



Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager, was shot and killed on Aug. 9, 2014 by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis. What does what happened in Ferguson and the subsequent response that followed have to do with the food justice movement?

[Risk Ratios](#) reveals that Black people were killed at 10 to 40 times the rate of whites or other minorities at the hands of the police. [Research also forecasts that Black and Brown children are now expected to live shorter lives than their parents, due to diet-related disease.](#) This special series of WhyHunger's Food Justice Voices is a bold attempt to explore the way in which police violence and institutionalized anti-black racism is deeply interconnected to food, land and Black bodies. What is the connection between the death of Black people at the hands of the state (police shootings) and the death of Black people at the hands of the corporate food system (diet-related disease/land displacement/redlining)?

To lift up critical voices of grassroots leaders, WhyHunger's Beatriz Beckford facilitated a national call with dynamic organizers and activists across the country to discuss the connection between the oppression that Black communities face at the hands of the state via police violence and at the hands of an unjust

food system. Based on this initial dialogue, *What Ferguson Means for the Food Justice Movement* series was born. Through this series, we'll release a powerful collection of articles featuring the grassroots voices of Black leaders working within movement building and food justice to create real social change. These are their voices and their solutions, rooted in their lived experiences.

The *What Ferguson Means for the Food Justice Movement* series is a collective interrogation of these issues from the perspective of Black activists around the country organizing around food justice. The series is rooted in the innovation happening in Black communities to resist state violence in all its forms while building our way into the society we have always dreamed of.

We hope you join us for this important conversation and contribute your thoughts. Read the [series introduction](#) by Beatriz Beckford to get started and follow the conversation with [#FoodJusticeVoices](#).

What Ferguson Means for the Food Justice Movement Issue 4

By Charm Taylor

Co-Director of Community Outreach & Youth Internships at The Backyard Gardeners Network

Q: How do we define food justice with a racial justice lens?

A: Food justice, race, and power in America are inseparable. Simply put, it's about examining the ways in which people of African descent have been violently, politically and economically disenfranchised. Proponents for reparations have long since made the connection between power and land in the US.

Q: Considering the fact that our movements (food, labor, gender, etc..) are segmented and often divorced of

a racial justice analysis, how do we create movement interdependency that acknowledges racial biases and institutional racism as the root cause for all these other issues?

A: Frederick Douglass rarely if ever spoke against abolition without speaking for women's suffrage. Movements based in food justice, gender equality, and humanity in labor must begin to work interdependently towards a more just future for the people. It's not only about the very real implications of showing up in mass >>>

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The Backyard Gardeners Network

The Backyard Gardeners Network is a Lower 9th Ward based nonprofit organization whose mission is to sustain and strengthen the historically self-sufficient and deeply rooted community of the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, LA using our own food growing traditions as a platform to build community, revitalize the neighborhood and preserve our cultural heritage. We currently manage two community gardens in the Lower 9th Ward, the Laurentine Ernst Community Garden and the Guerrilla Garden, and are spearheading the development of the Ernst Garden Resource Center. backyardgardenersnetwork.org



in support of each cause, but it's also about a radical shift in perspective, a fully integrated approach that says there is actually only ONE cause: more just futures for Black and Brown and marginalized bodies.

If activists for social justice strategize the holding of powerful space, for example, rallying, marching, and facilitating vigils teach-ins etc., in say their local Guerrilla Garden or onsite at an urban farm, then we may be able to visualize and connect on an experiential level, the ways in which the progress of one movements is critical to the other.

Q: What explicit connections can we make between gender, food justice and police violence?

A: What we see happening in Ferguson is a symptom of institutionalized American denial. That is to say, public housing policy as it stands is not the same thing as "40 acres and a mule." Let's face it, to be Black and poor in America means the state exercising control over your ability to acquire generational wealth and mobilize out of the "trap"; its "population containment" masking as public welfare. What if highly policed "low-income" and "subsidized housing" projects became "low risk, land subsidized" to cultivate land and return to communities with access to our cultural roots of farming? That's liberation from such a grossly outdated paternalistic view of public welfare and true progress!

Q: On the national call with Black food activists around the country, which precipitated this series, we asked

participants to finish the sentence "We demand..." How would you finish it?

A: We demand water rights and control over food production and distribution in our communities.

Q: How can we connect the organizing that has been happening — the innovation and future thinking in black communities — with the energy that has been generated through response and support of mass actions around policing and police killings in black communities -specifically lifting up the role black women are playing?

A: When we identify our fertile ground as sacred ground, our allies and supporters move off the concrete and into the possibility of a new future. We return to source, our great-grandmothers, our roots of sharecropping and planting roots predating the transatlantic **MAAFA**. Get them not only holding signs that say "Black Lives Matter" but also planting heirloom tomatoes all in the same day! Now that's a beautiful vision in action!

"Movements based in food justice, gender equality, and humanity in labor must begin to work interdependently towards a more just future for the people."

Q: Any final remarks or offerings?

A: We rule the land!

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