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# Addressing Racism in Urban Agriculture: The Case for an Urban Agriculture Land Trust in Bridgeport, Connecticut

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Addressing Racism in Urban Agriculture: The Case for an Urban Agriculture Land Trust in

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Chelsea Gazillo

SIT Graduate Institute Capstone

July 2017

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## Abstract

Cities across the United States have started to adopt urban agriculture zoning ordinances which provide access to land and encourage food production in low-income black and brown communities. However, many cities fail to use an anti-racist lens in the creation and implementation of these policies. According to scholars and activists, anti-racist practices in urban agriculture zoning require that first, community organizations and policy makers co-create policy with black and brown communities and second, develop secure land tenure arrangements for urban agriculture. In this case study of the development of an urban agriculture zoning ordinance by the Bridgeport Connecticut Food Policy Council, I argue that neither of these two conditions have been met. Marginalized low-income black and brown community members who live within Bridgeport should lead in decision making, yet they are only minimally involved. Furthermore, anti-racist practice requires that food justice organizations understand and address the racial history of a place; however I have found that most are largely ignorant of this history. The city of Bridgeport has a legacy of using policies, such as redlining, to create an unequal division of wealth and access to resources including land. A secure form of land tenure would need to acknowledge this legacy, address the high cost of urban land, and remove land from the speculative market. This paper will argue that the Bridgeport Food Policy Council must promote equitable access to land for food production by developing a community land trust that is owned by marginalized nonwhite communities and protects public land from development. Without attention to these two key elements, this ordinance will not address the hardships many black and brown people experience when attempting to obtain access to land for food cultivation.

### Acknowledgments

I want to dedicate this paper to the fearless advocates working to bring social justice issues to the front and center of Bridgeport City politics. Your continuous dedication and tenacity were truly the inspiration for this paper. Organizations like Make the Road-CT, CT-CORE and Bridgeport Generation Now! are making a difference in a city that has often felt left out of economic development opportunities within the state. These organizations tirelessly fight for racial and economic justice and give the city a beautiful soul which makes Bridgeport the heart of Connecticut. Without the people who make these organizations outstanding, I would have been lost this past year. Many of the arguments made in this paper are influenced by the perspectives you brought into my life. I am beyond grateful for all of you. I hope my words will inspire you to continue fighting for change in Bridgeport; a city that remains a place for revolutionary love to thrive.

I would also like to dedicate this paper to my academic advisor, Rachel Slocum. Thank you for holding me to high standards and pushing me to think critically about my work during the past two years. Your work has truly inspired the trajectory of my career and will forever guide me on my path as an advocate for food justice. Your guidance was essential to this research.

To my friends, family and partner, I am grateful for the continual support and love you have given me these past two years. Thank you for editing countless drafts of this paper and other papers, and thanks for drinking bottles of wine and cider with me when I wanted to give up. Without you, this thesis would not have been possible.

"Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality" (Malcolm X, 1964 cited by Llorens, 1968, pg. 90).

## **I. Introduction**

Since the inception of the United States of America, black and brown<sup>1</sup> people have been denied ownership of land, hindering their freedom. Denial of ownership and dispossession prevents many black and brown communities from growing food in urban areas. Local food movement advocates argue that increasing urban agriculture<sup>2</sup> initiatives in low-income black and brown communities will reduce food insecurity<sup>3</sup> and provide individuals with access to land. Critics of the local food movement suggest that the root cause of food insecurity stems from the systemic disparities faced by low-income nonwhite communities. These reasons include racism, access to affordable housing, living wages, health care and land, among other things. Therefore, urban agriculture alone will not end high food insecurity rates in low-income black and brown

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term "black and brown people" instead of "people of color" throughout this paper for three reasons. First, a majority of black and brown interviewees in my research suggested I refrain from using the phrase "people of color." Second, the term "[d]iminishes the separate histories and stories of individual groups" (Baltimore Racial Justice Action, 2017 n.p.). The final reason I chose to use this term is "Color" "is a word packed with history, prejudice and confusion when it's used to describe someone's complexion as an indication of race or ethnicity" (Malesky, 2014, n.p.). Sparingly throughout this paper, I will also use the term Latinx. This term is used to describe people of Latin American descent. This term is a gender neutral word that replaces "Latino and Latina" (Ramirez and Blay, 2017). The term 'Black' is used to describe individuals who because of their race were and continue to be discriminated against by European descendants. The term became popular with 'Black Power Groups' (Modood, 1988) such as the Black Panthers.

<sup>2</sup> Bridgeport Food Policy Council defines urban agriculture as "farms and gardens that exist within city limits for the purposes of household consumption, commercial venture, and/or education, such as urban farms, community gardens, backyard gardens, and school gardens. Urban agriculture can include activities such as hydroponics, aquaponics, aquaculture, indoor farming, rooftop farming, beekeeping, flowers, livestock (i.e. chickens, grazing goats), composting, and use of accessory structures, such as hoop houses, greenhouses, cold frames, and sheds" (BFPC, 2017, n.p.).

<sup>3</sup> Food security can be defined as "[existing] when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2002). In 1995 the Community Food Security Empowerment Act expanded on this definition of food security to include "all persons obtaining at all times a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local non-emergency sources" (Community Food Security Empowerment Act, 1995 cited in Gottlieb and Fisher 1996. n.p.).

communities. Despite this fact, local food movement advocates continue to call for urban agricultural initiatives as a solution to food insecurity.

As a result of this advocacy, cities across the United States have started to adopt urban agriculture zoning ordinances that provide access to land and encourage food production in low-income black and brown communities. Many cities and organizations ignore the effect of structural racism<sup>4</sup> when creating and implementing these policies including the city of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The Bridgeport Food Policy Council (BFPC) is actively working to pass an urban agriculture zoning ordinance that local food advocates argue will promote food security within the city. Anti-racist practice in urban agriculture zoning requires that first, community organizations and policy makers co-create policy with black and brown communities and second, develop secure land tenure arrangements for urban agriculture. In this case study which provides an analysis of BFPC's efforts to pass an urban agriculture zoning ordinance, I argue that neither of these two conditions has been met.

Bridgeport has a legacy of using policies to create a racial hierarchy of wealth and access to resources, such as land. An anti-racist urban agriculture policy designed to provide secure land tenure needs to acknowledge this legacy and address the high cost of urban land by removing land from the speculative market. This paper argues that the Bridgeport Food Policy Council (BFPC) must promote equitable access to land for food production by developing a community land trust that is owned by black and brown communities and protects public land from development. Without attention to these two key elements, this ordinance will not address the

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<sup>4</sup> Structural Racism “refers to the ways in which social structures and institutions, over time, perpetuate and produce cumulative, durable, race-based inequalities. This can occur even in the absence of racist intent on the part of individuals (Harper and Holt-Giménez, 2016, n.p.).



wealth inequality many black and brown people experience when trying to access land for food cultivation.

Through the course of my research, the need to acknowledge these two issues has become clear. The creation of an urban agriculture zoning ordinance, while providing short-term land tenure for city residents, does not remedy the lack of long-term access to land for black and brown people. In order for the BFPC to practice “food justice” in the development of urban agriculture land tenure policies, advocates and community organizations must create viable ways for black and brown people to have access to land. Food justice entails confronting the structural reasons for inequality in the food system, the parameters of which I define later. Urban agriculture practitioners in Bridgeport must practice food justice when implementing new policies that will affect black and brown communities.

For many Bridgeport residents, community gardens and urban farms have been identified by the BFPC as an affordable option for obtaining fresh and nutritious foods during the summer growing season. However, many residents do not own land or homes and are dependent on city-owned plots to cultivate produce to feed their families. In response to the need for community gardens and farm space within the city, the BFPC has proposed a policy that would protect land tenure<sup>5</sup> through a zoning amendment. This policy change would create a new city zone designated to protect plots of land for urban agriculture initiatives. If the policy is adopted, the council would work with the city’s Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) in identifying new plots of land that could be used for urban agriculture initiatives. In addition, the council would draft an ordinance to the city’s charter that outlines who is responsible for

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<sup>5</sup> Land tenure is defined as “ the relationship that individuals and groups hold with respect to land and land-based resources, such as trees, minerals, pastures, and water. Land tenure rules define the ways in which property rights to land are allocated, transferred, used, or managed in a particular society (U.S.A.I.D., 2017)

maintaining community gardens and urban farms within the city (Bridgeport Food Policy Council, 2017). Due to the stark income inequality that is apparent in Bridgeport and out of the context described above, I developed my research question for this inquiry: How can the Bridgeport Food Policy Council address issues of racial and class inequity in the design and implementation of a new zoning ordinance that would regulate and protect Urban Agriculture within the city?

In this capstone, I first outline the methodology I used while conducting qualitative research. Second, I examine the relationship among systemic racism, the food system and urban agricultural policy. This includes a detailed history of how Bridgeport's neighborhoods became racialized. I then take a critical look at the approaches made by the BFPC in creating new food system policies. Finally, I provide an analysis of how the BFPC can support creating and implementing new policies that promote racial equity within the city.

