Abolishing the Status Quo: How Black Commons Projects Challenge Conceptions of Land Use and Inform Reparations in US Agriculture

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September 30, 2021
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Mindi Schneider, for all her help and guidance throughout this process. During a time of instability and uncertainty she provided me with what felt like boundless insight, new perspectives, positivity, and reassurance—thank you. I would also like to thank my friends, Dina Khatib and Bianca Biberaj for reading sections of my work and offering their feedback, as well as Memet Süzgün for designing and formatting my thesis. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their truly endless support in this process and always.

Abstract

The historical connections between dispossession, private property, industrialization, and the consolidation of land and capital within US agriculture are rooted in centuries of structural racism and racial capitalism. Racial inequality is foundational to the industrial-capitalist US food system and can be seen through racial disparities in land ownership, access to land and credit, and the fact that 95% of all US farmers are White. Analyzing US agriculture through the lens of the metabolic rift allows this research to look at how forced separation from the land as well as other racially biased policies and practices have created social, ecological, and epistemic rifts within society. Further, through putting racial capitalism and the metabolic rift in conversation this paper argues that these rifts are, and always have been, racialized in the United States and encourages that theorizations on the metabolic rift consider racial narratives. This research then provides historical grounding for the racialization of the metabolic rift within US agriculture, looking directly at the central role of private property. Additionally, it identifies various examples of the rift through time and space and looks at how these rifts have manifested in contemporary agricultural realities. This research then reviews six Black, Indigenous, and People of Color led agricultural commons, collective, and cooperative projects to see how they operate within the realities of the contemporary agricultural system, how they envision the future of agriculture, and how their work may help inform reparations in agriculture. In conjunction with the lessons learned from the case reviews abolition geography is offered as a means of healing racialized metabolic rifts and as a framework through which to build reparations in agriculture.

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Capitalism requires inequality, and racism enshrines it.
— Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Antipode, 2020

Chapter 1: Introduction

Dispossession, the workhorse in the relationship between capitalism and private property, has grounded and shaped the contemporary agricultural system in the United States. It is a country founded on land taken from Native Americans, built by stolen Africans and their descendants, and maintained through the neoliberal normalization of private property in various forms. This thesis starts from the baseline that structural racism has penetrated all aspects of contemporary society and looks to explore and address it within agriculture specifically. Before beginning, it is important to note that many minority groups have been systemically oppressed and discriminated against in the United States, with the first, and arguably least acknowledged group being Native Americans. This research focuses on Black farmers, with reference to the challenges and discrimination felt by other minority farmers. This thesis looks at how structural racism and capitalism have historically intersected in US agriculture to create and perpetuate racialized inequalities in land access, ownership, surplus, and autonomy in the contemporary US agricultural system. Within this research there is a specific focus on the role that property and property-making have played in perpetuating these relationships.

1.1 Problem Statement

Private property has played a central role in US agriculture since its conception, one that has proven essential and foundational to the making of today's industrial-capitalist agricultural system, a system that is rooted in centuries of structural racism, dispossession, and racial capitalism. Racial inequality is foundational to the industrial-capitalist US food system and can be seen through racial disparities in land ownership, access to land and credit, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of farmers in the United States are White. Today, of the roughly 2.7 million people employed in agriculture in the US, less than 2 percent are Black, and cumulatively own only. 5 percent of all agricultural farmland (Rembert & Banjo, 2021; United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2017).The current racial and ethnic composition of farmers is rooted in a "lingering legacy of a long history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination in both government programs and the private sector" (Carlisle et al., 2019, p. 4).

Although state-enforced historical makings and dispossessions of property in US agriculture continue to structurally disadvantage Black farmers, reparations for such harm have still not been paid. Alternative conceptions of and relationships to land have a long history in Black agrarianism and are currently being implemented through agricultural collective, cooperative, and commons projects in the United States as a means of combatting structural racism in agriculture (Gordon Nembhard, 2017). A central goal of these alternative models is to provide sovereignty, solidarity, liberation, choice, support, and education to BIPOC farmers. Through reimagining new relationships to land these agricultural alternatives are subverting capitalist norms in agriculture and building equitable agricultural futures.

After the abolition of slavery in 1865, newly freed Black Americans were promised 40 acres and a mule; land that was intended to be redistributed from Confederate landowners. This promise was promptly broken by President Andrew Johnson who overturned the order, leaving formerly enslaved Black Americans without resources or much opportunity. Without land, money, or an education, many formerly enslaved persons had limited options and so were pigeonholed into sharecropping, a form of indentured servitude that did not provide an entryway to landownership (Packman, 2020). Furthermore, Jim Crow laws legalized segregation and contributed to social, legal, and commercial discrimination in the United States beginning in the 1890s. Yet, despite efforts from both the government and laypeople to keep Black Americans from owning land, by the early 1900s Black Americans amassed roughly 20 million acres of land, largely in the South (Philpott, 2020b). Black agricultural land ownership reached its peak in 1920, as "through a variety of means—sometimes legal, often coercive, in many cases legal and coercive, occasionally violent—farmland owned by black people came into the hands of white people" (Newkirk II., 2019). In addition to the legal and coercive means used to strip Black people of their land, "racial terrorism and discriminatory agrarian policies" (Carlisle et al., 2019, p. 4) contributed to the Great Migration of many Black Americans to cities in the North and West of the country. Since the early 20th century Black agricultural land ownership has decreased by approximately 90 percent (Tabuchi & Popovich, 2021), while the number of Black farmers has fallen by 98 percent (Philpott, 2020b). Over the last century the transition to industrial capitalist agriculture has transformed agricultural realities more generally, but has done so unevenly, intersecting with other social discriminations, leading to additional and exacerbated rifts between farmers of varying race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

The entire food system, not just agriculture, has a "long, racialized history of mistreatment of people of color" (Holt-Giménez, 2018, p. 2). Racial inequality is foundational to the capitalist US food system and can be seen not only through racial disparities in land ownership and access to land and credit, but also through racialized inequalities present in the disproportionate rates of pay and management positions within the food system, as well as general access to food (Holt-Giménez, 2018). The numerous, interconnected inequalities entangled within the US agricultural system provide an entry point to question and dissect how structural racism and industrial capitalism are simultaneously perpetuated in the United States agricultural system, and what mechanisms may be feasible to combat, and reverse, such trends on a systemic level. Contemporary inequalities within US agriculture are not a series of unfortunate coincidences but rather the result of centuries worth of discriminatory practices.

Over the last few years there has been growing momentum around addressing and correcting discrimination in US agriculture and what appropriate means of reckoning may be. Such discussions have been centered around the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, Jim Crow, dispossession, and various iterations of normalized and legalized discrimination over centuries. These conversations seemed to gain a new momentum with the strong re-engagement of the Black Lives Matter movement after the police murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. For the United States, and much of the world, this seemed to be a catalyst—those who seemingly had not understood or noticed racism and discrimination in the US suddenly saw what Black people have been experiencing, talking about, and fighting against for centuries. Protests against racism and police violence became a daily occurrence in the midst of a global pandemic and were attended by an estimated 15-26 million people over the course of several weeks in the United States alone (Buchanan, Bui & Patel, 2020).

These protests highlighted the rampant discrimination of police brutality within communities of color, with marchers calling for the abolition of the police, a system that has always acted with violence against Black people, originating out of slave patrol forces in the 1700s (Reichel, 1988; Montenegro de Witt, 2020). The disproportionate police killings of people of color and the subsequent protests highlighted the pervasiveness of racism in the United States, far beyond that of police brutality. A poll from Monmouth University from June 2020 found "that 76 percent of Americans considered racism and discrimination a 'big problem'—up from 51 percent in 2015" (Serwer 2020). Spurred by centuries of discrimination against and organizing by BIPOC, and seemingly catalyzed by the BLM protests, various sectors began to take stock of their actions and in some cases attempted to rectify their own wrongs. Some actions were taken proactively, while others were the result of public callouts about White-supremacist culture. Yet, regardless of how it was prompted—or if it was genuine on all accounts, change—to some degree—began to occur in various sectors, in multiple iterations across the country, and agriculture was no exception.

In February 2021, two bills were introduced aimed at supporting farmers of color. The first was the Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act of 2021. This bill, which was passed in March and later put on hold in June, proposed $4 billion in loan forgiveness for farmers of color affected by Covid, and $1 billion in funding for additional assistance for "socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and socially disadvantaged groups" (Warnock, 2021). Similarly to this thesis, the bill cites low numbers of farmers of color and high rates of land loss, crediting centuries of structural racism on a federal level. After the bill was passed, thousands of eligible farmers were notified that their loans would be paid off or that they would receive money back from the government. However, just as quickly as the relief bill was passed, it was put on hold due to a series of lawsuits to block the bill filed by white, conservative farmers from the Midwest, Florida, and Texas who claimed that the bill was "anti-white" and "reverse racist". The farmers involved in the suit are not the only ones enraged by the "discriminatory" bill, thousands more have fled to internet forums to relay their concern. In addition, three of the biggest banking groups[1] are also fighting against the $4 billion relief bill relaying their woes at the rapid repayment of credit, citing that banks make money from interest on loans, and that this cycle is disrupted by early repayment. Considering years of discriminatory lending practices, it seems particularly charged for these same banks to be complaining about losing profits now that minority farmers are finally receiving (minimal) compensation. Fortunately, it seems that the USDA is not deterred by the banks—who have less than subtly voiced their concerns as threats—and is attempting to fight the lawsuits and continue payments to eligible farmers. However, the stalling of these payments due to the ensuing lawsuits has consequences for many eligible, debt-ridden farmers of color, prolonging their overdue, deserved, and frankly less than substantial reparations. Further, it is reminiscent of past discriminatory tactics used by banks and the USDA to run small farmers out of business.

The second bill that was proposed in February 2021, the Justice for Black Farmers Act, has yet to be passed. It proposes to: (1) End Discrimination within the USDA, (2) Protect Remaining Black Farmers from Land Loss, (3) Restore Land Base Lost by Black Farmers, (4) Create a Farm Conservation Corps, (5) Empower HBCUs and Advocates for Black Farmers, (6) Assist all Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, and (7) Enact Systems Reforms to Help all Farmers and Ranchers. A main difference between the two bills is that the latter is aimed exclusively at Black farmers, rather than all farmers of color. Similarly, the bill looks to rectify discrimination in agriculture, citing need based on historical bias and discrimination. If anything, this bill is grander, less specific, and more radical than the Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act of 2021, making it likely to receive more pushback from conservative, White farmers. The overwhelming reality here is one of ignorance and perpetuation of discrimination, as White farmers (and much of the general population) seemingly refuse to acknowledge historical and continued bigotry in agriculture (and otherwise).

1 — The American Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America, and National Rural Lenders Association

Alongside this historical context of dispossession and discrimination, there is also another reality of a longstanding history of Black collective, commons, and cooperative projects in the United States. These agricultural alternatives have been used as forms of resistance, solidarity, and strength. Collective resistance by Africans and Black Americans in the United States dates back to the origins of slavery, with both enslaved peoples and formerly enslaved escapees using forms of cooperation and collective existences "to survive enslavement, gain freedom, and advance economically" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, p. 33). Historically these models have been initiated as alternatives to hegemonic structures, typically without the support of the state. This research looks at this history to help answer how these models have been used to subvert racist and capitalist agricultural norms.

Growing momentum around addressing and correcting discrimination in US agriculture has further highlighted the importance and necessity of the work that is being done through these agricultural cooperative, collective, and commons models. Many of these agricultural alternatives are working to combat contemporary structural inequalities in agriculture that are grounded in historical actions of state-legitimized dispossession and discrimination. Not only are these projects working to heal harms that have been (and continue to be) created by the state, but they are doing so without structural support or funding from the state. Through reimagining new relationships to land these agricultural alternatives are subverting the norms or property ownership in agriculture and building equitable agrarian futures. Because private property plays a central role in the perpetuation of racial discrimination in US agriculture it is important to understand if and how alternative relationships to land within agricultural models can facilitate more egalitarian anti-racist agricultural futures, how these models interact with (or don't) capitalist structures in agriculture, and how the state can best support these transitions.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Building on concepts such as racial capitalism and the metabolic rift this thesis will examine how the agricultural status quo in the United States has systemically oppressed minority farmers, with specific attention to Black farmers. Additionally, this thesis will look at Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) led commons, collective, and cooperative projects[2] and asks if and how they might intervene in the agricultural status quo by presenting feasible, structural alternatives. Each of the reviewed cases has allowed me to gain insight, with a degree of abstraction, into the struggles, practices, demands, and discourses faced and developed by farmers in this arena. First, through putting racial capitalism and the metabolic rift in conversation this paper looks to argue that these rifts are, and always have been, racialized in the United States. Further, this research aims to understand what discourses are prominent and desired regarding common agricultural futures, and it intends to use these discourses to understand and theorize potential means of reparations in agriculture. This research does not intend to speak on behalf of those engaged in common, collective, and cooperative agricultural projects, but rather looks at existing discourses and work that is being done to question if and how these models can contribute to political thought around reparations in agriculture. Lastly, this research questions if and how theories on abolition geography may inform means of healing metabolic rifts as they exist in US agriculture.

Research Question: How do Black Commons Projects operate at the intersection of structural racism and capitalism, and (how) can they help inform the framing of reparations within US agriculture?

Sub-questions:

1. (How) has historical racism in agriculture contributed to a racialized metabolic rift?

2. How do people involved in Black agricultural cooperative, collective, and commons projects envision the future of agriculture?

3. (How) can such rifts be healed?
a. Can / (how) do Black Commons Projects offer a means of healing such rifts?

2 — For the rest of this thesis, including the research question, the case reviews will largely be referred to as Black Commons Projects. Although many of the reviewed cases are led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, this research is focused on reparations for Black farmers. Further, although the reviewed cases consist of commons, collective, and cooperative projects, this research will refer to them all under the umbrella of Black Commons Projects. This is done to use more concise language. Further, the capitalization is intended to represent the general mentality and practices of the reviewed cases and thus is inclusive of the diversity of the projects and organizations.

Answering these questions will help understand the amalgamate influences of historical social, political, and economic policies that have led to the contemporary inequalities faced by farmers of Color. These questions address the foundations of these inequalities as a means of looking to their compounding effects over time to better understand appropriate means for reparations that target root causes rather than just symptoms. Additionally, the progression of these questions seeks to understand if commons projects may be an appropriate and functional means to address the inequalities that exist within US agriculture.

1.3 Structure

The remainder of this thesis follows the subsequent structure: Chapter 2 explains the methodology and methods that have guided this research. This chapter first explains my positionality as a researcher, before providing a brief literature review and overview of the case reviews and my coding methods. Chapter 3 elaborates on the applied theoretical frameworks of the metabolic rift, racial capitalism, abolition geography and the commons. It opens with a section operationalizing how the frameworks will be used, both independently and together, before presenting individual sections on each framework. Chapter 4 looks at contextualizing what I argue is a racialized metabolic rift through a historical overview of racial discrimination and dispossession in US agriculture. Next, chapter 5 first provides a brief overview of Black collectives in the United States before then diving into the case reviews of existing Black agricultural commons, collective, and cooperative projects. Chapter 6 then questions if and how the aforementioned metabolic rifts can be healed by looking at lessons from the reviewed cases and theorizations on abolition geography and the commons. Finally, chapter 7 closes this thesis by summarizing the empirical and theoretical findings of this research, which are then used to answer the research question.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Methodology & Research Design

This chapter is intended to clarify the thought processes that guided my research over the last several months, as well as the reality of carrying out research during a global pandemic. Here I will reflect on how these two aspects impacted my chosen methodology and how such 'unprecedented' times have called for various iterations of this research, at first forcing, and then teaching me to be infinitely flexible in terms of my research, methods, timeline, and overall disposition. For these reasons I have chosen to take a less traditional academic, and more personal attempt at reflecting upon and analyzing my methodology, which will help highlight my positionality within this research. Next, I will elaborate on my literature review and the process that led me to my texts. I will then explain and justify the selected cases and data collection methods of grounded theory and coding. Lastly, I will review the limitations of this research.

This research is based on literature and case reviews, with my literature review occurring before, and informing, the selection of cases. The entirety of this research is qualitative, with data collected and processed via grounded theory and coding of the selected cases. These methods are used to identify the main discourses, demands, and desires present within BIPOC-led agricultural collective and commons projects and to help inform reparations in agriculture.

2.2 Positionality

As a young, White person from an upper-middle class family in New York City, I have felt conflicted many times about my role, and even my interest, in this research topic. I have been aware of being yet another white person asking BIPOC for their time while potentially offering nothing of use nor value in return. When it became clear that interviews would not be feasible for this research project, I questioned the validity of writing about BIPOC-led collective agricultural projects without active participation or consent from those whom I was writing about, especially as an outsider.

Lastly, and most constantly, I have thought about the role that my guilt has played in pursuing this research topic: general White guilt from constantly benefiting from structural racism, guilt for past inaction, guilt for unknowingly perpetuating white narratives in past agricultural jobs, and guilt for not knowing better. In grappling with the origins of my guilt, I asked myself why this research was important to me and why I thought that I should engage with it. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that this research is intended to be an act of active solidarity: that correcting past injustices, specifically in the agricultural realm and the fight for reparations, although they should be BIPOC-led, should not be solely BIPOC-borne. If anything, those who have historically committed—or benefitted from—injustices should be advocating for change the loudest. This thesis, although only a small offering, is my first attempt at advocating for that change.

Choosing food and farming as a medium through which to explore and analyze structural racism in the United States was not arbitrary. My initial interest in food and agriculture began via an academic lens during my bachelor's degree, was then complemented by several farming seasons in the US and abroad, and finally rounded out by a variety of agriculture and food related jobs. Through each of these experiences I have both learned about and witnessed a variety of challenges, barriers, and inequalities that exist within the food system at large. For me, it took the diversity of these experiences to only just scratch the surfaces of these issues—to see how they are interconnected, perpetuated, and often structurally engrained. For example, I worked on rural and urban farms in the US, all of which were owned, run, and staffed by White people, with the urban farms geared towards engaging People of Color. Through a job in Agriculture Tech, I was part of an AgTech collective—now more broadly named an agriculture collective—that at the time was almost exclusively comprised of White-owned, technology-focused businesses that tended to ignore and exclude the foundational work of NYC's agricultural predecessors, largely People of Color, through the guise and moniker of 'AgTech'. Further, within many of these positions I witnessed much self-aggrandizement and appropriation of historical and cultural agricultural knowledge and practice. For me it took such a breadth of experiences just to see the intersectionality, pervasiveness, and engrained nature of discrimination in agriculture.

By sorting through and analyzing the plethora of materials that are already available and abundant online, I hope that this research presents an overview that might encourage and further conversations around reparations in agriculture and amplify inequalities and demands of social movements and current groups that are already doing this work.

I hope to do so through the potential publication of a truncated version of this research or through sharing findings via other forms of online publication. Additionally, this research is based on the advocacy work of the selected cases and is highlighting their work to make a case for what reparations in agriculture might look like. For this reason—because I am using their work and their claims to make this case—I think that it is important to use the names of the organizations, and specific individuals when possible. Further, if I attempt to publish this work, I would like to share it with the studied organizations prior so in the case that I have misrepresented any of their intentions, words, or demands, it will be easier to identify and correct, so that I can be held accountable for this and alter my findings. Within this research I have chosen to capitalize both Black and White. This decision came after much reading regarding thought processes behind reasons for and against capitalization.

Lastly, I will discuss my decision to capitalize the B in Black in this research. There are many different approaches and reasonings behind the capitalization of Black, although all seem to take inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois' campaign to publishers to capitalize the N in Negro in the 1920s, who cited it as form of respect for millions of Americans. Additionally, contemporary discourse around this topic offers that race is a social, not natural, category, and so giving Black a capital B signifies a historically created racial identity. Others argue that Black references a culture and an ethnicity and therefore deserves to be capitalized. Most consistently, however, capitalization is offered as a sign of respect. Further, all six of the reviewed cases capitalize Black in their writing. Thus, in following their lead and as a sign of respect I too have chosen to capitalize Black within this work. The capitalization of White is not something that I had initially intended to do, having only known it to be done by White-supremacist groups. Yet, after reading Kwame Anthony Appiah's piece The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black I decided to also capitalize the W in White. In his piece he calls attention to how the capitalization of White is intended to highlight how Whiteness functions in society, to call attention to the construction of race, and to remind White people and White institutions that they too must be active and held accountable in conversations around race. I found that this reasoning behind capitalization paralleled the intentions of my research of (1) holding White people accountable in conversations around reparations in agriculture and (2) the importance of recognizing racial narratives within the metabolic rift, and for these reasons I have decided to capitalize White within this thesis.

2.3 Literature Review

COVID-19 highlighted a division between city and country of which I had previously been aware but hadn't spent much time questioning or engaging with. Particularly in the United States there was a mass exodus—by those who could afford it—to the countryside. This trend was also seen, and written about extensively, in England. I initially began questioning the role that property and land access played in this transition, as well as what it meant for those who could not afford to leave cities. These questions ignited my preliminary literature review, helping to inform and enlighten me about topics and theories that I had not previously engaged with. My initial review was broad, looking at a variety of scholars within Marxism, geography, sustainable food systems, environmental policy, and agriculture.

