

“Transnational Black Feminist Food Sovereignty and Solidarity”

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Amani El-Jack:

Hello, good morning to everybody joining us here in the room, and good morning -- maybe afternoon -- to those who are joining us from around the globe via Zoom. My name is Amani El-Jack, and it is my great pleasure, on behalf of myself and the [Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights](#), to welcome you all to this talk. Today's talk is with Dr. Melchor Quick Hall. It is being run as a hybrid event with a live audience here, as well as participants who are joining us from around the world.

We would first like to acknowledge that [UMass Boston](#) and its surrounding communities are based on the unceded land of Massachusetts' Pawtucket and Nipmuc indigenous groups. We want to honor their lives and the enduring relationship with their traditional territories and acknowledge the many ways they were ripped away from indigenous people and the land given to non-indigenous groups. This was done through a very violent and genocidal forced removal that encompasses death, disposition, displacement, and countless individual communities being evicted from their homelands. While acknowledging this is the first step, I think that it would be important for all of us to follow it with action that builds solidarity, particularly by compacting the structural and physical violence that indigenous groups continue to endure as we speak right now.

While people are still joining us, I would like to take few minutes to tell you the structure of our event today. Dr. Quick Hall will talk, and after that, we'll take questions from the participants here as well as on Zoom. We encourage you to state your name before asking your question. For the Zoom audience, the chatroom is open now and you can start asking questions throughout the forum. We'll get a chance to interact with questions from the Zoom audience at the end of the event.

There is a short survey that will pop up for the Zoom participants. Please take the time to fill it out, and, for our participants here in the room, there is a survey on your seats. Please take the time to fill it out before you leave. This event is recorded, just to alert everybody, and the video will be available on the [Consortium website](#). Finally, I would like to thank many of the UMass departments and programs that have collaborated and generously contributed and co-sponsored this event today. Many of the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights events are very collaborative. They are very homegrown, and the reach goes far beyond some of the departments that we are mentioning.

Now, it's my great pleasure to introduce you to our speaker. Dr. Quick Hall is a popular education and community-based researcher, currently working as a postdoctoral fellow for Wellesley College’s [Anti-Carceral Co-Laboratory](#) and the Education Director of [Global Village Farms](#). Her professional work advances abolitionist and food sovereignty futures alongside

communities. Dr. Quick Hall has many publications, like one of her major contributions, her book [*Naming a Transnational Black Feminist Framework: Writing in Darkness*](#), and she is a co-editor with Gwyn Kirk of [*Mapping Gendered Ecologies: Engaging with and beyond Ecowomanism and Ecofeminism*](#). Welcome, Dr. Quick Hall.

K. Melchor Quick Hall:

Thank you. As I lean into the mic, I invite some of you who are in the back part of the room to move forward.

First of all, can you raise your hand if you've heard the phrase "popular educator" before? Those are timid hands. Part of what it means when I say that I'm a "popular educator" is that I recognize that in a room full of people, while there may be someone who identifies professionally as an expert in an area, I think that everyone has something to contribute to the conversation. I'm really looking to learn from the people who are in the room, the range of people who have experiences with which I'm not familiar, who can teach me something about food, about food sovereignty, about your connection to water and land, and so I'm going to be pausing at different points during the presentation to hear from you. I came in after the room was set up, but I almost removed the chairs in the back of the room to encourage that. Also, often in that kind of mode, things are more in a circle than in the current setup, but I'm going to share in this mode, and I hope that you all will come a little bit closer as we move forward.

I am both professionally, at this moment, a postdoctoral fellow at [Wellesley College's Anti-Carceral Co-Laboratory](#), which is a Mellon-funded initiative [concerning] prisons - feel free to ask me questions about that later - and I'm also the education director at a place called [Global Village Farms](#), which is in the central part of the state. If anybody is familiar with the state and knows the Worcester area, it's in Grafton, Massachusetts. Those are the affiliations I have here, but I have many alternating and changing and rotating affiliations.

I'll start where I began. This is a picture of my grandmother, Mrs. Bula Quick, who passed away in September of 2023 at the age of age of 102.