## **II. Methodology**

My research question asks how the Bridgeport Food Policy Council might implement an equitable urban agriculture policy which is mindful of the historical policies that have upheld and perpetuated systemic racism within the city. I used a mixed-methods approach to this research, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. I conducted an intrinsic case study, which is the study of a person, place, organization, specific group, department or occupation (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, 2010) with the intention of understanding how urban agricultural policies in Bridgeport can accomplish food justice goals (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

During my time serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA member with the Bridgeport Food Policy Council, I collected data and conducted interviews. This capstone also reflects my

participation with Bridgeport Generation Now!, Connecticut - Community Organizing for Racial Equity (CT-CORE) and my experience as an intern with the Food Chain Workers Alliance. I used participant observation as part of the research for this capstone. Participant-as-observer is a research method in which the researcher participates in the activities in the research setting (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). The participants in this inquiry were completely aware of my position as a graduate student and AmeriCorps member. In addition, over the course of two months, I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews, using a set of seven questions to help guide each interview. This method allowed me the freedom to ask additional questions if the interviewee gave an answer which encouraged further elaboration and deeper understanding of the subject. These interviews were conducted with city planners, food justice advocates, a state senator from Bridgeport, a community gardener, a community farmer, and academics who are food justice experts. The organizations and positions of my interview subjects consisted of the following participants and organizations (outlined below in Table 1) :

**Table 1: List of Research Participants and Organizations**

Participant's Occupation	Organization	Participant's Location
Executive Director	Green Village Initiative	Bridgeport, CT
Head Farmer	Green Village Initiative	Bridgeport, CT
President and Community Gardener	Bridgeport Community Land Trust	Bridgeport, CT
City Planner	City of Bridgeport, Office of Planning and Economic Development	Bridgeport, CT
Community Organizer and Food Solutions New England (FSNE) Leadership Institute Alumni	Connecticut-Community Organizing for Racial Equity (CT-CORE)	Bridgeport, CT
Connecticut State Senator and CT Ambassador for FSNE	Connecticut State Senate	Bridgeport, CT
Senior Research Program Director	Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future- Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD

Assistant Professor and Director of Sustainability and Environmental Studies	Hamline University	St. Paul, MN
Council Director	Oakland Food Policy Council	Oakland, CA
Policy Associate	Los Angeles Food Policy Council	Los Angeles, CA
Urban Agriculture Working Group Chair	Los Angeles Food Policy Council	Los Angeles, CA
Open Space Specialist	City of Pittsburgh Planning Department	Pittsburgh, PA
Food Policy and Open Space Intern	City of Pittsburgh Planning Department	Pittsburgh, PA
Policy and Advocacy Director	Just Food	New York, NY

The methodology for this inquiry is based on the principles of participatory action research, which “aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science, simultaneously” (Gilmore, Krantz, and Ramirez, 1986, p.161 cited in Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). With this in mind, I attempted to include as many viewpoints of Bridgeport residents as time allowed. I selected and interviewed food policy council experts who work with councils that actively address issues of racial inequity within their local food system. This included interviewing planning departments that have created specific positions to analyze and implement food system policies. Many of the interviewees are individuals whose work I have admired and followed as a fellow food justice advocate.

Countless hours of one-on-one conversation with community members, food justice advocates and city officials who work in the city of Bridgeport, the New England region, and around the United States were an integral part of this research. I also drew on historical documentation and archival records that were provided to me by the Bridgeport History Center

located in the Bridgeport Public Library. These resources provided a broad historical context of previous policies that helped create Bridgeport's current socio-economic climate. This was essential to identify policies that led to racial inequity within the city.

In addition to a comprehensive literature review, which analyzed existing materials relevant to food policy councils, urban agriculture, and food justice, I also looked into alternative publications that critique the dominant literature written about urban agriculture practices. These publications catalog the many socioeconomic and ecological benefits associated with community gardens and urban farms. I conducted this research using an anti-racist lens, which I applied to the questions I asked participants and incorporated in the final results of this inquiry. I used an anti-racist lens to see how racism influences black and brown people's access to resources, opportunities, rights representation, and respect that society grants (Lee, 1998).

For the purposes of this research, I drew heavily on the assigned reading from my Theory and Practice of Sustainable Development course and Issues of Sustainable Development course, which was completed during my studies at SIT Graduate Institute. The readings given in each of these courses contributed to development of an anti-racist lens that shaped the conceptual framework used for the methodology of this capstone. Literature provided in these courses assisted me in effectively employing an anti-racist lens in my review of the alternative food movement. Peer reviewed articles include the work by the following scholars: Dr. Rachel Slocum, Dr. Valentine Cadieux, Dr. Kristen Reynold, Dr. Julie Guthman and Dr. Eric Holt-Giménez. Finally, the following literature review reflects many of the resources provided during my coursework at SIT Graduate Institute.

### **III. Lessons Learned in Good Food Policy Practices**

In this literature review, I draw on critical social science and NGO scholar work that discusses four key topics: food policy councils, food justice, racism in the food system, and contradictions within urban agriculture initiatives that are relevant to this case study.

The current U.S. food system was created by corporate entities that neglected environmental, social and economic justice issues (Holt-Giménez, 2011). To address this neglect, local food policy councils (FPCs) have emerged as food system governing bodies composed of representatives from different sectors of the food system. FPCs hold the power to create policy recommendations that influence local, state and regional food systems. In the past decade, they have worked with policy makers to focus on developing and implementing urban agriculture zoning ordinances that protect agricultural activities from urban development. Many FPCs use the term “food justice” in the creation of new policies that will influence food access in black and brown communities. However, organizations often fail to confront the systemic reasons why low-income, black and brown individuals do not have access to healthy, fresh and affordable food. This failure includes neglecting to recognize policies which have perpetuated inequities that are directly connected to systemic racism.

This literature review explore how food policy councils can adopt a food justice perspective in the creation, development and implementation of policies aimed at protecting urban agricultural initiatives. I will explore why it is necessary to have a critical analysis of racism in urban agriculture policy and programming. For the purposes of this capstone, I will use the following definition for the term racism - “the systematic mistreatment of people based on their ethnicity or skin color — affects all aspects of our society, including our food system...

racism is not simply attitudinal prejudice or individual acts, but a historical legacy that privileges one group of people over others” (Holt-Giménez and Harper, 2016). Systemic racism is a root cause of poverty, hunger and malnutrition (Holt-Giménez and Harper, 2016). I will incorporate the lessons learned for addressing systemic racism in the food system identified within this literature review into the final analysis of the research presented in the paper.

This literature also discusses how racist policies have upheld income inequities and access to resources for low-income marginalized communities of color. The first section provides a critique of food policy councils (FPCs). I then answer how racist policies have created and maintained systemic inequities within our food system. Finally, I will provide a detailed analysis of how scholars and academics have portrayed urban agriculture initiatives across the United States.

### **A. Food Policy Councils**

Policies that address food system planning are important to fully support strong local food systems (McCabe and Burke, 2013; Treuhaft and Karpyn; 2010). FPCs are entities that consist of representatives from not for profit organizations, government officials, and other stakeholders who represent many aspects of the food system (Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon and Lambrick, 2009). They provide a unique opportunity for urban communities to promote structural changes in regional food systems (Purifoy, 2014; Clancy, Hammer, and Lippoldt, 2007; Sadler, Arku, and Gilliland, 2015). FPCs are forums for participants to work together and coordinate actions that will affect state, local and regional food systems and policies (Clancy, Hammer, and Lippoldt, 2007; Sadler, Arku, and Gilliland, 2015). They offer a holistic and integrated approach to food policy, which has traditionally been implemented in a

“piecemeal fashion” (Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon and Lambrick, 2009). Many councils tend to create food programming and development instead of policy initiatives that will improve state, regional and local food systems (Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon and Lambrick, 2009; Clayton, Frattaroli, Palmer and Pollack, 2015; Schiff, 2008). However, FPCs that do create food systems policies focus their efforts on improving affordable access to healthy and nutritious foods for low-income residents (Copen and Cuneo, 2014; Santo, Young, and Palmer, 2014).

One of the main failings of FPCs is that they neglect to include black and brown communities, youth, and residents of low-income neighborhoods in the decision making processes and meetings (McCullagh and Santo, 2012; Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon and Lambrick, 2009). Despite efforts to include diverse community members, many councils have found it challenging to recruit individuals who represent the demographics of the community they serve (McCullagh and Santo, 2012; Coplin and Cuneo, 2015). Conversely, members of FPCs that do represent marginalized citizens, such as youth, sometimes feel that they can only speak in regard to a certain sector of the food system and do not feel comfortable speaking up in front of professionals who are well-versed in food system issues (McCullagh and Santo, 2012; Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon and Lambrick, 2009). Slocum and Cadieux (2016) argue that FPCs perpetuate stereotypes that dominate the alternative food movement such as the idea that failure to eat well is a moral failing and make “African-American and Latino people show up in the food system through reference to pathological conditions (obesity, unemployment)” (pg. 11).



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines low-income black and brown neighborhoods that lack healthy food choices as “food deserts”. Food desert is a term used by the USDA to define a geographic area “where either a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store” (Gallagher, 2011). In this capstone, I use the term “food apartheid” to describe “food deserts”. Many activists have argued that this term suggests communities defined as “food deserts” are completely lacking or “dry” of food; however, often these neighborhoods have been segregated from an equitable food system, which is not reflected in this term. Using the term “food apartheid” suggests that neighborhoods are not barren of food but instead have systematically been denied access to equitable, local, affordable and healthy food options (Penniman, 2017).

Not only do many FPCs lack representation from black and brown communities, but most rarely frame their work using a social justice perspective (Purifoy, 2014). Instead many councils focus their efforts on increasing affordable food access to low-income communities citing the issue of food access as a public health crisis. However, this perspective fails to look at food insecurity as an economic justice issue (McClintock, Wooten and Brown, 2012; Purifoy, 2014). To understand the relationship between racial equity and the food movement, it is crucial to do a historical analysis of race in the food system (Burke and Spiller, 2015) and apply a social justice framework to the policy work being performed by FPCs (Purifoy, 2014). Food policy councils should provide a platform to “amplify the voices of underserved communities that have traditionally had limited access to power” (Harper, et. al, 2009, pg. 44). FPCs have the ability to demand that black and brown communities and low-income communities be included in the development and implementation of food policies (such as urban agriculture zoning ordinances)

which improve local food systems and potentially the environment (Purifoy, 2014). Purifoy (2014) argues that social justice must be the focus and mission of FPCs or they risk replicating the same race and class inequities found in many historical policy efforts. For food policy councils to practice food justice, practitioners and advocates need to confront the systemic reasons why low-income black and brown communities do not have access to healthy food options.

The next section focuses on academic literature that supports the need for urban agriculture initiatives across the United States as a means to remedy environmental degradation and bring economic and social opportunities to cities.

### **B. Benefits and Critiques of Urban Agriculture**

Some scholars have argued that urban agriculture can provide low-income communities with social, health, economic, and environmental benefits (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016). Urban agriculture has been linked to increasing access to healthy affordable food in low-income, marginalized communities that lack supermarkets and other food retailers, improving social capital, creating opportunities for job development and aiding in making communities resilient to climate change (Bellows, Brown, and Smit, 2003; Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016; Hagey, Rice, and Flournoy, 2012; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; McClintock, 2010). Further assets associated with urban agriculture initiatives include: growing and selling culturally appropriate foods, (Hagey, Rice, and Flournoy, 2012), opportunities for community organizing and civic engagement (McIvor and Hale, 2015, Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016), access to land (Golden, 2013), decreased crime rates, increased chances for diverse community members to establish interpersonal relationships with one another and providing constructive educational initiatives for

youth (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016, pg.5). Environmental benefits include increasing rainwater drainage, reducing the risk of flooding, groundwater contamination, and depletion of groundwater levels (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016; Golden 2013).