Inspired by the metabolic rift and its conception in the separation of people from land and agriculture as they moved to cities, I decided to focus on this division specifically within contemporary US agriculture, looking at who has access to land in the United States. From there I divided my literature review into two categories: historical and theoretical. I began with the historical section looking first at the contemporary racial breakdown of land ownership in the United States in agriculture, noting that White farmers own 98% of all agricultural land (Philpott, 2020a). Having grown up in the United States and having received a relatively comprehensive, if not slightly reformed, education of US history, I understood that there were connections between slavery, emancipation, and Jim Crow on contemporary land ownership, and that issues of land access in the United States have always been racialized. To better understand how contemporary land ownership in agriculture became almost exclusively White I chose to refamiliarize myself with historical racial discrimination in the US from the time of emancipation until present day, focusing on (in)accessibility to land, with a particular focus on agricultural land.

This historical overview then brought me to the rich history of collectives and cooperatives within Black communities in the United States at large, but particularly within agriculture. Learning that cooperatives and collectives were long-practiced tools of social and economic solidarity in the face of various forms oppression in conjunction with my more thorough understanding of severe racial inequality in contemporary agriculture I began to contemplate if and how tools that have been historically used to resist oppression could be successfully implemented, publicly funded, and supported as reparations. I was interested in understanding if (and how) these historical conceptualizations of cooperative and commons models could fit within broader schemes of agricultural reparations.

I hoped that by doing so I could highlight the immediate need for reparations in agriculture through a solution with historical relevance and successful track record. With this research objective, I found it not only relevant, but imperative to analyze the US industrial capitalist agricultural system at large to inform where and how these agricultural alternatives might fit or successfully disrupt it. Additionally, understanding these alternatives encouraged further theoretical literature review on Marxist conceptions of capitalism, racial capitalism, the commons, and abolition geography. These theories are then used as frameworks through which to view the historical literature review. This, in turn, creates space for a critical analysis of contemporary systemic racism in agriculture as well as possible structural methods for addressing reparations and anti-racist agricultural futures.

2.4 Case Reviews & Coding

This research is concerned with the question of how Black agricultural collective, cooperative, and commons projects operate at the intersection of structural racism and capitalism in US agriculture and if their work may help inform the framing of reparations in agriculture. First, it aims to understand what discourses are prominent and desired regarding common agricultural futures, and second, it intends to use these discourses to understand and theorize potential means of reparations in agriculture. The intention behind the selected cases is to highlight BIPOC-led agricultural collective, cooperative, and commons projects that could help me understand the current discourses, desires, and demands of BIPOC farmers around the future of agriculture. Because this research aims to understand these discourses more generally regarding BIPOC agricultural communities six cases were selected and reviewed rather than focusing on a single, in-depth, explanatory case. This allowed for a more, although not fully, comprehensive overview of current BIPOC-led agricultural projects, their demands, and what more equitable pathways forward may look like.

Cases were selected based on four main criteria: (1) they were BIPOC-led, (2) they self-identified as a collective, cooperative, or commons project, (3) they focused on agriculture as a means of transformation, and (4) they were based in the United States. Through a combination of Google and Instagram searches, as well as through inquiries with other scholars and professionals working in relevant fields, I compiled a list of organizations that met the aforementioned criteria and then organized my list based on which had the most extensive online presences, i.e., which organizations stated their mission, goals, intentions, projects, demands, and desires most thoroughly through in their online presence.

After having identified numerous organizations, I was initially interested in interviewing the founders and organizers of these projects, however Covid added several layers of complications, both for myself as a researcher and more broadly on a societal level. Firstly, it highlighted and exacerbated racial inequalities both generally and within agriculture, as the majority—nearly all—debt relief went to wealthy, (White) large-scale farmers (Brown, 2020). Second, Covid made in-person interviews and work-trades nearly impossible. Third, it generally increased tension, stress, and anxiety for both business owners and employees as many businesses were forced to close (at least temporarily, if not permanently), and many people were laid off. With all this in mind I reached out to one cooperative through Instagram in April 2021, inquiring about an interview, offering a work-trade in exchange for their time. They declined citing the following:

Hi Jessie! Thanks for reaching out and considering us for this opportunity, it sounds like a great thesis topic. Unfortunately we are at capacity in terms of things we can do outside of establishing our farm system and setups so we won't be able to assist at this point in time.

Following my first rejection, I emailed two other collectives with a similar inquiry about an interview in exchange for a work-trade. I intentionally left the work-trade offer open, citing that I was open to any suggestions they may have or specific, remote work they may need help with. After receiving no response from either organization, I decided to analyze the web content of several organizations through open coding. Being that I had already compiled my case list based on strong online presences, I selected six that I felt had the greatest quantity of relevant information on their organizations' websites. The cases, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, are located in New York, California, Michigan, and Virginia, one is a regional organization located in the Northeast, and another is a national organization. The selected cases consist of three farm collectives, a food security organization, a land trust organization, and one coalition of Black-led organizations focused on food and land justice. I intentionally chose a diverse selection of cases in regard to scale and type of organization in the hope of providing a broader and more encompassing scope of how these various organizations might inform reparations.

For each organization I compiled the entirety of text from their website into a word document and printed it out. Additionally, certain organizations had more extensive online presences including Instagram, GoFundMe, and Medium from which I also sourced and compiled text. I then began my first round of open coding, or decoding, where I reflected on "data to decipher its core meaning" (Saldana, 2016, p. 4). This was all done manually with pen and paper. I then encoded the data by identifying and labelling what I deemed as appropriate codes from which I then identified subcodes, categories, and themes. The coding process occurred several times. In my first cycle of coding,

I created an initial list of codes, which I then organized into categories. From these categories I created subcategories, and within these subcategories I placed the remaining codes. In my second cycle of coding, my categories remained largely the same, but became more precise in name. Some of my codes were subsumed by others, some dropped, and others relabeled. Through several iterations of coding, I identified three categories, eleven subcategories, forty-seven codes, and four themes, all of which arose from the collected data. Within the case reviews all quotations and data will be referenced in Appendix A unless otherwise noted.

2.5 Societal and Academic Relevance

This research engages work in sociology, geography, critical race theory, Marxism, food systems, and commoning in conjunction with case reviews of BIPOC-led agricultural commons projects. One central goal is to highlight existing agricultural initiatives that work to counter racism and capitalism in agriculture in the United States; another is to consider how these initiatives might contribute to or inspire movements and discourses around reparations for Black Americans, particularly within agriculture. To answer the proposed research questions, this work builds on, and connects, the work of several scholars in various fields through the exploration of concepts such as metabolic rift, epistemic rift, anti-capitalist commons, racial capitalism, abolition geography, and structural racism as they relate to the US agricultural system. There is existing literature that directly connects some, but never all, of these topics.

Maywa Montenegro de Witt (2020) uses examples of racial inequality heightened by COVID19 to highlight the metabolic rifts present in the US agri-food system and looks towards agroecology through the lens of abolitionist movements as a means of healing some of these rifts, making specific mention of the presence and role of racial capitalism within the industrial-capitalist US food system. Building on Montenegro de Witt, I both argue that the metabolic rift is racialized and that the application of abolition geography to theorizations on reparations for Black farmers and agricultural futures can help heal existing metabolic rifts within the US agricultural system. Marion and Horst (2019) look more specifically at the history of structural racism in US agriculture to examine the contemporary impacts that centuries of oppression have on BIPOC farmers. They acknowledge the dominant role of racial capitalism present in the US agricultural system and additionally "highlight the need for intervention to confront the legacies of racialized and gendered capitalism and patriarchal white supremacy in U.S. agriculture", yet do not offer insights or solutions for how to dismantle these dominant paradigms. This research attempts to create a thread among the aforementioned work in an effort to present methods of repairing some of the numerous metabolic rifts within the US agricultural system.

Looking to scholars who work in the realm of alternative food movements, food justice, and food sovereignty (Alkon, Guthman, Agyeman) there is common criticism that "the food movement is characterized by neoliberal strategies that urge consumers to choose locally based on economic alternatives rather than invite citizens to reform or even transform the food system itself" (Alkon & Mares, 2011, p. 69). The prioritization of market-based strategies in alternative food movements is inherently exclusionary as it privileges those who can pay for "good food" while simultaneously placing judgement on what constitutes appropriate food choices (Alkon & Mares, 2011). Not only do such models perpetuate the racial inequalities encouraged by the capitalist food system, but they also continue to promote change through "individualized consumption practices rather than broader more collective efforts" (Alkon & Mares, 2011, p. 69). Based on the assertion from these scholars that collective efforts have the potential for success regarding a more egalitarian and racially just food system, collective, cooperative and common agricultural projects provide a possible means for reaching said goals and provide a potential structural means for combatting a structural issue.

Similarly to many conceptions of agricultural collective, cooperative, and commons projects, the concept of food sovereignty is in direct opposition to neoliberalism, yet has been more thoroughly researched and written about in direct relation to agriculture and food procurement (Alkon & Mares, 2011). Both food sovereignty and these alternative forms of agricultural organization call for "the rights of local peoples to define their own agro-food systems…land reform, free access to and control over seeds, and the safeguarding of water as a public good" (Alkon & Mares, 2011, p. 69; Whose common future, 1994). The breadth and popularity of food sovereignty studies provides a strong platform for further theorizing the commons, collectives, and cooperatives as they relate to anti-capitalist agricultural platforms rooted in collective action. The foundations of food sovereignty in conjunction with the historical relevance and uses of collective, cooperative, and common forms of agriculture provide a basis for alternatives to the US industrial capitalist agricultural system that touch upon the concepts of land reform, racial (economic) justice, collective action, and local autonomy as means to mending associated metabolic rifts. This research intends to build on the work of scholars in the food justice space who have critiqued the use of neoliberal narratives as a means of radically transforming the US food system, and to expand on their general calls for collective efforts and autonomy largely through the lens of agricultural projects that function outside of the norms or privatization and capitalism.

2.6 Limitations

There were both internal and external limitations that presented challenges within this research. The external limitations include time constraints, Covid-19, and a relatively limited number of reviewed cases. Further, all of this research took place remotely due to Covid-19, and no interviews were able to be conducted. Although there is a plethora of information available online, interviews would likely have contributed to a more in-depth understanding of, and direct insight into, this research. Further, a key limitation of this study is the small number of case reviews that were able to be analyzed. As mentioned above, the selected cases are only a sample of the existing BIPOC-led agricultural commons, collective, and cooperative projects and may not speak to the demands and desires of these projects, farmers, or participants at large.

The internal limitations of this research, however, presented more amorphous challenges. Firstly, much of the theory used within this research is theory with which I had not previously engaged, and even now, after months of review, there are still concepts that I am grappling with and struggling to contextualize. This is, in part, due to the confines of working within a Covid-19 reality, as much of my engagement in the selected literature was done independently with few opportunities to discuss, theorize, and challenge my understanding of the concepts with others. Further this isolated way of working—in addition to various other Covid-related realities—significantly decreased my work speed and motivation. Limitations of the research itself will be discussed later in chapter 7.

Chapter 3:
Theoretical Framework

The "problem of nature" relates both to contemporary environmental crises as well as the general, modern perceptions of nature in its biological and ecological manifestations. John Bellamy Foster, the first scholar to reengage Marx's theory of social metabolism, instead situates the "problem of nature" as a "problem of capital", reframing the connection between capital and environmental degradation (Foster & Clark, 2010). Further, this reframing makes clear how contemporary narratives of nature are also manipulated by and viewed through neoliberal norms. This normalization of the commodification of nature perpetuates environmental crises through the prioritization of profit over ecological systems, "as natural cycles are turned into broken linear processes geared to private accumulation" (Foster & Clark, 2010, p. 142). One sector where this coalescence is overwhelmingly obvious is US agriculture—a heavily consolidated, industrialized, and capitalized industry responsible for the fifth largest greenhouse gas emissions of any sector in the country (USDA Economic Research Service, 2021). The metabolic rift, the idea that under capitalism there is a dual separation of people from the land and agriculture from biology, is a useful theoretical framework for analyzing these multifaceted aspects of US agriculture as it provides a historical context through which to situate contemporary problems of nature and capital. However, when the theory of the metabolic rift is applied to contemporary agriculture, it is apparent that social, ecological, and epistemic impacts are not felt uniformly by all who participate in the system. Applying the lens of racial capitalism to the metabolic rift provides a means to understand how each component has racial implications that are not addressed within contemporary theorizations on the metabolic rift. More specifically, theorizations on racial capitalism offer explanations for how these inequalities have come to disproportionately affect Black and minority farmers through actions of, and legalized by, the state, and offers insight into the interconnected, and what I will later argue is a racialized nature of metabolic rifts within agriculture. This section will explore theories on the metabolic rift and racial capitalism, both independently and together, and will investigate how they can be applied to US agriculture. Lastly, this section will look at abolition geography and the commons as theoretical frames that integrate racial narratives and conceptualize more equitable agricultural futures.

3.1 Operationalization of Main Concepts

This thesis looks at the metabolic rift and racial capitalism—theorizing them both independently and together—as meta-theoretical frameworks through which to study the relationship between structural racism, industrial capitalism, and property in the US agricultural system. Because these concepts have been theorized by numerous scholars it is crucial to first clarify how they will be defined and used within the context of this research.

First, I look at the metabolic rift, which in its original form refers to a separation, under capitalism, "of agriculture from its biological foundations, and of humans from nature" (Schneider & McMichael, 2010, p. 461). The concept of an ecological metabolism was first introduced by Marx and later reengaged by John Bellamy Foster who coined the term metabolic rift in his 1999 essay, Marx's Theory of the Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology. In this piece Foster identifies and fleshes out Marx's theorization of metabolism as it pertains social and ecological factors. This revival inspired a wide array of responses from other scholars encouraging discourse around Marx's original thoughts on ecological crises under capitalism, further establishing the concept of the metabolic rift. In an effort to continue building on the work of scholars over the last two decades, this paper will begin from the premise that the metabolic rift exists in three forms: ecological, social, and epistemic (Montenegro de Wit, 2020; Wittman, 2009; Schneider & McMichael, 2010; Bezner Kerr et al., 2019). Ecologically, metabolic rifts refer to imbalances in natural cycles caused by industrial capitalist (agricultural) practices (Foster, 1999; Moore, 2000); socially, they refer to human interaction with nature as guided by capitalist norms and values, i.e., labor; and epistemically, they refer to the separation of knowledge, experience, and practice regarding humans and their interactions with nature (Schneider & McMichael, 2010). Through this research I use the metabolic rift—as it provides an interconnected approach, combining social, epistemic, and ecological factors—to analyze the multiple channels through which structural racism is produced and reproduced throughout the US agricultural system. To make this argument, this research offers that the metabolic rift has a fourth form—racial—on the basis that the three pillars of the metabolic rift disproportionately affect BIPOC communities.

Next, racial capitalism is understood as the commodification of racial identities, or "the process of deriving social and economic value" based on a person's race (Leong, 2013). This research situates racial capitalism within historical debates on agrarian capitalism to contextualize how contemporary definitions of property continue to be shaped by social-property relations, with propertization relating not only to land, but also to race, labor, and identities.

This research follows a combination of Cherisse Burden-Stelly's (2020) and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2020) conceptualizations of racial capitalism, the former with a strong focus on labor, the latter on property and property-making. Lastly, a combination of these conceptualizations is used as a theoretical framework to depict the historical grounding and contemporary prominence of racial capitalism within US agriculture and to ground the argument that metabolic rifts are, and always have been, racialized in the United States. This research offers that the metabolic rift has a fourth form—racial—on the basis that the three pillars (social, epistemic, ecological) of the metabolic rift disproportionately impact BIPOC communities specifically within the US agricultural system. I use property as the central connector between the metabolic rift and racial capitalism, looking at theorizations on (primitive) accumulation and accumulation by dispossession to explain (1) how Black people have been historically made into and viewed as property through labor, particularly within agriculture and its foundations in slavery, (2) how they were then systemically excluded from owning property in various forms post emancipation, and (3) how these historical iterations of property and property-making present themselves in discriminatory ways that further inequalities in contemporary agriculture.

Further, I look at abolition geography and the commons as frameworks for remedying the unaddressed racialized natures of the metabolic rift. Abolition geography offers a means of creating space for those who have been intentionally left out, kept out, and pushed out, and encourages alternative mentalities that, when applied to agriculture, may allow for the reimagining of more equitable and anti-racist agricultural futures (Gilmore, 2017). Enacting abolitionist politics within US agriculture offers a means to "relearn many of the lessons that have been lost or erased from histories of building solidarity toward liberation" (Heynen & Ybarra, 2020). This chapter then looks at the commons and commoning to build on theorizations for healing the racialized metabolic rifts present within the US agricultural system through alternative means of conceptualize and relating to land. The commons, and the act of commoning are dynamic social relations, political projects, and processes that, similarly to abolition geography, focus on social and societal change as a means of alternative placemaking that is created by and centered around those who inhabit it.

3.2 Capitalism and Nature: The Metabolic Rift

In 1999 John Bellamy Foster introduced the concept of "Marx's ecology" to address ecological crises. As he saw it, looming environmental disasters were actually problems of capital, as under capitalism natural cycles are oft broken in favor of accumulation (Foster & Clark, 2010).

Foster looked at Marx's "materialistic and metabolic approach" for studying the relationship between humans and nature to question how social order could be reworked to ensure that future generations could be sustained. Metabolism, for Marx, referred to the exchange of material between humans and nature with labor as the key vessel of metabolic interchange (Marx, 1981). Under capitalism, a system propelled by exponential growth, agricultural practice became more intensive and extractive in nature, simultaneously increasing pressure on, and ultimately depleting, the soil. Further, the privatization of property defined new relationships between land and labor, which in conjunction with increased mechanization decreased labor needs leading to an exodus of peasants from the countryside, thereby activating an influx in the urban population. This led to a further rupture between town and country as soil nutrients were leaving the countryside at rates faster than they could be replenished.

In his reconstruction of Marx's ecology Foster (1999) heavily centers the role of labor, guided by Marx's understanding of the labor process as the key mechanism of metabolic interaction. Schneider and McMichael (2010) then reconstruct Foster's reconstruction of Marx's ecology in three parts, paying specific attention to the reordering of soil within the metabolic rift: first they note that that social divisions of labor "created an 'irreparable' rift in the metabolism between humans and nature" (Schneider & McMichael, 2010, p. 464), second, that industrial agriculture and long-distance trade amplified this rift, and third that loss of soil fertility in the countryside expressed itself through amassing human waste in cities (Schneider & McMichael, 2010). While Foster (1999) argues that the metabolic rift originated with agricultural industrialization in the 19th century, Jason Moore[3] (2000) argues that it originated in the late 16th century, with the enclosure of land and the transition to capitalism. Moreover, Moore looks at primitive accumulation and the metabolic rift as concepts that are mutually constitutive, with the original primitive accumulation being that of the accumulation of land in the countryside. Although Moore situates the origins of the metabolic rift in the 16th century, he champions the notion that additional metabolic rifts occur within each phase of capitalism. Within this re-periodized framework of the metabolic rift, Moore creates space for, and places the metabolic rift centrally within the history of capitalism thereby providing foundational grounding for racial capitalism through the context of (primitive) accumulations of land and labor as they pertain to capitalist, and industrial capitalist, agriculture (Schneider & McMichael, 2010; Montenegro de Wit, 2020).

3 — This research engages Moore's placement of the metabolic rift, while understanding that he has largely dismissed the concept and instead theorized "world ecology".

While Moore challenges Foster by situating the metabolic rift centrally within capitalism rather than industrialization, Schneider and McMichael (2010) deepen the theory by further diving into the ecological component. For them the metabolic rift does not only concern soil quality regarding the extraction that ensues from the city–country divide, but rather it more so concerns the agricultural practices used. The inclusion of agricultural practices is imperative because such practices not only "implicate a broader set of ecological and social relations" but also "provide a way to specify how humans interact with non–human nature" (Schneider & McMichael, 2010, p. 462) and the ways in which humans can, both positively and negatively, shape their surrounding environment. In their paper Schneider and McMichael (2010) explain how the ignorance of agricultural practices within historical theorizing of the metabolic rift only provides a partial understanding of declining soil fertility under capitalism, and therefore only a partial understanding of ecological rifts. Centering agricultural practices as a key factor of soil health creates an opening for understanding how capitalism drives certain agricultural practices which in turn (negatively) affect soil health, ultimately perpetuating a positive feedback cycle between the two (Schneider & McMichael, 2010). Schneider and McMichael challenge Marx's notion that declining soil fertility was brought on exclusively by capitalist trade and offer that a decline in integrated, ecological agricultural practice also played a large role. The attention to the relationship between agricultural labor and ecological processes within the metabolic rift enhances its "analytical utility" (Schneider & McMichael, 2010) by combining the social (labor) and ecological (soil quality) components. Further, the idea that agricultural practice is central in analyzing capitalism's ecology exposes how farming practices (i.e., the combination of ecological and social components) can be perpetuated or guided by the metabolic rift, but also have the capacity to either enhance or disrupt it through practice.

