

The Post-Incarceration Kitchen: Food-Based Community Organizing and Employment after Imprisonment

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The concept is recycle, repurpose, reuse. We've built gardens in the back, so we can teach them sustainable living and growing. The idea that something can grow from something so small. When you see the harvest, you can really reformat your mind. And if all you see is death, you'll reformat that way, too.¹

Susan Trieschmann, Executive Director, Curt's Café

In September 2013, I completed my first interview in Chicago.² Jay was twenty-one at that time. He was living in the city after having spent years in and out of a state boy's home, county jails, and prisons in multiple states. I asked him several questions about his experience with food during his incarceration, and his responses ranged from descriptions of his training and employment in a traditional prison kitchen to memories of eating with friends in the mess hall.³ Thinking back to that conversation, I remember that despite the stigma and hardship placed on him by his past criminal convictions, most notably securing employment, obtaining decent housing, and accessing healthy and affordable food, his voice and his demeanor reflected hope. He was especially excited to show me the garden and the produce he had helped cultivate at his new place of employment, a nonprofit café that hires and trains young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

The garden that Jay referred to sits in the backyard of Curt's Café, a coffee shop and restaurant in Evanston, Illinois, Chicago's northern suburb. At first glance, its exterior with glass windows and a simple green awning looks similar to other establishments in the city that serve food and provide a space to meet friends for breakfast, coffee, or lunch. Its proximity to Chicago and to the light rail station makes it convenient for people traveling on public transportation and also contributes to its success. Indeed, many of the participants in its training program, including Jay, as well as regular customers, travel from Chicago or other neighboring cities to contribute to and benefit from the "good portions of hope and opportunity"⁴ cooked up at the café.

Curt's, which is an acronym that stands for Cultivating Unique Restaurant Training, is a nonprofit organization that provides food service and life skills training, as well as education about healthful, local, and sustainable food options, to youth who have contact with the criminal justice system. Part of the mission of Curt's is to "dine with purpose": enjoy great food and help our community at the same time.⁵ After sitting in peace circles with youth in Chicago, founder Susan Trieschmann learned that these young adults from underserved neighborhoods and in prison (ages from fourteen to eighteen) felt that if they had jobs, they wouldn't have participated in activities that led them to the criminal justice system. Based on that experience, she developed this concept to build skill sets among youth so they would be ready to get jobs if they were available. She doesn't require any prior experience; in fact the only requirement is "just [that you] are ready to try to make the commitment to change."⁶ Student employees learn all aspects of the enterprise, including dish washing, basic café management, basic prep, sandwich making, hot line, and running the cash register in front, and receive a daily stipend for their work.

While the program at Curt's is certainly one of a kind, companies and organizations with similar missions are cultivating change across the United States. In this article, I highlight the work of food-based businesses and nonprofit organizations that work to prevent involvement in the criminal justice system and provide employment opportunities for people with criminal records. By making spaces for people to assert their independence, showcase their abilities, and share the fruits of their labor with other individuals and groups, these enterprises seek to create positive change in the lives of directly affected individuals, particularly in low-income Black and Latino communities. Through an analysis of regulations and policies that limit the rights of individuals with criminal histories, along with an examination of mission statements, hiring criteria, and interviews with owners, directors, and employees, I illuminate the efforts of these institutions to combat punitive state practices while considering their distinct brands of philanthropy. I also suggest a broader abolitionist approach that employs food as a mechanism to effect change and fosters connections across communities.⁷

Legal Limitations: Employment Barriers Facing Individuals with Criminal Histories

Stable employment is considered a significant factor in reducing or preventing recidivism. But individuals with criminal histories face various difficulties obtaining stable jobs, often perpetuating a cycle of incarceration. As the National Employment Law Project has reported, approximately 70 million people have some type of arrest or conviction record that prevents them from obtaining jobs, despite relevant knowledge and skillsets.⁸ Once a potential employer learns of an applicant's criminal history, the chances of that job seeker receiving a callback decrease by 50 percent.⁹ The effect is even greater for Black men, where only one in three receives a callback.¹⁰ Although this research showed that employers were hesitant to hire Black people even without criminal records, they became more reluctant to make job offers when they were aware of a known criminal history. Conviction records for Black people, then, have significant impacts on one's ability to engage in the labor market.¹¹

Recent legislative and policy efforts have helped, with states, cities, and counties across the country enacting fair chance ordinances and laws that make it unlawful for companies to consider criminal records when first assessing a candidate's application. These regulations call for assessments that focus on an individual's age at the time of offense, the length of time since the offense has been committed, and the relevance of the offense to the job being sought.¹² Twenty-five U.S. states have adopted such ordinances for public employment, including nine that require private employers to likewise abide by this law. Illinois is one of these nine states, suggesting a progressive environment in terms of fair hiring practices in the state where Jay resides. More than 150 cities have also enacted fair chance policies, recognizing the economic benefits, including an increase in tax contributions and sales tax, and a decrease in criminal justice spending.¹³

Even with these progressive laws, limitations still exist for individuals with certain kinds of convictions or in certain types of employment.¹⁴ State licensing boards in many professions exclude individuals with conviction histories even though they have received the requisite education and passed the appropriate tests, often while incarcerated. For example, the American Bar Association indicates that more than 12,000 restrictions exist for individuals with felonies, and more than 6,000 restrictions are in place for people with misdemeanor records. Moreover, there are close to 20,000 permanent restrictions that would render a person ineligible for work indefinitely and 11,000 mandatory denials of licenses that leave no discretion to an employer.¹⁵ Thus, even where fair chance policies are beginning to offer a reprieve for individuals facing discrimination based on their convictions, licensing statutes and requirements continue to prevent them from full participation in the workforce. States maintain different requirements for the same occupation and employ different standards to evaluate applicants.¹⁶ Moreover, applicants face difficulties navigating blurry application processes

that do not clarify the meaning behind broad phrases like “good moral character” and leave people wondering about their status and without recourse.¹⁷ What this looks like practically is that people in many states who have learned the basics of plumbing or electrician work while in prison are unable to secure jobs upon release because of the particular restrictions of licensing boards in the states in which they reside. Similarly, people who complete prison sentences and go on to attend college and obtain degrees in subjects like nursing find out when they try to sit for their board exams that they have been automatically deemed unfit because of criminal convictions.¹⁸ Until the completion of a systematic rewrite of state licensing laws, this unjust gap will continue to have disproportionate and severe impacts on low-income Black and Latino communities that bear the greatest burden of hyperincarceration. That said, some businesses, nonprofit organizations, and social enterprises have taken it upon themselves to effect change in this area by offering jobs, training, and more to people who have had direct contact with the criminal justice system. And even more than that, food provides a particular vehicle through which individuals can learn to empower their bodies, minds, and communities.

Food-Based Strategies for Post-Incarceration Success

Similar to the ways in which renegade foodways facilitate connections among people in prison, these organizations and companies provide places where formerly incarcerated people can learn new skills, build community, and earn a living.¹⁹ Their goals include providing training and employment, reducing recidivism, and building individuals and communities, and their work speaks to the role of food as an agent of change. In many ways, these entities provide avenues by which formerly incarcerated people can assert agency, take control of their health, enhance personal and political engagement, and promote sustainability while growing a multigenerational, multiracial, and multigendered antiprison movement. The potential consequences of this type of work are thus far reaching and get at issues of food production/consumption, hyperincarceration, activism, and freedom. Though many of these entities are relatively new, the groundwork on which they have developed was laid long ago.