Across the United States, many FPCs focus on the need for municipal governments to incorporate urban agriculture into city planning efforts (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016). Cities such as Pittsburgh, PA have developed food system planning positions which are housed within the city planning departments. FPC's argue that municipal governments need to support urban agriculture initiatives as a means to secure more land for food production and protect land tenure. In addition, advocates argue that city governments have the power to ensure access to basic gardening commodities such as compost, soil, water and technical assistance (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). Many FPCs have cited urban agriculture as a way to increase levels of political and civic engagement (McIvor and Hale, 2015; Hagey, Rice, and Flournoy, 2012). However, many urban agriculture organizations fail to acknowledge the contradictions that urban agriculture initiatives have created for black and brown communities (McClintock, 2014; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; Havens and Roman Alcala, 2016).

A number of scholars have critiqued the motives of well-intentioned white-led urban agriculture initiatives that are located in black and brown communities. The following provides four critiques of urban agriculture initiatives failing to create social and economic benefits for black and brown communities.

First-- Urban agriculture initiatives led by young, white, non-residents in communities of color often fail to promote black and brown people into leadership positions (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016; McClintock, 2014; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). This racial dimension of urban

agriculture organizations receives little attention as those led by educated white residents are seen as ‘helping’ black and brown communities. People in these communities often mistrust urban agriculture groups that are designated as 501(c)3s and are driven by middle class, white, young “hipsters” (Reynolds and and Cohen, 2016). Mainstream media outlets tend to focus on urban agriculture initiatives that are being led by middle-class, white people (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). Slocum (2006) sees this process as the capacity of whiteness to expand and strengthen not through discrimination but through good intentions or, the process of ‘bringing good food to others’ via urban agriculture and farmers markets.

Second-- Many leading white urban agriculture practitioners fail to challenge existing power structures (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016), which can lead to community mistrust (McIvor and Hale, 2015). Many activists and practitioners claim focusing on these structural inequalities can seem daunting and hard to put into practice (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). Often urban agriculture organizations with white-led boards whose participants hold highly skilled positions (e.g. lawyers, accountants, doctors etc.) have many connections to wealthy often white funders and government support (Reynolds and Cohen, 2015). Conversely, urban agricultural projects that are led by low-income black and brown communities often experience unequal access to land, government funding, and political support (including being informed on policy decisions and potentially governmental grant opportunities) compared to their white counterparts that are leading similar efforts (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016).

Third-- Frequently urban agricultural initiatives adhere to neoliberal ideology, which praises individual initiatives over collective action and large systemic changes that challenge the

privatization of the industrial food system (Allen and Guthman 2006; Guthman, 2008; Brown and Getz, 2008; McClintock, 2010, 2013; Holt-Giménez, 2011; Sbicca, 2012; McIvor and Hale 2015). Scholars argue that a majority of civic engagement associated with urban agriculture initiatives are controlled within an “individualistic, consumption-oriented framework that cannot adequately challenge the dominance of industrial agriculture or achieve food or social justice” (McIvor and Hale, 2015, pg. 730). Urban agriculture initiatives often experience outcomes that further feed into the industrial food system that uphold capitalist ideologies (McClintock, 2013), which contradicts the intentions of many alternative food movement activists in attempting to challenge the industrial food complex (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; McIvor and Hale, 2015 and McClintock, Cooper and Khandeshi, 2013).

Fourth-- Municipal governments and real estate developers have acknowledged urban agriculture's potential to create beautification in low-income neighborhoods, thus increasing property values, tax revenue and improving the overall economy (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; McIvor and Hale, 2015) factors which are associated with gentrification (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016). Urban agriculture advocates must confront the fact that urban agriculture has been linked to the gentrification of low-income, black and brown neighborhoods (Kim, Palmer, and Santo, 2016; McClintock, 2014; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016) before promoting zoning ordinances that protect urban agricultural initiatives in these neighborhoods (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). Unfortunately, this has not stopped a majority of white led urban agriculture organizations from implementing new community gardens and farms in low-income black and brown communities. Finally, racist policies have created inequity that furthers racial disparities within the United States food system, which I discuss further in the next section.

### **C. Racist Policies that created the U.S. Food System**

Policies such as “school policies, land policies and institutional discrimination, farm bill policies, social security and wage policies” (Giancattarino and Noor, 2014, pg. 5) have continued to favor white residents over non-white individuals. Racism in the food system has been established through a long history of local, state and federal policies that were intentionally developed to economically and socially oppress black and brown communities. The following section looks at policies such as redlining that have denied black and brown individuals access to homeowner’s loans. Also, land use policies developed by the United States federal government have resulted in dwindling amounts of farmland owned and operated by non white-citizens. Federal legislation, such as the Farm Bill, controls the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) or food stamps. This program grants low-income individuals with a monthly food stipend and has remained stagnant for decades despite the need to meet the evenly increasing food prices. Additionally, a majority of food chain workers in the United States are black and brown individuals who work for low wages. This is a direct result of policies created to keep black and brown individuals in low paying food chain jobs. I dig deeper into how these policies have fostered racial inequity within the United States food system.

Redlining was the practice of denying bank loans for mortgages to black and brown people and it was used to segregate black and brown communities into inner city neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2017). The practice was started in 1934 by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) program. The HOLC program was criticized for denying black and brown residents equal access to home mortgages, often offering sub-prime loans that came with unusually severe terms (Rothstein, 2017). The

federal government insured private mortgages, which resulted in lower interest rates and a decline in the amount owed for the down payment to purchase a new home (Coates, 2014). The following quote further details the practice of redlining:

“On the maps, green areas, rated “A,” indicated “in demand” neighborhoods that, as one appraiser put it, lacked “a single foreigner or Negro.” These neighborhoods were considered excellent prospects for insurance. Neighborhoods where black people lived were rated “D” and were usually considered ineligible for FHA backing. They were colored in red. Neither the percentage of black people living there nor their social class mattered. Black people were viewed as a contagion. Redlining went beyond FHA-backed loans and spread to the entire mortgage industry, which was already rife with racism, excluding black people from most legitimate means of obtaining a mortgage” (Coates, 2014, n.p.).

As Ta Nehisi Coates shows, redlining has led to racial and class inequality by denying black and brown people access to home ownership, which hinder many non-white families from gaining home equity (Giancattarino and Noor, 2014; Reynolds and Cohen, 2016).

Federal land policies and program denied black and brown people land ownership opportunities that were available to their white counterparts. The federal government’s creation of early land use policies such as President Andrew Johnson’s “states rights” based reconstruction policies, resulted in sharecropping (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012). Sharecropping was the federal government prohibiting black farmers from owning property and as a result they were forced to rent land from white landlords. Many black farmers at this time experienced unfair terms and agreements (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012). The USDA and Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loan Distribution Program have made it difficult for black and brown people and women to own farmland (Carpenter, 2002; Giancattarino and Noor, 2014; Ayazi, and Elsheikh, 2016). The rate of “black land-loss” can be attributed to Jim Crow, racist practices conducted by the USDA and decades of farm busts (Holt-Giménez and Harper, 2016). Specifically, the USDA lending programs “prohibit[ted] discrimination, the structure for the election of FSA county, area, and local committees that decide who receive loans and under what terms facilitates

continued racial discrimination” (Ayazi, and Elsheikh, 2016, pg. 56). As a result of these policies today, black and brown individuals own less than two million acres of land in the United States and this number continues to decline (Carpenter, 2002).

The Farm Bill is responsible for controlling many sectors of the U.S. Food system. Since the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s, the farm bill has encouraged the concentration of property ownership in the food system. The long-term shift from the subsidization of production and consumption to the subsidization of agribusiness has structurally positioned low-income communities and black and brown communities on the losing side of such shifts (Ayazi and Elsheikh, 2016, pg. 11.) The Farm Bill also regulates SNAP a program that provides governmental assistance to low-income communities. Although food stamps are preferable to food banks, the amount of money issued to SNAP recipients is inadequate to ensure food security. Many low-income individuals who are dependent on SNAP benefits are low level food chain workers (Food Chain Workers Alliance and Solidarity Research Center, 2016).

A majority of low level food chain positions are held by black and brown individuals who are often paid low wages and work in harsh conditions (Allen, 2016; Food Chain Workers Alliance, 2012). In the 1930’s President Roosevelt signed the New Deal creating the National Labor Relations Act that provided labor regulations to farmers, the unemployed, youth and the elderly. The protections included the right to participate in organized unions (Food Chain Workers Alliance and Solidarity Research Center, 2016; Penniman, 2017). At the time jobs that were overwhelmingly held by “black workers such as agricultural and domestic work were intentionally left out of the laws” (Food Chain Workers Alliance and Solidarity Research Center, 2016, pg. 7). Today, food chain jobs, which include production, processing, distribution, retail,



and service position's continue to be overwhelmingly held by black and brown individuals. Many non-white individuals remain in frontline positions, while a majority of food chain CEOs are white (Food Chain Workers Alliance and Solidarity Research Center, 2016). Finally, economic policies that have kept the federal and state minimum wage and subminimum wage (for tip workers) stagnant for nearly twenty-five years (Restaurant Workers Opportunity Center, 2016; Economic Policy Institute, 2015) have kept many black and brown people working in the food chain reliant on public assistance programs (Food Chain Workers Alliance and Solidarity Research Center, 2016). As a result of these economic policies, many low-income food chain workers remain in poverty, reliant on charity and public assistance programs.

#### **IV. Research Site**

##### **A. The History of Racism in Bridgeport**

The following section will provide an in-depth analysis of historical policies that created racial disparities in Bridgeport. Food justice advocates argue practitioners must understand historical policies which have led to white people having power over resources, such as land before implementing new food systems policies.

Prior to European colonization the area now occupied by the city of Bridgeport was home to the Paugussett Native Americans of the Pequannock native tribe (Brilvitch, 2007). The tribe maintained two main villages within what are now Bridgeport city limits. The Paugussett tribe valued agriculture and their main settlements were located on fertile flat land. Between 1497 and 1795, European settlers committed genocide against the Native Americans and stripped them of land ownership (Brilvitch, 2007).