Additionally, this thesis utilizes Schneider and McMichael's idea of an epistemic rift as it relates to agricultural practice and local ecosystems. The epistemic rift, otherwise referred to as a 'knowledge rift' is rooted in the notion that as people began to leave the countryside for cities they took with them not only physical materials, but also local knowledge relating to the land, farming, ecosystems and more. Building on Clifford Geetz's (1983) idea of local knowledge, as well as Donna Haraway's (1991) concept of situated knowledge Schneider and McMichael (2010) argue that "the metabolic rift privileges a capital logic, whereby social relations are mediated by value relations" creating what they refer to as an epistemic rift, or the division of humans from practical knowledge of their local ecosystems (Schneider & McMichael, 2010). This rift further hinders ecological futures as it ruptures connections through the making of "irrelevant" knowledge through displacement.

This research builds on the work of Schneider and McMichael as their incorporation of agricultural practice and the concept of epistemic rifts help ground the metabolic rift within US capitalist agriculture, a sector within which private property reigns supreme. In the Marxist conception of capitalism private property holds a central place and is characterized by a specific class structure between those who own the means of production, capitalists, and those who don't, laborers. (Brenkert, 1979). This relationship is characterized by the owners' ability to pay laborers for their labor-power, while then profiting from said labor-power, creating what Marx refers to as "surplus value" or "unpaid labor". The relationship then proceeds through accumulation, which occurs through the privatization of property (land accumulates wealth independently under capitalism), as well as through the extraction of (natural) resources and the dispossession of ownership of the means of production for workers, ultimately furthering class distinctions. Dependent upon the consistent accumulation of capital, capitalism is propelled by a belief in endless growth, based on access to and use of raw materials which then places increasing demands on nature, thereby intensifying "the social metabolism of the capitalist order" (Foster & Clark, 2010, p. 145).

The significance of private property within the metabolic rift is further expanded through theories of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession (ABD) which I analyze through various iterations of property in contemporary agriculture, looking specifically at how separation, or in many cases forced removal from the land (property) is isolating in both literal and epistemic ways, creating dual boundaries to overcome for those who are interested in (re)accessing land. Primitive accumulation, according to Marx, is "the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" (Marx, 1867, pp. 874-5; DeAngelis, 2001) which occurs through two transformations: (1) the creation of subsistence production into a means of capital, and (2) the transition of producers into wage-laborers who have nothing to sell but their labor (Marx, 1976). This separation is central, continuous, and is what creates and reproduces class separations under capitalism (DeAngelis, 2001). David Harvey (2004) notes that, as described by Marx, primitive accumulation is a continuous process that includes "the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; conversion of various forms of property rights — common, collective, state, etc. — into exclusive private property rights" (p. 74) and commodifies labor and suppresses alternative production systems. Primitive accumulation plays a central role within the metabolic rift, with its origins in the enclosure of the commons (i.e., the separation of peasants from the land), and the creation of private property.

Due to its ongoing nature, Harvey (2004) reconstructs Marx's theory of 'primitive accumulation' as 'accumulation by dispossession', noting that such realities under capitalism are only possible with support from the state (Levien, 2012). For Harvey (2006) ABD is defined by the means that re-create conditions for capitalist expansion, rather than pre-conditions for capitalism itself. Levien (2012) views Harvey's definition of ABD as not simply just a renaming of primitive accumulation, but rather one that provides "a definitive break with primitive accumulation traditionally conceived by unmooring it from the historicism of modes of production and thereby freeing it for application to a panoply of contemporary forms of dispossession of private and social wealth" (p. 938). With the intention of heightening it's 'analytical specificity' Levien (2012) defines accumulation by dispossession as "the use of extra-economic coercion to expropriate means of production, subsistence or common social wealth for capital accumulation" (p. 940). He argues that it is a political process in which the state "or other coercion wielding entities — use extra-economic force to help capitalists overcome barriers to accumulation" (p. 940). Additionally, Levien articulates that dispossession, and resistance to it, can exist both within public and private forms of property, and is typically used in cases where the landowner is either unwilling to sell or their ownership is not 'legally recognized' by the state. This connection, and the claims that state support is largely required for various iterations of dispossession of both public and private property helps position the argument that the state is accountable for contemporary inequalities in US agriculture—a highly capitalized and consolidated industry—particularly as they relate to landownership, and therefore is also responsible for reparations within the sector.

The means-specific theorization of ABD as articulated by Levien (2012) helps to explain why, in many cases, there is a state tendency—a capitalist state is typically keen on attracting industry—towards dispossession, for "when sellers are unwilling, or where possession or use is not accompanied by recognized legal ownership (such as with government land or commons), land can typically only be alienated to capital with the backing of the state" (p. 941). In other words, capitalists legitimate dispossession through 'legal' state force to overcome barriers to accumulation (Levien, 2012). Marx's theorization of primitive accumulation has its origins in the enclosure of the commons, arguably centering land as private property in its most authentic form. Just as ABD clarifies that accumulation is not a singular affair but rather one that is reproduced through dispossession under capitalism, the metabolic rift too is not a unique experience, but one that is also produced and reproduced under capitalism. This research looks at how the metabolic rift is, and always has been, racialized in the United States, which is why theorizations on the metabolic rift must include race and racialized exclusions if is to be healed. Further, this research maintains that all aspects of the metabolic rift must be holistically considered if they are to be repaired. That is to say that each form is part of a whole, and the healing of one is contingent on that of the others, and

therefore all, including race, must be equally considered; a metabolic rift cannot be healed in isolated parts.

3.3 Racial Capitalism

Within this research racial capitalism is a central theoretical concept that helps guide my argument that the metabolic rift has racial implications. It is a dynamic conceptual framework that has been theorized by numerous scholars (Robinson, Gilmore, Burden-Stelly, Leong) over the last several decades, and looks at the role of race and racism within capital accumulation and consolidation (Robinson, 1983, Burden-Stelly, 2020). Prior to this research I had not engaged much in theories of racial capitalism and my research on this topic is largely informed by readings from scholars who summarize, analyze, and build on the work of Cedric Robinson, who popularized the term racial capitalism in his 1983 publication Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition. There he discusses the foundation of racial capitalism as how "capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions" (p. 2) in its development and expansion. Robinson critiques Marxism for its failure to address the racialized nature of capitalism and argues that "Capitalism and racism… did not break from the old order [feudalism] but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide" (Kelley, 20017). I apply Robinson's critique of Marxism to the metabolic rift through the application of racial capitalism, arguing that the inclusion of racial consideration and acknowledgement of racialized exclusions are essential to healing the rift.

Racial capitalism, as defined by Professor Nancy Leong (2013), refers to the commodification of racial identities, or "the process of deriving social and economic value" based on a person's race, a definition that this research uses as a baseline from which to build on. Scholar Cherisse Burden-Stelly (2020) specifically theorizes modern U.S. racial capitalism as it "refers to Blackness defined as African descendants' relationship to the capitalist mode of production—their structural location—and the condition, status, and material realities emanating therefrom". In her scholarship she refers to the "accumulation, disaccumulation, debt, planned obsolescence, and absorption of the burdens of economic crises" (Burden-Stelly, 2020) that have historically been forced upon Black Americans under capitalism. Rooted in Marxist-Leninist thought, Burden-Stelly builds on the work of Oliver Cromwell Cox, noting that capitalist production in the United States is defined by a racially specific, anti-Black, and antiradical labor hierarchy with Blackness invariably at the bottom.

She defines antiradicalism as the rejection of anticapitalist and leftist thought and organizing; and identifies both anti-Blackness and antiradicalism as the foundations of contemporary racial capitalism in the United States. Further, she makes historical parallels between antiradicalism (anti-communism) and anti-Blackness, otherwise referred to as the Red Scare and Black Scare, respectively. Aptly named for their alarmist tendencies, I argue that both movements are rooted in, consciously or not, their fear of the disruption of the American status quo, i.e., White supremacy and capitalism. Additionally, I apply her above framework specifically to the US agricultural system to analyze where and how the continued and manifold forms of structural racism within US agriculture present themselves and how they contribute to racialized metabolic rifts.

This research places Robinson's intervention, as well as the following iterations, of racial capitalism within ongoing debates surrounding the origins of agrarian capitalism. Situating racial capitalism specifically within historical debates on agrarian capitalism contextualizes how contemporary definitions of property in agriculture continue to be shaped by social-property relations with propertization relating not only to land but also to race, labor, and identities. Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017) identifies the origins and progressions of racial capitalism as one that was developed in agriculture, enhanced by enclosure in England, perpetuated with "captive land and labor in the Americas, [and] perfected in slavery's time-motion field-factory choreography". Historically, capitalism has always relied on relationships of racial inequality, long before the introduction of African slavery in the United States (Robinson, 1983; Gilmore, 2020). Building on Robinson, Gilmore (2020) notes that capitalism as we have inherited it is racialized: "it started racial, without what people imagine race to mean, which is Black people, and it will continue without what people imagine 'not race' to be, which is white people".

This is to say that the racialized nature of capitalism is ingrained in the fabric of capitalism and will persist with or without what we have come to understand race to mean through the norms of standard labor relations and social constructs. For Robinson this contextualization is particularly important as he maintains labor as a grounding factor within the commodification of race, citing capitalism's inability to reconcile the gap between capital and waged labor as the source of the need for stratification (Burden-Stelly, 2020). Further, he was heavily critical of the eurocentrism (i.e., lack of racial analysis) of Marxism, citing the racial nature of capitalism as a central and perpetuating force. In his argumentation he asserts that differentiation within the labor structure is essential for capitalism to survive, and that the racialization of this process is what enables and perpetuates it.

Therefore, for Robinson, racial capitalism "constantly recreates itself through differentiations of waged and unwaged or surplus labor, which in turn are associated with racial and colonial divisions between possessors and dispossessed, between citizens endowed with liberal rights and the unfree, between productive humanity and disposable humanity" (Kundani, 2020).

Based on the inherent racialized nature of capitalism as expressed above, many scholars and activists (Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Malcom X) have often made the claim that racism cannot be undone without undoing capitalism. Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2020) extrapolates on Robinson's conception of racial capitalism when she says that "capitalism is never not racial". For her, all of capitalism is racial capitalism, not a stagnant concept, but a dynamic relation that has existed and transformed over centuries and across geographies. She explains it "as a technology of antirelationality", a means of "reducing collective life to the relations that sustain neoliberal democratic capitalism" (Meladmed, 2015, p. 78). This statement in addition to Burden-Stelly's connection between anti-blackness and anti-communism provides grounding for the notion that the end of racial capitalism in the United States may in fact be rooted in alternative modes of collective production that have been historically fought against and denied by capitalism. Further, Gilmore's application of geography to racial capitalism helps explain both the mechanisms of how racial capitalism commodifies race for capitalist furtherment, as well how it can be used (abolition geography) to combat it. Gilmore applies the lens of 'geographies of racial capitalism' to explore how "capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it" (Gilmore, 2020). In her application of racial capitalism to the industrial prison complex, Gilmore (2017) discusses the extractive nature of racial capitalism and its ability to literally remove people and wealth from the communities that they target, namely BIPOC communities. In this context it is done in the most literal sense by locking people in prisons and enforcing inactivity and severely limiting freedoms. Her application of racial capitalism to the industrial prison complex in the United States shows how the state has been responsible for, and proactively engages in racial capitalism through the removal and dispossession of BIPOC within certain sectors of society. This research applies this framework of Gilmore's to US agriculture to explore how racial capitalism similarly removes Black farmers from the land, extracting people, wealth, and knowledge along with it.

Understanding the role of the state in the shaping of racialized policy and capital accumulation is another important aspect of racial capitalism (Kundani & Kumar, 2015) and is a prominent factor from which alternatives to capitalism, such as abolition geography and the commons, structure their realities. The state was and continues to be prominent in the transition to and support of industrial capitalist agriculture. Therefore, their recognition and cooperation are essential if alternative structures are to be built that will support those who have been historically dispossessed, marginalized, and extracted by the state. Forms of dispossession of land and autonomy, as well as extraction of wealth within BIPOC communities are not unique to prisons and can be seen throughout the historical realities of Black Americans in agriculture. People are extracted from their communities when they are sent to prison, just as they are extracted from their communities when they are dispossessed of their land and livelihood—the reality of many Black farmers since emancipation. The extractive nature of structurally discriminatory agricultural and land policies have and continue to destabilize Black Americans (Gilmore, 2017). Racial capitalism provides a discourse through which to explore the connection between structural racism and the US industrial agricultural system both within and outside of state control to better understand how racism and capitalism intersect within US agriculture, and by what means they might be subverted. Further, its application to the metabolic rift facilitates the understanding of how metabolic rifts are, and always have been, racialized in the United.

3.4 Connecting Racial Capitalism and the Metabolic Rift

Throughout the rest of this thesis property is used as the central connector between the metabolic rift and racial capitalism, looking at theorizations on (primitive) accumulation and accumulation by dispossession to explain (1) how Black people have been historically made into and viewed as property, typically through labor, (2) how Black people have been systemically excluded from owning property in various forms post emancipation, and (3) how these historical iterations of property and property-making present themselves in discriminatory ways that further inequalities in contemporary agriculture. Property is unique in that it is often artificially created within race, gender, bodies, labor, and identities, holding amorphous spaces that can be difficult to pinpoint and therefore condemn. Somehow, though, property always seems to hold an 'official' space as it relates to the confines of land, where violators are ensured to be persecuted, yet this accountability doesn't extend to other forms of property.

Further, this 'officialness' as it pertains to land is dictated by—and seemingly only applies to—those with power and is often used as a tool to dispossess the marginalized. Racial capitalism helps inform why there is no accountability regarding other forms of property as lack of accountability within other forms of property–making benefits the powerful and further disposes the marginalized, just as accountability around land as property does. This complicated and nebulous space is analyzed and helpfully navigated by the intersection of racial capitalism and the metabolic rift, which together help inform how the artificial creation of property in various forms, and the dispossession of it in the form of land have contributed to and perpetuate discrimination and inequality in contemporary US agriculture. Further, they are used to look at how alternative forms of property, or rather alternative forms of perceiving and interacting with land, may be useful in correcting historical wrongs at the intersection of racism and capitalism in US agriculture. The intersection of racial capitalism and the metabolic rift provides a discourse through which to explore how property plays a role within the production and reproduction of structural racism in the US industrial agricultural system, and how this is often carried out and enforced by the state.

The construct of property takes many forms under capitalism touching not only land but also race, gender, bodies, labor, and identities (Roy, 2021). These various forms of property in the United States, although not exclusively linear, inform one another. During slavery in the United States, Africans and their descendants were property; their bodies owned, traded, and used as commodities by White settlers. After emancipation, under capitalism, their labor was then commodified as a form of property. Although this is a standard arrangement under capitalism, the opportunities were fewer and the negative impacts higher for Black Americans and other POC than for White Americans. In her 1993 essay "Whiteness as Property" Cheryl I. Harris looks at how through slavery and various forms of subjugation in the United States "whiteness came to be protected in law as a type of 'status property,' a proprietary prerogative that, like property, entails 'a right to exclude'" (Roy, 2021). In a later essay, "Finding Sojourner's Truth" Harris (1996) dissects how slavery in the United States, through its social and legal manipulation of gender and race laid the foundations of racial patriarchy. Ananya Roy (2021) builds on Harris' arguments, focusing on "the propertization of the gendered subject in the making of whiteness" as a means of linking property and personhood. Roy elaborates on this iteration of property as it relates to personhood and gender and uses it to call for the abolition of property in all its forms. These multiple forms of propertization inform the various ways in which property can be made, owned, racialized, othered, and unevenly distributed under capitalism.

Applying the lens of racial capitalism to the metabolic rift provides a means to understand how each of the three components have racial implications that are not addressed within contemporary theorizations on the metabolic rift. More specifically, theorizations on racial capitalism offer explanations for how these inequalities are intentionally created and imposed on Black and minority farmers and offers insight into the interconnected, racialized nature of metabolic rifts within agriculture. Further, racial capitalism positions property's historical role in the making and remaking of racialized metabolic rifts.

3.5 Abolition Geographies

Abolition geography is an expansive concept that Gilmore (2017) refers to as both "capacious" and "specific" in the ways that it challenges normative thought and action around labor, land, and freedom. The root of abolition geography lies in the creation of space and the reconstruction of place. It is a tool that marginalized and oppressed peoples have used "to make where they were into places they wished to be" based on their "sensibilities, dependencies, [and] talents" (Gilmore, 2017, p. 231). It not only challenges contemporary norms of dispossession, extraction, and capitalism (i.e., racial capitalism) but also offers similar alternatives to those offered by anti-capitalist commons models, as theorized by scholars Federici and Caffentzis (2014). Gilmore (2017) elaborates on the importance of abolition geography and place-making as subversive means that challenge "the normative presumption that territory and liberation are at once alienable and exclusive" (p. 239).

The spaces created through abolition geography are not 'official' spaces in the sense that they are acknowledged or protected by law, rather they are liminal, acting as a "counterrevolution of property" in the traditional sense, making space for those who have been intentionally left out, kept out, and pushed out (Gilmore, 2017). W.E.B. Du Bois' theory of abolition democracy predates that of Gilmore's abolition geography, and offers a similar alternative vision based in creation; it is centered around the transformation from racial capitalism to liberation through the conversion of social structures and the abolition of all notions of white supremacy (Du Bois, 2013). It is based on notions of collective struggles for change, founded in common histories of the oppressed "who refused the fates offered to them in structures of settler colonialism and racial capitalism" (Heynen & Ybarra, 2020) and have instead opted to fight for liberatory alternatives.

Reclaiming abolitionist politics offers a means to "relearn many of the lessons that have been lost or erased from histories of building solidarity toward liberation" (Heynen & Ybarra, 2020). Gilmore (2017) looks at historical "displacement and redistribution of human sacrifice" (p. 227) in abolition geography to inform the development of alternatives that are based in the making of place as a means of looking at, explaining, and combating historical and contemporary racism. Abolition geography, similarly to the anti-capitalist commons, focuses on social and societal change as a means of alternative placemaking that is created by and centered around those who inhabit it. Through its conceptual nature, abolition geography provides a framework for envisioning and building physical and realized means of change. When applied to the contemporary US agricultural system it contextualizes the historical struggles of unfreedom that have existed around land and how agriculture was the original means through which models of oppression—the plantation-industrial model—were designed in the United States. This model has been replicated through time and space, within agriculture and beyond. Theorizations around the neoplantation bloc[4] show that systems of oppression are historical replications that are rooted in and manipulated by racial capitalism. Understanding the cyclical nature of systems of oppression, this research applies abolition geography to contemporary agriculture to reimagine "networks of care that have for so long been manipulated by racial capitalism" (Freshour & Williams, 2020).

3.6 Commons

This research uses the commons and commoning as additional concepts to theorize healing the metabolic rifts present within the US agricultural system. The commons, and the act of commoning are dynamic social relations, political projects, and processes through which "human beings have organized their existence for thousands of years" (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014, p. 93) as a means of management and survival. Historically, commoning has proven itself a feasible means of supporting communities at large in the face of adversity—in varieties of scale—in their abilities to protect and support themselves through acts of solidarity (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Additionally, marginalized groups, in many cases, have resorted to communal organization and collective ownership as a means of survival in the face of bias policies (Gordon Nembhard, 2014).

4 — Geographer Clyde Woods (2017) refers to new modes of the plantation model as the "neoplantation bloc", a system that produces and relies on vulnerability—he specifies the production of regional vulnerability, looking at the US South—through the prioritization of "extractivist capital accumulation and exploitation over the needs of people and the environment" (Freshour & Williams, 2020).

Moore's (2000) placement of the origin of the metabolic rift in the sixteenth century parallels the timeline of the enclosure movement in England. In his 2008 book the Magna Carter Manifesto, Peter Linebaugh identifies the sixteenth century as a pivotal historical moment not only for England but the world at large: it was the beginning of modern capitalism, privatization, and the separation of town and country (metabolic rift). These impacts were felt far beyond England as "it was an age … [that] gave birth to the prison and the Atlantic slave trade" (Linebaugh, 2008, p. 47). The simultaneous development and synergies of these movements center around the enclosure of the commons, making the re-introduction of commons models a prime subject to question the nexus of healing metabolic rifts and reparations in agriculture.

Mirroring the aforementioned triad that commonly characterizes the metabolic rift, this research will present a three-fold understanding of the commons: (1) as autonomous spaces where users have control over reproduction (and can therefore work to repair ecological metabolic rifts); (2) as a foundation that counters privatization and works to "ensure the satisfaction of people's needs and desires", (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014, p. 101) (thereby addressing social metabolic rifts), and (3) by enabling those who participate in the commons to acquire more power in relation to capital and the state by working towards new modes of production that are rooted in collective solidarity, (thereby addressing epistemic rifts) (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). This tri-part understanding is used as a map for how the commons may be able to heal racialized aspects of the metabolic rift through practice, as a manifestation of abolition geography. Further, this paper will look beyond the commons to the anti-capitalist commons as a means of analyzing the potential of commoning as a proactive tool to combat the omnipresence of racial capitalism in agriculture.

The commons and capitalism are not exclusively at odds with one another, as can be seen through the various iterations in which the commons exist. Therefore, Federici and Caffentzis (2014) explicitly name and define an anti-capitalist commons as a means through which "to transform our social relations and create an alternative to capitalism" (p. 100). The advent of neoliberalism has further normalized the privatization of land and labor, enabling it to seep into all aspects of daily life to the point where it is hardly noticed or questioned as such (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Thus, in the United States, where private property reigns supreme, hegemonic neoliberalism has further eradicated the seeming relevance and usefulness of the commons in contemporary society.

