

## **THE HISTORIC AND CURRENT USE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN FOOD SYSTEM AND AGRICULTURAL MARKETS TO DISMANTLE THE SYSTEMIC WEAKENING OF AFRICAN DESCENDED COMMUNITIES**

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*Keywords: Social Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, Food System, pragmatic Pan Africanism, Underdevelopment*

*Abstract: This work aims to explore the historical relevance and current necessity for grassroots social enterprise and entrepreneurship, from the base of underserved communities overwhelmed by hyper-incarceration and unemployment, to support the production of community empowering capital with prospects for economic growth in food system and agricultural markets. This mixed methods research project is based in a socio-cultural historical framework and involves aspects of community development and empowerment, food system advocacy, youth entrepreneurship, systemic weakening of community foundations, the prison industrial complex, and pragmatic Pan Africanism based in the work of: Afro-Brazilian activist Abdias do Nascimento's conception of quilomboismo, Huey P. Newton's theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, and Jessica Gordon Nembhard's study on African American cooperative economic thought and practices.*

*In addition to a survey of social enterprise, community development and entrepreneurship in food system and agricultural markets from the 19<sup>th</sup> century by enslaved and maroon communities in the southern United States and Caribbean region to the contemporary period in diasporic or urban migratory spaces, there will be a case study on social enterprise organizations in Boston, MA and New York state, such as Haley House, The Food Project, Fresh Food Generation, The BLK ProjeK, Soul Fire Farm, and Drive Change. These organizations are at the forefront of supporting and advocating for important interventions (employment training and entrepreneurship support), policy changes, community development, and empowerment for correctional controlled individuals and underserved communities of African descent through the alignment of solutions for individual and community development with food system advocacy.*

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### **1. Introduction**

In "The New Jim Crow" (2012), legal scholar Michelle Alexander examines the evolution of systemic racism, the War on Drugs, mass incarceration and the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). The period of Jim Crow can be define as government-led systems of economic, social and political repression and segregation of people of color in the U.S. from 1865 to 1966 supporting white supremacy and maintaining white privilege. For Alexander the "New Jim Crow" is a reconstitution and continuation of government-led oppression of people of color, particularly African Americans, through the criminal justice system. The existence of the "New Jim Crow" is documented through the exponentially expansive qualities of the PIC through the extension of Richard Nixon's War on Drugs policies by Ronald Reagan and George Bush's presidential administrations in the 1980s and 1990s. The reinvigoration of the War on Drugs was compounded with racially biased judicial and prosecutorial practices within the U.S. criminal justice system which increased the length of mandatory minimum sentencing and the amount of plea bargain deals for non-violent drug offenders. This exponentially increased the prison population and communities affected by

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incarceration. Corporate and political interests have been intrinsically tied to capitalist profitability of incarceration.

As private for profit prison corporations, such as the Corrections Corporation of America and GEO Group, focus on inmate population growth and prison profitability (Alexander, 2011, pp. 231), enormous profits are gained by telecommunication companies, gun manufacturers, private health care providers, the U.S. Military (prison labor used to make war supplies). Fortune 500 corporations also use prison labor to avoid paying minimum and living wages to U.S. workers. Angela Davis, Bryan Stevenson and Loic Wacquant share Alexander's analysis of connecting the enslaved labor central to modern U.S. Capitalism as ancestral to the "correctional controlled" labor of global Capitalism – which includes, and fluidly moves between, the drug industry and Prison Industrial Complex (Davis, 2011; Wacquant, 2002; Blackmon, 2009). This correctional controlled labor is overwhelming sourced from working class, underclass, under caste, and (what Karl Marx identifies as the) lumpenproletariat communities of color occupying systemically underdeveloped and underserved spaces in urban centers.

Engaging with the concept of the "New Jim Crow" and current efforts to end mass incarceration remedying the underdevelopment experience by affected communities, the following questions have emerged: As slavery became Jim Crow which subsequently transitioned into the New Jim Crow, what will stop the ongoing evolution of subjugation of the most vulnerable in our society? How can poor people, especially of color, survive and thrive regardless of bad policies, deindustrialization, globalization and transitioning modes of control? How can poor people, with a focus on poor people of color in urban areas that are high priority targets in the War on Drugs and Prison Industrial Complex, establish legal economies that are community supported, empowering and maintained outside the illegitimate and legitimate sectors of Capitalism? Can economic advocacy through entrepreneurial and social enterprise involvement in food system markets simultaneously address unemployment, hyper-incarceration, economic deprivation, and food resource needs?

