



World Food Policy Center



CONVENING REPORT

Our Collective Next Steps in Food & Faith Work

Bridging to Better Policy

Summary

In partnership with Duke Divinity School and the Rural Church Program Area of The Duke Endowment, the Duke World Food Policy Center (WFPC) hosted a Food & Faith Convening in Durham, North Carolina November 12-13, 2018. A group of expert practitioners, academics, funders, and non-profit professionals guided the WFPC team in convening design and implementation. Forty-six individuals participated in the convening.

The convening discussions identified several themes that drive the work of faith communities: moving from charity to justice, food sovereignty, and equitable food-oriented development; moving from charity to justice for the land & environment; the need for bridging and relationship building between practitioners, funders, and the academy; and the need for bridging between faith communities and policy. Additionally, several academic themes for future research were identified focused on cross-faith comparative analysis and the broad impact of faith community-based food systems work.

Convening conversations and the direct feedback of attendees post-convening reveal a strong collective desire for a convening that brings funders and practitioners together for in-person discussion. Such a meeting could better align philanthropic support with the on-the-ground needs of faith practitioners. Attendees also expressed a desire for conversations that further cross-faith peer-learning. And finally, the WFPC is developing a co-authored, publishable State of Food & Faith Practice Report, tentatively entitled “Moving from Charity to Justice: Faith Communities & Food Systems.” The goal of this report is to bridge dialogue across academia, philanthropy and faith practitioners, and to encourage further investments in work that addresses the root causes of hunger in communities, rather than just the acute need.

Convening Goals

In consultation with the steering committee, we established the following goals for the convening event:

- Explore the state of the food and faith field to understand how faith communities can, and already do, engage in food systems work
- Draw upon the unique gifts of faith communities to envision a more just and equitable food system
- Foster relationships between and among scholars and practitioners across religious, racial, geographic, and socio-economic lines
- Identify model practices and gaps in research
- Identify and make visible structural inequalities that make the food system work for some and against others
- Empower faith communities to engage in food systems work as a key part of their spiritual and theological development
- Chart the next action steps that we can collectively take to improve and/or create new local, regional, national, and international food systems

Background

People of faith and faith-based institutions play a significant and strategic role in improving the health and well-being of their surrounding communities through food systems work. The WFPC at Duke University recognizes and celebrates these interventions worldwide. For this program area, we seek to bridge and connect the fields of academic religious studies, community-based practice, philanthropy, and non-profit organizations with the aim of better linking policy and practice for the betterment of people and planet.

First Nations, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim and other faiths hold rich theological, ethical, and spiritual traditions that speak to the relationship between people, the land, and the planet. Drawing upon their traditions, academics and practitioners of various faiths are re-imagining the food system and re-imagining human relationships to land, animals, food, and one another with the goal of promoting justice and healing. The WFPC seeks to support the work of academics and practitioners, while identifying areas where the center can have positive impact.

Charity-based efforts by faith institutions have historically played and continue to play an important role in many parts of the world in responding to weather disasters, political conflicts, displacements of large numbers of people, and other factors that are significant threats to supplying people with food. Such programs have been prominent domestically as well, and are now joined by efforts focused on more structural changes in local food systems that offer hope of more permanent, community-led means of producing and distributing food (food sovereignty). This conference focused specifically on such approaches.

We recognize that the food and faith movement is not monolithic nor centralized, but a movement with many roots, founders, points of convergence and divergence. Multiple understandings of cultural and religious heritage, central problems, and future visions are at work and in continual interaction within this movement. For example, historic disenfranchisement grounded in racial inequity drives many community-based practitioners to engage in creative and transformative food and faith work from a food sovereignty perspective. In other cases, philanthropic institutions and non-profit organizations fund and provide technical assistance to communities seeking to move from a charitable model to a justice-based model of food and faith work. We therefore sought to invite attendees from multiple faith traditions, geographies, racial and ethnic identities, and areas of work. See Appendix A for the attendee list.

