

The Ecotonal Nature of Community Food Work:
A Case Study of Trauma-Informed Care and Agential Change Space

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ABSTRACT

Communities of color in particular have experienced a traumatic history of structural violence, interpersonal racism, segregation, and oppression. The unjust history of structural violence and the deleterious treatment of people and cultures in the U.S., that in part stems from neoliberal policies and rationality, continues to plague communities and people within the food system. Many people and communities are working to actualize the social-ethical ideal of a non-violent ‘beloved community’ to counter this unjust history and expand the boundaries of what is possible for individuals and society. Historical and systemic injustices ramify the adverse experiences and trauma affecting vulnerable people’s lives. The effects and pervasiveness of individual and collective trauma at a global scale has highlighted a serious need for broader-scale awareness and adoption of a trauma-informed care approach by community food work organizations, practitioners, and social change leaders. A trauma-informed care approach was developed as a health care framework based on the importance of adverse childhood events to poor distal health and mental health outcomes. Without a deeper understanding of how extensive the collective impact of such trauma and injustice is on people and the food system; community food work researchers and practitioners may reify uninformed responses that result in continued trauma and injustice. However, there are few examples of community food work organizations using a trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process to promote community transformation and resilience. This research examined and specifically analyzed how a community food work organization that is engaged in mutual aid and social-ecological activism embodies trauma-informed care; engenders an agential change space; and grapples with the aspirations and tensions of being an organization seeking to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. A narrative inquiry methodology was used to critically explore and study the perceptions and thoughts of 17 study participants of how a trauma-informed approach to care is embodied and agential change space provided as mutual aid and community food work. The seventeen study participants’ narratives were coded and analyzed using the *Principles of a Trauma-Informed Care Framework* defined by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al (2018). The narrative inquiry of seventeen narratives demonstrated that an integrated trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process is essential to the formation of agential change space and has wide-reaching applicability to mutual aid efforts and community food work pedagogy and praxis, especially as organizations and practitioners confront ongoing systemic trauma and injustices that have resulted from structural violence and continue to persist due to the dominant hegemonic neoliberal framing that exists in relation to race, gender, and socioeconomic class.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Communities of color in particular have experienced a traumatic history of structural violence, interpersonal racism, segregation, and oppression. The unjust history of structural violence and the deleterious treatment of people and cultures in the U.S., that in part stems from neoliberal policies and rationality, continues to plague communities and the food system. Many people and communities are working to actualize the social-ethical ideal of a non-violent ‘beloved community’ to counter this unjust history and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. Without a deeper understanding of how extensive the collective impact of such trauma and injustice is on people and the food system; community food work researchers and practitioners may reify uninformed responses that result in continued trauma and injustice. However, there are few examples of community food work organizations using a trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process to promote food system transformation. This research examined the ecotonal nature of community food work and specifically analyzed how a community food work organization that is engaged in mutual aid and social-ecological activism embodies trauma-informed care; engenders an agential change space; and grapples with the aspirations and tensions of being an organization seeking to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. A case study and narrative inquiry methodology was used to critically explore perceptions and thoughts of 17 study participants and stakeholders of meaningful support as embodying a trauma-informed care approach and participative interaction as engendering agential change space as mutual aid and community food work. The seventeen study participants’ narratives were coded and analyzed using the *Principles of a Trauma-Informed Care Framework* defined by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al. (2018). The narrative inquiry of seventeen narratives demonstrated that an integrated trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process is essential to the formation of agential change space and has wide-reaching applicability to mutual aid efforts and community food work as pedagogy and praxis, especially as organizations and practitioners confront ongoing systemic trauma and injustices that have resulted from structural violence and continue to persist due to the dominant hegemonic neoliberal framing that exists in relation to race, gender, and socioeconomic class

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Hilda and the many people who struggle and fail to find a safe, healthy place of refuge, compassion, love, and peace in this world.

“They will beat their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,

nor will they train for war anymore.

Everyone will sit under their own vine

and under their own fig tree,

and no one will make them afraid,

for the Lord Almighty has spoken.”

~ Micah 4: 3, 4 (NIV)

Old Testament minor prophet, social reformer, and

champion of the oppressed,

750 to 687 B.C.

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Table 1. *Timeline of the expansion of neoliberal rationality and the development of New Community Project*

New Community Project	Historical Expansion of Neoliberal Rationality
1930s	Great Depression; Start of New Deal and Welfare State; British economist John Maynard Keynes espoused an economic theory of aggregate demand and counter-cyclical policies to balance the business and market cycle and notion of a free market.
1947	The Mont Pelerin Society was established and founded by Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, George Stigler, and Ludwig von Mises as a gathering of classic liberal and neo-liberal economists. Three basic neoliberal tenets: 1) free circulation of financial capital; 2) free trade of goods and services; and 3) freedom of investment.
1948	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established to facilitate multilateral international commerce and trading system.
1963	March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech; Assassination of President John F. Kennedy
1968	Assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy; Election of Richard M. Nixon as president.
1970s	Introduction of neoliberal policies in African countries as part of the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)
1974	Economist, neoliberal theorist Friedrich Hayek wins the Nobel Prize for Economics

1976	President Jimmy Carter elected; Economist, neoliberal theorist Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago wins the Nobel Prize for Economics as a proponent of free market capitalism.
1979	Margaret Thatcher elected British Prime Minister. From 1979 to 1994, public sector jobs in Great Britain declined from over 7 million to 5 million.
1980s	Neoliberalism connoted with the economic reforms of President Augusto Pinochet in Chile; Many countries in Latin America, South America, and Africa adopt neoliberal policies as necessitated to receive loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which led to increased income inequality, unemployment, increased poverty, and individualization of healthcare.
1981	President Ronald Reagan takes office.
1987	Income gap continues to grow with the income of the top 1 percent of American families being 115 times greater than the bottom 10 percent.
1992	Bill Clinton elected U.S. President known politically for support of neoliberal economic policies.
1994	North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) enacted between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico; Zapatista Army of National Liberation led a rebellion in the Chiapas region against the Mexican government in defense of indigenous people's rights and opposition to the effects of the NAFTA.
1995	Birth of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to reform international commerce in regard to services and intellectual property

	2001	Terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in Manhattan and Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11.
New Community Project established as a 501c3 organization by David Radcliff	2003	Iraq War with U.S.-led coalition in effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein
New Community Project proposed and started in Harrisonburg, Virginia by Tom Benevento	2008	Financial and housing crisis started at end of President George W. Bush's second term in office; Onset of Great Recession; President Barack Obama elected
Northend Greenway, a 2.5 mile shared-use path, envisioned and initiated by New Community Project and one-year later added to Harrisonburg City Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan with expected completion 2019 – 2020.	2010	Affordable Care Act (ACA) enacted into law to reform comprehensive health care provision.
	2012	President Obama re-elected; many neoliberal policies continue.
New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) and “urban village campus” opens in Harrisonburg, which allows for housing people and doing community gardening on residential R2 zoning.	2013	
In developing the New Community Project Vine & Fig site realized organization is better equipped to create an “urban village or intentional neighborhood” rather than the traditional “intentional community.” For New Community Project, and urban village means a place where there is shared resources and collaboration in a neighborhood, but with individual projects and lifestyles.		
Renew Rocktown started before the Paris Climate Agreement with a focus on renewable energy for the	2015	

Harrisonburg and energy efficiency for low-wealth households; New Community Project Sustainable Living Center initiated in Starksboro, Vermont.

Silver Run Forest Farm (formerly Black Run Forest Farm) was initiated at the New Community Project Vine & Fig site as a riparian nursery to encourage and facilitate agroforestry, watershed health, and restorative justice.

Give Solar Harrisonburg started to put solar electricity on nonprofits and now is focused on solar for Habitat for Humanity homes; 50 by 25 Clean Energy for All Campaign that now also includes Renew Rocktown programming; Soil Cycles started to encourage composting by Harrisonburg businesses and households.

New Community Project Vine & Fig Outreach and Education Program helps supply Harrisonburg City Public School's Farm-to-School program with vegetables.

Jubilee Climate Farm started in Rockingham County dedicated to carbon sequestration and experimentation in addition to creating a vibrant community garden space.

2016
2017

President Donald J. Trump elected.

2018

Election of Abiy Ahmed as president of Ethiopia with support from Western countries such as the U.S. and Canada based on his plans of economic and political liberalization as part of a neoliberal project; Ethiopia has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 173 which means basic living conditions for the majority of people is declining; War initiated in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

2020

President Joseph R. Biden elected.

2021

End of U.S. War in Afghanistan

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Communities of color have experienced a traumatic and oppressive history of structural violence and interpersonal racism (Ball, 2015; Saussy, 2010; Wilkerson, 2011). The unjust history of structural violence and deleterious treatment of people and cultures in the U.S., along with the dominant neoliberal hegemonic framing of what is possible, continues to plague communities and the food system (Hecht et al., 2018; Hendrickson et al., 2020; Saussy, 2010; Williams, Lawrence, & Davis, 2019). Within this historical and contemporary context, many people, communities, and community food work organizations are still working to actualize a social-ethical ideal of a non-violent ‘beloved community’ where -- in contrast to the dominant neoliberal hegemonic framing -- all people are valued, and justice and equity are possible for all. The social-ethical ideal of a non-violent ‘beloved community’ was espoused by Josiah Royce, Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King Jr., Vincent Harding, John Lewis, and other advocates for equity and justice for all (Camp, 2020; Harding, 2007; Jensen, 2016). People and community-based organizations continue to envision that the meaning of community can be reframed and experienced differently through collaborative change processes, a refined social-ethical imagination, and a counter-hegemonic narrative. Today, food justice and community food work continue to garner interest as a counter way and means to systemically address and reverse injustices and traumas that continue to persist (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2013; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015; Slocum, Cadieux, & Blumberg, 2016; Sumner, 2016). Farmers, activists, practitioners, policymakers, and academics in the U.S. and around the world are particularly interested in food justice and community food work’s relevance as a counter claim to neoliberal rationality and ideology as a means and space for affecting deep, lasting social, economic, and environmental structural change (Alkon, 2014; Guthman and Dupuis, 2006; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015; Slocum, Cadieux, & Blumberg, 2016). Niewolny and D’Adamo-Damery (2016)

stated that community food work space is a site and place of diversity, activity, and transformative possibility for people and communities in their prevailing contexts.

For this research and community food work context, I specifically use an ecotone as a social-ecological metaphor of an agential change space and site where activity, diversity, complexity, fluidity, and possibility are present for individuals and organizations to expand the boundaries of what is possible. I use a metaphor to encourage an active imagination of the social-ecological and ethical dynamics that exist in nature and in community food work pedagogy and praxis. A metaphor can form imagination and encourage deeper reflection because it means what it says and what it does not say (Peterson, 2016). Kark (2013) defined an ecotone in ecological terms as ‘boundary regions, borders, meeting zones, zones of intermingling, and zones of transgressions, which are characterized by high spatial heterogeneity and significant diversity of species.’ Ecotones are often referred to as the edge effect and margin (Seidman, 2009).

This research examined how a community-based organization engaged in mutual aid, social-ecological activism, and categories of community food work embodies trauma-informed care and engenders an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. A descriptive case review and narrative inquiry approach were used to critically analyze the perceptions and thoughts of seventeen study participants about a trauma-informed approach to care and agential change space in food system and community transformation.

Problem Statement

Many people have been displaced and commodified throughout history (e.g., Slavery Trail of Tears, Native American Trail of Tears, the Great Migrations of the 1800s and 1900s, etc.) (Ball, 2015; Desmond, 2019; Wilkerson, 2011) resulting in individual and collective trauma and injustices. Displacement, dislocation, fragmentation, and disordering of people and cultures

continue today because of conflict, the ravages of war, and trauma-inducing environmental crises related to anthropogenic struggles and climate change. (Ball, 2015; Bauman, 2016; UNHCR, 2020). Trauma at an individual and collective scale has the power and ability to disorient, create perpetual chaos, and alter relationships and means of making sense of reality and the world (Orr, 2002). Neoliberalism and its accompanying normative reasoning perpetuate trauma and injustices in communities and the food system by atomizing humans; marginalizing people, communities, and voices; affecting almost all non-economic aspects of life; downplaying mutual social responsibility; exploiting people, communities, and natural resources; and externalizing social, economic, and environmental costs (Alkon, 2014; Brown, 2017; Brown, 2019; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Giroux, 2019; Hendrickson et al., 2020; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015; Slocum, Cadieux, & Blumberg, 2016). The predominant growth of neoliberal rationality with its plentiful seeds and creeping tendrils continues to have detrimental societal impacts and invisible influences on community food work pedagogy and praxis, particularly in relation to the perpetuation of trauma and injustices, therefore, must continually be interrogated.

Slocum and Cadieux (2015), in their discussion critical nodes for community food work such as justice and trauma, have suggested that trauma refers to the “present day experience of significant historical and contemporary harm done especially to indigenous people and people of color in the U.S. and Canada through foundational racism” (p. 32). Historical and systemic injustices ramify the adverse experiences and trauma affecting vulnerable people’s lives. The effects and pervasiveness of individual and collective trauma at a global scale has highlighted a serious need for broader-scale awareness and adoption of an integrated trauma-informed care approach by community food work organizations, practitioners, and social change leaders. Without a deeper understanding of how extensive the collective impact of such trauma and injustice is on

people and the food system; community food work researchers and practitioners may reify uninformed responses that result in continued trauma and injustice.

Niewolny and Archibald (2015) articulated that the scale and complexity of today's social, cultural, and environmental problems will demand lifelong, relational, and reflexive learning processes and frameworks to engender social justice and community resilience. Within the context of food justice and community food work praxis, Slocum and Cadieux (2015) posed two salient questions relevant to this case study research: 1) How do organizations acknowledge and confront ongoing historical and intergenerational trauma and injustices that have resulted from the dominant hegemonic neoliberal framing that persist in relation to race, gender, and socioeconomic class? 2) Is there a shift in *what* food movement organizations do or in *how* they work to indicate a shift in pursuit of transformative social change and peace? This research acknowledges historical and contemporary traumas and injustices, and proposes a shift towards a trauma-informed care framework for community food work organizations working transformative change in the areas of justice, equity, and trauma. A trauma-informed care approach was developed by the U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a health care framework based on the importance of adverse childhood events to poor distal health and mental health outcomes (SAMHSA, 2014), however, trauma-informed care is also conceptualized as an organizational change process that recognizes the pervasiveness of trauma across the population and considers the root causes and upstream determinants of trauma. Therefore, community food work organizations and practitioners can learn from this health care and organizational change process conceptual framework in efforts to engender social justice and community resilience.

However, a trauma-informed care framework was only recently used as an analytical lens for studying the effects of social policy and food security on trauma (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Hecht et al., 2018). The current reality is that because of the epidemiological pervasiveness and

prevalence of individual and collective trauma, community food work organizations need to learn about the complex, multi-dimensional nature of trauma. Trauma is not just trauma; there are many types and forms of trauma. For instance, Atkinson (2002) and Brave Heart et al. (2011) stated *historical trauma* is the result of cumulative emotional and psychological wounds experienced by specific cultural or racial/ethnic groups, such as enslavement, forced migration, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust, and violent colonization. Similarly, Harris (2018) defined *systemic* trauma as the contextual features of environments, structures, policies, and institutions that instill and perpetuate trauma, and that also shape post-traumatic responses and care.

The effects of trauma are mediated by the scale, intensity, severity, duration, and time of the event and experience, and often reverberate in many directions and ways. Therefore, a community food work organization, in its efforts to restore justice and transform trauma, needs to be knowledgeable and accountable to how an integrated full-bodied trauma-informed care framework can be embodied as praxis. Following the inquiry of Slocum and Cadieux (2015) about trauma and the insights Niewolny and Archibald (2015) on the frameworks needed to engender social justice and community resilience, this research frames community food work as an alternative social-ethical modality and site where trauma-informed care as an organization change process can be embodied and agential change space engendered to expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively.

Research Purpose and Questions

This research is a case study of trauma-informed care and agential change space in the context of community food work as praxis. Drawing upon narrative inquiry, this research specifically analyzed how, if possible, an organization embodies trauma-informed care and engenders an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand people's boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. If the effects of

anthropogenic trauma are not understood and ameliorated, injustices will be exacerbated and possibilities for transformation will be further constrained. The research included a descriptive review of the organization as a community food work site and an ecotonal space, which included analysis of its vision, mission, goals, objectives, programming to frame the organization's complex social-ethical interactions; what guides and animates its daily programs and activities for building community; and the thoughts and perceptions of community food work coordinators and stakeholders about a trauma-informed care approach and agential change space for collective action. The review included text analysis of organizational documents (vision, mission, objectives, programs, timelines), the websites of national and local programs, bi-annual newsletters, and IRS 990 nonprofit organizational forms.

A narrative inquiry approach was used to learn how, if possible, an organization and its stakeholders perceive trauma-informed care, resilience, and agential change space to actualize justice and equity as a meaningful response to trauma-inducing anthropogenic events, experiences, and effects. The descriptive review of the organization and case study specifically focused on three research questions and the theoretical framework that follows:

RQ1: How does a community food work organization embody trauma-informed care to promote and support resilience?

RQ2: How does a community food work organization engender an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand vulnerable individuals' and the broader public's boundaries of what is possible?

RQ3: What aspirations and tensions exist and emerge for an organization embodying trauma-informed care and engendering an agential change space?

The Community Food Work Site: New Community Project

To answer these three research questions, I used the community food work definition and categories defined by Slocum (2007), the critical nodes of justice, equity, and trauma specified by Slocum and Cadieux (2015), the framing of community food work space by Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016) as parameters to guide the identification of a community food work organization and site for this research. In recognizing that trauma intersects with many social and health issues, an additional research parameter was to identify a community food work organization working to redress the individual and societal trauma and harm caused to people by the current dominant political, economic system. New Community Project's Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg, Virginia fit these guiding parameters for a community food work organization and site.

To situate myself in relation to the research and the identified community food work site, I am employed as an extension specialist for community viability and community food systems with Virginia Cooperative Extension. I was first introduced to New Community Project in 2008. In my role as an extension specialist, I convened and co-chaired the Shenandoah Valley Food and Farm Workgroup from 2008 to 2017. The coordinator of New Community Project's Vine and Fig program Tom Benevento and other personnel regularly attended the workgroup meetings from 2008 to 2012. Additionally, Virginia Tech through its Virginia Cooperative Extension collaborated with New Community Project, James Madison University, and the Harrisonburg Farmers Market on a two-year USDA-Risk Management Agency funded grant from 2010 to 2012 that focused on food, farming, and renewable energy initiatives in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area. New Community Project as a grant collaborator help to facilitate the establishment and coordination of community gardens and school gardens as part of the grant. I have sporadically worked with and collaborated with New Community Project on various food, farm, and community-focused educational initiatives since 2012.

Overall, New Community Project's Vine and Fig program seeks to be a living laboratory and place of experimentation for socio-ecological activism in support of its bigger goal: to change the world. Since 2008, a number of projects and programs have been incubated and started by staff, volunteers, interns, and employed workers. New Community Project's Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center (The White House), which was opened in 2013 to provide temporary shelter and housing for those in the community in need continues to serve as a hub for community food work-related programs and activities (i.e., gardens, greenhouses, compost units, education and outreach, and agroecological activism). Neighboring homes were purchased near the White House in subsequent years to create an "urban village campus" setting and environment centered around the communal gardening space. Other projects and programs specifically incubated and co-initiated include the Northend Greenway (2.5 mile walk and bike path to connect low wealth neighborhoods to area grocery stores); Silver Run Forest Farm (a tree nursery and riparian watershed restoration initiative); Renew Rocktown (the 50% renewable energy by 2025 initiative in Harrisonburg); GiveSolar (to meet the solar energy needs of low wealth populations and reduce monthly energy bills); Soil Cycles (food waste recovery and composting program; Education and Outreach Program around gardening, composting, and permaculture; and the Jubilee Climate Farm in Rockingham County focused on agroforestry, carbon farming, and community gardening.

In reference to the critical nodes of justice, equity, and trauma, New Community Project's Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg, Virginia references the early community food work of the Old Testament minor prophet Micah who was recognized as a champion of the oppressed and an advocate for land and social reform from 750 to 687 B.C. (Youngblood et al., 1995). In Micah 4: 3, 4 (NIV), a vine and fig are specifically referred to as metaphor for peace and shelter rather than a world dominated by power, war, and continual conflict: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor

will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken.”

New Community Project seeks to intervene and advocate in the areas of justice, equity, and trauma in a number of tangible ways. The Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) in Harrisonburg provides a home and shelter as mutual aid and care for individuals and families who came out of conflict zones as immigrants or refugees due to geo-political harm and/or environmental crises; faced homelessness, addiction, violence, physical and emotional harm or violation; and those seeking a place of refuge and healing. Additionally, New Community Project personnel are actively engaged in local and state government policy initiatives that relate to climate change, renewable energy, low carbon use alternatives, and food access and security. Therefore, I believe New Community Project’s Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg can provide a rich context for the study of trauma-informed care, resilience, and agential change space as community food work praxis.

Theoretical Framework

From an overall theoretical perspective, this research seeks to contribute to community food work as pedagogy and praxis through better understanding of a trauma-informed care approach and agential change space to reframe social-ethical realities and support emergent fertile possibilities for community and food system transformation. In this section, two overarching social-ethical modalities and two primary theories provide an historical perspective and context of systemic injustices that persist relative to race, gender, and socioeconomic class that result in anthropogenic trauma events, experiences, and effects. The overarching social-ethical modalities are a Beloved Community (King Jr. & Washington, 1986) and Community Food Work (Slocum, 2007; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). The two overarching modalities provide an ontological frame of historical and contemporary social movements and efforts to rectify unjust collateral realities and

build a better world with justice and equity for all. The two primary theories are Trauma-Informed Approach to Care (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Hecht et al., 2018; SAMHSA, 2014) and an Ecotone as a Metaphor of Agential Change Space (Kark, 2013; Lederach, 2005; Parker, 2017; White, 2018).

Beloved Community

The term a ‘beloved community’ was first espoused by Josiah Royce and then further elaborated on and expounded upon by Howard Thurman, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., Vincent Harding, Cesar Chavez, Delores Huerta, Oscar Romero, John Lewis, and other advocates for love, equity, solidarity, and justice for all as they tried to address civil rights, homelessness, poverty, and farmworker rights (Camp, 2020; Harding, 2007; Herstein, 2009; Jensen, 2016). Josiah Royce specifically talked about the beloved community as loyalty of an individual to a greater cause (Jensen, 2016). Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned a non-violent ‘beloved community’ as a social-ethical ideal and commitment to actualize a different reality and structure of true justice and equity for all during the Civil Rights Movement and to contest the dominant hegemonic politics of racism, segregation, exploitation, and oppression within an unjust system (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). Within this context, to actualize and create the conditions for a beloved community entails an understanding of the personal-communal spirit, the inherent dignity of all persons, mutual cooperation, voluntary involvement, responsibility to others, the need to protest injustices and social evil, and to view that all of life is interconnected (Burrow, Jr., 2006; King Jr. & Washington, 1986). A beloved community as envisioned as a social-ethical ideal and commitment involves key philosophical principles and strategies for change that include love, nonviolence, civil disobedience, unity, solidarity, moral purpose, valuing the worth of all persons, increased consciousness, a sense of ‘somebodyness’, indivisible justice for all, and without collateral realities for white and black persons but true equity (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). For this research,

collateral is used an adjective meaning parallel, coordinate, or corresponding in position, order, time, valence, or significance (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). A beloved community and community food work as two alternative social-ethical modalities are resonant and align closely with New Community Project's vision, mission, and programming.

Community Food Work

Slocum (2007) defined community food work as the integration of approaches used by organizations, practitioners, and researchers for ecologically sound, socially just farming methods, food marketing, fair distribution and access to healthier food options across the U.S. Slocum (2007) outlined four broad types of processes and end goals of organizations and practitioners devoted to food, farming and community work. The four categories are centered on: 1) farm sustainability through direct linkages and localized connections of small and mid-scale farmers to markets; 2) community nutrition education to prevent diet-related illnesses and encourage better health outcomes; 3) environmental sustainability through ecologically sound agricultural practices for people, place, and planet; and 4) social justice efforts ranging from advocating for producer/worker rights, anti-hunger/food insecurity/food access, and urban agriculture for job creation.

From a research perspective, community food work provides a frame and body of literature on complex ecological, social, ethical, and political issues related to food systems and is an approach to rectify unjust and inequitable systems and structures that result in disparate collateral realities for vulnerable individuals and affect farm viability, food access, food system resilience, individual and community health outcomes, food equity, and racial justice (Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017). The concept of mutual aid and care is particularly resonant to community food work as well because mutual aid entails understanding the systems and conditions that people live under (Spade, 2020). *Mutual aid* is defined as “when people get together to meet each other’s basic survival

needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together right now!” (Spade, 2020). Hence, mutual aid generally occurs on a volunteer basis and is community-focused as people recognize individual agency and the importance of mutual collective responsibility that goes beyond simply charity; therefore, mutual aid involves social-ethical actions and participation to change present conditions (Spade, 2020). Slocum and Cadieux (2015), in later research on trauma and equity in the food system, argued that trauma should be understood as a universal experience because of the expansive social-ethical ramifications of the failure of the current food system to meet basic needs of individuals and vulnerable populations. This research used community food work as a frame based on this additional deeper understanding of trauma as a universal experience that requires mutual aid, empathy, and solidarity with those most affected. This broader frame allows for a more generative analysis of community food work pedagogy and praxis as organizations and practitioners try to address complex endemic issues that affect the food system and communities.

Trauma-Informed Approach to Care

Trauma can affect any person regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, geography, or sexual orientation. No population is immune from trauma. Gregory Orr (2002, p. 132) stated that trauma, on an individual and collective scale, is the most vicious and dangerous form of disorder and chaos because of its power to disrupt and dislodge narratives, memories, and people’s relation to time and reality. To build on the argument Slocum and Cadieux (2015) advanced relative to community food work on the importance of understanding trauma as a universal experience, this research used the trauma-informed approach to care defined by SAMHSA in 2014 as a taxonomy of principles for organizations and health care providers to practice and embody as an organizational culture of care. SAMHSA (2014) defined a trauma-informed approach to care as a universal approach that addresses the widespread impact of trauma,

understands potential paths for *recovery*; *recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system; *responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma and resilience into policies, procedures and practices for all people receiving services; and seeks to actively *resist re-traumatization* (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 9).

To center trauma-informed care in my research and ongoing community food work, I used an integrated taxonomy of trauma-informed care principles identified, outlined, and referenced by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al. (2018) as a theoretical frame and lens to how a community food work organization like New Community Project might embody a trauma-informed care approach in their social change processes. Hecht et al. (2018), in discussing an advocacy coalition framework for addressing the effects of trauma, emphasized the importance of advocacy as a form of solidarity with people and communities most affected by systemic trauma where the focus is not on what happened but on root causes, upstream determinants, and what is possible. The integrated taxonomy of trauma-informed care principles included: 1) Safety & Security, 2) Trustworthiness & Transparency, 3) Peer Support, 4) Collaboration and Mutuality, 5) Empowerment, Voice, and Choice, and 6) Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues. Additionally, solidarity, with those most affected by injustices and oppression, was a core principle during the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for justice and equality (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). Therefore, solidarity was integrated into the taxonomy of trauma-informed care for additional consideration and analysis.

Ecotone as a Metaphor of Agential Change Space

From a theoretical perspective, I proposed an ecotone as a metaphor for agential change space in this research paper because a metaphor can offer wider inquiry and a variety of lenses for considering social-ethical dynamics and systems. Kark (2013) defined an ecotone in ecological terms as ‘boundary regions, borders, meeting zones, zones of intermingling, and zones of

transgressions.’ The metaphor of an ecotone can provide a social-ecological frame to imagine what is a transitory, diverse, productive, fertile, safe place with porous permeable boundaries for humans to come and go or stay; to share their humanness and vulnerabilities; for experimentation and creativity to seed, disperse, and incubate ideas; to allow new imaginaries of community and living sustainably to emerge. Additionally, as people and communities attempt to address the effects of individual and collective trauma, an ecotone as a social-ecological metaphor enables us to consider and imagine what a transitory, diverse, productive, fertile, safe place might engender in contrast and juxtaposition to systems and structures that predominate with their own ecologies of power and oppression that dehumanize people and disorder lives. Similarly, an ecotone as a living ecological system allows for imagining the dynamic aspirations and tensions that exist based on function, time, and space as species within the system interact, collaborate, and compete for critical resources such as light, oxygen, water, nutrients, and space to eke out a niche to survive and thrive.

An ecotone is often thought of as a margin, an edge effect, and a liminal space between two ecosystems. Ecotones are characterized by high spatial heterogeneity and significant diversity of species (Kark, 2013). Kark (2013) distinguished two types of ecotonal regions: ones with natural boundaries and others that are human-generated or anthropogenic. Natural boundaries and transition areas of ecological systems would include shorelines, a sand forest, a mixed-forest region, and other zones that change by altitude and latitude (Kark & van Rensburg, 2006). Typical examples of anthropogenic ecotones include the edges of a forest that has been clear-cut or an urban-peri-urban area that has been altered through residential and commercial development. Wang et al. (2022), similarly stated that ecotones play a critical role as early indicators and warning signals of the onset of climate change because of ecotone’s relative sensitivity to changes in “community ecology, landscape ecology, and biodiversity conservation” (p. 1 - 2).

The predominant neoliberal framing and normative reasoning of economic and non-economic aspects of life systems can have powerful, destabilizing anthropogenic impacts and consequences because of its prominence and propensity to define and constrain what is possible and acceptable. In this research study, an ecotone as a metaphor of agential change space can provide a social, ecological, and political meaning comparable to what Monica White (2018) described as communal space necessary for resistance to such predominant frames; enable a community of praxis to flourish; and allow the role of experimentation and creativity in a community to flourish. Similarly, an ecotone provides an analog to the creative participative spaces for social justice that Parker (2020) outlined based on the catalytic leadership developed by civil rights leader Ella Baker.

Community food work has clear intersections with the social-ethical modality of a Beloved Community and the theories of a Trauma-Informed Care Approach and an Ecotone as Agential Change Space, particularly as community food work organizations and practitioners attempt to counter neoliberalism, dominant hegemonic narratives, and onto-epistemological politics that address injustices and the effects of trauma (Broad, 2016; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). From a theoretical perspective, this research seeks to contribute to community food work as praxis through better understanding of a trauma-informed care approach and agential change space to reframe social-ethical realities and to support emergent fertile possibilities for community and food system transformation.

Research Methodology

This research examined the ecotonal nature of community food work and specifically analyzed how a community food work organization that is engaged in mutual aid and social-ecological activism related to justice embodies trauma-informed care and engenders an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what

is possible individually and collectively. A narrative inquiry methodology was used to critically explore perceptions of mutual aid participants and thoughts of community food work practitioners about a trauma-informed approach to care and agential change in the food system. This methodology aligns with the research epistemology, ontology, and axiology of a critical realist, constructivist, and emancipatory post-positivist paradigm (Freire, 1970/1973; Giroux, 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Law, 2004). The ontological paradigm was that multiple realities exist often in collateral relationship and opposition that are influenced by politics, power, presentation, and narrative (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Law, 2009). The epistemological proposition in this methodology was that knowledge is created, understood, and influenced by values, ethics, hegemony, and power (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Leavy 2014). Critical consciousness and pedagogy are essential value-laden components of praxis in community development and change processes (Freire 1970, 1973; Giroux, 2020; Parker, 2020).

Significance

Food system practitioners and scholars are increasingly asked to address issues of justice, equity, and trauma in their community food work. Slocum and Cadieux (2015) proposed that the experience of historical and collective trauma that resulted from past and present injustices must be linked to food justice and equity. Many past and present injustices have deep systemic roots in neoliberal ideology and governance. Similarly, the uninterrogated prominence of neoliberal rationality in economic and non-economic spheres has resulted in the subjectification of people and undermined any sense of community and collective social responsibility to one another. Therefore, as food system practitioners and scholars attempt to center justice, equity, and trauma in their food work, they must also theorize what a social-ethical ideal of community entails and if that theoretical framing of community counters neoliberal rationality or tracks onto the existing social economic framing of neoliberalism. The research argues that justice, equity, and trauma continue

to be significant interlinked problems within communities and the food system (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). The deleterious experiences and effects of individual and collective trauma -- that often have resulted from systemic injustices and inequities – require a wide-reaching understanding and adoption of trauma-informed care and agential change space as critical to community food work pedagogy and praxis of educators and social change leaders.

This research is significant to community food work in four specific ways. First, the research helps to situate community food work praxis in a trauma-informed care framework as an organization change process needed to create and serve as an agential change space at the intersection of social and health issues like justice, equity, and trauma (Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Gottlieb & Joshi; 2013; Alkon, 2014; Slocum, 2007). Second, the study builds understanding of the aspirations and tensions implicit in community food work efforts seeking to promote resilience, open space for expressions of agency, and expand boundaries of communal possibility (Parker, 2020; Spade, 2020; White, 2017). The research, expands the methodological and generative possibilities for community food work as agential change space to reframe social-ethical realities and to support latent possibilities of community transformation (Law, 2008; Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017; Stake, 2005). Lastly, the study widens the narrative and field of vision of what is individually and collectively possible (Brown, 2019; Lederach, 2002, 2010; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016 Stephenson et al., 2020).