The drug industry, War on Drugs policies and the Prison Industrial Complex have targeted working and lower class communities. This work aims to explore the historical relevance and current necessity for grassroots social enterprise and entrepreneurship, from the base of underserved diasporic communities overwhelmed by hyper-incarceration and unemployment, to support the production of community empowering capital with prospects for economic growth in food system and agricultural markets. This mixed methods research project is based in a socio-cultural historical framework and involves aspects of community development and empowerment, food system advocacy, youth entrepreneurship, systemic weakening of community foundations and the prison industrial complex. This project utilizes pragmatic Pan Africanism based in the work of: Afro-Brazilian activist Abdias do Nascimento's conception of quilomboismo, Huey P. Newton's theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, and Jessica Gordon Nembhard's study on African American cooperative economic thought and practices.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

I define pragmatic Pan Africanism through interconnecting themes of Pan African communalism, Revolutionary Intercommunalism, and economic cooperativism. The intersection and/or acknowledgement of the utility of these three theoretical and practical anti-oppression models are integral in advocating for grassroots based community and global development. Abdias do Nascimento's Pan African communalism is fundamental to this intersection and advocates instituting communalism through the narrative of "quilomboismo," referring to the maroon state of Quilombo dos Palmares (1605-1694) in Brazil. This ideological model for development places human beings as

the base of power, leading to the elimination of white privilege in economy, polity, society and culture (Nascimento, 1989, pp. 11).

Co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Huey P. Newton theorized revolutionary intercommunalism as anti-oppression and anti-capitalist solidarity building amongst subjugated global communities. Pragmatically built into the practices of the BPP and written as a part of his PhD dissertation, Newton asserted the United States was no longer a nation-state but a boundless empire controlling spaces and populations through moving technologies and mechanisms of the state (Heynen, 2009, pp. 417; Newton, 1980, pp. 18).

Jessica Gordon Nembhard's recent publication, "Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice" (2014), demonstrates the importance of cooperative economic development as a community economic development strategy. Cooperative economics has historically supported marginalized populations gain independence, in the midst of racial segregation, racial discrimination, and market failure (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, pp. 18).

### **3. A brief historiography**

During the period of enslavement in the Americas, Africans and their descendants established a significant economic base in provision grounds and internal market producing local fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and other foodstuff throughout the Diaspora (Levine, 2003, pp. 261; Carney and Rosomoff, 2011; Sheller, 1998; Eiss, 1998; Sheridan, 1985; Johnson, 1989; Gaspar, 1988; Beckles, 1991; Marshall, 1991; Tomich, 1991; Campbell, 1991; Schlotterbeck, 1991; Johnson, 2009). Free, enslaved and maroon Africans were able to find autonomy through self sustaining agricultural systems that fended off starvation and established economic and cultural sovereignty allowing the purchase of freedom, acquisition of additional land, personal items and/or needed food resources. In addition to cultivation for consumption, cooking and selling food were common occupations of enslaved and free women (Carney and Rosomoff, 2011, pp. Kindle 2190-2192). Known as "higglers" and "hucksters" in the British Caribbean and quitandeiras in Brazil, the "market women" of plantation societies specialized in selling prepared beverages and cooked food and surplus agricultural goods (Carney and Rosomoff, 2011, pp. Kindle 2196-2197).

In the post-emancipation period, land ownership and agricultural market systems remained relevant. In the Caribbean, a broad class of Black property owners emerged shortly after the abolition of slavery and continued to thrive at the early turn of the century (Brown, 2014, pp. 59). Although tenancy, sharecropping, and the crop lien systems were economic and social control arrangements present in post-emancipation United States, black landownership grew in the post-slavery Reconstruction period of 1865 to 1877 (Green, Green, and Kleiner, 2011, pp. Kindle 1150-1157). The number of black farms in the United States peaked in 1920, with one-quarter of all farms owned and operated by blacks at the national level (Green, Green, and Kleiner, 2011, pp. Kindle 1165 - 1168). Through the early system of economic cooperativism, black farms maintained their existence during this period (Green, Green, and Kleiner, 2011, pp. Kindle 1264-1270). Cooperatives have remained a strategy for black farms in the U.S., which are now less than 1% of total farms (Green, Green, and Kleiner, 2011).