Steering Committee

A group of expert practitioners, academics, funders, and non-profit professionals guided the WFPC team in convening design and implementation. We are grateful for the knowledge, expertise, and deep wisdom of the steering committee members:

- Rev. Dr. Christopher Carter, University of San Diego
- Rev. Darriel Harris, Strength to Love 2 Farm, Black Church Food Security Network, Johns Hopkins
- Rev. Richard Joyner, Conetoe Family Life Center
- Dr. Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College
- Rachel Meyer, Reimagining Health Collaborative, Duke Divinity School
- Rev. Nurya Love Parish, Plainsong Farm & Ministry, the Christian Food Movement
- Mikki Sager, Resourceful Communities at the Conservation Fund
- Robb Webb, The Duke Endowment
- Dr. Norman Wirzba, Duke Divinity School

Food & Faith Convening Agenda

The convening opened with four theological, ethical, and spiritual grounding talks, each offering a perspective from the faith traditions present.

Following the grounding talks, the convening explored challenges at the intersection of food and faith through a series of 5-minute “flash talks,” organized in three thematic areas: 1) Food, Faith, Land, and Sustainable Agriculture; 2) Food, Faith, and Race; and 3) Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty, and Economic Empowerment. See Appendix B for speaker bios.

The convening steering committee decided to dedicate a specific thematic area to Food, Faith, and Race given the critical importance of directly naming and addressing racial inequity in all discussions of food and faith. However, discussions of racial inequity ran throughout all the thematic areas given the reality that race is important in every aspect of food systems.

Following the Flash Talks, convening attendees participated in three revolving world-café-style conversations focused on what is needed by scholars and practitioners to do this work in their home communities.

Attendees then participated in a group discussion reflecting on the convening, discussing possible next steps.

To extend practical and intellectual engagement with the topics discussed at the Food & Faith Convening to a broader audience, the WFPC videotaped the grounding talks and flash talks. Closed caption videos and transcripts are now publicly available on the World Food Policy Center website:

<http://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/projects/food-and-faith-convening>

Additionally, we conducted podcast interviews with eight attendees. Podcasts and transcripts are now publicly available on the World Food Policy Center website and various podcast apps through The Leading Voices in Food series:

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/leading-voices-food-podcast-series>

Speakers and attendees are encouraged to use the talk videos and podcasts to advance their work.

What are faith communities and faith-based organizations currently doing in the food and faith space?

Food Sovereignty and Equitable Food-Oriented Development

- Moving away from food charity and instead moving towards developing alternative, community-level food systems and supply chains grounded in justice, empowerment, and racial equity
- Re-claiming and placing programmatic and entrepreneurial energy into the development and expansion of indigenous, black, and Latinx foodways
- Connecting youth to gardening and agriculture to build skills, generate income, learn from their elders, heal from trauma, connect to the earth, and promote a sense of pride and community belonging
- Developing alternative sources of funding, outside of the traditional charitable and philanthropic funding stream, to create and sustain faith-based farm and/or food enterprises
- Supporting, advocating for, and sourcing from small and mid-scale farmers, particularly farmers of color, to boost local economic development
- Organizing and running community-supported agriculture (CSAs) and selling value-added products to generate income and spur local economic activity
- Engaging in advocacy geared towards fair wages and safe working and living conditions for farmworkers, particularly migrant farmworkers
- Linking local farmers with faith-owned lands to create a community-owned food supply that generates and keeps wealth within the community

Health initiatives

- Applying faith-based, faith-placed, or faith-based and faith-placed health interventions that address nutrition and food-related behaviors with the goal of reducing the incidence of chronic disease and morbidity.
 - **Faith-based:** health initiatives framed explicitly by theological, ethical, or spiritual beliefs
 - **Faith-placed:** health initiatives taking place on the grounds of a faith community/faith-based organization, but not explicitly framed by theological, ethical, or spiritual faiths
 - **Faith-based and faith-placed:** initiatives framed explicitly by theological, ethical, or spiritual beliefs and taking place on the grounds of a faith community/faith-based organization
- Including healthy food at worship and other faith community events
- Using central kitchens on the site of churches/houses of worship with the goal of efficiently cooking healthy meals for children at local day care centers and to create economies of scale
- Inviting health care providers to host open clinics at churches/houses of worship
- Increasing awareness and engaging in advocacy as to the importance of race and the social determinants of health: neighborhood and built environment, food environment, health and health care, social and community context (stress, trauma, addiction, abuse), social inclusion or exclusion, education, and economic stability

