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Subverting the new narrative: food, gentrification and resistance in Oakland, California

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Abstract
Alternative food movements work to create more environmentally and economically sustainable food systems, but vary widely in their advocacy for social, racial and environmental justice. However, even those food justice activists explicitly dedicated to equity must respond to the unintended consequences of their work. This paper analyzes the work of activists in Oakland, CA, who have increasingly realized that their gardens, health food stores and farm-to-table restaurants play a role in what scholars have called green gentrification, the upscaling of neighborhoods through the creation of environmental amenities. Gentrification has had grave consequences for the low-income communities of color that food justice activists seek to serve. Activists are reflexive about this dynamic, and have developed strategies to push back against displacement. Most commonly, non-profit organizations and individual social entrepreneurs found businesses that seek to raise the profile of people of color in the trendy Oakland food scene while employing long-term residents in well-paying, green jobs. However, while these efforts are an essential component of a broader agenda to create both food justice and development without displacement, even these relatively high paying (when compared to the industry standard) "good food jobs" cannot keep up with escalating rents. For this reason, we also highlight the direct action and policy-oriented strategies engaged by a smaller number of food justice activists, and argue that these are necessary compliments to a market-based approach.

Keywords Food justice · Urban development · Gentrification · Race · Entrepreneurship · Jobs · Policy

Introduction

In 2014, a New York Times article entitled "Oakland: Brooklyn by the Bay" described the upscaling of a city that had long been known for poverty, crime and Black radical politics. In it, Chinaka Hodge, an African American poet and screenwriter, who was one of the only native Oaklanders to be featured, reflected on how her hometown has changed. "I think there are two narratives about Oakland that have existed for my entire life," she said. The first was longstanding concerns about safety, which have been somewhat abated as the drug dens of Hodge's youth have become elegantly restored Victorian homes. "The second narrative has been gaining attention over the last few years," she continued. "It's the Michelin stars, the cool pop-ups, the Eat Real Festival, the uptown story" (quoted in Haber 2014). Notably, three of the four examples through which she describes this new narrative are about food.

Food is an important but rarely studied aspect of the gentrification process. Cafes are often the first businesses new residents open in their new neighborhoods, creating gathering spaces for artists and more affluent subcultures (Sullivan and Shaw 2011). Food is also important to the later stages of this process, the so-called supergentrification, in which an influx of increasingly wealthy individuals, industries and speculators move into an already gentrified neighborhood (Lees et al. 2007). In today's food-focused popular culture, thriving restaurants and urban farms are an essential element of cities' efforts to develop what McClintock (2017) calls "symbolic sustainability capital," through which they brand neighborhoods as hip, creative, green and attractive (see also Burnett 2014; Hyde 2014). At the same time, investors search for food retail as a signal that a neighborhood is

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ripe for redevelopment. According to Stan Humphries, chief economist for the real estate online marketplace Zillow, "The entry of a coffee shop into a location provides a signaling function to other types of investors… that this neighborhood has now arrived and is open for business in a way that it was not before" (quoted in Kohli 2015). Understanding this, a group of Harlem real estate agents have banded together to open ground floor coffee shops and eateries so that they can raise the prices of residential units above (Clarke 2014).

But gentrification, of course, is not all food and fun. Neighborhood "revitalization" is often devastating to the low-income communities of color who long had little choice but to inhabit the area despite scant retail and city services. As property values rise, they are often displaced to outlying areas that again lack these features, and experience increasing rates of homelessness (Slater 2006; Hern 2017).

Many gentrifying cities are home to vibrant arrays of food justice activists working to create more environmentally sustainable and socially just local food systems. While it is difficult to define a relatively nascent social movement like food justice—the term has only become widely used since the mid 2000 s—it can be seen as "the struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root causes both within and beyond the food chain" (Hislop 2014). Support for local food systems has long been a mainstay of affluent, white, highly educated communities, and has cohered through a growing array of farmers markets, community gardens and farm-to-table restaurants. Food justice activists working in low-income communities of color draw on many of these same tools as a means to address racial, economic and health inequalities.

Because food has become such a strong symbol of gentrification, as well as a marker of a neighborhood's "readiness" for redevelopment, food justice activists have argued for food-focused strategies to resist the displacement of their communities (Crouch 2012; Markham 2014; Massey 2017). This article investigates these strategies in Oakland, California. Following a review of the literature and a description of our research approach, we will describe how the most common form of resistance to gentrification occurs though the formation of community-based food businesses. Founded by both non-profit organizations and individual social entrepreneurs, these businesses raise the profile of people of color in the trendy Oakland food scene while employing long-term residents in "good food jobs," which pay above market rate and often offer additional benefits such as a culture of support for the experiences of marginalized people, education and training and connections to social services. However, while business development is an essential component of a broader agenda to create both food justice and development without displacement, even these relatively high paying jobs cannot keep up with escalating rents. For this reason, we also highlight the direct action and policy-oriented strategies engaged by a smaller number of food justice activists, and argue that these are necessary compliments to the dominant, market-based approach.