Working within the confines of a neoliberal reality, Caffentzis and Federici warn of the dangers of "soft privatization", a co-option of the commons model that offers the commons as a type of antidote to the ills of neoliberalism while ultimately being driven by a profit-motivated agenda, operating under the norms of enclosure—an appropriation that is commonly seen in 'alternative' food movements today. Caffentzis and Federici also discuss the limitations of 'gated' commons, using the example of housing co-ops where resources are open access for its members, yet guarded—at times with hostility—from those who cannot afford to buy in. They argue that these models, although powerful examples of collective action, "do not construct different social relations and may even deepen racial and intra-class divisions" (Federici, 2019, p. 91). Additionally, they ponder the commodity producing commons, looking at if, and how, the commons can produce for the market without being ruled by the market. There are numerous ways in which the commons and commoning can manifest, typically, yet not exclusively separate from the state and market (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Remembering that the commons are specific, community-oriented, and localized, it is important not to create 'models' of commons (De Angelis, 2017), but rather to identify useful frameworks and criteria which can be applied and tailored to the individuality of each commoning effort. Based on their own historical and political research, Caffentzis and Federici (2014) offer an expansive list of commoning practices including, but not limited to characteristics such as: building autonomy and new modes of production, centering shared property and community, and practicing active dynamic social relations and cooperative decision making.

The commons exist both as a physical practice and as a conceptual framework through which to envision alternative relationships with people, land, and (re) production. Massimo De Angelis (2017) identifies autonomy as a central feature that is produced by the commons arguing that "Commoning is also a constituent of rights, the 'commons rights', which should not be confused with 'legal rights'" (p. 223). Legal rights are rights granted by the state, whereas commons rights exist on the condition that they are exercised, a practice that the state can deny or restrict, but cannot grant. Linebaugh (2008) reflects similarly on the commons, noting that its collective nature exists through the contract of participatory labor. Those who participate in the commons "don't think first in terms of who owns the property, rather in terms of human needs" (p. 224). Establishing autonomy through the commons relates to autonomy from capital and the state through protesting impositions by hegemonic state norms. This autonomy relies on the internal networks of commons, a series of collective production processes based on social relations between commoners.

De Angelis offers an example: "Institutionalised capital wants us to eat GMO food? Commoners develop commons that promote permaculture, agro-ecological methods and networks of community support to agriculture that reproduces ecologies while producing food" (p. 226). His example, although not specific, paints a broader picture of how the commons can work in liminal spaces to maintain its autonomy from both the state and capital. The commons are about relationships and collective value practices derived from the work of its participants.

Within contemporary US agriculture—a heavily capitalized sector with strong influence from the state—the commons offers both theoretical and physical alternatives that may inform opportunities for autonomy for Black farmers from the traditional roles—and hold—that capital and the state currently have on agriculture. Further, the application of abolition geography to the commons encourages additional means of encompassing individuated narratives that acknowledge historical racialized exclusions and include the realities of race. The next section elaborates on the ways in which structural racism has penetrated agriculture in the United States and builds on how forms of property, propertization, and dispossession have informed the contemporary agricultural system. I then use this grounding to argue that the metabolic rift in the US is, and always has been, racialized.

Chapter 4: Grounding A Racialized Metabolic Rift

This section looks at historical racism in agriculture to argue that the metabolic rift is, and always has been racialized in the United States. To do so it explores how industrialization, consolidation, and capitalization within agriculture has "severely limited farmers' power in decision making and their ability to survive on the land" (Green,et al,. 2011, p. 50). Contextualizing these factors within US agriculture positions my argument that Black people in the US—more specifically Black farmers—have been historically dispossessed of their land largely through economic coercion and encounters between accumulation by dispossession (ABD) and systemic racism that have in many cases been legitimated by the state. The application of ABD to my argument supports how discriminatory tactics were used within and around property in agriculture, supporting how that discrimination was also used as a form and means of dispossession. These race-specific iterations of dispossession separated Black people from their land at disproportionately high rates, which is central in my argument that the metabolic rift is racialized.

Further, placing my argument that the metabolic rift is racialized within the context of industrialization, consolidation, and capitalization of US agriculture situates why and through what means dispossession at large was 'necessary' for industrial-capitalist agriculture to thrive, why and how Black Americans were disproportionately targeted to achieve such means, and why, if we are to heal racialized metabolic rifts we must look at and dismantle contemporary norms of US agriculture.

4.1 US Agriculture: Industrialization, Consolidation and Capitalization

Agriculture in the United States has been capitalized from its conception. The first European settlers came in the 15th century, with larger numbers arriving in subsequent centuries. Many of these settlers "had been peasant farmers in their home countries, forced off of previously commonly-held agricultural land due to enclosure acts which privatized agricultural land ownership and made common land access illegal" (Horst & Marion, 2018, p. 2). Upon arrival to what is now known as the United States, settlers–presumably learning from the realities of their own histories–began recording land, turning it into a commodity that could be bought and sold. This was the beginning of farmland as an appreciable asset, with its value derived independently from its use for food production (Horst & Marion, 2018; Pivo, 1984). Privatization and commodification of land is foundational to the colonial United States, the making of which occurred largely through the dispossession of Native Americans from commonly held lands. The U.S. government was instrumental in this through both their economic and legal support, relying on discriminatory policies, violence, and broken treaties as means of dispossession (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Unsurprisingly, newly acquired land was quickly privatized and put in the hands of (wealthy) White individuals (Greer, 2012).

The capitalization of agriculture continued through the plantation economy of the South as early as the 17th century. Millions of enslaved Africans and their descendants were forced to work on cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco plantations, largely for industry and export, accumulating wealth for slave owners in the South and industries and merchants in the North. Most of the accumulated wealth remained in the South in various forms of property, i.e., land and slaves (Clegg, 2019). From the initial expropriation of Native Americans from common land for the making and division of private property to plantation models of crop production for capitalist markets, property-making and racial exclusions have always been central to the capitalization of US agriculture.

The role and influence of capital in US agriculture can be framed through Kautsky's agrarian question which asks: "whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionising it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones" (Kautsky, 1988, p. 12). In the United States the answer was industrialization.

Colonial plantations set a precedent for many contemporary industrial agricultural practices, including monocultures and large-scale processing (Mintz, 1985). The replication of such models was facilitated by the increasing affordability of machinery in the 1920s (Fitzgerald, 2003), and then again with the heavy application of artificial nitrogen fertilizer after World War II. Further, the combination of increased affordability and "cultural, economic, and sociotechnical pressures" (Iles et al., 2017, p. 950) encouraged farmers to buy and farm larger tracts of land and concentrate on fewer crops. During this time many farmers "expanded their holdings to repay debt and survive in the capitalist political economy" (Iles et al., 2017, p. 950) that had penetrated agriculture. The state was further instrumental in the transition to industrial agriculture through both its research and policies, as after World War II the federal government encouraged the conversion of post-war chemical surplus into agricultural inputs, contributing to a technological increase in agriculture, with fossil fuels at its epicenter. The government continued to encourage industrial production through the creation of laws that developed price floors and commodity payments for certain crops, and the establishment of an international food aid program where subsidized surpluses could be dumped (Iles et al., 2017).

Price supports and supply control from the state remained essential for farmers, yet such support was "contingent on farmers expressing specific identities—large-scale, monoculture, technologically advanced" (Iles et al., 2017). The New Deal of 1933 offered relief to struggling farmers that supported transitions to mechanization in an effort to push agricultural modernization. To excel this transition the New Deal forced "the South into conformity with the modernist blueprint… [by] trimming away sharecroppers, tenants, and small owners" while simultaneously "providing subsidies and tax advantages for larger farmers to invest in machines and chemicals" (Daniel, 2013, p. 9). These policies disproportionately benefitted large, White farm owners, while the institutionalization "of commodity price supports reduced opportunities for would-be small-scale farmers to enter farming" (Horst & Marion, 2018, p. 5; Daniel, 2013), such as Black and other minority farmers. After the initial farm bill, price floors helped farmers to cover their costs of production, however, starting in the 1950s agribusiness began to lobby against supply controls and pushed mandates that encouraged farmers to increase production via mechanization and chemical inputs. Within this transition, the federal government was still expected to help struggling farmers through commodity payments, which ultimately functioned "as an indirect subsidy to agribusiness" (Carlisle et al., 2019).

These supports, in conjunction with increased availability of technology, continued to encourage agricultural capitalization and industrialization, facilitating consolidation (USDA, 2005). Within agriculture, consolidation refers to the transition to fewer and larger farms, a trend made feasible by the realities of industrialization. Technology's impact on agricultural consolidation can be seen through the simultaneous decline in the number of farms and rise in farm size (with a slight decline in farm size in the early 2000s) in the United States since the mid 1930s (USDA, 2020). The last three decades in particular have seen great levels of agricultural consolidation regarding land ownership and access, crop production, and ownership of means of production (USDA, 2018). Additionally, technology's influence on consolidation in agriculture can also be seen within the sector's declining agricultural workforce from 41% of the total US workforce in 1900, to 21.5% in 1930, to 1.36% in 2019 (Dimitri, Effland & Conklin, 2005; USDA 2020). The trend of agricultural consolidation has exacerbated since the 1980s, as every agricultural census since 1982—the most recent being 2017—has seen increasing trends of land and capital consolidation, ubiquitous amongst nearly all crops. Such trends are directly related to industrialization and farm specialization, as large farms tend to focus on only one or a few commodity crops, continuing to capitalize on economies of scale through mechanization. The synchronicity of policy and technology are responsible for this shift, as commodity and crop insurance in conjunction with increased mechanization facilitated large scale industrial farming and consolidation in the United States (USDA, 2018).

Today, the trend of privatization and consolidation in agriculture continues with only 3.4 million (USDA, 2019) Americans—1.3% of the US population[5]—employed in agriculture, and more than 82% of the population living in cities[6]. Additionally, merely 7.4% of US farms operate 41% of all farmland and earn 80% of total agricultural sales (USDA NASS 2012c; Horst and Marion, 2019). This consolidation is the foundation of today's food system, which has been coined by Phil McMichael (2005) as "the corporate food regime", a system that continues to be "dominated by the monopolies of the industrial agri-foods complex and politically managed by the national governments and multilateral organizations" (Holt-Giménez, 2010) that accrue power and wealth from the consolidation of these markets at the cost of small farms.

As industrialization and consolidation in agriculture put more money in the hands of fewer people, small scale farms have been increasingly pushed out of business, or otherwise encouraged to compete through the replication of industrial practices which, amongst other things, have the tendency to "damage the viability of rural communities, reduce the diversity of agricultural production, and create environmental risks through their production practices" (USDA, 2018). In the United States family farms— which the Economic Research Service defines as "one in

5 — World Bank. Employment in agriculture, United States. 2019.

6 — World Bank. Urban population, United States, 2019.

which the principal operator, and people related to the principal operator by blood or marriage, own more than half of the farm business" (USDA, 2013)—account for 98% of all existing farms. The majority of those farms (90%) are considered small farms. The small farm category is broken down further, with half of all small farms considered 'very small', meaning that they make less than $10,000 in annual sales. The other half of 'small' farmers have annual sales ranging anywhere from $10,001–$349,999, a rather broad range. Additionally, production expenses usually account for a majority of farmers' gross income, meaning that their net revenue is far lower than the aforementioned numbers (USDA, 2021).

Industrialization, consolidation, and capitalization of agriculture in the United States has "severely limited farmers' power in decision making and their ability to survive on the land" (Green et al., 2011, p. 50), yet the resulting inequalities are not uniform across all farmers. Their diversity goes beyond scale to production style, goods produced, organization, race, class, gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Green et al., 2011). Failure to acknowledge the breadth of diversity amongst farmers, as well as the intersectionality of such diversity, has led to minimal, and largely misaimed, government assistance (Green et al., 2011). In addition to diversity amongst farmers, a distinction must be made between farmers and farmworkers, as the two groups have different racial makeups and face different challenges. An overwhelming majority of farmers in the United States are White (White farmers own 98% and operate 94% of all agricultural land), while the majority of farmworkers are BIPOC, 83% of whom are Hispanic (TUFTS, 2018). Although there is much research on the adversities faced by migrant laborers in US agriculture, there is far less research on the realities of other forms of racism in farming and the compounding impacts of structural racism in US agriculture on minority farmers today.

One example of this is made clear within agricultural land ownership and access to land, as most land is privately held, yet due to historical discrimination and systemic racism BIPOC have a disproportionately harder time gaining access to land (Tabuchi & Popovich, 2021; Marion & Horst, 2019). Determining how historical laws—both those related directly to agriculture and otherwise—have contributed to structural racism within agriculture is an essential component of understanding the contemporary struggles of Black farmers and is necessary for determining a path towards agricultural equity, reparations and healing racialized metabolic rifts.

4.2 Discrimination as Dispossession: Historical Racism and Land Access

This section argues that discrimination functions as a form of dispossession and looks at how the historical agricultural realities described above are examples and functions of racialized metabolic rifts. The current racial composition of farmers in the United States is rooted in a "lingering legacy of a long history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination in both government programs and the private sector" (Carlisle et al., 2019, p. 4). In 1920 there were nearly 32 million farmers in the United States, of which 1 million were Black (US Census of Agriculture, 1920; Tabuchi & Popovich, 2021). Today, of the roughly 2.7 million people working in agriculture in the US—including both farm owners and farm workers—only 1.4% are Black, and cumulatively own just .5% of all agricultural farmland (USDA, 2017). These contemporary realities can be traced back through centuries of dispossession and discrimination.

Just days after the abolition of slavery in January 1865, newly freed Black Americans were promised 40 acres and a mule; land that would be redistributed from Confederate landowners. This decision was prompted by a conversation between General William T. Sherman and Black religious leaders in Savannah, Georgia. During this conversation one of the religious leaders said: "The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor–that is, by the labor of the women and children and old men; and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare…We want to be placed on the land until we are able to buy it and make it our own" (Freedmen and Southern Society Project, 2021). From this conversation it was clear that land was a means through which to achieve autonomy and independence for those who had been formerly enslaved, a means through which to employ embodied agricultural knowledge.

By June of the same year, 400,000 acres were identified and broken down into 40-acre parcels for nearly 4 million formerly enslaved persons. Yet, this promise was promptly broken by President Andrew Johnson, a renown white supremacist—a prominent slave owner known for his initiation and signature of the Indian Removal Act of 1830—who overturned the order within the year (Clayton, Moore, & Jones-Eversley, 2021). As arguably the first attempt at reparations for Black people in the United States, 40 acres and a mule foreshadowed much of the discrimination and dispossession around land and agriculture that was to come over the next 150 years.

The broken promise of 40 acres and a mule left many formerly enslaved persons without land, money, or an education. After centuries of employing passed down ancestral and embodied agricultural knowledge to US soil—both on plantations and within subsistence gardens—many Black Americans were suddenly further excluded from the land and therefore from practicing such knowledge. Presented with limited options after enslavement, many Black Americans were pigeonholed into sharecropping, a form of indentured servitude that did not provide an entryway to landownership (Packman, 2020). This intentional preclusion of Black people from owning land after emancipation functioned as a type of pre-dispossession as it inhibited Black people—who under centuries of enslavement were not able to accumulate wealth—from a realistic means of acquiring land. Further, it highlights a racialized epistemic rift as it was a racially targeted exclusion that kept many Black Americans from practicing forms of embodied agricultural knowledge.

Beginning in the 1890s, Jim Crow laws legalized segregation and contributed to social, legal, and commercial discrimination in the United States. Yet, despite efforts from both the government and laypeople to keep Black Americans from owning property, by the early 1900s Black Americans had amassed roughly 16 million acres of land, largely in the South (Daniel, 2013). Black agricultural land ownership reached its peak in 1920, with nearly one million Black farmers. However, "through a variety of means—sometimes legal, often coercive, in many cases legal and coercive, occasionally violent—farmland owned by black people came into the hands of white people" (Newkirk II., 2019). In addition to the legal and coercive means used to strip Black people of their land, "racial terrorism and discriminatory agrarian policies" (Carlisle et al., 2019, p. 4) contributed to the Great Migration of more than 6 million Black Americans to cities in the North and West of the country between 1916 and 1970. This mass exodus was encouraged by a combination of segregationist laws, the impacts of agricultural technology on rural life, and because many Black farmers "were denied loans, information, and access to programs essential to survival in a capital-intensive farm structure" (Daniel, 2013, p. 2).

Further, there was opportunity in industrial factories in the North during WWI, which in the face of mass dispossession provided a reason for many Black Americans to leave the rural South and settle in Northern cities. Under such realities the Black population in the United States became increasingly urban and much of "the public lost touch with traditional farming" (Daniel, 2013, p. 10).

The Great Migration created physical separations from the land, an estrangement that also defined new relationships to labor as race-based forced dispossession separated millions from their means of production, transforming them into laborers with nothing to sell but their labor power (Daniel, 2013; Levien, 2012). This targeted dispossession and the ensuing transformation of labor relationships for millions of Black Americans highlight both racialized epistemic and social rifts. The Great Migration depicts an encounter between accumulation by dispossession (ABD) and systemic racism, showing how Black communities in the United States have been actively redirected away from (rural) land ownership for capitalist gain. Levien's (2012) explanation of the state's role in facilitating this relationship within ABD also highlights the state's role in perpetuating racialized metabolic rifts. Firstly, he describes ABD as a "political process in which states – or other coercion wielding entities – use extra-economic force to help capitalists overcome barriers to accumulation" (Levien, 2012, p. 940). This puts the dynamic relationship between capitalists and the state into perspective including why "Capitalists increasingly look to the state to expropriate land through eminent domain" (Levien, 2012, p. 941), and how the state legitimizes racialized metabolic rifts through iterations of 'legalized' dispossession.

Other examples of 'legalized' dispossession can be seen in the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) long history of discrimination that has been recorded—and often ignored—on numerous occasions. In July 1980, a USDA Civil Rights Office investigation investigated the abuses of the organization. The director of Legal Services of Costal Plains John W. Garland "noted not only FmHA's (Farmers Home Administration) discriminatory treatment but also 'the blatant attempts to silence critics and retaliation against farmers who seek redress'" (Daniel, 2013, p. 249). Further evidence of discrimination was uncovered regarding, but not limited to, "biased real estate appraisals, delayed approving loans for blacks…no deferred-payment schedule for blacks, and [the requirement of] some black farmers to voluntarily liquidate as a loan condition" (Daniel, 2013, p. 249), all of which contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the loss of Black farmland. Many of the same claims and sentiments were repeated in the Pigford v. Glickman lawsuit of 1997.

Since its foundation, the USDA has excluded Black and other minority farmers from loans, crop insurance, and other programs through sustained, state-legitimized discrimination. The Pigford v. Glickman federal discrimination lawsuit of 1997 highlights both the rampant frequency and breadth of structural racism within the USDA. This historic class action discrimination lawsuit was brought against the US Department of Agriculture on behalf of Black farmers who claimed that they had been discriminated against by the organization based on their race between 1981 and 1996; nearly 23,000 eligible class members filed claims. The USDA was accused of discrimination regarding both applications for federal financial aid and for the failure to investigate allegations of discrimination brought against them by Black farmers (Cowan & Feder, 2013). When Judge Friedman made his ruling on the case in 1999, he began his decision by referencing the broken promise of 40 acres and a mule, citing the historical continuation of racism and broken promises within US agriculture (Daniel, 2013).

The Pigford v. Glickman trials highlight how for thousands of Black and other minority farmers, federal discrimination has ultimately functioned—and continues to function—as a form of dispossession. Whether through actively racist policies, coercion, or complicity, the federal government has played an active role in the dispossession of Black land through proactive discrimination. Over a decade after the trial, congress finally appropriated the funds won from Pigford v. Glickman under the Obama administration in 2010, allotting $1.25 billion to eligible Black farmers. Judge Friedman acknowledged that this settlement would neither correct the wrongs of past—nor guarantee the prevention of future—discrimination yet hoped that it would at the very least be a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, and perhaps unsurprisingly to most, funding arrived too late "to save hundreds of thousands of farms lost by minority and women farmers" (Daniel, 2013, p. 263), nor can it be said that discrimination within the USDA has completely ceased after the trial. It did, however open "avenues to address discrimination aimed at the broader minority farm population" (Daniel, 2013, p. 263), with several more discrimination suits filed by Indigenous, Laitnx, and women farmers in the following years.

The contemporary reality of the above-mentioned examples of racialized dispossession is that Black agricultural land ownership has decreased by approximately 90 percent since the early 20th century (Tabuchi & Popovich, 2021), while the number of Black farmers has fallen by 98 percent (Philpott 2020b). Conversely, the number of White farmers has fallen by less than fifty percent since 1920 (USDA 1920, 2017).

Although there has been a significant overall decline in the US farming population since the early 20th century, Black farmers have been disproportionately impacted, today accounting for just 1.4 percent of all US farmers and owning approximately only .5 percent of all agricultural land (Philpott 2020a; 2017 Census of Agriculture Highlights Black Producers). Over the last century the transition to industrial capitalist agriculture has transformed agricultural realities more generally, but has done so unevenly, intersecting with racial, social, economic, and political discriminations.