The Great Migration of African descended populations from the American south, Caribbean and Latin spaces at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century to 1970 was integral in precipitating land loss. Migration occurred for variety of reasoning, including domestic terrorism of blacks in the American south to environmental issues that affected the economic stability of agriculture. But these migrated populations sustained their entrepreneurial and internal community development traditions as a strategy for survival (Brown, 2014; Posmentier, 2012).

Marcus Garvey established the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Harlem, NY in 1917. The organization combined race nationalism and political militancy to create a self-sustaining, Pan-Africanist economic order (Marable, 1999, pp. 146; Dalrymple, 2014; Jacques Garvey and Essien-Udom, 1977; Jacques Garvey, 1978; Hill, 1983). The UNIA not only entered into ventures such as the *Black Star Line Shipping Company* and *Negro Factories Corporation*, but also engaged in agricultural commerce with black farmers in the American South and Caribbean. Under the direction of U.S. Poston, Minister of Labor and Industry, UNIA established a trade in agricultural produce that sold directly into New York and New Jersey markets (Walker, 1989, pp. 38-39). The commercial operation traded transnationally with oranges and grapefruits from Florida and limes from the Caribbean (Walker, 1989, pp. 40).

Inheriting the Black Nationalist and transcultural character of Garveyism, The Nation of Islam (NOI) intersected black unity, black centered education, and economic pursuits similar to the UNIA's economic ventures that accumulated to "real estate holdings in a number of states, fish markets, [and] farmland" (Showers Johnson, 2006, pp. 122). Founded in 1930 by Master Fard Muhammad in Detroit, Michigan and led for decades by Elijah Muhammad, black sovereignty and community building within the realms of food, land and health are defining features of the Black Nationalist Islamic organization. In addition to entrepreneurial ventures by members in low-income communities of color vis-à-vis establishing grocery stores and selling door to door food items such as bean pies, Nation of Islam's Ministry of Agriculture is currently developing "a sustainable agricultural system that would provide at least one meal per day, according to the teachings of the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad for the 40 million black people in America" (Nation of Islam, Ministry of Agriculture.< <http://www.noimoa.com/about-noimoa/>>). This endeavor is connected to the organization purchased over 1,556 acres of rural South Georgia farmland in 1994 (McCutcheon, 2011, pp. Kindle 3822-3829). Elijah Muhammad's teachings about food, depicted in his books *How to Eat to Live 1* and *2*, and the social enterprise endeavors of NOI had an important influence on Black Power organizations such as the Black Panther Party.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense's community survival programs politicize inequities within the food system advocating for oppressed and disenfranchised communities. The political organization was cofounded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, CA in 1966 advocating revolutionary socialism through grassroots organizing and the implementation of community-based "survival programs" (Heynen, 2009, pp. 410). The Free Breakfast for School Children Program was initiated at St. Augustine's Church in Oakland in September 1968 with the support of Father Earl Neil and Ms. Ruth Beckford (Heynen, 2009, pp. 407). In late 1969, Seale and Newton sent out a directive to make the Breakfast Program a mandatory initiative for all BPP chapters. The program allowed political power, hope, and possibility to be actualized through the reproduction of black communities at the level of individual children in alternative ways that were local and autonomous from the state (Heynen, 2009, pp. 407).

#### 4. Case study

Used widely in anti-oppression teach-ins and social justice trainings to push for movement based policy changes, Alexander's "The New Jim Crow" is a progeny of Elijah Anderson's "Code of the Streets" (1999) – an ethnographic examination of co-existing values of "decent" and "street" in inner city communities as a response to systemic underdevelopment. Anderson explains that "when jobs disappear and people are left poor, highly concentrated, and hopeless, the way is paved for the underground economy to become a way of life" (Anderson, 2000, pp. Kindle 5457-5460). The human capacity and entrepreneurial aptitude employed in the underground economy of poor

communities, such as the illicit drug trade, facilitate entry points of the Prison Industrial Complex. Through his discussion of Philadelphia community activist Herman Wrice's support of the entrepreneurial pursuits of formerly incarcerated young men, Anderson provides an example of a critical community based intervention intersecting food system markets, community development, entrepreneurship and community reentry. He writes: "[Herman] knew they had been drug dealers, whom he sees as businessmen 'but with a terrible product,' and wondered whether they might become entrepreneurs. Could they sell fruit on a local street corner instead of drugs? Could this then grow into a larger market, contributing eventually to revitalizing the community?" (Anderson, 2000, pp. Kindle 4918-4921).

