

CONGO SQUARE
MARKET

It's the people, stupid

the Food Dignity action research project

schools the PI

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IATP

June 4th, 2015

Minneapolis

4-6pm every Friday
Through September 3rd

Southside Community Center
105 E. Flinn St. Waco

“Food Dignity: Action research on engaging food insecure communities and universities in building sustainable community food systems”

USDA/NIFA/AFRI Global Food Security program

Integrated project

April 2011-March 2016

\$5 million

Hypothesis

“Our project title, ‘Food Dignity,’ signals both our **ethical stance** that human and community agency in food systems is an end in itself and our **scientific hypothesis** that building civic and institutional capacity to engage in sustainable community food systems for food security action will improve the sustainability and equity of our local food systems and economies.”

Food Dignity Proposal, 2010

“The people hold thousands of solutions in their hands.”

Via Campesina declaration

December 9, 2010

Partners

5 community initiatives

- **East New York Farms! (ENYF!)**, United Community Centers, Brooklyn, NY
- **Whole Community Project (WCP)**, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County, NY
- **Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV)**, Action Resources International, Albany County, WY
- **Blue Mountain Associates (BMA)**, Wind River Indian Reservation, WY
- **Dig Deep Farms & Produce (DDF)**, Deputy Sherriff's Activities League, Alameda County, CA

4 higher education partners:

- **Cornell University (CU)**
- **University of Wyoming (UW)**
- **Ithaca College (IC)**
- **UC Davis**

Plus **Action Resources International**: Gayle Woodsum, community-university liaison

Objectives

- Education
 - Sustainable food system (SFS) minors
 - SFS “products”
 - Community-engaged student learning
- Extension and Action
 - Community organizing support package x 5
 - Dissemination and netbuilding
- Research:
 - Lessons from 5 case studies/stories for SFS. Plus “nested”:
 - Garden harvest measures
 - Tracking \$150,000 in minigrants
 - “6th case” - *lessons from FD case study on role of universities*
 - *Cross-case lessons*

Research: case study methods

- Photovoice and digital storytelling
- Interviews and narrative inquiry
- File collection and coding
- Participation & observation
- Migrant tracking
- Garden harvest measures
- Pathway modelling

Core questions:

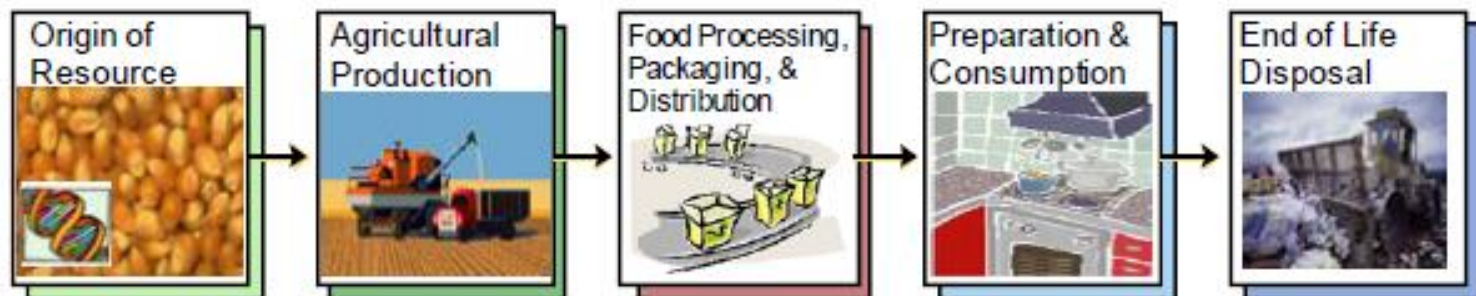
1. How do, can and should US communities work to create sustainable and equitable food systems that generate food security?
2. How should universities and extension help?