Similarly to the reframing of primitive accumulation to accumulation by dispossession to clarify a re-occurring process, this research intends to make clear that the metabolic rift is also not a one-time occurrence, but rather a series of interconnected and iterative rifts that are racialized. Ecological imbalances tend to follow social ones as new relationships to labor, which in this case are informed through encounters between ABD and systemic racism, isolate people from the land, thereby breaking natural ecological cycles. The above argued iterations of forced dispossession create automatically racialized ecological rifts, as Black people were removed from the land and encouraged towards urban areas at a disproportionately high rate. Further, Black farmers who remained on the land were—and arguably still are—under pressure to conform to industrial capitalist agricultural practices, that, as they are practiced in the United States tend to enhance metabolic rifts. Additionally, I argue that the racialization of ecological rifts is visible through what is referred to as environmental racism, a term coined by civil rights leader Ben Chavis, who defines it as the ubiquity of racism within environmental policy and law enforcement that negatively impacts people of color and excludes them from decision making (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Many existing ecological rifts were not created by communities of color, yet, in many instances, are felt disproportionately and more significantly by them. Examples of environmental racism occur daily across the United States and are seen through the fact that BIPOC communities have higher levels of exposure to air pollution than their White counterparts, that landfills and other hazardous waste sites are more likely to be located in communities of color, that impacts of climate change are felt most by low-income communities of color (one can look to the recent example of Hurricane Ida in New Orleans), and that low-income communities of color have limited access to clean water and high levels of contamination (Flint, MI) (World Economic Forum, 2020). Secondly—and furthering the irony—is that BIPOC farmers are generally responsible for the invention and implementation of ecologically sound farming practices that have often been devalued in favor of industrial practices yet have been historically precluded from practicing them and then are forced to deal with the ecological repercussions imposed by industrial agribusiness and corporations.

4.3 Contemporary Realities of Racialized Metabolic Rifts

This research has briefly summarized the long history of racial discrimination in US agriculture as well as its compounding effects for Black farmers. It has also made clear that contemporary discrimination, in agriculture and otherwise, is still prominent in the United States, and that the state has been largely proactive in many cases. Theories on racial capitalism help inform and ground historical and structural racism within US agriculture and demonstrate how Black people in the United States—through iterations of racial capitalism and structural racism—have been both defined as property in the making of the colonial US and later excluded from property in the post-antebellum South. In the United States where private property reigns supreme the fact that Africans and their descendants were regarded as property—a means for accumulating wealth—only to then later be excluded from owning property of their own is a profound and foundational structurally racialized inequality, one on which the United States is built.

Further, the state's active role in centuries of racialized dispossession and discrimination highlights that structural harm "cannot be remedied by individual claims of discrimination. The government's systemic denial of loans and subsidies to farmers of color throughout the 20th century resulted in mammoth losses of intergenerational wealth" (Pandittharatne, 2021), which the state now must reconcile. Loss of Black land due to dispossession translates directly to "a transfer of wealth from Black to primarily white Americans conservatively worth $300 billion" (Philpott, 2020b), further exacerbating the historical racial wealth gap. The origins of this wealth gap are grounded in the 246 years of Chattel Slavery in the United States, exacerbated by Jim Crow and dispossession, and maintained through contemporary discriminatory policies. Today, the racial wealth gap is significant in both rural and urban areas and is experienced at higher levels for BIPOC communities in rural areas. Additionally, underemployment for rural Blacks has historically been higher than that of rural Whites and urban Blacks (Slack, Thiede, & Jensen, 2018). Not only is underemployment higher for BIPOC communities, but BIPOC are "more likely than whites to be persistently poor (as measured by being poor over a two-year period) in both urban and rural settings" (Pandittharatne, 2021), with rural inequality felt most predominantly by Black Americans. Urban racial wealth gaps are also significant; a 2015 study entitled The Color of Wealth in Boston funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that the median net worth of Black people in the city was $8 compared to the median net worth of White people in Boston of $247,500. These numbers, although they do not tell the entire story, are a representation of how centuries of dispossession in a multitude of forms have manifested and continue to manifest in contemporary society.

Theories on the metabolic rift help expand notions of how, through the support of the state, current standards of US industrial agriculture perpetuate racialized social, ecological, and epistemic divides that ultimately perpetuate racial inequalities. Understanding that these rifts were built on racial foundations also highlights how these divides have and continue to pursue racialized directions. I argue that analyzing these contemporary realities through relationships of property and property-making helps explain and clarify the positive feedback cycles that exist within discrimination in the agrifood system that perpetuate inequality for farmers and people of color. I have argued that the forced dispossession of Black land and the ensuing loss of generational wealth in conjunction with historical structural racism has significantly limited opportunities for Black farmers, especially as it relates to owning the means of production and accumulating wealth. Property holds a central role within the racialization of metabolic rifts for several reasons: (1) Black people were viewed as property in the making of the Colonial United States, (2) Black people have been actively excluded from property after emancipation, (3) private property is the epicenter around which US agriculture is centered, and (4) contemporary agricultural wealth is largely based in farm real estate. Finally, through placing the metabolic rift within the context of industrialization, consolidation, and capitalization of US agriculture this chapter has situated how accumulation by dispossession was racialized by the state in favor of industrial-capitalist agricultural practice, why and how Black Americans were disproportionately targeted to achieve such means, and why, if we are to heal racialized metabolic rifts we must look at and dismantle contemporary norms of US agriculture.

Chapter 5: Black Commons Projects

This chapter looks at how people involved in Black Commons Projects (BCP) envision land use and the future of agriculture. It first provides a brief historical overview of the significance of collective projects, particularly within Black Agrarianism and resistance movements, and then looks at six case reviews of contemporary BIPOC-led agricultural collective, cooperative, and commons projects. Through open coding I established four main themes that identify how people involved in Black Commons Projects perceive and relate to the land as well agricultural futures: (1) land as sovereignty (2) the transformation from struggle to empowerment through agriculture (3), community building and healing, and (4) autonomy and liberation as ultimate goals. Sections 5.2-5.5 look specifically at, and are named after, each identified theme and elaborate on the perspectives of the reviewed cases. In section 5.6 lessons from these case reviews are then discussed in relation to structural issues in the food system and how they might transform common agricultural futures.

5.1 Collective Resistance: The Power of Cooperatives

Collective resistance by Africans and African Americans in the United States dates back to the origins of slavery, with both enslaved peoples and formerly enslaved escapees using forms of cooperation and collective existences "to survive enslavement, gain freedom, and advance economically" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, p. 33). Furthermore, "abolitionists and abolitionist societies deliberately established Negro-organized communities and communes to house freed African Americans" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, p. 34). These early examples of Black communalism highlight the grounding of collective and cooperative living that have existed for centuries in various iterations. In her book Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice, Jessica Gordon Nembhard provides a thorough history of just that. Generally, "cooperatives are companies owned by the people who use their services member-owners form the company for a particular purpose: to satisfy an economic or social need, to provide a quality good or service (one that the market is not adequately providing) at an affordable price, or to create an economic structure to engage in needed production or facilitate more equal distribution to compensate for market failure" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, P. 2).

There are many benefits associated with cooperative models as they are based on and run by—similarly to commons models—the community that they are intending to serve. Cooperatives typically address multiple forms of economic and environmental sustainability and address a 'triple bottom line' regarding ecological sustainability; social sustainability, including mutuality and participation; and economic sustainability (Gordon Nembhard 2014). This triality of cooperative models parallels the above mentioned three-fold understanding of the commons that mirrors the tri-part definition of the metabolic rift:

1. ecological sustainability: as autonomous spaces where users have control over reproduction (and can therefore work to repair ecological metabolic rifts);

2. social sustainability: a model that counters privatization and works to "ensure the satisfaction of people's needs and desires", (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014) (thereby addressing social metabolic rifts), and

3. economic sustainability: by enabling those who participate in the commons to acquire more power in relation to capital and the state by working towards new modes of production that are rooted in collective solidarity, (thereby addressing epistemic rifts) (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014).

Similarly to the anti-capitalist commons, cooperatives work to "modify capitalist principles" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). Because they are focused on meeting the needs of community members, they "are understood more for their unique contribution to community development, particularly community-based economic development" and function as "group-centered, need-based, and asset-building local development models based on the pooling of resources, democratic economic participation, and profit sharing" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, pp 12-13). One of the most significant examples of Black cooperatives in agriculture, and perhaps in general, is the Freedom Farm Corporation founded by Fannie Lou Hamer in 1969. In 1964, Hamer co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) which focused on addressing voting and civil rights, as well as poverty, with a central focus on hunger, out of which the Freedom Farm was born. Hamer recognized the political power of food and how it was often used as a weapon (Height, 2003). The intention of the Freedom Farm "was to address economic need, human suffering, and racial discrimination by creating economic self-sufficiency for poor Blacks through co-op ownership" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, pp. 179-180; Lee, 2000) and the creation of a cooperatively run Black farm.

Within its relatively short lifespan, "Freedom Farm institutionalized a structure and process for low-income and destitute rural people to feed themselves, own their homes, farm cooperatively, and create small businesses together in order to support a sustainable food system, land ownership, and economic independence" (Gordon Nembhard, 2014, p. 181). Freedom Farm originated with 60 acres and later grew to over 600. Through fundraising and donations, they purchased over $60,000 worth of large-scale agricultural equipment which was used collectively by farmers. In addition to crops Freedom Farm had a "pig bank" that from an initial donation of 55 pigs bred over 2,000. The intention behind the pig bank was to give people the tools to meet their own needs and so provided them with a pregnant sow under the premise that participants would return two piglets from each litter back to the pig bank, which would later be donated to other families who would continue the model. (Gordon Nembhard 2014, p. 180). In addition to the agricultural component the farm also consisted of several types of social services such as food stamps and disaster relief and helped roughly fifteen hundred families (Mills, 2007). Shortcomings in management and organization as well as a series of unfortunate health events ultimately led to the downfall of the cooperative, a topic that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.2.2. However, although it closed in 1977, less than ten years after opening, Freedom Farm is both a beacon of hope and shining example of what can be achieved through collective action in agriculture.

5.2 Case Overviews

In the remainder of this chapter, I will elaborate on the data that I collected from the six selected cases. The cases investigated in this research all meet four main criteria: (1) they are Black and POC-led, (2) they self-identify as a collective, cooperative, or commons project, (3) they focus on agriculture as a means of transformation, and (4) they are based in the United States. Below I will provide a brief overview of the selected cases. Because the data taken for this research is all publicly available online, and no one was interviewed directly, I have chosen to use the true names of each organization with the intention of highlighting the work that they are doing. Additionally, this research is based on the advocacy work of the selected cases and is highlighting their work to make a case for what reparations in agriculture could look like. For this reason—because I am using their work and their claims to make this case—I think that it is important to use their names.

After these brief introductions I will then investigate the four themes that I identified in my research. The sections will be broken up by each of the four themes that I identified during open coding and will be used to guide discussion. Further, I will address some of the categories, subcategories, and codes that I identified while coding and how they led me to define the four themes. The following four sections are named after the themes that I identified during open coding: First, I will look at the theme of land as sovereignty (5.3), then the transformation from struggle to empowerment through agriculture (5.4), community building and healing (5.5), and autonomy and liberation as ultimate goals (5.6). Finally, section 5.7 will shed light onto how these discourses can inform alternative agricultural futures.

The Black Yard Farm Cooperative[7]
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative is a newly established farm cooperative "created by 5 young Black and Latinx farmers/ entrepreneurs in the Bronx working together to build a supportive community for Black farmers and creatives". The farm consists of several components including livestock, cut flowers and wholesale vegetables and educational programs, with the mission of connecting "Black folks with the opportunity to steward land for sustenance". Based on their GoFundMe Page, they are in the process of raising capital for (1) developing a replicable cooperative farm model that can be used to bolster future Black farmers, (2) purchasing equipment, (3) creating a BIPOC-centric educational curriculum, and (4) supporting land access for Black farmers. The farm is located in New York State.

7 — The Black Yard Farm Cooperative has since renamed to The Black Yard Farm Collective.

Black Earth Farms

Black Earth Farms is a "Black and Indigenous led agroecology collective" comprised of farmers, land stewards, artists and others who focus on agroecology as a means of teaching the local community "to build collectivized, autonomous, and chemical free food systems". The farm is located and dedicated to food sovereignty in the Bay Area of California, specifically the Occupied Karkin Ohlone & Chochenyo Territory, and is focused on food distribution and access. The people involved at Black Earth Farms refer to themselves as "a revolutionary youth coalition of militant peasants in the struggle for liberation", using food and farming as their main medium for change.

Sylvanaqua Farms

In January 2021, Sylvanaqua had officially become a collective comprised of three business—40 Acres Community Ranch, a livestock farm; Choptico Farm, a produce farm; and Sylvanaqua Farms, a processing and marketing facility—as well as a non-profit, the Chesapeake Food and Environmental Trust. The mission of this collective was to build "a sustainable, restorative, integrated food economy in the Chesepeake Bay region, with a mission to feed millions of people and protect all the land and water in Baltimore, Washington D.C., Richmond, and the cities of the Virginia Tidewater, and the spaces between". However, four months later, in May 2021, interpersonal issues within the collective led to its dissolution. Sylvanaqua Farms is once again operating independently but is looking to re-build a collective founded on the same mission.

National Black Food & Justice Alliance (NBFJA)

The NBFJA is a national organization that "represents hundreds of Black urban and rural farmers, organizers, and land stewards…working together towards… institution building and advocacy work protecting Black land and [working] towards food sovereignty". As a coalition of Black-led organizations the NBFJA is dedicated to supporting Black leadership and communities and organizing for Black self-determination and sovereignty through institution building, direct action, building visibility and the creation of intentional space for Black urban and rural farmers, land stewards, and organizers.

Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN)
Formed in February 2006, the DBCFSN was created in response to the observation that many of the people involved in and leading the urban agriculture movement in Detroit were young, White, and not from the city. The DBCFSN felt that the movement for food justice in Detroit, a city with a majority Black population, should "grow organically from the people whom they are designed to serve". From their founding, DBCFSN has planted several urban farms, developed food security policies, created a youth development program, and is developing a food co-op located in Detroit's North End, a low and moderate-income neighborhood, that will be open to the public. The BCFSN centers community development in all their sector projects through food security, justice, and sovereignty.

Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC LT)
The NEFOC LT is a regional organization that is building a "hybrid model land trust, bringing together a community land trust model and a conservation land trust model to reimagine land access as well as conservation and stewardship" for BIPOC communities in the Northeast United States. With the goal of advancing land sovereignty, NEFOC LT is working to secure land tenure, conserve land, and center BIPOC voices. Additionally, they are developing access to farmer training for famers of color and engaging in policy and advocacy work on local, regional, state, and national levels. NEFOC LT is incubated by Soul Fire Farm.

5.2.1 Land as Sovereignty

Throughout my research, an intriguing paradox revealed itself surrounding the simultaneous historical trauma for Black Americans regarding their relationship to land and farming, as well as strong (positive) ones. When coding the selected cases, these relationships with land made themselves apparent in various iterations through their connections to time and ancestry. Relationships with land were broken up into three subcategories: (1) historical ties to land, (2) creating contemporary access to land, and (3) future healing through land. I identified two main narratives within historical relationships to land as they relate to agriculture: oppression and connection. The former narrative of oppression is largely remembered and discussed with words such as displacement, dispossession, exclusion, trauma, marginalization, and colonial harm. They are used in reference to the centuries of slavery and dispossession endured by their ancestors. Many of these codes are used directly in the following quotes or their sentiment is alluded to through alternative phrasing. Conversely, there is a narrative of strong, positive ancestral connection to land and farming which is discussed with words such as tradition(al), ancestral, roots, reclaim, deep, and plentiful.

The trauma connected with Chattel Slavery, colonization, centuries of oppression and discrimination surrounding property (in agriculture), and contemporary structural racism within and beyond the USDA have all been cited as discouraging many BIPOC from entering agricultural spaces. Yet these selected cases, choosing to fully recognize historical land trauma for Black and other POC, have also chosen to revel in strong, positive, ancestral connections to agriculture and its historical use as a means of resistance and rebuilding. The National Black Food & Justice Alliance writes:

> *The work of Black people in food and land justice is deep and plentiful… From natural healer Dr. Alvenia Fulton to Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative in Mississippi and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives work protecting Black farmers to national influences such as the Nation of Islam's work (How to Eat to Live) to the revolutionary survival work of the Black Panther Party, we have a long, rich tradition of Black food security and collective Black food justice and healing work that is often made invisible by mainstream omission.*

This sentiment, of strong historical relationships to agriculture as a means of resistance in various instances of oppression was also echoed by others. Historical relationships to land rest in a complicated space between freedom and oppression. Although arduous, this space highlights the centrality of land in the fight for sovereignty and liberation. The exclusion of marginalized peoples from land has been explicitly used as a tool to oppress freedoms. The centrality of land in the fight for Black sovereignty is not a new development, but rather has been a constant and fundamental pillar in ongoing struggles for equality. The National Black Food & Justice Alliance write that "Land has always been the foundation of our dreams Land, safe space and the means for self-determination continues to be assaulted and undermined thus the need to form an organized, multifaceted and collective long-term response is urgent". They then close with a quote by Malcom X: "Land is the basis for freedom, justice and equality" (November 10, 1963), expressing their part in and continuation of a long-standing movement. Within this framework there is also a desire to take back the narrative surrounding Black Americans and their relationship to agriculture to create a positive means of (re)connecting with land and farming. Ideas of contemporary access to land are rooted in notions of reconnection, collective visioning, security, and equity.

The Black Yard Farm Cooperative explicitly refer to their desire to shift negative historical narratives to positive ones:

> *The Black Yard Farm Cooperative is dedicated to disrupting the racist and exclusionary spaces that prevent Black farmers from connecting to the land and healing…Black people have had a traumatic relationship with land in this country, we've been exploited and continue to be devalued and systemically displaced…We want to disrupt the narrative that our connection to the land started with Chattel Slavery and build a positive connection with the land while providing opportunity to learn restorative practices, and gain hands-on farm experience in an environment free of exploitation.*

Just as dispossession of and exclusion from land have been historical means of domination and oppression, access to land has both provided space for resistance and offered opportunity. Contemporary BIPOC-led agricultural projects are harnessing the potentials of such opportunity by bringing people back to the land to (re)discover their own personal relationships to it. Additionally, these agricultural organizations are encouraging possibilities surrounding land for future generations who may be looking to land as a means of healing, a profession, or otherwise. This vision of what the future of land access could look like not only centers notions of reconnecting with the land, but also of restoring balances, advancing skills and knowledge, realizing autonomy, centering community, and protecting Black land. Black Earth Farms addresses how historical dispossession and subsequent harms have shaped contemporary relationships to land when they write "The privatization of land is the framework through which colonized and oppressed Indigenous people across the planet are denied access to their ancestral homelands which historically provided them with sustenance and wellness…".

This quote also highlights how the separation of people from the land deprives them of their sovereignty regarding health and wellness as it denies them of the ability to practice their traditions and desired agricultural methods, and ultimately makes them reliant on others. Chris Newman of Sylvanaqua Farms echoes many of these sentiments when he says:

> *One of the biggest things that's led to poor health, especially among Indigenous people has been a removal from our traditional diets. Native people would be removed from their traditional homelands, and they'd be forced onto a reservation, forced onto a farm and it's interesting where the parallels are between African Americans being forced to farm and us having this cultural aversion to this idea of farming because it's slavery. For Native people there's a parallel where farming is almost like a form of surrender. (See Appendix B)*

Land is the genesis from which further change is founded; regaining access to land not only promotes reconnection to history and tradition but inspires sovereignty beyond it, a grounding from which to continue building. It is a means through which one can reclaim autonomy beyond oppression to become self-sufficient. Within these cases access to and 'control' over land do not refer to privatization or exclusion, but rather alternatives to it, with the intention of creating space for those who have typically been excluded from it. NBFJA summarizes this sentiment when they write that to sustain and protect Black land "we must move past individual notions of ownership, which still left us vulnerable under racial capitalism", reiterating land ownership as a communal tool through which to achieve collective solidarity.

5.2.2 Transformation from Struggle to Empowerment through Agriculture

This theme echoes one identified by farmer and scholar, Leslie Touzeau (2019), in her piece "Being stewards of land is our legacy": Exploring the lived experiences of young black farmers. Touzeau identifies four themes, one of which she labels "From Struggle to Empowerment". Because this research centers both land access for agriculture and land access more generally I felt that it was important to be explicit about the role of agriculture within this transformation. The historical relationship that many Black Americans have with land is centered around "Centuries of slavery, racism, and exploitation" surrounding a forced "agrarian life for the benefit of American agriculture" (Touzeau 2019). Words including reclaim, lift-up, strengthen, liberate, connect, support, restore, and empower were often used within the reviewed cases to signal the transition from fraught historical relationships with agriculture to it as a means of reappropriating a formerly oppressive narrative to one of strength. Additionally, as mentioned in the section above there are also many positive historical associations with agriculture where it has provided a means of sovereignty and resistance. Black Earth Farms discusses how both historical aspects motivate their mission:

> *Our work regenerates our community's connection to and reverence for land and agriculture, which was partially severed from our ancestors through colonial violence, and from our elders through multinational corporate exploitation, food system consolidation, and racist actions of the usda…One of our main priorities is to…further food justice and food sovereignty for low-income, Black and Indigenous communities, families and individuals…*

In each of the reviewed cases there is acknowledgment of the past with the intention of transforming the perception and historical narrative of agriculture for BIPOC by using it to reappropriate a narrative that was forced upon them.