In this particular moment, when I'm thinking about legacy and I'm thinking about transnational legacies, I'm thinking about the people who I'm connected to. I'm thinking about my own grandmother and her life and the other pictures here. I consider myself as having a transnational family, and those horizons take me to several different countries. One is Honduras, which I'll talk about a lot during this talk. The second place is Senegal.

One of the pictures here with the woman in the red shirt and the little girl in green leaning against her is a mother and daughter who I met over a decade ago when I was studying traditional West African dance in Senegal, West Africa. We've been family since then. Aida is the mother, and the daughter is named after me (left). The other picture you see is another little girl in Tanzania who's named after me (right).



My first book is [*Naming a Transnational Black Feminist Framework*](#), and I talk about the importance of naming in the birth process, how much time, how much ritual is involved in naming something. Often, when someone gives a child your name, it comes with some responsibility. It's not just to make you feel self-centered or to get you into an ego situation. The idea is more about your commitment to the family and to that particular child. I was really honored to have these relationships and continue those relationships.

My grandmother wasn't able to see it, but that middle picture (below) is my namesake taking care of her newborn sister, my mother's namesake. I want to always think about that now, about

how we do naming, what it means, what we call ourselves, how we identify, so that's where I'm starting.



Also, I'm going to talk about food traditions, in particular women's food traditions, and say a little bit more about what I mean by that. Food sovereignty, transnational black feminism, which I've already mentioned once, black indigenous solidarity, and I'm going to end where I started, which is with transnational legacies.

So, this is a quote from Natasha Bowen's text [*The Color of Food*](#): "Through food and farming, women are continuing our legacy of providing spaces together, food to share and nourishment that goes beyond the belly." I'm always curious about what kind of food traditions are in the room, what kind of agriculture, gardening traditions, so I want you to take a moment to share something with someone near you about a food or garden memory. It could be with someone in your family, it could be with a friend, and then I'm going to ask people to share some of that tradition.

[Audience discussion]

I think it's great that people are starting to share. Don't think of it as coming to end, continue these conversations hopefully beyond this. I wonder if I can get maybe two people in the room who are willing to share, and you can either share a piece of your story or you can share something about what it felt like to share with somebody else or listen to somebody else's story.

Q1:

[...] I'm Dominican, so every day is rice and beans, rice and beans, maybe chicken, and it's a tradition. My grandma thinks that the only way you can get nutrition is if you have rice and beans at twelve o'clock, and if you don't eat, you're going to die and you're going to have anemia. But not everyone likes rice, like me, but plantain, I have never heard of a single Dominican that doesn't like plantain and cheese and salami, so I think that's a culture thing.

MQH:

Nice, thank you for sharing. And while the mic is going, who else raised their hand?

Q2:

I shared what was more of a hospitality tradition. Back when I was in Morocco, every Friday, we'd make a huge bowl of couscous that could feed at least 15 people. Every Friday we'd make separate bowls to give to people on the street, guards at the front, neighbors, anybody. So, that's a really important tradition that I know of for a lot of Moroccan families because it's a huge hospitality tradition.

MQH:

Thank you for sharing that. I love when food is used to communicate other things, like certain dishes mean people are being welcomed into a particular place. I also love rice and beans (laughs). Over here?

Q3:

I was talking about my dad's side, who was born in Kingston, Jamaica on a farm, so that was very fundamental - being with the land, part of the land, and exploring. Obviously, I wasn't born there, I was born here, but my dad would talk very fondly about growing sugar cane or having goats around on the family's little plot of land. This got me in a reflective mindset, because I don't often think about that idea of land a lot, so it helped to re-textualize and get my brain moving. I enjoyed the discussion.

MQH:

Thank you for that. It's interesting when we have someone close to us. My godmother grew up on a farm, and I didn't. I'm just thinking about when I became more involved, and my relationship to food, how it changed my relationship to those people, and their willingness to share stories with me. I see that we have lots of stories, but there will be other opportunities to share.

I'm going to talk a little bit about two women's groups. The picture on my left, where you can see that the women are sort of inside a structure, is Lucha y Esperanza [*Struggle and Hope*] in Spanish] which is a group in Punta Piedra, Honduras, and that's a group that I came to know a

while ago when I was doing dissertation field work in the region about *ereba* work. *Ereba* is the Garifuna word for what is often translated into English as cassava bread. This is one of the groups of women who make that traditional food product in the Garifuna community.