Three “macro” morals of the stories

Mapping Food Systems: Processes



The Food System Life Cycle

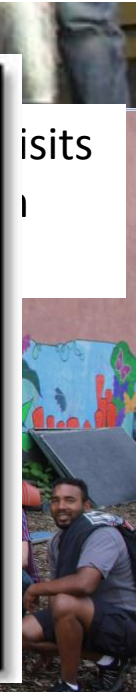


le labor



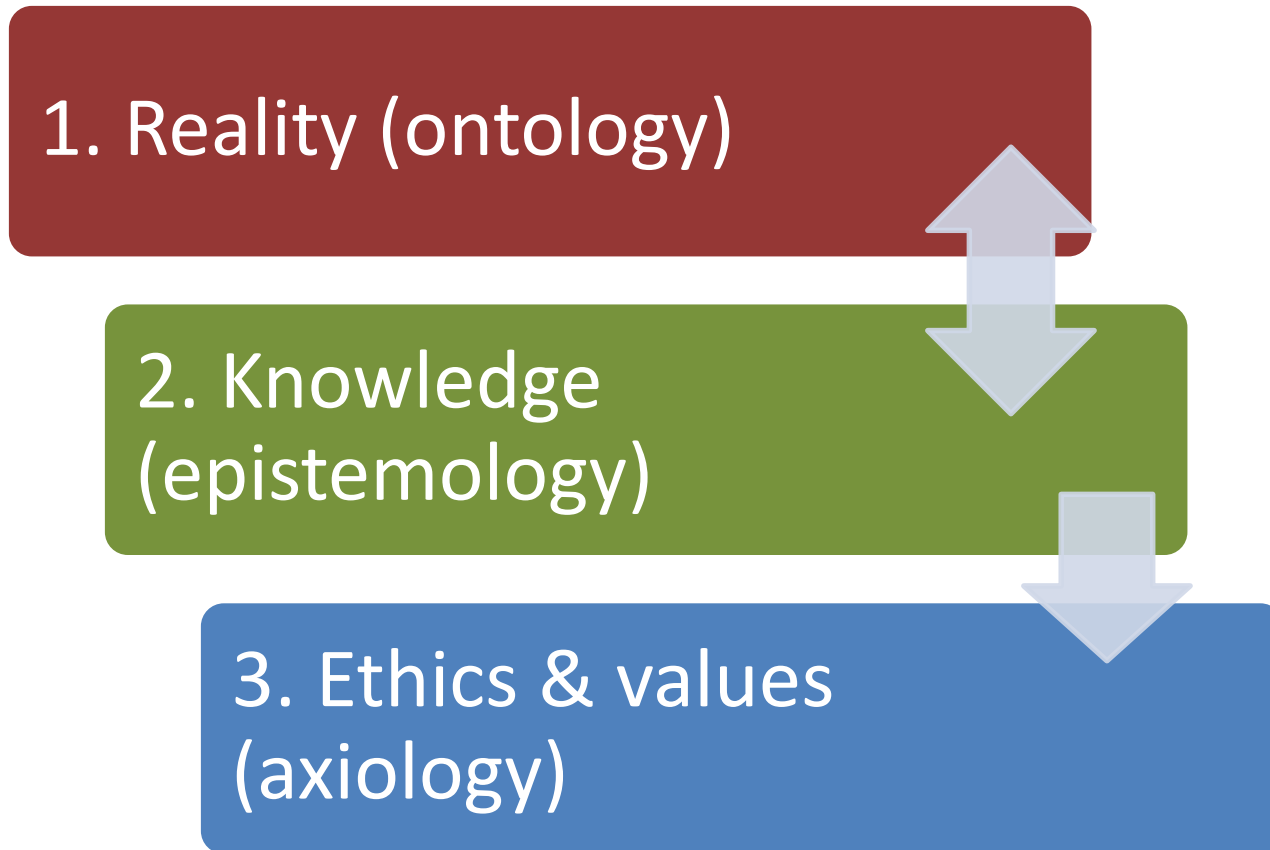
A young man with dark hair is smiling and holding a small, fluffy white dog. They are outdoors, with green foliage visible in the background.