This is done through highlighting the past strength that land and food has brought to BIPOC communities and harnessing it to further positive connections to food and farming. Looking towards positive historical connections to land and agriculture, there is a general consensus among the reviewed cases that constructive relationships with food and farming have transformational capabilities both for and beyond the individual. The National Black Food & Justice Alliance touch upon building visibility in this arena:

> *The work of Black people in food and land justice is deep and plentiful…We know that Black narratives around food and land exist and help to deepen our collective understanding, affirming that Black liberation is intricately connected to land and our means to community control of our food systems… Reframing narratives around Black food and land via our historic struggles and our own family histories (documented and told through our own lens) deeply transforms the relationships our people have with food and land.*

Each of the selected organizations made an active choice in using land, and more specifically agriculture, as a means of transformation more broadly within BIPOC communities. These proactive decisions to empower communities locally, regionally, and nationally through agriculture are rooted in the taking back of a formerly imposed narrative. Again, echoing the research of Leslie Touzeau, reviewed cases refer to turning to agriculture as a natural and obvious choice both as it relates to historical roots and the promise of future community empowerment and sovereignty. Black Earth Farms write explicitly on this citing that "Relationships with soil, plants, food, and medicine are direct lines of communication and connection with our ancestors…Healing from trauma and ancestral wounds is an essential part of liberation". Further, NEFOC LT acknowledges that transforming these narratives also requires the acknowledgement that Black people are not the only ones who have experienced dispossession and other land related traumas in the United States, and that their own liberation as it relates to land cannot be built on the continued oppression of other marginalized peoples:

> *In order for us to move forward with respect and reciprocity while linking farmers of color with land, it is essential to center the voices of Indigenous peoples of these territories first, so that we do not cause further harm via the colonial violence of land access without consent.*

This transformation from struggle to empowerment is grounded in the acknowledgement and harnessing of historical connections to land, particularly as they relate to ecological and community stewardship. Chris Newman of Sylvanaqua Farms, who is Black and Indigenous[8] discusses how his work is grounded in both Black and Indigenous forms of land conceptualization and practice:

8 — Chris Newman is enrolled in the Choptico Band of Piscataway Indians

…what we're doing at Sylvanaqua Farms…is anarchist and [goes] back to my Indigenous roots which is combining the ethics that you see from a lot of Latinx and African American farmers who are very good at growing row crops…that are grown sustainably…in a way that [rebuilds] soil and creates ecosystem services… combining that with an Indigenous method of farming collectively where you're farming at a very large scale…so that you're able to have a positive ecological impact on an entire watershed or an entire microbiome… (See Appendix B)

The transformation alluded to in this section does not only refer to that of agricultural narratives but also ecological ones. Engaging with the land is also a taking back of traditional agricultural practices, a dismissal of industrial agricultural norms and an application of reimagined futures.

5.2.3 Community Building and Healing

Community is a central aspect within all the reviewed cases and is typically used in two senses: the first refers to local, immediate BIPOC communities and the second refers to the BIPOC community at large in the United States. The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) is comprised of several components, one of which is the D-Town farm, which has the explicit mission of community building. More generally, DBCFSN seeks "to build community self-reliance and change our consciousness about food". Additionally, their Food Warrior's Youth Development Program teaches young people about "all aspects of the food system… so that they become empowered to make decisions around food" through education and autonomy.

The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC LT) centers community through their combination of community land trust and conservation land trust models that support conservation through Black, Indigenous, and POC community stewardship. Their work speaks to both iterations of community support:

The food system was built on stolen land and stolen labor of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and people of color. Members of the Northeast Farmers of Color Network are claiming our sovereignty and call for reparations of land and resources so that we can grow nourishing food and distribute it to our communities…Our desire is to connect POC farmers to land to grow healthy foods and medicines for our communities and plan to accomplish this by acquiring and returning land to Indigenous nations and respectfully connecting Black…and other POC farmers and land stewards to land while centering and respecting Indigenous sovereignty.

NEFOC LT supports BIPOC communities not only through their land trust model but also through their goal of acquiring land to "build a flagship community with incubator farms, [and] commons for production". In addition, they also collaborate with other organizations to facilitate access to various resources for BIPOC farmers as yet another means of bolstering BIPOC communities in the greater sense. On their website, they discuss why there is such a profound need for an organization such as their own, to which they answer that there is, and always has been, overwhelming support for White farmers. This support has translated to a reality where the majority of agricultural land and financial assistance is in the hands of White farmers which consequently means that such a system privileges farmers with access to capital and leaves "little support for farmers of color who often work on a **smaller, more sustainable scale**"[9]. The desire to build and support community is not unique to agriculture, rather agriculture is one historical means through which that end may be achieved. The NBFJA "continues the tradition of Black institution building by creating an organized framework for collective visioning and action around food and land issues impacting Black people". They elaborate on how the creation of spaces and institutions within Black communities can encourage structural change:

> *The development of these systems allows for Black food grown to get to Black plates in a way that circulates Black wealth and resources in Black communities leading to less extractive and more self-determining food economies.*

Furthermore, other cases discuss the need for structural change to create impact beyond their individual organization. Within most of these projects there is mention of active concerted efforts to create replicable models that can be used by others to further support Black farmers in the fight for sovereignty. The Black Yard Farm Cooperative cites developing "a successful and replicable farm cooperative model" as a major focus of their project with the intention of bolstering the efforts of future Black farmers. Additionally, DBCFSN notes the importance of community building centered around sustainability and future generations. Through their combination of policy development, farm, youth programming, and food co-op they are building systems that support greater structural change within Detroit. Although the processes and scales of each organization may be different, the importance of and need for structural change feels equally recognized and acted upon by individual farms and larger scale regional and national organizations, each working in the manners most feasible to their operations to effect change beyond the individual.

The desire to build and support community comes with the desire for healing and future growth. Healing through land relates back to themes of longstanding historical connections to land, farming, and collective action.

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9 — Bolding done by NEFOC LT

NBFJA centers healing in their mission citing that they "approach food sovereignty, land and self-determining food economies through the lens of healing, organizing & resistance against anti-Blackness". They elaborate further on relationships with land claiming that access to land has a central role in the healing process and can foster capacity building centered around "accountability and restorative/ transformative justice [that] allows for deep healing and change". Black Earth Farms echoes the need for healing, making connections to ancestral (land) trauma. They discuss the need to heal through agriculture from trauma that has been imposed on their ancestors through "colonial nation state systems [that] have denied [them] access to healing and wellness" through the dispossession of their land. The Black Yard Farmer Cooperative focuses on existing barriers and identifies as an organization "dedicated to disrupting racism and exclusionary spaces that prevent Black farmers from connecting to the land and healing", not only acknowledging the need for restoration, but acting in resistance and solidarity for their community.

Healing refers not only to the personal, emotional, and spiritual, but also to that of ecological healing. Black Yard Farm Cooperative operates with the intention of "increasing ecological biodiversity and instilling responsible and mindful land practices for future generations". Further, NBFJA echoes this sentiment when they write: "We work to build healthy, ecologically sound connections to the land in all its manifestations". There is a seeming interconnectedness both in the desire to heal and the effects of healing, for if land is to be used as a means to build community and heal, it is only natural that the land be nurtured in return.

5.2.4 Autonomy and Liberation as Ultimate Goals

Within each of the selected cases the movement for autonomy and liberation for Black and other farmers of color through land access is paramount. Each organization relayed their thoughts on this theme through a wide, yet focused scope of intention. For the multitude of ways in which each organization has chosen to orient itself—locally, regionally, nationally—through a variation of educational, emotional, vocational, legal, and other means, there is a multilateral desire to use these methods as means of driving autonomy and liberation for BIPOC communities through the grounding factor of agriculture. There was much commonality in the language used when expressing what these futures looked like and how they could be attained. For one, the importance of centering BIPOC voices was omnipresent in all cases. Support and visibility were the main mechanisms through which to achieve said centering, and through that centering, transformation.

Within this, the needs of local community and the right for self-determination in and through food and land sovereignty were central, as was the desire to subvert racial capitalism through anti-exploitative, re-imagined economies that support rather than oppress BIPOC communities. The NBFJA advocates for the importance of "designing, building and protecting the nourishing, safe and liberatory spaces our communities need and absolutely deserve" and refer to "sovereignty as the ultimate goal". The Black Yard Farm Cooperative similarly references themes of protection and creation when they write: "It is no coincidence that the people in this country who are most affected by food insecurity have the least access and control over our food system. This needs to change. It is crucial that we have autonomy over our food system". Their words speak for themselves and reference their intention, will, and need to effect difference. Black Earth Farms, in expressing a similar demand, is more explicit in their language:

> *Settler colonial parasitic capitalism, militarized imperialist nation states, and Eurocentric ideologies such as pseudo socialism and fascist neoliberalism must be abolished and replaced with autonomous and sovereign communities centered around indigenous self-determination and Black liberation.*

They speak further on how they envision these autonomous communities to look when they write that they "believe all people should have access to affordable and safe housing, and the ability to collect clean water, to produce their own food, and steward their own food systems". Black Earth Farms unapologetically blames the contemporary lack of sovereignty and autonomy of BIPOC communities on structures such as colonialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism at large, while NEFOC LT references their work in the undoing of "the harm perpetuated by colonial land theft and genocide". Others make similar, although less direct, claims regarding the contemporary impacts of historical economic and political systems on food sovereignty. Overwhelmingly, all cases identify autonomy and sovereignty as means of healing, liberation, and restoring balance. Many of the reviewed cases reference the harms imposed by (racial) capitalism and view the collective systems that they are building as either alternatives to, means of subversion against, or ways to navigate the realities of capitalism.

5.2.5 Conclusion

This chapter identified four main themes in the reviewed cases: (1) land as sovereignty, (2) transformation from struggle to empowerment within agriculture, (3) community building and healing and (4) autonomy and liberation as ultimate goals. The first theme discusses a grounding factor that connects each of the cases: land.

Access to land is a struggle that faces many BIPOC communities and is the biggest barrier facing farmers today. Additionally, land in agriculture and otherwise has been identified as an agent of change and a means through which to achieve freedom and sovereignty. Within these cases specifically access to land is the mechanism through which the following themes are centered and able to be achieved. Centuries of slavery and oppression, largely exhibited through iterations of historical forced separations of Black people from land, have created rifts and negative feelings around working the land for BIPOC communities. Yet, these reviewed cases are reappropriating this narrative and using positive historical connections to land and agriculture as a means to build community and heal through land and farming. Further, land is used as the foundation from which to navigate the healing processes, a discussion that is centered around different iterations of collective gain and cooperative modelling.

5.3 Discussion: The Future of Agriculture

5.3.1 Correcting Structural Issues in the Food System

In attempts at correcting inequalities in the food system, under the guise of food justice, many alternative food movements have encouraged individual behavior as a means of combatting structural problems. The individualization of structural problems is normalized through neoliberal practice, with market-based solutions presented as mechanisms of free choice that allow people to "vote with their dollar" as a mean of having their voice heard. This understanding is misguided for many reasons. Firstly, "strategies pursued through the market…are by definition less accessible to low-income people" (Alkon & Guthman, 2017), a group that is disproportionately made up of BIPOC (Creamer, 2021), meaning that whatever "opportunity" market strategies might hold are limited for those who have been systemically wronged within and by the food system. Additionally, relying on the market as a means of effecting change places all the impetus on consumers without addressing the structures that perpetuate and uphold inequalities (Alkon and Guthman 2017; Guthamn 2008). This research has laid out numerous structural inequalities within the US food system with a particular focus on the barriers and injustices faced by Black farmers. Many of these structural inequalities are actively upheld through discrimination, racist policies, and contemporary condemnation at attempts for rectification.

The cases reviewed in this thesis navigate racism and capitalism within the food system through grassroots attempts at solving structural problems through community building and organizing at a variety of scales. Within this navigation there are two key confrontations facing farmers of color that I have identified from both my research and the reviewed cases. The first is the inherent harm that comes with wading through the compounding effects of historical racism that have left farmers of color at a greater disadvantage than their White counterparts (i.e., land loss, generational wealth, etc.). The second is contemporary racism that exists within (and beyond) agriculture, which occurs in two main forms: the first is the continuation of racially biased practices (i.e., loan discrimination, subsidy payments, etc.) and the second is active protes against forms of contemporary support that are intended to level the playing field (refer to section 1.1). The breadth of discrimination faced by farmers of color is clearly structural, yet thus far neither structural change nor support has been achieved, and in many cases is actively protested. Each of the reviewed cases have visions that are larger than their individual projects, and are working, in one way or another, to create structural, transformational change within the US agricultural system.

Although grassroots efforts have historically been predominant methods of bringing about desired change, it is important that the institutions and people responsible for inflicting, perpetuating, and benefitting from such discrimination are held accountable and proactively work to make amends, which is why many of the reviewed cases call for reparations. This is not to suggest that grassroots efforts are no longer necessary or productive, rather the opposite. Such work is essential in dictating what and how change is needed, yet it should no longer be the burden of the dispossessed, oppressed, and marginalized to actualize this change. Further, this research has shown that in regard to correcting discrimination in agriculture the demands are clear, and the practices proven. Although all working at different scales, with variations in practice, there are consistencies in why these organizations exist, how they are structured, and what they are intending to achieve.

5.3.2 Building Common Agricultural Futures

This research has reviewed long-standing historical discrimination against BIPOC within agriculture and the ensuing hardships that have not yet been rectified to encourage an active movement towards reparations in agriculture. Based on my research I have identified dominant narratives shared by those working on collective and commons projects that ought to be considered in future conversations and negotiations. My argument in this research, supported by the selected case reviews, helps position how commons, collective, and cooperative projects may provide appropriate and effective insight for reparations in agriculture.

As mentioned in chapter 5.3, this research explores the commons in relation to the triad that commonly characterizes the metabolic rift through a three-fold understanding of the commons, which I argue can be used as a map for how the commons may be able to heal the racialized aspects of the metabolic rift through practice, as an act of reparations.

Scholars Julian Agyeman and Kofi Boone (2020) have also made connections between the historical significance of agricultural commons and collective ownership for Black Americans and their potential contributions in the development of reparations in agriculture. They reference the historical significance of collective ownership during slavery and civil rights and highlight W.E.B. Du Bois' belief in economic empowerment through a Black Commons, citing his 1907 publication Economic Co-operation Among Negro Americans. Further, they discuss Du Bois' belief that cooperative ownership provides a means for which "to ground economic empowerment in the cultural bonds between black people" (Agyeman & Boon, 2020), in support of the potential role of cooperative models in reparations. In the closing of their piece, they echo a prominent theme from the reviewed cases when they write:

> *…the current soul searching over this legacy is also an unrivaled opportunity to look again at the idea of collective black action and ownership, using it to create a community and economy that goes beyond just ownership of land for wealth's sake.*

Intentions of building community and economy through agricultural collective and commons models were also prominent within the reviewed cases. The desire to build these models within a discriminatory agricultural system seemingly stems from their past successes in the face of adversity. If collective organizing has historically been able to provide stability, create wealth, and support community needs within a biased agricultural system without federal support, there is argument to be made that these systems may be able to accomplish higher levels of success if bolstered by federal funding and other iterations of federal support. However, the state's historical role in the dispossession and oppression of BIPOC leaves much room for skepticism regarding what the realities of their 'support' may look like. These agricultural models are also attractive in their divergence from the standard norms of capitalist agriculture which disproportionately harm BIPOC through racial capitalism and discrimination. Furthermore, because the US agricultural system is currently designed to support corporations and industrial agriculture, not small farmers (who are the large majority of US farmers) means that providing minority farmers with the means they need to enter the current system functions only to provide entry to a rigged game.

For this reason, developing and supporting alternative systems that are based on cooperative, collective and commons models that have shown promise may be able to frame reparations in a way that does not just provide access, but also sets farmers up for long term successes. The agricultural organizations reviewed in this chapter identify existing pain points, desires, demands, and strategies for what a more equitable and anti-racist agricultural sector may look like in the United States and what is needed to get there. The next chapter looks at contemporary capitalist "alternatives" in agriculture and questions if and how racialized metabolic rifts can be healed, and if these alternative agricultural projects can provide insight into the healing process.

Chapter 6: Healing the Rift?

This chapter specifically looks at how racialized metabolic rifts can be healed, and what alternative systems exist that might help. Because the US agricultural system is heavily entrenched in capitalism, or rather racial capitalism, this research has chosen to look at capitalist alternatives within and relating to agriculture, such as the commons and abolition geography. These frameworks provide alternative forms of viewing property, human-nature relations, power, and difference. I argue that the application of these frameworks and practices in agriculture may provide attractive alternatives to contemporary agricultural structures because they do not rely on market-based solutions to solve problems that, if not created by the market, are typically perpetuated by it. By first looking at existing capitalist "alternatives" within agriculture and the food system at large I show how these "alternatives" are often rooted in neoliberal practice and tend to perpetuate—or in best case scenarios do not alleviate—structural inequalities in the food system. I then look to commons and collective projects as potential feasible alternatives as (1) they have a long history as means of resistance both within and outside of agriculture for Black farmers (as explored in chapter V), and (2) they do not rely on market-based solutions to solve problems created by the market. Next, using Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2017) theory on abolition geography I argue that building on her notion of freedom as a place that can be created through various resources including people and land is a helpful theoretical stance from which to envision and build new agricultural futures before then exploring the commons as concrete, physical practices and manifestations that address issues of community, property, (anti)capitalism, class, and access. The commons and abolition geography are theorized independently and together to imagine alternative agricultural realities that might help heal the social, ecological, and epistemic rifts present within US agriculture.

6.1 Capitalist "Alternatives"

Over the last 50 years alternative food movements have emerged in the United States to address, respond to, and/or perpetuate troubles in food and farming. Grounded in addressing social, ecological, and economic inequalities, alternative food movements have gained traction, with interest stemming largely from young, White, urbanites (Belasco, 1993). Further, BIPOC have fought for food justice and equality in the food system in the US, however they have often been ignored and excluded from these conversations, which has created overwhelmingly White narratives in the food system (Wozniacka, 2021; Gelobter, 2005). Throughout the iterations of these movements critiques have been made regarding the individualist, neoliberal, market-based, and privileged lenses through which much of these movements have been developed and framed as they ignore the foundational realities of the structural inequalities on which the food system has been built and continues to function (Alkon & Guthman, 2017). In an effort to address, and hopefully redirect the misguided approaches often taken by alternative food system movements, food scholars and activists focus on altering the central role of neoliberalism in the food system and the importance of food justice.

Neoliberalism, broadly, is the political economic philosophy that the market functions best with little to no intervention from the state, however the "free market" typically witnesses interventions through regulatory bending that ultimately bolsters corporations (Harvey, 2005, 2010). Within the food space this narrative "is rooted in American ideals of personal responsibility and hard work" (Conrad, 2020, p. 3). It claims that the keys to addressing hunger are grounded in removing responsibility from the government and placing it on communities. Food justice stresses the intersectionality of "race, class, gender, and other forms of inequality" in "both conventional and alternative food systems" (Alkon & Guthman, 2017, p. 5). Therefore, restructuring food systems grounded in a neoliberal market is also plagued by intersectional inequalities that need to be addressed as such. One example of this intersectionality being that "strategies pursued through the market…are by definition less accessible to low-income people" (Alkon & Guthman, 2017, p. 6), a group that is disproportionately made up of BIPOC (Creamer, 2020).

Within the framework of food justice comes the demand for structural change, and the critique that within alternative food movements too much focus has been placed on market-based solutions, through positions such as "voting with your dollar" and alternative markets (farmers' markets, CSAs, etc). These positions ultimately reproduce neoliberal food system models and privilege certain classes, rather than pressuring the state and corporations to take action to dismantle and restructure systems that systematically favor some and oppress others.

Additionally, in these systems, much attention is paid to correcting the results of inequality in the food system, such as combatting food deserts (now more aptly referred to as food apartheid) rather than addressing the structures that perpetuate them (Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Guthamn, 2008). These initiatives are not only misdirected but are also largely based in and around White narratives that often—intentionally or not—tend to perpetuate, or at the very best do not work to alleviate structural inequalities in the food system.

Conrad (2020) argues that these well-intentioned attempts at creating alternative food systems often miss the mark as they are typically—perhaps unknowingly—rooted in White supremacist cultural narratives of Whiteness and White experience and tend to function under the assumption of universalism, the idea that "values held by whites are normal and widely shared" (p. 3). In the food space this translates to Whiteness dominating "the conversation on how and why the food system should be reformed" (Conrad, 2020, p. 3). Paternalism is another logic that is prominent in alternative food movements and is related to what Julie Guthman (2008) refers to as 'bringing good food to others', where "white desires and missionary practices" work on the behalf of other groups (BIPOC) under the assumption that those groups cannot or do not know how to take care of themselves. Neoliberalism and individualism are two additional narratives that play large roles in perpetuating whiteness in the food system as they stress the power of the individual and alleviate responsibility of the government, thereby ignoring the realities of historical and structural oppression.