History Rooted in the Civil Rights Struggle

The contemporary food-based activities that form the basis of my research have roots in the Civil Rights struggle and particularly in the Black Panther Party Breakfast Program, which began in 1969 when Huey Newton called for all chapters to launch a Free Breakfast for Children Program. People in Oakland and across the United States began to view food as a potential tool to address structural inequality. As David Hilliard, the Black Panther Party’s Chief of Staff pointed out, “food serves a double purpose, providing sustenance but also functioning as an organizing tool.”²⁰ This recognition of food as a means of politi-

cal mobilization in an effort to combat hunger and overall injustice became a major element of the Party's agenda. The food program that began in Oakland, California, had spread to thirty-six cities by 1971 and incorporated free food programs and free groceries with items donated by community members, local churches, and neighborhood businesses. The Party called out those in the business community who perpetuated the hunger problem by making food items unaffordable. The breakfast programs took on a consciousness-building role, leading people to understand the interconnectedness of capitalism, starvation, and marginalization. Their success can be measured by the strength of the attack FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover launched against them with his memo to FBI offices that read:

The Breakfast for Children Program promotes at least tacit support for the Black Panther Party among naïve individuals and what is more distressing, it provides the BPP with a ready audience composed of highly impressionable youths. Consequently, the Breakfast for Children Program represents the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for.²¹

Although the breakfast programs were ultimately dismantled by COINTELPRO,²² they planted the seeds for future food-based resistance efforts (and ironically future federal government programming in the national school lunch program). Fred Hampton, the Deputy Chairman of the Black Panther Party in Illinois, asserted the breadth and depth of the breakfasts when he said, "First you have free breakfasts, then you have free medical care, then you have free bus rides, and soon you have FREEDOM!"²³ Organizations that sprouted later have embraced this approach as well.

In the 1990s, political prisoner and former Black Panther Herman Bell, along with advocates in Maine, conceived of the Victory Gardens Project, a grassroots enterprise that employed food to facilitate social change and economic self-sufficiency.²⁴ This project linked urban and rural areas in the northeastern United States by creating a collective practice among organizers and volunteers who shared resources, skills, and labor as they worked to bring organic produce to their communities. The goal of the Victory Gardens Project was to use this hands-on participation to restore lands, establish community independence, and combat inequality. During its eight-year span, Victory Gardens handed out more than thirty tons of free produce.

The legacy of this project lives on in the Freedom Food Alliance,²⁵ a New York cooperative of rural and urban farmers, activists, and political prisoners who prioritize food as a method to deal with environmental, economic, food, and prison injustices. Following the Victory Gardens model, the foundation for this organization's transformational approach is rooted in food sovereignty²⁶

and community control over food production and consumption. Herman Bell remained involved in this project from prison and provided another avenue for activists to create dialogue about current juridical policies and practices, specifically around incarceration and food. One of the organization's key programs is the Victory Bus Project, which forges connections between rural and urban spaces by transporting and feeding families of incarcerated people as they visit their loved ones who are housed in prisons many miles from home. Bus riders eat fresh produce as they strategize about developing sustainable alternatives to prison. In this way, Freedom Food Alliance galvanizes people who have been most directly and negatively affected by the justice system to take part in their personal and community health.

Modern Counterparts That Work to Develop Food, Jobs, and Sustainable Communities

Many of the establishments at which I conducted interviews²⁷ are wedded to facilitating connections between food, work, and empowerment. Though each follows a distinct approach, they maintain certain characteristics in common. For example, all of these entities focus on food, whether growing, preparing, or serving, and all work to disrupt cycles of incarceration. One functions as a for-profit business in a suburb of Chicago, the owner of which chooses to employ adults with criminal convictions and teach them a new business model. Another is a mobile social enterprise in New York City run by a young college graduate with experience working with incarcerated youth. Still another is a pair of nonprofit organizations in Oakland directed by progressive and experienced individuals that connect people on the inside and outside with experience and well-paying jobs. One is a decades-old nonprofit started by a pastor that has developed into a large enterprise with multiple locations in Los Angeles. Two organizations work specifically to empower youth outside Chicago and in San Francisco, but with different models that I will discuss below. Other organizations follow similar approaches in Boston, Washington, DC, Dallas, Portland, and New Orleans.

For-profit businesses are providing food-based job openings for formerly incarcerated men and women. I Have a Bean, a coffee-roasting company in the Chicago suburb of Wheaton, falls into the category of "business as mission," so according to the company's founder, Pete Leonard, a middle-aged white male entrepreneur who previously owned a software company, "what we do is as important as why we do it. We roast and sell coffee from the top 1 percent of coffee in the world using what society considers the lowest of the low."²⁸ Leonard started the company with two partners after he witnessed first-hand the difficulties his brother-in-law, who had spent time behind bars, experienced finding post-release employment. Around the same time, in 2005, Leonard also led a mission trip to Brazil to pour cement for a church. He happened to see someone roasting coffee behind his shed. As he puts it, "I tasted it, and it was a taste

epiphany.”²⁹ He went on to design and build a coffee-roasting machine, perfecting his coffee recipe over time with the help of willing taste-testing neighbors. When choosing a name for the business, he first chose Second Chance Coffee and has since rebranded with the help of a marketing expert. In an effort to avoid initial stigmas or perceptions that the product was subpar, he opted to keep the focus on the superior product and renamed his company I Have A Bean. The name choice is an interesting one as it recalls Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, though Leonard did not mention this.³⁰ His position as a white business owner with no Black employees at the time of the interview leads me to wonder how he would be regarded by potential future employees. Would they view the name of the company as an attempt at solidarity considering Leonard’s business model and commitment to hiring people with criminal histories, or would they be offended by it, especially in light of the increasing difficulty Black people with criminal records face in seeking employment, as I noted earlier?³¹

Leonard’s preferred employees are formerly incarcerated people, and he seeks to hire people who have been or are currently enrolled in an established re-entry program. Since Leonard’s coffee roasting company is a for-profit operation, it does not incorporate some of the components that nonprofit organizations include. As he indicated, he attempts to hire individuals who are also participants in other programs that facilitate success after incarceration, like those providing counseling or life skills training. In that way, his role is solely to offer employment, though several of his employees believe that he has given them much more by equipping them with technical expertise, communication skills, and business experience.³²

Jobs at I Have a Bean serve as springboards to other employment opportunities, as highlighted by his former employee, Miguel, who discussed the variety of skills he honed while working for Leonard: “I roasted coffee, which involves packaging; I started doing the farmers markets where they sell cups and bags. I learned how to brew. I started reaching out, and people were buying a lot of coffee. I couldn’t be doing what I’m doing now [prison ministry] had I not worked here and developed those skills.”³³ Leonard claims that his newly designed roasting machine allows for a “level of control that would let someone who doesn’t know anything come in and do it.”³⁴

This technology is particularly helpful, considering the barriers former prisoners face obtaining licenses from professional boards and applying for work with most private employers. With no knowledge or experience required, Leonard is able to present prospects for employment and skills-based learning that others may not be equipped or able to do. While his long-term goal is seventy-two microroasting plants around the country, he points out that “really we just want to roast and sell the top 1 percent of coffee, and the more we sell, the more post-prison people we can employ.”³⁵ While his ambition as a businessperson is evident, so is his mission to facilitate improvement and success in the lives of people who have suffered. Though his approach may not come

across as radical, his open-mindedness and flexibility allow employees to engage in various parts of the business and find their niche. In this way, his labor and vision inspire his employees and give them a chance to brew their talents, along with high-quality coffee.

