“Worthy of Sustenance”: Disability and Food Justice

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Abstract

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“Worthy of Sustenance”: Disability and Food Justice

Encouraged by the work of food justice organizations in addressing structural inequities, this thesis names how ableism is also a structural factor in the lives of disabled people when it comes to accessing food, questioning the assumption that these challenges are primarily due to bodily impairment. First locating the connections between the food justice and disability justice movements, this thesis articulates the need for disability, and the impacts of ableism in the lives of disabled people, to be considered as it relates to food justice. This thesis asks the questions: 1) How are food justice organizations both subverting and/or fulfilling dominant discourse, specifically when it comes to health and illness/disability? 2) How might a larger context of indigenous West African cosmologies and legacies of Black healing activism ~~have~~ informe~~d~~ food justice activism, especially the food activism of the Black Panthers, and how does this continuing vein of food justice offer a uniquely powerful basis for furthering disability justice? And 3) What might a liberatory discourse and practice be, if disability justice informs food justice, and what might this look like in everyday practice? The aim of this work is to illuminate that the nature of ableism is so insidious in our language and culture that it can be challenging to

see and articulate, and certainly to challenge, especially when it comes to something as charged as “health” and food, survival-based concerns. How can we both see and enact more liberatory ways of being with disability?

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Dedication

To my parents, Pamela Denise Cain and Floyd Wesley Simpson, who fed generations spirit and body, respectively, before joining the Ancestors.

To Isiah Haggins, Jr. Your life was precious and valuable to me.

To my aunt, Mary Lynne Cain, I did it!

To my beloved grandmother, Helen Cain, who lives with breathtaking grace and who has never made one promise you didn't keep - thank you for always believing in me. Thank you for everything.

And to Paolo, you were meant to be. Your presence is a gift to everyone you meet, and I am honored you call me "Mama".

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This endeavor, of completing graduate school, truly does require support. The work that follows was created in and through interdependence; this is what allowed me to finish writing after many starts and stops. It is important to me to express my gratitude in a way that illustrates just how connected the completion of this work is to so many beyond myself and those who most directly contributed. As I believe will be apparent throughout my thesis work, deeply honoring and learning through lineage and journey are important to me and these acknowledgements are written from that place, of desiring to recognize as many as I can within the web that has supported me in this process.

I first want to thank my graduate advisor and thesis chair, Professor Ryan Galt in the Department of Human Ecology at UC Davis. From the moment we met, I recognized our mutual excitement for sharing our ideas. I have learned so much through our conversations and interactions about how to embody our greatest ideas in practice, and how to do so from a desire to share our learning to benefit as many as we possibly can. I have benefited from your ability to tangibly support my process, while also reminding me that I am leading my work; your encouragement, genuine kindness, and care; your clarity and ability to assist me in navigating the details and the overarching aim at the same time; and of course, your insistence that I attempt things that move me beyond comfort. I am so grateful that I have always felt allowed to show up as my whole

self in your presence, which has supported me so much in feeling that I could write this thesis in a way that honors how relevant the content is to my own embodied experiences. I am honored to know you, not just as my mentor in this academic context, but also as a dear friend.

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To Professor Ryan Cartwright in the American Studies Department at UC Davis, my final committee member: I can't express enough how much gratitude I have for the way you have embraced me. You have spent an incredible amount of one-on-one time supporting and strengthening my understanding of (critical) disability studies and disability activism; assisting me in navigating my first academic conference; affirming my work and, equally, offering insightful questions that always help me to consider more deeply. I also appreciate the

time spent building a true rapport grown through laughter, as well as a true interest in me as a person and my life as a whole, which really supported me in challenging times throughout this process. I am deeply appreciative for each of you.

A special thanks to Carrie Armstrong-Ruport, Graduate Student Adviser and Coordinator in Human Ecology: you are seriously the foundation on which my navigation of completing this degree has been possible. You have offered unwavering support in many tangible and intangible ways, encouraged me and shared with me, and showed genuine care for me and my family - these are all generosities I will never forget. Words are lacking when I say I am so deeply grateful for you.

Along the way, I met Josh Cadji, a student in another cohort of the Community Development Graduate Group at UC Davis. It was through our conversations that I shared passionately about bringing disability justice into my own practice and understanding of food justice. Josh connected me with Phat Beets Produce, and Max Cadji, one of its founders, who I am also so thankful for. In addition to writing this thesis, through Phat Beets, I was able to create a curriculum bringing questions of disability justice and food justice to a political education workshop in the North Oakland community in which I live. Meaningfully for me, many of the attendees of this conversation I facilitated were also disabled people living in Oakland. Thank you Josh, for your friendship,

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It was through a second workshop I facilitated at Phat Beets Produce that I met some of the members of disability justice organization, Sins Invalid – namely, Patty Berne, Leroy Moore, and Lateef McLeod. There was an instant affinity and desire to share and collaborate with one another. There was also a lot of excitement for me to gain the in-person presence of cross-disability community that was mostly queer and of color; and, from there we continued to collaborate – a collaboration that lasted for 3 years. To all I know at Sins Invalid,

and through the Hothouse Leadership project (Neve Mazique-Bianco, Alli Yates, Kiyaan Abadani, Patty Berne, India Harville, Stacey Milbern, Max Airborne, and Nomy Lamm) and disability justice community more broadly, I truly have learned so much from being in connection with you in various capacities – in relationship, in creative collaboration and political organizing, and in practicing disability justice together across the many differences, and similarities, we all hold. Each of your presences in some way taught me how to more deeply love, advocate for, and honor the bodymind I inhabit, and how to show up from this place willing to receive others doing the same; most especially when it feels challenging. This has strengthened my own desire to be, and do, what I can in solidarity with others to create shifts so all have access to honor their own existence and experience living in bodyminds that society has, detrimentally, marginalized. I can't say enough how my experiences with you all transformed every aspect of my life and how much I appreciate and value our experiences together - thank you.

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Fundamentally, the relationships I have built around me, both prior to and during graduate school, have sustained me so that I was even able to show up to the task of a graduate degree.

To Jim, thank you for supporting me in my education, always; for all of the (access) intimacy[1] we have built, and your foundational support in navigating life, both at school and at home. Thank you for staying present in the challenging times that inevitably occur in life beyond graduate education, for learning with me how to move through all of it, and for sharing in the excitement of what I want to pursue in life. I appreciate how moving through this process with you has taught me a lot about how truly grounded and adaptable you are. Your presence has been an undeniable support in getting me here. With you, I truly know what it is to be loved. I love you.

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1 Mia Mingus describes access intimacy as "that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level" (2011).

and helped me reclaim that sense of deserving – not just for you or myself, for our communities as well. And perhaps most obviously, you have taught me to live life now. Not solely from the fear of attempting to outpace death or forced change, but because we deserve to create our dreams, in whatever ways we can, right now. I have learned as much about life with you in our time together as I have attained knowledge in the process of my degree, and I look forward to so much more. My love for you is forever unconditional and it is infinite.