Land and regenerative agriculture

- Locating worship, ritual, or religious practice on land as a way of embodying the importance of human connection to land and soil and human reliance upon land and soil
- Gardening/agriculture as a literal and embodied connection to faith that promotes self-care, trauma healing, and connection to ancestors, heritage, and community
- Granting access to land as a way to redress/heal/take accountability for First Nations land loss
- Initial scoping of the possibility to match aspiring/young farmers without access to land or existing farmers without access to land to faith-owned lands
- Engaging in agriculture to grow healthy food, heal the soil, and mitigate climate change

Themes from the Convening Discussions

Moving from Charity to Justice, Food Sovereignty, and Equitable Food-Oriented Development

How might faith communities and their partners:

- best leverage faith community assets (such as human capital, land, buildings, and industrial-grade kitchens) to stimulate equitable food-oriented development?
- pool resources to develop a powerful investment engine outside of current available philanthropic and charitable dollars?
- prioritize sourcing/contracting food from farmers of color and small farmers for church-based feeding, school, day care, and night school programs?
- connect the work on food security and food sovereignty to the work of de-clustering poverty (food apartheid areas, low income housing, etc.) in ways that address root causes including structural racism?
- draw better attention to and raise awareness of the connections between racial inequity, food insecurity, poor health outcomes, and lack of economic opportunity?
- advocate for living wages for those employed in food systems work along the spectrum of the supply chain?
- support more sustainable community/cooperative ownership of food systems and food businesses to keep wealth in communities and to create economic opportunity for people of color?

Moving From Charity to Justice for the Land & Environment

How might faith communities and their partners:

- tell a more accurate history of racial discrimination, intergenerational trauma associated with forced labor on the land during slavery, and First Nations and African American land loss and the role, or lack thereof, of faith communities in this history?
 - How might we leverage these narratives to drive change and to create opportunity for those currently without access to land or at risk of losing their land?
- participate in and promote a process of reconciliation or reparations for our country’s legacy of land loss?
 - How can we better protect farmers and farmers of color from land loss today?
 - What policy levers/tools exist to protect and conserve farmland?

- restore soil health and environmental health and mitigate the effects of climate change?
- better understand and emulate a First Nations perspective on valuing land, water, and other natural resources as living beings and part of the community?
 - How might this perspective shape our interaction with the environment?
 - How might this shift our food systems work?

Bridging Between Practitioners, Funders, and the Academy

How might faith communities and their partners:

- increase awareness of the importance and impact of food and faith work to funders not currently funding in this space?
- identify and name the power differential between practitioners, funders, and the academy and work to create more equitable working relationships and partnerships?
- engage well-resourced organizations to leverage their power and funding to empower people of color-led organizations in an equitable way?
- align funders and food and faith grantees on funding priorities, grant requirements, grant evaluation/measurement frameworks, desired impact/evidence, and deliverables in such a way that greater community ownership and benefit is achieved?

Bridging Between Faith Communities and Policy

How might faith communities and their partners:

- engage more deeply in policy advocacy in support of their food systems work?
- bring cities/counties/governments into conversation on prioritizing and addressing food desert/food apartheid areas? Food desert/food apartheid areas are places where there is little to no access to healthy foods.
- help faith communities connect to the work of local food policy councils to effect local food systems change?

Next Steps in Advancing Food & Faith Work

The convening identified several possible ways to make academia, funders, practitioners aware of the results of this convening so they can continue to pursue justice-based work that attends to the underlying root causes of food insecurity in their communities.

- Convening attendees expressed a strong interest in bringing practitioners and funders together for in person conversation on ways to strengthen the support for faith-based food system interventions.
- Attendees expressed interest in peer learning, and particularly cross-faith learning, to expand on the knowledge and expertise shared at the convening.
- Attendees expressed a desire for cross-university academic collaboration, and a deepening of the academic exploration of food systems, agriculture, land and faith traditions.
- Attendees expressed a need for a state of food & faith practice report as a mechanism to draw attention to the ways in which faith organizations are working with communities and how to support and advance such work.