Understanding gentrification through critical food studies

Since the early 2000s, a group of activists working under the banner of food justice have used food as a lens through which to create grassroots economic development and increase the health of low-income communities of color. Food justice activists recognize that people of color have long been discriminated against within food and agriculture. For example, the USDA's historic policy of denying loans to Black and Latino farmers has been the subject of several lawsuits (Gilbert et al. 2002; Minkoff-Zern and Sloat 2016). In addition, immigration and labor policies have prevented people of color from land and farm ownership, limiting both participation in agriculture and the acquisition of wealth (Minkoff-Zern et al. 2011). Food justice activists also seek to address inequities in access to healthy food. Although many problematize the term "food desert" because it implies that the absence of fresh food in communities of color is somehow natural, and because it prioritizes proximity over inequalities, the food justice movement has worked diligently to increase healthy food access in these places. The have developed urban farms and gardens, and an array of farmers markets and health food stores to distribute produce grown by small farmers of color.

One of the explicit goals of many of these programs is to create opportunities for people of color to work in the natural food industry. Food justice activists have also developed a broad ethic of support for people of color working in the food industry; they have campaigned on behalf of farm and restaurant workers in a way that has changed the nature of food activism more broadly (Alkon and Guthman 2017). Even more prominently, the food justice movement has raised the profiles of people of color working as farmers, chefs, food writers and other sorts of food entrepreneurs. This strategy also draws on communities of colors' longstanding traditions of forming small-scale, culturally-rooted food provisioning businesses in order to provide sustenance to their own communities and to resist barriers in the traditional labor market (Ray 2016; Williams-Forson 2006; Abarca 2006; White 2019).

Support for contemporary food entrepreneurs who are people of color is particularly important because they are less likely than their white counterparts to be able to draw on family resources to start their businesses, or to receive traditional loans and equity investments (Fairlie and Robb 2008). Moreover, white farmers and food entrepreneurs

are more likely to be featured in food media, even when there are people of color doing similar work (Reynolds and Cohen 2016). Food justice activists often describe the linking of marginalized farmers and food entrepreneurs to food insecure communities as a win–win—a source of profits for the former and healthy food for the latter (Alkon and Guthman 2017).

However, and despite intentions to the contrary, many food justice activists and entrepreneurs rely primarily on a customer base that is predominantly middle class, white and often relatively new to the neighborhood. This is in part because the food justice movement has laid some of its deepest roots in areas that are rapidly gentrifying (Alkon and Cadji 2018). Gentrification is a process through which working-class urban neighborhoods, especially those into which communities of color have been pushed through histories of segregation and redlining, become inhabited by wealthier and whiter residents, displacing long term inhabitants and changing the culture of cities (Slater 2006; Lees et al. 2007; Quastel 2009). Popular discourse surrounding gentrification commonly highlights the consumer preferences of new residents—rehabilitated older homes, walkability to urban amenities like high end coffee shops, and the availability of green space. The vibrant urban spaces created by food justice organizations fit well into this aesthetic, and are easily appropriated by urban growth coalitions as s form of "symbolic sustainability capital used to extract rent and burnish the city's brand at larger scales" (McClintock 2017). In this sense, food justice activists can unwittingly contribute to what scholars call "green gentrification," the process through which the elimination of hazardous conditions or the development of green spaces is mobilized as a strategy to draw in affluent new residents and capital projects (Alkon and Cadji 2018; Dooling 2009; Gould and Lewis 2016).

Despite popular emphasis on the tastes of new residents, prominent urban theorists argue convincingly that gentrification must be understood fundamentally as a structural process of neoliberal urbanization (Smith 2008[1982]). Through gentrification, capital expands through the (re)production of urban space, as guided by city and regional policy (Smith 2008[1982], Hackworth and Smith 2001). Gentrification is also a racialized process, predicated on the previous divestment from the urban core that characterized segregation and redlining (Shaw 2007; Lees et al. 2007). Displacement and violence are two of gentrification's core features; low-income communities of color are increasingly subject to police scrutiny at the behest of new residents (Ospina 2015; Shaw 2015), and are pushed out of their homes, at best resettling in less expensive areas and at worst becoming homeless (Slater 2006; Applied Survey Research 2015).

Food justice activists have often able to access land for their gardens and store fronts because prices were sufficiently devalued and many properties were abandoned (Glowa 2017). Gentrification commonly builds upon this history of urban divestment, creating a rent gap that investors can take advantage of through the purchase of depreciated properties. As several excellent histories of the city have described, Oakland's long-time status as a low-income, predominantly Black area with high crime and poor public health did not happen naturally. It was produced through a series of real estate and development decisions at the local and federal level (Walker 2001; Bagwell 1982; Self 2005; Johnson 1996; McClintock 2011). While Oakland in the early 20th century was a racially integrated "garden city," the combination of highly-subsidized, low-interest loans incentivizing white flight to the suburbs and the redlining of Black neighborhoods ensured overcrowded and dilapidated housing as the city's African American population grew. After World War II, developers and boosters encouraged the flow of industrial capital away from Oakland and to newly incorporated industrial suburbs, leaving a deindustrialized city with a declining tax base (Walker 2001). The flatlands were additionally hamstrung by the construction of urban renewal projects in the 1960s which razed Black-owned housing and businesses and displaced thousands of residents in order to construct freeways, rail lines and the city's central post office (Self 2005). Similar dynamics have occurred in cities across the United States.