Between 1823 and 1932, the process of withholding land from Native Americans continued with two major federal policies. This began in 1823 when the United States supreme court ruled indigenous people can live within the United States but could not hold property titles because European settlers' "right to discovery" trumped indigenous peoples' "right of occupancy" (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012). In 1887 the Dawes Act confiscated land and distributed it to indigenous people who were promised citizenship as long as they accepted the land apportioned by the U.S. government (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012). In 1932, the United States government breaks part of this promise and Native Americans lost over 100 million acres of land they owned prior to the U.S. federal government passing the Dawes Act (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012). These policies show how land was stripped from Native American communities through federal legislation. This set the precedents for the U.S. government to continue creating and implementing land ownership policies that favored white settlers compared to those who were brown or black, especially Native Americans.

The slave trade drove much of Connecticut's economy prior to the Civil War which established the state as a place economically driven by cheap and free labor. Like other northern states, Connecticut gradually phased out slavery, emancipating those who were born to slaves in 1784. 1848 was the final, official emancipation when the state became the last in New England to outlaw the practice (Tisdale, 2017). However, prior to the Civil War many black individuals fled to Bridgeport because the city's South End neighborhood was seen as a place blacks, including free slaves, could prosper (Tisdale, 2017). This area of the city remained a predominantly black neighborhood for the next hundred years.

The economic disparity between different neighborhoods in Bridgeport – often correlated with the racial composition of each neighborhood – was not created by chance. Racial disparity is a product of public policy: “Today’s residential segregation in the North, South, Midwest and West is not the unintended consequences of individual choices and of otherwise well-meaning law or regulations but of unhidden public policy that explicitly segregated every metropolitan area in the United States” (Rothstein, 2017, Pg. VIII). These “unhidden public policies” have influenced the socio-economic makeup of Bridgeport’s diverse neighborhoods. As my literature review demonstrates redlining policies shaped the racial geography of many cities across the United States including Bridgeport, thus creating a divide in resources and shaping current urban agriculture initiatives within the city.

During World War I and World War II economic opportunities in Bridgeport were abundant for new immigrants and white people. Similar to most cities in the U.S. during this time period, many Irish and Italian immigrants moved to Bridgeport in search of work. Conversely, black and brown people who lived within the city were not granted access to the same jobs as their immigrant and white counterparts (Tisdale, 2017). As immigrants assimilated, black and brown residents remained marginalized and were denied many of the economic opportunities available to those who were seen as white (Personal Correspondence, 2017). In the case of Bridgeport, historical census records reveal that home ownership within the city has consistently remained something readily acquired by white residents, often leaving those who have been labeled as non-white forced to rent homes.

According to the 1930 Census, the total population of Bridgeport was 146,716 people. The demographic breakdown by race included: 102,566 of people identified as native white

(70%), 40,756 people identified as non-native white (28%), and 3,314 of people identified as black (2%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 1930). The population of black individuals within Bridgeport remained steady until after World War II, when the total population of Bridgeport rose from 147,121 to 158,709 by 1950. This included an increase in black residents from 3,767 people to 6,748 people. It is important to note that while the populations of both black residents and white residents increased post-World War II, the number of homes owned by black people remained constant. According to the 1940 Census, there were 40,233 dwellings in the city; of the 10,191 homes that were owner occupied, 10,063 were owned by whites (25%), while only 128 of homes were owned by black residents (.3%). (U.S. Census Bureau, 1940). By 1960, the number of housing units in Bridgeport had increased to 51,654; 20,075 of homes were owner occupied (39%), 19,256 were owned by whites (38%), while the remaining 819 of homes were owned by black residents (1.5%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950). These Census Bureau statistics shows that while the number of houses owned and occupied by residents in Bridgeport nearly doubled, the percentage of homes owned by non-white residents remained low in comparison, which meant many non-white residents were renting homes, often from white landlords. As a direct result of policies that prevented many non-white residents from owning property, black and brown individuals in Bridgeport lacked access to land for food cultivation.

Racial segregation within the housing sector was apparent not just for those who owned homes, but also those who lived in public housing developments. While Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was designed to “provide housing to white, middle-class, lower-middle-class families,” (Rothstein, 2017, n.p.), black and brown people and other minority groups were left out of the development of public housing. Many early housing developments

were built exclusively for white people (Rothstein, 2017). For example, a 1919 public housing project, which is still standing in the city's South End neighborhood, was constructed by the U.S. Housing Corporation (USHC) for the city's white families who were working in war-related jobs (Rothstein, 2017). However, after the Great Depression, the racial demographics within public housing shifted as the United States started looking into public housing options for all Americans, especially those who were working in factories. In 1937, the United States Housing Act created the National Public Housing Program "to remedy insanitary [sic] conditions and address the acute shortage of decent and safe workforce housing" (Housing Authority of Bridgeport, 2013, pg. 7).

The National Public Housing Program created opportunities for low-income black families to move into public housing developments. In 1939, Bridgeport broke ground on Father Panik Village, the first public housing development in New England (Lavoie, 1994; Rierden, 1993). The development opened in 1941 with the hope of moving immigrants who were living in "slum" living conditions into high-rises that would provide temporary stable housing for factory workers (Lavoie, 1994). The 40-acre complex was built to house nearly 5,000 people in 46 three-story buildings (Lavoie, 1994). Like many housing complexes, the development was at first a place that brought together residents of diverse backgrounds, including immigrants from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe (Housing Authority of Bridgeport, 2013). Residents who grew up at Father Panik remember a place that was well maintained, with small community garden plots adjacent to many of the buildings (Lavoie, 1994; Rierden, 1993). During the 1950s blacks and Puerto Ricans started to occupy the units of Father Panik and by 1969, it is reported that the

housing infrastructure began to drastically decay, including an increase in crime-related activities (Housing Authority of Bridgeport, 2013).

The increased number of black residents who moved into Father Panik Village, a low-income housing development after World War II did not happen by coincidence. Shortly after the construction of Father Panik many returned veterans in Bridgeport were granted access to the GI Bill, also known as Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. The GI Bill gave government-guaranteed mortgages to veterans to help them become homeowners in suburban areas (Rothstein, 2017). As a result, white veterans across the nation moved their families into wealthy suburbs. In Connecticut, many white soldiers who returned from the war were able to afford homes in Bridgeport's wealthy neighboring suburban towns of Trumbull and Fairfield. Conversely, veterans of color were denied the benefits of the GI Bill - often they did not even apply to the Veterans Administration for GI benefits because they were aware that "these applications were rejected on account of their race" (Rothstein, 2017, pg. XI). Without access to the mortgage assistance provided by the GI Bill, a number of black veterans remained in Bridgeport. Many could not afford to buy homes in the city without mortgages and thus were not able to build capital as property owners unlike their white counterparts who fled Bridgeport and were able to buy land (Tisdale, 2017; Rothstein, 2017).

In the 1970s, industry started to slowly move out of Bridgeport. As this shift continued, Father Panik Village became a "blighted" part of Bridgeport. By the 1980s, the housing development became the primary distribution point for crack cocaine within New England (Housing Authority of Bridgeport, 2013). The crack epidemic predominantly affected black and brown people and led to mass incarceration for many users (Interviewee M, 2017). As a result,

the community gardens and beautification efforts started to disappear from Father Panik, - the city began tearing down the project in 1986. Father Panik village closed permanently in 1994 (Lavoie, 1994).

Today, Bridgeport remains the largest city in Connecticut and is situated in one of the state's wealthiest counties. The city is home to roughly 141,000 people. The demographics of the population consist roughly of 40% White, 35% Black or African-American, and 38% Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). According to a 2016 DataHaven Fairfield County Wellness report, most black and brown people that live in Fairfield County are located within Bridgeport. Within the city, the racial division of neighborhoods is starkly apparent, especially in wealthier neighborhoods such as Black Rock, where most residents are white, compared with the East End and South End which have remained low-income and a majority of the population are black and brown people (Participant observation, 2017).

The percentage of homes in Bridgeport that are owned by black and brown residents is still relatively low compared to homes owned by white individuals. As this section shows, the city's racial demographics have shifted dramatically over the last 80 years. However, the percentage of homes owned by black and brown people has remained low. According to the 2010 Census, 51,255 homes were occupied within the city. Of these, 21,822 were owner-occupied. The breakdown of demographics of owner-occupied homes is as follows: 5,886 home were owned by African-Americans (9%), 1,188 were owned by Asian-Americans (2%), and 5,463 homes were owned by Latinx individual (11%). This compares with the 9,012 (18%) of homes owned by white families. This does not include the percentage of individuals who are currently renting homes. Nearly fifty-seven percent of homes in Bridgeport are occupied by

renters and eighty-three percent of these renters identify with a race other than white (U.S. Census 2015). In recent history, when the 2008 financial crisis swept the nation, black and brown residents were disproportionately displaced from homes and were given mortgages lenders knew they would default on as compared to white counterparts (Blinder, 2014).

Today, the effects of redlining are still evident within Bridgeport, nearly 60 years after Congress signed the Civil Rights Act. Bridgeport remains one of the poorest cities in Connecticut. The history of land ownership in the city is long, complex and, much like other post-industrial cities around the United States, filled with a legacy of racial oppression. This includes policies implemented to racially segregate Bridgeport and allow systemic racism to thrive within the city and the greater Fairfield County area. As a result, housing discrimination within the city is still prevalent, 40 years after the United States Congress signed the Fair Housing Act. The legacy of these historical policies has had a direct effect on black and brown communities in the city. Bridgeport city government policy commissions, such as the Bridgeport Food Policy Council, are attempting to redress this legacy by creating new policies that would create land tenure for Bridgeport's black and brown communities.

### **B. The Bridgeport Food Policy Council (BFPC)**

The following section will provide the history of the BFPC and political barriers that the council faces in passing new food policies with the Bridgeport city government. This information is important to understanding the challenges that food policy advocates in the city have faced when advocating for new food policies. If the BFPC wants to pass new urban agriculture policies, a strategic advocacy plan that accounts for these barriers must be created.



The Bridgeport Food Policy Council is a city commission established in 2012 to make municipal food policy recommendations to the Bridgeport City Council. BFPC was established by a city ordinance to address high food insecurity rates and the lack of healthy, affordable foods in neighborhoods that the Bridgeport Health and Human Services Department (BHHS) defines as “food deserts.” The mission of the council is to make sure that “every Bridgeport resident has easy access to, skills to prepare, and desire to consume healthy, mostly local foods. Bridgeport food access is driven by Bridgeport residents and opportunities for livable wage job creation” (Bridgeport Food Policy Council, 2015). One of the council’s goals is to combat food insecurity within the city.

