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Soil and Soul: Fostering Cultural Healing Through Reconnection to the Land

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In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis,

2021-22 academic year, Pomona College, Claremont, California

Readers:

Professor Char Miller

Professor Heather Williams

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Introduction

The first time I stepped foot on Pomona College's 1.2-acre organic farm, I was on a mission. Tucked in the farthest Southeast corner campus, the farm is hidden behind the art building, the Greek theater, and "The Wash," an expanse of protected oaks and other native habitat. Yes, the farm is a location many on campus will never have explored, but I was determined to find a home for myself there. I can't say I recall exactly what version of the speech I surely rehearsed a dozen times that I sputtered out to the farm manager at the time, but my intention was clear: I wanted to work at the farm, and I wanted to know how to make that happen. In the weeks that followed, I visited the farm every chance I could. I was informed that "demonstrated interest" was the way to secure the job, a strategy I would later realize was a theme at Pomona College. I worked alongside the farm employees weeding nut grass and Bermuda Grass, sowing seeds, harvesting fruit, and most permanently ingrained in my olfactory memory, turning compost.

When I was hired for the position, I was thrilled. My whole life I've had the privilege of being around natural spaces, and that's where I feel most at home. When I found out that Pomona had a farm, it was not a question of if I would participate, but how. It was not until much later that I began to realize that not everyone who may have wanted that experience might have felt comfortable going out and getting it.

To me the farm, and outdoor spaces in general, have almost always felt like safe spaces.

Throughout my time at Pomona, I began to realize that other people of color don't necessarily feel that way. Like many outdoor spaces, Pomona's farm is primarily visited by white students.

This racial divide is especially apparent with Black students. In the nearly four years since I

began working at the farm, there are four other Black students I recall ever seeing step foot on the farm.

As my interest in agriculture grew, so did my awareness of the racialized nature of the work. To me, farming is healing, but the more I learned, the more historical trauma I saw unfolding all around me. I knew that before the traumatic history of slavery, black people had a sacred relationship with the land. As I learned more about race, land, and the environment, I discovered black farmers in this country looking to restore this relationship. Although I saw few people like myself looking to change this narrative around agriculture at Pomona's farm, and in general, the work of young Black farmers like Leah and Naima Penniman inspired me. Perhaps most known for their work at Soul Fire Farm¹, which Leah founded, they are working to restore Afro-Indigenous ancestral connections to land and promote food sovereignty through farming, food distribution, and education (Soul Fire Farm n.d.). When it comes to finding healing for Black people in farming, these sisters are the modern-day leaders. At nearly every point in writing this thesis, I came back to them, intentionally or unintentionally, because of the sheer magnitude of their presence in this work. No longer alone, and with Leah's book² and Naima's painting³ to guide the way, I began my journey with this project.



In this thesis, I explore how land and agriculture can be transformed from a space of trauma into a space for cultural healing within the context of African American culture. This thesis is

¹ Soul Fire Farm website <https://www.soulfirefarm.org/>

² *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land* by Leah Penniman <https://www.soulfirefarm.org/media/farming-while-black/>

³ Foresight by Naima Penniman <https://soul-fire-farm.myshopify.com/products/foresight-poster>

personal to me. Although most of the experiences I highlight are not my own, my personal experience as a mixed-race Black woman involved in farming is at the heart of my decision to write this thesis and present the perspectives it generates. Because this topic is so expansive, the thesis is focused through its structure as a collection of short essays, each presenting specific perspectives on a theme that especially stuck out in my research of Black farmers and healing. These essays present a counter-narrative to the association of farming with slavery and related historical trauma that many Black people experience to this day. There is a common thread developed throughout that through reconnecting to the land people of African American descent can experience healing.

I begin this thesis with “Who Cared.” This is the story of African Americans who cared for each other using traditional medicinal wisdom carried over from Africa and grounded in a relationship with land. This connection with the land, strong enough to survive centuries of enslavement, sets the stage for understanding Black people’s relationship with land today. The next essay, “Healing Land,” considers how Black people today can develop healing relationships with land and agriculture. In researching interviews with black folks who experienced healing from farming, themes emerged. People found cathartic release in the sensation of pulling out weeds. They found healing in the reciprocity of caring for their own health as they cared for the land. They found empowerment and community in knowing how to feed themselves in food deserts, and in reconnecting to the land-based practices and ways of being of our ancestors. This essay provides examples of these experiences and suggests that creating a safe space is essential for healing to occur.

However, the farms that are creating these safe spaces for cultural healing, primarily small community farms, are relatively few. For some of these farms, they are *the* places in their area connecting people to land-based healing (Larios 2021). More farms that hold cultural healing as a focus are needed to reach more people, and these existing farms need more resources. In my “Healing Reparations” essay, I analyze how Soul Fire farm’s Reparations Map connects people of color farming initiatives with a variety of essential farming resources. The final essay, “Homeland,” Joins together the major themes of the previous essays, then proposes a theoretical framework for understanding land and racial relations in this country today. The essay considers what the idea of reparations for Black people implies in the context of being on land that was already inhabited by Indigenous people, and how we can approach these concerns going forward with compassion.

A Note on Sources

While this topic is incredibly important and rewarding to me, researching sources for this topic was extremely challenging. Scrolling through page after page of unfruitful journal articles, I had to make the most out of the limited scholarship on my topic and get creative with how to fill in the gaps. While Black farming and healing are not recent practices, interest in this topic is only just taking off in academic and popular media. Many of the sources I utilize in writing on modern day land relations have been written in the past three years. Because of this limited literature — not on historical events, but on the stories and experiences of Black farmers in the country today — Natalie Baszile’s book, *We Are Each Other’s Harvest*, and Leah Penniman’s *Farming While Black* are critical to this thesis. Representing well 300 pages worth of first-hand interviews with Black farmers across the country, documented verbatim, Basile’s book especially functions like an encyclopedia for a multitude of perspectives of Black farmers.

Who Cared

“We are descendants of futurists, carrying on the legacy of our ancestral grandmothers, who braided seeds in their hair before boarding transatlantic slave ships, believing against odds in a future of sovereignty on land” - Naima Penniman⁴

Before the traumatic history of slavery, black people had a sacred relationship to the land. It is challenging to recover accounts of this relationship before the influence of slavery. The knowledge that *during* the institution of slavery, Black people managed to maintain this relationship with the land through their spiritual, agricultural, and ecological knowledge is also evasive. Just as these ancestors braided seeds of plants and hope in their hair, they carried cures from a land-based medicinal tradition overseas. They grew this knowledge on foreign soil out of necessity, and under the unimaginable conditions of slavery, the ecological knowledge of enslaved Africans kept them alive.