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2 I offer special gratitude to Audre Lorde for her words in "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (1984) which, since I read them in community college, have been a reminder of why I continue writing, even through challenge, fear, and circumstance.

humbled, and reminded that we do the very best we can with the time and lives we have, attempting to trust that, in some way, there is possibility for our lives to nourish far beyond ourselves and into the future; often, in ways we could not imagine. To them, I give the deepest thanks.

I did not get here, by any means, alone.

Why Disability?: Food Access in the Context of Ableism

What, *exactly*, is the connection between disability and food justice? Despite rampant food insecurity[1] among people with disabilities, the food justice movement has yet to significantly acknowledge the barriers for disabled people in achieving food justice that is rooted in an understanding of ableism. According to Fiona Kumari Campbell, ableism operates through "…a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then, is cast as a diminished state of being human" (2008, section 1). Campbell's definition is of great use, as it reminds us that ableism, and other forms of systemic oppression, is something we are inducted into. Campbell's definition does not diminish the largeness, or systemic nature, of ableism, while also recognizing that there are components to ableism, and other forms of systemic oppression,[2] that are not *solely* placed outside of us; that we as individuals, relationally and collectively, subvert, halt and/or (re)produce it as well by the ways we do, and do not, enact it on our own bodies/within ourselves, our environments, and with one another[3.]

1 Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to food." Low food security entails reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet, with little to no indication of reduced food intake; very low food security indicates disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 2015). I would add to this definition that food insecurity is broader, as "household-level economic and social condition[s]" are also impacted by structural forces (Whittle et al. 2015; Elsheikh and Barhoum 2013).

2 Systemic oppression and systemic domination will be used interchangeably throughout.

3 See also Pylypa on the usefulness and limitations of Foucault's concepts of (bio)power (1998). The sociological term agency, or the ability to make choices within (internal or external) constraints, may be more precise here.

Fortunately, a wealth of information has been gathered regarding the impacts of race,[4] class, and, to a lesser extent, immigration and migration status in the food system, which has led to the common acknowledgment that "certain populations of bodies are structurally recognized as less worthy of sustenance and luxury" (Slocum and Saldanha 2013, 1). Judith Carney echoes this, stating, "The right to a meal has been used in specific historical periods to deny some people their fundamental humanity" (Carney 2013, 74). It is surprising in this context that questions about the role of disability in the food system have, until relatively recently, been absent.

The USDA reports that not only are households that include an adult with a disability considered "food insecure" at rates alarmingly higher than households without, but they also experience more severe food insecurity, and, the utilization of disability assistance programs[5] and food and nutrition programs[7] were found not to be wholly effective in ensuring food security for disabled people (Coleman-Jensen and Nord 2013).[6] Additionally, higher rates of

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4 It has been acknowledged that experiences of racism/racial discrimination impact wellbeing (Centers for Disease Control as quoted by National Public Radio 2021).

5 Such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

6 This could mean that food insecurity is actually much higher among disabled people, as those who, for myriad reasons, are not utilizing these programs are not represented. USDA Economic Research Service data from 2009-10 found that 33 percent of households that included an adult with a disability who was unable to work, and 25 percent of households with an adult with a disability that did not prevent them from working, were food insecure, compared to 12 percent of households without an adult with a disability. The data also showed 38 percent of households including an adult with a disability had very low food security (as defined in footnote 1) (Coleman-Jensen and Nord 2013).

food insecurity are the case even for moderate-income households that include an adult with a disability (Coleman-Jensen and Nord 2013).

It seems that these conditions, however, have not stimulated an ableism-informed analysis within the food justice movement. While the movement's primary food access[7] concerns are proximity to food, affordability of food, and knowledge about food (Oakland Food Policy Council n.d.)—all also relevant to disabled people—this conception of food access is not enough to encompass additional barriers to food access that people with disabilities experience. There is a range of additional considerations for disabled people in accessing food, such as experiencing social isolation and being based within the home; inaccessibility of transportation options and inaccessibility of grocers; difficulties transporting groceries, and preparing and cooking food[8] (Webber et al. 2007; Coleman-Jensen and Nord 2013). While these barriers are often framed as being a result of disabilities themselves, effectively depoliticizing disability, I would suggest that they are all evidence of ableism's influence within society, in which myths of independence, expectations of productivity, and abledness are glorified. As Gloria L. Krahn (2015) et al. write, "...these differences are linked to a history of social, economic or environmental disadvantages."[9] This

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7 I define food access as the ability to easily produce or obtain, prepare, and consume food that nourishes on the physical, mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual levels.

8 This could be due to lack of support with impairments, and/or due to the lack of accessibility of the home/kitchen. For example, as of 2020, over 15% of households include someone with a disability (defined solely as mobility impairments/constraints), yet only 6% of homes are disability accessible (Stern 2020).

9 See Hackett et al. (2020), Krnjacki et al. (2017) for further impact of discrimination (ableism) on the wellbeing of people with disabilities.

depoliticization obscures ableism as a root of these barriers to food access. While connections made to other systems of oppression within the food system are commonly present in other analyses, they seem to be absent in regard to disability. Alison Kafer (2013, 10) asks questions I believe are useful to begin to deconstruct this: “How has disability been depoliticized, removed from the realm of the political? Which definitions of and assumptions about disability facilitate this removal? What are the effects of such depoliticization?” I will revisit these questions, in connection with my own throughout this thesis in order to gain more understanding of if, why, and how this may be relevant in relation to food justice.

The questions I explore here are: 1) How are food justice organizations both subverting and/or fulfilling dominant discourse, specifically when it comes to health and illness/disability? 2) How might a larger context of indigenous African cosmologies and legacies of Black healing activism inform food justice activism, especially the food activism of the Black Panthers, and how does this continuing vein of food justice offer a uniquely powerful basis for furthering disability justice? And 3) What might a liberatory discourse and practice be, if disability justice informs food justice, and what might this look like in everyday practice?

It is important to know how ableism functions to limit food access for disabled people; more importantly, moving toward disability justice can

transform not just the material circumstances of disabled people in regards to food, it can also support expanding on and fully living this essential assertion at the basis of food justice: all people are worthy of sustenance. It is this goal that I seek to further with this thesis.

I have organized the thesis as follows. In the next chapter, social movements and, specifically, justice-based social movements will be defined, ideally providing a deeper understanding of the potential meeting of disability justice and food justice. The methodology, methods, and limitations follow. The legacy, importance, and influence of Black-led food justice work is then brought forth, and finally an analysis of how ableism influences our understanding of disabled bodies' inherent worthiness of sustenance. Throughout, there are moments of integration which allow you as a reader to pause, reflect, and tend to your body and the information you're receiving if you so desire.

***A Moment of Integration*[10]**: This is a pause provided to take in what you've just read, if you so desire, and allow it to settle, and/or to explore the following questions. What physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts came up in response as you read "Why Disability"?