The other picture is a group called Tabasamu, which translates into English as “smile”. It’s a Swahili word. That’s a multiethnic group of women who do a number of different things, including, through this project which supports them, working on their gardens, community gardens, family gardens, and talking about food sovereignty.



I'm going to talk a little bit about this project. This is an extension of the [Fulbright](#) program - some of you have probably heard of Fulbright, or heard of [The Institute of International Education](#). If you have a Fulbright, then you're permanently in a community of folks that has access to other kinds of opportunities. Through the opportunity to apply for this fellowship, I decided that I wanted to connect the work of these two groups. I wanted them to see each other and be in a relationship in a way that was unlikely and otherwise not going to happen because of the distance, because of the language barriers. I would send them pictures of what was happening in the other place, and they would joke about how it looked very similar, like their cousins across the water.

The picture—I'll go from my left to right—where you see one of my TAs (teaching assistants) holding up a machete, is a picture of the group Luchi y Esperanza out in the fields working the land together. Similarly, the next picture is them working the cassava fields. You have a family garden in that third picture which is in Mwanza, Tanzania. Then you have a woman who has just gotten access to pipe water in her own home, which is extremely important for a number of reasons: washing, gardening, that kind of thing.



The money from the fellowship allowed me to be in relationship with those two organizations and projects. What was important to think about was how, even though it was designed to advance food sovereignty in both locations, the work of each location was quite different.

Luchi y Esperanza was focused on renovating the *molin*, which is where they both strain the cassava root of the liquid that is poisonous and also grind it down. They have machines, and you see them gathered around a machine there, where a woman is taking out the ground cassava, and then they use a car jack that's connected to other containers and some machinery to squeeze it out after it's been ground.



The woman is sifting the flour, and then the woman on the other side is just setting up the final product, which is a crispy flatbread that's about the size of a small table.



They were really interested in renovating that, putting in a bathroom, and getting it set up so that they could spend more time in there as a community space. They were interested in promoting *ereba* work so that other people outside of the Garifuna community would know about it. People call it a "nostalgia market," people who travel from the diaspora and will still come back and get it, especially at holidays around Easter and Christmas. Also, they were very much committed to celebrating mothers. Every Mother's Day, I'm invited to celebrate with them by supporting some kind of celebration, a cake or a meal or something like that. That's one of the groups.

The other group had very different priorities. One of the things is that they were experiencing a drought, very different than the experiences in Punta Piedra [in Honduras]. The group in Mwanza was focused on getting water access. They were in a city where it was important for them to have piped access to their homes. They were focused on supporting women's businesses. The picture where you see the green bottles at the bottom, they're making a liquid soap there.



The picture where they are holding up a sign, they're celebrating International Women's Day, so they were very much into thinking about women's solidarity and women in other parts of the world.



They were also interested in supporting girls' education and activities, so this is a girls basketball tournament that you see in the last picture.



I'm going to shift to saying something about how this is connected to the idea of food sovereignty. But I'm first going to read this quote about food sovereignty, which says, "It is not a one-size-fits-all approach but an expansive set of principles, policies, and practices. It is grounded in the belief that everyone has the right to healthy, sustainably produced food, and that people and nations must have democratic control over their food and agriculture systems." This is from [Harvesting Justice](#). What I thought was important to be thinking about as I engage through the sovereignty work is the local circumstances, the local conditions.

I'm going to pause again here, and I want people to again engage with someone near you. You can even get up if you didn't sit near anyone. The question is to think about a local food product or practice—sometimes if you're from a particular place, there's some food thing that's unique to that place—and in what ways does that food tradition or food practice demonstrate the importance of local control over agriculture and food. I'm going to give you a couple of minutes to talk about that. See if you all can think of a local food tradition and understand why it's important that local control exists for that tradition to continue.

[Audience discussion]

All right, so I know the conversations are going well. I'd love to hear just a couple of traditions in the room. If we can hear from some people who we haven't heard from yet? Maybe one or two people.