For enslavers, health care for enslaved people was a matter of practicality. With poor living conditions and so many people in one place, illness was common, and healthcare was needed on a regular basis and on a large scale. As a result, the most direct part of the job went to enslaved people. To enslaved people, however, healthcare was sacred due to its ties to spirituality and community. These contrasting but semi-congruous priorities resulted in the unique composite culture known as slave medicine. This essay analyzes the conditions that led to this process, including: the poor living conditions on plantations, the reasons behind (and the impacts of)

⁴ Foresight by Naima Penniman <https://soul-fire-farm.myshopify.com/products/foresight-poster>

enslaved people being given the responsibility of healthcare, the context for how enslaved people were equipped with medicinal knowledge from Africa, and the connection between the practice of slave medicine and culture. I conclude that despite the great abuses and restrictions placed on them, the need for slave healers provided enslaved African Americans with a unique opportunity to preserve their culture, especially their sacred relationship with the land, amidst an environment designed to destroy it.

In this essay I rely primarily on first-hand narratives and interviews of enslaved African Americans. While there are many of these sources available, the information on slave medicine from any one source is usually limited. Slave medicine was certainly a major part of everyday life on plantations; however it is typically not the most documented by enslaved people in their narratives. Instead, most of the focus tends to be on the cruelty of slavery. This makes sense, especially in the case of such sustained historical trauma. Thus, it is necessary to make connections between sources, while keeping in mind that some details and exact facts may be altered in the process.

To understand the great need for slave healthcare, it is first necessary to understand the severe conditions on plantations and the disregard for the well-being of enslaved people beyond what was necessary for labor. In her 1861 narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs summarizes the sentiment behind bare minimum care of enslaved people in a single sentence: “these God-breathing machines are no more, in the sight of their masters, than the cotton they plant, or the horses they tend.” In Jacobs’ case, this was a response to her grandmother serving her enslaver dutifully despite the fact that he sold all her children (Jacobs 1988). Years later, 83-year-old Alabama former slave Henry Baker saw the same pattern of

enslavers only providing care because they valued enslaved people for their labor. In a 1938 interview, Baker recalls, “De health uv de “nigger” durin’ slavery time don’ tolably well, but dere wuz much sickness ‘moung dem dan ‘tis now.” This greater level of sickness that Baker describes is due to a great lack of basic sanitary measures on plantations. Particularly important is Baker’s observation that “Dey [enslaved people] all drunk out uv de same dipper en de same bucket, but the white man allus drunk fust” (Blassingame 1977). Here the enslaver view of the worth of enslaved people is saddeningly clear. Sanitation, which could prevent illness and save lives, is disregarded in favor of convenience. In concurrence with the idea of objectification of enslaved people, the worth of a slave was established in terms of economics. To slave owners, sanitation could justifiably be sacrificed because the cost of illness and potential deaths was deemed less expensive than the cost of providing sanitation measures like separate drinking cups for enslaved people, or real toilets and beds, which Baker goes on to note were a privilege that only the whites enjoyed. From Baker’s perspective, however, the main reason that enslaved people were sick so much was their limited ability to bathe. He comments on how White folks commonly pointed out how enslaved people smelled bad, and explains, “enybody would smell ef dey didn’t wash.” Baker’s observations make a logical distinction between the racist idea that black people “naturally” are dirty, and the conditions that forced them into that state at that time. Poor sanitation and disregard for the inherent worth of enslaved people highlight one key aspect of the need for extensive slave healthcare.

In his 1789 narrative Guinea-born Gustavus Vassa presents a seemingly even worse, or at least more detailed, depiction of his experience of slave living conditions. Vassa describes how the enslavers he encountered did not pay “the least attention to the lodging of field negroes. Their huts, which ought to be well covered, and the place dry where they take their little repose, are

often open sheds, built in damp places; so that when the poor creatures return from the toils of the field, they contract many disorders, from being exposed to the damp air in this uncomfortable state, while they are heated and their pores are open. This neglect certainly conspires with many others to cause a decrease in the births as well as in the lives of the grown negroes” (Blassingame 1977). These unsanitary conditions would have made enslaved people especially susceptible to disease, making the need for healthcare even greater, and making the need for an easy labor source to provide that health care even greater.

Unsurprisingly, other enslaved people were the ones made to fulfill this need. As Alabama former slave, Sara Fitzpatrick explains in her 1938 interview, the hierarchy for providing care to enslaved people was as follows: “When ‘Niggers’ got sick... de Mistus giv’ dem medicine an’ on de plantation de ov’seer is’ued out all de medicine an’ de ‘Nigger’ mammies waited on all o’em.” This system gave slave healers the responsibility of providing the most direct care, as they were the ones actually administering treatment. Baker echoes this sentiment in his narrative: “I ‘membah once we got down wid penumony. Der wuz six uv uz in bed at one time. We got er white doctor tuh come tuh see us but de main remedy we had wuz tuh go tuh de woods en git pine tops tuh boil en sweat ourselves wid it. Put a cloth on our head en sweat ovah a tub” (Bontemps 1969). While a white doctor initiated the medical process in this example, a subtle but important detail of this recollection lies in Baker’s use of the words, “we” and “ourselves” when describing how the cure was administered. This suggests that even when white doctors — who enslavers would have generally held in higher regard than slave healers (Fett 2002) — were sent to treat enslaved people, they had to care for themselves for the most part. In this case, the white doctor provided medicine, but it was up to the enslaved people to prepare and administer it themselves. An 1863 interview of slave, Harry McMillan, further illustrates this point. When

asked by his interviewer “Are there physicians enough here to take care of the sick?” he responds, “I do not think there are doctors enough...if you send for him one day you will see him a day or two afterwards. They don’t get out of bed to go when called” (Blassingame 1977). This first demonstrates the lack of regard for the health of enslaved people — beyond a bare minimum — discussed earlier in this essay. In this case, even when plantation owners cared enough to call a doctor for enslaved people, the doctors who were supposed to provide care sometimes didn’t care enough to even get out of bed to do their job. As a result, this emphasized the need for enslaved people to step in and provide healthcare for each other.