The work of Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman advocate for the inclusive participation of low income communities of color in food justice activism and in the creation of alternative food system markets. This departs from neoliberal green economic strategies that foster social change through market behavior and away from the public sphere (Alkon, 2012, pp. Kindle 305-312; Alkon and Agyeman, 2011). Alkon and Agyeman's perspective is supported by Andrea Freeman, who describes food oppression as "a form of structural subordination that builds on and deepens pre-existing disparities along race and class lines... [which is] difficult both to identify as a social wrong and to redress, because it stems from a combination of market forces and government policy" (Freeman, 2007, pp. 2245). Freeman specifically addresses the close relationships between the United States government with processed food industries – such as dairy, meat, and fast food – that support food assistance programs and promote malnutrition (Freeman, 2007, pp. 2246) through the proliferation of food deserts and swamps. Although the administration's *Let's Move* campaign, spearheaded by First Lady Michelle Obama in 2011, addresses food deserts and swamps, poverty, and malnutrition, the focus of the initiative is childhood obesity (Obama, 25 October 2011.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/10/25/remarks-first-lady-mayors-summit-food-deserts-chicago-illinois>). This emphasizes the role of choice, minimizing the socioeconomic influence on food access and control of distribution. Intersecting just sustainability with community development and increased economic opportunities will address layered issues of food access, unemployment and hyper-incarceration at the root of systemic underdevelopment.

As religious organizations such as the Nation of Islam are still present as an example of entrepreneurship and communal uplift through the creation of alternative and culturally specific food markets, there has been a recent increase of social enterprise businesses and nonprofit advocacy organizations that are intersecting food system advocacy with critical interventions addressing race and class based systemic oppression rooted in the U.S. criminal justice system. Haley House, The Food Project, Fresh Food Generation, The BLK ProjeK, Soul Fire Farm, and Drive Change are a small list of organizations leading the work to create conscious capital through impactful economic community development with food system markets.

#### **4.1 The Northeast**

The Northeast of the United States has played a critical role as a central destination for migrants of African descent. This historic cultural diversity expands the black Great Migration story of 1910 to 1970 from the American South to include black immigrants from Cape Verde (Africa), Jamaica, Cuba and Puerto Rico (Betty, 2013, pp. 24).<sup>2</sup> Similar to the 6.5 million black migrants from the American

<sup>2</sup> By 1930 there were 177,981 foreign-born blacks and children of foreign-born blacks in the United States, this figure constitutes 1.5 percent of the U.S. total population. Although the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 and the anti-Communist McCarran-Walter Act of 1950 placed heavy restrictions on black immigration, US Guest worker programs initiated in the 1940 supported the consistent migratory flow of foreign born blacks. These

South, there has been significant land lost – whether sold, forgotten or stolen – for recent and generational immigrants of African descent. In addition to high incarceration rates in this region of the U.S., there are systemic issues with food insecurity and access to healthy and culturally relevant food, especially fruits and vegetables. This occurrence has led to the labelling of many neighbourhoods within these cities food deserts and food swamps. With many Afro-descended immigrants settling in the Northeast, Boston and New York provide a significant perspective in the current and historical use of food in particular as a tool for socioeconomic community building and empowerment.

#### 4.1.1 Boston

The population of Massachusetts is close to 7 million. Although black and Hispanic communities consist of 17% of this population, they account for 50 % of Massachusetts' total prison population (U.S. Census Bureau, <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html>>; *Prisonpolicy.org*, <<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/MA.html>>). This imprisoned population is rooted from Boston where 25% of residents are black/African American and 17% are Hispanic [Most of the Hispanic population is Afro-Latino]– and 21 % of the population lives below the poverty line – some neighborhoods the poverty rate is close to 50% (*City-Data.com*, <<http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Dudley-Square-Boston-MA.html#ixzz3nA5UUksu>>; U.S. Census Bureau, <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25/2507000.html>>). Boston communities, such as Roxbury, have been heavily impacted by the diversion and recycling of residents (especially young males) into the criminal justice system by war on drug policies and racially targeted policing – suffering the socioeconomic, familial and communal consequences of incarceration. Haley House Bakery Café, The Food Project, and Fresh Food Generation are examples of community supported, invested and led social enterprise initiatives countering these systemic issues with food advocacy.