Another Chicago establishment has quite a different approach. Felony Franks³⁶ places its employees' pasts front and center in the name of the hot dog stand, menu items, restaurant lingo, and advertising. When customers approach Felony Franks, they don't place their orders but instead "plead their cases." They might choose the "Felony Frank," a jumbo hot dog, the "Misdemeanor Weiner," a regular hot dog, or the "Pardon Polish," a Polish sausage. If they still have "reasonable doubts," they might instead ask for "Freedom Fries," "Objection Onion Rings," or a "Deliberation Drink."³⁷ Incorporating this terminology urges people to speak openly about issues faced by formerly incarcerated people, according to creator and former owner Jim Andrews, who employed individuals with felony convictions at his restaurant paper-supply business, Andrews Paper Company, and thought opening the hot dog stand would further combat homelessness presumably because of the known increased risk of homelessness after incarceration.³⁸ Andrews spent \$160,000 to rehabilitate a Polish sausage stand on a busy street on Chicago's West Side. What he created in 2009 was a small space with cinderblock walls, no tables or chairs, and servers standing behind bulletproof plastic, a standard practice among neighborhood stores. A unique list of Miranda rights welcomed customers who had "the right to remain hungry. Anything you order can and will be used to feed you here at Felony Franks."³⁹ His slogan as heard in his theme song began and remains to this day "Food so good it's criminal."⁴⁰

But not all residents and city officials in Chicago agreed with him. One long-time resident, Michael Cunningham, explained that positive change is taking place in his community, and this restaurant is "a step back,"⁴¹ presumably because it glorifies criminal activity in its use of various criminal charges as the names of menu items, rather than condemning it. Moreover, Robert Fioretti, the city alderman that represented the area in which Felony Franks was originally located, claimed that using language focusing on criminal behavior merely perpetuates the stigmatization of people with criminal records.⁴² Fioretti opposed Felony Franks for other reasons, as well, namely, that the hot dog stand's name applauds criminal activity and in turn damages the West Side's reputation.⁴³

Fioretti's opposition to Andrews's project led to a two-year lawsuit that began with an attempt by Andrews to install a larger sign that would be more visible from the street. The city denied Andrews permission to post the sign; Alderman Fioretti subsequently proposed an ordinance that would prohibit signs that extended seven inches or more from a building's façade on the street where Felony Franks was located, a project he claimed was part of a beautification effort and not related to the hot dog stand sign.⁴⁴ In early 2011, after the city denied Andrews's permit request for a sign, Andrews filed a federal lawsuit requesting \$300,000 in damages against the city. The following month, the City Council

quietly approved the permit request. Nonetheless, Andrews closed his original shop in the summer of 2012. Although some community members respected his mission, the expense and hassle of the lawsuit, combined with the opening of a liquor store that brought rowdiness to the street corner where Felony Franks was located, led to his decision to pick up shop.⁴⁵ While Andrews considered Evanston as a new home, opposition from residents there⁴⁶ made Los Angeles, a city that is home to other organizations doing similar work, his top choice. However, in 2014, his son Deno Andrews decided to follow in his footsteps and reopen Felony Franks in a suburb of Chicago. Until November 2017 when his restaurant officially closed, he sold hot dogs at 6427 North Avenue in Oak Park.

The younger Andrews employed the same business and advertising tactics his father did while simultaneously emphasizing the supposed high-quality affordable food produced at his “hot dog joint.” As he explained in his promotional video, despite higher costs, Felony Franks procured fresh onions and tomatoes, created a steak burger comprising 90% lean prime cuts of steak from the same supplier that provides meat to top Chicago steakhouses, and sold sausages made by a long-time Italian sausage maker in the city with the Felony Franks original recipe and made from pork from one farm. Along with high-quality meals, part of Deno Andrews’s mission was to destigmatize incarceration, provide meaningful employment, and decrease marginalization by refusing to use terms like “ex-offender” and “ex-felon.”⁴⁷ He also commented that “once jail time is served that a person has paid his or her debt to society.”⁴⁸ The attention he placed on his employees’ prior convictions could have myriad effects.

An alternative analysis to the Andrews’ assertions that Felony Franks fosters an open dialogue about incarceration and to opponents’ suggestions that the restaurant is moving that area of the city backwards by approving criminal activity is the notion that the restaurant may be trivializing the gravity of the hyperincarceration problem experienced nationwide, and particularly in Chicago. Though both Andrews suggest that people will speak openly about imprisonment, they provide no material to suggest an informed and engaged discourse has emerged. Instead, it seems more likely that by forcing customers to engage in a noncritical way with the language of the carceral state, he may be perpetuating the very stigma he claims to oppose by participating in “carceral othering.” I define “carceral othering” as the practice where incarceration and other disciplinary measures tied to the prison work to render incarcerated people as “other,” meaning they are objects of the carceral state.⁴⁹ In this specific case, calling attention to employees’ past criminal convictions and incarceration histories would further other his employees by inviting outsiders to participate in the potential judgment that comes with knowing surface-level information about employees’ backgrounds, marking them as “criminal,” and failing to engage in a more productive dialogue. Moreover, by poking fun at the language of incarceration, and in turn, the oppression suffered by so many of the city’s Black residents, including his own employees, Andrews seems to turn his restaurant into a touristic experience, perpetuating the notion of the prison as

spectacle. Finally, Andrews's "paid a debt to society" rhetoric is detrimental to antiprison work because it ignores the structural and systemic inequalities that often lead to incarceration in the first place.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, it seems evident that the controversy around Felony Franks continues to provoke debate for some about the failures of the carceral state.

Many other organizations that employ people with criminal records function as nonprofits with a social justice-oriented plan in place for individual and community empowerment. At Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, for example, former gang members, many who have been incarcerated, participate in educational, parenting, and substance abuse programs, while receiving training over a sixteen-month period to work in several food-based establishments, including a diner, bakery, and farmers markets in the greater Los Angeles area.⁵¹ Father Greg Boyle founded Homeboy and works as its executive director. While serving as the pastor of Dolores Mission Church in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of East Los Angeles, and after watching his community suffer the effects of gang violence, hyperincarceration, and death, Father Boyle worked to create a school, daycare, and employment opportunities. He began his first project, Jobs for a Future and Proyecto Pastoral in 1988, and through it, he developed a social enterprise in an abandoned bakery. Homeboy Bakery came to life in 1992, and Homeboy Tortilleria followed a couple months later in downtown Los Angeles. In 2001, Jobs for a Future became an independent nonprofit called Homeboy Industries and is now the self-proclaimed largest and most successful rehabilitation and gang reentry program in the world.⁵² According to the organization's 2015 Annual Report, that year, Homeboy generated more than \$16 million in revenue from their social enterprises and individual donations, and their financial profile indicates over \$12 million in assets, confirming their status as a stronghold in the community. Moreover, a study done by the UCLA School of Public Affairs concluded that 70 percent of graduates of the Homeboy program had not been arrested in the two years since leaving the organization.⁵³