Limitations of the Study

A case study, even if limited in scope, can contribute to the ongoing analysis of community food work and the narratives that inform its pedagogy and praxis. Trauma can have wide-reaching lasting impacts on a large percentage of the population; however, the study was contextually specific to one time and place. The case study of trauma-informed care and agential change space focused primarily the perceptions and thoughts of seventeen study participants who work closely

with and fulfill different roles with New Community Project's Vine and Fig Program based in Harrisonburg, Virginia. New Community Project is a relatively small community food work organization working and partnering to change what is imagined and possible locally, regionally, and internationally through farming, gardening, and ecological care of people and the earth.

New Community Project's programming initiatives seeks to serve and be a place of refuge for people who are vulnerable due to the experiences and effects of conflict, addiction, abuse, homelessness, and general social isolation. Hence, the community food work organization and its initiatives are bounded in place but may serve as a representative microcosm of similar organizations seeking to address issues centered on justice, equity, and trauma. The findings are not meant to be monolithic or deterministic but to demonstrate the complexity and fluidity of the human experience. Like the majority of qualitative studies, the focus was on the specific perceptions and thoughts of people and the validity of their experiences in relation to the research questions posed to them. I am hopeful the theoretical framing and thoughtful narrative inquiry of the ecotonal nature of community food work will enhance the general understanding of the aspirations and tensions as community food work organizations and practitioners seek to provide trauma-informed care and create and serve as agential change space in support and recognition of individual agency, collective action, and emerging possibilities.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this literature review, I provide a comprehensive and historical explanation of why understanding the ecotonal nature of community food work as praxis specifically in relation to a trauma-informed approach to care is important for organizations, practitioners, and community change processes. To do so, I review the social-ethical ideal of a beloved community, historical implications of neoliberal framing and governance, the concept of collateral realities, an ecotone as a metaphor for agential change space, and the idea of community food work as praxis. The specific lens of the review was on how an organization that is engaged in mutual aid and activism related to socio-eco justice might embody trauma-informed care and provide agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand people's boundaries of what is possible through their community change approach.

Actualizing the Beloved Community

The social-ethical ideal of a 'beloved community' was espoused by Josiah Royce, Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King Jr., Vincent Harding, John Lewis, and other advocates for equity and justice for all (Camp, 2020; Harding, 2007; Jensen, 2016; King Jr. 1968). Philosophers and social movement activists Josiah Royce, William Morris, Dorothy Day, Howard Thurman, and Vincent Harding espoused similar phrases to the beloved community: loyalty to a just cause, fellowship of souls, transcendent spiritual community, community of minds, community of memory, community of expectations, and community of hope (Parker, 2020; Strong, 2007). For the framing of this research study, I focused on the social-ethical concept of a beloved community envisioned and communicated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who spoke for civil transformation, social change, and manifesting a 'beloved community' through non-violent actions of resistance and movement against racism, poverty, materialism, militarism, and ongoing exploitation (King,

Jr., 1968, 2010). Dr. King advocated for courage, compassion, creativity, and solidarity to overcome adversity and mobilize the social moral imagination (Burrow, Jr., 2006; Harding, 2007; King Jr. & Washington, 1986). Core principles of Dr. King's vision of an active nonviolent beloved community were influenced by his parents, Black church faith community, seminary studies, graduate school, and personal experiences. Dr. King's vision entailed an understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things; a shared humanity and solidarity; a moral and sacred obligation to individual and community betterment; that everyone has benefitted in some way from the historical contributions of others; a passion for cross-cultural, multi-generational relationships, and multi-ethnic connections; and real human transformation is possible (Burrow, Jr., 2006; Harding, 2007, 2011; King, Jr., 1968, 2010; Strong, 2007). Overall, justice is indivisible and cannot be divided into distinct collateral realities where justice is only accorded to some individuals.

Lederach and Lederach (2010) enumerated similar principles and ways to finding our way back to a 'beloved community' and community wholeness through healing and reconciliation. The principles include adaptability; resourcefulness; the capacity to face and creatively negotiate risky situations; solidarity; sustained hope and purpose; realizing the journey to wholeness is internal and external; but also recognizing the less tangible creative resources in people and community; the personhood, identity, and purpose of all people; and that resilience can mobilize social and moral imaginations (Lederach and Lederach, 2010, p. 68). John Paul Lederach (2005) outlined four capacities for moral imagination to flourish: 1) the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships, one that includes even our enemies, 2) the ability and capacity to embrace complexity without getting caught up in social divisions, 3) a deep fierce commitment to the creative act of conversation and possibility, and 4) and acceptance of the risks needed to facilitate change and transcend current limitations. Lederach (2005), in developing and cultivating a moral

imagination, emphasized that relationships are central to human community and what is best for relationships is set as the horizon people are working towards, particularly when relationships have been fractured or shattered due to trauma and conflict.

In the following section, I discuss the origins of the neoliberal frame and its implications for governance moving forward and the systemic injustices that favor some individuals and disfavor others through this framing. The neoliberal framing of life, civil society, food systems, individuals, and relationships is extremely salient to understanding the root and proximal causes of oppression and marginalization within the food system and vulnerable communities because neoliberalism tends to define and constrain what is possible and acceptable particularly in regard to mutual aid and care. Its history and contemporary broad general acceptance as economic theory and system of governance of non-economic areas of life is fraught with social, political, and ecological implications for individuals and communities (Brown, 2019; Giroux, 2019; Klein, 2019).

History, Ecology, and Implications of the Neoliberal Frame

In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968, 2010, p. 3) stated that America was still struggling with irresolution and contradictions in its ability to truly address equality and the systems that perpetuate racism, poverty, materialism, and militarism. More than fifty years later, the U.S. is still in a crisis of policy and governance in relation to power and equality. Zygmunt Bauman (2016) went even further and stated that humanity is in a crisis and the only possible solution is solidarity among and between humans. This background of the neoliberal frame provides some footing for why rethinking, re-storying, and reimagining a social-ethical ideal like a nonviolent beloved community and community food work as agential change space is needed as a counter to the hegemonic narrative of neoliberal governance and ideology (Brown, 2017). Historically, neoliberalism was first coined as an economic philosophy in 1938 to counter the

prominent role social democracy and Keynesian welfare state played in social provisioning, organization, and justice in the 1930s and 1940s (Brown, 2019; Klein, 2019). Milton Friedman, an ordoliberal economist and early proponent of neoliberal economic thought at the University of Chicago, purportedly said that during a crisis you have to look for what ideas are lying around and run with them (Klein, 2019). Harvey (2005) stated that neoliberalism as a theory and potential antidote for capitalism's problems was always laying around and continues to have a social-ecological life nurtured by economists, philosophers, and politicians.

The amorphous, fluid ecological nature of neoliberalism makes it quite pervasive and insidious at a social-ethical level so that even early proponents of neoliberalism might not recognize its present-day antidemocratic implications in disenfranchising everyday people (Brown, 2019). Harvey (2005) interpreted the neoliberal frame as foundationally aimed at reorganizing capitalism across the world and creating conditions to re-solidify class distinction and order. The neoliberal frame has grown and morphed from an economic philosophy to a rationality for governance and policy to an order of reason that affects and pervades all spheres of people's lives – not just economic (Brown, 2017). Sociologist Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism is much more than “capitalism on steroids” but is a framework that atomizes, subjectifies, and financializes humans, deeply affects human rights, pervades judicial rationale, undermines civil society, and exacerbates the exploitation of people, communities, and natural resources (Brown, 2017; Brown, 2019; Klein, 2019 interview with Wendy Brown).

As an economic rationale for limiting the role of the state in the market and acting as a safety net, neoliberalism seeks to entrepreneurialize public markets, deregulate financial capital, reduce progressive redistributive taxation, make individuals subjects and entrepreneurs responsible for their own needs and future, and privatize any form of social provisioning (Brown, 2019; Harvey, 2005). For adherents of neoliberalism, government should not have an active role in

distributing justice but serve to protect and ensure the conditions are right and secure for the market to function. Within a neoliberal framing of governance, the state's role is to create the environment and structure for competition, entrepreneurialism, and market function and growth (Brown, 2019; Brown, 2015). As a result, neoliberal theory and practice monetizes relationships, entrepreneurializes social possibilities, colonizes minds, and stunts imaginations (Brown, 2019). At an individual level, citizens are seen as “performers”, “bits of human capital” or “micro-enterprises” with their own personal brand to financialize themselves (Bauman, 2016; Brown, 2019; du Plessis & Sorensen, 2017). At the extreme of neoliberal thought, thoughts advocated by early proponents like Friedrich von Hayek, and later voiced by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, there is no such thing as a society or the social with deep communal bonds but all responsibility for well-being lies with individuals and families for self-definition, self-organization, and complete self-provisioning (Bauman, 2016; Brown, 2015).

Wuthnow (2018), Hochschild (2016), Klein (2020), and Stephenson et al., (2020) write about the social, demographic and political shifts occurring at different scales in rural communities and across the cultural landscape. These social and political shifts are polarizing people and leaving community and civic life quite fragile, brittle, and tenuous. The shifts have neoliberal economic underpinnings but are also characterized by nostalgia for moral order, racialized hierarchies, fear of loss, ongoing appeals to deep epistemic claims by leaders, blaming, scapegoating, and untenable paradoxes (Hochschild, 2016; Stephenson et al., 2020). The expansive unquestioning and acceptance of neoliberal market ideology as a cure-all for social, economic, and environmental sustainability has fed on people's anxiety and sense of despair (Hochschild, 2016).

Neoliberalism and its overall framing of personal and social life in strict economic terms are extremely harmful to countries' sovereignty and delegitimize both community and individual claims of what defines freedom and democratic rule because it often dismantles forms of solidarity

aligned with labor, consumer, welfare, and populist causes (Brown, 2017). If history and dominant hegemonic discourses like neoliberalism are not critiqued as unjust realities and inequalities but are quietly accepted as beneficial to economic growth and everyone's general well-being, true democracy becomes more untenable (Brown, 2017). Sociologist Wendy Brown contends the neoliberal framing goes beyond economic boundaries and economizes all non-economic aspects of life including basic human rights such as freedom of speech and expression (Brown, 2017, Brown, 2019). The neoliberal frame has pervaded our vocabularies and language so individual and community possibilities are often framed in economic terms. Words common to commerce and business are now part of our lexicon because, as Brown (2017) argued, of the economization of non-economic spheres of life. For example, relationships are spoken of as transactions with returns on investment (ROI) for friendships and services. Community development conversations are about investment, enterprise zones, opportunity clusters, economic growth, and jobs created, and divestment when this type of development is not happening or possible.

Economic disparities between high-wealth and low-wealth populations in communities and countries continued to increase due to neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2005). Sociologist Arlie Hochschild spoke in 2017 of the downward spirals in mobility the current workforce faces because of exceedingly difficult employment terms. The downward spiral is characterized by uncertainty, stress, and the overhanging possibility of replacement by automation and outsourcing to other countries so that the

...neoliberal figure is constantly trying to edge out the pressures upon him or her. It is about getting comfortable with a culture of divestment and investment over which you don't have control. That is what companies are doing: 'I think I will invest here and divest from there and offshore this'. It started with the lower classes getting hit and it is moving up and hitting the middle class, where westerners now compete – as workers and

consumers – with the Chinese and Indians. It is creating a great deal of anxiety. So, the ideal worker is one who fearlessly dives in anyway and who makes him or herself apparently impervious to this new insecurity (du Pressis & Sorensen, 2017 interview with Hochschild).

Slocum, Cadieux, Paul, and Blumberg (2016) stated the food and agriculture environment and space like all other places should be understood in relation to power dynamics and the ecology of oppression. Just as neoliberalism seeks to re-establish class distinctions and order, the dominant food and agriculture system is established and maintained through social hierarchies based on race, poverty, and class (Slocum, Cadieux, Paul, & Blumberg, 2016). A central question Harris (2009) wrestled with was: what is needed for constructive socio-environmental change in and through food networks? Harris (2009) stated that individuals and communities must question the discourse around neoliberalism, otherwise, everyone forfeits the ability to imagine and build a different system and future. Hence, a radical critique of the neoliberal frame and its pervasiveness is needed to understand the food environment and ongoing efforts of reform and transformation of current structural realities.

Neoliberalism and how it is expressed in local, regional, national, and international food systems has created a pervasive structural paradox and a jarring reality of extreme wealth and gross inequality (Broad, 2016). For moralistic and conservative adherents of neoliberal rationality, the theory and practice are appealing because responsibility for personal and social well-being lies with the individual and communities; not government and the state (Brown, 2018; Harvey, 2005).

Harris (2009) has critiqued common arguments about alternative food networks and the idea of localism as just reinforcing neoliberal theories and continuing the rhetoric of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse. Harris drew on Gibson-Graham's (2006) technique of 'reading for difference rather than dominance' to recommend going beyond just a strict discourse about the ill

effects of neoliberalism. In simplest terms, Gibson-Graham (2006) argued that rather than getting bogged down in the rhetoric of the power of neoliberalism to dictate what is possible, food movement activists and practitioners should focus on a different social-ethical imaginary and distinct alternative. Gibson-Graham (2006) continue to advocate for post capitalist and cooperative-based models for transforming food and agriculture systems and economies. Gibson-Graham (2006) have stated food justice activists need to move beyond the neoliberal hegemonic discourse. Gibson-Graham also talked about taking a positive affective stance for collective agency and actions within postcapitalist alternatives.

Alkon and Guthman (2017) emphasized that food justice advocates need to thoroughly assess how neoliberalism was weaved into their theories of change, discourses, and more importantly, their practices to gauge if such framing aligns with their overarching goals and vision for an environmentally sound, socially just food system that serves all or the framing needs to be abandoned. Alkon and Guthman (2017) also posited that the post capitalist cooperative-based models uplifted by Gibson-Graham (2006) already exist at the edges and margins of the neoliberal political economy but the existing models (e.g., food cooperatives, specialty stores) generally overlooked and failed to address the needs of people and communities most adversely harmed by neoliberalism or perpetuated an uncomfortable space of whiteness.

The consolidation and concentration of ownership and power across the food system and all agricultural sectors has provided many uneven benefits and resulted in significant external costs to people, communities, economies, and the environment (Hendrickson et al., 2020; Hendrickson et al., 2017). D'Adamo-Damery (2015) stated the present-day food and farming system was maddening and exacerbated inequality leaving many people socially and economically marginalized. Slocum and Cadieux (2015) similarly argued that from a political ecology

framework that emphasis should be on how societies create equitable, just food systems rather than solely focusing and harping on more food production.

Adherents of neoliberalism and beneficiaries of techno-scientific rationalities exclaim the virtues of free-trade, privatization, deregulation, and maximum efficiency but do not interrogate its deleterious impacts on food system democracy and how these rationalities marginalize voices and vulnerable communities (Hendrickson et al., 2020). This narrative valorizes conventional industrialized agriculture and does not question its external costs to society, the economy, and environment (Hendrickson et al., 2020; Hendrickson et al., 2017). Many adherents see the inherent risks of conventional agriculture and economic growth as worth the costs because feeding the world is a morally, just duty and cause. Opposing food and farm narratives have emerged that critique the discourse and contest what voices and realities are being silenced in the presentation of this narrative (Holt-Gimenez & Altieri, 2013). Alternative food and farm activists acknowledge the need for reform or for a total overhaul and transformation of the system (Holt-Gimenez et al., 2012). Hassanein (2003), cited Magdoff et al. (2000), in stating transformation of the food and farming system as presently structured will require a complete societal shift and overhaul.

At the most basic level, the neoliberal frame and its accompanying injustices are manifest in communities and food systems in pervasive and rather insidious ways. Within the food system, consolidation, vertical integration, concentration, and long-distance food value chains have created a culture of divestment and investment of which people have little to no control (Alkon, 2014). Farmers, processors, and purveyors have been encouraged and thoroughly admonished through a mantra of ‘get big or get out’ since the 1970s. ‘Get big or get out’ is a mantra that can blithely be accepted and not thoroughly critiqued by land-grant universities and educational and technical assistance providers. Globalization, outsourcing, and automation greatly impact farmers and farm communities (Lyson, Stevenson, & Welsh, 2008). Much of this push and practice is based on being

the least-cost provider where cut-throat competition, efficiency, and price point are major drivers. University of Wisconsin Sociologist Joel Rogers termed this trajectory and practice “low-road capitalism” that can be traced back to the plantation system (Desmond, 2019, p. 1). From a conventional agricultural perspective that embraces the neoliberal paradigm, neoliberalism is accepted as beneficial to the trade of agricultural goods and a way for countries to transition to more technological and financially diverse economies (Harvey, 2005). However, the benefits hardly ever trickle down to the majority of people. Profit no matter what the social and environmental costs is the primary consideration. This perspective does not allow space and thought for achieving broader societal values.

Beyond a Neoliberal Framing of Community and the Social

The neoliberal frame has evolved and adapted to its physical surroundings much like a biological organism through time in response to various crises since the 1930s (Brown, 2019; Harvey, 2005). Desmond (2019), however, argued the basic tenets and roots of capitalism and the neoliberal frame can be dated back to the history of plantations and enslavement, and has always been in the water of U.S. policy and governance. The neoliberal frame, overall, has decreased people’s trust in government and delegitimized the potential positive balancing counter-weight government can have to enhance social, economic, and ecological well-being beyond what a competitive organized free market provides (Brown, 2017).

Within this context and frame, individuals are solely responsible for their health and overall economic and social well-being and the communal bonds of society are progressively eroded due to hyper-individualization and continued undermining of the meaning and existence of social responsibility (Brown, 2019; Brown, 2017). Therefore, a different social-ethical ideal is needed to establish an image of liberation and emancipation that contests present ontological politics and reified uncritiqued realities. A counternarrative and shift in social ethics must honor individual

agency, prevent continued oppression of vulnerable groups, and expand the boundaries and reality of what is possible.

Interwoven Collateral Realities

People with power and position often present only one aspect of what is real and possible, and rarely present another perspective because those with power and position often do not want the dominant narrative questioned and critiqued even though two truths can exist in the same time and place. Again, I use collateral in this research as an adjective to mean parallel, coordinate, or corresponding in position, order, time, valence, or significance. The dominant neoliberal framing tends to define and constrain what is possible, and has resulted in disparate social and economic outcomes and realities for many individuals and vulnerable populations, therefore, I contend the neoliberal framing of reality needs to be questioned and critiqued to explore places where new possibilities can emerge.

The 1800s were a similar time in history when there was comparable disproportionate social, economic, health outcomes and inequalities as today. The author Charles Dickens chronicled the disparate experiences and realities of individuals' lives and exposed the systemic and structural injustices that existed in society but were rarely highlighted as pertinent to reality and society. In his many stories and books, Dickens was able to see and hold parallel disparate realities and narratives together. The opening passage of Charles Dickens's *The Tale of Two Cities* distills and juxtaposes distinct disparate social-ethical realities. Although written and set in London and Paris in the 1800s, the passage's depiction of disparate realities and parallel lived experiences remains salient to community food work and efforts towards transformative justice.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of

despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. ~ Charles Dickens, *The Tale of Two Cities* (Para.1).

Like in the mid-1800s, there remains a tale of two distinctly different realities for many individuals and communities today. Black, Brown, Indigenous, First Nation, People of Color, and other vulnerable communities continue to grapple with endemic inequities and injustices and resultant trauma that are tied to history. A history that resulted in lasting adverse social, economic, and health outcomes. Structural violence and the deleterious treatment of people and cultures in the U.S. continues to plague communities and the food system today. Similarly, the historical and systemic injustices that underpin and ramify the trauma, stress, and adverse experiences that daily affect vulnerable people's lives are manifestations of disparate realities. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the stark reality of abiding health and social disparities experienced by communities of color and other marginalized populations.

Gibson-Graham (2006) stated society needs to value the thinking about alternative economies and bolder social imaginaries that are coming from the edges and margins that may have been historically overlooked and underappreciated to address these asymmetries. Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016) stated that community food work space can be a place of diversity, activity, and transformative possibility for people and communities in their prevailing contexts. Therefore, community food work can be a liminal and ecotonal space for new possibilities to emerge that go beyond the rigid neoliberal framing and provide solid footing for rethinking and reimagining community-building frameworks that can ameliorate the ongoing disparate social, economic, and health realities.

Ecotone as a Metaphor for an Agential Change Space for New Realities

Law (2004) emphasized how metaphors of reality can elucidate and give a greater sense of people's diverse interactions with the world but also frame "what is possible or barely possible, unthinkable or almost thinkable" (p. 6). This emphasis on metaphor for clarity and reimagining is resonant with other writers and authors working for social change. Hochschild (2018), Solnit (2016), Lederach and Lederach (2010), Orr (2002), Levine (1997), Krall (1994), and D'Adamo-Damery (2016) emphasized the need for better metaphors to understand epistemic claims, project hope, build peace, heal trauma and past hurts, appreciate margins, and frame community food work networks. The use of metaphors appropriate to people's experiences and histories can also help in the transformation process. Hochschild (2016), Solnit (2016), Lederach and Lederach (2010), and Orr (2002) emphasized the need for better metaphors to deal with past hurts and frame future hope. Hochschild (2016, p. 5) specifically used the metaphor of understanding and scaling an 'empathy wall' and disabling our personal alarm systems to strategically work across differences and polarization.

According to Hochschild (2016), an empathy wall "is an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, one that makes us feel indifferent or even hostile to those who hold different beliefs or whose childhood is rooted in different circumstance" (p.5). Adrienne Marie Brown in *Emergent Strategy* (2017) drew on metaphorical examples from nature to demonstrate complexity and the elements of different gifts, abilities, and strategies for shaping community and societal change: mycelium, ants, ferns, wavicle, starlings, and dandelions. On the nature of home and salient tensions, bell hooks (1989) posited that the notion of home and belonging can be changed dramatically as a mind is decolonized and openness to new possibilities is radically expanded. hooks (1989) stated "home is that place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a

new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting.” (p.19). Overall, metaphors can be extremely constructive in the context of relationship and bridge building for peace and reconciliation in shaping and fomenting a larger transformative process (Lederach, 2002).

Seidman (2009) and Kark (2013), in outlining ecotones and ecological gradients, provided the etymology of ecotones as being Greek in origin and meaning “oikos” (home) and “tonus” (tension). Clements (1905, p. 316) defined an ecotone as the tension line between two adjoining zones, formations, or ecosystems, but the author stated the tension lines are never sharp and are always variable in width, permeability, rigidity, and flexibility. Ecotonal zones are characterized by transition and overlap with similarities and dissimilarities (Clements, 1905). Kark (2013) offered other definitions from ecological literature, which included ‘boundary regions, borders, transitional zones, tension, zones, meeting zones, zones of intermingling, and zones of transgressions.’

Ecotones are characterized by high spatial heterogeneity and significant diversity of species and are often contrasted with more homogenous units or monocultures. Ecotones are fluid, transitory areas between ecological communities, ecosystems, and major biomes (Kark, 2013). Within ecological discourse, conservationist and environmentalists contend that ecotones are significant because they are dynamic and host resilient plant and animal populations. The properties and nature of an ecotone are quite distinct from adjoining areas: ecotones consist of two or more ecosystems with properties not present in adjacent ecosystems (Kark, 2013).

Similarly, an ecotone as a living ecological system, allows for imagining the dynamic aspirations and tensions that exist in context based on function, time, and space as species within the system interact, collaborate, and compete for critical resources such as light, oxygen, water, nutrients, and mutualistic synergies to eke out a niche to survive and thrive. An ecotone is identified as a metaphor for this research to explore and analyze how a community food work

organization might create and serve as an agential change space in its programming and actualize a social-ethical ideal. Additionally, an ecotone has applicability to ecological, social, and political landscapes; relevant translatability to disparate realities caused by systemic traumas; belonging and diversity; and resonance with expanding boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively.

Re-storying, Reframing, and Reimagining

Stories and community food work can be transformational since stories and food are foundational for cultivating community and broader societal conversations. Recent food system scholars, Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016), Gottlieb and Joshi (2013), (Alkon, 2014) and Slocum (2007) write about how important understanding the prevailing contexts of community food work spaces; grappling with tensions of new realities; and having a critical consciousness of the stories of peoples and communities is for the food movement to move forward locally, democratically, justly, and synergistically. Broad (2016) emphasized the need for building critical consciousness, asserting rights, empowering collective efficacy to achieve durable social change and lasting community resilience. Similarly, Broad (2016) asserted the effort overall will require action, persistence, and really engaging the issue and endemic challenges through time.

Storytelling, counter-storytelling, and re-negotiating stories can be therapeutic in dealing with extreme trauma, post-traumatic stress disorders, and the acute vulnerability of cultural devastation that can be part of people's narratives (Janoff-Bulman 1985; Janoff-Bulman, 1988; Lear, 2008; Nichols and Davis, 2017; Parker, 2020). Re-negotiated stories and counter-storytelling can help people and communities integrate their narrative, make sense of their current reality, change personal and social trajectories, and re-imagine a preferred social reality (Nichols and Davis, 2017; Parker, 2020).

White (2018), McCutcheon (2019), and Ramirez (2015) articulated the importance of understanding historical imaginaries, uneven geographies, power asymmetries, and inequities in community development and food system alternatives, particularly because Black, Brown, Indigenous people and communities of color have struggled and resisted oppression to achieve their own liberation and autonomy for so long. Cadieux and Slocum (2015) stated practicing food justice means intervening in the areas of trauma/inequity, exchange, land, and labor arrangements using processes that enable people to deal with power relations across relevant scales with the aim of effecting systemic change.

Charles Taylor (2004), Lederach (2002, 2010), Mills (1959, 2000), Asma (2017), Brueggemann (1978, 2018) each write about the need of a new social-ethical imagination to address and redress today's order and disorder, which leads to anxiety and uncertainty. Stephen Asma (2017), in analyzing epistemic territory and embodied imagination, highlighted the potential of the imagination because of its ties to mind-body epistemology, perceptions, emotions, and ability to create countervailing narratives and ways of knowing relevant for adaptation. According to Asma (2017, p. 36), study of embodied cognition and imagination allows insights into the underlying dispositions, motivations, desires, emotions, and thought patterns of people as they interpret and adapt to the world. Adrienne Marie Brown (2017, p. 18) contends that we are in an imagination battle. Therefore, catalysts need to help their audiences and communities envision alternatives to how people currently live and can live.

Arlie Hochschild in *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016) described a 'deep story' and epistemic claim as a situation that magnifies a host of previous situations that feel fraught and feel true. A person, therefore, takes facts and moral precepts from the deep story because the story is such a thick distillation of fraught feelings. From this distillation, the ongoing narrative is based on

dreams and metaphors related to the deep story because the feeling of truth is perceived and felt as so strong and deep.

To create a new story and envision a counternarrative, a catalyst must evaluate their own stories and working assumptions as well as issues of position, privilege, and positionality that comprise their dominant epistemic frame. Hochschild (2016) and Stephenson (2020) discussed the paradoxical nature and cultural phenomena of deep stories and epistemic claims that are adhered to and profoundly felt by people and rural communities but would seem to bear little coherence to the current reality of economic devastation and environmental degradation that threatens the lives of individuals, households, and communities. Stephenson et al. (2020) outlined three tenets and characteristics that should be considered and valued by people working with communities facing economic devastation and environmental degradation: 1) the epistemic and ontological assumptions people have create real fears and anxieties in people's psyches and bodies, 2) the factors underlying the deep story and narrative are extremely complex and multi-dimensional, and 3) the need for empathy, compassion, respect, and care for human dignity cannot be overstated.

Reflexivity can also open up opportunities for catalysts, through studied openness, to learn alternate histories, traumas, tensions, and different imaginaries of communities and the world (Hochschild, 2016; Ramirez, 2015). Peters, Alter, and Schwartzbach (2010) emphasized more importantly that an open dialogue and space can further evoke everyone's interests, motivations, purposes, values, ideals, and commitments that might otherwise remain unsaid or below the surface of conversations. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild urged respectful conversation and that people who seek to understand and catalyze change turn off their personal alarm systems for genuine openness to another person's reality and lived experience.

So, whatever you are criticizing, it is a good idea to be mindful of how people are holding a reality in place. That is a fundamental assumption I carry around in my head; that we don't

just live our lives, we accept a reality, and we hold that reality in place. It takes a curious kind of effort – emotion work. Strange to say, we work to keep normal things seeming normal. And in a commercial age, we work to keep personal life feeling personal. To some people, this can feel like a dangerous idea, because it invites us to reflect on the strangeness of our context and culture. ~ interview with sociologist Arlie Hochschild (du Pressis & Sorensen, 2017).

A broad-scale shift away from the neoliberal epistemic frame requires a capacity to mediate disparate realities and reimagine what is possible. John Paul Lederach (2002) defined mediative capacity in relation to conflict resolution and peacebuilding as a “philosophical lens and requires practitioners to think about the social spaces for constructive change processes that can have an intermediary impact” (p. 92). Lederach (2002) emphasized the word ‘mediative’ because it is based on the quality of relations rather than a specific role of a person such as a trainer, educator, or facilitator. Empathy, compassion and mediative capacities can open up relational spaces, break down barriers, and plant seeds for a different timeline and trajectory for change and action in individuals, communities and structures. This approach is less prescriptive and more participatory to walk together with people to understand their lived experiences, education, and context rather than extolling the need for outside content and expertise (Horton, Freire, Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990). Lederach (2002) and Horton and Freire (1990) framed the walk as one that seeks co-existence, cooperation, and constructive interdependence rather than fear, anxiety, blame, and scapegoating.

Community Food Work as Praxis

Food is critical to human development, cultural identity, economic vitality, community viability, and peaceful co-existence but ultimately food and farming as a system is politically and ethically complex (Broad, 2016). Black, Brown, Indigenous, First Nation, People of Color, and

other vulnerable communities continue to grapple with endemic injustices that are tied to a fraught history of enslavement, displacement, systemic racism and oppression that has resulted in racialized trauma events and experiences with lasting unequal valences and effects. In their analyses of food justice movements and praxis, White (2018), McCutcheon (2019), and Ramirez (2015) emphasized how pertinent understanding historical uneven geographies, food spaces, and epistemologies is to community food work and change processes but also seeing past our assumed food and farm histories.

In setting out to provide a comprehensive and historical explanation of community food work as praxis, there are clear intersections with neoliberalism, onto-epistemological politics, social-ethical ideals such as a beloved community and emergent possibilities. Wakefield (2007, p. 331) defined praxis in relation to the food movement as “the melding of theory/reflection and practice/action as part of a conscious struggle to transform the world. Put simply, praxis is giving life to ideas about the way the world is—and could be—by acting on one’s convictions in daily (work and home) life” (p. 331). Even with this relatively straightforward definition of praxis, there remains tensions in connecting action to reflective processes needed for engagement without giving into disillusion and cynicism (Wakefield, 2007), especially since knowledge is created, understood, and influenced by values, experiences, hegemony, and power (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Leavy 2014).

Brand (2007), in assessing ethnographic research and the idea of history and historicity, asked the following questions: What counts as historical knowledge? How is such knowledge exchanged? What does this process tell us about people’s relationship to the past? These questions are pertinent to the history of the food justice movement and the concept of community food work as people and communities grapple with interpreting history and work for an equitable just future. Awareness of whiteness, how whiteness is centered, and its tendencies to privilege and see and

interpret history is especially salient to academic spaces and literature reviews given Black, Brown, and Indigenous people's fraught relationship with enslavement, displacement, and systemic racial oppression. Slocum (2007, p. 521) addressed the prevalence of whiteness in food and agricultural spaces and termed "whiteness as bodies with pale skin color, the changing tendencies of those bodies to do certain things in a particular context and the socio-spatial processes with which those tendencies are linked" (p. 521).

Slocum (2007), in addressing whiteness in food and farm spaces as a struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression, outlined alternative food practices that she termed '*community food work*' that encapsulated concepts of a community-focused food systems, food security, and overall sustainability. Slocum outlined four broad types of processes and end goals of organization's devoted to food, farming and community work. The four categories are centered on: 1) farm sustainability through direct linkages and localized connections of small and mid-scale farmers to markets; 2) community nutrition education to prevent diet-related illnesses and encourage better health outcomes; 3) environmental sustainability through ecologically sound agricultural practices for people, place, and planet; and 4) social justice efforts ranging from advocating for producer/worker rights, anti-hunger/food insecurity/food access, and urban agriculture for job creation. Slocum (2007) defined the integration of these approaches for ecologically sound, socially just farming methods, food marketing, fair distribution and access to healthier food options across the U.S. as *community food work*. Slocum's (2007) definition elaborated on previous alternative food practices but specifically named social justice and socially just sustainability as critical domains for understanding the prevailing contexts and ecotonal nature of food justice and community food work spaces.

