



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES IN TORONTO

Challenges and Policy Opportunities

**Black Food Sovereignty
Working Group (BFSWG)**

Nicole Austin, Ashanté Daley, Sheldomar Elliot, Julian Hasford,
Winston Husbands, Anan Lololi, Cecile Peterkin, Cady, Ann Phillips

**Omar
Elsharkawy**

Food Secure Canada

Acknowledgements

The Black Food Sovereignty Working Group (BFSWG) is a committee of the Afri-Can FoodBasket (AFB). Sincere thanks to the AFB for supporting the BFSWG to engage Black communities, community stakeholders, and policymakers around food sovereignty for Black communities in Toronto.

The BFSWG members were collectively responsible for this policy-oriented report. The work to develop the report was organized as follows:

- The BFSWG conceived the project, and provided feedback on initial and final drafts;
- Omar Elsharkawy (Food Secure Canada) prepared the first draft;
- Winston Husbands (BFSWG) edited and revised subsequent drafts;

We also thank the following organizations, agencies and individuals for their support:

- Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAFCAN)
- Centre for Studies in Food Security (CFSF), Toronto Metropolitan University
- Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit, City of Toronto.
- Food Secure Canada
- Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC)
- The Community Steering Committee that helped to organize the BFSWG's first online Community Conversation on Black Food Sovereignty in 2020
- Community members who shared their questions and perspectives in various Community Conversations organized by the BFSWG in 2019-2022
- Deeper Roots Farm

Special thanks also to Lynn Harrison for editorial services, and Corine Bond for layout and design.



The Black Food Sovereignty Working Group

*Action-oriented dialogue on Food
Sovereignty for Black Communities
in Toronto*

The Black Food Sovereignty Working Group is committed to critical dialogue that strengthens community understanding of food sovereignty, and supports policy and program development for food sovereignty among Black communities. Since 2020, we have organized regular community conversations and initiated a newsletter to keep the dialogue alive.

As part of our commitment to action-oriented dialogue, we have also initiated a publication series on critical issues for Black Food Sovereignty in Toronto and nationally. The current policy-oriented report – *Food Sovereignty for Black Communities in Toronto: Challenges and Policy Opportunities* – is the first publication in the series. We expect to issue the second report later in 2023, and other reports in the following years.



The Black Food Sovereignty Working Group
info@bfstoronto.ca

Sections

1. Introduction	3
2. Black Food Sovereignty	4
3. Systemic Barriers and the Origins of Food Insecurity Among Black Canadians	6
4. Black Food Sovereignty in the City of Toronto	14
5. Recommendations - Working towards Food Sovereignty for Black Communities	17
6. Summary and Conclusion	23
7. Reference	24
8. Credits	28

1

Introduction

In 2018, Black families in Canada were 3.5 times more likely to be food insecure than white families, and over one-third of Black children lived in food insecure households (Dhunna and Tarasuk, 2021; FoodShare and PROOF, 2019). This chronically insecure access to food illustrates how systemic inequality undermines Black Canadians' health and wellbeing. Inequitable access to food and other inequities in health and wellbeing are the result of years of racism, discrimination, and inequality (Roberts 2020). Black Food Sovereignty is an approach to addressing inequitable food access—it supports Black people to exercise stewardship of food systems in their own interests. Achieving Black Food Sovereignty entails removing the systemic barriers that affect Black people's ability to produce and access food, and instituting policies and programs that support and strengthen access to food of appropriate quality and quantity. This paper outlines (a) how and why food insecurity became a chronic problem among Black communities, and (b) policy directions and opportunities in the City of Toronto and elsewhere to promote food sovereignty.



2

Black Food Sovereignty

What is Black Food Sovereignty?

Processes and strategies to achieve food sovereignty reflect the interests of communities that understand access to food as a human right, and emerge under the leadership of those communities (UN, 2022). There is general agreement on seven constituent pillars of food sovereignty. Six of the pillars (Box 1) were adopted by an international forum in Mali, in 2007 from the original work of La Via Campesina (Nyéléni International Steering Committee, 2007; La Via Campesina, 2008). The seventh pillar – Food is Sacred – originated among Indigenous communities in Canada (Food Secure Canada, n.d).

Communities that pursue food sovereignty are concerned with understanding how they are disadvantaged by the food system, and taking steps to ensure that the food system works in their interest (i.e., exercising stewardship over the food system to meet their needs). Black food Sovereignty locates the principles of food sovereignty within the context of Black people's marginalization. It is a movement and process to ensure that Black communities build and control a food system that serves the needs of those communities.