Omar, a forty-five-year-old Latino man and former gang member and prisoner, works as a pastry chef at Homeboy and shares his appreciation for what he has learned from Homeboy: "Thank God for a place like this that gives us the opportunity to reform our lives and make it better for ourselves. I've been clean for two years. No drugs. They test us, keep us on our toes, make sure we're clean. We have programs that help us here. We have to take classes here, like parenting classes. People here really care about us."⁵⁴ Omar speaks about this experience positively and does not elaborate on the penalties or conditions of the drug testing at Homeboy. The organization offers free mental health services, including substance abuse counseling, which confirms its multilayered dedication to employees. Omar has known Father Greg since he was thirteen years old, and he tells me that in his younger years, he would run around the projects where he lived, selling drugs and gang banging and that no one really cared until Father Greg showed up. After being imprisoned as a young adult and then returning to his home, Omar sought help from Father Greg. A lot of

his inspiration comes from his four-year-old son: “My son, that’s the reason. He’s four. He’s catching up. They notice. I don’t want him growing up like me. No gangs. None of that stuff. I want to give him a different life.”⁵⁵ He initially started doing maintenance at Homeboy, but when he volunteered in the bakery and showed interest in pastries, pastry chef Nick Glenn started teaching him.

Omar’s experience with food began in the pastry department, where he currently works full-time, making all the cookies, cupcakes, and cakes from scratch. He creates the dough, kneads it, bakes it. He explains how food connects him, physically and emotionally, to people with whom he had no connection prior: “I work with rival gang members, cooking with them, doing things that I wouldn’t do with them. If we saw each other before on the streets, we’d shoot each other, either fight, or try to kill each other. But we had to put that to the side.”⁵⁶ He doesn’t hide the apprehension he felt at the start of his employment and his surprise at how well Homeboy has served him: “It’s a good experience, something I didn’t really think I would do. I didn’t know how it would work out, working with rival gang members.”⁵⁷ He also has hopes for the future, including getting “a little bit more experience and either stay here and help others or later on, start my own business. I’m gonna stick with the baking and try to make it out there.”⁵⁸ He currently writes his own recipes and photographs the pastries that he cooks but doesn’t indicate whether he shares them publicly at this point. When I asked about his favorite pastries, he mentioned his Mexican pepitas, what he described as “a little cookie with cinnamon, pistachios, and pumpkin seeds in it. And then after I bake them, I put caramel on top.”⁵⁹ It’s evident that the experience he has had at Homeboy has provided him not only with training to prepare baked goods from scratch but also hope, pride in his work, and confidence that he will have additional opportunities to help himself and others in the community.

Other employees reiterate these positive sentiments about their own experiences at Homeboy. Josefina, who is Latina, in her late thirties, and from Southern California, remembers her reluctance about working there, thinking it represented people who forgot where they came from. She spent a few years in juvenile hall, beginning in 1992, and then spent several years in and out of adult county jail and one year in federal prison. At the insistence of her probation officer, she agreed to give Homeboy a try and quickly came to realize how inspirational she found the workplace and particularly her fellow employees. She ponders her experience and comments,

I like it because you’re working with people that are just like you, that understand you. I remember being in juvenile hall and hearing people come talk to us and it would go in one ear and out the other because I was like you ain’t been where I’ve been. But to be around people who know your struggle or that go through the same things you go through, it kind of inspires

you. Like if they can do it, I can do it. Slowly but surely I started making that change.⁶⁰

Unlike some other program participants, Josefina came to Homeboy with experience cooking and baking. As a prep worker in the kitchen, she has to take direction and ask questions, experiences that she told me have been very humbling for her. She thinks for a minute about her current role and the training she has received at Homeboy and then shares her thoughts about what she has learned: "I think the training is not so much in the cooking and prepping, it's more like life skills, working with people you normally wouldn't work with."⁶¹

Lorena, who is Latina and in her twenties, spent three years incarcerated and reaffirms Josefina's opinions of Homeboy. She describes the opportunity she receives at Homeboy as "a beautiful thing."⁶² She describes the thorough training she received in keeping foods fresh, preparing them, making salads, cutting, slicing, making dressings and full meals. She learned more than culinary skills. In Lorena's words, "Communicating, having patience, really opening up and letting people in is something I learned besides kitchen skills."⁶³ While contemplating what the future may hold, she confidently asserts, "but I do know that all the skills I'm getting here will in my future be helpful. I do know that."⁶⁴ Like Omar, both women speak proudly of their work, recognizing the chances she has taken, the benefits she has received, and the contributions she continues to make to her new community.

Still other establishments focus specifically on youth who have been convicted of crimes and provide unique restaurant experiences that speak to the backgrounds and culture from which many incarcerated youth come, while also providing broad-based training. Old Skool Café in San Francisco is a youth-run restaurant created by Teresa Goines, a middle-aged white woman whose experience as a former juvenile corrections officer in Southern California led to her second profession.⁶⁵ She heard stories of youth who were released from juvenile detention centers and reoffend due to lack of opportunity and wanted to make a change. Goines employs youth ages sixteen to twenty-two who apply by writing essays, interviewing, and submitting letters of recommendations. Once accepted, trainees must be working on their GED or high school diploma. Students train for four months, learning all aspects of the business, including bussing tables, managing, or serving as head chef. Old Skool Café has reported success based on its recidivism rate of 10 percent as of 2014, much lower than the national average of 76 percent.⁶⁶ The ambience is rather formal considering the age of most of the staff. The style of the dining room, as well as staff uniforms, are inspired by the Harlem Renaissance, and music of that era plays while patrons dine. The evening I was there, though piano playing enhanced the opulent décor, the hustle and bustle of people moving around and engaged in conversation seemed front and center. I couldn't help but notice the deep reddish tint of the walls and ornamental mirrors placed neatly upon them. Ornate chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and polite waiters dressed in dark red shirts

and black blazers and black pants appeared often to check in. The floor and tables were both made of dark wood, giving the entire place the feel of a sort of speakeasy. Some of the tables were surrounded by large chairs, and others were placed close to booths upholstered with red velvet. Goines has explained, “from the Harlem Renaissance to jazz and swing, so much of that was started by African-Americans. So many of our youth are of minority descent, I feel like that connection to that era is really important.”⁶⁷ Student-employees look extremely professional, and their demeanors indicate they take pride in their work and feel connected to their community.⁶⁸ While Goines is religious and the program is faith-based, she describes it as inclusive and focuses on providing hope to youth. One activity she encourages is the creation of dream lists.⁶⁹ Her goal, she says, is to encourage them to dream and recognize their potential. As she puts it, “The core of it is giving them hope. . . . Once that light goes on, whatever they do, they’re on their way to fly.”⁷⁰ But since hope cannot be measured like recidivism rates, one must wonder how far it goes. Goines points out that while much of their training focuses on the restaurant industry, they also learn how to interview and write résumés, so it seems they will have gained skills that can serve as an impetus in their job searches.⁷¹

Founded by Jordyn Lexton, a white woman in her midtwenties, Brooklyn resident, graduate of Wesleyan University, and former high school English teacher at Rikers Island, the main prison complex for New York City, Drive Change is a youth-empowering social enterprise comprising several food trucks that provide culinary training to formerly incarcerated youth, ages seventeen to twenty-five. Its mission is directly related to New York’s strict laws that try youth as young as sixteen as adults, labeling them “felons,” and leading to a future with the same barriers adults face as they leave prison. Drive Change began “serving delicious, locally sourced food with a side of social justice”⁷² in early 2014. Lexton’s organization is completely mobile; food trucks move around New York city, selling a variety of creative takes on typical food items at an affordable price while simultaneously delivering a bit of advocacy,⁷³ meaning that the individuals running the truck are youth who have served time at Rikers Island. If asked about the name of the truck, they can provide personal perspectives about the truck’s role in providing employment and skills to formerly incarcerated youth. While the trucks are not overly explicit in announcing their social justice mission, Lexton hopes that by providing a quality product in a well-designed vehicle, she and her team will reach a broad audience; in turn, people who might have limited or no experience with the legal system in the state will gain a new understanding of the obstacles facing youth with felony convictions. Of course, this theory has not been tested yet since the first food truck, which I describe in detail below, has mainly been used for private events.