The definition of *food justice* offered by Rasheed Hislop (2014), a geographer and activist, provided an ontological reframing and specifically raised awareness around race, class, gender, and

those most affected by inequalities. Hislop's (2014) definition raised the question of whether some activists and researchers have not recognized previous historical food justice struggles and movements, partly because of fickleness but also due to privilege, historicity, and whiteness. Hislop (2014) defined food justice as: "the struggle against racism, exploitation, oppression, taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root cause both within and beyond the food chain" (p. 24). Parker (2020), in writing about the catalytic leadership methodologies of Ella Baker to redress injustices during the Civil Rights movement, stated that the word radical in its etymology is based on growth at the root and seed level, therefore, radical listening to people who are oppressed is required to unearth root causes and illuminate upstream determinants of systemic injustices.

Broad (2016) outlined how alternative food system movements have coalesced around associated social, economic, and environmental challenges. The challenges include: 1) vertical, monopolistic growth, and hegemonic corporate consolidation that is extractive, exploitative, and has stripped people and communities of control and power, 2) environmental costs and concerns ranging from animal welfare, habitat loss, natural resources conservation, species extinction, and overall dependence on non-renewable resources, and 3) food nutrition and overall public health in relation to diet-related diseases, food safety, food insecurity, and access that affect individuals and communities.

The authors Slocum (2007), Gottlieb and Joshi (2013), Sumner (2016), Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016) referenced community food work as a social-ethical movement, learning process, and an unfolding narrative of how people and society interact with food. In reflecting on Slocum's (2007) article on whiteness in food and agriculture spaces, the tendency to privilege and see and interpret history through whiteness is problematic to the development of alternative food system movements and is a predominant critique of the genesis and manifestation of these

movements. The fraught relationship of Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples and communities of color with enslavement, displacement, and disenfranchisement were rarely acknowledged in early movement efforts.

Bradley and Herrera (2016) have detailed the effects and ramifications of continued hegemonic colonization of social movements, specifically within movements working for food justice, security, and access; and argued how research of community food work can perpetuate white, patriarchal systems of power, position, and privilege. Therefore, new narratives and counter-narratives are imperative. White, patriarchal systems of power, position, and privilege must be interrogated and examined to understand how the system has been impacted and how new narratives and counter-narratives are or can be injected and inculcated into alternative food movements by people and communities most affected by historical and structural inequalities, especially in the realm of food justice and community food work (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Broad, 2016; Gottlieb & Joshi 2013; Niewolny & D'Adamo-Damery, 2016; Slocum; 2007; Sumner, 2016).

According to Cadieux and Slocum (2015), alternative food networks (AFN) and social movements have drawn on white imaginaries of an idyllic communal or agrarian past (e.g., Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson), promoted local, consumer-oriented (e.g., Buy Fresh Buy Local, Virginia Grown, farm-to-table initiatives), market-driven change (e.g., value chain coordination, local and regional food hubs and aggregation), and left yawning silences in the areas of gendered work, migrant labor, and racial inequality. Agyeman and McEntee (2014), in critiquing alternative food movements (AFM) and trying to move food justice efforts forward, cited that those organizational efforts to enhance consumer-choice, value-added product differentiation, local and regional product labeling are common characteristics of neoliberalism where the marketplace is expected to provide social outcomes and solutions to endemic structural social issues.

Food justice is defined as the struggle against racism, exploitation, oppression, taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root cause both within and beyond the food chain (Hislop, 2014). Agyeman and McEntee (2014) state food justice is oriented to highlight, address, and change historical and contemporary inequalities in the food system and organizing processes that are based on racialized valences and socio-economic imbalances. White (2018), McCutcheon (2019), and Ramirez (2015), in their analyses of food justice movements, emphasized how critical understanding of historical imaginaries, uneven geographies, food spaces, and epistemologies is to community food work, particularly black food and alternative geographies, white and black epistemologies, and power asymmetries. According to Slocum and Cadieux (2015), food justice is ultimately a critical analysis of "inequities in the food system and demands for structural change" (p. 32)

Food justice rejects and resists neoliberal claims that the market just has to function and societal issues will be properly addressed. In contrast, food justice proponents have argued that the commodification of food through production and consumption processes based on neoliberal rationality and their root causes perpetuate and exacerbate injustices and inequities in today's food system (Agyeman and McEntee, 2014) rather than centering and truly addressing key values such as social justice, well-being, diversity, and inclusion.

Misguided assumptions and culturally-inappropriate knowledge can have deleterious social and ecological effects and result in "misplaced concreteness where believed abstractions do not necessarily coincide with reality" (Kirschenmann, 1991, p. 166), continue to produce and (re)produce structural inequalities, create new trauma and re-traumatize, and not have the intended impact for systemic change. Alternative food movements and networks have varied histories and community food work organizers have tried to create new narratives and approaches to challenge and transform the hegemonic race, gender, and class politics that engender food access and

availability issues (Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016). There are philosophical overlaps and divergences, and consistent instances where whiteness or white imaginaries continue to be primarily highlighted (Slocum, 2007). There are similarities of the alternative food movement with environmental justice and sustainable agriculture movements that emerged in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s out of concerns of pesticide drift and exposure; ecological diversity; soil fertility and quality; pollution abatement; the externalities of industrial agriculture; and the subsequent decline of small and mid-sized farms and rural communities (Alkon, 2018; Allen, 2004; Broad, 2016). Similarly, significant evidence exists of how the industrialization, commodification, and consolidation within agriculture has left indelible marks and had lasting adverse impacts on small to mid-sized family farms and rural agrarian communities (Lyson, Stevenson, & Welsh, 2008).

With the sustainable agriculture, community food systems, and community food security movements, a criticism was and is that the initiatives perpetuated whiteness, skirted around uncomfortable race, class, and gender issues, or patently ignored systemic racism and structural discrimination (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Gottlieb and Joshi, 2013; Guthman, 2008; Niewolny and D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Slocum, 2007; Sumner; 2016). Within this alternative food and farm movement landscape, concepts of sustainable agriculture, civic agriculture, and localized, community-based food systems gained traction in advocating for sustainably produced, locally grown, healthier food options to benefit local communities and economies. Community-focused efforts and projects were a common feature of the efforts as sites of resistance against the globalization and commodification of people and places (Broad, 2016). Lyson (2004) termed this type of community-focused social, ecological, and economic embeddedness as a signifier of *civic agriculture*. Garrett and Feenstra (1999) defined a *community food system* as “one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance

the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place [i.e., neighborhood, city, county, or region]” (p. 2).

The paradox of the great abundance of food and the persistent existence of food insecurity and malnutrition continues to be a key focus of alternative food movements and networks at the local, community, and national level. Hamm and Bellows (2003) defined *community food security* “as a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice” (p. 40). In a subsequent article on food security and food system principles, Hamm (2009) provided boundaries for deeper discussion around the food system and issues of health and fairness, and described the attributes and difference of tame and wicked problems that face society in relation to the disparate racialized issues of poverty, hunger, and health.

Alkon and Agyeman’s 2011 book *Cultivating Food Justice* elucidated the tension and struggle of those who have suffered injustices, those wanting food sovereignty to be rightfully acknowledged, and those endeavoring to fight for food justice. Morales (2011), Mares and Pena, (2011) and Guthman, (2011) demonstrated the complexity of food security and food sovereignty work at an institutional and personal level. These authors juxtaposed the tensions within the food movement around personal and racial identity, particularly with peoples of color and indigenous groups who have suffered the most inequality and injustice and those people working to ‘do good’ and who may suffer from ‘color blindness’. Morales (2011) specifically reported how this tension around race, class, gender, and whiteness manifested itself within the alternative food movement between the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) and the Good Food Justice Initiative (GFJI). The crux of the tension was the need to dismantle racism and give greater voice, control, and power to communities of color and those people most affected and marginalized by racism, classism, and gender discrimination. Mares and Pena (2011) shared of the deep pain, anger, and

anguish of Native people who have been forcibly dispossessed from their lands and homes and how that pattern was repeated but how Native people are forging their own food and environmental justice movement. The outright genocide, ostracism, internment, and general “othering” of the people (i.e., Karuk, Black, Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, Mexican, and Latina/o etc.) within the U.S. and North America is disheartening, and yet people have recognized individual agency and the power of collective action to cultivate food justice and new food movement narratives (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011).

To encourage justice for all and enduring community change, the root causes and upstream determinants of these issues have to be named and acknowledged and kept at the forefront of transformation efforts. Redlining, gerrymandering, differential treatment by police, underinvestment, and disinvestment are symptomatic of historical and contemporary racial inequalities and yet often go unnoticed or are glossed over (Alkon, 2018). McClintock (2011, pp. 99-100) specifically addressed the history of redlining and disinvestment in West Oakland as an example of historical inequalities with present-day ramifications for communities living in Oakland. McClintock (2011) shared the blatant racial language of the 1937 Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) Residential Security Map of Oakland that referenced the ‘detrimental influences’, and the ‘infiltration of Negroes, Orientals, shopkeepers, lower classes, relief families, and foreign born’ in West Oakland and where lenders should be reticent and careful to invest and provide mortgages. HOLC was established during the New Deal as a government-sponsored lending corporation but many of its programs were unequally distributed.

Cadieux and Slocum (2015) posed questions that intersect the food justice movement and community food work praxis. Two prominent questions pertinent to this study included: 1) How do groups and organizations move food justice forward and embody food justice in teaching? 2) Is there a shift in *what* food movement organizations do or in *how* they work to indicate a shift in

pursuit of transformative social change? Niewolny and Archibald (2015) articulated that the scale and complexity of today's social, cultural, and environmental problems will demand lifelong, relational, and reflexive learning processes and frameworks to engender social justice and community resilience. Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016, p. 120) asked how their scholarship and practice of community food work might serve to solidify knowledges and certain realities or may open space to generative experimentation and creativity, particularly where social reality is diffuse, ephemeral, messy, and contested (Law, 2004). In relation to the

Broad (2016) outlined four principles for community-based food justice that is consonant with community food work moving forward. According to Broad (2016), community food work centered on food justice should encourage storytelling of lived experiences, sharing historical realities, catalyze community-based collaboration, and articulate a theory of change for individuals and collective efforts. All of Broad's (2016) principles intersected with food justice and community food work. Broad's first two principles particularly resonated with the historical realities of oppression and inequalities, and the broader legacies of social justice activism such as Civil Rights, Farmworker Rights, Gender Rights, Indigenous/Food Sovereignty. The histories of these social justice movements are multi-dimensional, dynamic, and offer thick narratives of struggle, hope, and perseverance that inspired learning and created new possibilities for community food work.

Alkon (2018) stated the food justice movement is relatively nascent and is continuing to emerge around projects, initiatives, and policies. Alkon (2018) outlined initiatives and efforts to increase access to fresh produce, creating economic opportunities in low-income communities of color; to understand and transform the situations and forces that cause food inequities; strengthen movement strategies, goals, and policies; encourage individual agency and collective action; justice beyond simple representation to full participation in decision-making; and just durable

sustainability. Alkon (2018) also defined future directions for food justice in community food work and stated all projects ought to be vested and embedded in the communities the projects and initiatives are aimed to serve; internal leadership has to be developed and insider-outsider leadership models assessed for imbalances and more than representation (Slocum, 2007; Guthman, 2008); advocacy and advancement of labor, worker rights, and collective leverage (e.g., Coalition of Immokalee Workers as a farm worker organization); antecedents and roots of justice in the Civil Rights Movement (McCutcheon, 2015, 2019; White, 2018); and research and policy for just equitable migration (Bauman, 2016; Sbicca, 2017). These future directions are replete with opportunities for community food work and scholarship.

Community food work intersects with theories and processes of change. Paulo Freire (1972, 2012), in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in addressing the dialogical nature of human interactions defined praxis as the confluence of reflection and action. To transform reality, Freire (1972, 2012, pp. 87 – 88) articulated that reflection and action are inseparable and that there can be no durable transformation without reflection and action as praxis working conjointly because people flourish and thrive through active reflection and reflective action. Similarly, Freire (1972, 2012) spoke of how essential critical thinking is to “true” dialogue and the dynamism of transformation processes because...

...true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking – thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without the fear of risks involved...For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men [all people] (Freire, p. 92).

Giroux (2020, p. 175) addressed Paulo Freire's legacy in regard to educational and political change processes, which helped to raise awareness and consciousness of true freedom, discern authoritarian principles and practices, elaborate on the role of self and collective knowledge to power and agency, and expand the ability of people to read both the word (action-reflection) and world in the ongoing struggle for justice, peace, and democracy. For Freire, history and historicity were sites of struggle and one that required ongoing dialogue and examination so people could imagine the future and not be relegated to repeating the past (Giroux, 2020). In teaching and praxis, the objective is to help people realize their own agency, amplify voices, and instill power and understanding of how power as knowledge is produced, distributed, consumed, and (re)produces realities.

Practitioners and those working for social change must critically question and evaluate supposed norms, underlying theories and their assumptions, working practices, and day-to-day ramifications when working across differences such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Lederach (2005) emphasized that practitioners and mediators have to always think about the intersections of the not-like-minded and the not-like-situated in community dialogue and change processes. Community food work activists, practitioners, and scholars need to know they are part of a larger whole and unfolding story within a dynamic social, political, ethical, and ecological landscape. Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016, p. 114) highlighted the work of Henry Giroux to illustrate how cultural politics are used to assess and "radically reflect on" how knowledges and realities are enacted as culture and possible structure. Overall, critical praxis of community food work is essential for exposing and speaking to socio-political processes that (re)produce inequities, injustices, and traumas.

Bringing the Beloved Community and Community Food Work Forward

From an overarching conceptual perspective, this research study sought to adhere to an understanding of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision and core principles for an active nonviolent beloved community. The ontological frame of a beloved community expounded on by Dr. King recognizes the distorted relationships and unjust reality experienced by Black, Brown, and communities of color during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and sought to redress racism, segregation, and oppression to achieve justice and equity for all (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). The vision and core principles of a beloved community entailed an interconnectedness and interdependence of all things; a shared humanity and solidarity not just tolerance for cursory cross-racial integration; a moral and sacred obligation to individual and community betterment; that everyone has benefitted in some way from the historical contributions of others; a passion for cross-cultural, multi-generational relationships, and multi-ethnic connections; and that real human and community transformation are possible (Burrow, Jr. 2006; Harding, 2007, 2011; King, Jr., 1968, 2010; Strong, 2007). Additionally, for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., community entails mutual cooperation, voluntary involvement, and a view that all of life is interconnected (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). A beloved community as a social-ethical ideal and commitment involves strategies for change based on love, nonviolence, civil disobedience, solidarity, increased consciousness, a sense of 'somebodyness', and knowledge that justice is indivisible (King Jr. & Washington, 1986). This conceptual and ontological frame of a beloved community provides a historical reference for working with a community food work organization like New Community Project that has a closely aligned vision and mission to the social-ethical ideal of a beloved community and orientation of how an organization seeks to approach care and provide agential change space through community food work.

Community food work as a core concept provides a frame to illustrate the ecological, social, ethical, and political issues related to food systems. Similar, to the social-ethical aim of the concept of a beloved community, community food work is an approach to rectify disparate realities that unjust systems and inequitable structures (Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017). Slocum (2007) outlined four broad types of processes and end goals of organizations and practitioners devoted to food, farming and community work. The four categories are centered on: 1) farm sustainability through direct linkages and localized connections of small and mid-scale farmers to markets; 2) community nutrition education to prevent diet-related illnesses and encourage better health outcomes; 3) environmental sustainability through ecologically sound agricultural practices for people, place, and planet; and 4) social justice efforts ranging from advocating for producer/worker rights, anti-hunger/food insecurity/food access, and urban agriculture for job creation. In later research on trauma and equity in the food system, Slocum and Cadieux (2015) argued that trauma should be understood as a universal experience that encompasses “the devastation of hunger, unemployment, imprisonment sickness, chronic stress, dangerous work, infant death” (p. 34). Using community food work as a frame that includes this deeper understanding of trauma as a wide-reaching experience that requires empathy, equity, and solidarity provided for a more generative analysis of community food work approaches and praxis as organizations and practitioners try to address complex endemic ecological, social, ethical, and political issues that affect the food system and communities. Community food work also intersects with theories and processes of change.

Theoretical Framework

Trauma-Informed Approach to Care

In this section, the specific theoretical framework for a trauma-informed approach to care and an ecotone as agential change space for community food work, the descriptive case review, and narrative inquiry approach to this research is provided. Trauma can affect any person

regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, geography, or sexual orientation. The U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) continues to research and evaluate the substantial impact of trauma on individuals and organizations. In SAMHSA's review of existing trauma definitions and discussions, the administration developed the following description for the concept of trauma:

...individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 7).

The concept of a trauma-informed approach to care was deliberated and articulated to assist service agencies, communities, and community-based organization in their work and inform emergent trauma-informed approaches and strategies. SAMHSA (2014) acknowledged that to significantly address the broad-scale impacts of trauma and its adverse experiences on individuals, families, communities, institutions, and service systems, a multi-pronged multi-systems approach to education, awareness, sensitivity, identification, prevention, assessment, and treatment will be required. The emphasis on being a multi-pronged, multi-systems approach is critical because experiences of trauma are extensive, seemingly wide-reaching, and inherently contextual. Each event, experience, and effect on an individual, community, and culture is manifested in different ways. Events and experiences of and responses to trauma are extremely diverse and variable (e.g., Holocaust, 9/11, interpersonal abuse by a trusted intimate, severe car crash, surgical mishap, etc.). Care requires knowledge of historic systemic context and locally-adaptive personalized service.

Historical and systemic inequities add layers of trauma, stress, and adverse experiences to people's lives to make any sense of belonging, settledness, and home untenable. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked new distress and exacerbated historical trauma; highlighting the health and

social disparities experienced by communities of color and other marginalized populations (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt, Gregory, & Singh, 2020; Harris, 2018; Williams, Lawrence, & Davis, 2019). The deleterious effects of individual and collective trauma revealed a serious need for broader-scale understanding and adoption of a trauma-informed approach by governmental organizations and educators. Simple awareness of the effects of trauma among organizations, community food work practitioners, and extension educators is not enough because the individual and collective ramifications are significant across society and the food system.

An adversity can elicit a stress response which can have a positive or negative effect. A certain level of trauma is necessary to generate a proper stress response to the event, experience, or site of the wound that is predictable, moderate, and not constant. An individual's response to the experience and how it is integrated and expressed determines whether the experience is considered traumatic or not (SAMHSA, 2014). Everyone experiences a normal stress reaction when their body, mind, and nervous system perceives a threat or injury as a spontaneous protective measure (Menakem, 2017). However, an event that discombobulates and dysregulates one person may not affect another person the same way.

The author Gregory Orr (2002), in his book *Poetry as Survival*, wrote about the shattering, fragmentation, disordering, self-blame, and disconnection that personal trauma causes and engenders. His reflection was based on his tragic shooting of his younger brother on his first hunting trip as a 12-year-old; and later as an 18-year-old civil rights activist being held and kidnapped at gunpoint in rural Alabama and later placed in solitary confinement for a week. The event and experience have the power to inform the body, mind, and system, and become part of a repertoire of tools as memory for future healing or the reverse, resilience, and coping (Yehuda, 2017). Similarly, in working for personal and social healing, resilience can be experienced as positive and negative with 'new and old faces' being possible depending on the anticipated

outcome (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 45). Memories can be good and bad; trauma can be triggered and reenacted so the violence of a bad experience can recur time and again. Trauma does not determine a person's destiny but can be foundational for building resilience (Menakem, 2017).

Trauma can be a tool to carry. You can carry your past and memories with you so you can go farther and be ready with the appropriate tool for a future situation (Yehuda, 2017). In thinking about the recognition and realization of individual agency needed for collective action, trauma does not have to define who we are and become our sole and group identity. Identifying with and being defined by trauma can be chosen by a group's members and become part of the group's memory and current identity (Lederach, 2005, p. 142). The concept should recognize true capabilities and capacities, and allow for context and personalization. Under most normal circumstances, the stress response builds and optimizes resilience if people have the necessary resources and are able to acknowledge, integrate, reset, and recalibrate their systems to move on and carry forward. But many people have limited resources, coping abilities, more to overcome, and greater vulnerability risks.

Trauma is not just trauma; there are many types and forms of trauma. Atkinson (2002) and Brave Heart et al. (2011) stated *historical trauma* is the result of cumulative emotional and psychological wounds experienced by specific cultural or racial/ethnic groups, such as enslavement, forced migration, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust, and violent colonization. Similarly, Harris (2018) defined *systemic* trauma as the contextual features of environments, structures, policies, and institutions that instill and perpetuate trauma, and that also shape post-traumatic responses and care. The effects of trauma are mediated by the scale, intensity, severity, duration, and time of the events and experiences, and often reverberate in many directions and ways that carry out and maintain inequities at an individual level and collective level. Therefore,

community food work organizations and practitioners need a full grasp of the multi-dimensional, multi-layered complexity of trauma.

A trauma-informed approach was developed as a health care framework based on the importance of adverse childhood events to poor distal health and mental health outcomes (Hecht et al., 2018; SAMHSA, 2014). A trauma-informed care framework acknowledges that sustained stress, adversity, and trauma affect individual and community health and resilience. The additional individual and collective trauma experienced due to COVID-19 makes the wide-reaching adoption and implementation of trauma-informed approaches by community organizations, state and local governments, federal agencies, and educational systems urgently necessary, particularly if equity and justice are truly going to be centered and achieved through community food work. The resultant grief, isolation, ambiguity, uncertainty, loss, and socioeconomic distress caused by COVID-19 in already vulnerable communities will potentially have transgenerational health outcomes and effects because of further dysregulation and attenuation of existing vulnerability (Perry, 2020).

The concept of trauma-informed care must be cognizant of and adaptive to scale, trust, time, duration, vulnerability, predisposition, ambiguity, history, and cultural devastation in relation to the effects and extent of trauma. These issues are extremely pertinent where people and cultures have experienced interpersonal and systemic subjugation, enslavement, displacement, dispossession, discrimination, historical loss, genocide, and racialization. These experiences add complexity, heaviness, and new layers to the concept of what trauma-informed care means for individuals, communities, and societies, and subsequent generations. Trauma can affect and be a source of body memory, power, genetic force, ritual, holding, and acknowledgment of right and wrong (McCutcheon, 2019; Menakem, 2018; Yehuda, 2017). In researching the life and activism of Fannie Lou Hamer and the Freedom Farms, McCutcheon (2019) shared that Fannie Lou

Hamer's memories and experiences of food insecurity, malnutrition, sexual violence, and racialized oppression motivated her activism and community food work. Therefore, there is a personal, interpersonal, historical, and collective context to trauma and adverse experiences.

The concept of trauma-informed care must also recognize and value signifiers and adjectives such as historical, racialized, intergenerational, transgenerational, and institutionalized as forms of trauma. These signifiers and types of traumas are inherently relevant to the description, concept, and practice of trauma-informed care because trauma is contextualized and differentiated based on history, culture, choice, generational, intergenerational, and transgenerational effects (Atkinson, 2002; Hecht et., 2018; Menakem, 2017; Van Der Kolk, 2014). Historical trauma is defined as the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations which is an outcome of massive group trauma (Hecht et al., 2018) that continues to manifest effects in overall health, relational well-being, and longevity (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). Historical trauma is the result of the cumulative emotional and psychological wounds experienced by specific cultural or racial/ethnic groups such as enslavement, forced migration, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust, and violent colonization of Indigenous and Aboriginal people (Atkinson, 2002; Brave Heart et al., 2011; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015).

For individuals and communities who have been in a state of disequilibrium or under chronic trauma for a generation or longer, a sense of individual agency and collective possibility and hope is most likely severely compromised and will require deep healing of hearts, minds, and bodies. Brave Heart et al. (2011) cited that historical trauma theory framed trauma as collective and group experiences with historical context and ramification for reducing isolation and the sense of stigma for communities and individuals so people can understand and recognize the scale and depth of the wound. Conching and Thayer (2019) stated that historical trauma theory has its origins based on work with Holocaust survivors and their offspring, but has also been foundational to

trauma research with American Indian, Alaskan Natives, Hawaiian, Japanese-American, Black and Brown communities, and other groups who have been oppressed and systematically traumatized at significant scale and intensity through time.

This intergenerational research discovered that children of Holocaust survivors were predisposed to having lower self-esteem, mental health disorders and complications, and compromised physical health compared to another cohort of Jewish children whose parents did not experience the Holocaust (Conching & Thayer, 2019; Yehuda, 2017; Yehuda et al., 2015; Yehuda et al., 2014). Yehuda (2017), in speaking on her research with trauma, resilience, and epigenetics, stated that trauma is transmitted between generations in two ways: 1) transmission of an epigenetic marker that programs like a code of software how a gene expresses itself in a child due to the trauma experienced by a parent and 2) transmission of a set of circumstances (i.e., endemic anxiety, persistent nightmares, unrealistic expectations, etc.) that impact the environment in which children are raised.

Menakem (2017) and DiAngelo (2016), in writing about racialized trauma and the socialization process of racism, explained historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, institutionalized trauma (white-body supremacy, white fragility, gender discrimination, sexual orientation, etc.), and personal trauma often interact within the body and in people's nervous systems. As these traumas intersect and compound, any new trauma on the site can provide new energy to trigger the remnants of past traumas (i.e., secondary, vicarious, ghosting) to further exacerbate the negative effect on people and their bodies (Menakem, 2017). When trauma is so pervasive and pernicious due to socialization and racialization processes, a trauma response can resemble personality and culture (Menakem, 2017, p. 9). Care, therefore, must consider multiple-systems and the cultural embeddedness of the trauma.

Hecht et al. (2018), in their work on creating a resilient food system in the greater Baltimore area through a trauma-informed policy approach, cite historical trauma as being the ‘cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations which is an outcome of massive group trauma’ (p. 1967). Trauma is internalized and externalized so a trauma-informed approach as praxis and mutual aid is needed to adapt to historical and present challenges on an organizational and societal basis. Hecht et al. (2018), in discussing an advocacy coalition framework for addressing the effects of trauma, emphasized the importance of advocacy as a form of solidarity with people and communities most affected by systemic trauma where the focus is not on what happened but on root causes, upstream determinants, and what is possible. Harris (2018) defined *systemic trauma* as the contextual features of environments, structures, policies, and institutions that instill and perpetuate trauma, and also impact post-traumatic responses and care. Leadership, policy, and practice are particularly critical to addressing institutionalized trauma and dismantling structural and systemic barriers to naming and healing trauma and the enduring effects of racism.

To confront historical and contemporary individual and collective trauma and disparate health and socioeconomic outcomes, community food work organizations and practitioners working within vulnerable neighborhoods and communities need to understand the lasting effects of these significant forms of trauma as they work toward new community and food system possibilities. Ramirez (2015), in research on black food geographies in relation to historic subjugation and enslavement, asserted transformative community food work for justice, sovereignty, and autonomy will require excavating historical trauma; decolonizing minds and politics; and greater acknowledgment of racial histories and oppressive exploitation.

Slocum and Cadieux (2015) highlighted that community food work practitioners work for food and social justice need be aware of and intervene in areas of trauma, land, labor, and other

sites of oppression. Lederach and Lederach (2010), in their work on peace-building and reconciliation, focus on relationships, friendships, and experiences that can happen in a shared space to recreate contested histories and forge new paths forward for people and communities. Ramirez (2015) goes on to posit that researchers, practitioners, and community food work organizations must consider how socialization and racialization processes continue to influence individuals, cultures, and society, particularly as community food work organizations with different epistemologies or those that have not directly experienced trauma attempt to reframe, re-story, and reimagine community food work spaces.

For injustices to be rectified and individual and community epistemic claims to be respected and restored, trauma-informed care and policies need to be universally understood by catalysts, individuals, organizations, and communities as a whole system that moves from awareness to sensitivity to responsiveness to true care (Walls, Higgins, & Hunter, 2016). Bowen and Murshid (2016) outlined a taxonomy of core principles of trauma-informed care in relation to social and food system policies that correlate to those outlined by SAMHSA: safety (e.g., food security), trustworthiness and transparency (e.g., past redlining and efforts of gerrymandering), collaboration (e.g., peer support), empowerment (e.g., really listening and stepping back), choice (e.g., freedom and control), and intersectionality (acknowledging the role of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age have in socialization and organization). In relation to community food work, Crenshaw (2017) described intersectionality as how systems of oppression are often stacked and layered in relation to race, ethnicity, and gender so the multi-faceted aspect of people's identity and personhood are deeply impacted by the oppression and directed marginalization. Bowen and Murshid (2016) and Hecht et al. (2018) also emphasized aspects of solidarity as integral to advocacy, policy, and care so the focus is not on what happened but what is possible.

Unfortunately, too many individuals, households, and communities are food insecure. Hamm and Bellows (2003) described and defined “community food security as when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice” (p. 40). Food insecurity can be viewed as a form of trauma. Hecht et al. (2018) made the association of food insecurity with ‘toxic stress’, which is characterized by chronic and acute economic uncertainties and other psychological stressors. From an experience perspective, children of food insecure families and households are physically and emotionally cognizant of the food situation and experience hunger, pain, tiredness, weakness, worry, anxiety, and anger (Hecht et al., 2018). These experiences can be acute and chronic. Experience of food insecurity in adults and children is closely correlated to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other long-term social physiological, and neurobiological development factors (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Chilton et al., 2015; Hecht et al., 2018).

Effects and additional consequences of individual and household food insecurity include maternal anxiety, social isolation, detrimental parent-child interactions, exposure to violence, poor mental health, absenteeism, stigma, decline in performance at school and on the job (Chilton et al., 2015). The experience and effects of household food insecurity can sometimes result in a negative feedback loop that can sometimes result in other personal and household interpersonal trauma events because everyone is in a heightened state of arousal and vigilance that can exceed a tolerable stress response level, which can result in more severe, longer-lasting difficulties (Chilton et al., 2015; Harris, 2018). Harris (2018) emphasized such a chronic prolonged activation of the stress-response system due to food insecurity and associated adversities can disrupt the proper development of individuals’ brain architecture and severely impact the body’s ability to respond appropriately to future stressful circumstances.

According to SAMHSA’s definition of a trauma-informed approach, a program, organization or system is trauma-informed: “when it *realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; *recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system; and *responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and seeks to actively *resist re-traumatization*” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 9). The four key assumptions of a trauma-informed care approach pertain to the primary focus of my research, design and methodology of inquiry, and data analysis in a multitude of ways. To center trauma-informed care in my research and ongoing community food work, I identified an integrated taxonomy of trauma-informed care principles defined, outlined, and referenced by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al. (2018), along practical actionable strategies to demonstrate, fulfill, and address trauma-informed care based on the core principles (Table 3). Hecht et al. (2018), in discussing an advocacy coalition framework for addressing the effects of trauma through policy, emphasized the importance of advocacy as a form of potential solidarity with people and communities most affected by systemic trauma where the focus is not on what happened but on root causes, witness, and what is possible. Therefore, solidarity was added as a seventh principle for thematic analysis to understand study participants’ thoughts and perceptions on the importance of solidarity as a principle to informed care and healing.

Table 2. *An integrated taxonomy of trauma-informed care principles and practical actionable strategies (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Hecht et al., 2018; SAMHSA, 2014).*

	Taxonomy of Trauma-Informed Care Principles	Practical Actionable Strategies to Demonstrate, Fulfill, and Address Trauma-Informed Care
1	Safety & Security	Consider the meeting space, timing, communication, and logistical constraints. Some people may not like to be confined in

		a room or indoor; or may be transitioning so safety needs to be learner-centered.
2	Trustworthiness & Transparency	Provide training and receive professional development to develop systems and accountability to enable trauma-informed services that build rapport, ensure confidentiality, and any questions focus on what happened and externalize the problem.
3	Peer Support	Recognize the lived experiences and wisdom in the room. Strategies may include story circles and mutual self-help group activities.
4	Collaboration and Mutuality	Incorporate activities and programs that allow practice, feedback, and reflection so people share in the leadership of the process. Shared power in the creation, development, and evaluation to address and level power imbalances. Strategy might include a quiet morning or afternoon reflection time for centering as an individual and group.
5	Empowerment, Voice, and Choice	Allow people to opt in or out of activities and programs to encourage self-determination of preferences, goal-setting, and decision-making. This could be done through a community forum but also be conscious that voice and choice can also be expressed through silence and action.
6	Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	Acknowledge and respect intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age in socialization and organization to recognize possible conscious and/or implicit biases. Have specific dates, times, and places to memorialize, ritualize, and create containers to hold and acknowledge the reality pain. Meditation, yoga, and somatic-based activities to encourage mindfulness.

7	Solidarity	Focus attention and care on what happened and not on what's wrong in a community

In reflecting on trauma-informed care and its application to community food work research and practice, researchers and practitioners will face challenges in adoption and make common mistakes in implementation. Events, experiences, and effects of trauma are complex and will be expressed differently at an individual and community level. Without deeper understanding of personal and collective trauma and how extensive the impact of trauma is on people and structures, researchers and practitioners may provide uninformed, isolated responses that result unknowingly in re-traumatization. Being uninformed and having good intentions can have unintended consequences and can be sources of potential harm if potential previous trauma exist. To create an organizational culture, everyone would have to be trained with coordination across departments and units for systemic change, and for care to be thoroughly modeled and practiced throughout the organization.