We were blessed with the opportunity to collaborate with attendees on an impressive array of talks and podcasts covering topics such as First Nations food sovereignty challenges, land stewardship and faith community renewal, agripreneurship, alternatives to factory farming, the theological framing of food in our lives, and organizing faith communities through food.

We are deeply honored to promote the work of our convening participants and to add to the broader food and faith community dialogue.

Duke World Food Policy Center

Theological, Spiritual & Ethical Grounding Talks



A First Nations Perspective on Food - A'dae Romero-Briones

"My grandfather was one of the tribal councilmen. And I remember going to meetings with him that lasted hours into the night. I remember falling asleep on his lap, but I most remember his hands...he used to tell me that those were the maps of our homelands and that the only way that you could get those hands was to put your hands in the water and the dirt and the earth will mold those maps on the back of your hands."

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/first-nation-perspective-food-theological-spiritual-ethical-grounding>



A Jewish Perspective on Food - Adrienne Krone

"Jewish tradition provides a legal framework and language for thinking about food, so it's just taking that next step and thinking a bit more broadly about what Jewish laws we consider when we think about what's kosher and in time hopefully we would have food that is truly fit to eat."

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/jewish-perspective-food-faith-theological-spiritual-and-ethical-grounding>



A Christian Perspective on Food - Darriel Harris

"We call these areas of food apartheid—at the time, it was the term food deserts...when we say healthy food is not available, we mean blatantly unavailable. There's other places in the city where healthy food is a challenge. But in these areas, it was beyond a challenge. It's unreasonable to expect that anyone who lives in these areas were to ever eat healthy food, regularly at least."

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/christian-perspective-food-rev-darriel-harris>



A Muslim Perspective on Food - Hisham Moharram

"What we give to others is more important than what we take. We should do no harm to any other thing, whether it's a species of animal or plant or part of the natural ecosystem. This is the web of life upon which all of our lives depend."

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/muslim-perspective-food-theological-spiritual-and-ethical-grounding>

Food, Faith, Land & Sustainable Agriculture

Food, Faith, Land & Sustainable Agriculture - Nati Passow

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-land-sustainable-agriculture-nati-passow>

“What we found is by working side-by-side and in solidarity with people in our community who are experiencing the most dire impacts of our food system, that is one way that we can channel the values that I draw from our tradition into our work in a contemporary context.”



Food, Faith, Land & Sustainable Agriculture - Jillian Hishaw

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-land-sustainable-agriculture-jillian-hishaw>

“Over the past 10 years, over 140,000 Black-owned farms went out of business or consolidated. And a lot of this also is coming down to economic justice. They also want to squeeze the small white farmer out.”

Food, Faith, Land & Sustainable Agriculture - Nurya Love Parish

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-land-sustainable-agriculture-rev-nurya-love-parish>

“I say to myself, how many of the ministries that are currently on that map will be there in 10 to 20 years? Then I also see decisions being made about land stewardship by people who do not yet understand what is possible because they come to it from a position of ‘I just go to church. I don’t understand food and land decisions’.”



Food, Faith & Race

Food, Faith & Race - Richard Joyner

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-race-rev-richard-joyner>

“As we try to build a model food system, we’ve got to build justice into the system. We’ve got to talk about historical racism and gentrification and privilege and everything else.”



Food, Faith & Race - Amirah AbuLughod

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-race-amirah-abulughod>

“We, as the community of living traditions, are attempting to face the challenge of offering hospitality and growing food on stolen land. Land that has been and continues to be violently and systematically taken from the people indigenous to it.”

Food, Faith & Race - Jennifer Ayres

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-race-rev-jennifer-ayres>

“So as a white scholar, I recognize that the term food desert undermines local food sovereignty. Using that language, continuing to use it, reinforces racialized and economic modes of paternalism. And here’s why: even as the language of food desert is starting to slip out of public discourse in many places, it’s still out there. It’s still a pretty powerful image.”



Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty & Economic Development



Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty & Economic Development - Robert Two Bulls

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-food-sovereignty-economic-development-robert-two-bulls>

“One thing that I learned in my work these last 30 years, from living in places that I have lived, is that we’re ghost people. When you see us on the street, you don’t see us. You walk past. It doesn’t register that this individual might be native, or this individual might be from a particular tribe.”



Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty & Economic Development - Lauren Ornelas

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-food-sovereignty-economic-development-lauren-ornelas>

“As a vegan organization, we are encouraging people to eat more plants. And therefore we feel we have a responsibility to talk about farm workers and how farm workers are treated in the food supply. So a big part of our work is also farmworker justice issues, where we work on policy changes.”



Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty & Economic Development - Shamu Sadeh

<https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/videos/food-faith-food-sovereignty-economic-development-shamu-sadeh>

“So the question is how do we put this—with all the challenges that people have been talking about, not to mention how do we put sustainability—on the map for Jewish communities and what exactly does that mean?”

Podcasts

All food and faith podcasts are available through The Leading Voices in Food on GooglePlay, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, RadioPublic, Soundcloud, and TuneIn.

Podcasts and full transcripts are available here: <https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/leading-voices-food-podcast-series/food-faith-podcasts>.



Heber Brown on Organizing Communities Around Their Food



Christopher Carter on Looking at Food Theologically



Aaron Gross on Factory Farming and New Ways to Support Farmers



Darriel Harris on Harnessing Faith to Improve Community Health



Nurya Love Parish on a Calling to Steward our Lands



Hisham Moharram talks Agripreneurship and The Good Tree



A-dae Romero-Briones on First Nations Food Systems



Normal Wirzba: Does Faith Shape Your Relationship to Food?

Appendix A: Attendee List



Amirah AbuLughod, Stony Point Center, NY
Kharmika Alston, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Jennifer Ayres, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, GA
Loneke Blackman-Carr, Duke Cook Center for Social Equity, NC
Jonathan Blitstein, RTI International/WFPC Duke, NC
Stephanie Boddie, Garland School of Social Work, Baylor University, TX

Chris Bolden-Newsome, Bartram’s Garden, PA
Heber Brown, III, Baltimore Black Church Food Security Network, MD



Kelly Brownell, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Lukas Brun, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Christopher Carter, University of San Diego, CA
Reverend Dele, Soil and Souls, NC
Aaron Gross, University of San Diego, CA
Grace Hackney, Life Around the Table, NC
Darriel Harris, Strength to Love 2 Farm, Baltimore Black Church Food Security Network, MD

Deborah Hill, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Jillian Hishaw, F.A.R.M.S., NC
Zahra Jamal, Rice University, Boniuk Center, TX
Richard Joyner, Conetoe Family Life Center, NC
Andrew Kang-Bartlett, Presbyterian Hunger Mission, KY
Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College, PA
Emma Lietz-Bilecky, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Nurya Love Parish, Plainsong Farm, Christian Food Movement, MI
Rachel Meyer, Duke Divinity School, NC
Hisham Moharram, The Good Tree Project, NJ
Monica Moss, Trinity United Church of Christ, IL
lauren ornelas, Food Empowerment Project, CA
Nati Passow, Jewish Farm School, PA



A-dae Romero-Briones, First Nations Development Institute, CO
Shamu Sadeh, Adamah Farm, CT
Mikki Sager, Resourceful Communities, NC
Gizem Templeton, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Alex Treyz, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Robert Two Bulls, First Nations Kitchen, All Saints Indian Mission, Dept. of Indian Work, MN

Tim Van Meter, Methodist Theological School, Ohio, OH
Jordan Vernoy, Feeding America, IL

Katie Waeldner, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Robb Webb, The Duke Endowment, NC
Anna White, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Melinda Wiggins, Student Action on Farmworkers, NC
Norman Wirzba, Duke Divinity School, NC
Sarah Zoubek, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC
Jennifer Zuckerman, World Food Policy Center at Duke, NC