In response to food insecurity within the city, the BHHS and Southern Connecticut State University partnered to understand the needs of the city’s East End residents, who live in a food apartheid. The partnership resulted in the creation of REACH 2020 program, whose goal was to “achieve health equity by erasing racism in the city’s East End” (Bridgeport Food Policy Council, 2015, pg. 7). The results of a Community Needs Assessment conducted by the group highlighted the high incidence of obesity and diabetes in the East End. In response to these health disparities the group prioritized the creation of a food policy council. In 2012 a city ordinance was created that established the Bridgeport Food Policy Council as an advisory board to the Bridgeport City Council on food systems policies. The council has outlined five major goals to concentrate policy efforts on; these goals include the following:

- To improve the availability of healthy fresh food for all city residents;
  - To improve food distribution channels into and within the city of Bridgeport; and
  - To generate growth and employment in the food sector; and
  - To support regional farmers, strengthen regional linkages and increase urban food production; and
  - To seize opportunities to reduce and recapture waste into the food stream.
- (Bridgeport Food Policy Council, 2015, n.p.)

The council's first project was designed to meet the goals listed above by purchasing refrigeration units for three of the corner stores located in the city's East End. The refrigeration units were supplied with fresh produce. This was part of BFPC "Healthy Corner Store Initiative". Within months, a few of the refrigeration units broke down and the store owners did not have the financial resources to fix the units. It was unclear if the city should pay for repairs. Store owners also were not properly trained as to when to discard produce which had spoiled. As the literature suggests, the BFPC failure to adopt a policy which would change healthy food options in the East End, instead concentrating on programming initiatives, is a mistake made by many food policy councils. Another mistake the BFPC made was recruiting diverse membership that represented the Bridgeport community to hold seats on the council.

Recruiting new members for the council has proven to be difficult, and currently both of the community members who were appointed by the mayor and have voting power are white. The council consists of nine voting members and an advisory board. The nine voting members include six community members, the Director of BHHS, the Director of the OPED, the City's Chief Administrative Officer. As of May 2017, four council member applications were pending and waiting for the city's Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to conduct background checks. Three of the pending applications are for black and brown individuals. However, if two of the applications are approved by the mayor, three of the six community member seats will be representatives from the Black Rock Neighborhood, the wealthiest neighborhood in the city.

Many BFPC participants fail to make the connection between the city's high food insecurity rates and systemic racism. At the March 2017 meeting, a pending applicant proposed that the city hire an equity officer who would hold the city's several commissions and councils

accountable to black and brown residents. In response, an advisory board member commented “what does this have to do with food?”. This is one example of council’s lack of understanding of the connection between systemic racism and food insecurity rates within the city. As the literature suggest, the failure for many good food advocates to make this connection has been apparent since the inception of the alternative food movement (Slocum, 2006).

Each year, the council is responsible for releasing policy recommendations for policies which will increase healthy food access to the city’s low-income residents. In 2017, BFPC released a report which outlined three policy recommendations to the city’s government in hopes of accomplishing this goal. As my literature demonstrates, without true representation from diverse community members it is challenging to determine how community-driven the 2017 policy recommendations are in achieving food justice goals. In 2016, BFPC created three working groups -- which also lack diverse membership -- to draft policy goals for the council’s 2017 final report that will be presented to city council. The three working groups are: urban agriculture, food based economic development, and school wellness policy.

After a meeting between the Director of OPED and BFPC, the council decided to move forward with drafting a new zoning ordinance that would protect land tenure for community gardens and urban farms within the city. However, before drafting the new urban agriculture zoning ordinance for the city of Bridgeport, the council failed to contextualize the history of urban agriculture practices in the city, which historically were led by white residents. Urban agriculture initiatives led by white educated individuals in cities across the country often have access to more financial and political resources than initiatives led by black and brown individuals (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016).

At the time my research was completed, the council was focused on the creation and implementation of an urban agriculture zoning ordinance which would provide land tenure to community gardeners and farmers. The council identified the need for this recommendation, as the lease for the city's only urban agriculture non-profit Green Village Initiative (GVI) Urban Farm -- Reservoir Community Farm -- is up for renewal in 2018. GVI has argued that it is challenging to invest in infrastructure for the farm without the support and commitment of the city government. As a result, GVI and BFPC are actively drafting an urban agriculture zoning ordinance that will provide legal protection for the the farm and for additional community garden plots within the city (Participant Observation, 2017).

During the council's May 2017 meeting, the 2017 food policy recommendation report was approved by the council by a majority vote. At this time the council had five approved voting members including three government representatives who serve as proxies of the following departments: the Director of BHHS D, the Director of the OPED and the CAO. Two community members who have been appointed by the mayor also have voting privileges. The vote for the report passed by one vote, with a representative from the CAO's office and a representative from the health department abstaining . This vote came despite the council's efforts to work with the Director of BHHS D to develop a recommendation approved by the BHHS D department.

Over the course of four months, the Director of BHHS D rejected the findings of the BFPC regarding the barriers many residents experience when accessing healthy foods in the city. Because of this, the Director refused to vote in favor of the report (Participant Observation, 2017). It was another three months before the council passed the 2017 recommendation report

and moved forward with disseminating a plan to achieve implementing the new policies outlined in the report. During a meeting between the BFPC chair, myself, and the Director of BHHS, the Director stated that she had the power to dictate who sits on the council, - a power which she does not hold. As stated in the 2012 ordinance that created the council:

“the food policy council shall consist of nine (9) members. Three of the members shall be the city’s Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the city’s Director of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) and the city’s Health Director, each of whom shall serve in an ex officio capacity as full voting members, and who may designate a member of their staff to serve as an alternative. The remaining six (6) members shall be [community members]...The six mayoral appointees shall have experience or interest in food production, distribution or quality, particularly in an urban setting” (Bridgeport Food Policy Council, 2015, pg. 41)

This demonstrates that the ordinance does not state in any way that the Director of BHHS has the power to appoint community members to the council. However, the council determined that without the support of the Director of BHHS it would be difficult to convince the two other government officials who sat on the council to vote in favor of the 2017 recommendations. After two months of thoughtful persuasion, the council was able to identify a champion within the Bridgeport government, and because of the efforts of OPED, the council’s 2017 policy recommendation report passed during the May 2017 meeting (Participant Observation, 2017).

The new administration was quick to dismiss the work of the previous administration which was responsible for passing an ordinance that created the BFPC. This has created a barrier for the council in attempts to push forward policy initiatives which were conceptualized during the previous administration. The current mayor of Bridgeport, Joseph Ganim, came into office in November 2015 after a heated election. The voter turnout for the election was very low (Brown and Tisdale, 2017). Joseph Ganim is currently serving his second term as Mayor of Bridgeport. His first term was between 1991 and 2004. Mayor Ganim was “catapulted back into office in 2015, twelve years after he was convicted of taking hundreds of thousands of dollars in

kickbacks and bribes from people who wanted to do business with the city. Between his last term and his current one, Mr. Ganim served nearly seven years in federal prison” (Foderaro and Hussey, 2016, n.p.). During the first Ganim Administration, in 1995, the city created Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs) with the goal of developing neighborhood governance committees (also known as NRZs) that report to the city government. The NRZ’s inform government officials of community concerns affecting Bridgeport neighborhoods (Bridgeport City Government, 2017).

Many city government officials prioritize the needs of the Black Rock NRZ, a wealthy white neighborhood because of their influential lobbying power, thus leaving low-income neighborhoods with fewer resources. As noted by a city employee who works within the Office of Planning and Economic Development:

“Government, for example, how the Black Rock NRZ is, from what I know...[has] the highest attendance and are usually the biggest lobbyist of the city and government of all the NRZs... because all of the people who have time and energy are able to make it to those meetings and actually lobby the government to see if they can get more resources and have the government make their streets cleaner. While NRZs and lower income communities have a hard time even organizing themselves (Interviewee D, 2017).

As the quote above demonstrates, the Black Rock neighborhood within Bridgeport a high income neighborhood with an active NRZ that lobbies regularly for improved infrastructure funding to the Bridgeport city government. Conversely, the city’s East End neighborhoods does not have the same time or resources to lobby government officials for infrastructure changes. As my literature review demonstrates, “Access to private funding, government resources, and city services often result from being part of influential networks. Frequently, being part of those networks is connected to social and economic privilege that comes from higher socioeconomic status and maintaining this status (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016, pg. 97).

Since the BFPC inception, the council has experienced a disproportionate amount of political barriers, some of which are outlined above. These political barriers are important to address because they have created challenges for good food advocates when implementing new food policies in the city. However, as stated in my literature review, to end food insecurity the council must persevere and advocate for systemic changes, such as increasing the city's minimum wage. The council must also take into account how previous urban agriculture initiatives have hindered racial equity efforts in the city. The following section will briefly explain the history of urban agriculture in Bridgeport and provide a critique of the city's current urban agriculture initiatives.

### **C. A Background of Urban Agriculture in Bridgeport**

The history of the current city's community gardens started in 1980, when the Bridgeport Community Garden Program was established. This section provides a short contextual history of the Bridgeport city government's support of urban agriculture initiatives. It demonstrates that Bridgeport city government has done little to provide land tenure for food cultivation to the city's non-white residents.

As the community garden program began to grow, the University of Connecticut-Extension took notice and in 1984 helped the Bridgeport Community Garden Program to receive a grant of \$75,000.00 annually, over a four-year period. During this time the Bridgeport city government also fiscally sponsored many community garden initiatives through the Federal Housing and Urban Development's Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) (Halstead, 2017). This is important to note because currently the city provides limited financial support to the community gardens and one urban farm.

The decline of financial support happened in the mid-1990s, when many urban agriculture initiatives in the city started to vanish due to a lack of support by the first Ganim Administration. By 2005, the city had sold many lots that were previously occupied by community gardens thus adding to a decrease in public land for urban agriculture (Halstead, 2017). A majority of these early initiatives were organized and led by educated white people.

In the spring 2006, the Bridgeport government sold ten of the community garden lots to private entities. Community members were not informed of the sale and there was a public outcry demanding that the Mayor respond to the loss of land for urban agricultural initiatives in the city. In response to the large amount of community garden spaces lost, residents organized and formed the Bridgeport Community Land Trust (BCLT). BCLT, which was a registered 501(c)3 non-profit supported most of the community garden plots within the city until 2013. The BCLT never owned land, but was granted ten-year leases from 2008-2018 for ten community garden plots within the city. BCLT's primary purpose was to support community gardens and community garden plots. BCLT lost their 501(c)3 status in 2012, however the organization exists today under a fiscal sponsorship which aids the organization in continuing programming. It is important to note the organization still does not own any land even though the organization is called Bridgeport Community Land Trust. This hinders the group's efforts in providing land tenure to community gardens who utilize space maintained by the group. However, the group does still manage some of the community gardens within Bridgeport.