Q4:

I interpret it as, when you say tradition, local traditions. We're in Massachusetts, which is the seafood plethora of the world, and I'm a seafood connoisseur. I thought of ... and local businesses profit off New England seafood, so that's what I thought of.

MQH:

Thank you for sharing. Anyone else have a local food tradition?

Q5:

I was chatting with them, and since I'm from the Dominican Republic, I was talking about the brand Goya. When I buy them here, it usually says where it's exported from, but every time I'm back in my country, I sit down and I have the beans from the plant itself and I just boil them and let it sit outside, and I eat them.

MQH:

Yeah, thank you, it's interesting thinking if you're from a place that is well known, or even a region. Some of you may know the phrase "[Banana Republic](#)" and have a sense of the political weight of what that's meant for countries, including Honduras, in terms of the [United Fruit Company](#) and stuff like that. This is not a conversation about that, but feel free to explore that.

I want to talk about these food sovereignty principles. This is a list of principles developed at a [2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty](#) in Mali, West Africa. There are [six principles](#) here, and I'll talk a little bit about each of them and how I see them in the context of this transnational project that was connecting black women's food sovereignty work.

1. Focuses on food for people

One is a focus on food for people. In the Garifuna community, the importance of *ereba* as a traditional food staple was indisputable. Even the way that people talked about the traditions that accompanied it, whether there were songs that women learned from their grandmothers while they were grinding down the cassava or the practice of peeling cassava in their community with other women, there was a lot of tradition around the creation of this food. In any house that you go in - and you won't always notice it if you're not accustomed to looking for it - there's always in some corner a stash of *ereba* that people can go to when there is no other food. In fact, often people would send it on buses to students in the city so that they could have it both to sell to Garifuna people without land but also to eat themselves. Certainly, there was a focus on food for people there.

The entire project of Tabasamu for this initiative was to think about all the different ways that women can grow, whether or not they have a lot of access to land. I get reports back saying we

can just do this, anybody who has a sack can grow, and I'd see images of that kind of work. The was to make sure that women were in a position to feed their families.

2. Values food providers

The second principle here is valuing food providers, which I think brings attention to women both as food growers but also distributors. I'm going to read another quote here *from [Harvesting Justice](#)* : "Women produce 60 to 80% of all food both as subsistence farmers and as agricultural wage laborers. They are the primary providers for the majority of the world's 925 million hungry people, obtaining food, collecting firewood and water, and cooking, and yet they have less access to land and the resources necessary to grow on it than their male counterparts. Inequitable distribution of land labor and resources leaves farming women triply burdened by work in the fields, in the home, and in society." Again, this is from 2013, [Harvesting Justice](#).

3. Localizes food systems

The next principle that we'll look at is localizing food systems. Certainly, in the rural areas of Honduras, in this particular community, local communities were in charge of everything related to the food, in part because the government didn't have the reach to regulate a lot. But something that I noticed when I was thinking about the two groups together was how government regulation in Mwanza would actually result in women without financial means having [*their*] access to water cut off because they weren't able to pay their bills. One part of that project was just paying their bills to make sure people can have water.

4. Makes decisions locally

The next principle is making decisions locally. I think this is a really interesting one to think about in the context of transnational work, of transnational black feminist work, because the question is, how does one engage in a way that doesn't disrupt local decision-making structures, that doesn't, in a way that's undesirable, disrupt power structures? I say "undesirable" because there are some ways in which you might be intending to disrupt local power structures.

Part of what I think about when I think about the importance of local governance and structure and control is the work of Ashanté Reese, who talks about geographies of self-reliance. I'm going to read a quote from [Black Food Geographies](#) which is focused on Washington DC, but the quote is this: "Geographies of self-reliance reveal different yet related experiences. Namely how the everyday lives of residents disrupt the dichotomy between death and survival to reveal how hope and visions for an uncertain future animate decisions on where to shop and who to support and inspire small-scale food justice."