The alternative food movements mentioned in this section do not refer to grassroots movements started by those whom they are meant to serve, such as the reviewed cases in this research, but rather refer to movements in the United States that in the face of a rotten framework, either out of ignorance or intention, choose to focus on individual action rather than on structural change. When facing a structural issue, the method of alleviation must also be structural, which is why this research looks to analyze if and how alternative relationships to land can be used to create structural change within a food system with fractured foundations.

Two recent bills have been proposed, both aimed at addressing the historical foundations and contemporary impacts of structural racism in agriculture. The first, the Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2020 is a Senate bill that intends to "create an Equitable Land Access Service within the USDA, including a fund that devotes $8 billion annually to buying farmland on the open market and granting it to new and existing Black farmers" (Philpott, 2020b). Additionally, the bill addresses issues such as protecting Black farmers from land loss, restoring the land base lost by Black farmers, creating a farm conservation corps with an educational focus, and enacting system reforms to help all socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (Booker et al., 2021).

The other bill, the Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act, was passed in early March, yet as of June 2021 is on hold due to a lawsuit from conservative White farmers. This bill is intended to provide $5 billion to BIPOC farmers, $4 billion of which is to be used for COVID relief payments, with the other $1 billion used to bolster USDA programs that directly support and assist BIPOC farmers (Warnock, 2021).

The layers of paradox surrounding the drafting, passing, and now holding of the Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act are almost too many to identify, and highlight the continued ignorance of past— while also demonstrating contemporary— discrimination within agriculture. In 2020 alone Black farmers were rejected loans at higher rates than any other racial group, with White farmers receiving loan approvals at nearly twice their rate (Bustillo, 2021). However, despite these statistics—let alone centuries of slavery and oppression—White farmers are claiming that this loan relief bill is discriminatory to them. Additionally, many of these same farmers received a bailout to the tune of $8.4 billion from President Trump in 2019 to compensate for the ongoing trade wars with China. Unsurprisingly, nearly 100% of these funds—more than twice that of the anticipated Covid relief bill—went to white farmers. Adding insult to injury, half of these funds were received by the wealthiest 10% of these farmers, showing that 'race-neutral' programs are clearly not race-neutral (Pamuk, 2019).

Understanding the racial and ethnic breakdown of US farmers and how racial discrimination has contributed to these demographics supports why farmers of color deserve support from the state. By looking to correct the current inequalities faced by Black and other minority farmers, such as the compounding effects of generational wealth and discrimination brought on by centuries of oppression, the creation of these two bills actively acknowledge that current adversities faced by farmers of color have been brought on by centuries of structural racism that has been supported by the state. Yet, even with federal-level acknowledgement of historical discrimination in agriculture there is still major pushback from White farmers, highlighting that the fight for equity in agriculture faces resistance from all sides.

6.2 Healing the Rift through Abolition Geography

One reason why collective, cooperative, and commons projects may provide attractive alternatives to contemporary agricultural structures is that they do not rely on market-based solutions to solve problems that, if not created by the market, have been perpetuated by it. Collective ownership has a long history in the United States, starting with the land practices of Indigenous peoples, to subsistence farming by enslaved peoples, to contemporary community land trust projects. Many of the realities of contemporary agriculture are grounded in capitalist values and policies that favor privatization and further strengthen structural inequality both in general and within the agricultural sector. The commons provide an alternative vision of land use that is not explicitly based in individual wealth accumulation, but rather looks at social, economic, and ecological community needs. Not only might theorizations on the commons present a potential alternative to the contemporary agricultural system, but it may also provide a means of healing rifts created by that system, as well as a means of paying reparations to those whom they are owed. The commons and abolition geography are framed within agricultural realities not simply as aspirations, but as pathways and means towards different models of more equitable agricultural futures. Looking at these frameworks together offers further space to develop individuated agricultural realities based on the needs of specific communities, rather than assuming blanket needs. This dual lens helps to establish communal grounding in the discriminatory practices that many Black and other minority farmers have faced in the United States, while also creating space for farmers to address their differences in experiences and need.

Applying abolition geography to conversations around equity in agriculture provides a framework through which to envision a more egalitarian future that recognizes the realities of racial narratives. This section argues that abolition geography as applied to perceptions of land in agriculture is how we heal the rift. In her paper What Grows From a Pandemic? Toward an Abolitionist Agroecology (2020) Maywa Montenegro de Witt looks at how agroecology might heal social, ecological, and epistemic rifts within US agriculture. Taking notes from abolition in the Black Radical Tradition she asks:

> *What can agroecologists learn from ongoing struggles for Black lives in terms of active anti-racist practice? How, specifically, does the abolition movement connect to a politics of transformative agroecological change? Can identifying parallels in the prison-industrial complex and the industrial agrifood complex help both abolition and agroecology movements envision how to smash presumed foundational structures in order to build worlds that affirm life? (p. 15)*

Similar questions have informed this research, looking not towards agroecology but alternative conceptions of land and property in agriculture. Montenegro de Witt (2020) ends her piece with five lessons from abolition that might inform agroecology's ability to heal metabolic rifts. Borrowing from these lessons, in conjunction with takeaways from my case reviews, I look at how abolition geography might be applied to agriculture to simultaneously help heal metabolic rifts and inform reparations through the following three suggestions:

Rethinking Property in Agriculture

It always seems that hegemonic structures are fixed in place. Yet, abolition rejects this notion, reminding "us that institutions such as slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow laws were once considered normal and 'natural'" (Montenegro de Witt, 2020, p. 20)—and while racism is still prominent in the United States today, these historical racial atrocities are no longer legal realities due to the work of abolitionists. The agrifood system in the United States is built on "The systematic cheapening of nature, labor, care, and lives" (Montenegro de Witt, 2020, p. 21), which is supported by capitalist norms of labor, production, and private property. With the enclosure of the commons and implementation of private property as the impetus for the separation of people from the land—the catalyst of the metabolic rift—it seems only logical that healing must begin with re-conceptualizations of property, and that these conceptualizations should be informed by abolition geography.

Although it feels difficult to imagine a United States beyond private property, abolition history shows that changing perceptions and practices takes time, does not come naturally or effortlessly, and requires "sustained counter-hegemonic organizing – and people willing to take risks" (Montenegro de Witt, 2020, p. 21). The people affiliated with the six reviewed cases of this thesis embody this notion of risk-taking as through their work they are challenging who has access to property, how property can be used and conceptualized, and how these alternative forms of property might support alternatives to capitalist agriculture. Abolition has been used to challenge and offer alternatives to destructive, racist, and discriminatory hegemonic norms and the application of abolition geography to conceptualizations of property in agriculture does the same by allowing us to reimagine a future of land use that confronts, heals, and finds alternatives to histories of displacement and hierarchy (Gilmore, 2017). The reviewed cases in this thesis view agriculture as means of liberation, autonomy, and sovereignty, and land as the means through which to achieve it. For them land does not imply ownership of private property but rather—similarly to Gilmore's definition of abolition geography—to the "premise that freedom is a place" (p. 227) and that that place is shared.

Abolition geography informs how the norms of private property in agriculture can be unmade (or abolished) through the creation of new relationships with and to land. These relationships are seen within the case studies, as land is cared for through iterations of cooperative and communal ownership (or without ownership); as means for community (re)building and healing; as ways of ensuring sovereignty. Healing metabolic rifts is an interconnected process whose causes are rooted in privatization, capitalism, and racism. Abolition geography teaches us to re-envision these relationships and in doing so we may begin healing. NEFOC LT exhibits this abolitionist mentality in their reimaging of agriculture futures and their application of that vision through regional-level work that looks to advance "permanent and secure land tenure through rematriating land and seeds; farmland stewardship, preservation and expansion; envisioning ways to be in reciprocity with land and creation, and by reimagining what the word 'farmer' stands for". Through the conservation of land and sharing of knowledge NEFOC LT is repairing the regional food system and healing metabolic rifts within the BIPOC community through its model that encourages and supports alternative relationships to the land.

Fighting for Reparations not Reforms

Abolition teaches us that if we are to heal metabolic rifts as they exist within agriculture, reform of contemporary systems is not enough. This research has laid out how the agricultural foundations of the United States are grounded in racial capitalism, and the making of, and exclusion from, various forms of property. Regarding the creation of equitable, anti-racist agricultural futures these foundational realities mean two things: (1) reforming the current system will not heal metabolic rifts—at best it may lesson them—and (2) that if reparations are to effect change, they must be based in alternative conceptions of and relationships to property. Reforming agriculture in the United States would mean working within a system that was built on slavery, flourished through privatization, and was expanded by industrial-capitalist practice. Calls to abolish the police in the United States highlight why reform won't work within agriculture: a system that's roots are based in the oppression of Black people cannot be reformed to serve them; it must be abolished and rebuilt.[10]

Examples from the case reviews show how these farmers and activists are not interested in agricultural reforms, but instead are creating new agricultural systems. Black Earth Farms calls specifically for abolition to end oppression in all forms, calling for the abolishment of prisons, the police, "Settler colonial parasitic capitalism, militarized imperialist nation states, and eurocentric ideologies such as pseudo socialism and fascist neoliberalism".

10 — The origins of policing in the United States are often thought to have roots in the Northern cities, however informal policing dates back to slave patrols in the 1700s (Reichel, 1988).

Although they do not explicitly call for the abolition of private property, they refer to the privatization of land as an oppressive colonial framework and state their demands for reimagined agricultural futures:

> *We need autonomous and sovereign communities that steward and produce their own ethically harvested food without pesticides and other chemical inputs. We need active divestment from the colonial food system and the fossil fuel petrochemical industry. We need access to de-privatized clean water, and food landscapes with no tolerance for racialized and gendered domination or enslavement. We need justice and reparations for Black and Indigenous people globally.*

In a Juneteenth broadcast with A Growing Culture in 2020, Chris Newman of Sylvanaqua Farms[11] discussed how his farm's agricultural model is subverting contemporary norms of property through collective ownership. He believes that "there are ways to pay people equitably working at scale as long as you're willing to kind of subsume yourself as a farm owner. Which is what I'm trying to do and share ownership, making it collective. That was the strength of Indigenous landholding" (See Appendix B). This method of shared ownership offers a means of healing social and epistemic rifts through alternative relationships to land ownership and knowledge sharing. He elaborates further not only on why these models are important, but why it is particularly important for Black and Indigenous people to get their hands on more land and practice them:

> *It has to be managed by us because.... we're the only ones who have the intergenerational knowledge that knows actually how to restore these places properly. We're the only ones that can stop thinking about these things in terms of global markets and commodities and scaling up individual products instead of scaling up our land management ethics and things like that. (See Appendix B).*

This quote by Newman not only takes an abolitionist stance, but it also touches upon the necessity of healing and how establishing alternative relationships with the land and property are the first place that we should start. In addition to new relationships—or rather reconsidering old relationships—to land Newman references restorative agricultural practice as a means of healing ecological rifts. Yet, Newman is aware that many of the regenerative agricultural practices that his farm is implementing, which have roots in Indigenous and African practices, are being co-opted under typically White-washed, capitalist ventures with labels such as 'regenerative agriculture' and 'permaculture'.

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11 — After this broadcast, in January 2021, Sylvanaqua Farms became a collective of three businesses and one non-profit, which then dissolved shortly thereafter.

Montenegro de Witt discusses parallel concerns relating to the institutionalization and colonization of agroecology that might stem from its increased recognition and popularity. She then offers insight rooted in abolitionist theory on how agroecology, as epistemic and ecological movements, can effect legitimate change, for which she offers (1) concerted pressure on the food system and (2) clear political demands.

I apply and modify her abolitionist analysis within agroecology in combination with lessons from the case reviews to offer what demands for land reform within agricultural reparations might look like: alternatives to private property such as commons or collective ownership; real incentives for biodiversity-based farming, an end to subsidies that encourage monoculture production (especially for crops that are not intended to be processed); an end to industrial-capitalist models of production that explicitly view quantity as mark of successful agriculture; accommodations for local and regional specifications and needs; worker-owned farming cooperatives and collectives; agricultural commons; agency and power in the agrifood system that leaves space for racial narratives; holistic measures for success that account for social, economic, epistemic, and racial realities; and finally the abolishment of oppression in all forms within the agrifood system.

Rebuilding a New System through Redistribution

The framework of abolition geography can help reimagine new relationships to agricultural land that might facilitate healing metabolic rifts. It is not simply about the abolition of harmful, oppressive structures, but about envisioning what new, more equitable structures might look based on the desires, traumas, work, and histories of those involved (Gilmore, 2017). Gilmore elaborates further when she writes that "the radical tradition from which abolition geography draws meaning and method goes back in time-space not in order to abolish history, but rather to find alternatives to the despairing sense that so much change, in retrospect, seems only ever to have been displacement and redistribution of human sacrifice" (p. 227). Further, it looks to how, through the dismantling of these structures, redistribution of funding provides a feasible means to achieving legitimate change. The work of Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) embodies this mentality in in its cross-over between connecting with unused land in Detroit through agreements with local organizations and the city government, as well as their work in policy development around food justice at the city level. In 2006 members of DBCFSN spoke before the Detroit City Council raising the issue of food security in the city. Over the next year and a half DBCFSN's policy committee developed food security policy for the city of Detroit. The draft was passed in 2008 by the Detroit City Council, adopting DBCFSN's food security policy. Firstly, this success highlights an example of agency and power in the agrifood system that creates space for racial narratives, and secondly it shows what can be achieved through the abolitionist model of reimagining and then building more equitable systems.

This example also leads us to a significant and common question in abolition which is what if resources that were being poured into institutions that harm people (i.e., prisons, police) were instead redirected to support community-led, life-affirming institutions (mental health facilities, school counselors, health clinics, housing programs) (Montenegro de Witt, 2020). Many current abolitionist groups point to all of the positive institutions that could be created or better supported if police budgets were reallocated to these institutions. For the sake of consistency in this research, I look to what funds could be reallocated specifically within agriculture. The USDA has a federal budget of $146 billion for 2021 (USDA, 2021). Within this funding, $13.4 billion is allocated for crop insurance and commodity programs (two programs that typically benefit rich, White farmers). Nowhere in the budget does it recognize the realities of structural discrimination or historical racism agriculture, nor does it reference building ecologically sound or economically or racially equitable agricultural systems. It does, however, list as a strategic goal the intention to "maximize the ability of American agricultural producers to prosper by feeding and clothing the world" (USDA, 2021), a Malthusian mantra that Montenegro de Witt (2020) begs be put to rest—a request with which I agree. This glimpse into USDA funding, although small, provides insight into the current priorities, and pockets, of the USDA and shows that there are existing funds that can be reallocated from imposed export-oriented agricultural policies and instead be redirected to supporting community-led efforts at food sovereignty and land justice. Montenegro de Witt reminds us that "Abolition is deeply agrarian" (p. 26), and in this vein we must demand that public institutions such as the USDA channel resources towards agricultural policies and initiatives aimed at healing all facets of the metabolic rift "so that it becomes realistic to go from niche to paradigm-shifting potential" (p. 24).

The reviewed collective, cooperative, and commons projects in this research are all rebuilding new agricultural systems through redistribution by sharing and centering agricultural knowledge within their communities. Approaching the metabolic rift through an abolitionist lens already ensures that racial narratives will be centered, and by teaching new generations to farm they are effectively working to heal epistemic rifts. Abolition geography helps us to reimagine anti-racist, equitable agricultural futures through redefining new relationships to agricultural land, that as modeled by the reviewed cases, can offer holistic means of healing racialized metabolic rifts.

12 — For reference according to The Council of the City of New York Report to the Committees on Finance and Public Safety on the Fiscal 2022 Executive Budget for the New York Police Department the projected police budget for 2022 is $5.12 billion.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis investigated how Black Commons Projects operate at the intersection of structural racism and capitalism, and how their work might help inform the framing of reparations within US agriculture. The theoretical frameworks of the metabolic rift and racial capitalism are used together to elaborate on the discursive relationships between capitalism and racism within the US agricultural system. Further, the marriage of these concepts creates space for racial narratives, a narrative that is largely absent in much Marxist scholarship. I use racial capitalism to help argue that the metabolic rift is racialized and that in order to heal the contemporary realities of these rifts, particularly as they relate to historical structures of inequality in US agriculture, a racial analysis must be considered. Further, I argue that metabolic rifts are reoccurring and have been racialized in the United States since its founding. To exemplify this I focused on the historical relationships between Black people in United States and property, specifically in relationship to agriculture, including how they have been both defined as, and excluded from, property since the making of the colonial United States, and how separation from the land and conceptions of private property are grounding factors. I then argue that abolition geography is a means through which these rifts might be healed and how—taking lessons from the agricultural organizations reviewed in this thesis—alternate relationship to and conceptions of land and property are ways to reimagine new agricultural futures and may be desirable structures around which to center reparations for Black farmers.

Much of this thesis is spent laying out how the intersection of structural racism, capitalism, and the iterations of property making in the United States have put minority farmers at a disadvantage, which today can be seen through low numbers of Black farmers and Black agricultural land ownership. Further, it looked at how the US agricultural system is designed in favor of a small minority of large-scale, industrial farms and how the intersection of racial discrimination in agriculture and the capital-intensive scale at which the agricultural system functions highlights an intersectionality of disadvantage for Black farmers. For even if Black and other minority farmers were suddenly provided with equitable access to the current agricultural system, it is a system that is not designed to support them. For this reason, this thesis does not ask how Black farmers can best be supported to gain equitable access into the contemporary agricultural system—a system that doesn't work for the majority of people who are involved—but instead looks at how existing alternatives might better support farmers through the question:

> *"How do Black Commons Projects operate at the intersection of structural racism and capitalism, and (how) can they help inform the framing of reparations within US agriculture?"*

My research question operates under the premise that structural racism has penetrated all aspects of society while focusing on its implications in agriculture, and works in two parts which will guide and inform the two discussion sections that follow:

– Firstly, it looks at how, under the omnipresence of discrimination, Black agricultural commons, collective and cooperative projects operate, focusing on their missions, actions, desires, philosophies, and demands, while also questioning and analyzing how they may speak to and inform larger scale demands and movements within agriculture.

– Secondly, the question then looks to apply the take-aways from the above-mentioned review and apply it to the theorization of what reparations in agriculture could look like. These takeaways are not only used as frameworks through which to reflect on the future of reparations, but also through which to contemplate a more equitable agricultural system at large.

7.1 Taking Back the Land: Unmaking Property

This thesis has argued that the intersection of structural racism and capitalism in US agriculture has manifested in centuries of racialized iterations of property, dispossession, and discrimination, all of which have actively targeted Black farmers. The case reviews in this research provide insight into how some BIPOC agricultural commons, collective and cooperative projects are navigating this intersection, and how they are actively working to create more equitable agrarian futures. The majority of reviewed cases condemn the norms of capitalism, particularly as they apply to agriculture, as under such norms land as a means of sustenance has shifted from a right to a commodity. Rejecting the norm of capital over people, the reviewed cases are focused on taking back the land and unmaking property as it has come to be understood in the United States. Looking both at and beyond the case reviews, challenges for minority farmers are abundant and varied: situated at the crux of legal, economic, and geographic frameworks. Scholars Tanya Kerssen and Zoe Brent (2017) argue that land is "the foundation of both capitalism and its alternatives". Although each with different interpretations and expressions, this sentiment is the driving force behind every one of the selected cases. The main intention driving each of these agricultural projects is sovereignty: to feed and support their communities the way they, not others, see fit; to build local economies; to support autonomous choice through education and access. Invariably, land is the foundation on which to achieve all of this. Yet, land in the United States takes the shape and name of property, specifically private property.

Understanding that land is the foundation through which to create alternatives, and that separation from the land (i.e., separation from the means of production) is foundational to exploitation, the Black Commons Projects reviewed in this thesis are focused on the reclamation of land for shared use, education, and freedom rather than the contemporary standard of privatization, profit, and dispossession.

The brief historical overview of agriculture, dispossession, and discrimination within this thesis demonstrates that the contemporary challenges faced by minority farmers are not a series of unfortunate coincidences, but rather the making of many centuries worth of discrimination and racism in various forms. Understanding this, each of the Black Commons Projects were founded with the intention of providing resources and support to their communities that the government historically has not. Their visions of the future, initially relating to healing in various forms, are rooted in the centering of Black and POC voices in (re)building and supporting community, uplifting future generations through creating and maintaining access to resources, and focusing on institution building and collective action. These actions are designed, performed, and intended to heal the compounding effects of discrimination in agriculture. These organizations acknowledge that much of the work that they are should ultimately be done with support from the state and those who have historically committed racial injustices in agriculture. However, because thus far such support has fluctuated from non-existent to limited to actively protested, the reviewed Black Common Projects have recognized that if they want change, they must be the ones to effect it.

As discussed in chapter 6.3.1, I have identified two fields that Black farmers are forced to navigate within their battle against discrimination in agriculture. The first is the inherent harm that comes with wading through the compounding effects of historical racism that have left farmers of color at a greater disadvantage than their White counterparts (i.e., land loss, generational wealth, etc.). The second is contemporary racism that exists within (and beyond) agriculture, which occurs in two main forms: the first is the continuation of racially bias practices (i.e., loan discrimination, subsidy payments, etc.) and the second is active protest against forms of contemporary support that are intended to level the playing field. Within all the reviewed organizations there is consensus that building and working within alternative systems is essential. These alternatives, however, are not all the same, and in some cases vary greatly. For example, Chris Newman of Sylvanaqua Farms decries the norms of heralding consumerist solutions to issues in the food system and blames the wage economy as a main ill at the intersection of food, agriculture, access, and sovereignty, while also believing that treating farming more like a business may in fact create greater equity within the sector. He elaborates on this sentiment in a panel with food scholar Raj Patel where he theorizes how capitalist principles can be reoriented in agriculture so that they're not exploitative or extractive but rather designed to meet the needs of the average person.