Appendix B: Facilitator Bio/Speaker Bios

Facilitator

Reverend Dr. Christopher Carter, University of San Diego

Dr. Christopher Carter’s teaching and research interests are in Black & Womanist Theological Ethics, Environmental Ethics, Religion & Food, and Religion & Animals. His publications include *The Spirit of Soul Food* (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming), “Blood in the Soil: The Racial, Racist, and Religious Dimensions of Environmentalism” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook on Religion and Nature* (Bloomsbury, 2018) and *The Future of Meat Without Animals* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). In them, he explores the intersectional oppressions experienced by people of color, the environment, and animals. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the University of San Diego and a Faith in Food Fellow at Farm Forward.

Grounding Talk Speakers

A First Nations Perspective: A-dae Romero-Briones, First Nations Development Institute

A-dae Romero-Briones (Cochiti/Kiowa) works as Director of Programs-Native food and agricultural Initiative for First Nations Development Institute. She is formerly the Director of Community Development for Pulama Lana’i. She is also the co-founder and former Executive Director of a non-profit organization in Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico. Romero-Briones worked for the University of Arkansas’ Indigenous Food and Agricultural Initiative while she was getting her LLM in Food and Agricultural Law. Her thesis was on the Food Safety Modernization Act as it applied to the Federal Tribal relationship. She wrote extensively about Food Safety, the Produce Safety rule and tribes, and the protection of tribal traditional foods. A U.S. Fulbright Scholar, Romero-Briones received her Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy from Princeton University, a Law Doctorate from Arizona State University’s College of Law, and LLM in Food and Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas. She was also recognized as a White House Champion of Change in Agriculture. She currently sits on the National Organic Standards Board and the Sustainable Ag and Food Systems Funders Policy Committee.

A Jewish Perspective: Dr. Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College

Adrienne Krone is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Director of Jewish Life at Allegheny College. She holds a Ph.D. in American Religion from Duke University. Her research focuses on religious food justice movements in North America. In her manuscript, “American Manna: Religious Responses to the American Industrial Food System,” she investigates the religious complexity present in contemporary food justice movements. Her current research project is an ethnographic and historical study of the Jewish community farming movement.

A Christian Perspective: Reverend Darriel Harris, Strength to Love 2, the Black Church Food Security Network

Darriel Harris is in his 4th year as a PhD Student at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (JHSPH) within the department of Health Behavior and Society. His research interests are in faith-based health communications, neighborhood related health factors, social determinants of health, and community based participatory research. Prior to studying at Johns Hopkins, Harris worked for the Center for a Livable Future within JHSPH’s department of Environmental Health Sciences and Engineering as the project coordinator for the Baltimore Food and Faith Project. Prior to moving to Baltimore, Darriel worked as a health missionary in South Sudan. He holds a Bachelor’s of Science degree in electrical engineering from Morgan State University, a Masters of Arts degree in Organizational Management from The George Washington University, a graduate certificate in Financial Management from the University of Maryland, and a Masters of Divinity degree from Duke University. Harris is also an ordained Minister in the American Baptist Church and he currently serves as Pastor-elect of Newborn Community of Faith Church in Baltimore, MD.

A Muslim Perspective: Dr. Hisham Moharram

Dr. Hisham Moharram is an American Muslim born in Egypt. He is a plant biologist by formal training, with sixteen years in academic research, who chose to become an agripreneur and an environmental and social justice activist. To serve that dual mission, Dr. Moharram started The Good Tree Farm project in 2007. Dr. Moharram seeks to engage Muslims and other faith communities in working together to care for people and planet.

Food, Faith, Land, and Sustainable Agriculture Flash Talks

Nati Passow, the Jewish Farm School

Nati Passow is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Jewish Farm School. He has been a leader in the Jewish environmental movement for over 15 years. Nati is passionate about connecting Jews to the agricultural roots of our traditions and using that as a foundation for engagement in contemporary food and social justice issues. Nati was raised in a traditional Jewish home, attended Jewish schools throughout his youth, and believes that justice work is more impactful, meaningful, and sustainable when it is grounded in ancestral wisdom and practices. He lives in West Philadelphia with his partner Rachel, their two boys, Zamir and Niso, and an ever-changing array of house mates.