So, I think that one of the things that I was exploring and looking at was thinking about the ability of communities to really control all aspects of providing their communities with food. In the rural Garifuna communities, there was again a lot of focus on local decision making. Also, at the same time, increasingly, the patriarchal norms of the larger Honduran society were impacting the respect for women's historical role in the historically matrifocal Garifuna society. I noted in the groups that make cassava (and there were some women's groups and there were some groups

that were not exclusively women), there were certainly sort of power dynamics that pointed to that influence. In Mwanza, decision making, and action planning were complicated by a longer history of indigenous patriarchy in a number of the different ethnic groups that were represented within the group. There was really a certain urgency around creating an alternative so that the girls in the community would not be vulnerable to child marriage, to other forms of exploitation. There was really a lot of dedication in the work there and, again, a sense of urgency.

5. Builds knowledge and skills

The next principle is thinking about building knowledge and skills. I'm going to read here a quote—a lot of black feminist inspiration here—from Monica White's [Freedom Farmers](#), and she writes about these cooperative structures in the history of black agricultural cooperatives. She says, "In these cooperatives, black workers drew on the skills that they had used to grow cash crops for white landowners to create organizations that spoke to the liberatory impulses of the day: the oppressive forces of economic discrimination, as well as their dire needs. They grew food crops for themselves as a basis for political autonomy." What I think about when I think about that, and of course around women who are growing, is how important in the Garifuna community it was to pass down the traditions that surrounded *ereba* work. This has been compounded by the migration of young women professionals to urban areas. When you see the pictures from Honduras, often you don't see younger women in those pictures. You see children, but you don't see that middle group of women in their twenties, and so part of my ongoing work is supporting the documentation of that process. In Mwanza, there was definitely a focus on working with girls and educating them for economic autonomy.

6. Works with nature

The last principle here is about working with nature. This is a quote from [Grassroots International](#), a nonprofit organization: "Food sovereignty seeks to heal the planet so that the planet may heal us and rejects methods that harm beneficial ecosystem functions that depend on energy intensive monocultures and livestock factories, destructive fishing practices, and other industrialized production methods which damage the environment and contribute to global warming." I say that to think about what food sovereignty activists are trying to advance. I've already mentioned that Garifuna culture, especially around the *ereba* work, is full of ritual and ceremony that builds deep relationships with nature, that acknowledges that there's a lot to learn from rivers, from land, from forest. In Tabasamu, the group from Mwanza, there were many different indigenous traditions, as I mentioned before, that engage with the question of water and the relationship with water. They were quite close to Lake Victoria, one of the African Great Lakes, but, again, because of the regulation of government, were often not able to have regular water access.

I'm going to say a little bit about how the framing of a transnational black feminist framework is implicated in this work, in this engagement. I'll just say that I use the word "transnational" in a really specific way. I always take a moment to distinguish between transnational, global, and international. Ultimately, when I say "international", I'm talking of relationships, interactions between governments, that's often where people focus in the field of international relations. When I think about the word "global", I'm often focused on larger global structure. You can

think about the United Nations. What I think about the term “transnational” is that it is disruptive, it is many different things, it is individuals and organizations interacting across borders in a way that doesn’t have to be organized in [*the same*] way. It has the power to organize itself and challenge both government structures and global governance norms. As may already be apparent in some of the things that I’ve said, part of the reason that I call it a “transnational black feminist tradition” is because it’s rooted in really strong legacies of black feminist work, some of which I’ve already cited when I was talking about food geographies.

But also, I want to be clear that the transnational feminists whose work I benefit from, when I talk about black feminist circles, they aren’t racially segregated spaces. I want to talk about black feminist collaboration, especially with other transnational feminists of color, and so that is often informing the concepts that I’m engaging. Sometimes these women have referred to themselves historically as “Third World” women, or subaltern communities. We can talk about [Chicana queer feminists](#), but I want to in particular name the legacies of the work of people like [Chandra Mohanty and Linda Carty](#) who’ve done some focus work on decolonizing knowledge in the academy and beyond, so that’s part of the legacy going on even in the naming of this.

I’ll rush through the five guiding principles [*of transnational black feminism*].

1. Intersectionality

Raise your hand if you’ve heard of intersectionality. Yes, everybody in the room, so I’m not sure what to say here except for that it has long legs. People often talk about the [Combahee River Collective, the Boston-based lesbian group that wrote a powerful statement](#). Also, people refer to [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)’s coining of the term, but there are a lot of different uses. What I thought was important here was to think about all the things coming together in these particular contexts. What does it mean that I’m engaging with the Garifuna culture in a Honduran patriarchal state? What’s coming up against other things and acting together in the creation of the circumstances? Similarly, I want to say briefly here the importance of engaging local concepts, not just local activity. So, what does it mean to think about race on the African continent and not just try to transport racial concepts that come from the US to the continent?