It is the intersection of these struggles that have led Newman towards a cooperative style of agriculture, for him it is a solution to issues of capitalism, care, and equity. As a Black and Indigenous farmer, Newman has often referenced his personal connection to collective agriculture, citing successful historical models of collective agriculture by Black and Indigenous communities as reasoning for why it is important that more Black and Indigenous farmers gain access to land (Newman & Patel, 2020). The reviewed cases within this research are currently working to create alternatives to the US agricultural system, and in many ways are already working outside of it, as at the intersection of racism, capitalism, and industrialization, US agriculture doesn't leave much room to envision equitable agricultural futures that support BIPOC farmers. For these reasons many are looking to abolish and rebuild.

7.2 Considering Limitations and Ironies

It would be remiss not to touch upon the limitations or the ironies that have been presented in this thesis. Firstly, this research is small in scale and only looks at the work of six BIPOC-led agricultural projects. This means that the findings from the reviewed cases may not present widely shared views. Further, ironies have presented themselves in numerous ways throughout this research regarding both the metabolic rift, anti-racist agricultural futures, and reparations themselves. Black and other minority farmers are forced to heal, fight against, abolish, and reimagine oppressive structures that they did not create. This work requires time, energy, funding, solidarity, vision, and will. In many ways this is just a norm of abolition. Additionally, private property plays a foundational role in the metabolic rift, forms of oppression, and means of accumulation. While discussions on alternative forms of property relations may or may not call for the abolition of private property, it brings into question by what means future farmers might be able to accumulate generational wealth (stability) under these alternative relationships to property. Within some iterations of these models the idea of generational wealth transcends into a more communal model based on collective ownership, however, in understanding new relationship models to land and agriculture, it is essential to question how farmers working within alternative structures can also survive under the realities of capitalism.

Further, it is important to consider Black and other minority farmers who may not be interested in iterations of collective, cooperative, or commons models, but instead want fair access to the current agricultural system. These farmers are also owed reparations.

This thesis chose to research farms and organizations that were interested in collective models yet did not reflect on farmers with different views on how anti-racist, equitable agricultural futures could be structured or what reparations for them could look like, and it is important that additional perspectives are heard and considered. This research focuses specifically on the histories, work of, and reparations for Black farmers. Yet, it is important to recognize the historical realities of racism, discrimination and dispossession faced by Indigenous and other minority farmers within US agriculture within this conversation. Chris Newman accuses the Justice for Black Farmers Act of doing the opposite:

> *It's a bill so loaded with oversights, anti-solidarity, and implied acceptance of settler-colonial agricultural ethics that it can't even be viewed as incremental progress or a step in the right direction. Instead, the bill simply represents a coarse attempt to add Black people to an already broken agricultural system, largely at the expense of Indigenous people, while opening up a bonanza of cash to Black non-profits built into the legislation as power brokers.*

Newman's statement, regardless of whether it provides an accurate analysis of what would happen under the bill, touches on valid concern within the future of reparations. He notes that the bill does not address land theft from Indigenous peoples and is modeled after the Homestead Act, an act that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land for private ownership for White settlers. Many of the Black Commons Projects reviewed in this thesis explicitly mention the need for liberation for all people, with their advocacy work extending to other marginalized communities. Often (under capitalism) liberation is be presented as a zero-sum game, implying that liberation for some will inevitably be built on the oppression of others. The work of the reviewed commons, collective, and cooperative projects show that this does not have to be the only reality, and in fact that they—without support from the state—are building more equitable realities.

The role of the state is yet another irony that has gone largely undiscussed in this thesis. As laid out throughout this research, the state has been responsible for many contemporary racialized realities in agriculture: the state has repeatedly legitimized the loss of Black land through ABD, legalized segregation, and through policy has supported industrialization and consolidation within agriculture. This research offers that the federal and local governments owe reparations, while also understanding that the government has historically and repeatedly committed acts of discrimination against Black and other minority farmers, making their participation contentious, and likely even suspect. Because their past attempts at reconciliation have often fallen short, been insincere, or have failed to exist it warrants asking: why now should we trust that the state might take part in, or even keep their promises when it comes to reparations in agriculture? 2020 was a catalyst for much change in the United States, including within the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Conversations and demands that BIPOC communities had been talking about for decades, some for centuries, were finally getting recognition and with that recognition, traction. Although the state has thus far proven to be an unreliable and undesirable partner, perhaps now they will finally be held accountable for paying for their historical wrongs.

Lastly, this research has not discussed the difficulties and challenges associated with creating alternative agricultural models under hegemonic structures. This topic in and of itself is worthy of its own research, yet it is still important to recognize the reality of such burdens on alternative agricultural projects. Freedom Farm, although a successful example of the potentials of agricultural cooperatives, ultimately failed due to challenges in leadership, organization, and support in various forms. Further, even with all their prolific planning, organization, and vision, the collective started by Sylvanaqua Farms dissolved only four months after forming. Organization, cooperation, and success are difficult for any business/project, especially so when the state not supporting you, and even more so when they are actively encouraging your demise. The actualization of alternative agricultural realities does and will take time, support, and funding. For these reasons state support is essential and will be discussed further in the section.

7.3 Informing Reparations & the Role of the State

This section aims to present how the findings from the reviewed cases in conjunction with the theoretical concepts of the commons and abolition geography might help frame reparations in agriculture. In cross-referencing both iterations of findings, a common theme emerged: land as a right, not solely a commodity from which to profit—this is the baseline from which the following suggestions should be understood. Further this section builds on chapter 6.4, highlighting how not only does abolition geography provide a means for healing metabolic rifts, but is also useful in informing reparations. The reviewed Black Commons Projects in this thesis have highlighted alternative relationships and uses of land in agriculture other than the standard norms of private ownership. This section indicates how takeaways from the reviewed cases in conjunction with theories of abolition geography and the commons provides a new framework for thinking about and organizing around land. The active application of abolition geography to agriculture, goes beyond "viewing land reform as the struggle for a parcel of land to also considering land as part of a territory and part of food-system transformation" (Kerssen and Brent 2017).

It helps to establish an alternative vision of what could be regarding property, ownership, labor, and land use norms and how these can be supported by the state, which is important because "It is difficult to imagine transformative change… without government support—at the local, state, or federal level—for redistributive and restorative land reform" (Kerssen & Brent 2017, p. 308). Providing frameworks such as abolition geography and the commons through which to understand and envision what change could look like provides a means for those who have been historically oppressed to envision change and recognize that other realities—more equitable realities—exist.

Applying abolition geography and the commons to agriculture helps to facilitate the notion of land as a right into a practice. They open the door to the possibilities of alternative futures and alternative realities. So often it is hard to see that other ways are possible; abolition geography provides the space for marginalized peoples in agriculture to envision alternatives. For hegemonic structures that have facilitated oppression, these frameworks highlight alternatives, and provide guidance on how to get there based on the visions of those who have been historically marginalized within US agriculture. These frameworks not only create space for envisioning new realities, but also provide mechanisms through which to hold the state accountable for change. Access to land is the greatest barrier facing new farmers today and is exacerbated for minority farmers (NEFOC LT, 2021). There is much consensus around why access to land is generally difficult: development, scarcity, land quality. This translates to land being too expensive and inaccessible for many, on top of which discrimination creates additional layers of inaccessibility for farmers of color. Echoing scholars Kerssen and Brent (2017) this research has identified that agricultural "Movements must conceptualize 'property' in ways that resist neoliberalism and open up spaces for justice-oriented, community-based alternatives. They must challenge market-led orthodoxy by insisting that access to productive land should not be restricted to the highest bidder, but rather distributed equitably". Although this research is specifically focused on land for agricultural use, if the goal of sustaining and protecting Black agricultural land is to be achieved, it cannot be done in isolation, but through collaboration.

The National Black Food & Justice Alliance (2021) writes that "If history is our example we must move past individual notions of ownership, which still left us vulnerable under racial capitalism". All of the reviewed Black Commons Projects are working on establishing alternative agricultural frameworks through food sovereignty, racial land justice, and other forms of equity outside of the parameters of state, meaning their work of combating various forms of oppression in agriculture is supported independently, typically though forms of mutual aid, donations, and participation. This research argues that the state is responsible for supporting Black farmers through reparations and argues that this may be best done, based on lessons from the case reviews, through supporting alternative forms of property ownership in agriculture.

Examples of agrarian commons, land trusts, collectives, and cooperatives, both from the case reviews and otherwise provide examples of how these efforts can be support by the state on a federal level as a form of reparations.

Currently, agrarian commons/ land trusts hold agricultural land in community-centered, non-profit entities. They are designed to remove barriers to land access and to remove suitable agricultural land from the commodity market, allowing the land to stay in the hands of those working it. Although they function as independent non-profits, government policies can be designed to support the creation of—and work in conjunction with—Black Agrarian commons, collectives, and cooperatives. Alternative models of property might be informed the Land Trust Model as it facilitates many of the desires and demands made by the reviewed cases, is flexible, and can be tailored to regional and local needs. Current land trusts and agrarian commons typically function as 501©3s. In this model, the land, and its value, would remain in the commons. Participants within the commons would "receive affordable and long-term equitable access to the land structured in a way that ensures community ownership and governance of land and shared agroecological stewardship… By holding land as a Commons, the community can also access a variety of capital to re-invest in the land, farmers, and community" (Agrarian Trust, 2021).

It is important to recognize that the state is responsible for supporting Black and other minority farmers through reparations via funding, policy, and equitable access to land. Yet, the foundations of these reparations should be based on and led by the work, demands, needs and desires of these farmers. For this reason, this research offers that lessons from the reviewed Black Commons Projects and insights from abolition geography and the commons offer frameworks and support for ways to propel and bolster the work that is already being done to create anti-racist and common agricultural futures. For these futures to truly be actualized, however, we must all play an active role.

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Appendix A. Websites

Organization	Data Content	Date Accessed	Source Type	Web Address
Black Yard Farm Cooperative	"created by 5 young Black and Latinx farmers/ entrepreneurs in the Bronx working together to build a supportive community for Black farmers and creatives"	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
Black Yard Farm Cooperative	"Black folks with the opportunity to steward land for sustenance"	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
Black Earth Farms	"Black and Indigenous led agroecology collective"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Black Earth Farms	"to build collectivized, autonomous, and chemical free food systems"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Black Earth Farms	"a revolutionary youth coalition of militant peasants in the struggle for liberation"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Sylvanaqua Farms	"a sustainable, restorative, integrated food economy in the Chesepeake Bay region, with a mission to feed millions of people and protect all the land and water in Baltimore, Washington D.C., Richmond, and the cities of the Virginia Tidewater, and the spaces between"	March 30, 2021	Website	https://www.sylvanaqua.com/
National Black Food & Justice Alliance	"represents hundreds of Black urban and rural farmers, organizers, and land stewards...working together towards...institution building and advocacy work protecting Black land and [working] towards food sovereignty".	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network	"grow organically from the people whom they are designed to serve"	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.dbcfsn.org/
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	"hybrid model land trust, bringing together a community land trust model and a conservation land trust model to reimagine land access as well as conservation and stewardship"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network

Organization	Data Content	Date Accessed	Source Type	Web Address
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	The work of Black people in food and land justice is deep and plentiful…From natural healer Dr. Alvenia Fulton to Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative in Mississippi and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives work protecting Black farmers to national influences such as the Nation of Islam's work (How to Eat to Live) to the revolutionary survival work of the Black Panther Party, we have a long, rich tradition of Black food security and collective Black food justice and healing work that is often made invisible by mainstream omission.	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	"Land has always been the foundation of our dreams…Land, safe space and the means for self-determination continues to be assaulted and undermined thus the need to form an organized, multifaceted and collective long-term response is urgent".	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	The Black Yard Farm Cooperative is dedicated to disrupting the racist and exclusionary spaces that prevent Black farmers from connecting to the land and healing…Black people have had a traumatic relationship with land in this country, we've been exploited and continue to be devalued and systemically displaced…We want to disrupt the narrative that our connection to the land started with Chattel Slavery and build a positive connection with the land while providing opportunity to learn restorative practices, and gain hands-on farm experience in an environment free of exploitation.	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
Black Earth Farms	The privatization of land is the framework through which colonized and oppressed Indigenous people across the planet are denied access to their ancestral homelands which historically provided them with sustenance and wellness…Our work regenerates our community's connection to and reverence for land and agriculture, which was partially severed from our ancestors through colonial violence.	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	"we must move past individual notions of ownership, which still left us vulnerable under racial capitalism"	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
Black Earth Farms	Our work regenerates our community's connection to and reverence for land and agriculture, which was partially severed from our ancestors through colonial violence, and from our elders through multinational corporate exploitation, food system consolidation, and racist actions of the usda…One of our main priorities is to…further food justice and food sovereignty for low-income, Black and Indigenous communities, families and individuals…	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/

Organization	Data Content	Date Accessed	Source Type	Web Address
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	The work of Black people in food and land justice is deep and plentiful…We know that Black narratives around food and land exist and help to deepen our collective understanding, affirming that Black liberation is intricately connected to land and our means to community control of our food systems… Reframing narratives around Black food and land via our historic struggles and our own family histories (documented and told through our own lens) deeply transforms the relationships our people have with food and land.	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
Black Earth Farms	"Relationships with soil, plants, food, and medicine are direct lines of communication and connection with our ancestors…Healing from trauma and ancestral wounds is an essential part of liberation"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	In order for us to move forward with respect and reciprocity while linking farmers of color with land, it is essential to center the voices of Indigenous peoples of these territories first, so that we do not cause further harm via the colonial violence of land access without consent.	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network	"to build community self-reliance and change our consciousness about food"	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.dbcfsn.org/
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network	"all aspects of the food system…so that they become empowered to make decisions around food"	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.dbcfsn.org/
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	The food system was built on stolen land and stolen labor of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and people of color. Members of the Northeast Farmers of Color Network are claiming our sovereignty and call for reparations of land and resources so that we can grow nourishing food and distribute it to our communities…Our desire is to connect POC farmers to land to grow healthy foods and medicines for our communities and plan to accomplish this by acquiring and returning land to Indigenous nations and respectfully connecting Black…and other POC farmers and land stewards to land while centering and respecting Indigenous sovereignty.	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	"build a flagship community with incubator farms, commons for production"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	"little support for farmers of color who often work on a smaller, more sustainable scale"	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network

Organization	Data Content	Date Accessed	Source Type	Web Address
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	“continues the tradition of Black institution building by creating an organized framework for collective visioning and action around food and land issues impacting Black people”.	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	The development of these systems allows for Black food grown to get to Black plates in a way that circulates Black wealth and resources in Black communities leading to less extractive and more self-determining food economies.	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	“a successful and replicable farm cooperative model”	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	approach food sovereignty, land and self-determining food economies through the lens of healing, organizing & resistance against anti-Blackness”	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	“accountability and restorative/ transformative justice [that] allows for deep healing and change”	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	“dedicated to disrupting racism and exclusionary spaces that prevent Black farmers from connecting to the land and healing”,	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	“increasing ecological biodiversity and instilling responsible and mindful land practices for future generations”.	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
The National Black Food & Justice Alliance	“We work to build healthy, ecologically sound connections to the land in all its manifestations”	June 17, 2021	Website	https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction

Organization	Data Content	Date Accessed	Source Type	Web Address
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	“designing, building and protecting the nourishing, safe and liberatory spaces our communities need and absolutely deserve” and refer to “sovereignty as the ultimate goal”.	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
The Black Yard Farm Cooperative	“It is no coincidence that the people in this country who are most affected by food insecurity have the least access and control over our food system. This needs to change. It is crucial that we have autonomy over our food system”	May 30, 2021	GoFundMe	https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-farmers-and-the-future-of-agriculture
Black Earth Farms	“Settler colonial parasitic capitalism, militarized imperialist nation states, and Eurocentric ideologies such as pseudo socialism and fascist neoliberalism must be abolished and replaced with autonomous and sovereign communities centered around indigenous self-determination and Black liberation.”	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Black Earth Farms	“believe all people should have access to affordable and safe housing, and the ability to collect clean water, to produce their own food, and steward their own food systems	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	“the harm perpetuated by colonial land theft and genocide”	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust	“permanent and secure land tenure through rematriating land and seeds; farmland stewardship, preservation and expansion; envisioning ways to be in reciprocity with land and creation, and by reimagining what the word ‘farmer’ stands for”	May 30, 2021	Website	https://nefoclandtrust.org/nefoc-network
Black Earth Farms	“Settler colonial parasitic capitalism, militarized imperialist nation states, and eurocentric ideologies such as pseudo socialism and fascist neoliberalism”	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/
Black Earth Farms	“We need autonomous and sovereign communities that steward and produce their own ethically harvested food without pesticides and other chemical inputs. We need active divestment from the colonial food system and the fossil fuel petrochemical industry. We need access to de-privatized clean water, and food landscapes with no tolerance for racialized and gendered domination or enslavement. We need justice and reparations for Black and Indigenous people globally.”	May 30, 2021	Website	https://www.blackearthfarms.com/

Appendix B. Presentations, Panels & Discussions

Person & Organization	Data Content	Date	Title	Host	Web Address
Chris Newman, Sylvanaqua Farms	"One of the biggest things that's led to poor health, especially among Indigenous people has been a removal from our traditional diets. Native people would be removed from their traditional homelands, and they'd be forced onto a reservation, forced onto a farm and it's interesting where the parallels are between African Americans being forced to farm and us having this cultural aversion to this idea of farming because it's slavery. For Native people there's a parallel where farming is almost like a form of surrender."	June 22, 2020	Juneteenth Broadcast—Restoring Democracy in Food and Agriculture	A Growing Culture	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd2rvT5jR0I&t=2507s
Chris Newman, Sylvanaqua Farms	"…what we're doing at Sylvanaqua Farms… is anarchist and [goes] back to my Indigenous roots which is combining the ethics that you see from a lot of Latinx and African American farmers who are very good at growing row crops…that are grown sustainably…in a way that [rebuilds] soil and creates ecosystem services…combining that with an Indigenous method of farming collectively where you're farming at a very large scale…so that you're able to have a positive ecological impact on an entire watershed or an entire microbiome…"	June 22, 2020	Juneteenth Broadcast—Restoring Democracy in Food and Agriculture	A Growing Culture	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd2rvT5jR0I&t=2507s
Chris Newman, Sylvanaqua Farms	"there are ways to pay people equitably working at scale as long as you're willing to kind of subsume yourself as a farm owner. Which is what I'm trying to do and share ownership, making it collective. That was the strength of Indigenous landholding"	June 22, 2020	Juneteenth Broadcast—Restoring Democracy in Food and Agriculture	A Growing Culture	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd2rvT5jR0I&t=2507s
Chris Newman, Sylvanaqua Farms	"It has to be managed by us because…. We're the only ones who have the intergenerational knowledge that knows actually how to restore these places properly. We're the only ones that can stop thinking about these things in terms of global markets and commodities and scaling up individual products instead of scaling up our land management ethics and things like that."	June 22, 2020	Juneteenth Broadcast—Restoring Democracy in Food and Agriculture	A Growing Culture	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd2rvT5jR0I&t=2507s

Appendix C. Codes

Category → subcategory → code

I. LAND (centrality of land)

a. Negative Historic Relationships (with land)
- i. Displacement
- ii. Dispossession
- iii. Exclusion
- iv. Trauma
- v. Marginalization
- vi. colonial harm

b. Positive Historic Relationships (with land)
- i. Traditional
- ii. Ancestral
- iii. Roots
- iv. Reclaim
- v. Deep
- vi. Plentiful

c. Creating Access (to land)
- i. Reconnecting
- ii. Collective visioning
- iii. Security
- iv. Equitable

d. Healing (through land)
- i. Restoring balances
- ii. Advancing skills/knowledge
- iii. Autonomy
- iv. Sovereignty (general)
- v. (centering) Community
- vi. Protecting (Black land)
- vii. Reconnecting
- viii. Reclaim

II. AUTONOMY (building autonomy)

a. BIPOC as leaders
- i. Visibility
- ii. Liberation
- iii. Access

b. Self-determination
    i. Food sovereignty
    ii. Land sovereignty

c. Subverting racial capitalism
    i. Re-imagined economies
    ii. Anti-exploitation
    iii. De-privatization

III.HEALING (need for healing)

a. Reparations
    i. Land reparations
    ii. Pay reparations
b. Center Black voices
    i. Support
    ii. Transformation
    iii. Visibility
c. Future Generations
    i. Uplifting
    ii. Agency
    iii. Community building
    iv. Empowerment
    v. Development
    vi. Education
d. Community Needs
    i. Commons
    ii. Institution building
    iii. Collective action
    iv. Liberation

Themes:
    1. Land as sovereignty
    2. Transformation from struggle to empowerment through agriculture
    3. Community building and healing
    4. Autonomy and liberation as ultimate goals