Women of Food Dignity
May 2013, WY



isits

Paradigms: European enlightenment



Paradigms: radical axiology

1. Ethics & values
(axiology)

2. Knowledge
(epistemology)

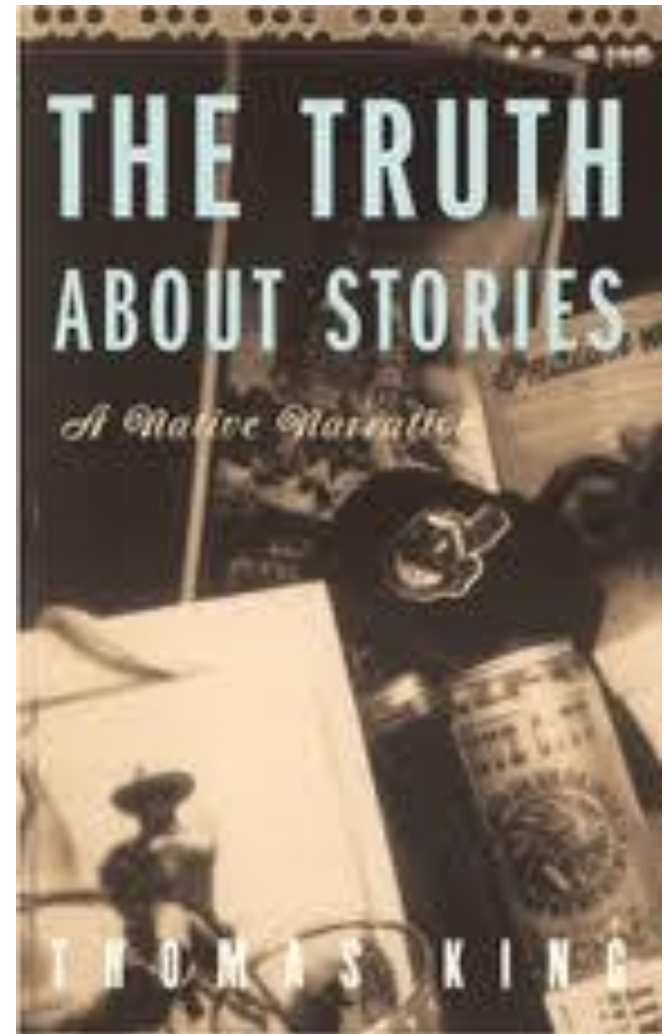
3. Reality (ontology)



Indigenous paradigms: Truth about Stories

“Do the stories we tell reflect the world as it truly is, or did we simply start off with the wrong story?” -King 2003: 26

“Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.” -ibid: 164



“Research is ceremony. The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between our cosmos and us.”

Wilson 2008: 137



Lesson 1:

People, relationships and ethics first.