What possibilities for access to nourishment might you see in the instances you've read? What comes up for you in response — especially your values, and any actions you feel inspired to take? Perhaps you might draw or journal your vision. What need(s) does *your* body have right now[11]? Can you receive it for yourself, or can you safely ask for it to be met[12]?

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10 These integration pauses are inspired by Meenadchi (2019, 2021).

11 https://youfeellikeshit.com by Amanda Miklik and Jace Harr described as "useful for people who struggle with self care, executive functioning, and/or reading internal signals", is a brilliant interactive resource that actually guides one through assessing the body's needs and how to meet them, and/or enlist support.

12 Meenadchi (2021) draws forward "three necessary conditions: an experience of being at choice, somatic awareness of one's own body, somatic awareness of the collective body" (16).

The Meaning of Justice: Disability Justice and Food Justice Movements

Colonization and decolonization are social processes even more than they are political processes. Governance over a people changes only after the people themselves have sufficiently changed.

— Laenui 2011, 150

The principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need — the principal horror of such a system is that it robs our work of its erotic[13] value, its erotic power and life appeal and fulfillment.

— Lorde 1998, 55

Disability justice and food justice are justice-based social movements.[14] Rights-based movements, in contrast, primarily "organize to participate in legislative and electoral processes on the state and federal level, target[ing] policy makers, legal experts and elected officials;" for a number of reasons, this primary focus on legal, legislative, or political processes can be inaccessible or challenging to access for those who are intensely impacted by marginalization within systems of domination (Sistersong et al. 2012). Justice-based social movements are broader in that, while they may organize to secure rights as well, they fundamentally seek "a paradigm shift in consciousness for many people

13 Lorde says of honoring the erotic that it "is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing" (1998, 54).

14 "Social movements are the organized efforts of multiple individuals or organizations, acting outside formal STATE or economic spheres, to pursue political goals within society. They may be organized around either particular groups - e.g. the working class - or particular goals - e.g. access to HEALTH CARE. Their demands may be focused on the state (e.g. the passage of new laws), on economic actors (e.g. wage demands), on society as a whole (e.g. the changing of norms relating to RACE or SEXUALITY), or on any combination of these" (McCarthy 2000, 758).

and radical transformation of society" (Sistersong et al. 2012). Change can be effected through legal, legislative, and political means; however, justice-based movements remind us that to create far-reaching, lasting change, it is important to not limit possibilities for change to these processes (Sistersong et al. 2012). At the collective level within systems of domination, the needs of those deemed dominant have been considered more important, and more worthy of compassion, than the needs of those marginalized within these systems, which gives rise to dynamics of power (Grewal 2012; Willie 1987). Nonviolent communication, then, is a useful practice because of its focus on "a universal set of life-affirming needs" (Meenadchi 2019, 15). Justice movements already assert that we must act in belief, language and practice (Sistersong et al. 2012), toward an existence where all needs are worthy. This chapter is meant to establish the frameworks of disability justice and food justice, including how a justice orientation is different; it also illustrates how these movements question the logic of deprivation and marginalization for certain bodies, and makes the connections between these movements clear.

For example, disability justice goes beyond "arguing for our mere right to exist, but instead [shifts the paradigm and] assumes that we are whole beings (Berne as qtd. in Lamm et al. 2015); it insists our worth is inherent and tied to the liberation of all beings, and that our worth has [nothing] to do with our ability to perform as productive members of [capitalist] society" (Lamm et al. 2015).

Disability justice includes people with chronic illnesses or who identify as sick as well as others not traditionally recognized as disabled and who are marginalized on other bases as well as disability (Allen 2013; Lamm et al. 2015; Berne 2015). Disability justice was initially named in the vein of other justice-based social movements by Patricia Berne and other queer disabled women of color in 2004 (Lamm et al. 2015). In 2005, the Disability Justice Collective was created, which included Patty Berne, Leroy Moore, Mia Mingus, Sebastian Margaret and Eli Claire (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018). Disability justice[15] is defined as a movement-building framework and practice that emphasizes the leadership of disabled people of color and, queer and gender-nonconforming people of color, "carried on by organizations […] and many individuals and unnamed collectives doing visible and also highly invisibilized work" (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018).

As will be expanded upon in the next chapter, the radical Black origins of food justice also illustrate the importance of <u>widespread</u> cultural and political shifts and building across social movements. These origins make clear that challenges in access to food for Black people has been a point of convergence where various forms of structural domination and marginalization are enacted, <u>and</u> have also been defied. My aim in revisiting these origins is to honor this historical and continuing vein of food justice and to imagine the potentially

15 See Berne et al. (2018) for "Ten Principles of Disability Justice".

liberatory gifts it can offer to food justice for disabled people, especially those who are multiply marginalized. The strategy of linking communities' material conditions to structural inequities, thereby politicizing marginalized communities' experiences, was fundamental to the food justice work of the Black Panthers, and is also of particular value in working toward a food justice movement informed by disability justice.

The food justice movement rightfully centers the experiences of poor and Black communities, as well as other marginalized communities. However, as acknowledged in the coming analysis, many food justice organizations implicitly define health as the opposite of disability. Centering this notion of health can potentially erase how food access challenges experienced by disabled people, including disabled people from these communities, is also a consequence of ableism. The food justice movement has the potential for transforming society beyond increasing food access; through a disability justice framework, food justice is a potential site where ideals privileging "normal", "healthy" bodyminds[16], and nourishment of only certain people and their bodyminds, can truly be challenged and transformed.

I aim to illustrate that, much like inequities along the lines of other facets of identity, the barriers that people with disabilities face in the food system can

16 Bodymind is the "intertwinement of the mental and the physical" (Schalk 2018).

also be read as a result of ableism in society. Referring to women, people of color, and immigrants, Douglas Baynton (2001, 33) asserts, “The concept of disability has [also] been used to justify discrimination against other groups by attributing disability to them.” This use of ableism as further justification of oppression against those already deemed marginal potentially provides a context for the absence of an analysis of ableism within the food justice movement; distancing from associations with disability has, understandably, perhaps been an attempt to escape more discrimination and oppression. Further, “health” for Black people historically, in the context of enslavement, was determined by productivity or ability to labor, or as Fett (2002, 20) writes, “the capacity to labor, reproduce, obey and submit,” not a subjective sense or felt experience of wellbeing, which was clearly systematically denied. Needs[17] like joy, rest, safety, play, (self) acceptance and so on were not, and often still are not, fully accounted for when determining what health is or means, especially for Black people and others who may be deemed marginal by systems of oppression.

The works of those like Tricia Hershey’s The Nap Ministry (founded in 2016) and Adrienne Marie Brown’s (2019) *Pleasure Activism* are so important for this reason. Instead of proving abledness and capacity for productivity, what if

17 A partial list of universal human needs is available at https://baynvc.org/list-of-needs/

liberation asserted there is no justification for oppression or discrimination, including for the bodies of disabled people, or for qualities associated with disability?