Drive Change’s first food truck, Snowday, highlights and draws attention to local foodways. Every menu item, including savory pancake poppers, maple grilled cheese, and pulled pork sliders, served by Snowday incorporates local maple syrup from the state of New York to benefit and promote the work of the

local farming industry. In fact, the website for the Snowday Food Truck claims that

Our fare is built with ingredients sourced locally, seasonably and sustainably. We know the best flavor is a byproduct of ingredients grown with great care, and the freshest ingredients come from the closest farms. With every bite, you're pouring money back into our local economy, as we source the majority of our ingredients from within 200 miles. With every dish, you're deciding to take back our food production from the hands of multinational corporations, as we work hand in hand with small and family farms.⁷⁴

This declaration of commitment to local sources may seem interesting to some considering Snowday's namesake item, Sugar on Snow, is an item Lexton borrowed after eating hot maple syrup poured over snow during a family trip to Canada. Her intent certainly seems laudable; she describes wanting to share "that amazing food experience" with other people: "So it went from something so small to wanting to provide that to other people in the city and then thinking why don't I start a food truck that serves this along with some other things and hire my students to work on it and do a whole program around it because food can be such a vehicle for really dispelling some of the preconceived notions about anyone really."⁷⁵ This notion of food experiences understood as simultaneously personal and political and narrated as facilitators of community and social change is one that appears often in terms of individuals' experiences with food during and after confinement. On the other hand, the potential criticism that could result from one's ability to travel, "find" an indigenous menu item, and then make that item the namesake for one's enterprise is also something to keep in mind.⁷⁶

The organization also declares its support for sustainability and community. Part of its design includes repurposed wood from Hurricane Sandy to create a modern log cabin on a metal frame. The purchase, design, and rehabilitation of Drive Change's first truck were made possible, in large part, by community funds collected during the organization's successful indiegogo campaign that raised \$42,196 from 347 supporters.⁷⁷ The launch film from this campaign lays out Lexton's message by highlighting the difficulties one formerly incarcerated youth faced upon returning home after imprisonment.⁷⁸ In particular, the film features a young Black boy walking out of Rikers Island in his blue hoodie, clutching a single paper bag of belongings. He returns to a house where he is depicted as lonely and out of place. As he walks outside the following day, his voiceover indicates that he half hopes no one recognizes him or remembers what he got into. An older Black comrade hands him a job application that asks about felony convictions, and the viewer watches the boy's face drop. He sits on a park bench with the words "Dead End" painted over his head and then runs

into other Black youth trying to get him involved in activities that will continue to bring him down. As he walks alone, he views a painting of the Drive Change food truck on a blank white wall. His voice reminds him, “I am the source of my own growth.”⁷⁹ Eventually, he stands alone on a basketball court, and Lexton appears in the Drive Change truck to pick him up, smiling and motioning for him to hop on the truck, apparently signifying the opportunities that await him. His voice indicates that when doors close, you open them. Without knowing more of Lexton’s story, some might critique this effort as part of a larger “white savior industrial complex”⁸⁰ whereby white middle-class U.S. citizens take it upon themselves to “save” Black people. The video on its own seems to reinscribe some of the stereotypes Black youth face in terms of criminality and Black families face in terms of being described as uninvolved or unsupportive. Moreover, Lexton driving up as a white woman to rescue the youth with no options can be misread as an attempt to intervene in a community of which she is not a part.⁸¹ The authority she seems to automatically acquire reminds us of the privilege her whiteness allows in these spaces. That said, Lexton’s experience teaching incarcerated youth, her work with the city of New York on employment initiatives for people with felony convictions, and her investment in her employees seem to counter potential critiques and demonstrate her commitment to the cause. As Teju Cole has explained in his writings on the “white savior industrial complex,” one of the key practices of doing good work is “first do no harm. There is the idea that those who are being helped ought to be consulted over matters that concern them.”⁸² Lexton’s ongoing dedication to learning about the disproportionate effects of incarceration on Black youth, her development of alternatives to incarceration, and her recognition of her own privilege⁸³ suggest that she is interested in ongoing engagement and improvement in her work.

After the video, Lexton appears on screen to describe how she left her full-time job to build Drive Change and give opportunities to kids coming out of prison who face so many challenges upon release. The challenges Lexton highlights in the launch film form the foundation for her training program, which provides payment to youth workers and includes three phases that correspond to the challenges faced by her students after reentering the community. Phase one, the pretruck training phase, lasts four months and focuses on licensing and certification, customer service, and general job readiness and includes a one-week internship on the truck to check preparedness before moving onto phase two, the truck employment phase. During this four-month phase, student-employees work one shift and participate in three smaller courses in three separate transferable skill areas that correspond with what they will be doing on the truck: money managing/accounting (cashier), social media/marketing (customer service), and culinary arts (head chef). The manager on each truck determines how to expedite everything, and the licensed supervisor (not a student-employee) drives each truck. The final four-month phase is a transitional phase tailored to the individual needs and motivations of each student-employee, who will have

been working with a social worker during the entire fellowship to offer assistance and determine next steps. Students are required to work in another job at this point while continuing courses at Drive Change.

Lexton's goals for how fellowship recipients might continue their food work beyond Drive Change link back to her desire to have each truck individually branded and her mission to provide students with industry and leadership skills. Her hope is that some students may franchise their own trucks and continue the mission while serving as their own bosses and sidestepping the difficulties that come with applying for more traditional jobs in New York and other cities when one has a criminal history. At the same time, though, it is important to note the prohibitive costs involved with purchasing one's own food truck, paying for required permits and licenses, and coming up with funds to rent parking spots, lease commercial kitchen space, and participate in food-based events.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Lexton's objectives again foreground and embrace the ideal of food as a potential agent of social change that can provide education, training, and paid employment and, in effect, lower recidivism, promote positive community development, and confront the state's continual marginalization of formerly incarcerated people.