This divestment lowered property values enough to eventually prompt investment and speculation. Though a definitive history of Oakland's redevelopment has not yet been written, recent demographic shifts have been motivated by a group of urban boosters, including developers and city officials, whose neighborhood-specific plans have attracted the construction of new housing and businesses including tech giants Pandora, Ask.com and Uber. Employees of even larger tech companies like Facebook and Google are encouraged to reside in Oakland and commute to Silicon Valley and San Francisco using private busses equipped with wireless internet so that they can function as mobile workplaces. Moreover, speculation has made the purchase of existing homes or new condominiums by even middle-class residents nearly impossible, and rising rents have accompanied, and often outpaced, rising property values. Despite the existence of rent control, developers have lobbied to lower requirements for affordable housing, and many landlords have subverted and broken these laws in pursuit of windfall profits, creating both displacement and homelessness (Bond-Graham 2017). This process is a racialized one; the city has lost approximately one-fourth of its African American residents while its white and Latinx populations are growing. It is also an economic one. Oakland's supergentrification is affecting both low-income and middle-class residents, although the

latter, of course, have more recourse and options. A recent study by the non-profit Policy Link found that the number of Oakland units affordable to both minimum wage workers and entry level teachers are the same: zero (2016).

Gentrification brings both opportunities and challenges to food justice organizations. On the one hand, as food justice activists improve the neighborhoods in which they work, they create spaces palatable to new residents already interested in local and organic food. These new residents support food justice entrepreneurs by purchasing food, volunteering and donating funds. Oakland's food justice scene, combined with its long history of progressive activism, help to give it the hip mystique that new residents are commonly searching for Zukin (2010). Indeed, for many of the food justice organizations in Oakland, the customer support of these new residents is crucial to the organizations' fundraising, as well as their ability to garner profits for small farmers and food entrepreneurs. These benefits, however, are tenuous. The displacement of long-term residents from the neighborhoods where food justice projects operate makes it impossible for activists to pursue their missions to address racial and economic inequalities and improve community health. As food justice activists increase food access in historically marginalized neighborhoods, the food insecure communities they seek to serve are forced out (Crouch 2012; Markham 2014; Massey 2017). For this reason, many food justice activists have developed strategies that they believe can resist gentrification.

This paper lays out three such strategies in order to analyze the potential for food-focused activism to address racial, economic and environmental inequalities. As described below, these activists' primary approach is the provision of good food jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities to long-term community members. The theory of change embodied by these projects says that these jobs can enable long-term residents to stay in Oakland. However, such opportunities are not able to counter the high cost of housing. For this reason, opposition to gentrification must also include the sort of direct action and policy reform engaged by a smaller number of food justice organizations, which are also described below.

Research approach

Quantitative research can document gentrification by measuring changing property values and demographics, but qualitative work is essential to analyze the ways that these trends inform lived experiences and communities' understandings of their circumstances. This paper is part of a larger project that uses participant observation and interviews to analyze the relationship between food justice activism, food social enterprise and gentrification. It began with Yahya's thesis for his MA in community development. Yahya had been an organizer with Phat Beets Produce, a food justice non-profit organization, before entering graduate school. He is also the brother of the organization's founder Max. As the organization became embroiled in the conflicts about gentrification we describe below, Yahya documented and analyzed these dynamics through 1 year of intensive participant observation and 21 interviews with Phat Beets members and supporters (Cadji and Alkon 2014; Alkon and Cadji 2018).

Although gentrification was an underlying theme in Alison's earlier work on food justice in Oakland (Alkon 2012), she began to think more critically about its role while serving on Yahya's thesis committee. Since that time, she has expanded their research by interviewing 30 additional activists, city officials, and employees of food businesses with social enterprise missions about the ways that gentrification affects their work. Interviews generally lasted from 1 to 2 h, and were audio recorded on an iPhone, and transcribed. She used a snowball sample, beginning with the community-based non-profits with whom she and Yahya were already acquainted. Following that, she widened her scope to include for-profit social enterprises and food businesses that were either mentioned by the non-profits as like-minded or who explicitly described their work as dedicated to food justice and/or community empowerment in local media. She stopped when she reached "saturation," meaning that the collection of new data failed to yield additional insights (Glaser and Strauss 1999). Because of the space constraints associated with a single article, only nine individuals representing eight organizations are profiled in the pages to come, but these interviews were conducted in the context of this larger project that shaped our sample and analysis.

While the individuals we spoke with includes a few individuals raised in the greater Bay Area, the majority of those interviewed were middle-class, educated, new residents. In order to get a better sense of how these dynamics played out in the lives of long-term community members, we invited Aunti Frances Moore to join our research team. Aunti Frances grew up in Berkeley and Oakland, and is a former member of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. For the past 10 years, she has revived the legacy of their school breakfast program by cooking and offering weekly community meals for her friends and neighbors, some of whom are houseless, in a public park. Aunti Frances has served as an informal advisor to this research, helping to facilitate interviews with long-term residents and critique our ideas and analysis. Her presence on the research team not only offers an emic perspective, but also helps to ensure that the lived experiences of those on the front lines of displacement remain centered in our analysis.