As conceptualized by leaders in Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty movement, Black Food Sovereignty promotes and strengthens:

- Black people's access to healthy and culturally appropriate food that is produced and distributed in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner
- Black people's stewardship of systems and institutions that determine access to food and resources for producing food.
- Black people's leadership in policy and program development to address community health and wellbeing (Nicoll 2021).

In short, Black Food Sovereignty is a holistic, healthy, sustainable, and systemic approach for Black communities to address chronic food insecurity.

In the face of structural racism and inequality, Black communities have a long history of self-determined community organizing to achieve health and wellbeing (Austin 2013; Kitossa et al., 2019; Diverlus et al., 2020). Presently, many B3 (Black-led, Black-serving, Black-mandated) organizations and Black persons within Toronto's food movement have programs that together constitute the basis for food sovereignty. Moreover, Black people have pioneered cooperative approaches to farming, food delivery and manufacturing. For example, since the mid-1990s the Afri-Can FoodBasket and other community stakeholders have pioneered food security and food justice efforts among Black communities by (a) developing cooperative programs to distribute culturally appropriate food, (b) establishing farm collectives and incubator farms, (c) developing community gardens, (d) supporting harvest festivals, and (e) participating in networks that champion food security and food justice. These efforts seeded the evolution of food sovereignty as a goal for Black communities.

3

Systemic Barriers and the Origins of Food Insecurity Among Black Canadians

Black people experience social injustice in the Canadian food system, just as they do in other areas of health and wellbeing. For example, throughout Canada's history, Black people have endured inequitable access to land; moreover, Black people tend to be concentrated in food apartheid neighborhoods, disproportionately experience diet-related health problems, and Black farm workers are especially exploited (Afri-Can FoodBasket, 2021; Justicia, 2022).

Since at least the 1800s, Black farmers and would-be farmers have experienced unjust treatment by Canadian governments and farm organizations across Canada: Guysborough, Nova Scotia in the late 1700's; Buxton, Queen Bush, and Dresden in Ontario in the mid-to-late 1800s; and Amber Valley, among other smaller communities, in Alberta in the early 1900's (Black Creek Community Farm, 2018; Clark, 2020). In effect, Black farmers have been shut out of any meaningful involvement in farm or commodity organizations (Clark, 2020), and still face considerable barriers (Leitato, 2021).

Even though many B3 organizations and allies are working towards Black Food Sovereignty, substantial barriers remain. Anti-Black racism is the main systemic barrier. It is deeply embedded throughout Canadian institutions and Canadian society at large; it emerges through "organizational values and practices" that systematically undermine Black Canadians' health and wellbeing (Fleras, 2017; Maynard 2017; James et al., 2010). Thus, it is evident that anti-Black racism would also emerge in activities related to food and agriculture, often referred to as food systems.

The section below outlines specific examples of how anti-Black racism manifests in food and agriculture, and, in turn, how these become barriers to achieving Black Food Sovereignty.

Box 1. Seven pillars of food sovereignty

FOCUSES ON FOOD FOR PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Puts people's need for food at the centre of policies - Insists that food is more than just a commodity
BUILDS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Builds on traditional knowledge - Uses research to support and pass this knowledge to future generations - Rejects technologies that undermine or contaminate local food systems
WORKS WITH NATURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimizes the contributions of ecosystems - Improves resilience
VALUES FOOD PROVIDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports sustainable livelihoods - Respects the work of all food providers
LOCALIZES FOOD SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces distance between food providers and consumers - Rejects dumping and inappropriate food aid - Resists dependency on remote and unaccountable corporations
PUTS CONTROL LOCALLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Places control in the hands of local food providers - Recognizes the need to inhabit and to share territories - Rejects the privatization of natural resources
FOOD IS SACRED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognizes that food is a gift of life not to be squandered - Asserts that food cannot be commodified

Source: Nyéléni International Steering Committee, 2007; Via Campesina, 2008; Food Secure Canada (n.d.)



