One of our goals was to start a two-acre organic farm. And we said two-acre because at that time we were mistakenly under the impression partially spurred by some discussion at the Community Food Security Coalition Conference I went to in 2005 that the difference between a farm and garden was scale. If you had at least two-acres you could legitimately say you were a farm. So, in retrospect that was warped but that was our thinking at the time. So, in 2006 we started quarter-acre garden on Detroit east side and that's a picture. That's with Karen's cousin who was our first farm manager. And we tried to fill this field with houses and quickly realized that we weren't going to be able to fill it because we were running in old blocks, so we did what's called Lasagna Method.

We layered topsoil in order to do these beds that were 12-feet long. And transformed a lot into a beautiful lush vibrant garden. Unfortunately, a developer bought the land at the end of that growing season and we had to leave. We weren't able to take the soil that we invested with us. In 2007, we moved to a half-acre location on the west side of Detroit where we began to use the term D-town Farm. In 2008 we moved to our current long-term location in the city of Detroit's Rouge Park where we signed in October of 2008 a ten-year license agreement, initially for two acres. That's our first farm manager there Nefri [referring to photo in presentation].

In November of 2001, the Detroit City Council approved an amendment to our licensing adding additional five acres, giving us a total of seven acres. And I love this picture because we always trying to get volunteers to come to our farm. We have five staff members. But we are also trying to get volunteers also to come to the farm. And brother Zebo was talking last night about a reality that all this is black farm workers are faced with, and that is that because of the historic experiences of enslaving and share cropping many black people aren't trying to get nothing about no kind of farm.

That's not all of the story. Because there are some trying to hear about that. So, there is it a dual reality. But for many of our people they have a very kind of bitter taste in their mouth because their understanding of agriculture has been framed by those experiences of slavery and sharecropping. So, I love this picture because it just pushes back against all of the excuses I hear that people give me why they are not going to come out to our farm and volunteer. Last year we grew more than 37 different crops at our farm. And I don't know if this is true, so that's Jackie Hunt, one of our founding members in the field of collards, I don't know if this is true, but rumor has it in Detroit that they are the sweetest in the city. I don't know if it's true, but I want to believe that.

We also raise bees for pollination and honey production. We do large scale composting. This is kind of so you can see the scale. All of those boxes were one delivery of food waste for our composting operation. That was probably 10,000 pounds of food waste that was delivered at one time. We make wind roles that are about 6 feet toe and 50 feet long using wood chop as carbon source. After seven or eight months we have finished compost. We have one that we use during the summer. They are used to. Our growing is in from March to September. And we can grow March and later at the end of the season. We had our first frost thaw nights ago in Detroit, so the tomatoes, all the things in the field is done. But during the summer we grow

things that like lots of heat. In that picture you see green beans and peppers that like the heat. But we have to roll the sides up because it can be unbearably hot.

We also do lots of agritourism. And we have interpreted farms and signs throughout the farm. Many young Detroiters are introduced to farming for the first time at D-town Farm. This was a breakthrough for this person holding a worm, but only partial a breakthrough because you see they have on rubber gloves. You can see the joy on these young people's faces. We have a harvest festival every September that about 1,000 people come to. This was a couple of years ago do you know DJ Cavem's a hip-hop artist that raps about food. He's on YouTube. Cavem, write that down, make sure you Google him, you might want to bring him here. He's dope. We give hay rides to the people. We have workshops on food justice. These were some young people who attended our bee-keeping workshop.

We've done a few new things in the last couple years regarding various solar projects. This is our tool shed. We keep our hand tools in it. And we have a solar panel on top powering a charging station inside that we can charge things inside. In 2015, we started building this eight-kilowatt solar power station, we bought a shipping container and able to generate 8 kilowatts of electricity. We are off grid. So, this is the only electricity we had on the farm. This is what it looked like when it was finished of the we are also able to do a muddy road that was there and had a tractor donated to us. So, we have a lot of water that runs off in that direction. We have seen it as deficit in the past, but now seeing it as asset because we are able to collect about 50,000 gallons of rain water. We use a solar pump and store [the water] in these two-2,400 container and we run it through the grip system. We sell to basically farmers markets in the city of Detroit. [We] also sell it at the farm, Saturdays and Sundays. We typically have about five farm hands that work on the farm, farm manager, summer interns and rely heavily on volunteers.