Resistance as a business model

The primary strategy through which Oakland food justice activists and social entrepreneurs aim to push back against gentrification is through employment and business opportunities. Indeed, all of the non-profit and for-profit social entrepreneurial organizations we have engaged with throughout this project deployed this strategy, with the exception of the Aunti Frances' Self-Help Hunger Program, which until recently was not formally incorporated. Many of the non-profits have missions to support entrepreneurship, and often run their own programs to teach cooking and business skills. These nonprofits believe that the growing market for local and sustainably-produced foods can provide good jobs and business ownership opportunities for long-term community members, allowing them to remain in Oakland even as rents continue to rise. These food justice organizations also typically offer some kind of support to employees, including assisting with access to social services, educational opportunities and on-the-job training.

One of the largest non-profits deploying this model is Planting Justice. Providing employment is a part of the organization's mission, along with democratizing access to affordable food and ensuring environmental sustainability. A nonprofit organization, Planting Justice runs several social-enterprise businesses to raise money outside of grant funding. These businesses include a landscaping company and a commercial nursery, both of which mainly serve newer residents of Oakland. Co-founder Gavin Raiders describes living wage employment as a central part of transforming food systems as well as broader systems of inequality:

> [Our goal is to create] business plans that work, that generate enough revenue to create living wage jobs that aren't grant-dependent… If we're going to change the food system or economic system or help people stay in their homes or help people stay in Oakland or any other city where they're born and raised and want to continue living, we have to have those economic models that work.

Planting Justice employs 35 people. Roughly 2/3 are people of color, and 60% are formerly incarcerated. Gavin credits this meaningful, living wage employment with transforming lives. "We've been hiring folks out of prison since 2010," he said proudly, "and not a single person has been re-incarcerated on a new offense in that entire time."

Planting Justice staff also help one another find support services such as housing. While the part of Oakland where most of Planting Justice's employees are from has not yet been subject to the same housing pressures as other parts of the city, these formerly incarcerated, predominantly Black workers face high levels of housing discrimination. Planting Justice provides letters of employment and references, and is also beginning the permitting process so that their recently purchased nursery can also be zoned for housing. Despite these strategies, several employees are homeless, living out of their cars or crashing with friends and family.

Another food justice non-profit that views the creation of jobs for long-term Oakland residents as essential to its mission is Mandela Marketplace. For Mandela, the goal is not just living wage jobs, but the ownership of community food assets. Mandela Marketplace is a non-profit food hub whose centerpiece is the for-profit, worker-owned Mandela Food Coop. Notably, all the worker-owners of Mandela Foods Co-op are African American while the non-profit staff is racially diverse.

Gentrification has long been on the minds of Mandela's employees, both at the co-op and the nonprofit. One important strategy through which they push back against this process is by providing an opportunity for community ownership of a business. As director of Social Entrepreneurship Mariela Cedeño explains:

> We've talked a lot about gentrification, and what that means in West Oakland. [We want to] make sure that community residents who have been part of the history of West Oakland can own the economy so that they can stay in it and profit from the people who are coming in who have higher levels of income. [Gentrification] is a dynamic that we don't want to happen to them. We want them to be a part of it… You know, Burke grew up here, (*pointing to James Burke, one of the worker owners*) and Mandela Marketplace is going to become profitable and he's going to get a share of those profits and be able to afford to stay in West Oakland.

For nonprofit organizations like Planting Justice and Mandela Marketplace, whose social enterprise businesses benefit from the influx of new residents to Oakland, employment and community ownership are ways to enable long-term residents to resist displacement.

There are also a growing number of private sector restaurants and food businesses that strive to create green jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for long-term community members. Perhaps the most prominent of these in Oakland is Red Bay Coffee. Founded by Keba Konte, an African American artist, activist and a co-owner of successful cafés in Berkeley and San Francisco, Red Bay has quickly become one of the East Bay's most visible brands. It is available at many local cafes and farmer's markets, and sells wholesale to large retailers such as Whole Foods and tech companies like Uber and Salesforce.

Red Bay also has a café in Oakland's uptown neighborhood, an epicenter of gentrification. Housed in a recycled shipping container and decorated with reclaimed wood, art and succulents, it maintains an aesthetic that has become synonymous with the influx of hipsters. Keba thoughtfully acknowledges the role that high-end food businesses like his have played in changing neighborhoods. "One of the things I struggled with was: If I opened up a coffee shop in central Oakland, would it be a magnet for gentrification? Would I be making the problem worse?" To avoid this dynamic, Keba argues that "the coffee shop [should employ] young black and brown people who are struggling to stay in the city—half of whom should be formerly incarcerated." These employees are paid wages that include tips and profit-sharing, and amount about $20 per hour. However, it remains to be seen whether this is enough to keep employees in Oakland. "It's a risky proposition and we're still sorting through the intricacies of the challenge," Keba expounds. "But I feel like it could catch on. Oakland could potentially be a model for resisting the displacement effect of gentrification."