Against all odds, enslaved people cared for each other and survived. Many enslaved people carried essential knowledge across continents that saved their lives. They relied on medicinal knowledge from their native countries and acquired new knowledge from working on plantation land. Vassa, for example, reflects on life in his home country and notes that “the natives of this part of Africa are extremely cleanly.” He goes on to describe how they “had many purifications and washings” (Blassingame 1977). Unsurprisingly, he was astonished by the comparatively hellish living conditions of slavery. Vassa’s observation that pores open when people are hot, making them more susceptible to disease, reflects a significant level of understanding of the human body. Vassa’s account highlights the difference between what people were used to in Africa, and the unsanitary conditions they were thrown into in slavery on American plantations. Since sanitation was so much better in Guinea than on slave plantations, Vassa likely absorbed this knowledge before he came to America, showing a carrying over of medical wisdom from Africa to plantations in America.

In terms of specific practices, many references of cures in slave narratives bear similarities to each other. This can be seen between narratives of Vassa, Alabama former slave Dellie Lewis, and Georgia former slave Carrie Nancy Fryer (“Aunt Nancy”). Vassa describes how the healers in Guinea would “practice cupping, and were very successful in healing wounds and expelling poisons.” Cupping is a technique involving suction with a cup on the skin, intended to facilitate healing in the blood flow (Blassingame 1977). Similarly, Lewis explains that her grandmother who was a midwife “always made tea of spice and cloves, putting in a little whiskey and gave it to a woman after childbirth as this always brought out all the bruised blood” (Lewis 2018). Additionally, Aunt Nancy suggested “Sassafax for measles, to run de humor out de blood” (Boudry 1941). All three techniques reflect a focus on healing the blood, a common concentration in slave cures. One slave woman even commented that you could find the source to any medical problem by “looking at the blood” (Fett 2002) These similarities between cures practiced in Africa and by those enslaved on American plantations show that enslaved people were able to continue their traditional medicinal practices even in slavery, thus preserving their sacred relationship with the land.

A major form of cultural preservation that slave medicine fostered was elements of religion, spirituality, and folk belief. Vassa explains that the “necessary habit of decency [cleanliness] was part of religion” in Guinea. He continues, “Though we had no public places of worship, we had priests and magicians, or wise men...These magicians were also our doctors or physicians” (Blassingame 1977). Here we can see that in Vassa’s culture, healthcare is integrated into other important parts of society. Vassa goes on to explain that they additionally “calculated our time, and foretold events” (Blassingame 1977). It is clear from his narrative that these major aspects of culture were one in the same. One could not exist without the rest, therefore preserving one

preserved the rest. In this way, Vassa's narrative demonstrates the interconnected nature of healing, religion, and other forms of culture that was common in African cultures during his time.

As enslaved people from different African countries were exposed to each other's varying indigenous religions, as well as European Christianity, a syncretic tradition of heterogeneous belief regarding religion, spirituality, and folk belief emerged, and was tied to slave medicine. Some of these beliefs can be seen in Dellie's grandmother's practice of curing night sweats with "an ax under the bed with blade of ax sitting straight up, or else a pan of water under the bed." She additionally suggests that "If someone you had no use for insisted on coming to see you, put a fresh laid egg at the door where they had to step over it, and they couldn't come in." and "If you are anxious for your sweetheart to return from a journey put a pin in the ground head down and point up, put an egg on point of pin, then insert another pin in top of egg with the point inside, and when the two points met your sweetheart would return" (Lewis 2018). These practices are reflective of the overlap between supernatural beliefs and everyday cures. Detailed and sincere, practices like these were taken every bit as seriously as herbal tea for colds.

A link between supernatural perceptions and health could especially be seen in the idea of signs foreboding death. Georgia slave, Sally Brown explains that "We'd always know somebody wuz goin' to die when we heard a owl come to a house and start screechin'." Luckily, she and those enslaved with her had a cure. "It sounded so mo'nful like and we'd pat the poker or the shovel in the fire and that always run him away; it burned his tongue out and he couldn't holler no more" (Brown 1941). Here a natural occurrence (seeing an owl) predicts a natural event (death) by supernatural means. Then, a natural remedy (stoking the fire to burn the bird's tongue) prevents

the supernatural prophecy from coming to fruition. Thus, we can see here that the natural and supernatural are seamlessly woven together. Nancy Boudry expressed a similar belief, noting that she “runs ev'y squeech owl away what comes close, too.” Claspng her hands, right thumb over left thumb, she explained “does dat - and it goes on away - dey quits hollerin’, you chokin’ ‘em when you does dat” (Boudry 1941). Though the exact cure is different, the idea of the supernatural is the same. Additionally, both women mention these procedures in the context of herbal and other cures that they use for health. Therefore, we can see how these supernatural remedies were not only taken as seriously as land-based medicinal cures, but they were also considered practically the same as them.

Aunt Nancy perhaps illustrates this connection most clearly in a description of a dream that fixed her health. “I had high blood pressure so bad I couldn’ walk right. My head nused to spin, laying down all night, couldn’ res. One night I doze off in my sleep and a lady's spirit come to me. Her and my mother was two friends, her name was Cyndie Garden High. She say: ‘Honey, in de morning when you git up, you git you some jimpson weed and put it wid cookin’ salt and bind it on your head.’ I done dat. I nused to have long hair to my shoulder. Jimpson weed done cut my hair off, but it cured my blood pressure” (Boudry 1941). Here we see again that a supernatural or spiritual experience occurs in conversation with a cure from the land.

Another way in which healing preserved culture was through enslaved people’s great pride for a healing tradition. As slave communities were established, and trust built among each other, enslaved people often came to trust the cures of their own healers more than white doctors. Sally Brown, for example, describes with pride several remedies that enslaved people used on her plantation including “a tepid bath made of leaves” for dropsy; jimsonweed for rheumatism; and a

tea made of chestnut leaves for asthma. Sally does not stop at a simple statement of the cures that were used. She continues boastfully, “We’ d git the chestnut leaves, dry them in the sun jest lak tea leaves, and we wouldn’t let them leaves git wet fur nothin’ in the world while they wuz drying.” Sally demonstrates a clear sense of dignity for her craft. She valued the quality of her work so much that nothing would stop her from making cures exactly as they were meant to be made. She continues, “We’ d take poke salad roots, boil them and then take sugar and make a syrup. This wuz the best thing fur asthma. It waz known to cure it too” (Boudry 1941). Sally’s expression of absolute confidence in the cure she and fellow slave healers made shows the value placed on this land-based knowledge. This is further verified by her note that this cure was known to actually cure asthma, something that today is not possible in conventional medicine.