An organization with a different model that is also committed to providing employment to people after they leave prison is Planting Justice, focused on growing food rather than cooking and serving it. When graduates of the Insight Garden Program,⁸⁵ a gardening program at San Quentin, are released, they have jobs waiting for them the following day at Planting Justice, where they will make \$17.50 an hour working on various gardening projects. The organization aims to provide healthful amenities, including "Fresh veggies. Good jobs. A safer, healthier neighborhood."⁸⁶ Its mission is broad and brings attention to systemic inequalities, including harsh treatment of food workers and limited or lack of access to healthy, fresh, affordable food particularly in low-income areas by providing skills, education, and jobs that promote sustainability to marginalized populations. Founded in 2009 and directed by social justice activists Gavin Raders and Haleh Zandi, the organization engages in a variety of activities and practices that foster its mission. By providing what they refer to as "holistic reentry," they work to end the inequities and systemic poverty that lead to incarceration, and their plan is based on providing job training prior to release and then continuing it afterward along with peer support, full health coverage, a living wage, and opportunities to grow and move forward. As far as specific jobs, Planting Justice has raised funds and purchased farms at which they provide training in permaculture and horticulture, growing nutritious local food that is available on a sliding scale to residents who are part of a neighborhood with no grocery store. Thus far, their recidivism rate is 0 percent as compared with California's 65 percent recidivism rate.⁸⁷ Based on that statistic, as well as the appreciation I witnessed among current employees, it seems that Planting Justice has delivered success along with its services.

Mark, a Black man in his late forties, who spent twenty-five years in San Quentin and graduated from the Insight Garden Program, extends praise to his current employer, who, Mark explained, provides ongoing training, the chance to be outside, and continued connection with Insight Garden Program. He calls Gavin Raders “the boss of all bosses”⁸⁸ and recounts a time when Raders brought his team to Burbank Elementary School to educate them on tree growth and the importance of recognizing suckers that will take the life out of a tree. Mark thinks that “elevated my game. When I see a tree, I already know what to do.”⁸⁹ The enjoyment shows on his face when he thinks about his favorite parts of the job, which include getting his hands dirty and getting in the mud. He still credits much of his success to the person who got him started on this path, Beth Waitkus, the founder of Insight Garden Program. He told me, “When I didn’t care, she did. If she could put the interest and energy in me, I think I could, too. I got closer to Beth. The re-entry program afterward, staying connected. That was the best part. Just knowing that in spite of, or regardless, I got you.”⁹⁰ In the future, he sees himself “helping people first”⁹¹ and continuing to take on the responsibility placed on him by Planting Justice. “Food is nutrition. It’s supposed to be fun. It’s not supposed to be obesity, trans fat, food deserts. We need to contain them to a minimum. That’s one thing PJ does. We are responsible. We go to high schools, building community gardens, giving free gardens to low-income housing. We are putting our best foot forward.”⁹² Mark articulates connections between food, health, labor, and joy and illustrates the ways Planting Justice has contributed to growing these connections among individuals and communities.

These positive attitudes resonate with another program participant, Leon, a Black man who spent eleven years in Solano State Prison and his last five months in San Quentin. He remembers meeting Raders when he came to San Quentin for part of his training in the Insight Garden Program. He began work upon release in 2012 and says his education began immediately, as he took in “more about pruning, gardening, gray waters, raised beds, how to plant. I just thought you put plants in dirt. I’ve learned the names of the dirt and compost and mulch, the time to plant a plant and where, north, south, east, which direction is the sun.”⁹³ He expresses his thankfulness for the relationships he has built, commenting that “I just love my job. It is like a big family here.”⁹⁴ What Planting Justice and its employees are building could have a long-lasting impact on entire communities, and this is not lost on Leon. His happiness stems from “working with my hands, being in the outdoors, fresh air.”⁹⁵ But more than that, as he reveals, “you have a sense of freedom. It’s like you’re giving back for your kids and grandkids and kids to come. They can say my great-great-grandfather planted this tree. I can visualize my great-great-grandkids eating a piece of fruit and telling the story, my great-great-grandfather planted this in 2013 and here it is in the year 2050.”⁹⁶

The roots that Leon has helped cultivate showcase food as a potential foundation for future generations to learn, grow, and harness skills in sustainable and more just ways. That said, the nature of this organization and others is

that its status is dependent on continued funding. Part of the business model involves employees canvassing to raise money by speaking about their work in the community. I observed this canvassing firsthand during my visit and found it extremely inspirational. We visited a busy marketplace crowded with mainly white shoppers, and I was impressed by the poise and pride in the employees' voices as they taught strangers about the organization. Rooting employees in their work by giving them a stake at making their own future by continuing funding for the organization seems to raise awareness about the way nonprofits work while also facilitating their involvement and showcasing their personal contributions to their success.

The Hopefulness and Limits of Food-Based Approaches

A few months after my first interview with Jay at Curt's Café outside Chicago, I tried to reach out to him but received no response. I learned that within a few weeks of our conversation, he had been arrested and incarcerated on new charges. I wrote to Susan Trieschmann, the director of Curt's Café, the nonprofit café at which he had been working, and we corresponded about the difficulties involved with coming home from prison.⁹⁷ The multiple layers of oppression—lack of housing, adequate healthcare, education, networks of support, and inconsistent counseling—work to break people down, continually reminding them that their lives don't matter. In Curt's Café's first three years, Trieschmann trained 110 men.⁹⁸ While Curt's had a 2 percent recidivism rate, 45 percent of people released from prison in the state of Illinois return within three years.⁹⁹ In 2015 Curt's opened a second café specifically to work with formerly incarcerated women in southern Chicago. As Trieschmann reiterates, "this is a community problem, and the community needs to be part of the healing process."¹⁰⁰ Without decent housing, support that extended beyond his workplace, and the ability to afford basic amenities, Jay couldn't have succeeded. Curt's alone could not make up for the lacks allowed for by the state's carceral project.¹⁰¹

Some of the more holistic programs that I have studied here begin to open up a space for the community to take part in the health and development of its most vulnerable citizens. These types of programs, including Curt's, that focus on more than just one aspect of foodways and whose work extends to diverse members of the community seem ripe for success. For example, some, like Planting Justice, offer jobs and training to former prisoners who then pass on the benefits of sustainability to young people who have not been convicted of crimes, thereby investing in their communities as they earn an income. Others, like Curt's Café, employ formerly incarcerated youth in an effort to stop the cycle of incarceration and teach them the benefits of gardening, eating healthy food, as well as how to run a café and how to interview for future jobs while also creating a community of like-minded people who have been through similar experiences. Homeboy provides a thorough model, as well, by providing

counseling, job training, and education to all participants and by giving them a chance to work at a variety of sites, including gardens, bakeries, and restaurants. Each of these spaces has the potential to teach visitors about their mission.

For many of the people I interviewed, productive possibilities came with hope. Yet that hope required these individuals' own labor, as well as the commitment of entire communities through funding and investments in education, training, and health. Even with this insight, recognizing the structural racism inherent in state policy and practice leads one to ponder the extent of the impact of such organizations. These organizations have problems as well. At their worst, companies like Felony Franks, for example, despite providing jobs to former prisoners, make light of the extent of the incarceration problem in branding and could be causing more harm than good. I would also be remiss to ignore the fact that all of the directors of the organizations and enterprises I visited exhibit and maintain privilege in the form of their whiteness, and some in their economic upbringing. Ensuring that the people with whom they are attempting to engage are part of the conversation about what would most benefit them and facilitate their objectives will be important as these organizations continue to develop. Moreover, cultivating a greater awareness about programs that may inadvertently work to build the carceral state rather than mobilize against it in all its forms will be necessary to advance the type of food-based abolitionist project I envision.