#### 4.1.2 Haley House Bakery Café

Haley House Bakery Café is the social enterprise business of Haley House, a nonprofit Boston-based organization founded in 1966 by Kathe and John McKenna. Haley House's mission is to use "food and the power of community to break down barriers between people, transfer new skills, and revitalize neighborhoods... helping those made vulnerable by the harshest effects of inequality move toward wholeness and economic independence" (Haley House, <<http://haleyhouse.org/who-we-are/mission/>>) Current Executive Director Bing Broderick explains that this is accomplished through initiatives such as a full-service Soup Kitchen managed by a social justice orientated Live-In Community (1966), Elder Meal program (1974), Housing program (1972), Rural and Urban Organic Farming (1982), a Food Pantry (1998), and the Transitional Employment Program (1996) (Bing Broderick, Personal Interview; Haley House, <<http://haleyhouse.org/who-we-are/history/>>).

The Transitional Employment Program (TEP) was established in 1996 in response to the intensification of the tragic cycle of addiction-to-prison-and-back experienced by many soup kitchen guests during the 1990s (Haley House, <<http://haleyhouse.org/what-we-do/tep/>>). Beginning as the Bakery Training Program through the Soup Kitchen, Bakery trainees learned how to bake bread which was sold to the South End community, "gaining invaluable practical skills and employment experience while bolstering the neighborhood community" (Haley House,

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racially based immigration restrictions were lifted in 1965 with the Hart-Celler Act, which has impacted black immigration to the United States from 1965 to the present period.

<http://haleyhouse.org/what-we-do/tep/>). In 2005 with the allied support of *Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative* (DSNI), Haley House established the Haley House Bakery Café as a full-service café, catering, and wholesale business in Dudley Square, Roxbury. Led by Bakery Manager and program graduate Jeremy Thompson, TEP provides paid work experience for participants producing wholesale bakery products for the café as well as core community reentry supports to facilitate the full transition of TEP men and women (Melvin Civry, YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpapoTv\\_y2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpapoTv_y2Q) >). As of 2013, only 2 out of 24 participants experienced recidivism (April Brown, PBS News Hour, [www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/lunch-with-a-story-on-the-side/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/lunch-with-a-story-on-the-side/)>.).

#### 4.1.3 *The Food Project*

With three urban farming spaces and their Boston headquarter office stationed in the Dudley neighborhood, The Food Project serves as an important collaborator with Haley House Bakery Café (as well as other community-based organizations) in furthering food system advocacy initiatives in Roxbury (Food Project, <http://thefoodproject.org/our-farms>>). Established in 1991 by Ward Cheney, The Food Project is one of the largest regional farming and food access organizations in Massachusetts with approximately 70 acres of land on three suburban farms, four urban farms, and two greenhouses throughout Massachusetts with distribution of produce through farmers markets, subsidized farm shares, and to hunger relief organizations (Food Project, <http://thefoodproject.org/our-farms>>). Through a national model of engaging young people in personal and social change through sustainable agriculture, The Food Project works with 120 teenagers and thousands of volunteers each year. To date, more than 1,400 youth have participated in leadership development programs since 1991 (Food Project, <http://thefoodproject.org/what-we-do>). In addition to selling reduced priced sustainably sourced food, purchasers are able to buy food with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at farm locations and the local Farmers' Market (Food Project, <http://thefoodproject.org/community-programs>>).

The Food Project's partnerships with Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and City of Boston have supported the continued access of food harvested from farm sites to community members through the Dudley Town Common Farmers Market and several local hunger relief organizations in the neighborhood. In 2010, The Food Project partnered with DSNI to operate a 10,000-square-foot Dudley Greenhouse in Roxbury, the greenhouse functions as a community space and year-round learning center for local residents and gardeners (Food Project, <http://thefoodproject.org/our-farms>>).

#### 4.1.4 *Fresh Food Generation*

Fresh Food Generation (FFG) is a farm-to-plate food truck and catering business founded in 2013 by Cassandra Campbell and Jackson Renshaw. FFG is committed to serving the entire Greater Boston Area with a focus on underserved neighborhoods that have limited access to quality foods. Through their relationships with local farmers and food organizations, such as The Food Project and City Growers, Fresh Food Generation makes low-cost meals influenced by Latin American and Caribbean cuisine. The food truck hires young adults in the local community as team members with the "hope to inspire a generation of young leaders who are excited to eat well and work towards creating a better food system" (Fresh Food Generation, <http://www.freshfoodgeneration.com/>>). The FFG food truck is notably stationed in the Dudley street neighborhood across from a multitude of sub and pizza shops.