The Town Kitchen is another for-profit food business that aims to ensure that the city's new development can benefit long-term community members. On their website, the Town Kitchen describes itself as a "community-driven food business [that] delivers locally-sourced lunch [and provides] fair-wage jobs and college classes to low-income youth." They source from food artisans who are women, people of color and largely based in Oakland. Their delivery clients include an array of corporate and tech businesses, social impact companies and large events including the 2016 Super Bowl. As one promotional article put it "poor youth get a good wage and culinary training, and Bay Area tech companies get their fancy lunches. Everyone wins."

Cofounder Sabrina Mutukisna has a background in non-profit youth development and works to ensure that the young people employed by The Town Kitchen get the support they need, including help with college and financial aid applications, housing and other needs. She estimated that 80% of her employees are either enrolled in college or taking college-prep classes in high school, and several have left to attend universities.

Although neither of its founders was raised in Oakland, the city provides not only the company's mission, but an important aspect of its branding, as "the town" has long been a nickname for Oakland, distinguishing it from "the city" of San Francisco. Sabrina describes the name of her company as a direct response to gentrification:

> Oakland's at a place where gentrification is really a big subject… These big questions of how do we preserve our culture and what is Oakland culture and how do we see that through our food and how do we see that through our young people and making sure that young people can stay in Oakland, can buy a house in Oakland, can start businesses in Oakland. What are we doing to create that?

The Town Kitchen and Red Bay Coffee are at the forefront of an effort by Oakland's food-based social entrepreneurs to ensure that some of the benefits of the city's dynamic sustainable food scene accrue to long-term community members, highlighting their contributions to the city's culture while providing living-wage green jobs. The trend toward employing youth of color with limited employment prospects is a recent phenomenon, and those making use of this approach hope it can help long-term residents withstand the housing pressures wrought by gentrification. But Sabrina reports that for at least some of the youth she works with, it's already too late. Their families have been displaced, and they commute to The Town Kitchen from suburbs as far as an hour away. That speaks to the quality of their job, but also the inability of even well-paying jobs in the food industry to combat gentrification as real estate pressures continue to intensify.

Despite much popular support, creating green food jobs is a limited approach to pushing back against displacement. It may help long-term communities see themselves reflected in Oakland's thriving sustainable food scene, but there is no guarantee that even these higher wages and support services, can provide enough income to withstand the city's housing market. Given that middle-income communities are also facing displacement pressure, it seems unlikely that long-term residents can be supported in navigating the current landscape. If Oakland's flatlands are to remain home to its long-term inhabitants, that landscape itself will have to change.

Direct action

One way that this landscape may shift is through direct action and radical allyship. Here, food justice activists develop strong relationships with long-term community members, and together, they work to avoid the latter's displacement in a variety of ways. In Oakland, this has included relationship building between new and old residents, petitioning the city for services, and campaigns against individuals' evictions. While many food justice activists working with organizations and businesses primarily employing

green job strategies are supportive of these efforts, and each of them build relationships with and support the long-term residents they employ, only a few are explicitly involved in direct action.[1]

The relationship between Phat Beets and Aunti Frances' Self-Help Hunger program is an important example of radical allyship through direct action.[2] Phat Beets first became embroiled in conflicts over gentrification in the spring of 2014, when a local real estate agent released a video promoting their North Oakland neighborhood as NOBE. An acronym for North Oakland, Berkeley, and Emeryville, and encompassing Aunti Frances' home, the park where she feeds her community, and most of Phat Beets' projects, the neologism allows urban boosters to elide the connotations of crime and blackness often associated with Oakland. The video highlighted the neighborhood's walkability, its bars and restaurants as well as Phat Beets' community garden, which it described as "a bonus to this block." In doing so, the agent cast the garden not as a resource for the neighborhood's many low-income, food-insecure residents, but as a selling point for the growing number of affluent buyers who threaten to displace them.

A few months later, Phat Beets found themselves on the other end of gentrification when the Crossroads Café, which they had launched in a formerly abandoned train depot and which housed many of their programs, was sold to a restauranteur from San Francisco. A series of conflicts ensued and the new owner reported Phat Beets members to both the police and the health department. Phat Beets was forced to move some programs to less visible locations and to discontinue others.

After a period of deep reflection and dialog about these issues, Phat Beets released a statement declaring their opposition to gentrification:

> If working class people of color are displaced from North Oakland – which inevitably happens through gentrification – then Phat Beets farmer's markets and CSAs become inaccessible to the community as a whole, which contradicts our mission and is therefore something we cannot support as an organization.

These conflicts inspired Phat Beets to prioritize the development of relationships with long-term community members as integral to their work. It was in this effort that they first met Aunti Frances, a former Black Panther and founder of the Love Mission Self Help Hunger Program (referred to hereafter as Self Help), which has been serving a free weekly meal in North Oakland's Driver's Plaza for much of the past decade. Those gathering at Driver's are typical of "the old Oakland," largely but not exclusively African American, and struggling to get by in this rapidly gentrifying city. Many are visibly disabled. Most are elders, though there are also younger adults and children ranging from elementary to high school-age. Some rent rooms nearby while others are homeless, crashing with friends or living in vehicles.