So, I want to end just with a couple of things. Because I don't want to end with you thinking that this is hopeless because I have great hope. But I have hope only if we frame this work within a much more fundamental shift of power kind of framework as opposed to many of the things I hear where we are just again trying to put a band-aid on an amputation. So, one of the things, this is to the black people and people of color in the room, would he have to organize for power. And I'm all for white allies, but black people need to organize ourselves. People of color need to organize ourselves. And we need to do it with the framework that we are organizing for power. One of the things that Karen has been fundamental in, again, is creating the Black Urban Garden Farmers Conference which is taking place this weekend in Durham, and that provides a forum for growers from throughout the United States and some other places in the world as well to come and begin talks to change ideas, not only on the skills and knowledge needed for farming, but also to begin to sharpen our politics so we are doing this from a very sharp gaining power kind of perspective.

But I'm also involved in an organization called the National Black Food and Justice Alliance. And we want to encourage you to look up that website, you can [www.blackfoodjustice.org](http://www.blackfoodjustice.org). Again, that's blackfoodjustice.org. We were very committed to co-ops. We think within the context of capitalist system that we try to dismantle tale that co-ops give us the best place to collective wealth, through these co-ops. Many of us are still kind of caught, including our organization, in what we call the nonprofit industrial complex where we

are constantly going to foundations asking them for money. We need to, in fact, this is something that white allies can do, to pressure those foundations to distribute funds in a way that is more helpful to black organizations and other organizations of color, not just to kind of crumbs off the table that we typically get, but to make long-term funding commitments. And we need often unrestricted funds, not just funds for particular programs, but funds that we can use however the hell we want to use them, frankly. And we need it over multiple years. And also, many times the evaluations that funders are looking for don't align with what we think is important to evaluate. So white allies in the room that's something you can work on.

Finally, I think we need to fight for reparations cause I'm an advocate of reparations. Some people say you'll never get that. The government will never pay. That might be so, but I think it's a righteous demand and we need to find a fundamental way to find some of the wealth that's been accumulating in American society as a free labor provided by enslaved Africans so we have some pool of capital in order to build the kind of institutions we need in our community. And, finally, I'll end with this, that this idea undoing racism is critical. Again, since it seems to be majority of people in the room probably identify as being white, two levels that I would suggest you need to work on. The first is working on dismantling systemic race that still exists within every institution within American society. But equally as important, and sometimes this is a little more difficult, because it's easy to point fingers and say the government, the institutions, the corporations, but it's a little more difficult, to point that finger inward. And so, there is this personal work that has to be done also to divest ourselves of hundreds of years of notions that are associated with this idea that white people are the best thing since sliced bread and that everything that's been developed of value and worth in the world has been developed by white people. And so, it takes intense personal work. I would highly recommend if you haven't already engaged in undoing racism trainings, that you do that on a regular basis. And it's not like you go to one training, I'm good, I'm cured. I'm good. This is a lifetime work just like me working to get rid of patriarchy inside of myself. Not just white people because we are all impacted by this in different ways. So, for black people and people of color, we internalize notions of inferiority that we need to get rid of. For people considered to be white they internalize notions of superiority that you all need to get rid of. So, all of us have work to do, just manifest in different ways. But I found these undoing racism trainings to be tremendously helpful. And in Detroit we use what some people call the Caucus Model where black people kind of caucus up together. We do a monthly session. Then we have caucuses where the black folks have a caucus where we talk about how we get rid of these notions of internalized inferiority. And white people have caucuses where they try to get rid of notions of superiority.

Finally, finally, that was the fake finally the first time. This is the real finally. There are a few students in the room it appears, so I want to encourage the young people and the students in the room to really step up. Because in every instance where there has been a major social transformation over the last 100 years, young people and students have been in the forefront of that. So young people and students have tremendous potential for social change. I don't want you to underestimate the role you can play. And really young people can take more risks than older people. Older people are worried about mortgage and job. If you don't have all that

yet, you can step out there and be a little more bold and fearless. I would encourage you to do that. I want to end by quoting a great African revolutionary, France Fanon. If you've heard of him throw your hands up. But one of the things he said is, "each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its historical mission, fulfill it or betray it." We certainly have that responsibility. I would encourage you to do that. We can change the world. We can change ourselves. Let's get busy. Peace.