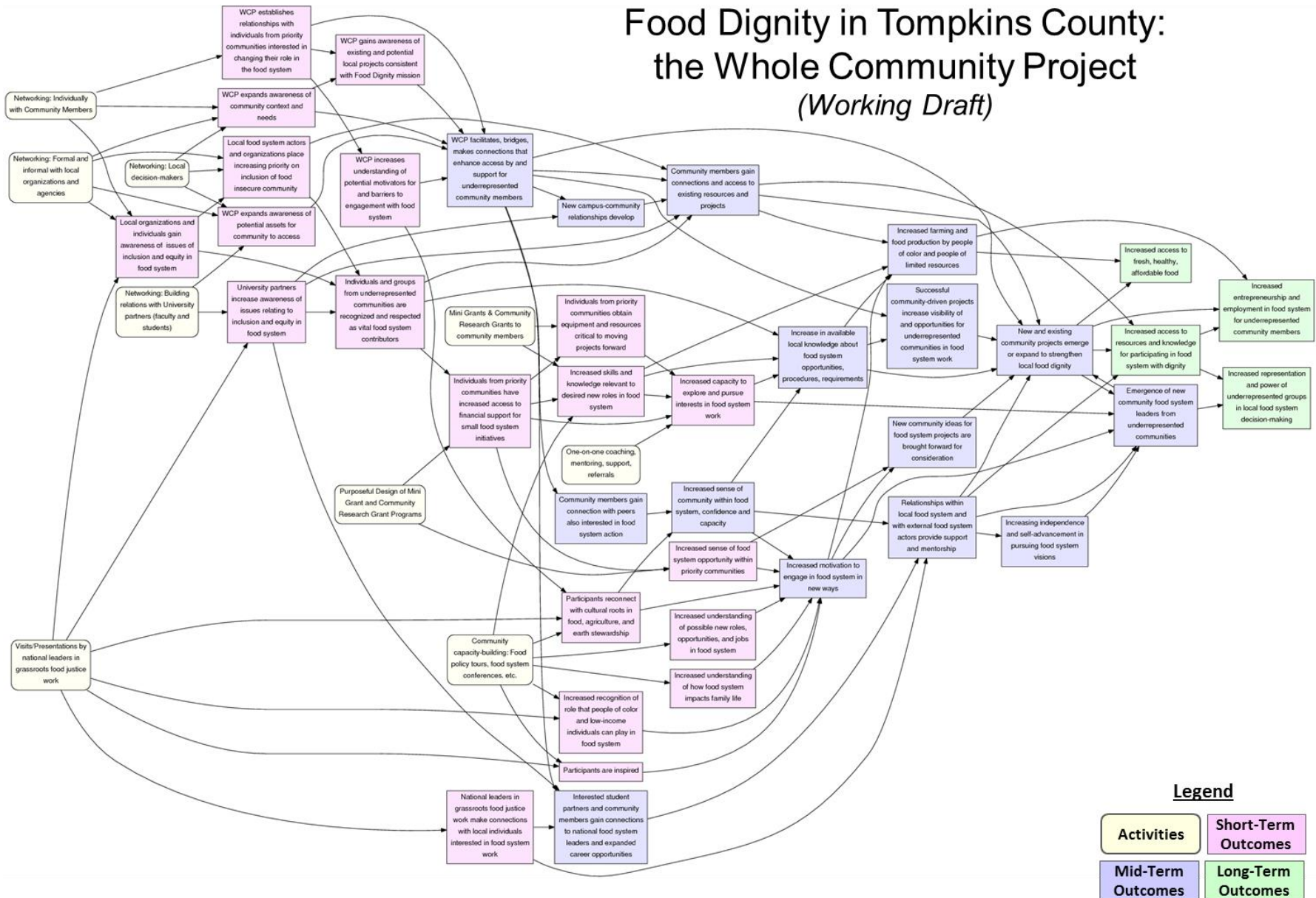
Processes, knowledge generation and application follow. (Even then, research can distract from social justice work.)

Lesson 2:

The work communities and organizers value most is hard to measure.

Pathway models: people centered processes

Food Dignity in Tompkins County: the Whole Community Project (Working Draft)



Case stories



selection of cucumbers, beets, squash,
will run every Thursday through the sec-
Photo by Alejandra Sáez