When Phat Beets organizers first arrived at Driver's Plaza, they found a community group trying to maintain their right to public space amidst rapidly shifting neighborhood dynamics. As Aunti Frances put it, "We are caught up in that vicious whirlpool of redevelopment." There are many new residents, younger, more affluent and disproportionately white, inhabiting the new condominiums and single-family craftsman homes that surround the plaza. According to Kedar Ellis, a Self-Help regular who was raised in the neighborhood, and whose grandmother lost her nearby home due to predatory lending, the new residents and longstanding ones have "different agendas."

> It's a clash now, because the people that have just moved in maybe had a different expectation. The housing prices have gone up and so they were in a certain economic bracket. But still all of the people in the area that have lived here previously aren't gone yet, so now it's like what do we do? They want a quick fix, a microwave method of just calling the cops or just getting rid of it like a quick solution. Some of the people here are feeling like they've been displaced.

Kedar believes that displacing the Self-Help regulars is part of the city's greater plan.

> The city, they have a 20-year plan of how they want the city to be. They're going to [use] eminent domain…. I think this is a part of that agenda that they want to clean this area out and make it look different. I think

[1] Because the nature of non-profit organizational programming changes rapidly, it is difficult to characterize the exact number of organizations engaged in direct action or policy work. Several organizations that we spoke with have done so at a particular point in time, but only one (Phat Beets) has direct action as a primary focus of their work and only two (Oakland Food Policy Council and the HOPE Collaborative) are primarily concentrated on policy.

[2] There is a longstanding debate in critical food studies that regards self-help efforts as reproducing the neoliberal notion that individuals are responsible for their own well-being and must care for themselves, and to a limited degree, one another, without calling on the state when market mechanisms fail to provide for basic needs (for a summary of this debate, see Alkon and Guthman 2017). However, Alkon (2012) has also written about the ways that these dynamics play out differently in low-income communities of color and in Black-led food justice organizations in particular. In this case, the myriad examples of state and city policy as fostering institutional and individual racism (think redlining, criminalization, or the permitting of locally unwanted land uses, for example), provide a clear message to marginalized communities that they are on their own. While we are supportive of efforts to engage these communities in collective action and policy reform, as is clear from the central argument of this paper, we are also hesitant to criticize their efforts to pool meager resources and provide for themselves and one another.

> they [the new residents] want to turn [Driver's Plaza] into a dog poop park so they can walk their dogs and come here. Then eventually after they get rid of everybody, then they can make it look nice.

But in the past few years, relationships with new neighbors have improved. Calls to the police are fewer, and several of the Self-Help regulars offer stories of friendly interactions with new residents. Aunti Frances describes this transition:

> There have been some residents that have reached out to us. Last week, the tenants barbecued for us. Instead of just the bad part it's pros and cons. We have come together. It's good progress. We have a monthly thing where we do street maintenance. Two communities. The have mores and the have less. Driver's Plaza is very instrumental for neighbors speaking to each other. This is a depo. This is headquarters.

While some new neighbors remain opposed or indifferent, many have begun to work alongside Self Help and Phat Beets. Though it does not mention Self-Help per se, the neighborhood association's website contains an article titled "NOBE-We Are Not" that reads "The acronym NOBE is nothing more than a realtor's tool to attract high salaried "hipsters" and to unreasonably and unconscionably raise sales prices… [Our neighborhood] has always been a friendly place to live and our association will continue to build relationships between all neighbors and our community through goodwill and hard work." With help from Phat Beets, Aunti Frances and Self-Help have turned many of their new neighbors from opposition to support.

Aunti Frances' warm and inviting nature certainly makes what she calls the "tying of communities together through food" possible. Though she is clearly at the center of Self-Help's work, she describes it as a collaborative effort. "Everybody participates, the neighbors, the merchants, the participants, the community gardens, the community organizations. We are Self-Help."

In addition, new residents have become connected to Self-Help through the permaculture efforts spearheaded by Phat Beets. Permaculture is a set of design principles that mimic patterns found in nature (Mollison 1997). Though many of its elements have long been practiced by indigenous people around the world, it became popular among back-to-the-landers in the late 1970s and continues to be employed by many small-scale organic farmers and food justice activists. The most prominent permaculture element at Driver's Plaza is an orchard in which each fruit tree memorializes, as Aunti Frances puts it, "one of our loved ones that have transitioned on." There are also tree collards (a highly productive perennial leafy green), a living fence made of espaliered (flat pruned) fruit trees, and, for a time, a cobb oven and bench made of a mix of sand, clay and straw. While the latter were removed by the city, the food production remains. Long-term community members and new neighbors have worked side by side to create and tend these elements.

Due in part to their experiences with the NOBE video and the Grease Box, Phat Beets' composition has changed over time. Most of the younger, more privileged organizers have moved on, and the organization has hired more long-term residents and people of color, including Aunti Francis and, for a time, Kedar, into paid positions. In addition to collaborating with Self-Help, Phat Beets is also a founding member of the North Oakland Restorative Justice Council. Of the three organizations, only Phat Beets is a registered non-profit, and they have used their acumen and privilege to support the other two organizations. For example, Phat Beets staff do much of the administrative work for all three groups and Phat Beets has served as a fiscal sponsor, writing grants that fund the other programs in order to amplify their work. In 2018, the three organizations cofounded a new umbrella nonprofit called Oakland Community United for Equity and Justice. This, according to Phat Beets' founder, will allow some of the work that they do "to be more supported in a way that's not so Phat Beets-centric."

