



The Olivewood Book Club

Meeting Outline - "The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience and Farming" November 5, 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)
- 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

Book Club Discussion - 11/5/20

- **Starting question:** What is a food tradition you grew up with or practice today and what significance does it hold for you?
- **Discussion questions/topics:**
 - *"Women feed the world, we always have. We've been the gatherers, the cooks, the ones to provide milk to our babies, the nutritionists, the healers, and even the farmers."* In what ways do the women outlined in Part 5 shatter stereotypes of feminine beauty and create sustaining communities through growing food?
 - A lot of conversations about healthy food access and food sovereignty revolve around land ownership and access. How do the Portraits in Part 6 (specifically Portraits 3 & 5) present different perspectives and philosophies for changing food environments?
 - Are younger generations changing the way our society views work, labor, farming and education? What are some ways that millennials are bridging the gap between older generations leaving the farms and younger generations who may not see farming as important? Has your lens on the subject of food systems, farming and history changed after reading the stories in this book? In what ways?
- **Action:** Share a 1-2 sentence action you can take away to work on between now and the end of the year.

- **Book Club Discussion - 10/8/20**
- **Starting question:** What does resilience mean to you OR how do you practice resilience in your life?
- **Discussion questions/topics:**
 - In Portrait 2: Forced Migration - the interviewee refers to the struggle of Mexican farmers and Black farmers in the south being similar and land being taken. She refers to “colonization - a scheme focused on the exploitation of economic opportunities” - expanding on this, how has colonization contributed to land loss for farmers of color and how policies and rights to land, water, etc. are still shaped today?
 - Many cultures have shown resilience in keeping their traditions alive. Is it possible for them to compete with the major Ag companies while not losing their methods? How?
 - Bowens talks about the importance of food-related projects being led by people that relate to or represent the community. How do we see this cultural solidarity, or lack thereof, play out in our local food system? How can you/we be agents of change to ensure the voices and leadership of our community truly reflect our community?
- **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

Part 1: Brown Girl Farming - “I started thinking, ‘Are people of color being excluded from this food and farm movement? Are we simply not on the farm? What’s caused our departure from the farm? Or are we staying off the farm by choice?’” - “I knew then that these stories were what I felt connected to when my hands were in the soil. That fierce and resilient agrarian identity was what I knew was buried there.”

Part 2: Rooted in Rights

- How are the 5 portrait stories connected in Part 2?
- Land and access - who owns it and why? How has it been systematically taken from people who have rightful ownership?
 - Think about the history of this country - how has war, internment, racist policies, discrimination, broken treaties, local and national agencies all have a role in land access and acquisition.
- Pickford vs. Glickman - took 20 years and farmers only got a \$50,000 payout each - reflect on this struggle for justice and what it meant to farmers who lost everything in the years it took to receive this “justice”.

Part 3: Seeds of Resilience

- With innovations in technology, the agricultural industry has moved away from more traditional methods of farming. How might this affect farmers trying to come back to land who wish to maintain knowledge and practices passed down from their ancestors?
- As exhibited in this section, government funding and programs are not always readily accessible for BIPOC communities. How then, can we empower farmers to seek out more community-driven efforts and support?

Part 4: Preserving Culture and Community

- Why is food so integral to connecting with community and culture?
- Do you have any cultural food traditions that have been passed down through your family generations or that you have revived? If so, what do these mean to you? How does this impact the way you connect with others?
 - If you do not ascribe to any cultural food traditions, have you thought about why not? How does this impact your relationship with food and community?
- What are the common themes in the Part 4 portraits? Consider who is leading the efforts and for whom, what circumstances led to the different histories, how they have evolved, and what the barriers have been.
- How does the concept of 'food sovereignty' connect back to this theme?
 - "Our heritage lives in these seeds, so when we give them to people we are empowering them not only to grow but to revive culture. And when we teach kids the skills to grow, we're giving them ownership over their gardens and their heritage." - pg. 85, Kevin Welch

Part 5: Fierce Farming Women

- According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, if women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of the world's hungry could be reduced by up to 150 million. What are ways in which the women in Part 5 have been discriminated against, and how could women work together to support each other?
- For the women in Part 5, how did the common theme of strength in the face of discrimination pave the way for them to find the true need within their communities to provide spaces to gather, and food to share?
- What does having access to land mean for farmers of color and new farmers? How does shared land, cooperative ownership and access to resources & education change what is possible for farmers, especially for women farmers of color? Does this model make sense to replicate more widely - is this a sustainable shift from big Ag?
- Think of what the word 'Organic' means to you. Why is it important for consumers to have this label, who does this label cater to? The author points out the fact that often farmers of color are stereotyped as being the farm hand or the picker/packer vs the land and business owner - what is your experience with buying direct from farmers? Are there assumptions you make based on stereotypes that are pervasive in our culture? How can we challenge our biases?

Part 6: Generation Rising

- How are the generation of millennials - often referred to as entitled and lazy - reenergizing and reclaiming their place on the land and changing the narrative of how farming and growing food is viewed?
- Kandace Vallejo says, *"I often say that food for me is not the issue, that justice is the issue and food is a tool to be able to teach about that."* How does this statement reflect the social equity and racial justice movements we are witnessing today? How might this reframing help clarify disparities in food access, consumption, etc?
- Why is it important to have cultural and racial representation in the food system?
- How has food been colonized? What does this mean for the foods we see available disproportionately in communities of color?
- What can we learn from native food systems? How can we incorporate these concepts into the food systems we participate in, and how can we do so while honoring native cultures and avoiding cultural appropriation?

Epilogue & Acknowledgments: Coming Home

- In the first paragraph the author talks about how our society interprets food systems and what lenses are used to look at these 'truths'. How has this book changed your perspective about the people who farm, what they face and how the dominant culture's lens has shaped your views in the past. Has your lens on the subject of food systems, farming and history changed?
- The author makes a reference to the ways that farmers and activists need to sacrifice so much for what they believe in and are called to do, often without structural or financial support. Do you think it's possible to change the narrative around how we view our food systems, what **value** we place on food and the people who grow it?
- Powerful way to end - after convincing the farmers that their voices, stories and knowledge were important and impactful the author writes *"And each time, after the last word was spoken and I clicked off the recorder, we would share a long breath and moment of satisfied recognition that they did indeed have something to say. And just like that, the lens through which we saw this work was shifted."*