As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) writes, “I honor the survival skills of denying need and getting by on nothing that have helped keep us alive. But I also deeply believe our beloved dead want us to do more [...].” Even though this has been a necessary response for survival, with self-sufficiency even being an assumed prerequisite for being considered human, or having a life worth living (Hall 2014, 181), how can we recognize and respect the autonomy, agency and self-determination of individuals and communities without the condition of complete independence or self-sufficiency? As Hall further writes,

> While our lives are interdependent, interdependence is considered disabling in an able-bodied society. Nondisabled people ignore their own interdependence [...] In this context, relying on others certainly does suck! (2014, 189).

Contrary to this influence of ableism, I'd suggest learning how to ask for our needs to be supported in a society built on the myth of independence[18], and making it safe to do so — to have the awareness of what we can sustainably carry on our own, and what we cannot — can *also* be courageous, is wise, and

18 While this is primarily in reference to disability, it does not escape me that this myth of independence also works in other ways - for example, through the hegemonic erasure/underacknowledgment of the contributions of Black and Indigenous people (and this land's name of Turtle Island), immigrants, women, queer, and gender nonconforming people, and many others.

a potent form of strength. And, at the same time, it is important not to completely romanticize interdependence; for some, dynamics deemed interdependence have been actively discouraged or compulsory, and a site of exploitation and/or harm[19] and even within communities of shared identity or identities, there can still be differences and dynamics of power that expand agency for some while limiting it for others[19].

Overlap already exists between the food justice and disability justice movements. As illustrated, both of these movements assert that justice is nourishment, requiring the transformation of conditions by and for those marginalized and targeted for deprivation by systems of domination, as well as shifting the culture of domination itself. They both shift collective consciousness by reclaiming the power to self-define and self-determine, as individuals within communities, and beyond the confines of how people of color, poor people, disabled people, queer and gender non-conforming people and many more marginalized people have been understood within the context of systems of domination. Both movements also encourage rooting within interdependence as a way of actualizing justice, the nourishment that they seek.

19 See TB Hunter's term "collective bodily ownership", where "there is a certain amount of forfeiture [expected] of individuality/individual bodily autonomy in exchange for [collective] survival" (2020).

A Moment of Integration: What has come up for you in reading “The Meaning of Justice”? How is your body responding to what you’ve read? Where might your body be reflected in what you’ve read? Are there questions or threads that you would like to explore further? This is an optional opportunity to pause, respond and/or integrate. What might your body need right now to be supported in having read this?

I invite you to journal or draw what independence and interdependence bring forth for you. What is revealed, where do they overlap and diverge for you? What insights might you like to carry forward, and what insights might you leave right here?

Methodology

We are not isolated selves but selves-in-relationship – which is love […] We want to be alone *and* with others. True love requires that we surrender any attachment to rugged individualism and total independence.
— Richo 2013, 48-49

I utilize critical discourse analysis as my primary methodology. Discourse analysis "looks critically at the use of language… [and] can reveal the hidden layer of signification lying beneath the obvious, taken-for-granted surface. It approaches language as both reflecting and perpetuating power structures and dominant ideologies in society" (Lupton 1992, 147). I would add that discourse analysis can also be utilized in seeking to understand *other* capacities of discourse, namely potentials for <u>subversion and transformation of</u> systems of domination and dominant ideologies present within discourse. As defined previously by Campbell (2008), ableism functions as a system, through "… a network of beliefs, processes and practices" (section 1); and, language can be one fundamental method of perpetuating (and dismantling) each component in this network. It is my intention to use discourse analysis in this way — to understand more about how ableism may be considered through the language of food justice organizations and projects, and to imagine how language might be used in further service of liberation.

Ableism is a pervasive network we <u>all</u> navigate — from varied points and with differing impacts, to be sure. Since it is my hope that this work will

contribute to uplifting the freedom of disabled people specifically, and our collective liberation from ableism, in part by understanding how language sustains and transforms it, nonviolent communication is an important practice to engage when considering how to dismantle the violence of ableism.

Therefore, along with discourse analysis, I will be engaging with the practice of nonviolent communication, embodied communication in which one "speak[s] in ways that are aligned with our deepest values and highest truth — when we speak with clarity, authenticity and fearlessness" (Meenadchi 2019, 13). Nonviolent communication and critical discourse analysis meld well, then, as the theory of discourse analysis, "rejects the assumption that scientific objectivity and truth are ahistorical and untainted by the effects of context, emotions, power dynamics and socioeconomic and political values. [It] openly acknowledges the inevitability of a theoretical position being context- and observer-specific; […] the role of discourse analysis as a critical tool requires that the commentator's particular perspective be made explicit" (Lupton 1992, 148). Both release us from the notion that we should or even can, engage with ideas in a disembodied way. Critical discourse analysis and nonviolent communication ask us to reconsider aspiring to this way of engaging and communicating. This fragmentation, of only "honor[ing] information [and communication] that comes from the neck up, primarily our sense of sight and the logical thoughts that emerge from the left side of our brain" (Meenadchi

2019, 12), I would assert, is also a violence in that it does not allow us to be wholly embodied — it can be an internalization of domination.

The impacts of domination differentially shape the practice of (decolonizing) nonviolent communication for each of us.[20] This may ask of us to name our love and dreams as well as harm, anger, grief and pain when we meet with injustice, to say no to it, to call for accountability, name needs, and be accountable, as a *necessary* practice of compassion and transformation of ourselves and systems of domination[21] (Manning 2019).

Both food justice and disability justice bring the wisdom of interdependence back into focus and seek to honor the needs of their communities from an embodied place where individual and collective experiences of deprivation on multiple levels are recognized, justification defied, and justice sought to be created (cf. Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018). These methodologies — critical discourse analysis and (decolonizing) nonviolent communication — assist in acknowledging where connections already exist to support the aims of both movements, while considering how disability justice can both strengthen and expand the benefit of the food justice movement,

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20 Meenadchi describes decolonization as "a gentle but consistent practice of interrogation" that asks "'Who put this thought there? Where did I learn this truth?'" (2019, 10). Poka Laenui (2011) further describes the process of colonization and five embodied phases of decolonization in "Processes of Decolonization".

21 A thoughtful article by Roxy Manning, "Calling Out/Calling In" (2019) is a powerful meditation on how to deepen this necessary listening, in cases of both being "called in" and "called out"; and, how both can actually be relevant to the practice of nonviolent communication. Roxy Manning has been essential in my introduction to, and deepening understanding of, the intersections of nonviolent communication and social justice. I find her work and the work of Nonviolent Leadership for Social Justice incredibly important, especially in these times.

especially by and for disabled people. Through this, I believe there are ways to honor both the needs put forth by food justice and disability justice.