But whether any of this work can enable long-term residents to stay in Oakland remains to be seen. Indeed, Aunti Francis herself was recently evicted. The duplex where she lived was sold, and despite the fact that she is both elderly and disabled, the new owners used a loophole in Oakland's rent control laws to force her out. Phat Beets and other community members helped to spearhead her "eviction defense" campaign, connecting her to nonprofit legal assistance, publicity and other resources. With this support, Aunti Francis was able to demand remuneration from the new owners and find a nearby apartment.

This is just one example of the ways that Phat Beets and Self Help have created supportive relationships with new neighbors, ensuring that Self-Help's community meals can continue to provide sustenance and commensality to a community dealing with the stresses of displacement and homelessness. They have also amplified the need for Oakland's more privileged progressives to connect with and become involved in the struggles of long-term residents. But Aunti Frances herself has become an example of the need for policy that can address displacement more broadly.

Policy and planning

One of the most striking elements of public and scholarly debates about gentrification is that at least some of the solutions to avoiding displacement are well known, especially in the gray literature. There are a number of policy and planning tools that cities can use to create affordable housing: community development block grants, inclusionary zoning,

linkage fees, stabilization vouchers for long-term residents, changing the Fair Housing rules to enable the targeting at-risk neighborhoods, and community land trusts are just a few (Rose and Lin 2015; Causa Justa/Just Cause Nd; Furman Center 2016). But cities often prefer the influx of new money and new residents, and are often not interested in ensuring that long-term community members can remain in their homes as they improve. Motivating cities requires public pressure, and several of Oakland's food justice activists are working to create it.

The Oakland Food Policy Council and the HOPE Collaborative (Health for Oakland's People) are among the community-based organizations working with the city's Departments of Planning and Public Health to craft what the city has named their Healthy Development Guidelines. If adopted, this policy will integrate food justice, housing rights, transportation and environmental health into the city's planning process. These guidelines are similar to those being developed by several cities facing intensive gentrification, and comprise an attempt to integrate development, environmental sustainability and social equity (Stanko and Naylor 2018; Zavetovski and Agyeman 2014).

Darin Ranelletti, the Interim Director for the City of Oakland's Planning and Building department explains the process by which the guidelines were created.

> There's been some concern because of the perceived amount of escalation in development and its impact on health and community. That that's a topic we should target. A decision was made with the project to focus on when new development comes in. How can we make sure that new development limits its impacts on community health and promotes health within the community? There was a sense that this was [an area where] we could have some meaningful effect.

In order to create these guidelines, the Planning Department convened a group of community-based organizations focused on health, transportation food and housing, as well as market-rate and affordable housing developers. HOPE's Executive Director Sabrina Wu describes the overall intent of these guidelines and her organization's motivation for participating:

> The premise of it is that it's supposed to be an upstream public health tool that would identify potentially negative health impacts of proposed developments before they're approved. We found ourselves always on the other side of the fight. The city has already approved the project; why didn't the community have a say?…
>
> What we were hearing from our members is we actually need something earlier on in the approval process. We're not going to count on the city to always let us know when public comment is, when is the time we engage? They just don't do that well. There needs to be some kind of check in place. They're not oriented in thinking about "How will this development proposal that I'm getting at the permit desk impact the health of this community?" That's not how they're trained. They actually need a tool that will walk them thought that. This tool. It looks at impacts on housing, transportation, food, space, arts and culture. It's very broad and comprehensive… The goal is that development projects over a certain threshold, whether it be budget or impact on the community, actually have to meet the standards of the tool before they're approved by city planning.

As Sabrina mentioned, and in contrast to development plans that emphasize environmental sustainability without regard to economic disparities, the Healthy Development Guidelines take a comprehensive approach. With regard to food, the guidelines incentivize developers to support the city's edible parks program, to increase neighborhood access to healthy food through the farmers markets, produce stands or grocery stores, and to dedicate space for permanent and visible gardens. The guidelines also advocate for enhanced access to affordable housing, particularly for vulnerable populations. Strategies include a jobs/housing impact fee, support for maintenance of existing affordable housing, the institution of preferences in city-assisted affordable housing projects for people who already live or work in Oakland, those who have been displaced, and homeless and very low-income families, and an inclusionary zoning policy for development projects that supports long-term affordable ownership opportunities for local residents. Other relevant guidelines include support for living wage jobs and the incubation of locally owned businesses, local hiring policies for construction and long-term employment, including for immigrants and formerly incarcerated individuals, and efforts to prioritize occupancy for locally displaced, small, neighborhood-serving and/or minority owned businesses through right of first refusal and below-market rate leases.

If they are adopted, the Healthy Development Guidelines will be an important tool to create development that meets the needs of current Oakland residents while minimizing displacement. But its creators recognize that it will be controversial, and that elected officials have favored recruiting tech firms and upscale housing developments. On the advice of two of the city council's more progressive members, the planning department decided to break the guidelines up and seek approval in three stages. The first includes policies that already exist, but are included to ensure that they are applied to new development, or that can be administratively implemented without legislative action. Because of this process, the city has already implemented guidelines protecting the

rights of employees of new developments to form unions, collecting housing impact fees to support affordable housing, and prioritizing those who live or work in Oakland for city-assisted affordable housing projects. The city has also begun collecting data that will inform efforts to adopt future policies such as requiring the disclosure and reporting of rental unit loss, eviction and relocation compensation and conducting a neighborhood resident needs assessment to ascertain preferences for retail and commercial services.