There is a sense of unwavering confidence in Sally’s words, which is driven home by her statement that “We didn’t need many doctors then.” Here Sally contradicts other narratives that express frustration with the lack of white doctors. She emphasizes what many more subtly suggest: enslaved people had their own healthcare that was more effective. Her simple explanation for this is that “we didn’t have so much sickness in them days.” This could be attributed to her high regard for the cures derived from the great wealth of medicinal knowledge passed between enslaved people. Sally concludes, “I still believes in them ole ho’ made medicines too and I don’t believe in so many doctors” (Boudry 1941).

Nancy Boudry similarly reflects on her life as a midwife while enslaved and free. When asked specifically about midwifery, the interviewer notes that she smiled before saying, “I was a midwife myself, to black and white, after freedom. De Thomson doctors all liked me and tole people to ‘git Nancy.’ I used ‘tansy tea’ - heap o’ little root - made black pepper tea, fotch de

paine on ‘em. When I would git to de place where I had a hard case, I would send for de doctor, and he would help me out, yes, doctor help me out of all of ‘em” (Boudry 1941). Nancy’s interview reflects yet another experience of White doctors, in this case a more collaborative one. This could be due, at least in part to the fact that Thomsonianism doctors reflected a field of white medicine that thoroughly accepted natural and herbal cures (Fett 2002). In this case, the medicinal knowledge of a slave healer is not only accepted by conventional doctors but is embraced. Additionally, Nancy’s account shows the persistence and monetary value of her trade after the end of slavery. Thus, healing can be seen as a form of culture with value on multiple levels: that of profitability, that of value to the doctors and other whites, and of course that of her own great dignity in being a healer.

With such a wealth of medicinal knowledge, it seems only natural that enslaved people would want to pass down the tradition. Often this was the case. It was common for women who were “too old to do any work” to “take and study what to do fer ailments of grown folks and lil’ chilluns.” (Fox-Genovese 1988). They frequently became the most knowledgeable about medicine, both because they absorbed much knowledge in their lifetimes around the plantation, and because they now could devote all their time to the study and practice of healing. Thus, in order to keep the tradition of healing going (and of course to fulfil the needs of the plantation) they often took young girls under their wing to train them to become the next generation of healers. Typically, this began with being a nurse for babies. Mary Jane Simmons recalls that she went to work “nursing the children by the time I was six years old” (Simmons n.d.) While modern observers might find problems with children working this young, this shows the great emphasis put on passing down knowledge from generation to generation. This continued even after enslaved people were free. “Aunt Nancy” grew up on a plantation owned by a doctor, and

notes that once she was old enough, she worked for Colonel Doctor McKie “in de house.” After emancipation, she continued to be a well-known healer in her community, and almost always had someone nearby ready to listen to her knowledge. At the time of her interview, her grandson and another young White boy were present. As she describes how she cured her high blood pressure with “Jimsom weed,” and how she treats rheumatism with “a pint of kerosene, and a block of camphor,” the interviewer notes that “The eager grandchild was hanging over Nancy's shoulder, listening and smiling. The white boy edged up, and Nancy laughed, ‘Hunh! I spects dese chillun kin 'member tomorrow every word I tells you today. Dey knows everything’” (Boudry 1941).

It may have been common for enslaved people to pass down medicinal knowledge to younger generations, however sometimes this knowledge was kept secret from the enslavers. When Robert Smalls was asked, "Do the masters know anything about the secret life of the colored people?" he firmly replied, “No, sir; one life they show their masters and another life they don't show” (Blassingame 1977). This is true of many kinds of knowledge, including certain non-Christian spiritual practices, ideas of escape, valuable cures, and even recipes for poisoning the master (Fett 2002). The very fact that enslaved people had something that they wanted to keep secret, knowing the risk if their secrets were discovered, highlights the immense value they placed on their medicine.

For all the culture that slave medicine fostered, its practitioners were not free. Restrictions were put on enslaved people, so they could not necessarily practice in the ways they would have preferred. This aspect of slave healing especially affected women. Looking back at Sara Fitzpatrick's explanation of the hierarchy of slave healthcare, we can see that for enslaved people, providing healthcare on plantations was hard work — it was slavery. As Sharla Fett explains, slave healers had to work on whomever their masters told them too, based on their

motives, not necessarily who the slave healer wanted to or who needed it the most. Often this meant not caring for one's own child, when other demands were placed on enslaved people.

These limitations on slave medicine can be seen in the examples of several slave women (Fett 2002).

In her 1848 Interview, Charity Bowery recalls that she had and nursed 16 of her own children, and additionally nursed 12 children for her mistress (Blassingame 1977). Having and nursing 16 children is far more than many in the US today will ever come close to. Nursing 28 is practically unimaginable considering the immense stress that puts on a person's body, yet this was hardly considered by enslavers. Slave wet nurses were commonly used to supply milk to the enslaver's children (Blassingame 1977). Sometimes this would leave little milk for their own children.

Thus, this most intimate form of first health care between a mother and child was freely exploited in 19th century American plantations.

Harry McMillan describes another common situation in which pregnant women were frequently still put to work in the field. He explains that if a woman got pregnant, "most of the times she had to do the same work. Sometimes the wife of the planter learned the condition of the woman and said to the husband you must cut down her day's work. Sometimes the women had their children in the field." When asked if women were given a doctor's aid in childbirth, he responds "No, sir; There is a nurse on the plantation sometimes- an old midwife who attended them. If a woman was taken in labor in the field some of her sisters would help her home and then come back to the field" (Blassingame 1977). Making pregnant women maintain unmodified workloads reflects a complete disregard for their health. Instead of letting these women rest and recover so they and their babies could be healthy and function better in the long run, only the immediate need of labor was considered. This is reflective of the disregard for inherent human worth of

enslaved people discussed earlier in this essay. However, this quote reflects a problem at a deeper level than discussed before. This shows that even when other slave midwives and healers could step in and help the person in need of healthcare, in this case a pregnant woman, they were not always allowed to. Even when they were allowed, it was kept to a minimum so that they could be put back to work on the field.