Lack of Access to Land for Farming & Related Activities

One of the main barriers to Black Food Sovereignty in Toronto and across Canada is lack of access to land (Igbavboa and Elliot, 2020). Land ownership is inaccessible to Black people in Canada for many reasons, but discriminatory policies play a decisive role:

“Many white farmers in Canada have generations of momentum behind them, access to land, resources, and experience. By no fault of their own, they are set up to have a fighting chance in the fields. If you’re Black or brown, if you’re an immigrant, the hill to climb is steep. The costs to get going, the tools you need – both are that much harder to obtain.” (Abdulai, 2021)

Black migration and settlement in Canada took place with deliberately inadequate institutional support, and under conditions of discrimination that positioned Black people on the margins with little chance to succeed. Initially, many Black people came to Canada as enslaved Africans or fleeing slavery in the US, some with the promise of land that they often did not receive (Arsenault, 2017; Library and Archives Canada, 2021; Newfield, 2011). Good quality farmland went to white settlers, while Black residents got insecure ownership of poorer quality land (Arsenault, 2017; Hounsell, 2020). Black people therefore had few opportunities to acquire land as a store of wealth or means of production that could benefit subsequent generations.

As recently as 2020, Black Nova Scotians went to court to assert title to lands that the Nova Scotia government had denied since at least the early 20th century. In one such case, Justice Jamie Campbell asserted that racism “is embedded within the systems that govern how our society operates ... a fundamental historical fact and an observation of present reality” (Hounsell, 2020). While the plaintiff in that particular case was rightfully given ownership to his family’s land, many other Black residents throughout Canada have been left in limbo without official land ownership (Hounsell, 2020).

The discriminatory lack of access to land continues to affect the Black farming community. This includes the inability of Black people to use land as collateral for bank loans to start businesses, coupled with extra layers of complexity relating to inheritance, which created more disputes and added to the precarity that Black land-owners face (Arsenault, 2020).

In 1909, when segregation laws and the Ku Klux Klan were ever present in the southern United States, 160 African American homesteaders travelled to Alberta seeking freedom (Morgan et al., 2020). These people settled the land and were soon followed by thousands of others. Subsequently, the Canadian government under Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier banned African Americans from entering Canada for one year. The official reason offered was that “the Negro race... is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada” (Morgan et al., 2020).

Although the order from the Prime Minister was later repealed and never fully came into effect, it is one example of the discriminatory policy which Black people, and specifically Black farmers, faced in Canada (Morgan et al., 2020). Canadian officials still imposed various barriers on would-be Black farmers entering Canada (Morgan et al., 2020). The policies illustrate the culture of violence and hostility that Black farmers faced early on and affects Black people’s wellbeing to this day (Schwinghamer, n.d).

Another major barrier to Black Food Sovereignty is the continued and increasing unaffordability of land for Black communities, especially in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The high cost of land is a barrier for Black people in particular because of their generally low incomes and insufficient wealth (Duah-Kessie et al 2020) which makes it difficult for them to purchase land using savings or credit. One study found that Black people aged 25-40 years in Toronto disproportionately earn less than the “thriving income” (\$46,186 and \$55,432) (Duah-Kessie et al., 2020). Currently, development discourse in GTA privileges commercial and residential development over agriculture which poses extra challenges for Black people because there is little farmland available in the GTA region. Black people may be unable to compete successfully with others for land. Ironically, gentrification is resulting in new residential development in areas where Black people live, which makes those areas financially inaccessible to those who have long resided there. For example, The Toronto Black Farmers and Food Growers’ Collective operated a 2.5-acre farm in Downsview Park from 2013 to 2016 that was eventually closed to make way for condominium townhouses (Leitato, 2021). Zoning bylaws also restrict the location, distribution, and amount of farmland in the city—some urban parks have good land that can be used by Black farmers to feed their communities (Leitato, 2021).



Under-representation of Black Leadership Food and Agriculture

Black people are notably under-represented in leadership positions on the policy and operational sides of food and agriculture. Moreover, there is no widely available study or data on what happened to lands that were either previously owned or operated by Black farmers.

Collecting racially dis-aggregated data on farming and land ownership may compel policymakers to take steps towards understanding how certain issues related to farming and ownership of land affect Black people. For example, we now know that, even when adjusting for factors like home ownership and immigration status, Black people are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than others (Dhunna & Tarasuk, 2021). This illustrates the importance of racially disaggregated data for informing public health policy and program interventions. In the United States, because of activism and organizational processes that identified the ways in which Black farmers were refused government support, the federal government is now attempting to redress past injustices by implementing initiatives that directly support Black farmers through the Justice for Black Farmers Act (National Black Food Justice and Alliance, 2020; Rosenberg and Stucki, 2019). The Act is intended to end discrimination by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and support current and new Black farmers to productively cultivate their land (National Black Food Justice Alliance, 2020). This example is relevant to Black farmers in Canada, as it illustrates the possibility of wide-scale policy to provide justice for Black farmers.