Communities that have suffered and continue to suffer from racialized trauma and are affected by historical and intergenerational trauma require awareness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and genuine whole systems care. To significantly address the broad-scale impacts of historical and contemporary trauma on individuals, families, communities, institutions, and structures, a multi-faceted, multi-systems approach to education, awareness, sensitivity, identification, prevention, assessment, and intervention will be required by community food work researchers, practitioners, and advocates. People who have not experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences may have a privileged epistemology and ontology. Trauma-informed care will entail an extensive critique and acknowledgment of that reality, and possible blind spots.

Trauma-informed care, agential change space, and the promotion of resilience are extremely salient to community food work and must be central to an organization's mindset and

culture to truly impact social justice and system possibilities. Southwick et al. (2014, p. 2) contended that the American Psychological Association's 2014 definition of resilience as a process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress still does not capture the entangled complicated context of resilience. Southwick et al. (2014) and (Ungar, 2012) added additional context and determinants to resilience as: 1) a stable trajectory of healthy functioning, 2) the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully, 3) a process to harness resources to sustain well-being, 4) having biological significance, 5) part of interactive systems, 6) cultural, and 7) promoting healthy development and supporting adaptive systems to support overall well-being.

Echterling and Stewart (2008) defined four general factors associated with individual resilience: 1) social support, 2) meaning making, 3) creative coping, and 4) regulating emotions. Luci (2010) cited that social support from friends, families, colleagues, and communities provides an essential buffering capacity during anxious and stressful events and experiences. Meaning making refers to the ability to transform what may be problem-saturated stories or seeming facts of an event into a meaningful cohesive narrative, while also being able to regulate and modulate the emotions surrounding the story and apparent facts (Echterling and Stewart, 2008). Creative coping strategies that bolster resilience include rituals, routines, and practices that provide structure for the individual, the situation, and reinforce a person's identity as capable of coping (Luci, 2010). Additionally, resilience and agency are essential factors for individual development and collective action in response to trauma and stress that can vary by type and context. The entangled and complicated context of resilience must be acknowledged to avoid reproducing a deficiency narrative based on the supremacy of some inherent capacity, particularly when context and support networks can vary at individual and community levels.

Trauma-informed care has wide-reaching applicability to health services and is emerging as an approach with community nutrition and food security organizations. Trauma and the lasting impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affects a large percentage of the population. Research confirmed how complex and burdensome such events and experiences are for children, adults, and communities. The individual and collective trauma experienced as a result of COVID-19 has shown there is a significant need for broader-scale adoption of trauma-informed systems of care. Organizations, practitioners, and service providers involved with community food work and who seek to be allies for food justice and sovereignty need to be cognizant of trauma events, experiences, and effects, and the disproportionate health outcomes in vulnerable communities as a result of historical and intergenerational racialized trauma.

Ecotone as a Metaphor for Agential Change Space

For this research, I believe an ecotone is an apt metaphor and social-ecological principle of a nurturing space and permeable boundary where community food work organizations and practitioners might imagine and co-create social possibilities of a just, equitable, safe world because organizations do not exist apart from people. An ecotone can also be a site of diversity, innovation, acceptance, resistance, and constructive experimentation of what is possible through community food work. From a theoretical perspective, I proposed ecotone as a metaphor for agential change space because an ecotone is a transitory, safe place with a porous permeable boundary for experiencing our shared humanity; for experimentation and creativity to spread, seed, and incubate ideas; and allowing new imaginaries of community and living sustainably emerge. Henry Giroux (2019, p. 84), in *The Terror of the Unforeseen*, described how neoliberal ideology and rationality has developed and devolved into a source of ‘slow violence’ and ‘fast violence’ that insidiously and ultimately destroys social ties and public spheres so individuals are left to their own survival and to an extremely harsh form of rugged individualism. In speaking to the collateral

realities and ontological politics the neoliberal ideology has created, Giroux (2019) posited in the following excerpt that any concept and reality of collective social responsibility and shared public space for a common good has to be rethought and ethically re-imagined:

Central to developing any viable notion of the social is a rethinking of the critical institutions and shared spaces in which matters of morality, justice, and equality become central to a renewed understanding of politics. There is a need to reimagine where public spaces, connections, and public commitments lie beyond the domain of the private and how they can be constructed as part of a broader effort to create engaged and critical citizens willing to fight for an emergent democratic politics. Central here is a renewed perception of education as the crucial site in which the intertwined dynamics of individual agency and democratic politics merge. Politics in this sense is connected to a discourse of critique and possibility in which a plurality of memories, narratives, and identities come together in defense of a common good and a comprehensive politics that brings together personal and public meanings, discourses, and connections. (p. 95)

An ecotone as an agential change space has similar social, ecological, and economic applications to community food work and to the epistemological politics and ontological framing of the food and farming discourse, particularly in relation to policies and anthropogenic factors such as an expansive pervasive neoliberal rationality that can encourage violence and be trauma-inducing. Krall (1994), in *Ecotone: Wayfaring on the margins*, declared that the majority of humans on Earth are in a sense marginalized by circumstances and transitions. Distinct trauma and marginalization of oppressed people are other distinguishing factors of marked differences in lived experiences. For people, the edge effect and margin are often apparent and marked by differences in lived experiences, position, and privilege. Krall (1994) defined an ecotone “as the boundary between two natural communities where elements of both communities as well as transitional

species intermingle and intersect to create heightened richness and diversity” (p. 4). Krall (1994), in discussing feminine theory and intersectionality, used ecotone as a principle and metaphor for her growing awareness and appreciation of margins but also the transitory emergent unfolding of life in ecological, social, and spiritual realms. Krall (1994) posited these ecotones as regions of the known and unknown can be sources of entangled networks, assemblages, and integral social spaces for individual and community growth. Kent et al. (1997), in researching the boundaries of landscape and plant communities, defined an ecotone as “a zone of relatively rapid change between two plant communities and a dynamic zone of interaction which, as a consequence, is often unstable” (p.324). Kark and van Rensburg (2006) emphasized the abruptness, sharpness, and steepness of changes and gradients in biotic and abiotic communities in these transition zones and how adjoining ecosystems are assembled.

D’Adamo-Damery (2015) used a rhizoanalytical lens and the metaphor of a rhizome to explore and describe the emergence of specific knowledge and realities as assemblages of community food work in the Central Appalachian Region. D’Adamo Damery (2015) described the rhizomatous nature of community food work and how networks grow out of ongoing initiatives and connections around food and farming. D’Adamo-Damery’s (2015) ecological metaphor of a rhizome demonstrated how community food work and social movement are entangled networks, assemblages, and integral social spaces. This research specifically used an ecotone as a metaphor for an agential change space for expanding and realizing new social-ethical realities and possibilities, particularly since characteristics of ecological and social ecotones include diversity, adaptation, tension, and resilience (Seidman, 2009). An ecotone as agential change space can provide a social, ecological, and political meaning comparable to what Monica White (2018) described as communal space necessary for resistance and a community of praxis. Giroux (2019)

argued for a reimagined space where morality, justice, and equality become pivotal to critical consciousness, civic education, and a renewed understanding of politics.

There is a great need to acknowledge and study how community food work organizations encourage and serve as agential change space to inform and foster the recognition of individual agency and expression of collective action (Hochschild, 2016; Lear, 2008; Silva, 2019; White, 2018). The food justice movement and the reframing of community food work must recognize people's inherent individual significance, value, and need for a sense of belonging and home as a safe agential space to achieve its aims and purposes. Food justice and community food work must include critical consciousness to encourage meaningful self-reflection and action in relation to power, politics, and the formation of individual agency and collective possibility (Freire 1970, 1973). Monica White, in her book *Freedom Farmers* (2018), provided an exemplar of why questioning narratives and working assumptions is so cogent to community food work and social change processes. White (2018) specifically researched sites of resistance and people within the Civil Rights Movement related to Black farming and food geographies.

Monica White (2018) provided a framework for resistance and liberation that included community as praxis, prefigurative politics, and cooperative models for collective agency. For White (2018), a community of praxis is defined as a communal space and site of resistance for discussing, debating, investigating, and truly contesting principles and problem-saturated stories and structures that would deny agency, voice, freedom, and full democratic participation. A community of praxis allowed for and encouraged experimentation, creativity, and new ways of being in what was an oppressive world. Initial and ongoing reflexivity can be liberating and allow people to see with new eyes existing spaces and places of resistance, where individual agency, collective identity, and community resilience are flourishing (White, 2018). Appreciative presentation and reception of practices shifts the discussion and creatively disrupts assumed norms

for narrative interpretation and analysis of individual agency and collective action by communities (White, 2018).

In this literature review, I reviewed ‘a beloved community’ as a social-ethical ideal and community food work as two concepts that contest the hegemonic influence of neoliberal rationality on individuals and vulnerable populations; and how a trauma-informed care approach and agential change space are critical to community food work pedagogy and praxis. Organizations and practitioners must learn from history but also grasp the economic and non-economic ramifications of neoliberal framing and governance on community food work pedagogy and praxis. A social-ethical ideal like a beloved community and an ecotone as a social-ecological principle and metaphor might assist organizations and practitioners to reframe what constitutes community and possibility. A trauma-informed care approach and agential change space have clear ramifications for community food work efforts to counter neoliberal hegemony, encourage social-ethical ideals, and expand what is possible for people and communities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation research used a narrative inquiry approach to analyze the ecotonal nature of a community food work as praxis. The research specifically focused on how an organization embodies trauma-informed care; how an organization engenders agential change space; and the aspirations and tensions that exist and emerge for an organization embodying trauma-informed care and engendering agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand vulnerable individuals' and the broader public's boundaries of what is possible. In this chapter, I explain my ontological, epistemological, and axiological approach to the study. Additionally, I provide an a priori framework for the rationale of a descriptive case review and narrative inquiry investigation of the perceptions and thoughts of study participants on trauma-informed care and agential change space. My working assumption of qualitative research is consonant with Guba and Lincoln (2008) and Deener (2018). Guba and Lincoln (2008) argue that research is always done in a social, political, and economic context. There are personal, organizational, and institutional ramifications and implications for research. Research is rarely if ever static but is always occurring in the middle of or as a result of change and transformative processes (Deener, 2018).

Research Questions

RQ1: How does a community food work organization embody trauma-informed care to promote and support resilience?

RQ2: How does a community food work organization engender an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand vulnerable individuals' and the broader public's boundaries of what is possible?

RQ3: What aspirations and tensions exist and emerge for an organization embodying trauma-informed care and engendering an agential change space?

Research Approach

Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology

Leavy (2014) outlined the elements of qualitative research and methodology as paradigm, ontology, epistemology, and axiology. My methodological paradigm for this research aligns with a critical realism, constructivist, participatory, and emancipatory as a post-positivist paradigm (Collier, 1994; Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent 2014; Giroux, 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Law, 2004; Freire, 1970/1973). As a critical realist, I acknowledge the existence of an objective world where a deeper truth of justice, equity, and shared humanity exists, while there are individual experiences and subjective interpretations in search of a deeper truth and understanding of an objective reality. Hence, I do believe in multiple realities. For the purpose of this research, I have specifically focused on the existence of disparate realities because dual realities are sometimes easier for people to understand and contest. However, I believe individual and collective ontology is influenced by politics, power, presentation, and narrative (Law, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2008). My research proposition and epistemological argument for the overall concepts of a beloved community and community food work as praxis is that knowledge is created, understood, and influenced by values, ethics, hegemony, and power (Leavy 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 2008), and that we construct the world we desire each day whether we acknowledge that power or not.

My career experience working internationally with Mennonite Central Committee as a community development coordinator and agriculturalist in Tanzania, East Africa provided a foundation in critical consciousness and pedagogy. Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers were two teachers and authors I studied to learn about development and change processes. Therefore, critical consciousness and meaningful reflection are essential components of praxis in development and change processes (Giroux, 2020; Freire 1970, 1973). This research aims to center story and narrative in deepening understanding on how an organization embodies trauma-informed care and

engenders agential change space to expand boundaries of what exists and what is possible individually and collectively. As a community food work researcher and practitioner, I believe research is situated and negotiated in time and space and should address the root causes and upstream determinants of human suffering (Deener, 2018; Becker et al., 2013; Hale, 2001). Trauma-informed care and agential change space as critical principles for alleviating human suffering are the focus of this bounded research case.

Case Study as Methodology

Descriptive cases and case narratives are critical to learning processes. Case studies as a theoretical sample can inform understanding of events, experiences, and effects (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Epistemologically, according to Stake (2005), the research question is what can be learned from a single case. What is studied is paramount to the research rather than reliance on a methodology that can be repeatedly measured for greater generalizability (Stake, 2005). A case study often is aimed at a research question that transcends the human experience. The debate and criticism of case study as a methodology is based on its specificity of time and place, statistical inference power, and ability to generalize to a macro-level. Patton (2002) emphasized the importance of interviewing and collecting data that can provide information-rich experiences, and not just data for data's sake. According to Patton (2002), based on a reflection and examination of an extended case method, a perceived weakness of a case study from a statistical perspective was a strength and argument for using a case study because it is rich in experience and context. New Community Project was chosen as the community food work organization for this research because of its vision of community, rich experience in mutual aid and social-ecological activism, willingness to embrace complexity, and possibly be a refuge and place of healing.

Narrative Inquiry

The narrative inquiry approach used draws from the research of Ligrani and Niewolny (2017), Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016), Lyon et al. (2011), and Peters et al. (2004), this research approach focused on the storyteller, the performativity of experience being shared, detaching from a research agenda, and opening a space for holding the story to allow the narrative to be revealed to the storyteller, listener, and reader. Narratives are understood for this research as a form and space for performative learning and experimentation to explore the possible with one another (Law, 2008). This approach requires empathic and generative listening (Scharmer, 2009, 2016).

The narrative inquiry research focused on how an organization embodies trauma-informed care; engenders a place of meaningful support and participative interaction, and models the characteristics of an ecotone as a metaphor and an extension of agential change space to expand individual and collective boundaries of what is possible as community. The narrative inquiry included conducting semi-structured interviews and hearing the stories of people receiving, coordinating, extending, and funding community care as mutual aid to understand the trajectory of the organization's programming and story in its efforts at community change processes. Law (2004, p. 6) emphasized how metaphors of reality can be elucidating and how assemblages and gatherings give a greater sense of people's diverse interactions with the world. New Community Project and its leadership in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in seeking to understand the individual and collective narrative and ontological frames of people who are vulnerable, have been displaced, marginalized, experienced trauma, or generally isolated socially, has referenced an ecotone as an ecological and sociological principle resonant with their community food work, social justice, and eco-activism. Ecotone serves as a metaphor and principal extension of a transitory, diverse, productive, fertile safe place; a porous permeable boundary to come and go or stay to share your

humanness and shared vulnerabilities; a space for experimentation and creativity to spread, seed, and incubate ideas; and a fecund transition zone to allow new imaginaries of community and living sustainably together emerge.

Narrative as Phenomenon of Interest

Clandinin (2007), hooks (2009), D’Adamo-Damery (2014), and Kim (2016) stated that researchers, teachers, and communities have to see stories and narrative as part of a puzzle rather than simply questions to be delved into for a simple answer. Stories and narratives elucidate people’s experience, help storytellers represent their experiences, and the storyteller and others to understand those experiences. The phenomenon of interest for this research is the specific perceptions and thoughts of study participants shared in their narratives about their experience of meaningful support and interactive participation with a community food work organization as evidence of embodied trauma-informed care and agential change space.

Narrative as Metaphor and Representation

Narrative as metaphor and representation can be a container to hold and allow honest evaluation and acknowledgment of the stories themselves, the stories we have told ourselves, and the stories we have been told. The use of metaphors appropriate to and resonant with people’s experiences, histories, and narratives can also help in the transformation process. Hochschild (2016), Solnit (2016), Lederach and Lederach (2010), and Orr (2002) emphasized the need for better metaphors to deal with past hurts and frame future hope. Arlie Hochschild in *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016) elaborated on two metaphors, specifically a deep story and an empathy wall, as representative of what is needed to bridge experiences and understand narratives. Hochschild (2016) described a ‘deep story’ as an epistemic claim that magnifies a host of previous situations that feel fraught and feel true. From this distillation of memories and feelings, the

ongoing narrative is based on dreams and analogous experiences related to the deep story and the need.

Narrative as Data in Assessment

Patton (2002) emphasized the importance of interviewing or collecting data such as interviews, observations, fieldwork, and documents that provide information-rich experiences. A perceived weakness of using a small sample size of narratives from a statistical perspective can become a strength because of the information-rich content. A general tenet in use of narrative is to use cases that you can learn the most from through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Framing shapes interpretation of data and alter the arc and meaning of a story (Harris & Carbado, 2006). Stevenson et al., (2007), in their discussion of the framing process for changing the food system, explained that a frame is a method of building shared meaning and definition A frame also has the capacity to mobilize people and communities to action, especially when the frame adheres to and is resonant with mutual experiences. A challenge of data analysis with coding, categories, themes at different levels within passages and a full transcript is to fully capture the multi-dimensional aspects of the narrative and not privilege some text or information over another, especially since narratives and stories reveal and communicate people and communities' experiences, biography, structure, and sense of the world (Patton, 2015).

Clandinin (2013) reviewed the boundaries and tensions that commonly frame narrative inquiry: temporality, fluidity, people, action, and certainty, but also emphasized researchers need to be equally aware of the boundaries, tensions, disruptions, interruptions, metaphors, and silences of the other people as data as well. In line with Peters, Alter, and Schwartz (2010), Niewolny & D'Adamo-Damery, (2016), Ligrani and Niewolny, (2017), my research aimed to attend to the storyteller; experiences shared; avoid forcing an agenda; and fitting data to pre-conceived notions. However, an a priori framework guided my research in the framing of questions, assessing

theories, critiquing assumptions and pre-conceived notions, and being open to how stories unfold and narratives are formed.

A Priori Framework for Case Study and Narrative Investigation

In this section, an a priori framework is shared that guided the proposed research of how an organization has sought to embody trauma-informed care, provided and been a place of meaningful support and participative interaction, and modeled an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma based on the overarching concepts and primary theories. A program, organization, or system, according to SAMHSA's (2014) definition, is using a trauma-informed care approach: "when it *realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; *recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system and *responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and seeks to actively *resist re-traumatization*" (p. 9). A trauma-informed care approach is dynamic and adaptive, and not a destination. Within this context, safety and security in relations, space, and environment are paramount for care, resilience, and agency. Therefore, my research approach to the case study and narrative inquiry was similarly informed to realize, recognize, respond, and resist re-traumatization, particularly in the semi-structured interview process and work with individuals who have received and are extending community care and mutual aid.

In researching how resilience is promoted and supported, I referred to the work of Echterling and Stewart (2008) who defined four general factors associated with resilience: social support, meaning making, creative coping, and regulating emotions. Southwick et al. (2014) and (Ungar, 2012) add additional context and determinants to resilience as: 1) a stable trajectory of healthy functioning, 2) the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully, 3) a process to harness resources to sustain well-being, 4) having biological significance, 5) part of interactive

systems, 6) cultural, and 7) promoting healthy development and supporting adaptive systems to support overall well-being. White (2018) conceptualized collective agency as a way people and communities through coming together and raising the critical consciousness of a larger group can affect and impact their social and political future and take more control of their individual and collective lives.

In regard to the use of ecotone as a metaphor for agential change space as a primary theoretical frame, I referenced the research of Krall (1994), Kark and van Rensburg (2006), Kark (2013), Lederach (2005), Parker (2020), Seidman (2009), and White (2018) on nature and human-related ecotones, renegotiated space, transformative space, free space, and participative space as a community of praxis because of their overlap and translatability to the overarching concepts as well as trauma-informed care. Seidman (2009) identified four characteristics of ecotones that were pertinent to the three research questions of the study, and specifically to an ecotone as a metaphor and an extension of agential change space: diversity, adaptation, tension, and resilience.

The a priori framework outlined in Table 4 provided a starting point for the narrative inquiry for the case study of the ecotonal nature of community food work. The a priori framework also demonstrates that there is overlap and alignment between the two social-ethical modalities (i.e., a beloved community and community food work) and the two primary theoretical frames. The analysis of how an organization has sought to embody trauma-informed care, engender and agential change space for individual agency and collective action involved how participants' responses to semi-structured prompts and their narratives align and resonate with an a priori framework of theoretical constructs, an integrated taxonomy of a trauma-informed approach to care and agential change space. The semi-structured interview scripts referenced in Appendices C and D were designed to follow the taxonomy of a trauma-informed approach to understand how

community food work practitioners and stakeholders think about and perceive this approach as being embodied and engendered within a community food work space.

Table 3. *An a priori framework to guide the narrative inquiry process.*

Research Questions	A priori themes of interest for Narrative Inquiry to Understand Perceptions of and Thinking about Trauma-Informed Care and Agential Change Space	Overarching Conceptual Constructs and Primary Theoretical Frames
RQ1: How does a community food work organization embody trauma-informed care to promote and support resilience? RQ2: How does a community food work organization engender agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand vulnerable individuals' and the broader public's boundaries of what is possible? RQ3: What aspirations and tensions exist and emerge for an organization embodying trauma-informed care and engendering an agential change space?	Collaboration & Mutuality^{1, 2, 3, 4} Connection, Empathy & Trust^{1, 2} Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues^{1, 2, 3, 4} Dignity & Trust^{1, 2, 3, 4} Diversity, Heterogeneity, & Participative Space^{1, 2, 3, 4} Empowerment, Voice, and Choice^{1, 3, 4} Peer Support^{3, 4} Richness & Potential for Growth^{1, 4} Safety & Security^{1, 2, 3, 4} Solidarity^{1, 2, 3, 4} Trustworthiness & Transparency^{1, 2, 3, 4}	¹Beloved Community (King Jr., 1968; King Jr. & Washington, 1986) ²Community Food Work (Slocum, 2007; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015) ³Trauma-Informed Approach to Care (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Hecht et al., 2018; SAMHSA, 2014) ⁴Ecotone as a Metaphor for Agential Change Space (Krall, 1994; Kark & van Rensburg, 2006; Seidman, 2009; Kark, 2013; Lederach, 2005; Parker, 2020; White, 2018)

Reflexivity Statement

My knowledge and understanding of peace, justice, equity, grace, mercy, kindness, love, non-violence, service, and community is specifically shaped in my life by the centrality of Christ and the Sermon on the Mount. Christ's teachings instruct my ongoing study of redemption, restoration, and reconciliation. Additionally, I understand faith to entail uncertainty, ambiguity, trust, and mystery. My understanding of a 'beloved community' and mutual aid is informed by chapters two and four of the Book of Acts, and further inspired by the lives and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Thurman, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, and others. In the Book of Acts, mutual aid was defined by people coming together and sharing to meet everyone's social and physical needs so that no one was in want or need.

From a practical perspective, my reality as an academic researcher and practitioner was shaped by my father's family's meager beginnings as first and second-generation immigrants in contrast to my mother's family's more affluent beginnings dating back to the 1740s. I was born in 1964 so my earliest formative memories of existing and disparate onto-epistemological politics were during the Civil Rights and Vietnam War Era. I remember watching scenes of protest marches, speeches, and war updates on my parents' television. Additionally, my parents were politically active. My father actively opposed a neo-Nazi gathering in my home city in the 1970s and became a registered independent after Ronald Reagan's presidency. Hence, I continue to appreciate the history and political lives of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, and other current social reformers and independent thought leaders.

An interview with Tom Benevento of New Community Project in 2017 for a food security and community resilience class, particularly informed and shaped this research. Tom is a co-coordinator and co-founder of New Community Project's Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg,

Virginia. In the interview, Tom observed and shared the following insights on the ecological principles and social applications of an ecotone for change and growth processes:

When we think of ecosystems, we think of the edge as an ecotone where you have sort of the margins. These ecotones are places of higher potential and higher productivity. I find these edges and ecotones in a social context as well with people that we work with, folks marginalized or on the edge. When you bring them together into a healing environment, you have a new ecotone that creates something that you do not expect and beautiful... The other element of community work that I have been learning more about is the intersection between ecological principles and their applications to social principles. They intersect in a unique way. Ecological principles do not only pertain to the physical world, but also in the social realm as well. For example, when we started this project, we started throwing out many ideas, had many little projects, and then needed to thin the ideas and projects out and prune them down. The process is similar to how nature throws out lots of stuff at the very beginning of the season, lots of seeds, lots of pioneer species, and then nature begins to thin things out a bit. We had to learn the thinning and pruning process and the whole sense of the margin and ecotone. The recognition that thinning and pruning is true in nature, but also true to social structures. To value and see those edges has been a neat lesson to learn and a fun process to watch as we go along. (Bendfeldt, 2017).

As a researcher, practitioner, and advocate for food system and community transformation, I believe critical consciousness, self-awareness, and meaningful reflection are essential components of education and research. I want to honor and walk alongside individuals and communities who are working to heal and address injustices. Consciousness and reflection help me understand the power differential and asymmetries that exist in life and research. Similarly, my own power, privilege, position, and epistemology must be acknowledged as an additional lens to

this well-intentioned research, community-focused initiative, and effort to hopefully contribute to the amelioration of significant ecological, political, and social injustices. Therefore, I must practice cultural humility and seek to level power imbalances.

I acknowledge my positionality and beliefs as a white, 58-year-old, heterosexual, well-educated affluent male that provides a lens and context of how I think about and read the narratives. I recognize my inherent privilege and power in being white, the son of an intact two-parent household with educated parents, and a U.S. citizen. I have experienced heartbreaks, some adversity, and loss but not to the tragic depth of many people. I am employed by Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech as an extension specialist and am a part-time doctoral candidate in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education.

Research Design

The research was designed to answer three research questions in relation a trauma-informed care as an organization change process in the context of a community food work site. Slocum (2007) elaborated on four broad types of processes and end goals of organization's devoted to food, farming and community work: 1) farm sustainability through direct linkages and localized connections of small and mid-scale farmers to markets; 2) community nutrition education to prevent diet-related illnesses and encourage better health outcomes; 3) environmental sustainability through ecologically sound agricultural practices for people, place, and planet; and 4) social justice efforts ranging from advocating for producer/worker rights, anti-hunger/food insecurity/food access, and urban agriculture for job creation. Slocum and Cadieux (2015) expounded on these four broad categories and identified justice, equity, and trauma as critical nodes of community food work in efforts to ameliorate the historical violence and contemporary harm inflicted on Black, Brown, indigenous people, and people of color in the U.S. and Canada.

The selection criteria for the community food work organization and site were based on the community food work definition and categories defined by Slocum (2007), the critical nodes of justice, equity, and trauma specified by Slocum and Cadieux (2015), and the framing of community food work space outlined by Niewolny and D'Adamo-Damery (2016). In recognizing that trauma intersects with many health and social issues, an additional research parameter was to identify a community food work organization working at this intersection to redress trauma and harm caused to people by the current dominant political, economic system.

Using these criteria, New Community Project's Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg, Virginia was identified as the community food work organization and setting for the case study of trauma-informed care as an organizational change process and agential change space as critical to mutual aid and community food work praxis. New Community Project's Vine and Fig program is part of a national and international community-focused organization working to change the narrative, ontological framing, and trajectory of people's lives who are vulnerable, displaced, and marginalized by society either due to conflict, addiction, abuse, homelessness, or general social isolation.

New Community Project's Vine and Fig Program is located in an urban setting so its approach to community food work and sustainability centers around urban gardening, community gardens, and growing produce within a shared communal space. The New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) was established to provide housing for those needing temporary shelter or refuge but is also community food work space that includes market gardens, farm-to-school gardens, compost units, rabbit hutches, greenhouses, meditation trails, tree nurseries, Egyptian wood-fired oven, solar-powered hot water heaters, and other agroecological demonstrations in an effort to be carbon neutral. Since its inception in 2008, New Community Project's community food work has intersected the four categories outlined by Slocum

(2007). New Community Project made direct linkages through the years with the Harrisonburg Farmers Market, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, and local Downtown Harrisonburg restaurants.

The Vine and Fig site that adjoins The White House in Harrisonburg continues to serve as a hub for community food work-related programs and activities (i.e., gardens, greenhouses, compost units, education and outreach, and agroecological activism). Neighboring homes were purchased near the White House in subsequent years to provide additional housing for people and families in need in the community, and to create a therapeutic “urban village campus” setting and environment centered around the communal gardening space.

From an ecological sustainability social justice perspective, New Community Project strives to reduce its ecological and carbon foot print in many different ways ranging from bike-powered marketing of produce, food recovery and composting, agroforestry and permaculture-based framing practices to passive solar arrangements for heating and cooling. Other projects and programs specifically incubated and co-initiated include the Northend Greenway (2.5 mile walk and bike path to connect low wealth neighborhoods to area grocery stores); Silver Run Forest Farm (a tree nursery and riparian watershed restoration initiative); Renew Rocktown (the 50% renewable energy by 2025 initiative in Harrisonburg); GiveSolar (to meet the solar energy needs of low wealth populations and reduce monthly energy bills); Soil Cycles (food waste recovery and composting program); Education and Outreach Program around gardening, composting, and permaculture; and the Jubilee Climate Farm in Rockingham County focused on agroforestry, carbon farming, and community gardening.

The research with New Community Project’s Vine and Fig Program and its specific community-focused initiatives was envisioned as being a descriptive case study of how an organization understands, frames, and addresses the social, economic, and environmental health of people; builds community; and how people who receive and extend mutual aid as part of

community food work perceive the organization's approach to trauma-informed care and effort to create and serve as an agential change space. The case study and a narrative inquiry approach examined the ecotonal nature of community food work and specifically analyze how, if possible, an organization embodies trauma-informed care; provides meaningful support and participative interaction to engender an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand people's boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively.

Research Timeline

Table 4. *Timeline of Research Steps and Activities.*

Research Steps and Activities	Start Date	End Date
Defend Research Prospectus	November 2021	November 2021
Submit IRB Protocol and Documents	December 2021	December 2021
Obtain IRB Approval to Conduct Research	December 2021	December 2021
Formally Recruit Participants	January 2022	February 2022
Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews	February 2022	April 2022
Data Collection: Organization Review	February 2022	March 2022
Transcribe interviews, triangulate data from field notes, journals, interviews, and organizational documents	April 2022	June 2022
Qualitative Coding	June 2022	July 2022
Data analysis	August 2022	September 2022
Report back to community care and community food work organization participants	September 2022	September 2022
Write up Chapters 4 and 5 of Dissertation	September 2022	November/December 2022
Defend Dissertation		February 2023

Data Collection

This research involved a descriptive review of the organization that included a review of current and historical documents about the organization's vision, mission, objectives, programming, bi-annual newsletters, websites, and 990 forms submitted in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020 as a nonprofit organization to the U.S. Department of Treasury's Internal Revenue Service. The vision and mission, along with current program initiatives, were found on New Community Project's website. New Community Project, through its two Sustainable Living Centers in Virginia and Vermont, learning tours, and educational exchanges, has a local, national, and international scope, however, the research predominantly focused on its work centered around New Community Project's Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) located in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Virginia.

The second data collection process focused on participants' perceptions and thoughts on trauma-informed care and agential change space through semi-structured interviews with seventeen people who fulfill different organizational and programmatic roles with New Community Project. The community food work interviewees were invited to participate on the recommendation of Tom Benevento who is the co-founder of New Community Project's Vine and Fig program in Harrisonburg and served as a key informant for this research. The community food work interviewees were divided into two cohorts as those receiving mutual aid and those coordinating and providing mutual aid. All of the study participants were attracted to and related to New Community Project for different personal and professional reasons so the division into two cohorts was not meant to be monolithic or deterministic. The New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) provided a reference point for the first cohort as those receiving mutual aid as shelter or temporary housing at some point in their relationship and

work with New Community Project to explore initial perceptions and changes in perceptions through time.

The second cohort of twelve study participants fulfilled organization roles that involved the coordinating and providing of mutual aid and care through programs, incubating initiatives, and philanthropic funding. As a case study, it should be noted that all of the people's capacities, roles, and responsibilities were bounded by time and space. The research focuses on one aspect of the participants' personhood in relation to New Community Project. The study participants are complex, multi-dimensional persons who have additional roles and responsibilities as sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, parents, grandparents, colleagues, mentors, friends, and more.

In reflecting on the second cohort's relationship with New Community Project, experiences and reasons for being involved and working alongside New Community Project varied among the second cohort that demonstrated similar heterogeneity and desire for social-ethical refuge as the first cohort. The reasons included healing relationships with people and the earth as an essential part of community; seeking to align values and faith with personal and professional goals; integrating a fuller-bodied approach to care, justice, and healing; finding answers to deep questions about systemic racism; being concerned about the present status of climate change; having epiphany that community development and true mutual aid is all about people; to learn how to address food access and actively oppose the carceral policies of the U.S.; being fiercely committed to agroforestry, watershed health, and restorative justice; supporting a holistic approach to philanthropic funding; recognizing the geopolitical and environmental harm of the current system; focusing on root causes of inequities and injustices; being a confluence of needs and interests; and providing a home for people who are homeless in terms of their own values and the things they care about in the world.

