As Director of the Grassroots Action Network (GAN), Beatriz collaborates with grassroots partners and allies to organize for the food justice movement. She works to provide coalition building support to partners across the country and to develop strategic partnerships within GAN’s Movement Communities of Practice, a national and regional program that centers intersectional movement building, and transformative organizing as the foundation of institution building, coalition building, allyship and accompaniment, storytelling and campaign development strategies. Beatriz works with GAN partners to lift up the leadership of historically marginalized communities and to build power and capacity for grassroots groups to organize effectively and develop strategies rooted in the collective wisdom of grassroots communities. Prior to joining WhyHunger Beatriz worked as the Director of Organizing and Policy Initiatives of the Brooklyn Food Coalition serving as chief architect of the coalition’s organizing efforts. She has served on the boards of the NYC Food Systems Network, the NYC Food and Fitness Partnership, and Eco Station NYC. Beatriz is a founding member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement Food Justice Committee, the Alliance for Food and Racial Equity, and is an active member of Black Urban Growers (BUGs). In addition to her role at WhyHunger, Beatriz continues to organize with groups active in the movements for social justice across the country.

**So it starts with a question.**

What does Ferguson mean for the Food Justice Movement? This is a question I have grappled with personally and in community with some of the most brilliant black organizers and activists I know from across the country for the past year. We cannot hide or avoid it, we cannot ignore the connections and or place Ferguson and Food Justice in separate stories in different books on different shelves in different houses.

Asking what Ferguson means for Food Justice has forced me to confront my personal hesitation to juxtapose the connection between the death of black people at the hands of the police and state, and the death of black people at the hands of the corporate food system intentionally reinforced by the state. This deep reflection has not been without pain or struggle, it has not been without deep learning and transformation, and has pushed me to name both as extreme acts of violence against black bodies. It is important that I and other Food Justice activists personally and politically affirm what black nationalists, black radical feminists, queer activists, black farmers, abolitionists, community health advocates and members from communities across the country, including my own, have framed as state violence that restricts the self-determination of black people, and name explicitly all the ways that violence shows up in their communities as anti-black racism.

The intricacy of America’s systems of oppression have always used land and food as weapons of choice. I say this not to take away any urgency from the extreme state violence black communities face at the hands of the state via a militarized police, but to make some important connections between the extreme and the everyday manifestations of violence against black people.

I hope to lift up the silent, often unnamed killers of black bodies that are related to food, land and the lack thereof. This type of violence touches us all, our friends, family members and children. Black and brown children are now expected to live shorter lives than their parents because of diet related illness including diabetes and obesity. And it is important to understand that this is not about individual behaviors, this is about a system that is built to provide the illusion of choice. It is about a system of food apartheid in black and brown communities across the country like the Bronx NY, Jackson MS, and Baltimore MD where politically-sanctioned redlining restricts access to healthy food. It is about the food justice movement’s inability to name anti-black racism as the root of systemic food and land oppression, and further the food justice movement’s lack of a mass based strategy grounded in organizing and direct action.

"Black and brown children are now expected to live shorter lives than their parents because of diet related illness including diabetes and obesity."

Tactics that are necessary to advance any major shift in power. Specifically, grassroots power that goes beyond voting with your fork to ultimately unravel a corporate food system that operates at the whim of markets and the elite at the expense of the planet and by exploiting poor and working class black and brown bodies. Consider Pigford vs. Glickman – a class action lawsuit in which years of racial discrimination and targeted disenfranchisement of black farmers by the USDA was cited. Black farmers and producers were intentionally denied loans and access to benefits through various USDA programs resulting in the loss of significant black-owned land and wealth – 300,000 acres in North Carolina alone resulting

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WhyHunger is a leader in building the movement to end hunger and poverty by connecting people to nutritious, affordable food and by supporting grassroots solutions that inspire self-reliance and community empowerment. WhyHunger’s programs support community-based organizations and social movements as they grow and develop, and bring new ideas and practices to creating a just food system that provides universal access to nutritious and affordable food.

Learn more at whyhunger.org