Farming While Black by Leah Penniman: A Discussion Guide

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Introduction

What is your relationship to the land? To farming? What privileges and inequalities have shaped that relationship?

Chapter 1

Leah talks about market realities to land access for black farmers and other farmers of color. What resources exist in your community/ organization to connect FOC (farmers of color) to land and skills?

If your work in a land-grant university or another agricultural education program, what is your organization doing to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion?

If you or your organization could engage in reparations: What could that be? What will stop you from starting this process?

Chapter 2

Leah writes "It is crucial to determine your business goals and select a legal entity that will serve those goals, rather than letting the legal entity define your operation. Consider the nature of your food/agriculture organization. How does it structure and legal entity affects its efficacy to address and meets its goals?

Chapter 3

Reflecting on your own ethnic background, what rituals did your ancestors have to honor the land?

What ritual do you practice today?

How do we acknowledge exploitative knowledge extraction (appropriation, mislabel) on agrarian practices today?

Chapter 4 and 5

Do you know the history of your soil and land? The name of the peoples that used to live there? what buildings/structures used to be there?

Touch your soil. Describe it.

Restoration of organic matter to the soil is part of the healing of colonialism. What are your soil practices and how feeding the soil for future generations?

Chapter 6

What crops are you planting? How do you make decisions about what to grow? What crops do you wish you have access to that you don't?

Chapter 7

I love that as peoples we have developed different tools for agriculture across the globe and how those tools and technologies tell such much about our history and culture. What surprised you from this chapter? How do we today and in the past have imposed agricultural tools and techniques upon others?

Chapter 8

Has anyone ever given you an heirloom seed?

Have you ever transported seeds across borders/places?

If you were to give seeds to someone today, what will they be and what stories will go with those seeds?

Chapter 9

I love how this chapter started with chickens/roaster memories. Farm animals have provided so much of a window for us to stay connected to agriculture as kids and youth.

Does reading this chapter made you like animal products more? Or changes your relamtionship with animals products?

Chapter 10

So much of plant medicinal knowledge is rooted in European origin. How do we reaffirm the place that ancestral African plant medicine has on alternative and holistic medicine spaces?

Chapter 11

Urban farming policies were used for generations to keep minority and immigrant communities from food production and force acculturation and assimilation to an urban and less agrarian American. It wasn't until the birth of the alternative food movement that was normalized, this it was always in communities of color as coping and resilience mechanism for food security and connection to the land. What can we learn from this history of double standards?

Chapter 12

Leah writes "Black people are 10 times are more likely to die from poor diets than from all forms of physical violence combined" and recognizes "food apartheid"as an inherent inequity in our food system towards black people. She says it is imperative that we decolonize our diets and reclaim African traditional foodways.

If you are working on food access or otherwise, how can you support this goal?

Insert African Heritage Food

Chapter 13

Are you working with youth? How do you create spaces for youth to be involved in your work while respecting their agency?

[https://nesawg.org/…/age-should-not-be-limiting-factor-when…](https://nesawg.org/news/age-should-not-be-limiting-factor-when-it-comes-doing-food-systems-work?fbclid=IwAR3lTuF-59aFLwCxQ-uIYqjhHRm9H1JSnnr_gxMDao1spanPTMALqDkJRV8)

Chapter 14

As POC and afro-descent peoples, we have a lot of healing to do to and that is healing goes hand on hand with our relationship with the land and Earth.

I also offer this "uplight" resource from [Amirio Freeman](https://www.facebook.com/ecogoon?fref=gs&__tn__=%2CdK-R-R&eid=ARDJIshCUxhs_kLoajRU6S16Ny30q0ry6UkP30p6lM2A174Xr7SoDeUA3f9WIZrmOiSFktMXSFsuzbaS&dti=340654569747564&hc_location=group) from Being Green While Black to help us in the process: [https://www.beinggreenwhileblack.club/re-audit](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.beinggreenwhileblack.club%2Fre-audit%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3TquVQ1LcHJ8f4dc90MmQzIFz6FyaV4IdBLa3DUgvGFJuexeYlSfSQ7i8&h=AT2ZwZ7u0DBhbZRiX6Vo2zWTFfP6N1Q0fbFylEQFJpfMq4KSmD0UQ43JOY0-Eu6eEbI1CtBoEAl2STJEl7IdJ3WWv3mo_WD88RojYH-Nx2jEgoP8IDpdalhDNsJNroyedCOtcyk6i982RA03W6ki7xkrVqw0qw)

For our white allies and accomplices, what can you do or not do to help POC and afro-descent peoples on this healing journey?

Chapter 15

Recognizing your privileges and background how can you be an accomplice in the process of movement building for black food justice?

Chapter 16

Do you or your organization have a racial equity statement?

On organizational transformation, what can you start doing in your organization?

How do you plan on continuing the journey to learn about dismantling racism in food systems?

Vanessa García Polanco is a scholar, activist, writer, and speaker on food justice and

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