Methods

In 2015, I began closely studying the "About" pages published on the websites of five food justice organizations and projects based in Oakland, California. I chose organizations with websites that articulated race and class as dimensions of challenges to food access which inform their work, in line with the focus of food justice historically. In the previously published version, this included five organizations (Simpson 2017). For this thesis work, I have removed one organization due to its closure and subsequent inaccessibility of web archive data, and I included two more organizations that fit these specific criteria, bringing the total to five. Two organizations are located in North Oakland, one in West Oakland, and two in East Oakland. At the time of this work's completion, one organization has shifted their work considerably, in addition to another which is no longer operating.

Utilizing critical discourse analysis, I aim to understand how these food justice organizations and projects position illness and/or disability as well as health. These discourses within the food justice movement are often centered around chronic illnesses, and this will be reflected to an extent in my analysis. I refer to chronic illnesses interchangeably here (admittedly, imprecisely) with nonapparent disabilities[22].

22 Brianne Benness' term "dynamic disability" (2019) is also very useful here.

Since ableism is so pervasive, I do not find it useful to single out by name the food justice organizations whose discourses I focus on here. It is precisely because I value that these organizations explicitly address how race and class impact access to food, and other resources, that I feel encouraged to bring disability justice into conversation with them. To honor this, and in no way according to a hierarchy, I will refer to the organizations with alphabetical letters.

While I am focusing primarily on discourses and their underlying ideologies, this work is very much rooted in furthering the understanding of their material implications, illustrated by the previously-named challenges in food access that disabled people experience. It is my hope that food justice organizations — and the food justice movement more broadly — will be receptive to this work, and that this will illuminate more connections and possibilities for collaboration for all those moving toward disability justice as well as food justice, regardless of identification with these movements.

Limitations

I would like to openly acknowledge the limitations of this work. While the focus is on the discourse of food justice organizations in Oakland, California, this research may or may not expand to the discourse of food justice organizations generally, or even to those in Oakland. The organizations I chose were based on very specific criteria: 1) they explicitly address race and class inequities, and 2) they had discourse related to their work on a public website at the time.

Because of the focus on discourse, I also want to be clear that public-facing discourse, which can be shaped by many factors, may or may not immediately translate to practices within organizations. However, within the context of the additional challenges to food access for disabled people I address in "Why Disability?", and the potential for the food justice movement to be in solidarity with disability justice, discourse does matter as it is understood within the "social, political, or cultural context in which [it] takes place" (Lupton 1992, 145, emphasis added). By inquiring into the discourse of the chosen food justice organizations within this broader context, I intend to stimulate reflection on how this may reveal perpetuation of ableism, and how we might – through shifting language – act in service of liberation.

The final, and perhaps most obvious limitation, is that this work focuses on discourse written/typed in English; I do hope to see more people undertake related questions in other languages and other formats, as well as other places.

Radical Black Origins of the Food Justice Movement

The long black freedom struggle has repeatedly underscored the cultural and political significance of food, explicitly calling attention to structures of racism and social inequality

— Potorti 2014, 45

Food knowledge and the cultivation of food, as well as the innovation in ensuring the propagation and endurance of foods, specifically those of African origin, is in no way new to those who are African descended. As Judith Carney writes, "an enslaved African woman whose deliberate effort to sequester rice grains in her hair led to the establishment of an African dietary preference in tropical and subtropical America" (2013, 29)[23]. Carney illustrates this long Black freedom struggle Potorti mentions — or Black determination for freedom, I would say — by elucidating enslaved African peoples' relationship to food prior to the context of the transatlantic slave trade as well as within the ensuing realities of slavery. Indigenous African foods and related knowledge of food production sustained enslaved Black people, but food was also strictly controlled and exploited by "plantation capitalism" (Carney 2013, 71–73). These, among others, are origins of unjust circumstances from which a Black politics around food in the United States, and throughout the African diaspora, sprung. It is incredibly important that Black food legacies be honored; the contributions

23 See also Carney's (2004) "'With Grains in Her Hair': Rice in Colonial Brazil".

of these legacies have benefited and continue to benefit not only African descendants but people from every imaginable social and geographic location on the globe. Carney expands, saying,

> Africans participated fully in the Neolithic Revolution that led to plant and animal domestication in different parts of the world beginning some 10,000 years ago. African contributions to the global food supplies include nine cereals, half a dozen root crops, five oil-producing plants, several forage crops and as many vegetables, tree fruit and nut crops, coffee, and the bottleneck gourd [...] These contributions to world food supplies are often overlooked because some of the continent's staples are incorrectly assigned an Asian origin. But the African continent harbors several indigenous food crops, including rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) and eggplant (2013, 17).

I believe it is fruitful to revisit and highlight the radical Black legacy of food justice in order to illustrate how the politicization of food access was utilized to connect a range of issues and supported political actions from consciousness-raising to informing other types of political organizing,[24] and to provide context and affirm the continuing work of food justice organizations that operate in this vein (including those whose discourse I include in this thesis).

As early as the Great Depression the Alabama Sharecroppers Union organized against the race- and class-based oppression of Black sharecroppers within a radical communist framework (Potorti 2014, 45), but my focus here will be on the food justice programs of the Black Panther Party. The Party's Free

24 See Nelson 2013.

Breakfast for Children Program, initially based in Oakland, California, synthesized their radical political analysis with the program's practical reach. It fed 250,000 children each day before school, nationwide, through 49 Party chapters, in partnership with other organizations (Holt-Gimenéz and Wang 2011, 89). This and their other food justice programs were a means to raise communities' consciousness by explicitly connecting "capitalism [and] social stratification [to] their own material deprivation and political marginalization" (Potorti 2014, 46, emphasis added). Of importance here, in addition to critiquing capitalism, the Party members demonstrated alternatives by sustaining this large-scale breakfast program solely with donations (Potorti 2014, 45, 47).

The government sought to disrupt the food justice work of the Black Panther Party precisely because it was explicitly political rather than humanitarian (FBI as cited by Potorti 2014, 46). These disruptive tactics included shaming accusations of sexual deviance and sexually transmitted infections; harassment, questioning, and arrest; frivolous public health citations; and the destruction of food (Potorti 2014, 46). The Black Panthers understood that concerns about obtaining the basic sustenance necessary for survival could divert Black communities' attention and energies away from linking a lack of sustenance to other "manifestations of egregious racism such as underemployment, economic exploitation, police brutality, and a skewed criminal justice system" (Holt-Gimenéz and Wang 2011, 89). I would add that

perhaps this work was also meant to create possibilities to experience and imagine an environment in which Black people could be freely nourished, to see and experience the reality of conscious interdependence possible outside of the reinforcement of oppression and lack. Therefore, they did not view food access as a goal in itself but as a necessary step on the way to Black liberation (Potorti 2014, 46).

Observing this historical context can provide promising directions for food justice praxis, or the application of this knowledge, as it connects to realizing food justice for people with disabilities. Although set apart, the influences of the environmental justice movement and the mainstream food movement have proximity to food justice (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 7).