A recruitment letter describing the project and its proposed objectives was shared with seventeen people associated with New Community Project to get diverse perspectives, histories, roles, experiences, perceptions, and thoughts about the organization in the realm of trauma-informed care. A sample of the recruitment letter in English and Spanish is shared in Appendix A. The 17 people interviewed as participants in community mutual aid ($n = 5$) and community food work coordination and programming ($n = 12$) were asked semi-structured questions as prompts to start a conversation and encourage reflective storytelling related to meaningful support and interactive participation (Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017; Lyon et al., 2011; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Peters et al., 2010).

Study participants were informed about the research study, their input was invited, and their participation was welcomed. Each study participant was given the option to share their identities or to use an agreed upon pseudonym, and approve their interview stories following an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) research protocol. Each participant was provided an information sheet in English and Spanish about the objectives of the approximate 45 to 60-minute semi-structured conversation (Appendix B.) (Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016). The semi-structured conversations followed a draft interview script and was conducted at a mutually agreed convenient open setting (Appendix C and D). The narrative collected during the visit was obtained through informed consent, audio-recorded, transcribed, re-transcribed with editing, and configured as a public “narrative profile” through a co-creating and co-editing process with the participants and the interviewer to add clarity (Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017; Lyon et al., 2011; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Peters et al., 2010). Three of the participants interviewed were Spanish-speaking, therefore, the recruitment letter, information sheet, and the interview script related to perceptions were translated into Spanish by a certified translator, reviewed and approved by Virginia Tech’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), and then shared with the participants for their

review and approval before starting the conversation. Each study participant was given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or use their real first name for their individual narrative profile. All study participants except four decided to use their real first names. The final co-created and co-edited narratives of each participant ranged in length from two to 14 single-spaced pages (Appendices E – T).

The semi-structured interview scripts were designed for two general cohorts of people within New Community Project: 1) those people coordinating, incubating, funding, and providing community mutual aid as a practice of community-building (n = 12) and 2) those who have received community mutual aid to understand how the recipients perceive the community-building process as possibly influenced and informed by trauma-informed care and the organization being a place for agential change space (n = 5). Again, the division into two cohorts was not meant to be deterministic or monolithic but to allow exploration of initial perceptions and changes in perceptions as well as changes in thoughts through time. The 17 research participants were interviewed with semi-structured prompting questions to construct a reflective story on thoughts and perceptions of meaningful support and interactive participation as two broad signifiers of whether and how trauma-informed care is embodied and agential change space is engendered by an organization as community food work praxis to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma. Additional questions focused specifically on care, aspirations, and tensions in providing and being a place of meaningful support and participative interaction.

The two interview scripts were very similar in the nature of the questions. However, one script was designed to collect data as narratives on the perceptions of five people who received or are currently receiving community mutual aid (e.g., shelter and temporary housing at the New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) and/or a living wage from coordinating hospitality or supervising a market garden initiative) in collaboration with New

Community Project to understand how they perceive the organization's community-building process as informed by care, resilience, and agential change space. The second interview script and process focused on how twelve practitioners and organizational stakeholders of community food work of New Community Project think about their community-building efforts in regards to trauma-informed care, resilience, and agential change space. The second set of interviewees included people who are now paid coordinating partners of daily educational and outreach programming; key leaders and coordinators of past and present incubated program initiatives; and New Community Project's founder, board members, and a major philanthropic donor of the community food work in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, VA (Figure 1).

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to attend to the storyteller, appreciate the experience and wisdom being shared, and not force an interpretive agenda. The process allowed the narrative to unfold for the storyteller, listener, and reader as an ontological framing of the ecotonal nature of community food work. It also included an analytical lens for understanding trauma-informed care and agential change space as part of a community organization.

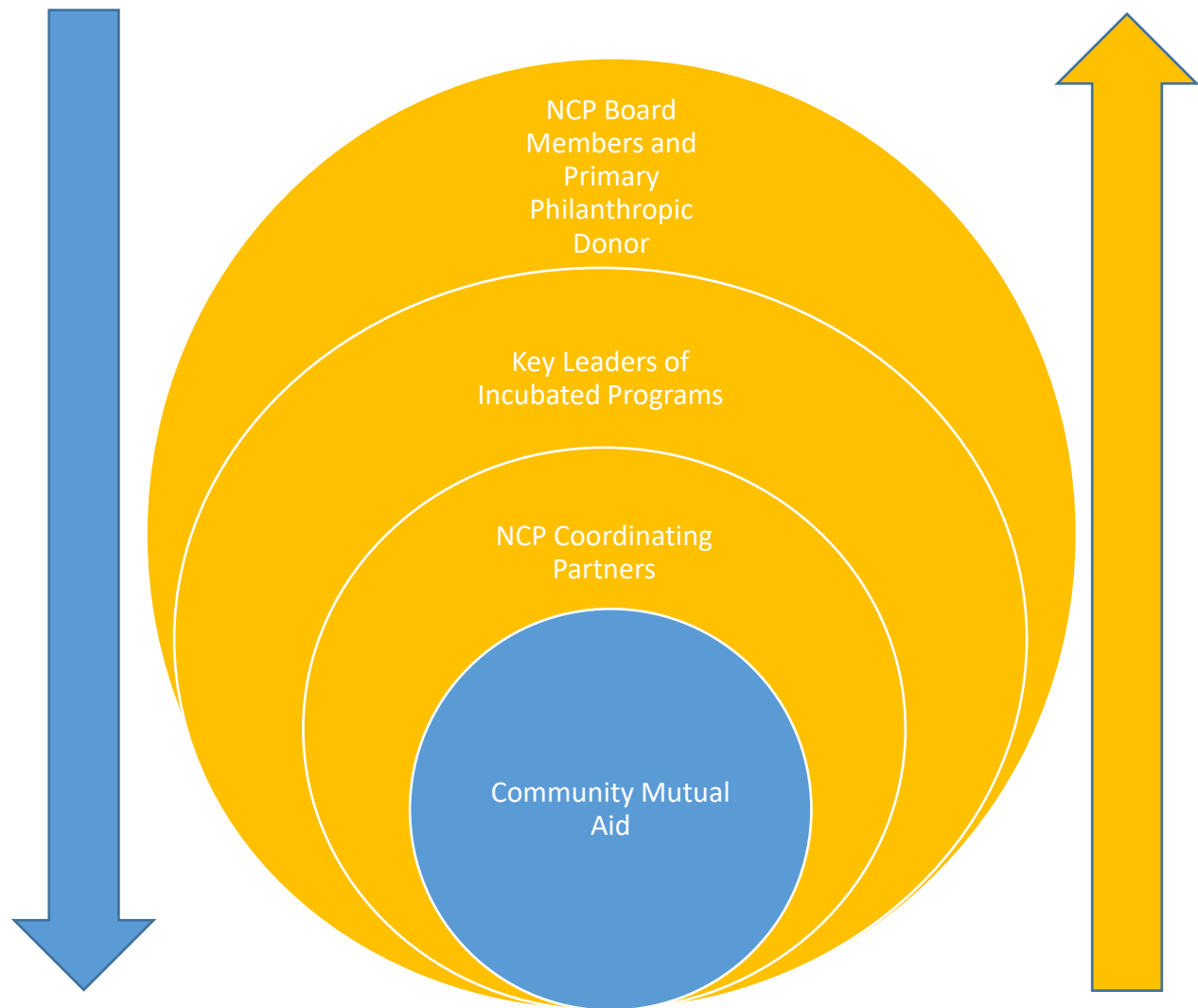


Figure 1. *Participants and stakeholders interviewed based on organizational roles.*

The participants and stakeholders were identified based on the different organizational roles and level of involvement with day-to-day programming and activities in collaboration with the organization's coordinator for community food work in Harrisonburg. The narrative inquiry semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen people who fulfill different organizational roles with New Community Project. Ten interviews were conducted in person and seven interviews were conducted via Zoom.

The New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) provides a home and shelter as mutual aid and care for individuals and families who came out of

conflict zones as immigrants or refugees due to geo-political harm and/or environmental crises; faced homelessness, addiction, violence, physical and emotional harm or violation; and those seeking a place of refuge and healing. As a community food work site, residents and visitors can also experience or work with the market gardens, farm-to-school gardens, compost units, rabbit hutches, greenhouses, meditation trails, tree nurseries, and other agroecological demonstrations. Actual involvement and residence at the Sustainable Living Center were used as a reference point for the first cohort as those receiving mutual aid at some point in their relationship and work with New Community Project. Four of the people interviewed, along with their families, were residents or are current residents at the New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House). Three of the former residents are now staff and fulfill a mutual care role in relation to the Center and other New Community Project program initiatives. The lone current resident also provides meaningful contributions to the daily activities and life of the Center. The fifth person interviewed was not a resident of the Center but a nearby neighbor who spent five years as a young adult in a refugee camp in East Africa and was invited to participate in and later hired to assist with gardening, farming, and mentoring at Vine and Fig and the Jubilee Climate Farm, which was established as a carbon farm and agroecological research and demonstration site in 2021. Lastly, the interview with the founder and director of programs and evaluation of the primary funding organization for the community food work in Harrisonburg, Virginia was conducted concurrently via Zoom.

Data Analysis Process

In my research methodology, I delineated the interviewees generally into two cohorts as those receiving mutual aid and those coordinating and providing mutual aid. The New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) provided a reference point for the first cohort as those receiving mutual aid as shelter or temporary living space at some point in

their relationship and work with New Community Project. The second cohort of twelve study participants had different organization roles that involved in the coordinating and providing of mutual aid and care through programs, incubating initiatives, and philanthropic funding. In reflecting on the second cohort's relationship and work with New Community Project, experiences and reasons for being involved varied among the second cohort. The reasons included healing relationships with people and the earth as an essential part of community; seeking to align values and faith with personal and professional goals; integrating a fuller-bodied approach to care, justice, and healing; finding answers to deep questions about systemic racism; being concerned about the present status of climate change; having epiphany that community development and true mutual aid is all about people; to learn how to address food access and actively oppose the carceral policies of the U.S.; being fiercely committed to agroforestry, watershed health, and restorative justice; supporting a holistic approach to philanthropic funding; recognizing the geopolitical and environmental harm of the current system; focusing on root causes of inequities and injustices; being a confluence of needs and interests; and providing a home for people who are homeless in terms of their own values and the things they care about in the world.

The narratives of the seventeen participants as data were analyzed according to how the narratives map onto three themes of interest: embodiment of a trauma-informed approach to care; characteristics of an ecotone as engendered agential change space for interactive participation and rich potential growth; and the aspirations and tensions in providing trauma-informed care and being a place of mutual aid. The trauma-informed care framework identified by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al. (2018) for promoting distal health, food security, and policy was used as a dialogical framework to understand the perceptions and thoughts of mutual aid recipients and community food work practitioners. The second research question of interest and thematic analysis focused on an ecotone as a metaphor and principle for agential change space and

involved analysis of how interactive participation is engendered and recognized for potential growth with characteristics such as adaptation, diversity, resilience, richness, and tension (Krall 1994; Kark and van Rensburg, 2006; Kark, 2013; Seidman, 2009). The third research question of interest and thematic analysis was the aspirations and tensions that exist or emerge in providing and being a place of mutual aid and trauma-informed care.

MacQueen et al. (1998) specifically looked at the systematic coding of texts as part of codebook development for building and analyzing overarching conceptual constructs and theoretical frames. MacQueen et. (1998) offered six basic components of a codebook: 1) the code, 2) a brief definition, 3) a full definition, 4) guidelines for when to use the code, 5) guidelines of when to not use the codes, and 6) specific examples. The themes and sub-themes for this research were coded and analyzed using *Atlas.ti* to understand the frequency and volume of references to themes and subthemes in and among the seventeen narratives (Ligrani & Niewolny, 2017; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; D’Adamo-Damery, 2015). The themes and subthemes were voiced and framed by the two cohorts of interviewees and their transcribed narratives as a measured response to 1) how mutual aid recipients perceive the community-building process through meaningful support and interactive participation as influenced by trauma-informed care and agential change space and 2) how practitioners and organizational stakeholders of community food work think about their community-building efforts as meaningful support and interactive participation in regards to trauma-informed care and an ecotone as an agential change space.

The thematic analysis included searching for and resonance among themes, patterns, and onto-epistemological positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis process involved four rounds of coding in *Atlas.ti*. The first round of coding of themes centered on the integrated taxonomy of a trauma-informed care framework as the primary component of the codebook for measuring and analyzing a trauma-informed approach to care. The second round entailed further

analysis and review of the seven trauma-informed care principles for resonance and patterns across the seventeen participants' narratives. The third round of coding analyzed an ecotone as agential change space specifically framed in how interactive participation was engendered and recognized for rich potential growth. The final round of coding focused on the aspirations and tensions of providing and being a place of trauma-informed care. The research logic for this tiered approach to coding followed the supposition that trauma-informed care: first, must be provided and practiced by in a community food work organization; second, trauma-informed care must be acknowledged and present in order for an organization to be an agential change space where interactive participation is engendered and recognized; and lastly, aspirations and tensions will exist and emerge as an organization attempts to provide trauma-informed care and engender agential change space to expand boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. The findings of this study of the ecotonal nature of community food work are outlined and articulated in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Summary of Methodology

Trauma awareness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and care were a priority for methodology and all personal, interpersonal, and community interactions. Trauma-informed care must consider multiple-systems and the cultural embeddedness of the trauma. The aim of the methodology used for this case study was designed to learn and understand community food work as praxis from an organization like New Community Project who is working to re-story a view and understanding of what constitutes a sense and place of community through care and mutual aid. This case study research examined the ecotonal nature of community food work as praxis by specifically analyzing how, if at all, an organization might embody trauma-informed care; the aspirations and tensions in providing and being a place for meaningful support as trauma-informed care; and creating an

agential change space for participative interaction to expand people's boundaries of what is possible for individuals and communities.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this research, I examined the ecotonal nature of community food work through a descriptive review of organization's foundational texts and a narrative inquiry process to understand how the New Community Project might embody trauma-informed care; provide and be a place of meaningful support and participative interaction; and model an agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand people's boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. In this chapter, I present a descriptive overview of the case and research findings from my narrative inquiry of how study participants perceive and think about a trauma-informed care framework in their community food work; how that framework might provide a foundation for agential change space to be recognized and engendered; and an analysis of the aspirations and tensions that arise in providing and aiming to be a place of trauma-informed care and agential change.

A Descriptive Review of New Community Project's Vine and Fig Program

New Community Project is the organization of focus for this case study of community food work as trauma-informed care and agential change space. In this descriptive review of New Community Project's Vine and Fig Program in Harrisonburg, Virginia, I aim to provide a textured description of the origin and working of the organization as an ecotone with social, ecological, ethical interactions and a diverse organizational ecosystem with permeable boundaries. The descriptive review of New Community Project included a review of current and historical foundational texts that included the organization's vision, mission, objectives, programming activities, newsletters, and the website. New Community Project maintains websites for the national program and local programs like New Community Project's Vine and Fig in Harrisonburg.

In this section, I describe the establishment and development of New Community Project; a summary of its governance, financial standing, and staffing from 2005 to present; an overview of

its programs; and the selection criteria for the community food work site and organization. In brief, New Community Project seeks to address the geographical-political harm and social-ecological crisis caused by the dominant neoliberal rationality, capitalism, and consumer-driven lifestyles as an alternative vision and experience of community. New Community Project was founded at a national level in 2003 by David Radcliff with a specific focus on community education and outreach related to environmental sustainability, social justice, non-violence, and peace.

New Community Project is a registered tax-exempt nonprofit organization in Arizona with a local, national, and international organizational presence. In the initial years, New Community Project worked under the auspices of the Church of the Brethren and the Church's goals of advocating justice, working for peace, serving human need, and caring for creation. Congregations and outreach ministries of the Church of the Brethren continue to be an important demographic for New Community Project's educational programming. New Community Project's website states "New Community Project considers the spiritual dimension of our lives to be important and seeks to bring about deep inner change in our personal and societal values." (New Community Project website, 2022). However, New Community Project as a standalone nonprofit organization welcomes and works with any person or group of people who share a commitment to forging a world of peace, justice, and sustainability. New Community Project's network has grown significantly the past 20 years. Learning tours and educational exchanges related to environmental sustainability were the primary focus first five years. New Community Project now has a national and international educational and outreach network of about 11,000 people. Table 1 (pp. xii – xv) provides a timeline of the historical expansion of neoliberal rationality as a social, cultural, political arrangement and New Community Project's development as an organization since 2003.

In 2008, Tom Benevento, after serving eight years in Guatemala with Brethren Volunteer Service, approached David Radcliff with a concept to put New Community Project's social-ethical

ideals into further action and to start a satellite chapter and the Vine & Fig program and Sustainable Living Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The New Community Project Sustainable Living Center aspires to build a sense of belonging, care, and community for people most affected by displacement, trauma, injustices, and marginalization, while also being a living social-ecological laboratory for the community. In 2015, Pete Antos-Ketcham approached David Radcliff and New Community Project's board to start a comparable satellite chapter and Sustainable Living Center in Starksboro, Vermont based on his knowledge of Tom Benevento's coordination work in Virginia. New Community Project's focus in Vermont is on addressing rural poverty, food and energy security, educating around climate change, and giving voice to people who have been pushed to the margins by society and economic circumstances that limit opportunities in rural communities.

In addition to its work in Virginia and Vermont, New Community Project partners with communities around the world in support of its bigger goal: to change the world. The community-based partnerships and project initiatives exist in the United States, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, with specific partner countries being Malawi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Nepal, Myanmar, Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. Partner initiatives and projects are identified by the people and communities themselves. The project and programming initiatives range from girls' education, women's development, a shelter to prevent human trafficking, microloans, wood-conserving stoves, market gardening, community gardening, permaculture, carbon farming, forest preservation and reforestation, bicycles and scholarships to enable girls to attend high school. In Malawi, young girls walk seven to 14 miles to attend school. Additionally, learning tours and exchanges are organized to encourage socio-ecological education and activism around the impacts of climate change.

New Community Project’s organizational governance and administration is overseen by a ten-member advisory board that David Radcliff as director and Tom Benevento and Pete Antos-Ketcham as coordinators for the Sustainable Living Centers in Virginia and Vermont report to about their educational programming, outreach activities, and grant projects. David Radcliff and Tom Benevento serve as co-principal officers for the nonprofit organization. Table 2 provides a snapshot of New Community Project’s organizational activities, governance, revenue, expenses, net assets or fund balances through time based on 990 forms submitted to the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Internal Revenue Service from 2005 to 2020. To understand New Community Project’s organizational structure, governance, and financial standing, I reviewed the 990 forms New Community Project submitted in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020 as a nonprofit organization to the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Internal Revenue Service. In 2022, New Community Project employed three full-time and part-time staff in its effort to accomplish its organizational mission. Other people who support programming are independent contractors, interns, or volunteers.

Table 5. *Summary data of New Community Project's Form 990 from 2005 to 2020.*

Form 990 Summary Data	2005	2010	2015	2020
Contributions and Grants	104,540	93,417	143,553	197,354
Program Service Revenue	8,865	102,660	169,687	251,186
Other Revenue	5,517	13,537	3,502	29,240
Total Revenue	118,922	209,614	316,742	477,816
Grants and similar amounts paid	75,622	62,605	126,130	259,342
Salaries, other compensation, employee benefits	22,935	78,914	65,343	132,074
Other Expenses	3,458	82,702	91,045	95,334
Total Expenses	102,014	224,221	282,518	486,750

Revenue less Expenses	16,908	(14,607)	34,224	(8,934)
Total Assets	18,164	58,983	152,200	240,705
Total Liabilities		12,996	5,816	1,705
Net Assets or Fund Balances	35,072	45,987	146,384	239,000
Number of Full and Part-Time Personnel	1	3	2	3

The organizational vision and mission, along with current programming initiatives, were found on New Community Project’s website (<https://www.vinefignccp.org/>). Additionally, interviews with the founder David Radcliff, the first board chairperson Kim, and two current long-time board members (Robbie and Pete) were drawn upon as points of corroboration and triangulation for the descriptive review, specifically to confirm the organizational timeline and the start dates of when various projects were initiated (Tables 1 and 6) and verify the timeframe of when the study participants fulfilled different organizational roles with New Community Project (Table 7).

New Community Project as a nonprofit organization as has a vision for social and ecological restoration and justice as a foundation for envisioning and embodying a culture of non-violence and peace. New Community Project’s Vine and Fig Program in Harrisonburg, Virginia, works and aspires to provide and build a sense of belonging, care, and community for people most affected by displacement, trauma, injustices, and marginalization. The concept of New Community Project’s Vine and Fig Program as an “urban village campus” originated in 2008. Tom Benevento, who had served eight years in Guatemala with Brethren Volunteer Service, approached David Radcliff, the founder of New Community Project, with a concept to put these overarching social-ethical ideals into further action. Tom proposed to start the New Community Project Vine & Fig

Program and a Sustainable Living Center as the hub for an eventual “urban village campus” in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The vision of New Community Project’s Vine and Fig program was and is “to cultivate and celebrate works of mercy, social justice, and ecological sustainability as the foundation for a nonviolent, compassionate way of life.” New Community Project Vine and Fig’s mission entails a commitment “to the creation of sustainable systems that care for the earth, empower people most marginalized and impoverished, educate and inspire, and build the foundation for a nonviolent lifestyle. We work to create transformation at both the personal level and community level in three key areas that have the highest impact; food, transportation, and the built environment.” (New Community Project’s Vine and Fig website, 2022).

Seeking to realize this social-ethical vision and actualize its mission, New Community Project’s Vine and Fig program is based in a low-wealth neighborhood in Harrisonburg, Virginia, along Blacks Run stream. New Community Project Vine and Fig renovated a former crack house from 2011 to 2013. The New Community Project Vine and Fig’s Sustainable Living Center (The White House) officially open in 2013 to provide a transition home environment for people recently affected by displacement, trauma, and marginalization in the community. In the first few years, the Sustainable Living Center (The White House) was modeled after and managed more as a traditional intentional community with up to ten or twelve people, including residents and partner team members, living in close community in the house. However, as the need to provide shelter and longer-term housing for homeless persons, refugee families, and those affected by different geo-political and anthropogenic traumatic events and experiences continued to increase, New Community Project’s Vine and Fig program evolved to be more of an “urban village campus” with additional housing for new residents, refugee families, and coordinating staff. Additionally, the New Community Project Vine & Fig site seeks to be a living laboratory and agroecological hub with gardens, chickens, fruit trees, low carbon energy efficient homes, greenhouses, a fish pond, an

Egyptian wood-fired oven, and many other practices informed by polyculture agroforestry farming systems.

Throughout its history, New Community Project in Harrisonburg, Virginia has served to collaborate and incubate a number of community-based initiatives under its organizational umbrella and meaning-making canopy (Table 6). Other projects and programs specifically incubated and co-initiated include the Northend Greenway (2.5 mile walk and bike path to connect low wealth neighborhoods to area grocery stores); Silver Run Forest Farm (a tree nursery and riparian watershed restoration initiative); Renew Rocktown (the 50% renewable energy by 2025 initiative in Harrisonburg); GiveSolar (to meet the solar energy needs of low wealth populations and reduce monthly energy bills); Soil Cycles (food waste recovery and composting program; Education and Outreach Program around gardening, composting, and permaculture; and the Jubilee Climate Farm in Rockingham County focused on agroforestry, carbon farming, and community gardening.

Give Solar Harrisonburg works closely with the Central Virginia Habitat for Humanity chapter to install solar panels on newly built homes to reduce monthly energy bills by \$50 per month. Some of these initiatives have spun off and become independent of New Community Project such as Silver Run Forest Farm and Folk School, but still benefit from its organizational fiscal sponsorship and management for grant-funded projects where nonprofit status is needed. Other local partners and collaborators include faculty and students from James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Bridgewater College.

Table 6. *A timeline of New Community Project and incubated co-initiated program initiatives.*

Year	New Community Project and incubated co-initiated program Initiatives
2003	New Community Project (NCP) established under leadership of David Radcliff
2008	New Community Project (NCP) Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center and “urban village campus” proposed for Harrisonburg by Tom Benevento

2010	Northend Greenway in Harrisonburg (a 2.5 mile walk and bike path to connect low wealth neighborhoods to area grocery stores)
2013	NCP Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) opens as temporary housing and site of social-ecological possibility where all are welcome.
2015	Renew Rocktown 50' by 25' renewable energy initiative
2017	Silver Run Forest Farm (formerly Blacks Run Forest Farm) -- tree nursery and riparian buffer restoration effort focused on watershed health and environmental justice
2018	Give Solar Harrisonburg (to meet the solar energy needs of low wealth populations and reduce monthly energy bills) & Soil Cycles (initiated to recycle and compost food waste from area businesses)
2020	NCP Vine & Fig Education and Outreach w/ Farm-to-School
2021	Jubilee Climate Farm (demonstration and research of agroforestry, carbon farming, and community gardening).

According to the interviews with founder David Radcliff and other New Community Project board members (Kim, Robbie, and Pete), New Community Project has been influenced philosophically and programmatically by its connection to the Church of the Brethren, the Quaker faith community, and an Anabaptist tradition of contrarianism, radical pietism, and general wariness of undue influence of government on the church. David, Kim, Robbie, and Pete also referred in their interviews to other historical, social-ethical reformers who have influenced New Community Project's model of social change and prefigurative politics. These include Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement, Mahatma Gandhi on non-violent civil disobedience, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on civil rights and the 'beloved community', Cliff Kindy of Christian Peacemaking Teams, and others within the Church of the Brethren. Although not specifically stated in the vision and mission, an overall ethic of downward mobility, voluntary poverty, personal responsibility, sharing of resources, and being in solidarity with the people and neighbors most affected and marginalized by social injustice and harm as exemplified in the early Christian church and the Catholic Worker Movement have influenced New Community Project's social change and community food work praxis. In addition, New Community Project's programming

partially mirrors the Catholic Worker Movement's community work centered around houses of hospitality, clarifying or sounding roundtable discussions, and working with land and food.

New Community Project's Vine and Fig program specifically references the restorative justice work and imaginary of the Old Testament minor prophet Micah. Micah was farmer, a champion for the oppressed, and an advocate for land and social reform from 750 to 687 B.C. (Youngblood et al., 1995). Vine and fig are referenced as metaphor for peace and shelter in opposition to empire, power, war, domination, violence, and continued militarization in Micah 4: 3, 4 (NIV) that "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken."

I highlight and mention New Community Project's Vine and Fig's theory of social change and the metaphorical reference to the biblical passage from Micah in this descriptive case overview to provide a frame and lens for how the organization and its leaders view its community food work. The biblical reference to Micah provides social, ecological, and ethical imagery and a deeper epistemological, ontological metaphor of what is possible individually and collectively when peace, comfort, settledness, and tranquility are realized and enjoyed by everyone and not just the powerful favored few within the current dominant system and structure. I also share New Community Project's Vine and Fig's theory of social change and the metaphorical reference because all of the study participants were attracted to this framing of change and a preferred future in their individual and collective interaction with New Community Project. Similarly, all of the study participants referenced the importance of soil, land, nature, and ecology as important to their journeys, while several study participants specifically highlighted how New Community Project's

relationships and programming activities resemble roots, shoots, and tendrils in being central to their vision of a new community.

Table 7 is shared to elucidate the heterogeneity of the study participants' temporal, functional, and spatial interactions with New Community Project's Vine and Fig program.

Table 7. Study Participants, Timeframe of Affiliation, Organizational Role, and Associated Program Initiatives.

Study Participant	Timeframe	Organizational Role	Associated New Community Project Program Initiatives
Alicia	2012 - 2022	Co-Coordinator to oversee collaboration, gardening, and community life	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center (Harrisonburg); Jubilee Climate Farm
Anita	2016 - 2022	Host for hospitality and collaboration	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center
Caroline	2016 - 2022	Intern/Co-Coordinator to oversee garden and farm education	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Jubilee Climate Farm
Charlotte	2019 - 2022	Intern/ Field Researcher	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Jubilee Climate Farm
David	2003 – 2022	Founder/ Director	New Community Project Learning Tours, Educational Exchanges, and Outreach
Indigo	2019 - 2022	Volunteer and then hired to co-coordinate collaboration and garden education	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Jubilee Climate Farm
Jeff	2018 - 2022	Coordinator	Give Solar Harrisonburg; Renew Rocktown; 50 by 25 Clean Energy for All
Jonathan	2011 – 2013 2013 – 2017 2017 - 2018 2017 – 2022	Volunteer Partner Team Member House facilitator/ mediator Co-founder	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Silver Run Forest Farm and Folk School (formerly Blacks Run Forest Farm)

Kim	2003 - 2022	Advisory Board Member/ First chair	New Community Project
Michael	2020 - 2022	Assist and mentor in gardening and farming	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Jubilee Climate Farm
Missy	2011 - 2022	Co-Coordinator to oversee hospitality and community life	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center
Pete	2015 - 2022	Coordinator	New Community Project Sustainable Living Center, Starksboro, Vermont
Reed & Sophie	2010 -2022	Private family foundation based in Tulsa, OK	Provided funding support for the Northend Greenway, New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center, and Jubilee Climate Farm
Robbie	2009 - 2022	Advisory Board chair Volunteer	New Community Project; New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center
Sarah	2017 - 2020	Intern/ Communications, Advocacy, and Website	New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center; Renew Rocktown, 50 by 25 Clean Energy for All
Taona	2018 - 2022	Advisory Board member/International partner	New Community Project/ Creative Solutions for the Environment in Malawi

The authors Kark and van Rensburg (2006) and Seidman (2009), in writing about ecotones as central or marginal areas of transition and boundaries of ecological and social systems, highlighted the steep gradients of ecotones that can occur due to altitude, latitude, geological processes, and sharp differences in function and relief. Adverse life experiences and traumatic events might also result in similarly steep social, ecological gradients and acute, sharp divides for individuals and communities. I briefly describe the study participants' experiences and realities to add texture, nuance, and a sense of a gradient in relation the differential steepness and acuity of

events, experiences, and effects that might be defined as adverse or trauma-inducing since some types of traumas are reflective of deep structural inequalities and the uneven distribution of trauma. Obviously, in interviewing seventeen people, there is a gradient and continuum of experiences and each person has a uniquely different view of reality and the world based on their individual experiences. The gradient might be quite steep and stark in contrast depending on the events, experiences, and effects that have influenced and informed people's lives.

Embodying Trauma-Informed Care as an Organization and Community

In this section, the findings address my first research question (RQ1): how does a community food work organization embody trauma-informed care to promote and support resilience? A trauma-informed care framework presumes everyone in an organization and community may have been directly or indirectly exposed to trauma at some point in their lives, therefore, care and attention are required throughout the organization and community. The seventeen study participants shared their perceptions and thoughts on trauma-informed care based on the meaningful support they experienced in their organizational roles and interactions with New Community Project and its programs. Care as mutual aid in its essence and embodiment is reciprocal, relational, and involves agential change space and the respectful accompaniment of people in facing life's challenges and complexities. Analysis of the five transcribed narratives of those receiving mutual aid (i.e., Alicia, Anita, Indigo, Michael, and Missy) and the twelve narratives of those coordinating and providing mutual aid (i.e., Caroline, Charlotte, David, Jeff, Jonathan, Kim, Pete, Reed, Robbie, Sarah, Sophie, and Taona) as community food work underscored the reciprocal and relational complexity of trauma-informed care as mutual aid. The narrative inquiry involved coding and analyzing each narrative for resonance with and embodiment of the core principles of a trauma-informed care framework defined by SAMHSA (2014) and Bowen and Murshid (2016). Hecht et al. (2018), in discussing an advocacy coalition framework for

addressing the effects of trauma through policy, emphasized the importance of advocacy as a form of potential solidarity with people and communities most affected by systemic trauma where the focus is not on what happened but on root causes, witness, and what is possible. Solidarity was also identified as a key philosophical principle of a beloved community as a social-ethical ideal and commitment. Therefore, solidarity was integrated into the thematic analysis as a possible seventh principle to understand study participants' thoughts and perceptions on the importance of solidarity as a principle to informed care and healing. The integrated taxonomy of trauma-informed care principles as themes to be analyzed included: 1) Safety & Security, 2) Trustworthiness & Transparency, 3) Peer Support, 4) Collaboration and Mutuality, 5) Empowerment, Voice, and Choice, 6) Culture, History, and Gender, and 7) Solidarity. A brief definition of each trauma-informed principle and an example of an accompanying trauma-informed care practice were used to give additional context to the thematic analysis and coding process in looking for patterns and positions. The final co-created and co-edited narratives of each participant ranged in length from two to 14 single-spaced pages (Appendices E – T). Excerpts from the co-edited narratives are shared below to highlight study participants' diverse perceptions and thoughts of trauma-informed care, agential change space, and the aspirations and tensions of providing trauma-informed care as mutual aid and being a place of agential change space to expand boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. The interview themes that were resonant with the seven trauma-informed care principles and that further defined meaningful support for the study participants included: 1) Safety and security as compassion, love, and belonging; 2) Trustworthiness and Transparency; 3) Peer support as shared humanitarianism; 4) Collaboration and mutuality as decentralized hospitality; 5) Empowerment, Voice, and choice: A sense of being valued; 6) Cultures, histories, and genders: Being recognized and seen; and 7) Solidarity as integrated care, justice, and healing.