During the COVID-19 health crisis of 2020-2022, community voices amplified their argument for the responsible collection and use of race-based data (City of Toronto, 2022). “Race-based data collection can play a valuable role in diagnosing inequities, holding public institutions accountable, and validating the lived experiences of racialized people—if done correctly” (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 2021, p. 16). Understanding and addressing the plight of Black farmers and the under-representation of Black people among industry leaders requires good data. Undoing the erasure of Black farmers and creating conditions for Black farmers and producers to thrive is a critical step in achieving justice through Black Food Sovereignty (Alonso, 2020).



Exclusion of Black Leadership from the Canadian food movement.

Many civil society groups lack meaningful representation of Black voices. This includes prominent groups like the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), a municipal body whose purpose is to strengthen access to healthy, affordable, sustainable, and culturally acceptable food among Toronto's population. Historically, white researchers, policy makers and activists constitute leadership of the alternative or community food movement, which broadly works to advance production and access to healthy and sustainable food. Consequently, civil society groups privilege whiteness in how they understand and respond to community food insecurity (Ramirez, 2014). Even though TFPC claims it is a "municipal food policy leader with a long history working to ensure access to healthy, affordable, sustainable and culturally acceptable food," it has lacked meaningful Black leadership for most of its existence. In a letter dated September 2020, Black leaders expressed frustration with TPFC's lack of meaningful engagement with its Black members and the systemic causes of Black people's food insecurity. In other words, the letter suggests TFPC has been insufficiently attentive to the needs of Black communities even though its membership has become increasingly diverse.

In policy and program development circles, Black organizations are often unable to strongly advocate for Black communities because of their precarious funding (Pereira et al., 2020) and long-standing entrenched prejudices that undermine or even exclude Black people's perspectives on appropriate policy and program responses. Consequently, Black leaders face an uneven playing field when it comes to advocating for and representing their communities.



4

Black Food Sovereignty in the City of Toronto

Anti-Black racism is embedded in policies and practices across Canadian institutions. Box 2 (below) summarizes the inequities that Black Torontonians face in the context of anti- Black racism. Therefore, with leadership from Black communities, policymakers must review how their policies affect Black communities and introduce measures to promote Black health and well-being.

Public institutions have not been intentional enough about eliminating anti-Black racism, the main systemic barrier to achieving Black Food Sovereignty. In 2017, the City of Toronto took a bold step by adopting the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and establishing the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit within the city bureaucracy to coordinate implementation of the Plan (City of Toronto, 2018). Much work still lies ahead to ensure that this commitment is enshrined throughout the City's policies and practices.

Public Policy Support for Black Food Sovereignty in Toronto

Until 2020, the City of Toronto did not have notably strong city-wide initiatives to promote Black Food Sovereignty. In 2020, the City of Toronto introduced the Toronto Strong Neighborhoods Strategy 2020, which included a pillar on improving access to healthy, and affordable food, and an action to land and other inputs for community gardening and urban farming.

Box 2. Inequities Produced by anti-Black racism:

- Black Torontonians are victims of 85% of hate crimes in Toronto where racism is the motivating factor.
- 42% of children in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are Black, five times their representation in the overall population
- Black students become "early leavers" of high school at higher rates – 23% compared to 12% of white students
- Torontonians of African descent have an unemployment rate of 13%, nearly two times the provincial rate
- 27% of all police carding incidents focused on Black Torontonians, which is three times their representation in the overall Toronto population.
- Black women and girls are one of the fastest growing incarcerated groups.

From: City of Toronto (2017). Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.
<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-black-racism/>



A year later (in October 2021), Toronto City Council unanimously approved the Black Food Sovereignty Plan for Toronto, which is the first plan of its kind at the municipal level in North America. Through inspired advocacy and community mobilization, Black community stakeholders were instrumental to the CABR's success in presenting the Plan to City Council. For example, starting in 2019, the Afri-Can FoodBasket instituted a process of engaging Black communities and the CABR around food sovereignty.

The five-year Black Food Sovereignty Plan is a “community-led, municipally-supported” initiative, with three primary objectives:

- Develop City-supported, Black-led initiatives dedicated to addressing food insecurity issues that disproportionately impact Black communities.
- Identify and establish sustained support and funding for Black-led, Black-serving, and Black-mandated food organizations and Black Food Sovereignty community infrastructure.
- Engage, align, and leverage new and existing City strategies and initiatives to advance systems change and shared goals to realize Black Food Sovereignty outcomes in neighborhoods with high Black populations.