The Need for Justice Movements

Environmental justice breaks away from mainstream environmentalism, whose ideologies, discourses and practices at times have historically been aligned with colonialism and eugenics.[25] The environmental justice movement developed out of the civil rights tradition, with Black, Indigenous, and other women of color, particularly mothers, at the forefront of the fight to gain protection from and provide input about a number of their communities' environmental concerns, such as land and water rights, exposure to toxins, and unsafe living and working conditions (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 7–8; Stein 2004, 2–3). While mainstream environmentalism asserts that nature is separate from (certain) humans and ranks nature above humans, "the environmental justice movement has instead defined the environment as 'where we live, work, play, and worship'" and firmly integrates humans with nature (Stein 2004, 1). The movement's strategy often employs data from community-based research to prove environmental and bodily harm and to advocate for legal protections and stewardship of their communities (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 7). This framework is evident in the food justice movement as well, with its focus on the disproportionate food insecurity in poor communities of color, as well as in many activists' insistence that communities should determine how their food

25 For more on the influences of colonialism and eugenics on mainstream environmentalism, see Ray 2013.

system operates (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 8). The centering of poor people and people of color in the food justice movement is also, in some ways, a rebuttal to the “predominantly white and middle-class” priorities of the mainstream food movement (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 2), which focuses “more on what people eat than how food is produced, works through the market, and for the most part punts on the question of inequality” (Guthman 2011, 141).

Although it is often referred to as the sustainable or alternative food movement, I will refer to it as the mainstream food movement to reduce confusion. For instance, the food justice movement can also be considered a sustainable or alternative food movement. Historically associated with the leftist counterculture of the 1960s, when initial concerns about increasing corporate consolidation and environmental exploitation in the food system began to grow, modern communal, organic, and local food operations came out of this framework (Guthman 2011, 142). While adopting similar operations, with less emphasis on organic, the food justice movement has drawn attention to the mainstream food movement’s privilege since its strategy generally entails encouraging people to buy fresh, local, and organic food without consideration for the fact that the cost or availability may be prohibitive (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 2–3).

Politicizing Disability within Food Justice

In studying the “About” pages on the websites of five Oakland-based food justice organizations, I focused particularly on discourses they contain regarding health and illness/disability. The organizations explicitly advance justice in terms of race and class. This analysis is to explore the potential implications of the organizations’ discourses in regard to inhibiting and/or advancing the connection of food and disability justice.

Before sharing deeper observations, it feels important to note that while all of the organizations discuss to some degree what actions would be necessary to achieve health, bodily health itself is not explicitly defined by any of the organizations. It is important, within the process of releasing ourselves from ableism, to not only explicitly define health, but to also inquire into its potential usefulness and harm. Much like within other systems of domination, the “corporeal standard” within ableism that Campbell mentions is both ever-present in the use of “health(y)”, yet at the same time is nebulous in its meaning for most. Within ableism then, this “corporeal standard” is only loosely defined by what it is not, namely sick/ill and disabled, in the comparatively myriad ways that illness and disability can appear.

My overarching question then, which informs my own life and work is, how can we honor the focus on the need and desire for nourishment that food

justice calls for, while honoring that this nourishment may not look like "health" (as it is used within the context of ableism) for all people and their bodies? How can we learn from and commit to the nourishment of disabled people without the condition of restoring or achieving this conception of health, and better yet, without assuming that the "corporeal standard" is even a universal, necessary measure of nourishment or wellbeing?[26] Indeed, how can the variety of food needs and desires of disabled people be considered as more than a "backdrop against which normalcy can be achieved" (Hall 2014, 187). Indeed, how can they be considered for liberation, for the inherent value and sake of a subjective quality of life, not as defined by systems that seek to put people at odds with their bodies?

Scholars have finally joined disability rights, disability justice, and fat activists in drawing attention to the fact that this concept of health is not apolitical, that it is "a term that speak[s] as much about power and privilege as about well-being. Health is a desired state, but it is also a prescribed state and an ideological position" (Metzl 2010, 1, emphasis added). Health as "a prescribed state and an ideological position" is an offshoot of ableism, and the depoliticization of this concept of health as such is in opposition to the vein of food justice that the Black Panther Party engaged in. If health is a defined goal

26 The desire of disabled people to utilize agency to care for our bodyminds, whether through medicine, food, or other means, does not invalidate this or automatically imply internalized ableism.

of food justice activism, and health is the complete absence of illness or disease (which can include disability), then the root of food insecurity for disabled people (ableism) for those who cannot attain health by this definition is obscured and normalized rather than recognized as a manifestation of ableist oppression.

Food justice is modeled on a lineage of Black people imagining a liberated future beyond basic survival into nourishment for all people and their bodies. These organizations have connection to the ongoing work of African descendants to refute the justification of oppression and deprivation, not just for ourselves, also ultimately benefiting the collective (for example, with the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program being the model for the US government to provide free and reduced meals in US public schools).

In the following, I analyze the discourse of the five organizations with this guiding question: how are food justice organizations both subverting and/or fulfilling dominant discourse, specifically when it comes to health and illness/disability? I share a deeper discourse analysis, and follow with a brief synthesis illustrating the connecting threads and divergences of the five organizations' discourses.

Organization A subverts the dominant discourse when it comes to racial and class disparities in Oakland, and also acknowledges the lineage of activism

in Oakland. Organization A acknowledges the determination of West Oakland despite “systematic disinvestment and discriminatory policies [that] have led to high rates of unemployment, poverty, crime and pollution" and explicitly acknowledges the difference in conditions between West Oakland and wealthier areas of Oakland.

Beautifully, and importantly, organization A makes it clear that West Oakland was not always in this position, but that systematic disinvestment and discriminatory policies shaped the conditions by and within which people eat. And they, along with residents, aimed to make “affordable, nutritious food” available as well as generate employment for those in West Oakland which has also been impacted.

Organization A implicitly defines access to health as “healthy food or fresh produce”, saying they sought to “work collectively toward a shared vision of a healthier future, fostered by affordable, nutritious food”. Organization A discusses the density of convenience stores and foods[27] as contributors to “diet-related diseases”; however, there needs to be acknowledgment that accessibility in terms of price, prepackaging/ease of consuming, and physical accessibility is a factor in what makes these choices appealing.

27 The organization was specifically referring to food deserts.

Organization B asserts that “healthy food is a human right”, however, health(y) is not explicitly defined. This subverts dominant discourse regarding race and class in that it asserts that *all* human beings have a right to healthy food. It also subverts dominant discourse when it comes to prioritizing community, and specifically youth-led programs and community-led education in health and nutrition, which continues the work of the Black Panthers in redefining who holds knowledge about wellbeing beyond solely biomedical sources[28]. For instance, organization B “use[s] community organizing as a tool to build power among those affected by diet related disease”. Organization B also ensures access to produce through medical/clinical settings. It is important to acknowledge that medical as well as environmental and food injustice have been a site and tool of domination and oppression for disabled people as well as Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (and many others deemed marginal). While connecting food and environment to wellbeing is important in this context, it is also important to recognize that, for many disabled people, medicine, and especially ease of access to medicine and respectful medical care, is just as important as food and environment. It’s incredibly important to hold and seek to shift the harm of medicine, especially as an industry, and food and environmental injustices, while understanding that access to medical care

28 See Nelson 2013.

and medicine may also be an aspect of wellbeing for disabled people. Access to affordable medical care and medicine that also does not perpetuate oppression/domination in its many forms is the other side of the work in (food) justice for disabled people (and many others).

