



The Olivewood Book Club
Meeting Outline - "Farming While Black" by Leah Penniman
July 16, 2020 @ 5:30 PM

Guidelines: This is a space of learning and growing. The following are guidelines we are offering to this group to use for positive, vulnerable, and growth-oriented conversations.

- Be mindful, everyone's experience is their own
- Respect the values and experiences of others
- Be careful to avoid cultural appropriation (eg. taking on the cultural beliefs/actions of other communities as your own - more on this in Chapter 3)
- Acknowledge the difference between intent and impact - words matter
- Use compassion if/when correcting others
- This is a confidential space, keep individual experiences within the group, and take learnings out to the community
- Step up, move back - share your experiences, thoughts, etc. and then move back to allow others to do so, as well
- If you start to feel defensive, hurt, etc. take a moment to breathe before responding
- We are all learning and growing, let's do our best to keep our egos out of the conversation and to be compassionate about our own and others' journeys

*Note: We suggest reading from cover to cover, as there is a lot to be gained from each section, AND we acknowledge that the book contains some more technical parts specific to farm management, etc. Feel free to skip over the sections that focus on farm specifics (eg. soil testing, specific crops, etc.). Our discussion will focus on broader topics found within the book.

Book Club Discussion

- **Starting question:** What are you feeling grateful for at this moment?
- **Discussion questions/topics:**
 - What is your experience with gardening, farming, and/or food justice-related topics?
 - How has the history of slavery, red lining, and other systems of institutionalized racism impacted access/ownership/use of land?
 - What does 'food apartheid' mean? Why is it important to distinguish this from the term 'food desert'? What does it mean to address this type of inequity?
- **Action:** Share a one sentence action you can take away to work on between now and the next book club meeting.



Questions for Self-Reflection

Introduction: Black Land Matters

- In your experience, what barriers might exist for maintaining a spiritual connection to the land? (For you, and for others.)
- How might building alternative types of economies support food justice and equity work?
 - Consider: *Ujamaa* - Cooperative Economics, Community land trusts
- What does it mean to be valued by our community and society? What can we do to create a community where everyone is valued and has a sense of place?
 - Consider: The school-to-prison pipeline, grounding and connection with the Earth and growing food

Chapter 1: Finding Land and Resources

- How could a microfinance strategy like the Caribbean *susu* be utilized to support community development?
- What does it mean to own and/or have access to land? To control your own food supply or have access to a community offered, affordable food supply?
- What are ways you could participate in reparations?
- How does the complexity of the system impact people's ability to access land?

Chapter 2: Planning Your Farm Business

- Have you experienced any businesses/programs that seem to be rooted in creating authentic relationships with its partners/consumers? If so, which ones?
 - Consider: Community-based marketing, wealth redistribution (sliding scale), co-operatives, flexible payment, doorstep delivery
- In what ways can cross-sector partnerships benefit your community and/or personal projects?
- Given how complex it is to develop and run a successful farm-related business, how do we encourage our community and society to value this work and to make it more accessible?

Chapter 3: Honoring the Spirits of the Land

- Can you identify any practices within your own life that may be misused in regards to a specific culture? How could you alter it to honor that culture in a more appropriate way?
 - Discover: Reconnect to cultural values and spiritual beliefs associated with your personal lineage
 - What are some ways that we can learn from, honor, and value the practices of other cultures?



Chapter 4: Restoring Degraded Land

- How has industrialized agriculture and the history of agriculture in the United States impacted the environment?
 - Consider: Soil health, restoration, and land use
- How has pollution impacted our ability to grow food? How can urban farming support environmental justice and soil remediation?
- How is food justice connected to environmental justice?

Chapter 5: Feeding the Soil

- Why is soil health important?
- What can you do to support soil health from a broader perspective?
 - Consider: Composting; supporting small-scale, local agriculture

Chapter 6: Crop Planning

- How does the introductory “A Small Needful Fact” poem reflect on past farmers, growers, people of color that have been excluded from the history of land and agriculture?
- Are there any plants or foods you have a cultural connection to? If so, how has this connection been maintained?
 - Consider: familial land access and privilege
- How do polycultures relate to diversity and health of land and people?

Chapter 7: Tools and Technology

- How have the actions of white America impacted land, people, and resources?
 - Consider: Wendell Berry quote
- What does the “choice of technology drives the culture of use” mean for our own lives? For our society?
- Farm Tools and Equipment - was this an eye opening list for how much thought needs to go into every detail of farming? What does this mean for the accessibility of farming?

Chapter 8: Seed Keeping

- What does saving Seeds mean for food and land sovereignty? How is this a form of resistance?
 - Consider: “They still had the audacity of hope to imagine a future on soil” hiding seed in hair, gathering spilled seed on slave ships, informal seed exchange for survival