Safety and Security as Compassion, Love, and Belonging

All seventeen study participants mentioned safety and security as integral principles to New Community Project's mission and vision. Within a trauma-informed care framework, safety and security means physical and emotional safety, reasonable freedom from harm, and the prevention of future re-traumatization. Compassion, love, and belonging were also identified through the interviews as requisite to safety and security. The New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) provided a safe physical haven and secure emotional base for four of the study participants after they experienced distressful traumatic events and experiences. For other study participants, New Community Project Vine and Fig provided a safe place and was situated at the confluence of their needs and interests when they felt homeless in terms of their own values, identity, and the things they cared about in the world.

Anita addressed her own sense of feeling safe, secure, and calm as a result of being welcomed to live at The White House. Anita sought refuge at The White House after experiencing an attempted rape in her neighborhood and then being raped by a co-worker at her previous place of employment so this principle of trauma-informed care, along with others, is particularly salient to her experience and sense of safety: "I felt calmer, safer than when I lived there then. There was a drunk man who lived there and the man who tried to rape me was getting drunk with him. Then, I came here and I felt safer, and there are no drunk people here. Yes, I felt that it is my home. I feel very happy because we can eat the vegetables here, the eggs from the hen, the meat too, and it's very healthy (Appendix F, Lines 9 – 11; 15 – 16)."

Missy addressed how individuals each have different backgrounds but events, experiences, and effects of adversity and trauma can disrupt and disorient people figuratively and literally so they do not have any place to turn to change their internal and external environment.

Well, for the people that move in here, it's our job to try and make them feel at home or make them feel safe and secure. If they need help cooking and everything, I do it to give that sense of being okay and safe. Families are rough. And you love them. And you love them 'cause you know them and who they are. But you don't know why they're doing and acting that way. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 40 - 43)

Indigo shared how the safety and security of being welcomed at New Community Project Vine and Fig and subsequent work at Jubilee Climate Farm has been stabilizing and therapeutic after suffering spousal abuse and life-threatening violence in her marriage.

I had the situation of a violent man. So, I was married to him but he was very violent... And I am still changing and the earth helps me. I have had problems because, with my marriage in the past, I suffered violence... Then I tried to look for a person for therapy, normal therapy, like counseling but I felt that really did not help me. So, I looked for other things. I feel that this has been helping me. I have not finished healing yet, but this project with the earth is for me, my healing. ~ Indigo (Appendix J, Lines 33, 34, 107 - 110)

Alicia reflected on her own experience and on the tenuous nature of providing a safe and secure environment for those in need and coming out of difficult situations like homelessness. Alicia reiterates the need for compassion, respect, and love.

Because what is important is the life of the human being, the life of each one of us, and what you are doing for that person... The value that we practice is compassion. Compassion that we all must feel to help each other, recognize the dignity and their dignity as human beings because we all deserve respect, all human beings deserve that. Love, because if God gives you love, even if you fall down, you get back up. ~ Alicia (Appendix E, Lines 128 - 130)

Although Michael and his family did not spend time living as residents at New Community Project Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center in Harrisonburg, Michael spoke of how important social, emotional, physical support and safety are for people who have been displaced or dislocated is for staying strong. Similarly, after spending five years in a refugee camp in East Africa, being indoors can be disordering and chaos-producing so being outdoors at the farm can provide a safe haven.

Like many immigrants and refugees here experience lots of trauma, depression, and many things, but thankfully there were people in my life that supported me to just stay strong with what I've been going through, and also here at the farm. ~ Michael (Appendix N, Lines 156 - 158)

Caroline, who volunteered as a student at JMU and worked after graduation at New Community Project Vine and Fig and the Jubilee Climate Farm for six years, acknowledged that integrating a person's identity must be a central element of providing a safe secure space but also that trust must be built and foundational to a potentially vulnerable personal issue. Similarly, allowing each person to define what a safe and secure space means to them in relation to their identity should be an intentional process and be integrated into the framework for trauma-informed care.

...a person's identity isn't always integrated into what it means to be a safe space in everyone's definition of a safe space. Whereas to me, that's an incredibly huge component of that. And so, there's this mutual learning of like, "Well, to me, I'm not comfortable calling this a safe space, if that's not incorporated into the meaning of that." ~ Caroline (Appendix G, Lines 125 - 128)

Robbie as chair of the New Community Project board and occasional volunteer at New Community Project Vine and Fig in Harrisonburg offered his thoughts on the goals of being and providing as safe and secure place to feel at home, regain autonomy, and control of their personal lives and be able to express and practice their different abilities and skills.

And, NCP just seeks to provide a safe and healing environment for those folks where they can begin to develop some autonomy and some sense of control in their lives and where they can make a contribution to the community. It's not them just receiving assistance from Vine & Fig, but it's them becoming a part of the community and making a very significant contribution to the community. ~ Robbie (Appendix R, Lines 61 - 65)

Safety and security were also demonstrated by New Community Project staff in providing guidance and assistance in domestic violence situations, understanding the medical care system, and offer legal counsel when it is needed and warranted.

Trustworthiness and Transparency

Trust and transparency as a principle of a trauma-informed care framework can be multi-faceted and multi-directional based on cultures, expectations, norms, and being attentive and accountable to boundaries. Trustworthiness and transparency as trauma-informed care involve systems and accountability to enable the building and exercising of rapport, ensuring confidentiality, and focusing on the environment of the problem rather than on a specific individual (SAMHSA, 2014). Trust and transparency are always deeply relational, temporal, and contextual. All of the study participants expressed that respect for humanity and each person is steeped in dignity, trust, and transparency should be wide-reaching and equally distributed but also spoke for the need for systems, rules, boundaries, and consequences for non-compliance. Anita who lives and works at New Community Project's Vine and Fig Sustainability Center (The White House) in Harrisonburg expressed this need for mutual respect, boundaries, and compliance: "We all respect

each other. We respect each other, and the people in charge also respect each other. If a comrade or colleague is disrespectful, then they talk to him. And if he doesn't comply, he has to leave. But I feel that we are all loved equally, but if someone violates the rules and does not obey the rules, then they also have to leave (Appendix F, Lines 33 – 36)”

Michael shared a similar sentiment based on his community food work experience at New Community Project Vine and Fig’s gardening site and the Jubilee Climate Farm about the need for respect and dignity from the ground up starting with people who previously lived on and worked the land to those who are just arriving and learning how to garden and plant seeds.

This organization really gives respect and dignity to those who have been here farming traditionally like the Native Americans. They also respect and work with those really affected or with low income and with immigrants. When you invite others like with the community garden that we are doing, people should be encouraged to know and feel they are welcome and they're part of the community. ~ Michael (Appendix N, Lines 124 - 129)

Taona as a board member and international partner with New Community Project in Malawi stated in the following excerpt how attentive and accountable you are to dignity, trust, and transparency becomes apparent in your day-to-day interactions with people, soil, and the land:

So, the manner in which New Community Project presents themselves when they come into a community, they're respecting the indigenous values, they're respecting the land that you're working on, and they're respecting the people... We are humans and everyone deserves respect and dignity, regardless of the gaps that we have or differences that we have. Sometimes there are educational gaps and literacy gaps as well. As a human being, I believe that everyone has value, and you can learn from anyone regardless of where they're coming from or their background. ~ Taona (Appendix T, Lines 176 – 179; 322 - 325)

Kim was a pastor within the Church of the Brethren served as an initial sounding board for David as he looked to found and establish New Community Project in 2003. Kim then assisted to form and chair the first board committee. Kim reflected more broadly on the external and internal structural and systemic issues in this excerpt that have to be acknowledged and given attention to truly honor people and learn from their wisdom.

It takes intention because we assume we're honoring everybody but don't always do it because of all the internalized systemic kinds of factors that impact us. ...But it's also clear with the partners who come to work at the Sustainable Living Centers to recognize that those people have expertise and experience and wisdom that we need to learn from and can learn from. ~ Kim (Appendix M, Lines 203 – 204; 210 - 211).

Sarah, in reflecting on her two-year internship and work at New Community Project Vine and Fig, observed that interactions have to be transparent and that attention and accountability to dignity and trust is: "... not just about putting on a face for people but lets us know where people are coming from. And that showed me what respect and dignity could look like. And then, with culture and gender, it is important to honor and acknowledge different backgrounds and experiences... But the fact that community can be so... forgive the pun... but be so organic at Vine & Fig -- it makes me smile (Appendix S, Lines 194 – 198; 326 – 327)."

Peer Support as Shared Humanitarianism

The concept and notion of peer support as true humanitarianism was mentioned by many of the study participants. SAMHSA (2014) defined peer support as evident when people's lived experiences are recognized and the wisdom in the room is welcomed, shared, and accounted for. Five study participants (Alicia, Anita, Indigo, Michael, and Missy) who received mutual aid early on in their affiliation with New Community Project due to coming out of abusive situations,

suffering displacement from war or armed conflicts, homelessness, alcoholism, sexual violence, or having refugee status, but who now have been on both sides of receiving and coordinating mutual aid, were particularly emphatic about the importance of peer support. Peer support was perceived and exemplified as caring shared humanitarianism by Alicia in the following excerpt:

That's what affects me the most in humanitarianism, in giving your help, without getting anything in return. It hurts a lot when you lose a human being there. For example, it touched me when a homeless person arrived very delicate in health and died, and it hurts because he is a human being like everyone else. Because what is important is the life of the human being, the life of each one of us, and what you are doing for that person. ~ Alicia
(Appendix E, Lines 113 - 119)

For Anita, active presence, listening, and a place of refuge are critical means of peer support and humanitarianism as she continues to cope and seek healing from an attempted rape by a neighbor and rape by a co-worker.

I think I still haven't come out of that trauma; when I remember, I cry a lot. They helped me a lot in the church and the psychologist helped me too, but it still hurts me a lot... Living in this place, it has helped me a lot; so, it gave me hope to be here. Yes, it gave me hope to be here longer. ~ Anita (Appendix F, Lines 30 – 31; 61 - 62)

In providing peer support, Missy reflected on the need for commitment, time, listening, and taking a long view in knowing people are all important and worthy of care. Missy's fierce commitment is evident in many ways as Missy serves as coordinator and 'den mother' at The White House (New Community Project's Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center). Her compassion, patience, and humanitarianism seemingly stem from her own struggle with thirty years of homelessness and difficult relationships which resulted from alcoholism.

Being here, working with the people and seeing them grow and develop. Because they start off really rough and then like a couple years in, they just start to grow and just be more themselves and more mature. They just learn a lot here 'cause your mind is really receptive of what you're around, who you're around, and who they're listening to. Week after week it just shows and it's just the people. And that's one part of here I'll always love the most -- the caring for them. It's a lot of work and it takes a lot of energy to do all the time, but they're worth it. It's worth it. (laughs) ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 79 - 85)

Michael shared that regular check-in times each morning as part of a regular daily routine was meaningful to him as peer support and feeling welcomed. Michael also mentioned routines such as sharing meals, dance, prayer, and actually being asked how you are doing were other means of universally needed support he experienced as community food work at Jubilee Climate Farm.

I've been welcomed since the first day that I met Tom and everyone here respects each other. And we, of course, eat and we dance and so I've been welcomed. (laughs)...It is something that we all need. Like when we come early in the morning here, we talk how we are doing, and if there's anything that we could do to support each other. I believe that is something very good. We never know how one person could be affected through life with many things. We just share our prayers and maybe support the person who's in need. ~ Michael (Appendix N, Lines 73 - 79)

For Caroline, peer support was recognized and felt when Caroline's mother was facing heart issues and colleagues provided Caroline the opportunity to work alone or not work at all to allow time to reflect and process a family illness.

NCP Vine & Fig Sustainability Living Center is based on peace, justice, and ecology. We don't have quite a catchy three-word thing out here at the Jubilee Climate Farm, but it's this groundedness in the work too. So, it's not just total lip service but how do we ground ourselves. This comes in the form of our morning meditations and our check-ins. We show our humanity in prioritizing family and if someone's sick. "No, your mom's sick, go home." Whatever someone needs. ~ Caroline (Appendix G, Lines 52 - 57)

Collaboration and Mutuality as Decentralized Hospitality

The seventeen study participants acknowledged collaboration and mutuality as being a central characteristic and principle of New Community Project's community food work praxis as experienced as part of the Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center and Jubilee Climate Farm. Collaboration and mutuality as a trauma-informed care principle means shared leadership, shared power in creation, allowing practice, feedback, and reflection (SAMHSA, 2014). Sarah, who served as an intern at New Community Project's Vine and Fig program while an undergraduate and graduate student at James Madison University, expressed the decentralized nature of New Community Project's hospitality and collaboration: "They were always excited to see and be part of the solution and part of the bringing together of lots of different people and really decentralizing what their goals were. Making it a real 'community effort' feels like such a small word compared to what they actually do. But like the feeling that you are welcome at the table even if you do not know where to sit yet." (Appendix S, Lines 48 – 52)

Missy who experienced homelessness and alcoholism for 30 years and serves as a partnering coordinator for hospitality at the Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center (The White House) for the past five years similarly emphasized how friendship, food, and genuine care help people get situated in life:

But what I do a lot here is help with the people that live in the house that have disabilities and I take care of them. And, we help people that just don't have nowhere to go to have somewhere -- and have food, friendship, and get on their feet. But it's hard being on the streets nowadays and times are hard... But I like each one to feel like they're someone, not a lump under the carpet because everyone's individual and people are very special. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 25 – 29; 47 - 48)

Alicia, who continues with long-term health challenges since arriving in Harrisonburg, serves as a co-coordinator for educational programming at New Community Project's Vine and Fig with specific oversight of gardening, tree planting, greenhouse management, composting, and hosting interns and school groups, acknowledged how involvement and mutual collaboration has expanded her view of what community means:

I started to get involved in many projects of Vine and Fig; I began to realize the magnitude that happens when you have your community, even though in my country I did community through my church. In this country I did not know how to do community and it was in Vine and Fig that I began to experience what community is; maybe in the church I go to I only receive a lot of information in theory but I think that God sent me to Vine and Fig to live that love of God, that community and to start learning together. ~ Alicia (Appendix E, Lines 28 - 33)

This perspective on the importance of living and working together was shared by Indigo who sought refuge after experiencing domestic spousal abuse and violence and now serves as a co-coordinator at New Community Project Vine and Fig and the Jubilee Climate Farm with Alicia.

Because we are living together, it is living and eating together also. Then it is something to be united. We are united, the food, the work, and we learn as a community. I think that is

something that we demonstrate, being like this. Then all of us who have come here feel good, we feel appreciated, like family, that's how I would take it, as a united family, and I feel happy. ~ Indigo (Appendix J, Lines 123 - 129)

In sharing their perceptions and thoughts on collaboration and mutuality, many participants reflected on a sense of belonging, settledness, and being at home. Similarly, study participants alluded to the need to recognize our shared humanity and frailty in being willing to seek and ask for mutual support. Michael, who lived in a refugee camp for five years in East Africa as a young adult and whose gardening skills were observed in a Harrisonburg neighborhood that adjoined the Northend Greenway that New Community Project partnered on, was later approached and asked to mentor and train others in gardening and agroecological farming practices with New Community Project. Michael offered this insight:

Whenever you feel cared for, have a sense of resilience, and any type of feeling you belong, you have a sense of welcome, being at home, and the right peace... And if there's something that someone needs help with, we go approach them and give them an extra hand and they would do the same with me. Everyone is welcomed and cared for here. (laughs) ~ Michael (Appendix N, Lines 100 - 106)

In talking about the overall mission of New Community Project and the specific work in Harrisonburg, Robbie as the board chair talked about how collaboration is aimed to intersect three central tenets in valuing, treating, and providing people care for their wellbeing.

So, the mission is to create a new community where social justice, environmental sustainability, and peace are at the heart of what the community is about and how the members of that community value and treat each other... Well, at NCP Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center, the emphasis is very clearly on creating a healing community

both a healing of the land and healing of the humans that associate with New Community Projects. ~ Robbie (Appendix R, Lines 46 – 48; 56 - 58)

Sophie offered these insights as a program director for her family's foundation and based on an abiding interest in community development that is centered on social and ecological justice.

And if we're talking about a trauma-formed approach and equity-based work, I think it's a great example. It was the first time I'd really seen a program like that. I don't even want to say holistic because it's even more than that. It seemed to have tendrils kind of creeping out. It was almost like a plant itself, right? And going where the needs arise in a very organic way. So, just from growing the food and then rehabbing the area, but also the people who would come and go allowing people to live there, who may not have had an opportunity to live like that in any other way. ~ Sophie (Appendix Q, Lines 105 - 112)

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: A Sense of Being Valued

The analysis and inquiry process of study participants' narratives identified how important being heard and valued are to mutual aid and community food work. New Community Project's programming specifically associated with the New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center is aimed to be a place of refuge and care for people who are vulnerable, displaced, marginalized, or impoverished by society due to conflict, addiction, abuse, homelessness, and general social isolation. Empowerment, voice, and choice as a trauma-informed care principle involves when and where people are allowed to opt in or out of activities and programs to encourage self-determination of preferences, goal-setting, and decision-making (SAMHSA, 2014). Alicia offered her perspective as a person who received and now extends mutual aid as a coordinator: "These are people who need to be heard, not only to give them a place to spend the

night, but also people who need company to motivate them that they are useful.” (Appendix E, Lines 108 – 109)

Indigo poignantly reflected on her own experience of why having a voice and telling her story is so important for herself, healing, and continued growth.

I think that in order for me to be well, I have to get this out. I have to get this out so that I can be better, and that is why I feel that the earth has helped me to heal. I feel proud of myself for what I am today compared to what I was in the past, and that has also helped me in my situation. ~ Indigo (Appendix J, Lines 60 - 62)

Taona spoke from her community development and food work experience in Malawi on how easy it is for vulnerable communities and people to be ignored individually but also by government through either active or benign neglect.

I represent very poor communities, and they're vulnerable people, and they're in mostly hard to reach areas. And, New Community Project is an organization that's willing to support people like those communities who rarely have a voice. Even in our own country, if they raise their voice and say, "This is what we want, or maybe we're facing this challenge." Their own country is not able to reach out to communities like this. ~ Taona (Appendix T, Lines 160 - 163)

David as the founder and director of New Community Project described the goals and intentions of serving and caring for people and land convivially. David stated some people are experiencing extreme predicaments and distress due to societal strains and systemic issues so they really need to be heard: “we try to do that, not just literally hearing them what they have to say to us and about us and to us, to work with us, but also, hearing them in a sense of being aware of their situation, their predicament, whether it's a predicament in extremis of, ... I mean, we've had people

from the streets come and live in our centers, or just the predicament of being in this society now and not feeling heard there or feeling welcomed there. They feel like they're out of place.”

(Appendix I, Lines 93 – 99)

Jeff, who incubated and coordinates Give Solar Harrisonburg under the umbrella and fiscal sponsorship of New Community Project, reiterated how adhering to this principle requires intentionality and accommodation to address possible language barriers. He stated, “What I've seen at Vine & Fig is a lot of intentionality to include them in the decision-making, intentionality in making sure that they are included in the conversation, even when the conversation is in English doing the translation for them.” (Appendix K, Lines 263 - 265)

Reed as a funder and outside observer of New Community Project’s programming reiterated the need for intentionality:

...it's about creating the space for people to have those conversations without feeling threatened or just able to be open and listening, and also have disagreements. And, where that it's okay if you don't agree. So, it takes time to understand where people are coming from and the experiences they've had and also be sensitive to the language you're using. I'm sure everyone offends someone without meaning to and if you can't hear, "Hey, you know, actually I come from this background, and that was offensive, and here's why!" You'll never know and you'll never grow. ~ Reed (Appendix Q, Lines 328 - 332)

Culture, History, and Gender: Being Recognized and Seen

The coding process for analyzing for a trauma-informed care framework recognized that respecting and recognizing the intersectionality and lived experiences of people is integrally important to daily interactions and educational programming. According to SAMHSA (2014), this trauma-informed care principle acknowledges and respects intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age in socialization and organization to recognize possible

conscious and/or implicit biases. And yet, the recognition of cultures, histories, and genders also has its challenges in that lived experiences can be quite divergent with steep gradients at times.

The importance of being recognized, seen, and accounted for in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, and nation was emphasized by Alicia, Anita, and Indigo. At the end of the semi-structured interview process, each of these three study participants expressed significant gratitude for having their perceptions and stories valued as women and human beings, and were thankful their narratives were recorded, transcribed, translated, and accounted for in Spanish and English. Alicia specifically spoke how love and patience is expressed to immigrants and to people as a whole by the coordinators and organization.

Caroline in speaking about cultural identity and gender stated how biases have to be constantly reassessed:

We try to create safe spaces, in brave safe spaces for everyone where the dignity of each person is respected. That means a ton of different things. As someone who identifies as part of the queer community that is actually fairly new as someone working in this space. I can really only speak to my experience on that end, but it's a pretty constant reassessment of our own biases and our own everything. You have to come pretty ready for feedback, ready for openness, and ready to mess up, at least in my personal experience... But having this pretty open-door feedback for really open, honest, and loving communication around the issue of identity and intersectionality is huge. Exactly, good old Crenshaw on intersectionality, we got to give a shout-out to. When you're asking people to come with vulnerability, you're gonna have huge spaces also then of asking, "Okay, now, how the heck do we navigate all of these different identities interacting in this space?" ~ Caroline (Appendix G, Lines 106 – 111; 133 - 138).

Missy addressed how individuals each have different backgrounds, but events, experiences, and effects of adversity and trauma can disrupt and disorient people figuratively and literally so they do not have any place to turn to change their environment.

The other aspect is just that we all have different life experiences. Exactly, we come from different cultures, different histories, and genders... And, we help people that just don't have nowhere to go to have somewhere -- and have food, friendship, and get on their feet. To find work maybe if they wanted to and find their own place eventually. But it's hard being on the streets nowadays and times are hard. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 26 - 29)

For Alicia, the recognition of diverse cultures within New Community Project and the United States offers an opportunity to celebrate the richness of the histories and backgrounds that would include celebrating gastronomy, dance, music, and agriculture, while also allowing for an exchange of ideas, knowledge, learning, and teaching where, “It is like the language exchange of English with Spanish. For me, it is like that exchange where you can be my English teacher and I can be your Spanish teacher.” (Appendix E, Lines 158 – 159)

Study participants also enumerated and expounded on ways baseline connections are made and maintained through food specific work and rituals. In the following excerpt, Charlotte, who was completing a senior capstone research project on agroforestry and silvopasture systems at New Community Project’s Jubilee Climate Farm as part of her Geographic Science class at James Madison University, shared how common work goals and rituals of communal meals build relationships, friendships, and identities across cultures.

...And we are trying to create a food system that can contribute to people's lives in a way that benefits them and helps contribute to their identity. The ritual of food and context "All right, we're all going to sit down together and eat something that so and so made." It creates

again a baseline connection of, "Oh, if we're all digging soil together, then we have something in common. If we're all eating and learning about this person's food and have this shared sense of community." ~ Charlotte (Appendix H, Lines 90 – 91; 95 - 99)

Reed, who has been involved with philanthropy for more than 50 years with organizations like the HundrED Project, the Grameen Foundation, Trees for Life and is a primary donor through his family foundation for New Community Project's work in Harrisonburg. In the study, Reed and his daughter Sophie, who serves as director of programs and evaluation and has strong background in food policy, epidemiology, and nutrition, shared their perspectives and experiences in relating to the organization as funders. Reed echoed the need for baseline connections and greater inclusivity to accomplish more as a community: "Well, for me, a community means people realizing their inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, people realizing they can accomplish great things when they work together" (Appendix Q, Lines 380 - 381)

Many of the study participants mentioned how community care and mutual aid must entail bridging divides and respectfully crossing boundaries that are apparent and those that have been constructed. Pete, who was counseled as a fifth grader by a young camp counselor named Tom Benevento at Camp Keewaydin in Vermont and later reconnected with Tom and New Community Project in 2014, shared an excerpt of how they try to bridge socio-economic and geo-political divides to address rural poverty at the New Community Project Sustainable Living Center in Starksboro, Vermont using similar methods as used in Harrisonburg.

One of the really cool things is that it reflects diversity. It may not reflect cultural diversity, but it certainly reflects a diversity of socioeconomic, educational, and gender backgrounds. ...And the wonderful thing about New Community Project and our work is that most people can agree on some of the fundamentals that we're trying to do – addressing hunger and poverty crosses ideological boundaries. So, there are these concepts, we have people

from different religious, faith traditions that are part of our group, some more conservative, some more liberal, and yet we're able to bridge those divides and those issues which are. But it was also about trying to get people together in the community that might not ordinarily sit down around a table with one another to find and remember the common culture of things that we can all agree upon. ~ Pete (Appendix P, Lines 288 -290;301 – 304)

As a small community-based organization with an overall big goal to change the world, New Community Project has forged partnerships and collaborations in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Virginia, but also across the world. Taona of Creative Solutions for the Environment of Malawi first became acquainted with Tom and Pete of New Community Project at a dinner organized by 350Vermont to talk about climate change and its impact on communities. Taona now serves as a board member and partner for New Community Project. As part of the study and her narrative, Taona made this observation on how New Community Project recognizes, listens, and works across and with cultures.

NCP really cares about the planet, and they're taking their time, learning more about different cultures and learning how they can best protect the people, provide security, and build their community that's stronger beyond just what we're seeing... ~ Taona (Appendix T, Lines 56 - 58)

Solidarity as Integrated Care and Healing

Many of the study participants acknowledged that they experienced solidarity as integral to care and healing. Solidarity as a trauma-informed principle focuses attention and care on shared humanity, the essentiality of each person, what happened, and root causes (Hecht et al., 2018). Solidarity also entails advocacy, accompaniment, witness, and compassion, while not trying to fix or shame anyone. Study participants reflected on and voiced different aspects of solidarity ranging

from a deep solidarity to soil, land, and common rituals; a sincere commitment to seeing residents at the New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center achieve incremental growth through time; in resistance to systemic racism in response to the White Supremacy rally in Charlottesville; to defining solidarity as one of many movements needed for transformational community development and systemic change.

For Alicia, Anita, Indigo, and Michael, the tacit embodied connection to soil, land, chickens, and caring for the Earth was significant to their care, sense of settledness, and ongoing journey of healing. Alicia offered “that God is the best psychologist that is why he left us the plants, he left us the soil. Because the soil centers me, it orients me, it reminds me of my roots, it reminds me that I am from the soil.” (Appendix E, Lines 52 – 54)

Anita offered that solidarity is often accompanied by many rituals, reflection, anger in wanting to forget, and a fervent hope: “As for practices, praying, visiting and being with the psychologist, dancing, walking and being here in this place also helps me to forget many things. I can walk over there. There are flowers and there are many vegetables, I am also going to plant now. Living in this place, it has helped me a lot; so, it gave me hope to be here. Yes, it gave me hope to be here longer.” (Appendix F, Lines 52 -54)

Indigo shared how care and healing take time and is a continual process if solidarity is to be experienced and achieved. Indigo shared that patience and the tender care of people is similar to the care of a seed and seedling, and requires a sense of wonder and discovery. Similarly, Indigo’s solidarity with individual and collective growth is exemplified in how Indigo modeled her community food work to her children and addresses healing of her own trauma:

I have not finished healing yet, but this project with the earth is for me, my healing. You bring it with you from birth, from the family, it is hereditary, from the fact that you like the land. So, it is something that you pass on to your children, to your family. I feel that my

children will also like this, they will like to help a community. ~ Indigo (Appendix J, Lines 152 - 154)

Missy spoke of the internal and external disorder and chaos that can accompany life and trauma and how care and healing are part of a lifelong journey. Food, friendship, and helping people get on their feet can be a touchstone but also a way to witness the humanity, strength, and journey of others without trying to fix or shame them. In understanding how persistent and burdensome problems can be for some individuals, Missy demonstrates solidarity in defending residents and trying to give them every chance possible to grow and heal.

Well, when people have problems here. They know I will defend them; I stand up for them. I'm pretty strong in that area. I get protective because I know they might not have a lot but don't pick on them. Don't say they're not good enough. Who knows if they're good enough because they never had a chance to show them? I'm more like just back off. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 59 - 61)

For other study participants, particularly those working as coordinators, part-time workers, volunteers, and occasional visitors, the programming and togetherness experienced around gardening, planting, harvesting, sharing, eating, and celebrating with food contributed to their sense of solidarity with the people and community food work. For Sarah, her introduction and involvement in New Community Project Vine & Fig came out of concern and personal wrestling with the effects and aftermath of the 2017 white supremacy rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Sarah shared her thoughts on solidarity in regard to intentional practices, specifically efforts to decenter whiteness within the organization's programming around energy and climate issues that affect vulnerable populations in the community but also to celebrate cultures and different backgrounds.

Definitely decentering whiteness. I had not realized that decentering whiteness was a goal that I was really passionate about until I actually left Vine & Fig and started realizing that this is not the way of everybody. It was not an issue but an intentional practice: to celebrate cultures, to acknowledge different backgrounds, just really give a sense of a diverse community, and put people who are historically underserved and ignored in the forefront of our minds when we ask what we can do in the community. ~ Sarah (Appendix S, Lines 222 - 228)

For Reed, whose family foundation provides philanthropic support for New Community Project in Harrisonburg, his introduction and primary connection to the organization has been through Tom Benevento who he first met in Guatemala through Trees for Life in the 1980s. He offered this observation as a supportive funding partner that people should “sense that they're not just passengers on the bus, they get to drive the bus. They're an integral part of working together with other people.” (Appendix Q, Lines 394) Sophie affirmed: “That’s what contributes to the feeling of solidarity with other people and part of it is that sense of place. You can band together against something and you can also band together for something. And so, it is that sense of place and creating something to care about and a place that also cares about them.” (Appendix Q, Lines 350 – 351) Sophie added reflections on solidarity based on her visits to and interactions with New Community Project Vine and Fig:

It's that feeling of being completely present. Like there's nothing nagging at the back of your head like, "Oh, I got to check this email or whatever." You know you're there. And then there's space to just be, and you don't have to be entertained or stimulated the whole time. Similar to other places, I remember when we first went to the garden and we just took a moment to appreciate and recognize the history of the land that the place was actually in. ~ Sophie (Appendix Q, Lines 390 - 394)

For Kim, who has been affiliated with New Community Project since its inception and formation in 2003, expressed that solidarity takes different forms at a local and global context but is “really central to the vision: what we're trying to do is to participate in and build strength in a new vision of community that is really broad, that unites all the people of the earth, the creatures of the earth, and the earth itself. It's not the community that we live in as neighbors exactly, it's part of it, but it's so much broader.” (Appendix M, Lines 43 - 46)

Taona described the solidarity she felt with Tom, Pete, and David when Taona first met them at a 350.org climate education event and discussion in Vermont. For Taona, solidarity entails respecting the indigenous values and knowledge of the people and community but commitment and intentionality. Taona shared that due to the remoteness of some communities in Malawi, several government agencies and organizations would ignore and not provide needed services to address food security and climate change related issues in these communities: “But that is why these communities are this poor because nobody goes there to help them. They have no hospital, they have no water, they have no access to education. Literally, a lot of things, they are remote and kept from having that.” (Appendix T, Lines 289 - 291) Therefore, solidarity involves an amount of risk and must recognize people’s inherent worth and shared vulnerabilities.

In speaking about solidarity as an overarching concept and genuine attempt to integrate a full-bodied approach to care, witness, justice, and healing, Pete and Jonathan provided their perspectives on the overarching objective and the inherent challenges of practicing and living out an ideal and principles of trauma-informed care. Pete shared from his experience with programming as the founding coordinator for New Community Project’s Sustainable Living Center in Starksboro, Vermont.

So, the solidarity concept comes back to this idea of, again: what does it take to have a life that's full of joy and abundance, but that doesn't cause injustice or climate chaos to other

people? And part of that idea is equity in sharing resources, developing a lifestyle that reduces harm to the greatest extent possible within the context of where you live and what your capabilities are, and approaching life with that mindset. ~ Pete (Appendix P, Lines)

Jonathan served as an early volunteer in 2011 – 2013 and member of the emerging partnership team of New Community Project in Harrisonburg from 2013 to 2017. During his time with New Community Project, he initiated and incubated Silver Run Forest Farm and Folk School. In the following excerpt, he addressed the philosophical tensions that exist from a theoretical perspective and the complexity of solidarity in practice, specifically for a relatively new organization that is attempting to address significant societal challenges such as homelessness and providing refuge for people coming out of conflict zones, abusive, violent situations, or comparable traumatic experiences:

People need shelter so where and how can we talk about a more liberating way to leverage or shift the unjust things we have inherited to make it possible for other people to access the basic means needed for thriving. And so, if solidarity moves us in that direction that's great. But sometimes for me there, the experience of solidarity with the greatest end was a personal spiritual transformation of moving through downward mobility and just bein' in a similar deprived situation as other people. ~ Jonathan (Appendix L, Lines 285 – 289)

In speaking about some of the philosophical tensions of community food work (i.e., moving beyond charity and provision of food to grapple with issues power, position, privilege, and leadership) and specifically about the complexity of solidarity in practice, David, the founder of New Community Project, shared that simple solidarity is not enough and that the next movement in the change process is restorative justice. In David's narrative, David discussed and elaborated on the oft quoted community development adage that "If you give a person a fish, you feed him for

the day. If you teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” (Appendix I, Lines 250 - 251) David reiterated and emphasized charity and development have their times and places but the deeper ongoing work is to address systemic root causes. David described at least five movements that are needed to get at real change using a virtual schematic of a person actually fishing along a stream. Building on the Chinese proverb and relatively common community development adage, the movement may start with charity and development, but the movement must address issues of equity and justice that limit access (due to race, gender, religion, war, etc.); work to create a healthy, stable sustainable environment; and move a more robust solidarity where no one is viewed as an outside actor, power imbalances created by inherited privilege and uneven geographies are rectified so everyone see themselves as equal peers and partners. The movement and change process at this stage would be more transformational potentially emblematic of an actual agential change space that might ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively.