The Plan consists of 45 actions and includes a mix of new and old policy directions to remove constraints and promote Black Food Sovereignty. While a much needed, positive contribution towards Black Food Sovereignty in Toronto, the Plan's likelihood of achieving Food Sovereignty for Black communities hinges on organized, innovative, committed leadership from Black communities, and stable funding from the City and other public and private institutions that is commensurate with the Plan's ambitions. Initial indicators were encouraging: in its 2022 Budget, the City of Toronto allocated \$150,000 to support the implementation of its Black Food Sovereignty Plan (City of Toronto, 2022, p.174); and community engagement efforts began to focus on establishing a Black Food Sovereignty Alliance to ensure community leadership of the Plan's implementation. However, the funds that the City budgeted for 2022 should be understood as an initial investment that will need to increase annually in order to achieve the goals of the Plan and the promise of Black food sovereignty.

5

Recommendations - Working towards Food Sovereignty for Black Communities

Black Food Sovereignty Within the Canadian Food Movement

To truly achieve Black Food Sovereignty, non-B3 organizations need to be intentional about food justice for Black communities. Debates among members of the TFPC, led by those from racialized communities, have laid out nine recommendations for TPFC to meaningfully support Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities. These recommendations are also guiding frameworks for non-B3 organizations to act in solidarity with Black communities to support food sovereignty. The recommendations are:

1. Advocate for and hire paid, full-time staff to work specifically on advancing the food priorities identified by Black communities.
2. Redirect focus and resources towards prioritizing the voices of those who have historically been marginalized in conversations about food insecurity.
3. Commit to advocating for more direct financial support for Black-led, Indigenous-led, and POC-led initiatives.
4. Use TFPC's influence to highlight the work of B3 organizations.
5. Provide financial support for racialized and low-income folks who are not paid by their organizations to attend TFPC meetings.
6. Re-examine and reframe the TFPC's downtown-centred approach to better reflect the many neighborhoods that make up the city of Toronto.
7. End gatekeeping of information and power-holding with the organization by ensuring all TPFC decisions are made in consultation with and input from the full TFPC membership.
8. End tokenistic representation in favour of a commitment to equity embedded in the fabric of the council and addressing and responding to concerns raised by Black TFPC members.

Elsewhere, a study by Elliot (2020) outlined potential strategies for white civil society food organizations and initiatives for organizational decolonization. The strategies provide a framework for Indigenous and racialized communities to set the agenda for achieving food justice and food sovereignty. Overall, there is a need for an evolving leadership to ensure that the most food-insecure communities have a leadership role in the kinds of organizations that work to address this.

Land ownership and control

Land ownership and control over land is central to Black Food Sovereignty. As of 2022, there is no publicly available ethno-racial breakdown on land ownership in Canada. This is central to a fuller understanding of Black farmers and farming in Canada. Research with Black farmers is crucial to understanding the challenges, and potential, and the policy directions for promoting and supporting access to space and other infrastructure for sustainable agriculture. There is also room for policy makers, farming communities and Black stakeholders to examine how real estate speculation may be contributing to the high cost of land in and around the GTA, how this affects the prospects for Black people's access to land, and how Black farmers and farming collectives may be supported to produce food in a regime of high land prices.



Supporting a Black Food Ecosystem

A Black food ecosystem is central to the needs of Black farmers and others working towards Black Food Sovereignty. A Black food ecosystem could include the physical infrastructure to support production and access to food, and support for employment and investment opportunities that would allow Black communities to be the drivers of their own development. Aside from access to land for growing food, Black communities need support to develop or acquire processing and manufacturing plants. A network of Black food centres will allow community members to be the drivers of their own development, through producing and distributing food by and for them.