Reverend Nurya Love Parish, the Christian Food Movement, Plainsong Farm & Ministry

The Rev. Nurya Love Parish is an Episcopal priest and co-founder and Executive Director of Plainsong Farm, a new farm and ministry outside Grand Rapids, Michigan. She created a small guide to the Christian food movement in 2015, which grew quickly to become a website in 2017 and now serves as the primary resource for Christians seeking the intersection between discipleship and sustainable and regenerative agriculture (according to Christianity Today). The guide includes an ecumenical directory of projects and resources, shares news items, and provides a space for cross-pollination for blog writers and thinkers. She co-created the first “FaithLands” gathering in March 2018, bringing together land access and transition professionals serving small and beginning farmers and faith-based leaders with stewardship responsibilities for religiously-held land. She has served on the Episcopal Church’s Advisory Council for the Stewardship of Creation, as a deputy to the most recent General Convention, and during the 2018 Convention on the legislative committee for stewardship of Creation. In addition to the Plainsong Farm Ministry, she is the part-time priest-in-charge with Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Belmont, Michigan. Her first book, Resurrection Matters: Church Renewal for Creation’s Sake, was published in May 2018.

Jillian Hishaw, F.A.R.M.S.

Jillian Hishaw, Esq., is an Agricultural Attorney, Founder of F.A.R.M.S., and Author of Don’t Bet the Farm on Medicaid. She is well-versed in the area of civil rights agricultural policy and has been featured in The Atlantic, Vice News, Seniors.com, and more. She is also a contributor to the New Food Economy through her recent article focused on hemp farming generating income at land-grant HBCU’s. Hishaw is an innovative strategist in the areas of agriculture, civil rights and asset protection; she was recognized by Civil Eats and the Clif Bar Co. as a “Food Industry Changemaker.” With over twelve years of public sector experience, she is highly sought after by various industries for her expertise in the areas of agriculture, law, and strategy, allowing her work to span across the country. Hishaw has published several law articles on agricultural topics and has worked with companies and groups such as Hallmark, the US Department of Agriculture, Allstate, Farm Aid, and Wholefoods. Through F.A.R.M.S., a national nonprofit she founded five years ago, she has donated nearly 300,000 pounds of produce to hunger relief agencies in numerous states and has provided elder care law services to aging landowners. She has a Bachelor’s degree in biology from Tuskegee University and a Law Degree and Legal Masters in Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

Food, Faith, and Race Flash Talks

Amirah AbuLughod, Stony Point Center

Amirah AbuLughod is a farmer at Stony Point Center Conference and Retreat Center, home to a small-scale farm in the Hudson River Valley of New York. She is also a resident of Stony Point Center’s (SPC) multi-faith intentional community the Community of Living Traditions. Amirah’s formal educational background is in

Environmental Geography from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her hands-on education began as a child in her backyard garden, continued with two years as a farm apprentice and now a food grower and educator at Stony Point Center Farm. Both sides of Amirah’s family have a rich history of farming tradition; a long line of dairy, beef, and crop farmers near the Mississippi in Wisconsin and orange growers beside the Mediterranean in Palestine. Even with the family background, the real seed of love for working with the earth sprouted when she was a little kid working in the backyard garden with her mom. That seed has continued to grow and flourish as Amirah’s Muslim faith informs her farming experience and as her farming experience deepens her faith.

Reverend Richard Joyner, Conetoe Family Life Center

Reverend Richard Joyner is the pastor at Conetoe Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, the founder of the Conetoe Family Life Center, and the Director of Pastoral Care at Nash-UNC Health Care in Edgecombe County, North Carolina. He was raised in Pitt County, North Carolina and spent his childhood on farmland tended by his family of sharecroppers. Tired of the economic injustice and racial discrimination his family faced as sharecroppers, he enlisted in the Army as soon as eligible. Despite his determination to leave, he returned and has been serving the small, rural community of Conetoe since 2001. Through his pastoral role, Reverend Joyner witnessed firsthand more than thirty funerals in one year for people under the age of thirty-two, due largely to complications from chronic health problems related to obesity. This moment was pivotal in his decision to turn his focus back to farming as a means to improve the health of his community by founding the Conetoe Family Life Center in 2007. The central focus of the center is a twenty-five-acre garden that provides approximately sixty youth the opportunity to develop leadership abilities, social skills, and stress management techniques through gardening. The garden also increases access to healthy, locally grown foods to the broader county.