Today, Green Village Initiative maintains and manages a majority of the community gardens and one urban farm within the city. The organization was founded in 2008 and recently updated its mission to "grow food, knowledge, leadership and community through urban



gardening and farming, to create a more just food system in Bridgeport”(Green Village Initiative, 2017). As of May 2017, the organization had three full-time paid staff members, two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers and two Foodcorps Service Members. The leadership is overseen by a board of ten members, which consists of seven white members, two Latinx members, and one black member. The majority of people who sit on the GVI board are white, educated, women (Participant Observation, 2017).

GVI is aware of the lack of diverse leadership within the organization and is actively working to engage more members of the community to directly serve in leadership positions by developing leaders through the organization's programming. A GVI staff member acknowledged the organization's struggles in recruiting organizational leadership that is representative of the community. Green Village Initiative is currently working on programming that they bill as “a pipeline into our own organization and a pipeline into other organizations that are doing social justice work” (Interviewee A, 2017). This quote and other correspondence with the organization's leadership suggest that GVI hopes to move towards combating systemic inequities that cause poverty and hunger in Bridgeport.

Many urban farms established by black and brown community members do not have the same political support as those started by white people (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). Green Village Initiative's Reservoir Community Farm is located next to one of the city's only public housing developments, Trumbull Gardens, whose population is a majority black and brown residents. The farm was started by wealthy white individuals who live in the neighboring rich suburb of Westport (Interviewee B, 2017). The founders of GVI lobbied the Bridgeport city government to merely pay a dollar to use the land that is now Reservoir Community Farms. As

my literature review suggests, this dichotomy of urban agriculture initiatives started by white educated individuals who understand how to navigate political systems is not just a Bridgeport phenomenon (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016). I will discuss this further in the next section.

Since the farm's inception, residents that live next to Reservoir Community Farms have recognized the farm's leadership is white. This has led to some black and brown community members questioning why no one at the farm looks like them. However, GVI is actively working towards implementing an anti-racist lens within programming at Reservoir Farms. For example, staff members of the organization attended an "Undoing Racism Workshop" held by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and the youth programs offer a food justice component where youth are educated about racism within the food system (Participant Observation, 2017). While these efforts to discuss racism within the food system are well intentioned, they fail to provide direct action that combats the systemic reasons why racism exists within the city's food system. This failure has made the organization ineffective in achieving food justice. The organization's leadership has actively worked with the BFPC to push forward an urban agriculture zoning ordinance.

The Bridgeport Food Policy Council must consider previous policies which have created racial inequity within the city. The following will elaborate how the BFPC can acknowledge the lessons learned from the implementation of previous policies when creating new policies that will affect the lives of low-income black and brown community members. In order for the council to achieve food justice, this history should be considered in the adoption of new food system policies.

## V. **The Bridgeport Food Policy Council *can* achieve food justice**

Across the country food organizations have coined the term ‘food justice’; however, academics argue many of these organizations fail to directly combat the fundamental reasons why low-income black and brown communities experience food apartheid. Food justice is a “radical critique of capitalism, neoliberalism, colonialism, exploitation, systemic racism, and patriarchy through different related registers of food sovereignty, food democracy, food solidarity, feminist food justice, and fair trade (e.g. fair food campaigns). As the name implies, food justice seeks transformative change through greater control over food production and consumption by those marginalized in society” (Slocum and Cadieux, 2016, n.p). Many organizations that claim to be practicing food justice are not challenging the systemic systems that are the root cause of black and brown individual’s experience with food insecurity (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016; Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). A true food justice movement is interested in food security and addressing class and racial disparities that have led to inequalities within the food system (Holt-Giménez, 2011; Sbicca 2016). In this way, food justice offers an alternative to the mainstream food system by empowering groups to create systemic changes through shifting power dynamics (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). The Bridgeport Food Policy Council can achieve food justice goals by creating policies which directly challenge these power dynamics.

Through the course of my research, it became clear that the BFPC new urban agriculture zoning ordinance would fail to practice food justice. By using the data I collected during my interviews and Slocum and Cadieux’s (2016) practicing food justice framework, I will outline for

the BFPC suggestions on how to achieve food justice goals. Food justice organizing focuses on four main points of intervention: trauma/inequity, exchange, land, and labor (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). For the purposes of this capstone, I will further elaborate on the terms trauma/inequity and land. The term trauma is used in food justice movements to characterize and explain the lived experience of racism. To understand the trauma that is internalized by black and brown individuals, an analysis of the root causes of racial and class inequality must be done (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015; Giancattarino and Noor, 2014). Land is a pivotal resource that must be “under[stood]... in a more-than-human relational context” (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015, n.p.). Organizations wishing to practice food justice need to understand and establish creative ways to place land into the control and management of black and brown communities who have historically been denied land ownership and access. Through land access, food justice organizations can “support agro-ecological land use systems to build equitable societies” (De Schutter, 2011; Agarwal, 2014 cited in Slocum and Cadieux, 2016, n.p.). These efforts will aid in preventing food projects from leading to the gentrification of these neighborhoods (Slocum and Cadieux, 2016).

In order to practice food justice, the BFPC must adopt the following principles (from Slocum and Cadieux 2015) within food system policy planning and implementation:

- Recognize and address how power is distributed within Bridgeport including adopting a power analysis
- Consider and evaluate policies and programs for how they quantify bringing about systemic change
- Understand barriers and disable elements that hinder food justice efforts.
- “Institutionalize equity in the democratic participatory process at every level” (Harrison 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2011 as cited in Slocum and Cadieux, n.p.)

Later in this section I discuss how the BFPC can apply the process of implementing food justice goals into the creation of a new urban agriculture policy.

The original research question I proposed, which was to find an equitable way to create an urban agriculture zoning policy, might in fact create further political barriers for low-income black and brown communities in accessing governmental resources, such as public land. As my literature review suggests, an urban agriculture zoning ordinance designed by white led organizations will not lead to land tenure for black and brown communities because this policy does not remedy the loss of land ownership. Each interview I completed, for this capstone, was filled with inspiration and often ended with “how do you undo what has already been done?” meaning how can white advocates change the history going forward of leaving black and brown communities out of the decision making processes in the creation of many urban agriculture initiatives, including those in Bridgeport? The advice interviewees gave as well as the literature I have reviewed tell the story of how Bridgeport can practice food justice when implementing new urban agriculture policies. While conducting this research three major themes arose from my literature review and interviews:

1. The BFPC must promote leadership opportunities for black and brown residents in policy planning and implementation.
2. Nonwhite communities need equitable access to fiscal and political resources.
3. Urban agriculture organizations must develop land trusts that are owned by the city’s black and brown communities.

The BFPC can learn from others who have sought to implement similar changes within their respective cities.

The Bridgeport Food Policy Council must promote black and brown individuals into leadership positions and structured meetings that are accessible for nonwhite low-income people

to attend. This means constructing agendas in which those who are not regular participants or well versed in food policy language feel comfortable discussing issues that are directly impacting black and brown communities.

### **A. Promote Leadership Opportunities**

Addressing the systemic reasons why low-income marginalized communities lack healthy food is essential to the practice of food justice. The lack of black and brown people within BFPC leadership positions is starkly apparent. The case of the BFPC supports literature which clearly states advocates have been pointing to the problem of white, colorblind leadership that does not address racism since the inception of the local food movement (Slocum 2006). For organizations wishing to practice food justice they must elevate black and brown community members into leadership positions. It is important to note that the BFPC has actively attempted to recruit community members which represent the Bridgeport community. The following section outlines the importance of recognizing who holds leadership positions on the BFPC and how the BFPC can promote black and brown community members into leadership positions.

Slocum and Cadieux note that in order to practice food justice advocates need to address the trauma/inequity experienced by black and brown communities. This means acknowledging the historical, collective social trauma and systemic race, gender, religious, class, citizenship, and class inequalities. This includes acknowledging leadership- first in relation to power structures as the first step to dismantling positions of power and second to recognize existing leadership within black and brown communities before creating new or taking control of existing projects (White, 2011 cited in Slocum and Cadieux, 2016).

The BFPC must work diligently to dismantle unequal power relations of black and brown individuals who attend BFPC experience at the council's monthly meetings. Participation from black and brown individuals who attend BFPC monthly meetings has been limited in scope. Many black and brown representatives on FPCs feel pressured to speak on behalf of all black and brown people in their community. Across the country FPC's have begun to address the lack of diverse voices in the development and implementation of municipal food policies by recruiting more black and brown people. One FPC that has been intentional about this recruitment is the Oakland Food Policy Council. This has not come without challenges. One non-white participant who sat on the council acknowledged they felt a lot of pressure to speak on behalf of every black resident in the city of Oakland, CA(Interview with Participant I). This was the case for multiple black and brown individuals I spoke with who are involved with local food policy councils. Conversely, many black and brown individuals who do attend BFPC monthly meetings do not feel comfortable speaking because a majority of participants are local food policy experts.

Creating and identifying alliances with other social movements, such as those working to end police brutality and gentrification, labor, housing and transportation justice, reproductive rights, and medical assistance are exceptionally important to combating systemic inequality within the food system (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015; Sbicca, 2014, HEAL Food Alliance, 2017). Food Policy Councils must actively work to engage *all* participants in the work of the council, especially those who are representative of black and brown communities. Council participants must build strong relationships with black and brown organizations. This involves intentionally attending meetings of organizations that are run by black and brown people and are working to

combat issues that affect black and brown communities (such as affordable housing groups, living wage campaign initiatives and immigrant justice organizations).

By building strong relationships with grassroots anti-racist organizations, the BFPC can be an ally to black and brown communities. Furthermore, many individuals who participate in organizations led by community members may have participants with lived experience or know individuals who have experienced food insecurity. The voices of those with these experiences must be elevated. Relationship building is one way the BFPC can actively recruit black and brown individuals for leadership positions. However, the BFPC must not place black and brown individuals in leadership positions and expect these representatives to speak on behalf of all black and brown individuals within the community.