I refer to this abolitionist approach as “food radicalism,” a more inclusive strategy for the mobilization and assertion of broad food-based rights among individuals whose stories often do not appear and are purposefully disappeared in traditional discussions regarding the right to food. Food radicalism advocates listening to those who are directly affected and including their knowledge and customs as part of the framework, as well as expanding the research and models on which we rely. Moreover, it highlights the efforts of individuals and groups already engaged in advocacy around food sovereignty, food democracy, and food justice; recognizes the points of convergence and divergence among them; and marshals this body of work to develop a sustained sense of activism and assertion of rights that starts with food and can potentially lead to freedom. I borrow the word “radicalism” from Cedric Robinson to indicate the ongoing and continual struggle, movement, and resistance to dominant thought,¹⁰² and I modify it with the word “food” to clarify that the resistance we are centering is specifically related to the multiple uses of food as a way to evoke power or effect change. It is my hope that naming and legitimizing this radical approach will allow for a complete revision of systems that perpetuate racist structures of knowledge and power. This is not to say that the other categories and words, particularly food sovereignty, food democracy, and food justice, are not useful; in fact, I think they are part of food radicalism. But I am deliberate in my word choice as a method of emphasizing the continual process, practice, and progress toward the right to food and the accompanying rights that could potentially come with it. Specifically, I call attention to rights that are being asserted in

response to structural dominance, oppression, and exploitation for low-income Black and Latino communities and specifically those experiencing the direct effects of the carceral state. I expand on this discussion elsewhere.¹⁰³

I remembered Jay's voice when he talked about the garden. He had made something he was truly proud of. Opportunities for growing and working in nature are starting points for connecting with the land, the community, and one another. I have described examples of the ways food and foodways can, perhaps unwittingly, assist people in achieving a small sense of agency in an oppressive situation by providing them with the sustenance to nourish their minds and bodies, the tastes and memories to allow them some control over their condition, and the skills to obtain jobs. If we take these activist responses to the punitive state as starting points, work to involve those who are the most directly and disproportionately affected in shaping opportunities for themselves and others, and explore various types of investments in their communities, particularly in ways that decrease their reliance on policing and prisons, we may see a fuller emergence of the power of food. Encouraging this type of comprehensive approach could contribute to the creation of a food-based framework for abolition. In this way, hope could move from a fleeting feeling or possibility to a radical transformation.

Notes

1. Susan Trieschmann, interview, September 2013.
2. I use pseudonyms for all formerly incarcerated interviewees.
3. Jay, interview, September 2013.
4. Curt's Café, "About Us," Curt's Café website, <http://curtscafe.org/about-us/>.
5. Curt's Café, "Our Program," Curt's Café website, <http://curtscafe.org/our-program/>.
6. Susan Trieschmann, interview, September 2013.
7. Prison abolition is a well-established intellectual and political movement to end surveillance, policing, and imprisonment and create humane and lasting alternatives to them. This project builds on the work of abolitionist scholars, activists, and organizations, including Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Craig Gilmore, Dylan Rodriguez, Beth Richie, Dean Spade, Critical Resistance, and In-cite!, among others. For more information, see Critical Resistance, "What Is the PIC? What Is Abolition?," <http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/>, and Dan Berger, Mariame Kaba, and David Stein, "What Abolitionists Do," *Jacobin*, August 24, 2017, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/08/prison-abolition-reform-mass-incarceration>.
8. National Employment Law Project, "'Ban the Box' Is a Fair Chance for Workers with Records," Fact Sheet, April 2017, <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/Ban-the-Box-Fair-Chance-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.
9. Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 5 (2003): 937, 955. Pager's research involved what she calls an "experimental audit approach—in which matched pairs of individuals applied for real entry-level jobs—to formally test the degree to which a criminal record affects subsequent employment opportunities."
10. *Ibid.*, 959.
11. *Ibid.*; see also Michelle Natividad Rodriguez and Beth Avery, "Unlicensed & Untapped: Removing Barriers to State Occupational Licenses for People with Records," National Employment Law Project, April 26, 2016, <http://www.nelp.org/publication/unlicensed-untapped-removing-barriers-state-occupational-licenses/>.
12. National Employment Law Project, "'Ban the Box.'"
13. Michelle Natividad Rodriguez and Beth Avery, "Ban the Box: U.S. Cities, Counties, and States Adopt Fair Hiring Policies," National Employment Law Project, April 1, 2017, <http://www.nelp.org/publication/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide/>.
14. Fair chance policies do not affect state laws that prevent individuals with specific offenses from obtaining specific jobs (i.e., individuals with sex offenses will continue to be precluded from employment at certified day care centers and schools).

15. Justice Center: The Council of State Governments, "National Inventory of the Collateral Consequences of Conviction," <https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/search/>, <https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/search/>. To access these data, one would do a multi-jurisdictional search for a particular offense and for barriers to categories including "occupational and professional license and certification" and "business license and other property rights."
16. Rodriguez and Avery, "Unlicensed & Untapped."
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. I develop the term "renegade foodways" elsewhere. Please see Elissa Underwood Marek, "Cooking With Conviction: Food and Foodways in the U.S. Carceral State" (dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2017).
20. Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 58.
21. Andrea King Collier, "The Black Panthers: Revolutionaries, Free Breakfast Pioneers," *National Geographic: The Plate*, November 4, 2015, <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/04/the-black-panthers-revolutionaries-free-breakfast-pioneers/>.
22. COINTELPRO refers to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterintelligence Program that consisted of covert projects aimed at disrupting or dismantling domestic political organizations between 1956 and 1971.
23. Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 58; see also Raj Patel, "Survival Pending Revolution: What the Black Panthers Can Teach the US about Food," *Food First Backgrounder* 18, no. 2 (2012), https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BK18_2_2012_Summer_Survival_Pending_Revolution.pdf.
24. Official Website of Herman Bell, <http://www.freehermanbell.org/VictoryGardens.html>.
25. Freedom Food Alliance Website, <https://freedomfoodalliance.wordpress.com/about/>.
26. La Via Campesina Website, <https://www.viacampesina.org/en/>. La Via Campesina is an international coalition of producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities that advocates on behalf of over 200 million farmers in policy discussions. La Via Campesina coined this term to assert the right of people to define their food systems and to advocate for the rights of individuals to control their food and nutrition.
27. As part of my dissertation research at the University of Texas at Austin, I conducted twenty-five interviews with individuals affiliated with food-based establishments, including a gardening organization, coffee-brewing company, cafe, restaurant, and a food truck, that focus on hiring people with criminal convictions. I interviewed formerly incarcerated people as well as founders and directors of such enterprises. Marek, "Cooking with Conviction."
28. Pete Leonard, interview, September 2013. Pete Leonard interview, September 2013. I interpreted the phrase "top 1 percent of the coffee in the world" to mean that his coffee was extremely high quality and he was working to help people who many others would not consider for employment.
29. *Ibid.*
30. See KM Liberato, "Colonization & Ally-ship in Struggles of the Oppressed," *Subaltern USA: Clarifying Our Concepts*, December 28, 2014, <https://subalternusa.wordpress.com/2014/12/28/colonization-ally-ship-in-struggles-of-the-oppressed/>.
31. Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record," 355, 359.
32. I include interviewees' discussions of these particular skills in the sections that follow.
33. Miguel, interview, September 2013.
34. Pete Leonard, interview, September 2013.
35. *Ibid.*
36. I did not have the opportunity to conduct interviews at Felony Franks because my interviews took place during the restaurant's closure.
37. Felony Franks, "Menu," Felony Franks website, <https://felonyfranks.com/menu/>; Felony Franks Menu, "Menu for Felony Franks," Yelp website, <https://www.yelp.com/menu/felony-franks-chicago>.
38. National Health Care for the Homeless Council, "Criminal Justice, Homelessness & Health," 2012 Policy Statement, <http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Criminal-Justice-2012.pdf>.
39. Julie Jargon, "Slaw and Order: Hot-Dog Stand in Chicago Triggers a Frank Debate: 'Felony Franks' Is Staffed by Ex-Cons, but Some Neighbors Don't Relish the Name," *Wall Street Journal Online*, October 13, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/16/felony-franks-evanston-pr_n_1677372.html.
40. Felony Franks Theme Song and Intro, <https://felonyfranks.com>.
41. Jargon, "Slaw and Order."
42. *Ibid.*
43. "Felony Franks Sues City to Keep Sign, Escalating Feud with Alderman," *Huffington Post*, May 6, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/06/felony-franks-sues-city-t_n_858700.html. I discuss an alternative analysis below.