Engendering an Agential Change Space

The narrative inquiry of agential change space focused on my second research question: how does a community food work organization provide agential change space to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand vulnerable individuals’ and the broader public’s boundaries of what is possible? I used an ecotone as a metaphor and principle of agential change space for potential for growth individually and collectively. The definition of an ecotone as porous, multi-directional, multi-layered space with temporal, spatial, and functional dimensions guided the coding and analysis. In regard to the recognition and expression of agential change space and resilience, Missy, Michael, Alicia, Anita, and Indigo are actively involved in providing hospitality and care at New Community’ Project’s Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center, coordinating the work schedule for market gardens, agroforestry, and agroecological demonstrations, education and

outreach, guiding tours, and being spokespeople for New Community Project. Additionally, each one of them recognized and demonstrated their own resilience and agency as complex, multi-dimensional persons in seeking a safe haven, secure base, and different environment in light of facing potential trauma-inducing events and significant adverse experiences: 1) homelessness, alcoholism, and intermittent violent relationships for 30-years; 2) displacement due to ongoing war in the Horn of Africa and lived in a refugee camp in East Africa for five years; 3) dislocation and homelessness due to armed conflict and civil war in Mexico and Central America; 4) physical spousal abuse, life-threatening violence by a partner, and homelessness as a consequence, and being separated from their nuclear family for more than fifteen years; and 5) attempted rape by a neighbor and rape by a co-worker.

As I previously mentioned, the second cohort of twelve study participants had different organization roles and reasons for being involved with New Community Project's mission and programs that included: seeking to align values and faith with personal and professional goals; integrating a fuller-bodied approach to care, justice, and healing; finding answers to deep questions about systemic racism; addressing the present status of climate change and geopolitical harm; experiencing a virtual sense of homelessness and displacement from their own beliefs and values.

An Ecotonal Space for Potential Growth

The seventeen study participants, although relatively small in number, were diverse and heterogenous with complex experiences and varied perspectives on how the organization engendered agential change space and what interactive participation meant to them. Again, New Community Project Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center seeks to be a place of refuge and care for people where people develop autonomy; a sense of control and leadership in their lives; and grow in meaningful personal ways that serve themselves and others in the community.

With the semi-structured interviews of study participants, Sarah, Alicia, Indigo, Robbie, and David specifically mentioned their appreciation for the leadership and influence that Missy has provided for New Community Project Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center. Missy helped with the renovation and establishment of the Sustainable Living Center from 2011 to 2013 and assumed the role of co-coordinator for hospitality and community life at the Center in 2017 and assists with the organization's financial work. Missy stated the growth she has experienced in her own life and the difference a more stable environment has played in getting control of her life:

And, I spent 30 days in jail because I really knew nothing about things. And then, I quit drinking. In 2009, I quit. So, I've been sober since and this area here, just kind of took me away from the bad environments. I feel in control of my life now. And I feel so relieved I'm not drinking. And, so it's been 12 years and here really helped me, just the environment -- it's just natural and caring about life too. And see me, and see who I was, and what I can do, and that kind of branched into what it is now. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 15 -21)

Sarah's reflection and insight speaks to the growth and strength of Missy witnessed by others at New Community Project: "Missy was another person who I had not too many moments with but every moment I got to chat with her she was always, what's a good word... she has such a gentle strength that whenever she talks with someone it is like you are in. At least, I felt that way. The talented artist who looks up from her beautiful work of painting -- like you get the 'hello of the day' you know you are in." (Appendix S, Lines 250 -254)

Missy is cognizant her own efforts to provide agential change space of giving others space and time to grow as well. In speaking about a resident of the Sustainable Living Center who has suffered from the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome, Missy proclaimed: "It shows in their confidence daily. I've seen him grow. And he's been here five or six years. He was really rough when he got here. It took a few years. He comes from a family with alcoholism and he has fetal

alcohol syndrome from a baby. But he does work here twice a week and he's grown so much emotionally and mentally. And he's just really grown.”

For Alicia and Indigo, they are now responsible for coordinating collaboration, gardening, and community life at the New Community Project Vine and Fig site in Harrisonburg and the Jubilee Climate Farm that was started in 2021. Alicia and Indigo both shared how important being recognized, seen, and asked to take on these roles were to them as individuals.

I discovered that the garden, through planting, it is therapy for me in my life, it has changed my life. When I am outside planting a seed, a little plant, I feel good with myself and with others and I started to get more involved, to represent the organization. I like the organization because our motto is to cultivate the land but also to cultivate human relationships and that filled me, I identified with that because no matter where you come from the important thing is that we can work together for a good cause. ~ Alicia (Appendix E, Lines 34 - 40)

Well, of Vine and Fig, I am now in charge of Vine and Fig, I can also talk about Alicia... (turning to Tomás) Me and Alicia are in charge of the Vine and Fig community. So, we are in charge there; and something that I feel proud of is having that place there. Also, when I began there, I started working, so it is something that made me change. I felt a change because I feel that I have a little more responsibility apart from my two children that I have. ~ Indigo (Appendix J, Lines 85 - 89)

Anita coordinates meals and hospitality at New Community Project Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center in collaboration with Missy and Alicia, but was also inspired to start her own nonprofit organization in Guatemala to assist orphaned children and children with disabilities.

Anita has additional aspirations to assist more children to learn to read and write in her home region.

The value that the NGO here gives me and for my work in Guatemala and own NGO. Here, the NGO Vine & Fig lets me choose what I am going to cook, and that is good for me. And they give me the opportunity to work to help with the rent. And for the Guatemala project, they have given me ideas... Living in this place, it has helped me a lot; so, it gave me hope to be here. Yes, it gave me hope to be here longer. ~ Anita (Appendix F, Lines 57 – 59; 61 – 62)

Alicia, Indigo, and Michael, along with Taona in Malawi, expressed similar interest in working and giving back to their home communities in meaningful ways because of the care, support, and inspiration they received from New Community Project, parents, and other people. However, presently, the geopolitical environment in the home communities of Alicia, Indigo, and Michael is not safe due to continued armed conflict.

For the second cohort of study participants, agential change was recognized and expressed in various ways ranging from being given new responsibilities; sensing at home theologically or epistemologically; initiating and incubating new programs; to finding common interest around renewable energy and efforts to mitigate geopolitical and environmental harm. Caroline spoke about the profound affect the experience interning and working at NCP and the Jubilee Climate Farm had in relation to Caroline's course of study and sense of satisfaction: "I changed my major. I was studying psychology and then started studying geographic science. I knew like, "This is the only thing that I could do." There was nothing else that would bring me the same satisfaction, true joy, and fulfillment." (Appendix G, Lines 18 - 22)

Caroline additionally voiced the need for fierce positivity in the face of challenges coupled with the ability to imagine and dream of other possibilities: "I don't have to fit into every

patriarchal structure, I don't have to fit into every relationship structure that comes under a power and control dynamic, right? I'm not forced into those systems. And I feel like farming can do the same thing, transforming the way the systems work. You're also changing and slowly liberating yourself from the capitalist mindset, depending on how you farm. But I'm really privileged to be able to think that way because when you are farming because most people who farm that's their income.” (Appendix G, Lines 186 - 192)

Sarah, who also started as an intern while study at James Madison University, was invited to join the Renew Rocktown 50 by 25 Renewable Energy Campaign, lead graphic design and communication efforts, and work on a research project for the Virginia Governor's statewide Environmental Justice Council, which helped to forge professional trust and competency. However, one facet of Sarah’s time with New Community Project that Sarah found refreshing and illuminating was the idea of celebration in light of difficult circumstances:

And so, taking the approach of celebration really opened up a completely new world for me and that has influenced my life in ways that are just insane. And to take an approach of celebration reminded me that you can have fun in really difficult work. So, getting outside and digging in dirt, or digging in the soil, planting things -- even if you do not know how to plant cilantro at first -- you can still celebrate learning with people and doing little tiny things that add up to really big actions and big inspirations for others. (Appendix S, Lines 183 - 189)

New Community Project as a community-focused food work organization seeks to be a living laboratory and a site of experimentation in trying to solve complex social and environmental problems. Since New Community Project Vine and Fig’s establishment in Harrisonburg, the organization has helped to instigate and incubate different programs as well as other organizations that still function under the auspices and umbrella of New Community Project’s nonprofit status

designation. Examples of some initiatives that have flourished and a few that fizzled include: the Northend Greenway, The Sustainable Living Center, Renew Rocktown 50 by 25 Renewable Energy Initiative, Give Solar Harrisonburg, Silver Run Forest Farm (formerly Blacks Run Forest Farm), Educational outreach (composting, school gardens, farm-to-school programming), and Soil Cycles.

Within this context, Silver Run Forest Farm and Folk School and Give Solar currently operate under the fiscal sponsorship umbrella of New Community Project Vine and Fig. Jonathan who co-founded Silver Run Forest Farm initially at the New Community Project Vine and Fig site in Harrisonburg spoke about how agential change within a small community food work organization needs to allow for interaction and healthy autonomy as well as an expansive umbrella or meaning-making canopy as people deal with their own issues and inherent structural issues related to our current economic system. Jonathan emphasized how important it is to establish boundaries, some kindred relational quality, and a sense of autonomy as people seek to recognize and express agential change, particularly in starting a new program or potentially another organization. Jonathan in reflecting on Silver Run Forest Farm and New Community Project Fine and Fig mentioned this sentiment and analogy in relation to agential change: “I wanted to be in a relationship. The image that came to me later was to be a good neighbor and where neighbors can partner on tons of stuff. And I would like to have my house, and I'd like you to have your house. That actually meant we could work better together. ...And so, that image of New Community Project, as an organization, being more of an umbrella for things to sprout out that could have some autonomy.” (Appendix L, Lines 341 – 343; 357 -360)

Jeff was motivated to work alongside New Community Project Vine and Fig because of the mutual interest in alleviating and mitigating the environmental and geopolitical harm that's being done by the current economic system, the predominant model of never-ending consumption, and

concern for ongoing problematic social and cultural dynamics that adversely affect low resource populations. Similarly, New Community Project's vision of finding creative solutions to social and ecological issues (e.g., Renew Rocktown) and serving as a social incubator for projects to address the social dynamics was resonant with Jeff: "Renew Rocktown was started in 2015 and it was basically started with the realization that climate change is a real and present danger. ...It's still going under a different name. We call it 50 by 25, which refers to a goal of transitioning to 50% renewable energy by 2025. (laughs) My involvement, in part, led to a bunch of great things including my project GiveSolar. And reflecting back, it was New Community Project Vine & Fig creating the place for this group to form and create the structural home, and even a place to meet." (Appendix K, Lines 59 – 67)

GiveSolar Harrisonburg was established in 2018 to increase accessibility of solar energy and renewable energy for households with low income; providing long-term economic security; and engaging in climate change solutions. Give Solar Harrisonburg, in collaboration with New Community Project and Central Virginia Habitat for Humanity, organized volunteer-supported solar installation events similar to barn-raising events that occur within Amish and Mennonite plain sect communities. For Jeff, the solar barn-raising community-based effort is an example of the beloved community. In speaking about agential change, Jeff reiterated thoughts similar to Jonathan in that it is good to know New Community Project has GiveSolar's back organizationally; helped to fertilize and water the seeds of the initial idea; and seems comfortable with the need for autonomy, neighborliness, a certain amount of family kinship, and tension as programs and initiatives grow and develop.

NCP Vine & Fig has been a long-term place of employment for many of them. And that's really impressive, several people have stuck with Vine & Fig for a long time. And, Vine &

Fig has been a supportive community to them. So, a strong aspect of what they do is trying to live lightly and walk lightly. ~ Jeff (Appendix K, Lines 266 – 269)

At an international level, Taona offered perspective on how her interaction with New Community Project has influenced community food work in Malawi: “As I said, we have a lot of similarities. We might not have everything in the world; we might not have all the resources, but we've got this big dream and this big vision. And, what they're [New Community Project] saying to me, it really corresponds. We're doing quite the same thing in essence; this might be a very good partnership.” (Appendix T, Lines 68 – 71)

An excerpt from Reed's narrative highlighted overall the ecotonal dynamics and dimensions of community food work with arguments and makeups: “With New Community Project, they really focus and thrive on the kind of sense of place in multiple ways internally and externally. It's not just about funding, they're literally putting roots down in the ground, gardening, and seeing something grow seasonally, year after year is really therapeutic, and naturally builds that sense of place. But then a sense of place includes the sense that people feel welcome and it's kind of family-based in the way that they eat and live and maybe have arguments and makeup. And, because of all those things, people feel more grounded than they've probably felt at a lot of times in their life.” (Appendix Q, Lines 350 - 356)

Of the seventeen study participants, Jonathan provided a cogent segue to the aspirations and tensions of a community food work organization providing and being a place of trauma-informed care and agential change space. New Community Project seeks to grow and produce food in ecologically sustainable ways and as close to carbon neutral as possible through agroforestry and polyculture techniques. Through the years, New Community Project has experimented with market gardening to sell at the local farmers market as well as to area restaurants and schools. Additionally, New Community Project has organized and coordinated community gardens and

school gardens at neighboring elementary schools. For Jonathan, there was an obvious aspiration and tension associated with trying to have a financially viable market garden where people could be paid a living wage and the need to hustle and be as efficient as possible at producing and marketing the food, while at the same time having to take breaks from gardening and preparing produce for markets to listen to and care for people's needs at The White House.

Jonathan, who is trained in restorative justice and served five years as a house facilitator and mediator at New Community Project Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center, emphasized the political nature of community food work. In efforts to center justice, equity, and trauma in systems change processes, Jonathan noted that along the way in trying to be an agential change space there will be "wounds and gifts surrounded in beauty but also steeped in complication." Therefore, the disordering and wounding of injustices and traumas demand an equally powerful and beautiful response to counter and overcome the long-term ramifications for individuals and organizations.

Aspirations and Tensions in Being a Place of Trauma-Informed Care and Agential Change

The final round of narrative inquiry focused on my third research question: what aspirations and tensions are apparent to an organization and emerge in providing and being a place of trauma-informed care and agential change space? The thematic analysis considered aspirations and tensions specifically mentioned or alluded to as existing or emerging by the study participants in their narratives. The themes included 1) aspirations related to vision, mission and sustainability, 2) interpersonal tension, 3) organizational tension, and 4) structural and systemic-related tension. New Community Project Vine and Fig's efforts to actualize the social-ethical ideal of a beloved community that brings people from different backgrounds, philosophical viewpoints, languages, genders, and ethnicities together much like an ecotone, aspirations and tensions naturally exist and emerge. The aspirations and tensions of individuals and the organization are emblematic of broader

social-ethical systemic struggles but can also serve as a microcosm of the aspirations and tensions of community food work pedagogy and praxis.

As a small community food work organization with a big goal to provide and build a sense of belonging, care, and community for people most affected by systemic injustices and traumas, there are challenges in aligning aspirations and managing tensions that are interpersonal and organizational. At the same, other aspirations and tensions are symptomatic of systemic issues (e.g., neoliberal rationality, capitalism, etc.) that may not be apparent but exert significant covert pressure and influence on individuals and organizations through power asymmetries and ontological politics.

Interwoven Collateral Realities

In my thematic analysis of the narratives, I viewed the aspirations and tensions as interwoven collateral realities of countervailing importance to the thinking and practice of community food work. Again, I use collateral in this research as an adjective to mean parallel, coordinate, or corresponding in position, order, time, valence, or significance. The aspirations expressed by study participants aligned closely as a positive counter valence with tensions meaning each can represent a desired preferred change. Aspirations were thematically analyzed in relation to the organization's vision, mission, and sustainability and how study participants perceived and thought about the organization as fulfilling, actualizing, and sustaining its vision and mission. Tensions were thematically analyzed based on interpersonal, organizational, and structural systemic challenges. However, the boundary between aspirations appeared nuanced and porous due to the mutual reciprocal nature of relationships and community food work. Therefore, I share study participants' perceptions and thoughts on aspirations and tensions as they relate navigating interpersonal, organizational, and structural systemic challenges in pursuit of justice equity, and healing.

At an interpersonal level, aspirations and tensions speaks to a basic human need for genuine care, stability, and settledness. Missy shared from her experience a deep desire and aspiration to just feel and be at home internally and not think she has to move from other pressures and influences.

...I was homeless for like 30 years or so. Yeah, I drank. I tried to live places but I just couldn't and would get beat up a lot. So, it's been a rough road. And I'm still not completely settled from being homeless, it'd be nice just to be at home and not think I have to move. I will find that peace of feeling at home but I've been through a lot. ~ Missy (Appendix O, Lines 11 - 14)

Alicia expressed that help and cooperation are fundamental to care but also acknowledged that cultures have virtues and defects, and as community and human beings we have to accept and possibly celebrate imperfections in work across cultures and generations.

For example, the new generations, the students, they help us a lot, when they come. They help us to till the land, to sow, and you teach them, and they learn to be responsible with the projects they have in their lives. And we all learn because all cultures have virtues and defects. Nobody is perfect, and what we do want is that we learn together. ~ Alicia (Appendix E, Lines 147 – 151)

Alicia, Indigo, and Michael expressed strong aspirations to work and give back to their home communities in meaningful ways because of the care, support, and inspiration they have received. However, their home communities and countries continue suffer from war and long-term armed conflict. Michael reflected on his own experience and aspiration to share his knowledge about agroforestry:

War affects the whole thing and causes depopulation and displacement though. People are leaving the countries because they don't have food and military are cutting the trees down for revenge and also sanction... If I go back to my country, that is something I would like to start, and would share my experience from here and what I've learned. And I would like to do agroforestry and work on ways that could improve farming. ~ Michael (Appendix N, Lines 90 – 91; 111 - 113)

Overall, Missy, Alicia, Anita, Indigo, and Michael as the first cohort expressed a desire and aspiration for New Community Project to have greater capacity and increase in scale to address needs of people and the planet in regard to environmental and geopolitical harms that endanger the present and future.

The second cohort focused on the organizational and structural aspirations and tensions in relation to trauma-informed care and agential change. An interpersonal and organizational aspiration that Caroline voiced was on experimentation, determination, and daring to dream: “Daring to dream about what things can look like has become a big part of me. There was nothing here this time last year. ...Honestly, daring to dream, is a brave thing to do in this world.” (Appendix G, Lines 85 – 91) However, Caroline defined an aspiration and tension in regard to identities, geographies, and working across differences in a rather small organizational space: “As someone who identifies as part of the queer community that is actually fairly new as someone working in this space. I can really only speak to my experience on that end, but it's a pretty constant reassessment of our own biases and our own everything. You have to come pretty ready for feedback, ready for openness, and ready to mess up, at least in my personal experience. And the same way we are with our systems we build here; we have to have that openness to failure ‘cause without that we'll never learn or succeed.” (Appendix G, Lines 107 – 113)

Taona offered aspirations based on her experience as an international partner and NCP board member in regard to care of Malawi people and the planet. Taona provided this vision for the community food work in Malawi:

As for a vision, I'll start with my own. In the next five to ten years, I would want our communities first of all to have planted 10 million trees. We're growing and planting a lot of trees, (laughs). So, we'd have planted 10 million trees, maybe even more... As regards to the girls, I'd really love to have leaders come from these communities. The development come from within, not be from outside, but from the work that we're doing. The community building a hospital themselves and becoming more resourceful. ~ Taona (Appendix T, Lines 342 – 347)

In discussing aspirations and tensions in continuing to provide trauma-informed care and agential change space, Taona, Kim, Robbie, and Pete as New Community Project board members and coordinator focused their reflections and insights on organizational leadership, succession planning, diversity, and capacity-building to enable continued programming and outreach, while interns, part-time employees, and those hired as independent contractors were concerned about ways to enhance the long-term financial viability of positions and the organization to further the vision and mission. Kim in addressing the overall wherewithal and leadership of New Community Project stated: "...A challenge for the board is to think about how we train other leadership? How do we engage people in sustaining the work? The work can change, the shape of it can change, but sustaining this work and how do we take advantage of this great network of people we have to do that training and sustaining?" (Appendix M, Lines 279 -282) These aspirations and tensions are particularly salient in bridging leadership so it is less personality and charisma dependent or continually conveying that the organization is about incubating and exporting ideas and solutions to complex community issues.

Pete offered these insights on organizational leadership: “At some point, we’ll have to think about how the work carries forward. So that’s always in the background, how do we create something that can sustain and go on, not just from a personality perspective, but has institutional wherewithal to continue with different people running it?” (Appendix P, Lines 412 – 415) Pete’s perspective was also salient to the economic realities of the people and communities seeks to serve and walk alongside: “In the end, if people are just trying to figure out how to survive day-to-day economically, they’re not gonna have the wherewithal to honestly try to address issues like climate change or structural racism, or you name the problem that we’re facing.” (Appendix P, Lines 311 - 313)

As an organizational funding partner, Reed mentioned how important mutual accountability is to interpersonal, organizational, and structural relationships and change: “You’ve got to keep your side of the agreement. “If you say you’re going to bring two goats, don’t show up with one.”” (Appendix Q, Lines 152 - 153) Mutual accountability, along with transparency in discussions, decisions, and actions, is critical to demonstrate true respect and care for people and the organization. Another tension that was apparent across several narratives and relates to mutual accountability was the need to have a better understanding New Community Project’s Theory of Change and how faith traditions, worker movements, and concepts like downward mobility influence and inform the organization in theory and practice. Additionally, proper accountability and reciprocity must account for the economic viability of individuals and the organization.

In relation to trauma-informed care and agential change space, Caroline, Kim, Sophie, and Jonathan specifically addressed the multi-directional and multi-layered complexity of these situations, circumstances, spaces, and systems. Caroline, in speaking about a preferred imaginary of community, highlighted the need for time, relationship-building, and volunteer training that creates brave safe spaces; acknowledges there will be microaggressions and people will mess up;

and yet envisions the real possibility for learning, unlearning, and growth. For Caroline, such a preferred imaginary and attitude is essential at a cultural and societal level to substantively address experiences and effects of relocation, migration, and generational trauma in communities and broader public spaces.

Kim recognized that people's experiences with trauma are individually distinct: "And we talked about trauma-informed work, there are places to recognize that the trauma has been so great for some people that they need to play a role that's different. They can work together with others, but they don't necessarily feel they can regularly deal and cope with their own trauma. It takes a shift in cultures before that can happen very easily." (Appendix M, Lines 292 - 296)

Sophie talked about New Community Project in relation to a trauma-informed approach and equity-based community food work. Sophie spoke specifically to universally realizing, recognizing, and responding in informed ways to resist triggering and re-traumatizing individuals as well as others who are interacting with one another: "And when talking about a trauma-informed approach, a lot of it is just the person-to-person interaction and realizing that everyone has experienced trauma in different ways and that people can be triggered in all kinds of ways." In Sophie's view, this complexity requires open conversations, structure, flexibility, gentleness, nonviolent communication techniques, and maintaining boundaries as part of an overall person-to-person ethic and trauma-informed equity-based organizational framework.

Of the seventeen study participants, Jonathan served as a member of the emerging partner team (2011 to 2013), house facilitator, and mediator from 2013 to 2017 with NCP Vine and Fig's Sustainable Living Center. Jonathan recalled several insights based on his experience. From Jonathan's recollection, tensions were most palpable when the model of community-building was more of a traditional community whereby ten to twelve people with varied lived experiences related to trauma and violence lived in cramped quarters of a single house rather than an "urban

village campus” with better prescribed boundaries. Jonathan stated with situations and circumstances requiring trauma-informed care there is an inherent ongoing juxtaposition of wounds and gifts for those in mutual aid relationships because of the systemic presence of pain and the intimacy of care needed: “Healing and wounding are very much systemic. It's structural, it's contextual.” (Appendix L, Lines 189 - 190)

Similarly, the theoretical and conceptual ideas of community-building and trauma-informed-care are often confronted with the dissonance stark contrasts, and visceral realities of people who have suffered generational violence, inherited trauma, mental anguish, abuse, threats, rape, dispossession, and oppression. Jonathan spoke to the dissonance and steep gradient of differential lived experiences that created challenges and tensions interpersonally and organizationally that often emanated from structural pressures and systemic issues: “There was so much dissonance, diversity, or a gulf between people's lived experiences and the thought that a place can be everything for everybody. And so, that beautiful desire, of how can you fit in this way, often led to being way overworked, way overpopulated, overstretched, and very unclear in what to do and who was responsible for what decisions. That was always a challenge. Some of that was just how a group figures out its identity.” (Appendix L, Lines 69 - 74)

Even with the tensions, Jonathan found the experience personally impactful and formative as he and others worked through these tensions in trying to create a different vision of community: “The supposed tension between social justice and environmentalism -- without naming environmental justice at that time -- NCP was just coming at it a different way. Recognizing this is all connected and related was really meaningful for me.” (Appendix L, Lines 217 – 219) Hence, there was, particularly early on in the establishment of the NCP Vine and Fig Sustainable Living Center from 2013 to 2015, and still is an ongoing need to reflect on and evaluate the organization’s identity, service capability, definition of responsible community and housing, and maintaining

healthy boundaries to avoid undue harm for everyone involved. And yet, Jonathan admitted how important it is to recognize that tensions, clashes, dissonance, and some relational challenges are part of the struggle; real compassion; and genuine solidarity as individuals and organizations grapple with messy wicked systemic problems.

Aspirations and tensions may appear simply interpersonal or organizational, however, the systemic pressures that result in trauma, inequity, and uneven social landscapes that leave people vulnerable and communities in precarious situations are multi-layered and multi-directional with their own roots and tendrils. Similarly, intention and practice of trauma-informed care and agential change space as community food work are continually in juxtaposition as organizations and practitioners grapple with complex, complicated, wicked societal problems, and endeavor to transform food systems and communities. Therefore, recognizing and critically understanding how these juxtapositions can be manifest through intentions and practices must be integrated and expanded in the pedagogy and praxis of community food work.

Summary of Findings

The narrative inquiry of the ecotonal nature of community food work as praxis revealed the complexity of embodying trauma-informed care and engendering agential change space as mutual aid. Embodying a trauma-informed care approach is complex and at times messy because of the multi-dimensional, multi-directional, multi-layered nature of trauma. Although the study has limited generalizability, the continued need for a social-ethical ideal was evident in study participants' narratives and aspirations. New Community Project uses a social-ethical ideal similar to a beloved community in framing its vision and mission to help people know they are not alone in their situation and struggle to find peace, safety, and refuge in this world. New Community Project as a microcosm of current community food work demonstrated that radical hospitality, celebration, fierce optimism, trauma-informed care, and agential change space are critical to

community-building and change processes. All of the study participants affirmed and valued New Community Project Vine and Fig's vision and mission of social-ecological restorative justice as foundational to a culture of non-violence and peace. The seventeen study participants varied in their exposure to trauma-inducing events, experiences, and effects, but all were drawn personally and professionally to New Community Project in some social, ethical, ecological capacity at various times to fulfill different responsibilities.

The seventeen study participants' narratives thematically analyzed in this research were resonant with the *Principles of a Trauma-Informed Care Framework* defined and outlined by SAMHSA (2014), Bowen and Murshid (2016), and Hecht et al. (2018). The narrative inquiry of seventeen narratives demonstrated that an integrated trauma-informed care approach is essential to the formation of agential change space and has wide-reaching applicability to community food work and the critical nodes of justice, equity, and trauma. A trauma-informed care approach should be viewed as an indivisible framework and not simply individual principles that can be applied piecemeal to community food work. Many of the study participants acknowledged that solidarity was an integral principle of informed-care and healing since solidarity entails advocacy, accompaniment, witness, compassion, and not trying to fix or shame anyone.

A deep relational ecotonal space that is engendered by a fierce, and sometimes sticky, commitment to people and healthy boundaries for everyone's care is foundational for individuals and organizations to recognize their own agency and potential growth. The use of a metaphor enabled study participants to generate their own metaphors (e.g., tendrils, soil, seeds, wounds, gifts, etc.) to add meaning to their narratives, aspirations, and tensions. Tensions, clashes, dissonance, and relational challenges will exist and emerge, but tensions and challenges are part of real compassion and genuine solidarity as individuals and organizations seek to grapple with messy wicked systemic problems, try to build justice, and transform what community means. The

interweaved realities of aspirations and tensions must be acknowledged, embraced, supported, challenged, encouraged, and possibly celebrated. As community food work organizations and practitioners attempt to contest the pervasiveness of neoliberal rationality and confront ongoing intergenerational trauma and injustices to actualize an alternative social-ethical modality, an indivisible integrated trauma-informed care framework as a foundation to create agential change space can serve as a testament of hope and possibility for community food work praxis.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Many community food work organizations, like New Community Project's Vine and Fig program, are trying to center justice, equity, and trauma-based work in their efforts to embody food justice, provide agential change space, and build community. This research examined the ecotonal nature of community food work and specifically analyzed how a community food work organization that is engaged in mutual aid, restorative justice, and social-ecological activism embodies trauma-informed care; engenders an agential change space; and grapples with the aspirations and tensions of being an organization seeking to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic trauma and expand the boundaries of what is possible individually and collectively. Within this context, I framed the concepts of a beloved community and community food work praxis as two alternative social-ethical modalities to the dominant neoliberal governance and rationality that are essential to addressing justice, equity, and trauma. Community food work as a social-ethical modality has clear intersections with the ethic of a beloved community, the concept of a trauma-informed care as an organizational change process, and an ecotone as a metaphor of an agential change space. In this chapter, I discuss the need for a guiding social-ethical ideal such as a beloved community; the importance of restorying and reimagining what is possible; trauma-informed care as pedagogy and praxis; and what is needed to bring a beloved community and community food work forward through research and practice.

Restorying, Reframing, Reimagining

Stories of community food work can be transformational since stories and food are foundational for cultivating community and broader societal conversations. Storytelling and re-negotiating stories can be therapeutic in dealing with extreme trauma, post-traumatic stress disorders, and the acute vulnerability of cultural devastation that can be part of people's narratives (Janoff-Bulman 1985; Janoff-Bulman, 1988; Lear, 2008; Nichols and Davis, 2017; Parker, 2020;

Wilkerson, 2011). The narratives and resilience of Missy, Alicia, Anita, Indigo, and Michael were resonant with this important reality that re-negotiated stories and counter-storytelling can help people and communities integrate their narrative, change personal and social trajectories, and re-imagine a preferred social-ethical reality (Nichols and Davis, 2017; Parker, 2020). Missy, Alicia, Anita, Indigo, and Michael each shared how they have re-negotiated their realities after trauma-inducing events, experiences, and effects. The simple eloquence of Missy, Alicia, Anita, Indigo, and Michael highlighted how important giving individual voice and context to societal issues that are steeped in complication is deeply moving and humanizing.

Hochschild (2018), Solnit (2016), Lederach and Lederach (2010), Orr (2002), Levine (1997), Krall (1994), and D'Adamo-Damery (2016) emphasized the need for better metaphors to understand epistemic claims, project hope, build peace, heal trauma and past hurts, appreciate margins, and frame community food work networks. The use of an ecotone as a metaphor and principle of a fertile social-ecological space allowed for the juxtaposition of disparate realities and emergent possibilities in face of dominant hegemonic discourse and the pursuit of peace and justice (Lederach & Lederach, 2010; Seidman, 2009), but also how an organization like New Community Project and other community food work organizations might envision their work with justice, equity, and trauma differently. Neoliberalism's prevalence and prominence in all aspects of people's economic and non-economic lives can dull and blind people to the possibility of agential change so must be deeply interrogated at a social and ecological level (Agemben, 1998; Bauman, 2016; Brown, 2019; Foucault, 2008; Stephenson et al., 2020). The predominant growth of neoliberal rationality with its plentiful seeds and creeping tendrils has visible effects and invisible influences on community food work pedagogy and praxis, therefore, must continually be interrogated. A metaphor such as an ecotone with social and ecological attributes can help community food work practitioners and organizations generatively analyze their pedagogy and

praxis to understand the political ecosystem and hegemonic discourses and how their work might be reframed to transform social-ethical landscapes (Brown, 2017; Krull, 1994; Seidman, 2009).