In one extreme case of restrictions in slave healthcare, Harriet Jacobs, imprisoned for resisting her enslaver's abuse writes, "one day the screams of a child nerved me with strength to crawl to my peeping-hole, and as I saw my son covered in blood. A fierce dog, usually kept chained, had seized and bitten him. A doctor was sent for, and I heard the groans and screams of my child while the wounds were being sewn up...Benny recovered from his wounds, but it was long before he could walk again" (Jacobs 1988). Here a mother, literally shackled by the chains of slavery, is unable to step in and provide care for her own child, and instead must rely on the hope that someone else will value his life enough to care for him. These sort of restrictions on the practice of slave medicine were major obstacles at the time in providing authentic care, and they serve now as a reminder that slave medicine was still confined by the restrictions of slavery.

Understanding the systems of medicine developed by African Americans during enslavement is a rich and complicated topic. Slave medicine was sometimes a source of ridicule and exploitation for enslavers, yet it taught medicine through years of practice and preserved countless spiritual beliefs. The exploitation of slave medicine took children away from the care of their own mothers, yet slave medicine formed cooperative communities of health care. Even after emancipation, many communities of formerly enslaved people stuck firmly together and continued to provide healthcare for each other when no one else would (Carlton-LaNey, Iris et

al. n.d.). In this way, analyzing slave medicine allows us to consider what defines a culture and what can blossom out of necessity and knowledge. Furthermore, it forces us to confront stereotypes and generalizations about living conditions in Africa and on American plantations that are made out of convenience and from a lack of comprehensive sources.

Most, if not all, the slave remedies I encountered rely on the land in some way, especially extensive ecological knowledge of plants. This relationship with the land enabled Black people to heal themselves. While the interviews highlighted in this essay provide a glimpse of the rich history of African American traditional medicine, the loss of specific medicinal knowledge is immense. In stitching together so many beliefs and practices out of context of the diverse holistic traditions from which they originated, I have presented this knowledge with great vulnerability. We may never know the full significance of slave medicine to enslaved people, or the extent to which the institution of slavery molded it. However, it is clear that slave medicine served as a vessel through which a connection to the land and many forms of culture survived the institution of slavery.

Healing Land

Summer in Claremont brings new meaning to the word hot — by mid-morning, sweat becomes as essential as each breath of heavy air. But in the early mornings, when the sun has only begun to tease an entrance through the east-facing trees of the Pomona College Organic Farm, I can enjoy the soft glow and subtle warmth while nestled between beds of arugula. There's something sacred about this time. 8:37 a.m. and counting. It's quiet, especially when I harvest alone. Quiet, but not silent. There is the occasional rustling and chirps of birds I know by call, not name. The sun begins to graze my shoulders through the shade cloth. Ambient sounds from the road remind me that I'm not fully isolated. I find subtle comfort in the warm, washed-out sound. I don't feel alone. I watch ants make highways of drip lines, squeeze soft soil between already thoroughly soiled fingers, and breathe. Tender and aromatic, the air of Claremont mornings is like steam off hot tea in the still-cool morning. Sitting close to the ground I smell the interspersed scents of wet soil and herbs. The unmistakable pungent aroma of arugula joins the mix as I pluck each tender leaf. I am satisfied to pick the leaves, damp from morning dew and residual drip line water. If I position my fingers just right, I can snap leaves off in one swift motion. Otherwise, the tender greens bend and tear or even tumble right out of the soil, roots and all. Picking arugula makes me slow down. I can think freely. My mind can wander wherever it needs to, because this is the time when my hands pick arugula. This work is my therapy.



As positive as my associations are with farming, There is no denying that farming is hard work. For many people of African American heritage, the land also carries the weight of much trauma.

Historical trauma is one of a number of terms used to describe the complex impacts of a collective experience of trauma sustained over generations by people sharing an affiliation, identity, or circumstance (Guthman 2008). Historical trauma has been used to describe the trauma experienced by African Americans beginning with first colonizer contact in Africa and sustained throughout slavery, and the impacts that continue to this day. While the structural racism and specific historical events that have sustained this trauma to this day are covered extensively in other works,⁵ it is worth noting here that according to the most recent USDA census data, only 1.4% of farmers are Black (“2017 Census of Agriculture: Black Producers”). This powerful statistic is largely reflective of sustained structural racism within the food system (Baszile 2021; Penniman 2018).

A great loss for Black people is that our connection to the land was exploited, and collectively, that trauma is interwoven with our current relationships to the land. Our connections to land go back further than the exploitation of them, yet we are not left unscathed. Despite the physical and emotional labor associated with farming within the context of historical trauma, the Black folks highlighted in this essay genuinely, and enthusiastically express how farming is worth it for them. Black farms are creating spaces for Black people to reconnect with the land in safe and culturally appropriate ways. As Leah Penniman states: “There's a truth that we do all belong to land and we have a right to belong to land and reclaim agency in the food system, but there's a healing process that needs to happen and part of that is knowing our history. It's not so much that we are stepping into this White good food movement, that this has always been our movement

⁵ We are Each Other's Harvest by Natalie Baszile,
Farming While Black by Leah Penniman,
The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson

and history has done its best job to alienate us from land and to tell us that we don't belong and that it's not our story, but it's always been our story. And so, it's been important for us to find those anecdotes and evidence of the strength of our people related to land, and uplift them" (The Laura Flanders Show 2016). In this essay I uplift the stories of Black folks who have already begun experiencing healing from farming, countering the dominant narrative of traumatic associations with farming. Thus, I show that positive and restorative relationships with the land are a possibility and living reality for Black people, and that farming can promote healing at personal and community levels.

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) is a food justice initiative founded to address food security in Detroit's majority Black population through empowering the community to take an active role in the existing local food security movement. Since their founding in 2006, they have established community gardens on 7-acres of land in Detroit with the goal of creating community self-reliance (DBCFSN 2019). In an interview about her work there, Rabia describes the act of weeding as therapeutic. "When you come out there you can clear your mind. We talk, we vent . . . the garden is a gathering place. It's like the earth takes up your problems . . . you're weeding the earth and it's like you're pulling out problems in your mind. You are venting your anger and it feels like you leave it there. Healing, positive energy, nothing like solving your problems with weeding. Gotta go out and weed, it's a stress reliever" (White 2011). Rabia's quote highlights several key ways in which farm work is therapeutic. She shows that DBCFSN functions first as a safe space because of the people; It is a "gathering place." The garden functions as a physical location in which people with similar backgrounds and life experiences can come together to clear their minds by talking, or even venting if

necessary. For people with marginalized identities, this is not something taken for granted. Black people might not feel comfortable sharing openly about their concerns in predominantly White, or otherwise unsafe spaces out of conscious or subconscious concern that they might not be fully understood. At DBCFSN, however, Rabia experienced a safe space to clear her mind. Rabia's quote additionally highlights how the earth functions independently as a powerful force for healing. Her comparison between pulling out weeds and pulling out mental problems is reminiscent of Ecowomanist thought. This framework connects Black women's experiences with those of the earth through their thought, especially regarding religion and spirituality (Harris 2017). Just as Rabia tends to the garden by pulling out its weeds, the garden reciprocates healing by taking up the problems and returning positive energy.