### **B. Access to Fiscal and Political Resources**

Urban agriculture organizations need direct access to fiscal and political resources. By redistributing political and fiscal resources to low-income black and brown communities in Bridgeport, residents of these communities will gain power historically given to their white counterparts. During the course of my research, this became clear. The following section will detail why the BFPC must challenge how these resources are traditionally distributed to black and brown communities. I demonstrate how resources intended for black and brown communities end up in the hands of well intentioned white led non-profit organizations. Additionally, I provide solutions for how the BFPC can consider redistributing these resources to black and brown community led organizations. Finally, the BFPC must develop new processes for obtaining access to government land (e.g. vacant lots owned by the City of Bridgeport) that



prioritizes applications of black and brown community members applying for lots in their neighborhoods.

Often new governmental funds that become available for black and brown communities are easily accessible to well-connected organizations which are familiar with the application and grant writing processes associated with accessing these funds. As one of my interviewees revealed, organizations wishing to practice food justice need to understand the economic and political power of these resources. The following demonstrates how many white-led not for profit organizations believe they can fix this problem:

“Someone recently called me to meet up to get involved with a [racial justice law] tied to this marijuana legislation and criminal justice reform..and so what [she] wanted to do is create a fund at the state level to redirect criminal justice dollars to communities affected by mass incarceration and so this fund can potentially come from like the shutting down of prisons and that money [could] somehow go into communities I mean the individuals who have been affected by mass incarceration or if Marijuana is legalized tax dollars from Marijuana sales [could go] into this fund and go on to benefit communities affected by mass incarceration. This is a white woman who’s with a good advocate rights [organization] but as she’s speaking about it she’s saying she sees the work as working at the state level .....to pass legislation and create the fund and that’s where she sees the ending and then what could happen is the communities like Bridgeport could go and apply to have access to those funds. She thinks the work is just creating the fund and then we can go and apply for those funds to do our work. It is similar to creating like a food or any type of policy that benefits everyone and hopefully it will benefit communities of colour.... what I flagged right away and what the other black woman who was on [the call] flagged right way is like no, for this campaign to work for us to even [have trust in the campaign] it has to be a campaign that’s about not only creating funds [for our communities] but doesn’t end until those funds....get to those communities because what will happen is what happens now...fund[s] are created and then white non-profits will apply for that money and get all of it and perpetuate what exist right now” (Interviewee E, 2017).

The quote tells the story of a white well-intentioned women who wanted to get involved with a local racial justice organization advocating for criminal justice reform. The woman on the phone proposed re-distributing money saved from shutting down prisons that previously held low level drug offenders to low-income black and brown communities. However, she did not take into account who would have the knowledge or resources to apply for access to this funding. While well-intended these efforts are misguided in the sense that they believe increasing government funding will immediately benefit low-income nonwhite communities.

The BFPC must create a strategic outreach plan that is informed by local grassroots organizations, advocacy groups and community members in black and brown neighborhoods in the creation of new food system policy changes. Without the input of these community members, BFPC will not create viable ways to redistribute resources to black and brown communities. This involves inviting and working with black and brown community members when drafting new food policy recommendations. This can be done by building alliances with organizations that work directly with black and brown community members, such as Make the Road, Faith Acts and CT-CORE to name a few.

In the case of creating new urban agriculture policies, BFPC must actively work to inform community members about urban agriculture opportunities, such as the potential to use vacant lots for food cultivation (Ravens and Acala-Akon, 2016) at the beginning of the policy making process. One black resident I spoke to from the city of Bridgeport criticized Green Village Initiative for only including black and brown people in the decision making process of Reservoir Community Farms after the program had been in existence for sometime:

“Don’t call me after you’ve started something and think that you’re going to use me as a person of color to pull in other people of color, you need to bring them when you have the idea, they need to be at the table at the very beginning to be a part of a discussion, to develop the property the way they would like to see it and mention these to whoever is developing it” (Interviewee Participant F, 2017).

This quote demonstrates that urban farm spaces developed in black and brown communities which include community members in the decision making process are spaces black and brown individuals feel comfortable frequenting and participating in activities. Conversely, spaces created by white people for black and brown communities feel like white spaces and are not frequented by black and brown residents.

BFPC must create an equitable application process that gives community residents priority for utilizing vacant lots within in their neighborhoods. For example, the Minneapolis, MN Food Policy Council created an application process for farmers interested in obtaining a vacant lot for farm space. However, the application had a deadline many black and brown people failed to meet. It was apparent the application process was not clear to individuals who were not familiar with government systems. Many plots were available in low-income neighborhoods of color compared to wealthier neighborhoods. As a result, many white residents applied to use land within the low-income neighborhoods and were granted access by the city of Minneapolis. This took land away from those who were neighborhood residents (C.Gazillo, Personal Communication, April 2017). In response the city was forced to revise their application process and instead now offers a rolling application deadline. The city is still working on configuring a way to prioritize applications from residents who are applying to utilize vacant lots within their respective neighborhoods (C.Gazillo, Personal Communication, April 2017).

### **C. The Need for a Community Land Trust**

Land trusts are “community organizations that hold land for the common good. Land trusts can purchase and temporarily hold ... land after foreclosure, the death of the owner, or amid a legal dispute” (Penniman, 2017, n.p.). As activist Leah Penniman argues, land trusts can provide land to black and brown individuals who have historically been denied the capacity to own property. The BFPC and community partners (such as GVI) need to develop and implement a new community land trust which will provide control over land to low-income black and brown communities in Bridgeport. I will argue two points in this section. First, the development of a community land trust would create land tenure and protect land from private development.

Second, community organizations across the country are establishing land trusts as an innovation solution that can provide equitable land ownership opportunities for black and brown communities. Due to the historical policies and political barriers the BFPC faces and with the city's current fiscal deficit, government officials hesitate in re-districting land and allocating vacant lots to be used for food cultivation (Participant Observation, 2017). This creates a barrier for food advocates to implement policies that zone city owned vacant lots for urban agriculture. An equitable alternative is to purchase vacant lots from the city and develop a land trust.

First, the development and implementation of a community land trust will remove land from the speculative market and protect it from private development. Community land trusts:

“support a range of community uses including homeownership, local business and agriculture. Land Trust's maintain long-term stewardship over the land by issuing 99 year leases with affordability requirements to the homeowners, business people or farmers. Deed restrictions and other long-term affordability mechanisms can also be used by Community Land Trusts for additional flexibility. Because the land is not owned by the homeowner and is under a longterm lease, the land cannot be “flipped” by speculators who buy undervalued land with the intention of selling it for profit. In essence, the Community Land Trust keeps the value generated by public and collective investments in the hands of the community (Cho, Li, Salzman, 2016, pg. 5).

By removing land from the market and placing it in a trust, advocates such as BFPC would keep the value and investment of the land to be controlled by the community. As Slocum and Cadieux argue, food justice requires finding “ways to equitably control, use, share, own, manage and conceive of land ecologies in general, that place them outside the speculative market and the rationale of extraction” (Slocum and Cadieux, 2016, n.p.). The creation of an urban agriculture land trust in Bridgeport would provide equitable access to land for black and brown community members.

Second, grassroots organizations across the country have started to deploy land trusts (see Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, [www.dsni.org](http://www.dsni.org)) as a means to create homeowner opportunities for low-income residences. Threats of gentrification in many urban cities are

displacing many low-income black and brown individuals from their communities. This displaces communities, forces residents from their homes, and for many individuals destroys their sense of place. In St. Paul Minnesota advocates have begun conversations of developing a land trust for low-income residents: According to one expert,

“So part of what’s been really interesting here [St. Paul, MN] is we are having a lot more conversations with housing land trusts, and people who provide affordable housing to figure out how to do a much more integrated approach between trying to combine housing and agricultural uses of land” (Interviewee H).

In Madison, Wisconsin this model has already been implemented. In Troy, New York, a joint venture between community organizations and conservation land trusts are attempting to secure sites for affordable housing, gardens and open spaces, which will protect local community gardens (Campbell and Salus, 2003 cited in Havens and Roman-Acala, 2016). Bridgeport advocates must understand how systems of power have created barriers for black and brown individuals to access land in the city. Creating joint initiatives, such as the development of a community land trust for food cultivation with affordable housing agencies and black and brown community members would confront these systems of power. Bridgeport Food Policy Council must work with organizations addressing the affordable housing crisis in Bridgeport, such as Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, in developing a new urban agriculture land trust that is controlled by black and brown community members.

In summary, I recommend the Bridgeport Food Policy Council actively develop and implement a community land trust with black and brown community members in Bridgeport. BFPC must ensure philanthropic and federal funding is directly given to black and brown marginalized community organizations within the city. Finally, those who have lived experience

in low-income black and brown neighborhoods within the city must hold leadership positions both within the BFPC and urban agriculture organizations in Bridgeport.

**VI. Final Thoughts - Undoing Racism in Urban Agriculture**

The Bridgeport Food Policy Council must diligently work towards achieving food justice when implementing new urban agriculture policies. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of the history of both racism in Bridgeport and within urban agriculture initiatives it is apparent the council must address the systemic reasons why many residents are food insecure. Finally, this capstone provides tangible solutions for how Bridgeport food system advocates can achieve food justice goals.

The purpose of this paper was to consider whether the BFPC can create equitable urban agriculture policies that will redistribute land or enable control over land for to the city's black and brown residents. The Bridgeport Food Policy Council needs to work with community organizations led by black and brown advocates in the development and implementation of a community land trust. By implementing a new land trust, the BFPC will address the systemic reasons why individuals do not have access to food and thus practice food justice. BFPC must be intentional in supporting black and brown individuals in leadership positions. Finally, the anti-racist framework used while completing research for this capstone considered the socio-economic and political power structures that currently exist within Bridgeport. This allowed me to thoughtfully analyze how to shift these structures in order to achieve food justice goals.

In speaking with city planners, food justice advocates, a state senator from Bridgeport, and food justice scholars, I was able to develop a sense of how FPC can initiate equitable urban

agriculture policies which take into account the historical trauma previous policies created for black and brown individuals in accessing land. Many of my interviewees identify as black and brown individuals and are advocates for food justice within their respective communities. As a white, cis-gender, heterosexual woman, I am humbled that black and brown individuals who participated in my research inquiry felt comfortable sharing their stories with me.