Photo credits: BMA, me

d River

...to Brooklyn

Case stories



East New York Farms! Brooklyn



Feeding Laramie Valley, Albany County, WY

But we can count garden harvest: Team GROW results from Laramie, Wyoming

Credit: Feeding Laramie Valley



Date	Crop type	Weight (ounces)	Food Use				Notes
			Eat	Store	Share	Loss	
7/15	Beets w/ stems & greens	14.7	X				Some beets damaged by gophers. Just cut around gopher bites and ate the rest. Ate beets, stems, and greens
7/30	carrots	32.3	10.3	12	10		Used in tonight's stir fry, froze some, and gave some to a friend
7/31	radish	2.3				X	Estimated weight. Our best radish disappeared the day before we were going to harvest!
7/3	Scallions	4.2 oz	X				weight includes green part which we eat
7/3	Rhubarb	5.02			X		we give Rhubarb away
7/6	Scallions	2.4 oz	X				(ditto 7/3)
7/9	Scallions	3.9 oz	X				(ditto 7/3)
7/13	chard	9.3 oz		X			second planting due to Gopher stems + Eaten for the year
7/16	chard	8.7 oz		X			ditto - usually pick for 3 months

Year	# plots	total ft ²	total harvest lbs
2014	15 (all repeat)	2,674	1,334
2013	33	9,355	4,519
2012	9	2,853	1,265

Team GROW average results per plot

Year	plot size ft ² (min-max)	lb/ft ²	# harvest weeks	% year of veg servings for 1 adult	% of veg if 300 ft ² plot
2014	191 (42.5-534)	0.41 (.08-1.16)	16.5 (8-34)	59%	93%
2013	283 (58-1006)	0.48 (.01-1.8)	15.4 (6-24)	75%	89%
2012	317 (120-890)	0.44 (.16-1.62)	12.2 (6-21)	94%	89%

*USDA recommends 2.5 cups of vegetables a day
(with “1 cup” of raw leafy greens actually filling 2 cups).

Thanks to Lea Steiner & Livy Lewis for their work on these calculations.