44. Jargon, "Slaw and Order."
45. "Felony Franks to Close, Owner Says, after Years of Battling City, Nearby Businesses," *Huffington Post*, June 4, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/04/felony-franks-to-close-ow_n_1567666.html.
46. "Felony Franks Evanston: Proposal for New Hot Dog Stand Raises Community Concerns," *Huffington Post*, July 16, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/16/felony-franks-evanston-pr_n_1677372.html.
47. Felony Franks, "Our Program," Felony Franks website, <https://felonyfranks.com/our-program/>.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Elissa Underwood Marek, "Sport, Spectacle and Carceral Othering: The Angola Prison Rodeo and the Prison View Golf Course," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism*, edited by Sarah Forrest, Justin Piché, Kevin Walby, and Jacqueline Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1011–1029.
50. For additional information, see Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
51. Homeboy Industries, "What We Do," Homeboy Industries website, <http://www.homeboyindustries.org/what-we-do/>.
52. Homeboy Industries, "Who Is Father Greg?" Homeboy Industries website, <http://www.homeboyindustries.org/fatherg/>; Homeboy Industries, "History," Homeboy Industries website, <http://www.homeboyindustries.org/life-at-homeboy/history>. Homeboy Industries claims to be the largest rehabilitation program in the world, but I have not found outside objective data confirming this information.
53. Homeboy Industries, 2015 Annual Report, April 2016, http://homeboyindustries.org/hb_adm/img/news-events/Homeboy_Yearbook_2015.pdf.
54. Omar, interview, April 2014.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. Josefina, interview, April 2014.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Lorena, interview, April 2014.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. Teresa Goines, interview, April 2014.
66. Old Skool Café, "Our Story," Old Skool Café website, <http://www.oldschoolcafe.org/our-story/>.
67. Kathleen Toner, "Troubled Youth Kicking It 'Old Skool' at San Fran Bistro," CNN, May 16, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/16/us/cnnheroes-goines-old-skool>.
68. Observation, Old Skool Café, April 2014.
69. Teresa Goines, interview, April 2014.
70. Toner, "Troubled Youth."
71. Information about Old Skool Café's program comes from my interview with Goines because I have not yet had the opportunity to interview Old Skool Café's youth workers.
72. Jordyn Lexton, interview, August 2013.
73. Drive Change, "The Truck," Drive Change website, <http://drivechangenyc.org/hiretheruck/>. The latest update on Drive Change's website indicates that the trucks are currently for hire for mission-aligned events and will be fully operational in June 2017.
74. Snowday Food Truck, "The Food," <http://snowdayfoodtruck.com/thefood-2/>.
75. Jordyn Lexton, interview, August 2013.
76. Though Lexton is not claiming to have been the first to come upon sugar on snow, her use of the food may be perceived as part of the gentrification already taking place in her own Brooklyn neighborhood. For more information about gentrification in Brooklyn, see "There Goes the Neighborhood," Episode 7: It's Complicated, *The Nation* on WNYC, April 19, 2016, <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/neighborhood>.
77. "Drive Change: Building a Food Truck for Social Justice," indiegogo website, <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/drive-change-building-a-food-truck-for-social-justice#/>.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*
80. This term came to light during the Kony 2012 video and subsequent controversy. A writer and novelist, Teju Cole, posted a series of tweets that were reproduced in their entirety on *The At-*

lantic and *The New York Times* and discussed in other popular media, that critiqued this movement as validating privilege rather than engaging in a project about justice.

81. Teju Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>.

82. *Ibid.*

83. Jordyn Lexton, Drive Change: Ending Mass Incarceration, TEDxDaltonSchool, December 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Vsl6MWYaL4>.

84. Robert Frommer and Bert Gall, Institute for Justice, *Food Truck Freedom: How to Build Better Food-Truck Laws in Your City*, November 2012, http://ij.org/images/pdf_folder/economic_liberty/vending/foodtruckfreedom.pdf; "How Much Does It Cost to Start a Food Truck?" Mobile Cuisine website, <https://mobile-cuisine.com/business/cost-to-start-a-food-truck-business/>; "The Complete Breakdown of Food Truck Operation Costs," Food Truck Empire website, April 10, 2014, <http://foodtruckempire.com/how-to/costs/>.

85. Insight Garden Program is an evidence-based gardening program that Beth Waitkus founded at San Quentin State Prison and has since expanded around the state of California and out of state into the Logansport Juvenile Facility, Indiana State Prison, and a reentry program in New York City. See Kathryn (Beth) E. Waitkus, "The Impact of a Garden Program on the Physical Environment and Social Climate of a Prison Yard at San Quentin State Prison" (master's thesis, Pepperdine University, 2004).

86. Planting Justice, Homepage, Planting Justice website, <http://www.plantingjustice.org>.

87. jpmassar, "Planting Justice. Reaping Social Change," *Daily Kos*, April 19, 2016, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2016/4/19/1516584/-Planting-Justice-Reaping-Social-Change>.

88. Mark, interview, April 2014.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*

93. Leon, interview, April 2014.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*

97. E-mail with Susan Trieschmann, April 2014.

98. Jay Shefsky, "Curt's Café Serves Up Job Training, Food for Thought," *WTTW Chicago Tonight*, March 30, 2016, <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2016/03/30/curts-cafe-serves-job-training-food-thought>.

99. Shefsky, "Curt's Café Serves Up;" State of Illinois Sentencing Policy Council, "The High Cost of Recidivism," Summer 2015, http://www.icjia.state.il.us/spac/pdf/Illinois_Results_First_1015.pdf.

100. *Ibid.*

101. The "carceral state" or the "state's carceral project" refers to the extensive structural apparatus of surveillance, control, and punishment in criminal justice, health care, education, work, and other societal institutions that includes punitive policies, practices, and beliefs and has political, sociocultural, and economic ramifications that disproportionately affect Black and Latino communities. See generally "The Size and Scope of the Carceral State," *process: a blog for american history*, June 26, 2015, <http://www.processhistory.org/the-size-and-scope-of-the-carceral-state/>.

102. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, rev. ed. (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

103. Marek, "Cooking with Conviction."