Due to historical policies, black and brown people have been denied capital through land ownership unlike their white counterparts. This is a direct result of capitalism and racism, which effect racialized groups differently. Low-income white people have not battled with the same systemic challenges that low-income black and brown individuals experience. Capitalism has created barriers for both groups in acquiring wealth. However, the power white dominant culture has over our society assures that low-income white people will often vote against their own interest (i.e. the election of President Donald Trump). As a direct result of capitalism and racism, many black and brown people have not generated generational wealth to provide a financial safety net for their children.

The exploration of developing community land trusts for urban agriculture initiatives is a one step solution to systematically addressing the large amount of historical black land loss in the United States. In addition, more needs to be done to grant black and brown people with acres of land access in rural areas. Capitalism and racism have both furthered dispossession for black and brown in accessing and owning land in the United States. This has challenged the economic viability of small family owned farms in the United States (Giancattarino and Noor, 2012) especially those operated by black and brown farmers. However, as this capstone demonstrates an urban agriculture community land trust would create and preserve land access for urban

agriculture initiatives within Bridgeport, prevent neighborhoods from potential gentrification, and stabilize land from being seized because of bank foreclosure. Urban farms that make food justice a priority can also use the land to create living wage jobs for black and brown community members who are denied traditionally job opportunities, such as formerly incarcerated individuals.

The option to move forward with the development and implementation of an urban agriculture community land trust in Bridgeport, which can help remedy the racial disparity black and brown people have experienced in acquiring land ownership in the city, is evident. By removing land from the speculative market, Bridgeport urban agriculture advocates can ensure land tenure for nonwhite residents. This is an alternative to BFPC's efforts to push forward with an urban agriculture zoning ordinance. In addition to a zoning amendment, the council has discussed advocating for a city ordinance that would codify who would be responsible for maintaining community garden spaces within Bridgeport. This includes advocating that the city pay for water, provide soil testing and wood chips for the city's community gardens and urban farm that are located in black and brown neighborhoods. The BFPC can actively apply for federal grants to help cover this cost (i.e Federal Housing and Urban Development- Community Block Development Grant Funds).

Part of creating food systems policies that take into account racial equity includes building the capacity of urban agriculture initiatives to forge resilient public relationships, investing in time to build community trust, and creating common spaces with intention and joint action that allows for inclusion of diverse community members (McIvor and Hale, 2015). By purposefully shifting who holds positions of power within the BFPC and non-profit



organizations within the city that are working on food access, Bridgeport's food system will reflect the majority of the population, which is consistent of black and brown people. This means these organizations need to move away from tokenism, where they have hired one black or brown person in efforts to achieve institutional diversity. This was an apparent practice during my time of serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA with the BFPC. Tokenism creates further trauma for black and brown people as they often feel the pressure of speaking on behalf of all marginalized individuals-- a theme that was consistently stated by black and brown people within my research.

To close, community land trusts do not provide black and brown communities reparations for land that has unjustly been stolen or withheld. However, I hope this inquiry will inspire advocates to "undo racism" in the development and implementation of urban agriculture policies. By joining in coalition with economic, environmental and social justice movements, food justice advocates can address the larger systemic reasons black and brown people do not have access to a just food system. As I finish writing this capstone, I am reminded of the words of Malcolm X, I quoted at the beginning of this paper. I call on white people to join in allyship with racial justice advocates around the country in advocating for land to be owned by black and brown people, for urban agriculture organizations in low-income black and brown communities to be led by nonwhite individuals and for federal and philanthropic resources to be given directly to organizations run by community members in marginalized communities. Without equitable access to land ownership none of us is truly free.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

### **Interview Questions for food policy council experts, city planners, food policy activists and academics who are not from Bridgeport:**

- What are some of the challenges marginalized populations within your community face when attempting to access healthy foods?
- Does your community have a history of using policy to racially divide residents (such as redlining, etc.)?
- Has your food policy council supported policy that protects urban agricultural initiatives?
- How did your food policy council or local government address issues of racial inequity in the creation and implementation of an urban agriculture policy?
- What was a catalyst within the community that led your organization to determine a need for an urban agriculture zoning policy in your community?
- In your experience, what have been some of the biggest challenges you have faced working with local governments to pass policies that address issues of racial inequity?
- How did you overcome these barriers?
- How did your food policy council address the possibility of urban agriculture leading to gentrification of low-income communities?
- Are the urban agriculture initiatives in your community led by community members?

### **Interview Questions For Bridgeport State Senator:**

- Does the city of Bridgeport have a history of using policy as a means to racially and economically divide people? In what ways? If so, how has this influenced food insecurity rates?
- What is your experience working with urban agriculture in Bridgeport?
- Are there policies that have created racial and class disparities that you believe the city needs to address before implementing an urban agriculture zoning amendment?
- Do you think that an Urban Agriculture Zoning Amendment could further divide people within Bridgeport? In other words, could it be a gentrifying force? If so, how and why?
- How do you believe Bridgeport residents will benefit from an urban agriculture zoning ordinance?

### **Interview Questions For Bridgeport City Planner**

- To enhance my understanding of the current priorities for the Bridgeport Planning and Economic Department, could you please share with me some of the biggest projects the department is trying to develop and implement in Bridgeport?
- Does the city of Bridgeport have a history of using policy as a means to divide people along racial or socio-economic lines? In which ways? If so, how has this influenced food insecurity rates?

- In your opinion, what are the biggest priorities in terms of economic development opportunities for the Bridgeport planning department?
- Are there specific neighborhoods within Bridgeport that would benefit from an urban agriculture zoning ordinance more than other neighborhoods?
- Do you think it is feasible to pass an Urban Agriculture zoning ordinance that takes into account the unique needs of Bridgeport residents?
- Do you think the city will allow residents to use vacant lots for the purposes of Urban Agriculture?
- Can you share with me some of the barriers you see to implementing a new urban agriculture zoning ordinance within the city?
- How could the planning department work with the Food Policy Council in addressing these barriers?
- Do you think that an Urban Agriculture Zoning Amendment could further divide people within Bridgeport? In other words, could it be a gentrifying force? If so, how and why?

### **Interview Questions for the Executive Director of an Urban Agriculture Organization in Bridgeport**

- In your experience, what are some of the biggest challenges to accessing healthy food faced by low-income individuals within the city? Do you think urban agriculture helps with these challenges? How can urban agriculture be more than beautification and/or a fun activity for wealthy people?
- How would an urban agriculture ordinance benefit the residents of Bridgeport?
- Can you share with me some of the barriers you see to implementing a new urban agriculture zoning ordinance within the city?
- In your experience as a co-chair for the Bridgeport Food Policy Council Urban Agriculture Sub-Group, how will the Food Policy Council inform residents of the ordinance change?
- Do you believe that the city of Bridgeport will need to address historical racial and class disparities before implementing an urban agriculture zoning amendment?

### **Interview Questions for Bridgeport Urban Farmer:**

- In your experience, what are some of the biggest challenges to accessing healthy food faced by low-income individuals within the city?
- Do you think urban agriculture helps with these challenges?
- How can urban agriculture be more than beautification and/or a fun activity for wealthy people?
- Does the city of Bridgeport have a history of using policy as a means to divide people along racial or socio-economic lines? In which ways? If so, how has this influenced food insecurity rates?
- How would an urban agriculture ordinance benefit the residents of Bridgeport?
- Can you share with me some of the barriers you see to implementing a new urban agriculture zoning ordinance within the city?
- In your experience as a member of the Bridgeport Food Policy Council Urban Agriculture Sub-Group, how will the Food Policy Council inform residents of the ordinance change?

- Do you believe that the city of Bridgeport will need to address historical racial and class disparities before implementing an urban agriculture zoning amendment?

### **Appendix B: Participant Consent Form**

**Title of the Study:** Passing an Urban Agricultural Zoning Ordinance in Bridgeport, CT: A Case Study

**Researcher Name:** Chelsea Gazillo

I am currently completing a Master's Degree at SIT Graduate Institute. As part of my Master's degree, I am conducting research about how Food Policy Councils can address racial and class inequity in the design and implementation of new zoning ordinances that would regulate and protect urban agriculture within United States cities. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Bridgeport, CT Food Policy council can address racial and class inequity in the design and implementation of an Urban Agriculture zoning ordinance that will regulate where urban agriculture can be practiced within the city, who can practice urban agriculture and who will codify the upkeep of urban agriculture initiatives. Food Policy Councils have a unique opportunity to influence local governments to engage in implementing policies that support local food systems (Purifoy, 2014). In the past few decades, equity has been notably left out of conversations regarding food policy initiatives (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). In response, alternative food movement activists and scholars have moved to include principles of food justice in policy reform. This study will be an analysis of how food policy councils can use food justice to address the historical traumas and experiences many people of color have had when new policies are implemented. This study will specifically focus on the creation of a new urban agriculture zoning ordinance that will be implemented in the city of Bridgeport, CT.

### **Study Procedure**

This interview will be an estimated 30 to 60 minutes and can take place in a location and at a time convenient to you. If we are not able to meet in person, online communication methods, such as Google Hangouts or Skype may be used. I would like to audio-record the interview, with your permission. If you are not comfortable with recording, I will take notes for my personal use only. I will not share my notes or the interview recording with anyone.

### **Potential Risk and Discomfort**

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

### **Potential Benefits to Participants and/or to Society**

The potential benefits of participating in this study include learning and sharing knowledge regarding best practices for how food policy councils can address issues of racial and class inequity in the creation of a new zoning ordinance.

**Confidentiality**

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. I will keep all notes and audio recording in password-locked files on my computer. Upon completing my degree in May, I will delete any notes and audio recordings. I will remove your name and identifying information to maintain your privacy and confidentiality. I may quote directly from our interview in my capstone paper and presentation, with your permission, but I will remove any identifying information. When the results of the research are discussed in the capstone presentation, no identifying or individually-recognizable information will be used.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Participant’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Quote from Interview**

I may wish to quote from your interview in the presentation or paper resulting from this work.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (initial) I agree to be quoted from the interview.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (initial) I agree to be quoted only if my name is not used
- \_\_\_\_\_ (initial) I do not agree to being quoted from the interview.

**Consent to Audio-Record Interview**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (initial) I agree to being recorded in the interview.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (initial) I do not agree to being recorded in the interview.

**RESEARCHER’S CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at [Chelsea.Gazillo@mail.sit.edu](mailto:Chelsea.Gazillo@mail.sit.edu) or my advisor, Rachel Slocum at [Rachel.Slocum@sit.edu](mailto:Rachel.Slocum@sit.edu).

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

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