In Toronto's neighbourhoods with high concentrations of Black population, residents experience notably insecure access to supportive infrastructure and other social determinants of health (Hulchanski, 2010; Vincent, 2018). In such areas, there is a paucity of Black-led food infrastructure ranging from processing facilities to grocery stores and markets. A network of food centres under the control of Black entrepreneurs or other community stakeholders, strategically located in areas with high concentrations of Black households, could contribute to Black Food Sovereignty. Black food centres would enhance community resilience in the face of shocks to the global agri-food supply chain. Given that Black residents in Toronto earn lower incomes than their non-Black counterparts, Black-owned or controlled food centres that serve the Black communities would allow Black residents to build a food distribution infrastructure that is not unduly

constrained by the priorities of traditional food retailing (e.g., large supermarket chains). Black food centres would also provide opportunities for Black farmers and other community stakeholders to take greater control over their food production, distribution, and processing, and allow them to further define and take control over their own food and agriculture systems. A viable network of food centres would require that Black communities also have access to the means of acquiring the necessary infrastructure. These infrastructure developments would require public and private sector support and investment from Black entrepreneurs. Such centres must be financially viable over the long-run for Black communities to realize the kind of stewardship, control and benefits implied in the concept of Black Food Sovereignty.

Despite differences between Canada and the USA in the history of Black people and anti-Black racism, in addition to differences in the policy landscape, Black food co-operatives in the United States may be a useful model for Black food centres in Toronto. In the USA, Black food cooperatives have existed since the 18th century (Barclay, 2021). Co-op partners or members share information to strengthen Black farming and promote political participation (Barclay, 2021). Black food centres would create a form of physical and financial capital capable of generating further expansions and initiatives, thereby providing long-term, sustained benefits for Black communities.

Access to jobs, income, and other social determinants of health

Chronic food insecurity is just one strand of interlocked and overlapping inequities that Black Canadians experience. In short, the problem of insecure access to food cannot be resolved by focusing exclusively on food. Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan acknowledges this reality, and emphasizes that the Plan will promote opportunities for employment and income in food and related sectors (e.g., farming, retailing, restaurants, etc.). One noted outcome of anti-Black racism is the concentration of low incomes among Black communities (Houle 2020; Stapleton et al. 2019). Therefore, beyond the BFS Plan, Black communities must continue to push public and private institutions, investors, and community leaders to create fair employment, social assistance and investment practices and opportunities that raise the level of wellbeing among Black communities. There is no substitute for ensuring equitable access to the social determinants of health. These policies and practices will support Black communities to strengthen community initiatives and investments related to access to food (Black Creek Food Justice Network, 2017).





Leadership

Politicians and bureaucrats may create supporting or enabling conditions, but communities exercise sovereignty through their collective beliefs and practices. Governments (and bureaucrats) may come and go, but sovereignty endures through community stewardship. Therefore, the BFS Plan may succeed over the long run only through the inspired and committed leadership of Black communities and their stakeholders. The organizations and individuals who have worked hard over the last 25 years to bring about the BFS Plan must now lead the way to ensure that diverse Black communities show leadership in securing the kind of change that food sovereignty promises. This effort entails advocacy to ensure that the municipal government invests appropriate attention and resources to help Black communities achieve food sovereignty. But community leadership also means inspiring Black networks to address community needs and harness necessary community and institutional support for their initiatives.

6

Summary and Conclusion

A multitude of current and historical impediments affect how Black Canadians produce, distribute, and access food. These systemic barriers disproportionately impact the Black community and inhibit Black people from achieving their right to food. Therefore, the issue of food insecurity/food sovereignty is not just an issue about food, but emerges from the wider problem of how the social system functions to push Black people to the periphery. *We must remind ourselves that, for the past 50 years (1966-2022), the coerced labour of Black farm workers has subsidized the production and consumption of food in Ontario, while Black communities in Ontario and throughout Canada experience chronic food insecurity* (Caxaj et al. 2022; Justicia 2022; Puttick 2022; Raza 2022).

Black Food Sovereignty is an approach and a process whereby Black people define and develop food and agriculture systems in the interests of their communities and to meet community needs in ways that are sustainable. Achieving Black Food Sovereignty is contingent on dismantling systemic barriers such as the acute shortage of land, diminished opportunity for Black leadership in food and agriculture, and lack of access to infrastructure and capital. Public and private institutions, with inspired community leadership, have a role and responsibility in working towards Black Food Sovereignty. Action-oriented policies like the City of Toronto's plan for Black Food Sovereignty are positive first step, but more needs to be done beyond the 5-year Plan to dismantle generations of racism and exclusion. Through a series of bold and comprehensive policies and programs, and through creating space for B3 organizations to thrive, Black Food Sovereignty can be an attainable reality. The City's Black Food Sovereignty Plan may be an opportunity for Black communities to assert their interests.