Organization B also implicitly defines health as opposed to fatness[29], writing “we also work to improve healthy food access for those most dramatically affected by the obesity epidemic”. Sonya Renee Taylor asserts, “We must ask who benefits from a war against people’s bodies. Does it benefit communities to be at war with their bodies? If the benefit is not to the communities we serve then what makes the model a justice movement?” (as quoted in Duong 2013). As we work toward greater nourishment, and wellbeing, how can we be curious about what that actually is and what it can look like — are we recreating the justification of our oppression and/or deprivation through our discourse and conception of ourselves and our bodies? How can we claim nourishment and wellbeing without reifying our own oppression?

Organization B does expand conceptions of access by speaking to working toward freer access to growing one’s own food; access here also means resources such as unused land, not just knowledge, skills, and tools.

29 Like many others, I assert that being fat is not in and of itself an illness or disability; and, common among both people who are fat as well as those who are disabled is often having bodies defined as inherently unhealthy (see Guthman 2011).

Organization C seeks to remedy “over-reliance on packaged, processed food that is killing our body and our environment” through edible gardens, supporting youth education and employment of those historically excluded from/exploited within the food system. While addressing the systemic destruction of the environment and the disproportionate harm to the wellbeing of (certain) bodies is essential, it is also important to imagine how foods that provide accessibility in terms of preparation and consumption can actually be nourishing as well as create the least possible harm on the environment. The demands of paid labor that can make time to nourish ourselves and each other challenging, and the potential challenges in accessibility to obtain, store, and prepare food due to manifestations of ableism, such as houselessness/lack of accessible housing or cooking facilities, insufficiency of income and many other factors is important to acknowledge. It is important not to demonize ease inherently when those aspects of accessibility continue to be important, especially for the nourishment of disabled people (Hall 2014, 181).

Organization D very explicitly (perhaps the most explicitly) asserts that their aim is to “challeng[e] oppressive dynamics and environments through urban farming”. Women founded and led, Organization D emphasizes health as safe outdoor space, both for recreation and exercise, which reiterates the importance of environmental justice to food justice work. Organization D writes,

“Many residents fear allowing their children to play outside, resulting in severed ties between children and the natural world and a significant reduction in exercise”. So, for this organization, health is also the ability to interact directly with nature in order to be in mutually nourishing relationship with the Earth, by noting, for example, that “nature-based experiences that will empower them to be educated, well-rounded stewards." This is in line with the cosmological threads of indigenous West African, and many other Indigenous, worldviews and in line with environmental justice as well, which makes the connection between our human actions and interconnectedness with each other and Earth. Supporting youth leadership and knowledge of growing food, cooking, and access to produce that is culturally relevant as well as increasing financial resources through produce sales are also measures of health for this organization.

Organization E also does not explicitly define health beyond using the term “healthy food”. There is a strong focus on subverting the dominant discourse through asserting the importance of culturally relevant foods “grown by the farmers of those groups where the crops are originated”, specifically founded to ensure the flourishing of and access to crops indigenous to Africa and to support Black farmers growing those crops. This organization is doing the decolonization work of rediscovery and recovery, as well as dreaming of a

reality where “these foods [do not] disappear along with the traditional recipes” (Laenui 2011).

To varying degrees, health for these organizations seems to be understood more broadly than residing in and maintained within individual physical bodies as reflected in the historical and continuing threads of Black healing activism and indigenous West African and West Central African cosmologies (Fett 2002). Fett writes that the descendants of Africans enslaved,

> [M]aintained a relational vision of health [which] connected individual health to broader community relationships; it insisted on a collective context for both affliction and healing; it honored kinship relations by bridging the world of ancestors and living generations; it located a healer’s authority in the wisdom of elders and divine revelation (2002, 6).

The majority of the organizations’ mission statements define health in ways that perpetuate the undesirability of disability, essentially defining disability itself (rather than the conditions of ableism) as inherently the antithesis of health. Four out of five organizations explicitly posit restoring health, though not explicitly defined, as one of the aims of their work; four of the five organizations position illness or disease as the opposite of health. Categorizing people experiencing illness and other disabilities as unhealthy, and therefore abnormal, in need of fixing or curing, potentially obscures so many other factors that affect the wellbeing of those most impacted by ableism.

Health, in this context, actually entails a normative state, and this can be

directly traced to eugenics, and normalization impulses within medicine and public health, among others. Although Guthman (2011, 41) set out to contribute a "political ecology of obesity," I am applying her insights regarding how "normal . . . became normative" in the context of disability. Guthman tracks this notion of "normal" bodies to the nineteenth-century application of statistical methods, particularly the bell curve, in public health and then medical practice; this led increasingly to the belief in the "average" within the population as the norm (i.e., the "corporeal standard"). Even further, the comparison of people based on "average" bodies made any outliers abnormal and pathological, the bodies against which normal was defined (Guthman 2011, 41–42). Baynton (2001, 36) writes, "Although normality ostensibly denoted the average, the usual, and the ordinary, in actual usage it functioned as an ideal and excluded only those defined as below average." Medicine and public health are two factors in shaping bodily norms, often dominating society's views of what truly "healthy," "normal" bodies are, but bound with them is the legacy of eugenics.

Eugenics is "the social engineering project that sought to eradicate defective traits from a nation's hereditary pool" (Mitchell and Snyder 2010, 187). People primarily within marginalized communities have been targeted based on nonnormative traits of the bodymind, and eugenics programs have spanned and intersected with gender, race, and other identities — not just because of disability but also due to the perception of disability (Baynton 2001). Society's

ableism has permitted science and medicine license to commit injustices in the name of health and normality, namely involuntary medical procedures and institutionalization, among other "cures" based in eugenics, against people with disabilities as well as others perceived to be defective (Wendell 2001; Gabel and Peters 2004; Mitchell and Snyder 2010). It is from these experiences that the "social model of disability" arose, "the result of resistance to the medical model, to the oppression of disabled people, and to ableism" (Gabel and Peters 2004, 592). These ideologies are apparent in references to "diet-related" illness and disease, which imply that through appropriate diet one can — and, more importantly, should—"cure" oneself of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. This erases the agency of people who are sick and disabled, shames them, and does not take into account, for example, those for whom diet is not a primary cause of illness or disability, those who cannot be "cured" by adopting a produce-rich diet, or those who don't desire to be cured to an abled standard, let alone taking into account the barriers that ableism poses to wellbeing.