Like Rabia, Brenae Royal of Monte Rosso Vineyard finds therapy in farm tasks like weeding. Reflecting on her time spent helping her grandmother garden as a child, she notes, "Pulling weeds I think is the most therapeutic thing you could do" (Baszile 2021). Brenae additionally reflects, "Getting into farming was probably the best thing to help me learn patience because over half of what we're up against is out of our control... I can't control the weather, I can't control breakdowns, and I can't control human error. What I can control is my response. How I respond and continue to grow is what keeps it interesting and allows me to be successful" (Baszile 2021). In Brenae's case, factors out of her control include excess rain in the wine vineyard and fires such as those in 2017 that hit Northern California. In addition to preparing her for a range of circumstances such as these, Brenae reflects that farming taught her patience and acceptance of things outside of her control. When productivity is the focus of daily life it is easy for patience to take the backseat. Harmoniously, farming requires both productivity and patience.

Productivity is a necessity to keep up with the workload and daily maintenance of farming, keep crops on schedule, and have a successful harvest to make a profit and keep the business afloat. As Brenae's example shows, because farming depends so heavily on the sometimes-unpredictable cycles of a modified natural environment, patience is equally important. In this way, farming can teach the process of surrendering control to have peace of mind, and how to balance this with the practical demands of life.

Lewa, another one of the women interviewed at DBCFSN, experienced healing from farming in a specific time of need in her life. "My father had just passed and I came out to D-town. The women told me, "You need to get in the dirt." [They told me] I needed to literally to get my hands, connect with the mother [earth], the original mother. This is the spiritual quality to gardening. What I learned gave me a way to be alone with my thoughts, a safe space to get with my thoughts. Women were all around me, they saw a satisfaction to it. I saw a direct connection from the pain of mourning my father to what I was planting. I planted that whole of collard greens, look at me go. What a sense of satisfaction" (White 2011). Like Rabia, Lewa's example highlights how the garden functions as a safe space through contact with the land and through the support from her community there. However, Lewa was not alone. As she explains, there were "women all around" her. The very fact that she came to the women at DBCFSN and they knew exactly how to help her highlights the community and sisterhood that had been established between Lewa and the founding women members of DBCFSN. As Monica White notes in her article, Lewa's personal experiences of healing from farming were so impactful that she felt that she had to get her children involved.

Tierra Negra is a people-of-color run farm promoting a model community-led food system. Operating as a project of Earthseed Land Collective,⁶ Tierra Negra provides classes and training to their local community outside Durham, North Carolina, and beyond. In a reflection on Tierra Negra, Rebekah Williams notes that even though she is “disconnected from her own ancestors’ land and place, whether that is the particular countries in Africa (the place where my ancestors had been stolen from), or the plantation where they had been enslaved, there was something powerful and healing about being there at Tierra Negra and connecting with a place where Black folks had lived and labored and connected with the land” (Gilbert and Williams 2020). Even though Rebekah may not trace her ancestry to this particular plot of land on which Tierra Negra resides, and despite the organization’s relatively recent emergence, Rebekah was able to experience the healing of a homecoming through her visit there.

In a similar vein, Zedé Harut says that for her, farming “feels very intuitive, and very healing,” says Harut. “It feels very familiar, working this land, although we're in an area that does not primarily represent me as a place. When I get in the field, and when I'm out in my backyard, looking over the river, it feels so comforting. Like, this is where you're supposed to be. For so long, a lot of our ancestors lost what we were used to. To try and feel that again, through growing food, and then growing food for other people—it feels like not only am I honoring what they always wanted us to have in the first place, but I also feel like I'm coming more into myself” (Jones 2021). Zedé’s reflection profoundly displays the power that African people had in their connection to the land and brought with them to this land. Zedé demonstrates that relationships

⁶ Earthseed Land Collective <https://earthseedlandcoop.org/about/>

to the land are not simply therapy for black people to overcome trauma, these profound relationships are the truth of our original connection to the land.

At their (unnamed) farm in Lugoff, South Carolina, Sadia Pollard experiences healing at a deeply personal level. Despite the attitude in their great grandmother's rural community that, in regard to farming, leaving "is the biggest thing you could do," Sadia and their father developed positive relationships with the land. Sadia reflects that farming is, "an essential part" of their identity and "a form of liberation and healing" Reflecting on the sense of acceptance they feel in nature, they add, "we have to understand that nature does not judge us. Nature does not tell us what we have to be to be valued and be respected. I want to make sure that's very clear when people come onto that property in Lugoff" (David Bland 2021). Societal pressure to constantly uphold standards of respectability can be exhausting. Considering this, Sadia's perspective that healing can be an escape from these judgements is compelling. Freer from outer influence, Sadia experiences individual healing through farming and hopes to share this experience with her community.

When a summer program took a field trip to Soul Fire Farm, Leah Penniman witnessed this cultural homecoming through the eyes of one of the participants. "Dijour, typically stoic and reserved, broke into tears during the closing circle at the end of that day. He explained that when he was very young, his grandmother had shown him how to garden and how gently to hold a handful of soil teeming with insects. She died years ago, and he had forgotten these lessons. When he removed his shoes on the tour and let the mud reach his feet, the memory of her and of the land literally traveled from the earth, through his soles, and to his heart. He said that it felt like he was 'finally home'" (Penniman 2019). Dijour's example shows how home is not

necessarily a definitive physical space. His experience is not something that can be quantified or necessarily even qualified. Something within him, beyond his conditioning, recognized the experience he had at Soul Fire Farm as “home.” Dijor’s example also shows the immediate transformational healing effect that land, and an environment set up to facilitate cultural healing can have.