References

- Abdulai, A. (2021). Being a Black farmer in a field of white opened my eyes to Canada's agriculture diversity problem. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-being-a-black-farmer-in-a-field-of-white-opened-my-eyes-to-canadas/>
- Afri-Can Food Basket (2021). Cultivating Black Food Sovereignty in Toronto: Towards agenda for Action. Retrieved from: https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/foodsecurity/Activities/bfsat/AFB_BFS_pamphlet.docx
- Alonso, G., (2020). Black Lives Matter in Rural Canada, Too. <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/black-lives-matter-in-rural-canada-too>
- Arsenault, C. (2017). Lacking land rights, historic Black communities in Canada seek change. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-landrights-race-idUSKCN1BH38E>
- Austin, D. (2013). Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Barclay, L. (2021). A Short History of Black Food Cooperatives in America. *Food Co-op*. Retrieved from: <https://www.foodcoop.coop/blog/2020/6/19/a-short-history-of-black-cooperatives-in-america>
- Black Creek Food Justice Network (2017). Fighting for Food Justice in the Black Creek Community—Summary. <https://cec.info.yorku.ca/black-creek-food-justice-action-network/>
- Bledsoe, A., & Wright, W. J. (2019). The anti-Blackness of global capital. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(1), 8-26.
- Caxaj, S., Trn, M., Mayell, S., Tew, M., McLaughlin, J., Rawal, S., Vosko, F., Cole, D. (2022). Migrant agricultural workers' deaths in Ontario from Jan 2020 to June 2021: a qualitative descriptive study. *International Journal for Equity in Health* 21(98). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-022-01692-7>
- City of Toronto (2021). City Council approves first Black Food Sovereignty Plan. <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-council-approves-first-black-food-sovereignty-plan/>
- City of Toronto. (2017). TORONTO ACTION PLAN TO CONFRONT ANTI-BLACK RACISM. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-109127.pdf>
- City of Toronto (2017). Confronting Anti-Black Racism. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-black-racism/>

- City of Toronto. (2021). Advancing Black Food Sovereignty – Update. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-165110.pdf>
- City of Toronto. (2022). 2022 City Budget. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/95be-2022-City-of-Toronto-Budget-Summary.pdf>
- City of Toronto (2022). COVID-19: Ethno-Racial Identity and Income. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-pandemic-data/covid-19-ethno-racial-group-income-infection-data/>
- Clark, J. (2020). Black farming settlements in Ontario History. *Farms.com*. <https://www.farms.com/ag-industry-news/black-farming-settlements-in-ont-history-399.aspx>
- Diverlus, R., Hudson, S., Ware, S. (eds.) (2020). *Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada*. Regina: University of Regina Press.
- Duah-Kessie, I., Siddiqi, A., Iveniuk, J. & McKenzie, K. (2020). No one left behind: Exploring thriving income among the Black population in the City of Toronto. *Wellesley Institute*. <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/No-one-left-behind-2.pdf>
- Dhunna, S., & Tarasuk, V. (2021). Black-white racial disparities in household food insecurity from 2005 to 2014, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 112(5), 888-902.
- Edmonton Social Planning Council. (2021). Confronting Racism with Data: Why Canada Needs Disaggregated Race-Based Data. https://edmonton-socialplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Race-Based-Data_ESPCFeatureReport_Feb2021.pdf
- Elliot, H. (2020). A Moment of Reckoning: Reconciliation Through Decolonial Prefiguration in a Food Movement Organization. <https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/987968/>
- FoodShare and PROOF (2019). Fact Sheet: Race and Food Insecurity. https://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2019/11/PROOF_factsheet_press_FINAL.6.pdf
- Food Secure Canada (n.d). What is Food Sovereignty? Retrieved from: <https://foodsecurecanada.org/who-we-are/what-food-sovereignty>
- Fleras, A. (2017). *Unequal relations: A Critical Introduction to Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada*. Pearson.
- Houle, R. (2020). Changes in the socioeconomic situation of Canada's Black population, 2001 to 2016. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2020001-eng.htm>
- Hounsell, K. (2020, July 18). Black N.S. man was unfairly denied title to land settled by his family in 1913, court rules. CBC News, July 18. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/n-s-supreme-court-land-title-systemic-racism-1.5654466>