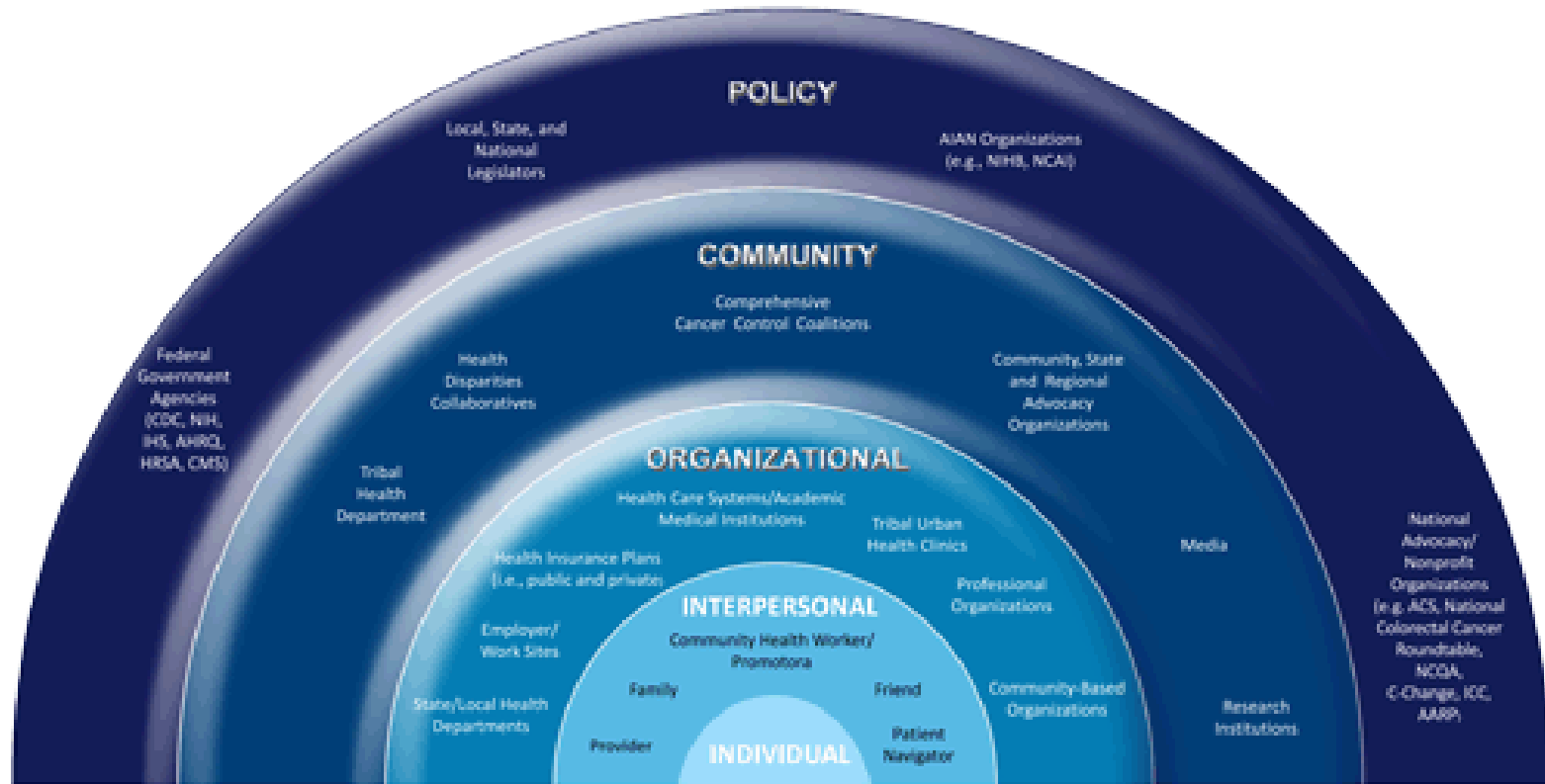
Team GROW results – per area

Average harvest outcomes per ft² of total space

Year	lb/ft ²	Use: % eaten/stored/shared		
2014	0.41	39%	44%	17%
2013	0.48	51%	19%	30%
2012	0.44	36%	30%	34%

Per ft² converted to acres

Year	actual acres	lbs/acre	\$/acre
2014	0.061	21,730	-
2013	0.215	21,042	\$74,419
2012	0.065	19,314	\$63,092



Lesson 2:

The work communities and organizers value most is hard to measure... but that doesn't make it any less important. And often it is more so.

A third lesson:

Food movement folks might be less prepared than those in other social justice movements to organize policy change. Yet have more to bring.

Story punchlines, in sum:

1. People, ethics and relationships before truth and knowledge.
 - a. People not processes
 - b. Food justice is life and death work, not a project.
 - c. Time! (necessary but not sufficient)
2. What is most important isn't always most measurable.
 - a. Post-disciplinary to tackle wicked social problems.
 - b. Gardens produce nutritionally meaningful amounts of food.
3. The movement needs more help with policy links.
 - a. Can bring so much and so many to the social justice table.
 - b. Trouble staying tied to grassroots (CFSC demise)
 - c. Labor collaboration?
 - d. Beyond the Farm Bill?

Gratitude

Food Dignity is supported by Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant no. 2011-68004-30074 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (www.fooddignity.org).

To the partners in Food Dignity.

And thanks to you for listening.

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We value the fundamental dignity, worth, sovereignty, self-determination and the inherent power of all people. As members of the Food Dignity project, we are committed to principles and ways of working within our own work and in the changes we wish to inform and inspire in the world, by:

- combating all forms of racism, oppression and implicit bias;
- respecting and valuing the individual and shared journeys of the people, the project and the histories of our communities, including historical trauma;
- valuing authentic first-person voice and first-person knowledge;
- valuing the different ways that people live, work and relate to each other;
- valuing the act of listening and specifically listening long enough to achieve shared meaning;
- valuing seeing and being seen, listening and being heard, becoming real to each other, recognizing that an important kind of knowing is experiential and lived;
- valuing accountability to one another and to the work for both the intention and impact of our words and actions;
- and persevering through the challenges that come with our inclusion and engagement of differences;

as we strive to achieve equity for every human being and personal, institutional, structural and systemic transformations.