Given that historical trauma is so tied to the land for people of African American heritage, in order for farms and gardens to be safe spaces for healing, it is essential that the farm work be done entirely by choice. The following reflection from “Pathways to Reparations: land and healing through food justice” is an excellent example of choice being facilitated at two community agricultural operations, Soul Fire Farm and Tierra Negra. Rebekah Williams, one of the authors, notes, “on the closing day, the hand drums had been set up in the field near a bench, nearby there was also farm work that needed to be done. All of the participants were invited to do what we felt called to do: farm work or drumming. The drumming felt celebratory, a way of saying goodbye to each other and the land. In that closing day experience and in being encouraged to self-care as we needed, my experience at Soul Fire Farm felt very much like the message we got at Tierra Negra: ‘When we work on the land, we only work if we choose to, if it brings us joy, if it is a celebration. We do not force others to do this work.’” As Rebekah puts it so succinctly in reflecting on her experience at Tierra Negra, “Our relationship with land and place needs to be a ‘choice’, and if it is our choice to live and work on the land, that relationship with the land can be a healing one” (Gilbert and Williams 2020).

Healing Reparations

In the previous essays we have seen an introduction into slave medicine as it relates to Black land relations, as well as how farms can function as safe spaces and facilitate cultural healing. In this next essay I explore how reparations can be utilized in agricultural contexts and serve as tools for healing for both those giving and those receiving reparations. Mainstream efforts for reparations tend to focus on calls for financial reparations distributed through litigation and legislation (Gilbert and Williams 2020). These efforts for government led reparations are important for facilitating large-scale redistribution of resources, but full government reimbursement for over 200 years of slavery is unlikely on the horizon. Additionally, Gilbert and Williams argue that while there is value in this form of reparations, access to land and healing is also an important form of reparations that has not been given as much attention. In this essay, I advocate for a use of a grassroots approach to reparations. Through my analysis of Soul Fire Farm's Reparations Map, I argue that these reparations, given in the form of any resources needed, have an essential role to play in supporting BIPOC agricultural organizations and promoting and normalizing the use of reparations in general.

On the reparations page of Soul Fire Farm's website, the following message is stated in bold:

The Reparations Map is a unidirectional, anonymous tool to GIVE to BIPOC farm projects, not to extract resources or labor, or for organizational outreach to BIPOC for anything that doesn't offer concrete financial or infrastructural resources. Please do NOT reach out to Reparations Map projects with requests for your organizations' research needs, for sales offers, or other Equity, Justice, Diversity, or Inclusion initiatives. Please respect the privacy of the Reparations Map farmers. Any such behavior will not be tolerated.

This intentional language emphasizes the purpose of this tool as reparations, not information.

Placing a profile on the reparations map provides farmers with access to many opportunities, but

it also creates vulnerability. Anyone on the internet can view their profiles, and those who do not want to see BIPOC farmers succeed could use this contact to harass them. Even those with less malicious intentions could use the map in a way that is counterproductive to its purpose as a tool for unidirectional giving, such as for any of the specific self-interest requests that the message mentions. Ultimately, the message cannot stop someone from using the map how they choose, but given that those who find their way to the reparations page of Soul Fire Farm's website likely *want* to support food justice, there is a good chance the message achieves its purpose. The message shows their commitment to providing supportive reparations not only in terms of resources, but in the way that resources are given. The beauty of this model is that when farmers share the specific needs of their farms, they open themselves up to receiving specific help.

Soul Fire Farm's Reparations Map is an excellent tool to facilitate the transfer of resources as reparations. The map features projects globally (though the majority are in the Northeastern United States at the time of this writing). Each is "directly related to land, agriculture, and/or food justice," led by majority BIPOC and connected to a POC farming organization (Soul Fire Farm n. d.) Anyone interested in giving reparations can simply click on projects marked on the map to view the resources they are seeking and their contact info.

One of the greatest strengths of the map is how accessible it makes the exchange of reparations for those seeking support and those looking to give it. The Reparations map identifies an array of farming projects, including privately owned and community farms of varying specialties, agricultural education centers, and herbal medicine practices, among other inspiring initiatives. Some are individuals, while others are organizations; some are established farming operations

and others are just starting out. Profiles range from a few sentences to several paragraphs, giving farmers the flexibility to share the amount they would like about their projects and needs. Even more diverse are the resources requested, which range from land to specific farming equipment, to targeted funding, to information and advising, to moral support. Land, especially in specific locations, and farming equipment were the most common forms of reparations I observed being asked for, after reviewing the 139 profiles that are currently included on the reparations map, being requested. All these features make the map accessible to a wide variety of BIPOC interested in agriculture.

While many of the resources requested require direct or indirect financial contributions, others simply require the gift of one's time and effort. Many farmers ask for assistance requiring specific skills such as administrative help, advice on land purchases, feedback on business plans, and suggestions for equipment purchase. Farmers from one project listed on the map explicitly acknowledge the challenge of working in agriculture as a person of color with additional marginalized identities and ask for people to reach out to them with words of encouragement. These non-financial forms of reparations provide accessible options for people who, for financial or other reasons, do not want to make monetary contributions, yet still wish to participate in giving reparations.

This said, I do not wish to diminish the importance of financial contributions. Many farmers on the map request funding to buy land or specific farming resources, pay employees, and pay for farmer training. These financial resources are essential for many of these projects, whether they are just starting out or are established with bills to pay. The current reality for many of these

projects and organizations is that they rely on continuous outside financial support. Even Soul Fire Farm has a profile requesting funding on their own Reparations Map. “We need a commitment of \$300,000 per year indefinitely to pay a living wage to our farm team, build adequate infrastructure to house workers and program participants, maintain vehicles and farm equipment so we can deliver fresh food to 250+ people weekly, and retain our autonomy from the nonprofit industrial complex.” In Soul Fire Farm’s case, though they make clear that the Reparations Map is a “unidirectional tool” (Soul Fire Farm n. d.), their combined creation and use of the map exemplify the key role of reciprocity and sharing of reparations within BIPOC communities. In creating the map, Soul Fire Farm provides the participating projects with access to a network of donors and resources that they might not have otherwise had access to. In turn, Soul Fire chose to make themselves available to receive what they need to continue their important work.