Campbell and Renshaw first connected at The Food Project where they were trained in an anti-oppression model with focus on food system inequity and community advocacy (Fresh Food Generation, <<http://www.freshfoodgeneration.com/#!our-team/cs5f> >). When Campbell finished graduate school of MIT in urban planning, she came back to her neighborhood in Roxbury and found that she was traveling to other communities to get healthy food (Dewey, *Bay State Banner*, April 8 2015). She connected with Renshaw on the idea of a community-based healthful food truck in Roxbury. Serving as a healthy alternative to over-processed foods sold at corner stores and fast food chains, FFG aims "to make affordable cultural relevant food, support local farms and engage in sustainable business practices that allow the communities they serve to 'thrive'" (Fresh Food Generation, <<http://www.freshfoodgeneration.com/#!our-philosophy/c18k6>>).

#### 4.1.5 Boston analysis

Haley House Bakery Café, The Food Project, and Fresh Food Generation have created conscious capital in the Dudley neighborhood of Roxbury, Massachusetts. With focus on alternative economic spaces and high levels of community support and collaboration, these social enterprise organizations have created critical interventions in employment opportunity, training and entrepreneurship support specifically for the low-income community in Dudley. In addition to pushing for important community based resources through policy changes and community development initiatives, these organizations have aligned interventions addressing systemic issues connected to hyper-incarceration, unemployment and youth development with food system advocacy and healthful food access – a strategy with historical and cultural relevance for Boston's communities of color.

As a part of the growing number of social enterprise community based resources in the Boston area, Haley House Bakery Café, The Food Project, and FFG are located in the Dudley neighborhood. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a nonprofit community-based planning and organizing entity established in 1984 with the mission of community "development without displacement," has been an impactful and supportive resource in connecting these three enterprises with community support and collaboration (Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, <<http://www.dsni.org/dsni-historic-timeline/>>). Through the creation of the Dudley Neighbors, Inc. community land trust in 1988, DSNI gained eminent domain authority, purchased vacant land, and protected affordability and family stability in the Dudley neighborhood – which transverses Dudley street spanning 1.3 square miles through Roxbury and north Dorchester areas (Dudley Neighbors, Inc., <<http://www.dudleyneighbors.org/land-trust-101.html>>).

Although the DSNI is a proven source of empowerment and community control with support from local and national political leaders, gentrification is an impending cause of disempowerment in the Dudley neighborhood. The ever present threat of the expansion of higher education institutions is compounded with the proximity and convenience to Boston proper which brings real estate developers and high-income interlopers. The positives of redevelopment are contradicted with the insertion of priorities of multibillion dollar corporate entities over community empowerment efforts and local entrepreneurship (Casey Ross, *Boston Globe*, March 30 2014).

## 4.2 New York

New York State's population is close to 20 million with large portions of residents concentrated to the boroughs of New York City. Although black and Hispanics account for 34% of the total population in New York state, they are 75% of the imprisoned population (53% for blacks and 22% for Hispanics) (Prison Policy Initiative, <<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NY.html>>). The incarceration rates of



New York City borough residents correlate with area demographics on race and poverty. These incarcerated populations are from communities in the South Bronx, East Harlem and Brooklyn (Marks, Gothamist.com, May 1 2013). Similar to the challenges of Boston's inner city, communities within New York have been affected by war on drug policies of the Rockefeller drug laws and racially targeted policing. The BLK ProjeK, Soul Fire Farm and Drive Change are examples of social enterprise initiatives impacting systemic underdevelopment driven by the criminal justice system through food.

#### 4.2.1 *The BLK ProjeK*

The BLK ProjeK (pronounced "Black Project") is a Bronx-based nonprofit organization that seeks to address food justice and economic development by channeling the local, good food movement and creating small business and career opportunities for underserved women and youth of color (The BLK ProjeK, <<http://www.theblkprojek.org/our-story/>> ). Established in 2009 by activist and mother of five Tanya Fields through the support of community-based organization ***Mothers on the Move***, TBP aims to strengthen the overall mental and public health of community members, creating viable pathways out of poverty while supporting local growers elevating the collective self esteem of the larger community (The BLK ProjeK, <<http://www.theblkprojek.org/our-story/>>; Andrew Leonard, Grist.org, April 24 2012) The organization implements culturally relevant education, beautification of public spaces, urban gardening and community programming to enrich "the lives of women who are routinely overlooked and overburdened yet serve an important and critical role in the larger fabric of society" (The BLK ProjeK, <<http://www.theblkprojek.org/our-story/>>). Fields passion for social justice and inclusive economic development is gauged from her perspective as a low-income single mother.