Reverend Dr. Jennifer Ayres, Candler School of Theology at Emory University

Jennifer Ayres is Associate Professor of Religious Education at Candler School of Theology and Emory University. She also directs the Doctor of Ministry Program there. Her research seeks to answer this orienting question: “How are people of faith formed through and for the work of tending human relationships, communities, and the earth?” She is the author of Good Food: Grounded Practical Theology (Baylor University Press, 2013). In 2017, she was the President’s Humanities Fellow at Emory’s Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, where she developed her current manuscript proposing an ecological approach to religious education for inhabitation (forthcoming, 2019.) She is also a Presbyterian minister, a marginally-successful gardener, and a child of North Carolina.

Food, Faith, Food Sovereignty, and Economic Empowerment Flash Talks

Reverend Canon Robert Two Bulls, First Nations Kitchen

The Reverend Canon Robert W. Two Bulls is an enrolled member of the Oglala Lakota Oyate (aka, Oglala Sioux), who resides on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota (what is left of our original homeland). In 1986, Robert moved to Washington, DC to live in intentional community and to renovate town houses in the Shaw Street Neighborhood of Inner-City DC with Manna Inc. After the year ended, Robert made the difficult decision to live and work for the next eleven years in DC pursuing his many interests, including attending the University of Maryland earning a degree in American History. He also developed his creative side, still very much part of my vocation as a priest, and worked as a sign writer, calligrapher, and logo designer. During the last decade, he has been exploring the connection that exists between art and spirituality. His vocation and ministry is working with the Native Peoples of this land as an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church. He attended seminary in NYC and was ordained to the priesthood in 2001 in Los Angeles, CA. He currently works in the inner city, urban and reservation settings.

lauren ornelas, Food Empowerment Project

lauren ornelas is the founder/director of Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.), a vegan food justice nonprofit seeking to create a more just world by helping consumers recognize the power of their food choices. The F.E.P. works in solidarity with farm workers, advocates for chocolate not sourced from the worst forms of child labor, and focuses on access to healthy foods in communities of color and low-income communities. lauren has been active in the animal rights movement for more than 30 years. She is the former executive director of Viva!USA, a national nonprofit vegan advocacy organization for which she investigated factory farms and ran consumer campaigns. In cooperation with activists across the country, she persuaded Trader Joe's to stop selling all duck meat and achieved corporate changes within Whole Foods Market, Pier 1 Imports, and others, and she helped halt the construction of an industrial dairy operation in California. She was also the spark that got the founder of Whole Foods Market to become a vegan. In addition, lauren served as campaign director with the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition for six years. Watch her TEDx talk on "The Power of Our Food Choices."

Dr. Shamu Sadeh, Adamah Farms

Shamu Fenyvesi Sadeh is the co-founder and director of Adamah Farm. He has been a professor of environmental studies, farmer, Jewish educator, writer, and wilderness guide. He has taught at Portland State University, Berkshire Community College, Southern Vermont College and the Wild Rockies Field Institute. His essays and articles on Jewish ethics, environmentalism, and family history have been published in Orion, Tikkun, The Washington Jewish Week, Response, Kerem, and the anthology Ecology and the Jewish Spirit (1998, Jewish Lights Publishing). Shamu holds a B.A. from Bowdoin College, a Master's degree in Environmental Studies from University of Montana, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Portland State University. These days Shamu teaches Judaism and ecology, turns the compost piles, maintains the orchards, and supervises and mentors staff and Adamah Fellows.

The 2018 Food & Faith Convening was sponsored by the Duke University World Food Policy Center in the Sanford School of Public Policy, The Duke Endowment, and the Duke Divinity School.

Acknowledgement:

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