2. Scholar-activism

Here, I want to highlight the work of [Dr. Harper Shipman](#) who talks about erasing Africa and erasing Africa in IR (International Relations), someone who talks about what it means to examine, to be looking close enough to see racial constructions all over. When I think about scholar activism, I think about the long legacy of black feminist anthropologists who have long talked about the importance of not just studying harm or various phenomena (poverty, for example) but building an ethical responsibility, a professional responsibility to intervene. I think about the work with [Irma McClaurin](#) especially, but [*that’s*] one of the things that was going on for me. I think about this as a challenge to do that but in a way that respects local decision making and leaves intact local systems. I think there’s always a kind of nuance there.

3. Solidarity

I also want to make a point here that I hope people will engage and challenge and ask questions of: I argue that this can be a feminist intervention without everybody involved self-identifying as feminist. I think that it's important that feminist work not be exclusive to feminists, that it's not that kind of project, not a proselytizing one, and that it's not converting people to something but can improve circumstances, that it can alter gender dynamics in a way that transcends that kind of thinking. Again, I'm linking to the work of people like [Chandra Mohanty](#) and also [bell hooks](#) to make the point that solidarity is not sameness, that you have to have difference in order to be engaging in solidarity. In fact, it is about *how* you cross the difference in a way that is enduring and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the work of someone else's struggle. I especially saw that in Tabasamu, in the Garifuna community, in the group Luchi y Esperanza, there was a shared ethno-racial identity there. But, I think there was a lot to observe in Tabasamu, especially because the person who I was most directly interacting with was a Kenyan national working in Tanzania with the multiethnic women's group. There was a lot there to think about and to consider.

4. Attention to Borders/Boundaries

Next, there is attention to borders and boundaries. I've already said a little bit about what it means that I am both an international relations scholar but also doing transnational work, which, for me, means a recognition of longstanding boundaries and borders that existed before these states did—the places that we think of now when we name countries. I'm linking here to the work of Gloria [Anzaldúa](#) about borderlands, and others who talk about these thick areas where cultures meet, where there is migration and transition, crossings, expansions, disappearances. In particular, when I think about the Garifuna community on the coastline, I think about it as a place that, in many ways, is abandoned, labeled as a kind of narcotic traffic zone that they don't have the reach to manage. What then emerges in that kind of zone is something to consider. I've already said a little bit about Mwanza being very close to the water but also very far because of the heavy regulation of government. What are the politics of that zone being close and being far, or having a central government but then really not?

5. Radically Transparent Positionality

This last one, radically transparent positionality, is something that I often ask people to engage with and consider because you probably have heard people talk about positionality before. Raise your hand if you have heard [*of positionality*]. Often, it's people saying something about race, gender, and class so they can situate themselves more broadly around a topic. What I'm pushing people to do here is to say more than they usually say, something slightly different, to consider the context of the case to figure out what's relevant for the case. If we're talking about mining and your family owns a mine, it would be useful to share that in that context, and to do it in ways that remove the smoke and mirrors of the academy, about how people are accessing research sites that really demystify some of that work. Sometimes what I name in the context of my work in the Garifuna communities is my link to one person who gave me access to their home and their family. Were it not for that, I probably wouldn't have been able to do that project.

When I was thinking about this transnational project, I began to think about my ongoing relationship with these communities and how my own rearing—what I would describe as

middle-class rearing—has a particular relationship to the work. I am not someone who lived in rural areas or lived in poverty, and I find myself trying to close the gap in ways that are radical in terms of a willingness to give (some people describe it as giving substance instead of surplus), but I think the way that I do it gives the appearance that I'm going to always have more to give. It's not something that I can prepare people for, but I think that one day I won't get the funding for the fellowship, I won't get a grant, and thinking about how to make that clear or how to share parts of that is part of the reason why I go back and share parts of this story.