The BLK ProjeK engages the Bronx community through two-tiered programming called *Holistic Hoods* and *Healthy Hoods*. Holistic Hoods supports community building with Bronx Grub, a quarterly meal series that brings Bronx community residents together for a sustainable low-cost/free meal, serving as a vehicle for base-building and civic engagement (The BLK ProjeK, <<http://www.theblkprojek.org/our-story/>>). *Healthy Hoods* is initiated through The South Bronx Mobile Market, an itinerant market that moves through South Bronx neighborhoods selling responsibly grown, high quality food from local producers; and Libertad Urban Farm initiative, through gardening of public spaces and vacant lots.

#### 4.2.2 *Soul Fire Farm*

Soul Fire Farm (SFF) is a Certified Natural Growing family farm serving as a community resource and vessel for education in dismantling oppressive structures that misguide the food system (Soul Fire Farm, <<http://www.soulfirefarm.com/>>). Founded by Leah Penniman and Jonah Vitale-Wolff and located in upstate New York outside of Albany, the farm is committed to raising "life-giving food and act in solidarity with people marginalized by food apartheid" (Soul Fire Farm, <<http://www.soulfirefarm.com/meet-the-farmers/>>). Penniman began her career in farming and food activism as a teen participant of The Food Project based in Boston, Massachusetts. The husband-wife duo met later in their careers, forming Youth GROW, a year round urban agriculture-focused youth development and employment program for low-income teens in Worcester, Massachusetts (REC Worcester, <<http://www.recworcester.org/#!/youth-grow/c1thu>>). In addition to SFF's activities as a functioning farm, the organization contributes to the movements for food sovereignty and community self-determination through education initiatives that include the Black and Latino Farmers Immersion program, Volunteering program opportunities, Farming

Apprenticeship, Youth programming, International Solidarity activities and Activist Retreats. With initiatives in Haiti, Ghana and Brazil, SFF is a part of an international community of small farmers connecting anti-oppression work with food system advocacy.

In 2014, Soul Fire Farm partnered with the Freedom Food Alliance supporting the Victory Bus Project<sup>3</sup> with produce and providing a place to work and learn for young people enrolled in Project Growth – Albany County's new restorative justice program (Penniman, YesMagazine.org, Jan 28 2015). Youth convicted of theft would elect to take on an internship with SFF as an alternative to incarceration paying restitution to their victims while gaining farm skills. With a program curriculum that explores the connections between mass incarceration and food injustice, the youth are trained in farming and social justice.

#### 4.2.3 *Drive Change*

Founded by Jordyn Leyton, a former high school English teacher at Riker Islands correctional facility in New York City, Drive Change is a social enterprise aiming to broaden opportunities for young people coming out of adult jail and prison through a fleet of locally sourced food trucks. With New York being one of only two states that prosecute 16 and 17-year-olds as adults – sending them to prison instead of juvenile detention – re-entry programming is key to supporting youth branded by the criminal justice system (Kamin, Huffington Post, March 20 2013). Formerly incarcerated youth are trained to handle the cooking and business affairs of Snowday, Drive Change's first food truck.

Drive Change embraces social enterprise model to lower recidivism rates for youth with evidence-based practices and holistic approaches in an effort to transform lives. The organization's re-entry program aims "to lower the recidivism rate for program graduates from 70% to 20%, and to place 100% of program graduates into full-time employment or educational opportunities" (Kamin, Huffington Post, March 20 2013). Roy Waterman is the Director of Program for Drive Change. A common fixture at the Snowday food truck, he serves as Mentor and Head Chef to the 24 young people employed and empowered per year. Waterman's background as a formerly incarcerated entrepreneur, owning his own Caribbean soul food catering company, is fundamental not only in providing experience based support to youth in the program but as an example of success in social justice and entrepreneurship.