Susan Wendell (1996, 94) refers to this as the myth of control, which also stems from and is perpetuated by medicine and public health, that solely "by means of human actions" we can control the near inevitability of illness and disability and the definite inevitability of death. This myth supports an increasingly common expectation that people "control" their bodyminds by whatever means necessary, which advances the notion that health is a matter of

personal responsibility (cf. Guthman 2011). This idea of health as a matter of personal responsibility is also abundantly clear in the case of antifat discourse within the food justice movement.

Black experiences, as well as the experiences of other people of color, with medicine, public health, and eugenics (although by no means monolithic), have included medicalization and other ableist violences[30]. This has often been characterized by simultaneous hypervisibility as well as invisibility and neglect, for example through forced medical experimentation as well as a lack of desired medical care (Nelson 2013, xiii). For people who are already marginalized due to race, gender, sexuality, and more, distance from disability has been a method of gaining rights (Baynton 2001, 34)—but at what cost?

Clearly ableism has a broad reach; however, by working toward politicizing disability and toward disability justice within the food justice movement, we may begin to resist disability as a basis of justification for oppression. Idealizing "healthy," "normal" bodyminds clearly stems from ableism and contributes to the oppression of people with disabilities.

30 Washington (2008) provides a thorough history of forced medical examinations and experimentation. The Black Panthers also organized to address the medical neglect and mistreatment of Black people (see Nelson 2013).

A Moment of Integration: This is an opportunity to take in what you've just read. What comes up for you having read this? We are so often told how to contribute to movements/do activism in ways that are not actually feasible or are inaccessible to us, or even overwhelming[31]. So this moment of integration is an opportunity to consider what is actually available to you, and sustainable for you, to offer to benefit food justice and disability justice. Utilizing the definitions of power below, what is at least one example of each form of power that you do have? What skills, resources, qualities do you hold where you have more agency? What forms of power do you not hold, or where is your agency more limited? This can help us to see more clearly what is truly available to us, and where we might choose to connect with others.

What is power and what are its different forms?[32]

Power - 1. The ability to name or define. 2. The ability to decide. 3. The ability to set the rule, standard, or policy. 4. The ability to change the rule, standard, or policy to serve your needs, wants or desires. 5. The ability to influence decision makers to make choices in favor of your cause, issue or concern.

- **Types of Power**

Each of these definitions of power can manifest on personal, social, institutional, or structural levels.

31 See also Piepzna-Samarasinha (2021) and Spade (2020) on mutual aid, and mutual aid for disabled people specifically.

32 From the YMCA Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary - https://ywcaspokane.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/YWCA-Social-Justice-Glossary.pdf

a. Personal Power - 1. Self-determination. 2. Power that an individual possesses or builds in their personal life and interpersonal relationships.

Example: When a person chooses a new name for themselves rather than the one given to them, this is an act of personal power.

b. Social Power - 1. Communal self-determination. 2. A grassroots collective organization of personal power. 3. Power that social groups possess or build among themselves to determine and shape their collective lives.

Example: Over the last few years individuals who identify as multiracial or multiethnic have used their social power to name themselves into existence and build a community around the shared experience of being multiracial or multiethnic. The growing social power of the multiracial/ multiethnic community is a direct challenge to institutions premised on a binary understanding of race (i.e., you are either this or that.)

c. Institutional Power - 1. Power to create and shape the rules, policies and actions of an institution. 2. To have institutional power is to be a decision maker or to have great influence upon a decision maker of an institution.

Example: A school principal or the PTO of a local school has institutional power at that school.

d. Structural Power - To have structural power is to create and shape the rules, policies, and actions that govern multiple and intersecting institutions or an industry.

Example: The city school board, mayor, and the Secretary of Education have structural power in the educational industry.

Conclusion [further questions, future desires]

As is now hopefully clear, the discourse of these select food justice organizations could advance the influence of particular ideologies held by medicine, public health, eugenics, and capitalism, even alongside the organizations' liberatory race and class analyses. It is important to contend with the material impacts of these ideologies in order to work toward disability justice as well as food justice. By engaging with a disability justice framework, I believe, the food justice movement can be a site for transforming oppressive beliefs about health and bodyminds. But what exactly does this look like?

The food justice movement's lineage from environmental justice often means that inequities in food access are articulated particularly through their impacts on the body, as previously illustrated. Kafer (2013, 158, emphasis added) aptly concludes, "What is needed, then, are analyses that recognize and refuse the intertwined exploitation of bodies and environments without demonizing the illnesses and disabilities, and especially the ill and disabled bodies, that result from such exploitation." This is an essential foundation to further analyses in regard to disability.

All of the food justice organizations I've included here have programs for community and political education; learning from disabled people, and/or those engaged in disability justice as part of their established political education efforts is one important aspect. Should the food justice movement deepen its

analysis, and broaden the accessibility of its organizing, this could facilitate connections across movements and further the meeting of food and disability justice.

Also important to bringing food justice and disability justice together is a broader conception and practice of access. Food access is often defined in terms of proximity, cost, and education, but this is not enough when thinking about disability. I hope I have illustrated that the scope of these barriers is wider than is usually articulated. Disability justice within this movement means there should be alternatives to solely labor-intensive methods of engaging with food production and organizing[33]. It means forms of transportation that are comfortable and reliable for a multitude of bodies and accessible options for people who are homebound or otherwise have difficulty getting to and/or preparing food. It entails incorporating more accessibility once people do get there, such as rest areas, Braille, and more affordable organic foods for those who experience injury from pesticides and other chemicals; it entails organizing against ableism throughout the food system, from production to reuse with a firm understanding of how ableism colludes with other forms of oppression, and how capitalism further impacts accessibility in this context. It also means affirming that sick and disabled people are deserving of nourishment and

33 Credit to Toi Scott (http://www.afrogenderqueer.com) for being essential to initiating this conversation for me.

pleasure.

This inherently also expands to relationships with other people, and interdependence is critical: what about those who are fed by others, or those with feeding tubes (Wilkerson 2011)? What about those whose pain or fatigue limits the cooking they can do, or who can consume only limited produce because fiber makes them ill (Sarah 2014)? These are all contexts that food justice can address if informed by disability justice. And yet, even with all I have written, I am not here to provide or even imply that there are neat answers. The reality is that, in practice, change of any kind is so much more complicated. Some will be able to clearly and accurately compile and disseminate needed information or data; some will be creating spaces of refuge, healing and art that inspire us and keep us going, or educate themselves, children and each other through intimate or broader social relationships; some others will be able to change policies, redirect resources to where it is most needed, and increase accessibility; others still will be growing food, doing the cooking and other day-to-day caring for our communities. Some weave in and out of all of these possibilities, and more. This is what interdependence is, the recognition and acknowledgment that we all hold a piece, whatever ours is. By becoming more familiar with the context, where we are within it, and the power and agency, skills, capacities and resources we hold, we perhaps have the ability to act with more awareness of our choice — especially for those that hold institutional and

structural power.

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