The planning department's next steps include obtaining legislative approval for those recommendations that it deems less controversial. Among the most promising of these policies is a requirement that at least 50% of full time employees be members of "vulnerable populations," which includes low-income, homeless or formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants and people with disabilities, and another that compels commercial and industrial projects to prioritize locally displaced businesses. Most directly relevant to residential displacement is a directive to adopt an inclusionary zoning policy to support local home ownership either by requiring affordable units or contributing to a community land trust or limited equity housing co-op.

The Building and Planning department describes the remainder of the guidelines as complicated and/or controversial, and recognizes that adoption will require significant legislative maneuvering. All of the healthy food guidelines are in this section, as are those ensuring the maintenance of affordable housing units, mitigation for those involuntarily displaced, and incentivizing housing for homeless people and those earning less than 20% of the area median income. Not surprisingly, those guidelines that seem best equipped to stem the tide of displacement are among the most difficult to implement.

If adopted, the Healthy Development Guidelines will be the kinds of policies that can help to prevent the displacement of low and middle-income Oakland residents, even as wealthier residents increasingly share the city and businesses—food and otherwise—cater to newcomers' needs. But the experience of the Self Help Hunger Program seems at odds with this approach. Even as the city moves toward stemming displacement, their food practices and use of public space are criminalized and otherwise threatened by city officials. This forces the question of whether the city truly wants to create opportunities for very low income and homeless individuals and families to remain.

Discussion and conclusion

Food justice activists' desire to resist gentrification through market-based solutions is an extension of their most common approach to social change more generally. The movement is dominated by nonprofit organizations that work to increase access to local and organic food by selling it, often at discounted prices, in low-income communities of color. They also seek to support farmers, restauranteurs and other food entrepreneurs who are people of color by creating opportunities for their businesses. When faced with the displacement of those they seek to serve, they respond by amplifying their focus on creating good food jobs and paying livable wages to individuals with substantial barriers to employment, including low-income people, people of color and formerly incarcerated individuals (and of course these categories overlap). But in a city like Oakland that is experiencing supergentrification, the price of housing is escalating so rapidly that even middle class people, including some of the activists who founded and are employed by these organizations, have been forced to move to surrounding areas. Thus, even a well-remunerated food service worker is unlikely to be able to remain in the city. For this reason, we argue that food justice activists seeking to acknowledge their own potential contributions to green gentrification, and to resist gentrification more broadly, need to look beyond the market-based approaches that are already essential components of their theory of change to engage in the sort of direct action and policy approaches described in the latter sections of this paper.

Theoretically, this paper joins much of the literature in critical food studies by extending our understanding of the limits of market-based approaches to social change. Within that literature, a small number of studies have looked at the ways that local and sustainable food systems can contribute to green gentrification (Alkon and Cadji 2018; McClintock 2013, 2017; Stehlin and Tarr 2016). Because local and sustainable foods are often associated with upscale and gourmet eating practices, the presence of businesses producing these goods helps to brand neighborhoods as ripe for investment and speculation, even when they prioritize the food cultures and employment of longstanding communities of color.

This paper critically assesses the ways that food justice activists have reflected on that dynamic and attempted to push back against it. Examples of direct action and policy advocacy are not limited to Oakland. For example, food justice activists in many cities including Buffalo NY (Raja et al. 2014), Boston MA (Agyeman et al. 2014) and Seattle Washington (Horst et al. 2017) have worked with local governments to ensure that urban agriculture policy serves the needs of communities of color, though scholarly analysis of these efforts proceeds the crises of displacement faced by many cities and therefore does not mention whether activists and planners explicitly acknowledged and sought to counter food justice's potential contributions to green gentrification. More directly related are efforts in New York City, in which activists are working in a broad alliance with housing and economic advocacy groups (Reynolds and Cohen 2016) and to oppose city-led affordable housing plans that remain

out of the financial reach of long-term residents (Meyers 2013). However, despite the best efforts of organizations and activists in these cities and beyond, and despite small-scale model and pilot programs that have allowed some long-term residents to stay in place while housing prices escalate, we are not aware of any city-wide success story of an area that has courted urban economic development without creating displacement. The urban planning tools exist to do so, but for now, the political will does not.

Unlike many organizations in the broader alternative food movement, the market-based strategies that food justice activists engage tie them to longstanding Oakland residents, who are often in need of the good jobs and support services that these nonprofit organizations and social enterprises can provide. We argue that these jobs can be important not only for the day-to-day lives of those who hold them, but also as means to create allyship and build power. Through the everyday connections that come from working side by side, these jobs can help Oakland's marginalized long-term residents and progressive middle class to join together to exert political pressure on city government. This sort of pressure will be necessary to support the passage of policies like the Healthy Development Guidelines. Policies such as these are important steps toward linking food justice with broader social, racial and environmental justice concerns, and creating socially and economically diverse healthy and livable communities.

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