Ultimately, diverse forms of resource are needed to support BIPOC agricultural organizations. In addition to making reparations more accessible, by displaying them as compatible with every day and large-scale needs, expanding the connotation of reparations to any resources needed normalizes reparations in general. Perhaps, giving whatever resources are needed could create more opportunities to give and receive. Because this giving can be done easily by just about anyone, perhaps this framework could even encourage people who might not be as open to the idea of reparations in other forms.

Homeland

In academia and societally, a fair amount of attention is given to addressing the relationship between White settlers-colonizers and Indigenous Americans. However, an often overlooked, yet important dynamic to consider is the relationship between people of color living in the US today and Indigenous Americans. In “Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities,” Byrd et al. explore this complex history of dispossession and focus primarily on the relationship between Black people and Indigenous people. The piece raises the point that dispossession assumes possession in itself, which is a Western capitalist mentality that is fundamentally different from the way many Indigenous Peoples view land.

Navigating these dynamics is something Melony Edwards prioritizes in her work at Calypso Farm and Ecology Center. In sharing her desire to start her own fiber farm Melony explains that she wanted “to make sure her farm is a people of color-led space and that we recognize the previous stewards of the land. As landowners, we need to recognize and show gratitude to the people who came before us.” She explains that she went to a conference the previous year (presumably farm related, but the topic is not specified) where she met many first nations people. When the group visited a White owned farm the people there kept saying that they owned the land. “A native woman on the tour was in tears. When I asked her what was wrong, she said Native Americans don’t think of land in terms of owning it. She expressed frustration that people whose farm we were touring didn’t recognize that before the White farmer bought the land, other people were there. One of my core values is land recognition — recognizing who was on the land before us. Another value is getting away from the word ‘own.’ We live in a monetary

system, but we can think about it in a different way. We can talk about being stewards and caretakers of the land. I'm thinking about how to change the language" (Baszile 2021).

While Non-White settler-colonizers still bear the historical weight of settling on already inhabited land, their historical relationship with Indigenous Peoples is not the same as that of White settler-colonizers. Since the ancestors of many people of African heritage in the US today were brought here against their will, this relationship is inherently different. Similarly, those immigrating due to unlivable conditions in their home country have a unique relationship with the colonial legacy of the US. These experiences cannot be equated to the attitudes of manifest destiny and imperialism that White settler-colonizers carried with them as they colonized the Americas. As people of color, our mutual experience of colonization connects us to each other. A main connection Byrd et al. make between African Americans and Indigenous Americans is how both have been affected by the Western concept of the world as "translatable for property ownership and of personhood as self-ownership."

These contextualizations are not meant to imply that people of color get a free pass to not acknowledge their historical and current treatment, conscious and unconscious, of Indigenous Americans. Neither is it to generalize all people of color into one cultural experience. We all must do our part in restoring and regenerating equity, balance, and harmony in this world. Byrd et al.'s piece suggests that if land were understood not as property or territory but as a source of relation, land might be used to relate peoples, rather than divide and be used for exploitation. Additionally, we might be able to appreciate land in and of itself, not just the services it can provide to humans. The piece also raises the question of how academic and political worlds might be different today if an understanding of the systemic and ongoing experience of

colonization was prioritized. Acknowledging and accepting the complex role of colonization in all of our lives is a major part of cultural healing, not only for those who have faced oppression, but for all involved.

Given these dynamics, we are left with the question of how to move forward. As we consider reparations for black people, and create community and networks of communication, we need to think about essential overarching questions that don't have straightforward answers: How do we societally create space for Black people to experience land-based healing while acknowledging the original stewards of this land? How can Black people reconnect with land in Africa while respecting unique relationships with place and culture that people have who have lived their whole lives in Africa? How can the US ever recognize and repair from the land dispossession and genocide inflicted on Indigenous People in this country, and how can the effects of colonization and racism ever be moved on from? I do not have answers to all these questions, however part of addressing them is acknowledging that these histories are not separate.

In the introduction of this thesis, I reflect that my experience as a mixed-race Black woman is essential to my writing this thesis. My whole life I have navigated the space in-between the boundaries of racial identities and the space they take up in US society⁷. I grew up largely disconnected from my Black culture, and disconnected from my Indigenous culture to an even greater degree, yet I never felt White enough to fully fit in. In college, the pendulum has swung the other way. With a new understanding of the pressure I felt to assimilate growing up, I've been reinvigorated with a desire to know my culture as a Black woman and as a person of color

⁷ "Race and Racial Identity | National Museum of African American History and Culture"
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/race-and-racial-identity>

generally. With this change, I have begun to realize that I cannot ignore the White part of my racial identity any more than I could ignore the ways in which I stood out in White society growing up.

Of course, mixed-race people are not new, and my experiences are not unique. However, from my own experience engaging with mixed-race identity, I can offer a potential approach in understanding the collective racial-colonial history of the United States of America as it relates to land. Mixed-race identity could serve as a conceptual framework for imagining land justice that acknowledges interwoven racial histories alongside colonization. The question of who should get reparations when considering Black and Indigenous people in the US, for example, looks quite different when considering that many black people are also mixed-race with people Indigenous to this land (Collins 2020).

Because our racial relations in this country are part of a legacy of colonization and slavery, the existence of mixed-race people born in the US is connected to this colonial legacy. Mixed-race people are not fragments of cultures. We are whole. Our legacy of racial relation lives and breathes. In every way from appearance to opportunities awarded to us, mixed race people's existence challenges preconceived notions, assumptions, and biases of what a person of a certain race should be like and be entitled to. If we can see the history of colonization manifested in a single person, purified in the love that brought them into being and the person that they are, then we can imagine this peace and healing for a land and all its people as a mixed-race organism. Like people, the land has been deeply impacted by the legacy of colonization, and we must work with that reality in moving forward. I hope that through this framework, we can imagine

strategies and futures that promote greater land justice while navigating challenging racial relations. With this intention, we can relate to the land as a mixed-race organism with the same loving as we would have for a single person, of any race or races, who we care deeply about.

In writing this thesis, there were so many times I felt I was not doing justice to the plethora of culture, history, questions, and complications that radiate in the sphere around my topic. After working on this thesis, I don't know that it is possible to truly consider cultural healing and land justice while only looking from the perspective of one race. I also realized that this healing is about more than race, it is also about neighborhoods, and class, and the structure of capitalism. My hope is that in sharing the perspectives represented and not represented in my thesis, that we can expand these conversations, and find as much healing in that unfoldment as myself and others find in the farming land.

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