- Hulchanski, D. (2010). The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization within Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005. Cities Centre, University of Toronto. <http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/tnrn/Three-Cities-Within-Toronto-2010-Final.pdf>
- Igbavboa, H. & Elliot, S. (2019). Future Farmers: The Challenge of Food Sovereignty for Black Farmers in the Greater Toronto Area. https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/social-innovation/News/FutureFarmers_ReportandBibliography_RU.pdf
- Janes, C., Este, D., Thomas Bernard, W., Benjamin, A., Lloyd, B., Turner, T. (2010). Race and Wellbeing: The Lives, Hopes, and Activism of African Canadians. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Justicia for Migrant Farmworkers (2022). Victory: Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario Finds that Police Engaged in Racial Discrimination Against Migrant Farmworkers during DNA sweep. <https://harvestingfreedom.org/2022/08/18/victory-human-rights-tribunal-of-ontario-finds-that-police-engaged-in-racial-discrimination-against-migrant-farmworkers-during-dna-sweep/>
- Kitossa, T., Lawson, E., Howard, P. (eds) (2019). African Canadian Leadership: Continuity, Transition, and Transformation. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- La Via Campesina (2008). Food sovereignty for Africa: A challenge at fingertips. <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty-for-africa-a-challenge-at-fingertips/>
- Leitato, R. (2004). Three Black farmers fight for diminishing land in southern Ontario. *The Narwhal*. <https://thenarwhal.ca/ontario-black-farmers-fight-for-land-gta/>
- Library & Archives Canada. (2021). Black History in Canada. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/blacks.aspx>
- Maynard, R. (2017). Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present. Halifax: Fernwood
- Morgan, J., Levinson-King, R., & Murphy, J. (2020). Black in Canada: 10 stories. BBC. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/black_in_canada
- National Black Food Justice Association. (2020). Justice for Black Farmers Act. <https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/supportaction>.
- Newfield, G. (2011). The Coloured Corps: Black Canadians and the War of 1812. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-coloured-corps-african-canadians-and-the-war-of-1812>
- Nicoll, D. (2021). North America's first Black food sovereignty plan. Rabble.ca. <https://rabble.ca/anti-racism/north-americas-first-black-food-sovereignty-plan/>

Nyéleni International Steering Committee (2007). Forum for Food Sovereignty. Sélingué, Mali. <https://nyeleni.org/en/homepage/>

Pereira, R., Abokor, L., Ahmad, F., Abdikkarim, F. (2020). Unfunded: Black communities overlooked by Canadian philanthropy. Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership Program, Carleton University. <https://www.forblackcommunities.org/assets/docs/Unfunded-Report.pdf>

Puttick, M. (2022). The Exploitation of Mexican and Caribbean Migrant Workers in Ontario's Agricultural Sector. Minority Rights Group International. <https://minorityrights.org/programmes/library/trends/trends2022/canada/>

Raza, A. (2022). Jamaican migrant workers in Ontario pen open letter linking conditions to 'systematic slavery'. CBC News, Aug. 20. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jamaican-migrant-workers-open-letter-1.6557678>

Roberts, M. (2020). Black Food Insecurity in Canada. Broadbent Institute. https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/black_food_insecurity_in_canada

Rosenberg, N. & Stucki, B. (2019). How USDA distorted data to conceal decades of discrimination against Black farmers. The Counter. <https://thecounter.org/usda-black-farmers-discrimination-tom-vilsack-reparations-civil-rights/>

Schwinghamer, S. (n.d). The Colour Bar at the Canadian Border: Black American Farmers. *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*. <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/the-colour-bar-at-the-canadian-border-black-american-farmers>

Stapleton J., James, C., Hope, K. (2019). The Working Poor in the Toronto Region. Metcalf Foundation. <https://metcalffoundation.com/publication/the-working-poor-in-the-toronto-region-a-closer-look-at-the-increasing-numbers>

UN (United Nations)(2022). About the Right to Food and Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food/about-right-food-and-human-rights>

Via Campesina (2008). Food Sovereignty for Africa: A Challenge at Fingertips. <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty-for-africa-a-challenge-at-fingertips/>

Vincent, D. (2018). Census map shows Black people live in 'segregated' Toronto. Toronto Star. Nov. 8. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/11/08/census-map-shows-black-people-live-in-segregated-toronto-professor-says.html?rf>

Credits

Jonathan Pham, page 21, *from* www.pexels.com.

Kindel Media, page 4, *from* www.pexels.com.

Laura Berman Photography:

- Cover

- Pages: 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, and 22

Mikhail Nilov, page 10, *from* www.pexels.com.

Rachel Claire, page 12, *from* www.pexels.com.