I'm going to ask you to reflect on it, and hopefully it'll come out during the question and answer, but what I ask people to think about here is their personal relationship privilege. People online and in the room, think about how you relate across difference.

I've already mentioned that I currently am Education Director at [Global Village Farms](#). We have a community farm day this Sunday in case you want to come out. *[In this position, I am]* thinking about what it's like to work with indigenous people here, not just elsewhere, and to be making those connections across place and also what it means to be working within the context of a non-federally recognized indigenous community. That is part of what I'm thinking about and part of what's important.

I will also *[return]* really quickly where I started which is *[with]* transnational legacies. This is a picture of my godfather who died in August, the month before my grandmother passed, last year.



His name is Roland Freeman. He's a well-known photographer, a photo documentarian, and part of what he taught me is continuing in the work that I'm doing. That is the power of images when language and other things are not shared, the importance of framing and documenting diasporic Black folk culture and traditions attending to racialized engendered hierarchies of power. I wanted to honor him in that work.

Thank you to the [Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights](#) for inviting me here. I am creating a container to hold some of this work on food sovereignty, reparations, and abolition work and so if you want, you can email me to be on the email list at founder@saedicollective.org. Saedi is "ideas" spelled backwards. There are a bunch of different references. I know you can't see it out there, but policies of citation are important.

AE:

Please join me in thanking Dr. Quick Hall for such an illuminating and engaged talk. Thank you so much. I would also like to thank the Consortium for all the work it took to organize this event. Carol and Claire and the support of many of these interns and supporters have been instrumental in some of these talks that we do. I also want to remind you of the Speaker Series that we have. You have two papers on your [*chair*], and please check our Speaker Series on the [website](#). We have one [*upcoming event*] on March 28th on postcolonial feminism and climate change, and there is another one coming on April 11th that deals with eco-feminist approaches, so please check in and come to those. I also would like to thank many of the students who are attending this today. Please make sure that you sign the attendance sheets that are at the front. Also, please remember to fill the surveys and feedback. I's available, as I mentioned earlier, for you here in the room, and it will pop up for the Zoom audience. Thank you very much. We'll take a Q&A now. We have about 15 minutes.

MQH:

Don't be shy! Okay, three hands popped up.

Q6:

Could you explain your work with the anti-carceral organization?

MQH:

Sure, so this is a Mellon funded grant. It's a two-year project. I's an [Anti-Carceral Co-Laboratory](#) so the idea is to work not just within the academy but with community activists who have been trying to end prisons. There are three partner organizations: [Families for Justice as Healing](#), [New Beginnings Re-entry Services](#), and [Sisters Unchained](#). We are working with all three of those organizations to advance the work and to make sure that that we don't end up in prison. Feel free to add if you have more questions about abolitionist politics.

Q7:

What is the best way to mobilize the Boston community in regards to food sovereignty?

MQH:

I think about the part of the food sovereignty quote that I read that says there's no one-size-fits-all, and I think it's tricky because often people will see me doing something and think that it's a suggestion. But I think we should do all the things. I think we should buy in bulk when that's useful. I think we should create worker cooperatives when and where we can do that. I think we should have land when we can do that. I think we should have hydroponic growing systems where we can't do that—I could go on. It's fine to focus on a big thing and to decide that there's a strategy for the big thing, but I also want to suggest that there are many ways of oppressing people and many ways of alienating people from the land where they are, and I want there to be as many strategies for engaging that as there are [*in oppressing people*], more strategies even. I'm paraphrasing, I believe, an [Elizabeth Spelman](#) quote here about the importance of having as many ways to respond to oppression as there are ways to oppress. Also, that's why I come to stuff like this, so people can suggest things that I never thought of, and we can do it.

Q8:

How do you place your activism in indigenous repatriation or first-peoples repatriation?