#### 4.2.4 *New York analysis*

Collectively, The BLK ProjeK, Soul Fire Farm and Drive Change serve a critical role in addressing systemic issues of poverty, hyper-incarceration, and community underdevelopment with food system interventions. Located in The South Bronx, upstate in Grafton, NY, and Manhattan respectively, each organization has acquired important gains within the specific microcosm of their region in New York. These three organizations are not necessarily partnered, in comparison to similar Boston-based organizations. The BLK Project is the personal mission of Tanya Fields, based on her experience as a Bronx community member receiving food stamps and not having the economic and geographical resources to access adequate food for her family. Fields was "saving my own life...

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<sup>3</sup> Freedom Food Alliance was established by Jalal Sabur, black farmer and prison abolitionist, in 2009 as a collective of farmers, political prisoners, and organizers in upstate New York who are committed to incorporating food justice to address racism in the criminal justice system. One of the Freedom Food Alliance's central efforts is Victory Bus Project, a program that reunites incarcerated people with their loved ones while increasing access to farm-fresh food.

[because] I know what [the community goes] through. This resonates with me and I want to do something to help them, and to help me" (Leonard, Grist.org, April 24 2012). As an African American woman, Fields entered food advocacy with negative reception. She states, "if my name was Lauren and I was from Wesleyan, and I was living in Brooklyn, there would be people coming out of the woodwork to help me" (Leonard, Grist.org, April 24 2012).

Soul Fire Farm has gained a reputation as an incubator and healing space for anti-oppression activists and exploited members of society. The organization is unapologetically positioned within the space of Black Liberation with revolutionary rhetoric infused into farm training through food sovereignty. The farm's location in Grafton, NY is an important feature to create the tranquility and space needed to run a 6 acres farm – land availability is not an issue as it is for urban agriculturalist Tanya Fields. Although SFF serves the needs of the immediate Albany community<sup>4</sup> and international partners, the farm's location separates the organization from the communities within the boroughs of New York City affected intensely by systemic oppression.

Drive Change is an important fixture in the social justice community in New York City. The organization has partnered with Black Lives Matter activist organizations geared at transforming the criminal justice sector. The mission of the organization is in direct alignment with the political push to "Raise the Age" in New York State, ending the practice of trying 16 and 17 year olds as adults. Although the farm-to-truck theme **does** address sustainability, the food truck's role does not directly speak to community food access issues. Drive Change is a supporter of food justice initiatives, but the organization's fundamental mission is to serve as a pragmatic re-entry program focused in breaking down barriers to create opportunities for formerly incarcerated teens.

## 5. Conclusion

As I am in the preliminary stages of this research project, I seem to have more questions than a firm conclusion. My focus on pragmatic Pan Africanism in community development and food system markets engage the importance of race, class, marginalization and autonomy in addressing the systemic underdevelopment of low income communities of color. Regarding my case study organizations: How are race, class, and gender dynamics addressed in organizational leadership and community engagement? How does the nonprofit industrial complex inhibit the creation of real change and autonomy for communities of color? Are there smaller community-food base social enterprise initiatives that are impactful but functioning under the radar?

The six organizations outlined have a profound impact on low income communities of African descent, but only three of the six organizations (Fresh Food Generation, BLK ProjeK, and Soul Fire Farm) are headed by African Americans – specifically women. These same three organizations also overtly engage with the historical and cultural aspects of Pan African communalism. But all six organizations function under an anti-oppression model of community building and engagement connecting with key themes of Revolutionary Intercommunalism and economic cooperativism. The three organizations founded and lead by white individuals are cross cultural, racial, class and gender with people of color and impacted communities members serving in important leadership positions (Board members, Managers and Directors).

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<sup>4</sup> Albany, 300,000 residents, 20 % black and Hispanic (14% and 6% respectively) 13.7% in Poverty , U.S. Census Bureau; generated by Lisa Betty; using Quick Facts; <<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/INC110213/00,36001,36005,36061>>; (9 September 2015); Alice P. Green, "What Have We Done? Mass Incarceration and the Targeting of Albany's Black Males by Federal, State, and Local Authorities" (Albany, NY: The Center for Law and Justice, Inc., October 2012), Web. 9 Sept 2015 <<http://www.cflj.org/cflj/what-have-we-done.pdf>>

My engagement with the dynamics of race, class and gender will be important features of my analysis, but community engagement, impact and economic growth will also serve an integral role in my exploration of social enterprise and entrepreneurship from communities that have been "locked up and locked out" (Alexander, 2012,pp.260).

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