MQH:

I would say, well aligned, almost to the point of it being slightly controversial. I'll say why: because I'm also a reparationsist. Let me do a quick terminology thing here. So, I use indigenous when I'm not talking to anthropologists, but sometimes anthropologists use the phrase called “autochthonous” to refer to the people who were there before the drawing of the state lines. It has less ethnic suggestion than the word “indigenous”. I want to be clear that part of the reason why I'm talking about the Garifuna as a Black indigenous community is because they were there before the state of Honduras existed as a thing. I think that it's important to have serious conversations among Black people who were not there before the states were created, and who are talking about the desire for land in the Americas, to have some serious conversations about indigenous folks. I describe it as a negotiation with thieves around questions of land. I think that we should all be engaging native folks of a land, whether or not the federal government recognizes them. We can think about what that history is and engage. It is more than acknowledgement, but a practice that is about repatriation, of [giving] indigenous land back. Also, [*it is about*] the decommodification of land and thinking about what it means to have rights of nature in a relationship with the Earth that does not presume that it is here for extraction.

Q9:

Communities are not always able to counter large multi-national corporations, what are your thoughts?

MQH:

The idea of food sovereignty really believes in and privileges local decision making, local systems, and so we're talking about multi-national corporations, like buying land, running all kinds of large plants that often have long environmental impacts. Right now, I'm thinking about petrochemical plants. Some people refer to "[Cancer Alley](#)." I was just engaging with some folks from Louisiana recently. But I am rooted in a really specific politic, and I don't suggest that it's not controversial; it is controversial. I would make a distinction here, again, between multinational and transnational, but, in any case, those large corporate interests that are coming into local communities, I'm not aligned with.

Q10:

I'm wondering if that has been kind of integrated within the local decision making, what has come about...so far in terms of making sure that the young people kind of stay involved. You said there's a short representation of the younger generation, have you seen reasons why younger generations do not want to do it?

MQH:

Sure, and I just want to make a clarification. It's in the Garifuna community that the middle group is not present as much. I want to say that it's tough when that middle group is gone, and it's not the kind of thing where I am invested in supporting the documentation of that culture, but that happens often that a tradition disappears without being documented. I think that it's an ongoing struggle, but I want to also point out another nuance. The folks who have the resources to travel don't always want the rural stories told. They are not as eloquently framed, they are a bit more rustic and in a politics of representation, they might not be invested in that story being told. There can be a tension in relationship to someone like me who's committed to telling those women's stories because I want my Auntie's work to be known even if it's not glamorous, even if it's not traditionally the image they want to see. One example is the songs that they used to sing traditionally, the songs that have been characterized as raunchy in some circles, and thinking about what that means.

Q11:

So, earlier you were talking about the statistic about food production ... [Statistics of food production]... how is this certain statistic placed?

MQH:

[.] I recommended—and I think there might an online version—that text that focuses on food sovereignty work around the world, and that's a decade ago, so we could see what that means today. I'm going to hang out, also, [*for questions*].

Q12:

[How do you foster collaboration among groups that have different ideas about what food sovereignty looks like?]

MQH:

Let me say, even within the same place the politics can be very different, right? As soon as you have one family and two people, often you have a conflict. I think that kind of nuance is always there. My goal with any project is to bring people together around values, so even if you don't get along around other things, my goal is to talk about how we can create food systems that will feed people, [food that] we all need to survive, and that's where I focus. But it isn't intended to suggest that there isn't conflict and controversy, which there always is, but that's part of the commitment of the long-term engagement.

Q13:

[..representation of the younger generation and I wanted to know if you have seen a specific reason why is like this interest of the generation not want to do it or is it just like it's not the I think it's a combination of things..]

MQH:

It's a combination of things. I don't know that farming is a glorified profession. Also, there are resources in the city that aren't in the rural areas. If you want to go out to eat all the time, or you want to be in movies, whatever things you're interested in. But I also want to say that sometimes people make the hard line between urban and rural. I think that it's important to recognize that people move back and forth between those different contexts depending on what's happening in their lives. It's really important to me to recognize a cyclical relationship between Garifuna people in the urban and rural areas, that it's not a hard line that people don't cross. Everybody comes home to the village for holidays because what are you going to do in the city? That's where there's a lot of ceremonies and parties, night parties. You can't get in the city what you get in the village.

AE:

Thank you, Dr. Quick Hall, thanks to everybody here, and on Zoom. For those who are in the room, you have the luxury of sticking a bit longer if you would like to converse with Dr. Quick Hall, but thank you everybody, we really appreciate it.

MQH:

Thank you, thank you online people!