Trauma-Informed Care as Community Food Work Praxis

Slocum and Cadieux (2015) highlighted that community food work practitioners working for food and social justice need to be aware of and intervene in areas of trauma, land, labor, and other sites of oppression. This research specifically focused on how a community food work organization might embody trauma-informed care as Slocum and Cadieux (2015) recommended for community food work to be an alternative social-ethical modality for addressing food and social justice. The narratives of seventeen community food work stakeholders and practitioners were thematically analyzed to understand how trauma-informed care is embodied and agential change space is engendered as community food work praxis. As a microcosm of community food work, the analysis of the seventeen narratives showed how important meaningful acknowledgement and generative analysis of trauma-informed care and agential change space is to community food work pedagogy and praxis. The prevalence and pervasiveness of trauma events, experiences, and effects must be acknowledged as extremely complex and universal to the likelihood of community food work to map onto existing social architecture steeped in neoliberal rationality with its current uneven geographies and power asymmetries remains highly plausible (Brown, 2019; Hochschild, 2016; McCutcheon, 2015, 2019; White, 2018).

The perpetuation of adverse experiences and manifestation of systemic traumas requires a deeper generative analysis of community food work through a trauma-informed care and agential change space lens (Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). The pain and visceral reality of the cumulative emotional and psychological wounds experienced by specific cultural, racial, and ethnic groups as generational violence and trauma cannot be overstated and should not be underestimated (Bauman, 2016; Sbicca, 2017). Therefore, community food work practitioners and organizations must have

realistic expectations and be self-consciously accountable to a trauma-informed care framework as praxis, particularly community food work organizations seek to work more deeply with people and communities most affected by trauma and injustices. Trauma-informed care as community food work must be embraced as a full-bodied framework and not just thought of as individual principles that can be applied piecemeal.

The juxtaposition of existing realities of aspirations and tensions in trying to actualize a social-ethical ideal of a ‘beloved community’ in and through community food work will remain an inherent struggle because of the expansive pernicious nature of power and structural violence that result in uneven trauma-inducing experiences, injustices, and inequities. In centering a trauma-informed care approach in community food work praxis, empathic, generative, and radical listening must be embodied and engendered by educators, researchers, practitioners, and allies (Parker, 2020; Scharmer, 2019, 2016; White, 2017), to understand, recognize, and see the depth of differential experiences and disparate outcomes as well as the distinct possibilities of resilience, agency, and change.

Bringing the Beloved Community and Community Food Work Forward

A different imaginary of a social-ethical ideal is critically important to keep at the forefront of community food work to counter balance a hegemonic narrative and rationality that results in increased disparity and the expansive precarity of individuals and vulnerable populations. For a social-ethical ideal of a beloved community to take hold in the present and future, this research on the ecotonal nature of community food work highlighted that organizations and practitioners must continue to envision and nurture a preferred social-ethical landscape and growing environment that inculcates celebration, fierce persistence, indomitable passion, beauty in face of struggle, and a radical hope that calls forth life and possibility (Asma, 2017; Brueggemann, 1978, 2018; Giroux, 2019; Lederach, 2002, 2010; Mills, 1959, 2000; Taylor, 2004). Several study participants shared

from their experiences about the tremendous disordering, shattering potential of trauma on multiple levels and many directions; therefore, community food work organizations and practitioners must reflect on how an equally powerful social-ethical imaginary and narrative like a beloved community might be required to provide order and possibility for the present and future (Orr, 2002).

Limitations of the Study

A case study, even if limited in scope, can contribute to the ongoing analysis of community food work and the narratives that inform its pedagogy and praxis. Trauma can have wide-reaching lasting impacts on a large percentage of population; however, the study was contextually specific to one time and place. The case study of trauma-informed care and agential change space focused primarily on New Community Project's Vine and Fig Program based in Harrisonburg, Virginia and the perceptions and thoughts of seventeen study participants. New Community Project is a partner effort of a relatively small community food work organization working to change what is imagined and possible locally, regionally, and internationally for communities through farming, gardening, and ecological care of people and the earth. New Community Project's programming initiatives seeks to serve and be a place of refuge for people who are vulnerable due to the experiences and effects of conflict, addiction, abuse, homelessness, and general social isolation.

Hence, the community food work organization and its initiatives are bounded in place but may serve as a representative microcosm of similar organizations seeking to address issues centered on justice, equity, and trauma. Like the majority of qualitative studies, the focus was on the specific perceptions and thoughts of people and the validity of their experiences in relation to the research questions posed to them. I am hopeful the theoretical framing and narrative inquiry of a trauma-informed care approach and agential change space would have wide-reaching impacts on community food work and education as pedagogy and praxis as organizations, practitioners, and

communities confront ongoing systemic trauma and injustices that persist in relation to race, gender, and socioeconomic class.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The narrative inquiry of seventeen narratives demonstrated that an integrated trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process is essential to the formation of agential change space and has wide-reaching applicability to community food work praxis. An integrated full-bodied approach to trauma-informed care and healing as true mutual aid and genuine community will involve aspirations and tensions. Tensions, clashes, dissonance, and relational challenges will exist and emerge because of the historical and contemporary embodiment of structural violence and systemic trauma, but tensions and challenges are part of real compassion and genuine solidarity as individuals and organizations seek to grapple with messy wicked systemic problems, try to build justice, and transform what community means. The interweaved realities of aspirations and tensions must be acknowledged, supported, challenged, encouraged, and possibly celebrated. The complexity of trauma and its multi-dimensional, multi-directional, multi-layered nature should be embraced by community food work organizations and practitioners and not simplified by those who seek to work at the nexus of justice, equity, and trauma. Events, experiences, and the effects of trauma are extremely complex and deeply complicated, especially when you consider the possible forms of trauma: single event trauma, multiple event trauma, historical trauma, inherited trauma, intergenerational trauma, and systemic trauma. An integrated trauma-informed care approach to a holistic organizational change process that creates agential change space should be foundational to pedagogy and praxis, especially as community food work organizations seek to ameliorate the wide-reaching effects of anthropogenic trauma, build justice, and generate community transformation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future community food work and scholarship needs to be vested and embedded in the communities the work and scholarship seeks to serve because of existing asymmetries in economic power, justice, and effects of trauma in the food system and among a large percentage of the population. Researchers and scholars should avoid the tendency to simplify complex issues and reduce the cause to a single story. The complexity of trauma and its multi-dimensional, multi-directional, multi-layered nature should be embraced by community food work researchers and scholars who seek to work at the nexus of justice, equity, and trauma. Researchers and scholars should continue to interrogate the root causes and upstream determinants of the different forms of trauma and be curious about and care for the complexity and pervasiveness of trauma. I offer the following recommendations for future research related to community food work as an alternative social-ethical modality and a trauma-informed care approach as an organizational change process for building community and actualizing a preferred reality; additional applicability of a trauma-informed care framework to the food and farm sector; the importance of story and narrative in community change processes; and how a social-ethical imaginary and broader use of metaphors can be stabilizing influences, levers for change, and means for expanding possibilities on an individual and societal level.

Community food work researchers and scholar-practitioners must acknowledge historical and contemporary structural violence and be cognizant of the existing asymmetries in economic power, social precarity, and legal vulnerability among farm and food system workers. Migration and relocation trauma of food system workers in the food and farming sector is inevitable and prevalent, therefore, future research should compare and contrast the narratives of community food work experiences with other food and farm system workers' experiences, particularly in regard to how different forms of work growing food and caring for the land can be therapeutic.

The use of story and narrative humanizes complex social-ethical problems, informs of how individuals make sense of and find meaning in the world (Clandinin, 2013). Stories and narratives about the experiences and effects of war, climate-change, and environmental displacement reverberate throughout community food work, these stories and narratives have ramifications for trauma-informed care within the food and farm sectors. Researchers and scholar-practitioners should be encouraged to use narrative inquiry and other qualitative methodologies to study and analyze how stories and narratives can educate and inform cross-sectoral food and farm policies.

Law (2004), in discussing collateral realities and experiences, stated that metaphors of reality can elucidate and give a greater sense of people's diverse interactions with the world but also frame "what is possible or barely possible, unthinkable or almost thinkable" (p. 6). Therefore, researchers and scholar-practitioners should research the role of metaphors and somatic-based practices in deepening the multi-dimensional inquiry of complex, wicked social-ethical problems. A well-structured metaphor can create constructive juxtapositions and contrasts; elucidate and excavate complex truths and realities; encourage deeper generative analysis of alternate social-ethical frames; and activate people's imaginations to what is possible.

Hegemonic discourses and imaginaries limit possibilities and often map onto existing social-ethical infrastructures responsible for current injustices and inequities. Community food work researchers and practitioners should research and explore how community food work pedagogy and praxis is influenced by the power of hegemonic discourses and imaginaries. A beloved community as a social-ethical ideal and imaginary has been a source of inspiration in the struggle for justice for all; a stabilizing influence; a lever for change; and means for expanding possibilities on an individual and societal level. Therefore, more research is needed on the role and power of imagination in community food work pedagogy and praxis. Lastly, since many

community food work organizations are small and limited in human resource capacity, additional research is needed in bridge and shared leadership models of structure and governance.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Community food work organizations and practitioners who are working at the nexus of justice, equity, and trauma in the food system and more broadly in society should embrace the complexity and richness of people's lived-experiences. By focusing on complexity rather than simplicity, community food work practitioners can open more options and possibilities for learning and systemic change. Organizations and practitioners should understand trauma-informed care as an organizational change process and guiding framework that is essential to the formation of agential change space and critical to praxis because systemic trauma is deeply contextual to environments, structures, policies, and the institutions that instill and perpetuate trauma. Therefore, community food work organizations seeking to be in solidarity with those most affected by trauma through advocacy, accompaniment, witness, and compassion must understand solidarity as integrated care and healing for everyone.

A trauma-informed care approach is not just a set of principles and useful tools but a conceptual framework must be framed and incorporated into organizations and practitioners' theories of change and day-to-day interactions and relationships if systemic trauma and inherited violence are to be transfigured and transformed. Given the complexity and prevalence of trauma, community food work organizations, Cooperative Extension, and funders should assess their short-term responses, long-term strategies, and the requisite overall timeframe needed for transformation. For Extension and organizations seeking to address healthy equity disparities and work in communities that have experienced more trauma and have fewer resources, trauma is deeply contextual to environments, structures, policies, and the institutions that instill and perpetuate trauma. The depth and quality of the relational commitment and space are critical to food system and community transformation but especially so in these circumstances, therefore, seven-to-ten-

year strategic commitments to community change processes would be more appropriate than a common three to five-year commitment.

Community food work organizations and practitioners should regularly review their own trauma-informed care framework and established protocols to consistently realize, recognize, respond, and resist re-traumatization and traumatization. Stories and narratives are critical for shaping and ordering lives. Therefore, community food organizations and practitioners should be encouraged to use stories and narratives to expand understanding of existing epistemic claims and emergent possibilities of community food work. Similarly, due to the somatic, multi-sensory nature of trauma, music, dance, art, play, meditation/prayer, yoga, poetry, haiku, planting, sharing of meals, periods of rest, check-ins, and celebration should be encouraged as community food work praxis. In addition to common Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols, community food work research praxis should include a trauma-informed care framework for researchers, practitioners, and study participants due to the complexity, multi-directional, multi-layered reverberating nature of trauma and adverse human experiences as an integrated full-bodied research approach to care, justice, and healing.

As a community food work researcher and practitioner, I am confident the concept of a beloved community as a social-ethical ideal will help people working to actualize justice and equity in their communities know they are not alone in their situation and struggle. I remain hopeful -- that even with existing and emerging aspirations and tensions -- the theoretical framing within this research of a trauma-informed care approach as an embodied organizational change process that creates and engenders an agential change space would have wide-reaching generalizability to community food work, particularly as organizations confront ongoing structural violence, systemic trauma, and injustices that persist in relation to race, gender, and socioeconomic class in their communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter (English and Spanish)

January XXX, 2022

Dear Community Food Work Organization participant,

My name is **Eric S. Bendfeldt**, and I am a student in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. I'm working on a research study to better understand how a community food work organization provides meaningful participation and supportive interactions in care of people and the community. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of his doctoral dissertation.

You are being asked to participate in a research study to share your perspective on your participation and interactions with New Community Project. The meeting and talk would involve one visit for the interview and another visit to finalize co-editing and co-creation of the narrative. The time required for your participation would be 1 1/2 hours with 45 to 60 minutes for the talk. The conversation will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy.

The goal is to hear and learn from you about your introduction to the organization and your perspective of the organization's activities, programs, and practices as possible evidence of how the organization provides meaningful participation and supportive interactions in care for people and the community.

If you want to participate, please reply to this letter. I will then work with you to schedule a time for a visit. Feel free to call me anytime at **540.383.5393**. You were invited because of your work and organizational role with New Community Project. The results of this research will be presented at professional conferences and be published in scientific journals. Your participation is not required. Your identity will be confidential in all documents and published materials -- unless you consent for the use of your identity.

The researcher perceives the known risks to be small but sharing your story and thoughts with an attentive listener may lead to emotional distress. The team will lessen any risk of a bad outcome. By taking part in the study, you will help New Community Project and other community food work people and organizations learn and understand how to better provide meaningful participation and supportive interactions for individuals to grow through their activities, programs, and practices in building a just community and world for everyone.

Thank you again for your consideration of this invitation to participate in this research.

Sincerely,

Eric S. Bendfeldt
Virginia Tech
Phone: 540.383.5393

Carta de Reclutamiento

28 de febrero de 2022

Estimado participante de la Organización de Trabajo Comunitario de Alimentos,

Mi nombre es **Eric S. Bendfeldt** y soy estudiante del Departamento de Agricultura, Liderazgo y Educación Comunitaria del Tecnológico de Virginia (Virginia Tech). Estoy trabajando en un estudio de investigación, 22-085 Un estudio de investigación de la naturaleza del área o zona de transición entre dos formas diferentes de vegetación (ecotonal) del trabajo alimentario comunitario, para comprender mejor cómo una organización comunitaria de trabajo alimentario proporciona una participación significativa e interacciones de apoyo en el cuidado de las personas y la comunidad. Este estudio contribuirá a la realización de la tesis doctoral del investigador.

Le estamos pidiendo a usted que participe en un estudio de investigación para compartir su perspectiva sobre su participación e interacciones con el proyecto Nueva Comunidad (New Community Project). La reunión y la conversación implicaría una visita para la entrevista y otra visita para finalizar la coedición y la co-creación de la narrativa. El tiempo requerido para su participación sería de 1 y 1/2 horas con 45 a 60 minutos para la charla. La conversación se grabará en audio para garantizar la precisión.

La meta es escuchar y aprender de usted acerca de su introducción a la organización y su perspectiva de las actividades, programas y prácticas de la organización como posible evidencia de cómo la organización Brinda una participación significativa e interacciones de apoyo en el cuidado de las personas y la comunidad.

Si está interesado en obtener más información, responda a esta solicitud con acuerdo verbalmente en persona, por teléfono o por correo electrónico. Luego trabajaré con usted para programar una visita para compartir y discutir la hoja de información y revisar los objetivos del estudio de investigación con usted antes de comenzar en si la entrevista semiestructurada. No dude en llamarme en cualquier momento al **540.383.5393**. Usted ha sido invitado por tu trabajo y su desempeño organizacional con el proyecto Nueva Comunidad. Los resultados de esta investigación se presentarán en congresos profesionales y se publicarán en revistas científicas. No se requiere su participación. Su identidad será confidencial y anónima en todos los documentos y materiales publicados, a menos que usted dé su consentimiento para el uso de su identidad.

El investigador percibe que los riesgos conocidos son pequeños, pero compartir su historia y pensamientos con un oyente atento puede provocar angustia emocional. El equipo disminuirá cualquier riesgo que evite un mal resultado. Al participar en el estudio, ayudara a New Community Project y a otras personas y organizaciones que trabajan con alimentos en la comunidad a aprender

y comprender como brindar una mejor participación significativa e interacciones de apoyo para que las personas crezcan a través de sus actividades, programas y prácticas en la construcción de una comunidad y un mundo justos para todos.

Nuevamente, gracias por considerar esta invitación para participar en esta investigación.

Atentamente,

Eric S. Bendfeldt
Virginia Tech
Teléfono: 540-383-5393



Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Kimberly L. Niewolny, Ph.D., 540.231.5784/
niewolny@vt.edu

IRB# and Title of Study: 22-085 *A Research Study of the Ecotonal Nature of Community Food Work*

Sponsor: N/A

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

“I, Eric Bendfeldt, am a graduate student at Virginia Tech, and I am conducting this research as part of my course work in a doctoral program.”

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a 45 to 60-minute semi-structured interview. As part of the study, a member of the research team will have a semi-structured interview and conversation with you to hear their perspective of the organization’s activities, programs, and practices as possible evidence of how the organization may provide meaningful participation and supportive interactions in care of people and the community. The participant will be asked a series of questions as prompts to start a conversation. The conversation will be audio recorded to assist with accuracy and transcription of a narrative. Each interview will be performed only once. Co-editing and co-creation of the final narrative from the interview will be one other step. A simple digital voice recorder and a backup recorder will be used to record the 45 to 60-minute interview and help with the transcription process. Each participant will be asked before the interview for verbal consent and agreement to participate and to be audio-recorded. If participants do not consent to participate and be audio-recorded, they will be thanked for their time and consideration and be withdrawn from the research study.

The study should take approximately 90 to 120 minutes of your time.

We do not anticipate any risks from completing this study, however, being asked questions as prompts to share your story and thoughts may be good or cause emotional

distress. The research team will work to lessen any risk of a bad outcome and provide a list of support resources for individual participants and the participating organization

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

The results of this research study may be presented in summary form at conferences, in presentations, academic papers, and as part of a dissertation.

➤ **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

Your responses to the questions will be de-identified during a coding process so no one can associate your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other identifying information in your responses that can identify you – unless you agree to have your identity associated with your response.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your interview will be audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. The researchers will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name) to de-identify the data. The recordings will be uploaded to a secure Virginia Tech password-protected computer in the researcher's office. The researchers will maintain a list that includes a key to the code. The master key and the recordings will be stored for 3 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

➤ **WHO CAN I TALK TO?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact at Kimberly L. Niewolny, Ph.D., 540.231.5784/ niewolny@vt.edu. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.



Hoja de información para participar en un estudio de investigación

Investigador Principal: Kimberly L. Niewolny, Ph.D., 540.231.5784/
niewolny@vt.edu
IRB# y Título de Estudio: 22-085 Un estudio de investigación sobre la
naturaleza ecotonal (área o zona de transición entre dos formas diferentes
de vegetación) del trabajo alimentario comunitario
Patrocinador: N/D

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación. Este formulario incluye información sobre el estudio e información de contacto si tiene alguna pregunta.

“Yo, Eric Bendfeldt, soy un estudiante de posgrado en Virginia Tech y estoy realizando esta investigación como parte de mi trabajo de curso en un programa de doctorado”.

➤ **¿QUÉ DEBO SABER?**

Si decide participar en este estudio, completará una entrevista semiestructurada de 45 a 60 minutos. Como parte del estudio, un miembro del equipo de investigación tendrá una entrevista semiestructurada y una conversación con usted para escuchar su perspectiva de las actividades, programas y prácticas de la organización como posible evidencia de cómo la organización puede brindar una participación significativa e interacciones de apoyo en el cuidado de las personas y la comunidad. Al participante se le hará una serie de preguntas como indicaciones para iniciar una conversación. La conversación se grabará en audio para ayudar con la precisión y la transcripción de una narración. Cada entrevista se realizará una sola vez. La coedición y la cocreación de la narrativa final de la entrevista será otro paso. Se utilizará una grabadora de voz digital simple y una grabadora de respaldo para grabar la entrevista de 45 a 60 minutos y ayudar con el proceso de transcripción. A cada participante se le preguntará antes de la entrevista por su consentimiento verbal, y acuerdo para participar y para grabarle por audio. Si los participantes no dan su consentimiento para participar y ser grabados en audio, se les agradecerá su tiempo y consideración y se les retirará del estudio de investigación.

El estudio tomara aproximadamente de 90 a 120 minutos de su tiempo. No anticipamos ningún riesgo por completar este estudio, sin embargo, al hacerle preguntas como indicaciones para compartir su historia y pensamientos puede ser bueno o causarle angustia emocional. El equipo de investigación trabajará para disminuir cualquier riesgo que de un mal resultado y proporcionará una lista de recursos de apoyo a los participantes individuales y la organización participante. Usted puede elegir si participa o no en este estudio. Si se ofrece como voluntario para participar en este estudio, puede retirarse en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo. También puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que usted no desee responder y puede permanecer en el estudio. El investigador puede retirarle a usted de esta investigación si surgen circunstancias que lo justifiquen. Los resultados de este estudio de investigación pueden presentarse en forma de resumen en conferencias, presentaciones, trabajos académicos y como parte de una disertación.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Haremos todo lo posible para proteger la confidencialidad de la información que recopilamos de usted, pero no podemos garantizar el 100% de confidencialidad. Sus respuestas a las preguntas serán des identificadas durante un proceso de codificación para que nadie pueda asociar sus respuestas con usted. No incluya su nombre o otra información de identificación en sus respuestas que pueda identificarle, a menos que esté de acuerdo con que su identidad se asocie con su respuesta. Los investigadores mantendrán la confidencialidad de los datos recopilados durante este estudio de investigación. Su entrevista se grabará en audio con una grabadora de voz digital y luego se transcribirá. Los investigadores codificarán las transcripciones usando un seudónimo (nombre falso) para des identificar los datos. Las grabaciones se cargarán en una computadora segura protegida con contraseña de Virginia Tech en la oficina del investigador. Los investigadores mantendrán una lista que incluye una clave para el código. La clave maestra y las grabaciones se almacenarán durante 3 años después de que se haya completado el estudio y luego serán destruidas.

➤ ¿CON QUIEN PUEDO HABLAR?

Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre la investigación, no dude en ponerse en contacto con Kimberly L. Niewolny, Ph.D., 540.231.5784/ niewolny@vt.edu. No está renunciando a ningún reclamo, derecho o recurso legal debido a su participación en este estudio de investigación. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, comuníquese con la oficina de HRPD de Virginia Tech al 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Por favor, Imprima una copia de esta hoja de información para sus archivos.

Appendix C: Script of Semi-Structured Interview with Community Mutual Aid Recipients on Their Perceptions of Care, Resilience, and Community-Building (English and Spanish)

A Research Study of the Ecotonal Nature of Community Food Work

Draft Script to Semi-Structured Conversation

Niewolny, K.L., Bendfeldt, E.S., Stephenson, M.O., Archibald, T.G., and A.L. Stewart

The goal of the first visit is to introduce the overall purpose, goals, and objectives of the study and gain a general perspective of the participant's introduction to and experience with New Community Project (New Community Project) as a community food work organization to set up a semi-structured conversation to hear the participant's perceptions, thoughts, and reflections as part of a story and narrative. Immediately following informed consent, the structured conversation begins at a relaxed and comfortable setting at mutually acceptable location with a brief introduction to the recipient's experience, history, and role with the organization.

Stage 1: Introduction and preparatory questions

1) Please introduce yourself to the study participant, and ask the participant to introduce themselves?

2) Begin with a version of the following introductory script:

"I am glad you have agreed to be talk with us and be interviewed. I want to explain how this conversation will be structured and work. I'll do about a 45 to 60-minute interview that will be audio recorded, the audio recording will be transcribed, and then edited into what we call a "profile" that will include only your words. The specific questions will be edited out. With your approval, a portion of the audio will be preserved and used for educational purposes. As part of the conversation, we would like to focus on your perceptions, thoughts, and reflections on your introduction and experience with New Community Project. Specifically, what you have found meaningful participation and supportive interactions of community, informed care, and new possibilities for you. As part of the conversation, you may reflect and share on a specific practice, instance, reason, and/or experience that makes your involvement with New Community Project rewarding and challenging. I specifically want to understand your perceptions of how an organization like New Community Project might provide meaningful participation and supportive interactions its overall care of people and the community.

Therefore, I would like to focus on your introduction and experience with the organization, and something others in the organization and community might find instructive and insightful in relation to care, resilience, and support. You have the option of choosing whether or not you want to be identified or remain anonymous in the final profile. I will not use your profile in any academic or educational way you do not personally approve."

3) Do you have a specific organizational practice, program, instance, and/or project you were introduced to or are involved in with New Community Project that you found meaningful and supportive you would like to focus on as part of the conversation and interview? Can you provide me an overview of the practice, program, and project? (Ask prompting and clarifying questions to hear what their perceptions, thoughts, and reflections are in relation to their introduction and experience with New Community Project)

4) Once you agree on the practice story, explain the interview will be divided into three parts of roughly the same length: (1) an overview of their background and experience with the community food work organization, (2) the story of perception and reflection, and (3) reflections on lessons learned. Make sure they get a chance to provide feedback and are able to ask you any clarifying questions.

Stage 2: Questions to Structure and Guide Conversation/Interview

The questions are structured with three main sections (1) background and experience, (2) the reflective experiential story, and (3) reflections and lessons learned. The questions are listed in numerical order as a guide but may be asked in response to the natural flow of the conversation and discussion. The time and interchange should be seen more as a "structured conversation" with someone whose story you want to hear and learn from rather than as a formal "interview."

Part I. Background, introduction to and experience with Community Food Work Organization (i.e., New Community Project)

1) Please provide an overview of your introduction to and experience with New Community Project?

- How and when were you introduced to New Community Project?
- What attracted you to the organization, its vision, and mission in building community?
- How or when did you sense personally the organization was aware of your needs and situation?
- How and when did you feel welcomed, safe with, and trust the organization?
- What activities, programs, and/or projects of the organization did you find most supportive, meaningful, and strengthening?
- Can you tell us about your experience of care and supportive interaction within the organization and its work?
- What were formative moments and experiences of support, care, and solidarity in collaborating with others and becoming more a part of the organization?
- How have you shared in and participated in the organization's activities, programs, and practices? What choices were you given and how did you share your preference and choice?
- What values of the organization's vision and mission inspire and motivate you in your day-to-day work and role?
- What are meaningful ways the organization honors and dignifies people in the organization and community, particularly in relation to experience, culture, history, and gender?
- What organizational and community goals are you passionate about and feel in solidarity with personally?

Part II. The Reflective Experiential Story of Care and Resilience

1) Let us move onto the practice and experiential story you are going to share. What specific organizational practice, experience, or instance are going to tell us about? Provide us a brief overview of the practice and/or experience?

2) Share with us your specific introduction to and experience with the organizational programs, practices, and overall experience?

3) In the course of the conversation and listening to the story, you might use the following questions as prompts:

- What was your introduction to the activity and practice?

- How did you choose to become involved?
 - Were there any key turning points in this practice and experience?
 - As you became aware of the activity and practice, were there any surprises?
 - Any “a-ha” moments? What were the social, physical, or environmental factors for the a-ha moment that made you feel welcomed and truly involved?
 - Who did you work with? Who was there for you?
 - With this practice and experience, what did you find most supportive, meaningful, and personally strengthening? How so?
 - What sources of support did you find critical to the practice or experience? Why?
 - How does the activity and experience encourage honor and dignity for yourself and others involved?
 - Who were key mentors and resource people?
 - What did you find most challenging? How did you overcome these challenges?
 - When issues, crises, and challenges come up, how does the organization cope with the crisis and challenge?
 - How did the organization handle and cope with these crises? Where did or does the organization find resilience?
 - From the practice or experience, what was most rewarding and inspiring? Why?
 - What impacts has the practice or experience had for you and the organization and broader community?
- 4) Do you feel like the practice and experience exemplifies the values you care about personally for the organization and community? Why? How so?**

Part III: Reflections and Lessons Learned

- 1) In reflecting on your introduction to and experience with the organization’s activities, programs, and practices, what gives you the best sense of meaningful participation and supportive interactions for care, meaning, and purpose?**
- 2) What lessons would you share from your introduction and perspective on resilience and growth?**
- 3) What are the strengths of the organization that have helped you and others within the organization?**
- 4) What values inspire and motivate you in the practice and experience?**
- 5) What goals are you passionate about and driven by personally and for the organization?**

- 6) What gives you the greatest sense of the possibility of a new ‘beloved’ community?
- 7) In thinking about the future, what gives you the most hope and sense of resilience?
- 8) Where would you like New Community Project to be in five to ten years?

Would you recommend I interview any other colleagues in the organization and community? If so, would you share their name and contact information with me? Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to share your story and answer to these questions. A member of the team will follow up with you once a transcription is finalized. I may contact you again if I have questions to clarify of the practice and story. If you have any concerns or questions, you may contact the research team at any time: Eric Bendfeldt at 540-232-6006 or ebendfel@vt.edu , Kim Niewolny at 540-231-5784 or niewolny@vt.edu, Max O. Stephenson at 540-231-6755 or mstephen@vt.edu, Tom Archibald at 540-231-6192 or tgarch@vt.edu , or Anne L. Stewart at 540-908-8288 or stewaral@jmu.edu.

22-085 Un estudio de investigación de la naturaleza ecotonal del trabajo alimentario comunitario

Guion de entrevista semiestructurada con coordinadores de trabajo comunitario de alimentos sobre sus pensamientos sobre el cuidado, la resiliencia y la construcción comunitaria

Un estudio de investigación sobre la naturaleza un área o zona de transición entre dos formas diferentes de vegetación (ecotonal) del trabajo alimentario comunitario

Borrador de guion para conversación semiestructurada

Niewolny, K.L., Bendfeldt, E.S., Stephenson, M.O., Archibald, T.G.

El objetivo de la primera visita es revisar la hoja de información y preguntar a los participantes si tienen alguna pregunta antes de comenzar. A los participantes se les pedirá su consentimiento verbal para participar y ser grabados en audio. Si los participantes no dan su consentimiento para participar y ser grabados en audio, se les agradecerá su tiempo y consideración y se les retirará del estudio de investigación. Para aquellos que den su consentimiento para participar, el investigador presentará el propósito general, las metas y los objetivos del estudio y obtendrá una perspectiva general de la experiencia del participante en su papel organizacional con New Community Project como una organización comunitaria de trabajo de alimento, y recogerá información preliminar para establecer una conversación estructurada como parte de escuchar la narrativa y la historia experiencial reflexiva del participante. Inmediatamente después del consentimiento informado, empezará la conversación estructurada en un ambiente relajado y cómodo en un lugar mutuamente aceptable con una introducción breve sobre la presentación, la experiencia, la historia y el papel del participante en la organización.

E tapa 1: Introducción y preguntas de preparación

- 1) Por favor, preséntese usted al participante del estudio y pídale al participante que se presente el mismo.**
- 2) Comience con una versión del siguiente guion introductorio:**

“Me alegra que haya aceptado hablar con nosotros para ser entrevistado. Quiero explicarle como se estructurará y funcionará esta conversación. Hare una entrevista de 45 a 60 minutos que se grabara en audio, el audio grabado se transcribirá y luego se editara en algo que llamamos un “perfil” que incluirá únicamente sus palabras. Las preguntas específicas serán eliminadas. Con su aprobación, parte del audio se conservará y se utilizará con propósitos educativos. Como parte de la conversación, nos gustaría centrarnos en sus percepciones, pensamientos y reflexiones sobre su introducción y experiencia con New Community Project. Especialmente, lo que usted haya encontrado significativo y de apoyo a la comunidad, la atención informada y las nuevas posibilidades para usted. Como parte de la conversación, puede reflexionar y compartir algo específico sobre una práctica, instancia, razón o experiencia que hace que su participación en New Community Project sea gratificante y desafiante. Específicamente quiero entender sus percepciones de cómo una organización como New Community Project podría brindar una participación significativa e interacciones de apoyo en el cuidado general de las personas y la comunidad.

Por lo tanto, me gustaría enfocarme en su introducción y experiencia con la organización, y algo que otros en la organización y la comunidad puedan encontrar instructivo y perspicaz en relación con la atención, la resiliencia y el apoyo. Usted tiene la opción de elegir si quiere ser identificado o permanecer en el anonimato en lo que es el perfil final. No usaré su perfil de ninguna manera académica o educative que usted personalmente no apruebe”.

- 3) **¿Tiene alguna practica organizacional, programa, instancia y/o proyecto específico en el que este involucrado y en el que le gustaría enfocarse como parte de la conversación y la entrevista? ¿Podría proveer una descripción general de la práctica, el programa y el proyecto?** (Haga preguntas motivantes y aclaratorias para escuchar de que se trata la historia y como relatan la historia)
- 4) **Una vez que este de acuerdo con la historia experiencial reflexiva, explique que la entrevista se dividirá en tres partes de aproximadamente el mismo tiempo: (1) una descripción general de su trasfondo y experiencia con la organización comunitaria de trabajo alimentario, (2) la historia experiencial reflexiva y (3) reflexiones sobre las lecciones aprendidas. Asegúrese de que tengan la oportunidad de proporcionar comentarios y que puedan hacer cualquier pregunta aclaratoria.**

Etapas 2: preguntas para estructurar y guiar la conversación/entrevista

Las preguntas están estructuradas con tres secciones principales (1) antecedentes y experiencia, (2) la historia experiencial reflexiva y (3) reflexiones y lecciones aprendidas. Las preguntas se enumeran en orden numérico como guía, pero se pueden hacer dependiendo al flujo natural de la conversación y la discusión. El tiempo y el intercambio deben verse más como una "conversación estructurada" con alguien cuya historia se desea escuchar y aprender en lugar de una "entrevista" formal.

Parte I. Antecedentes y experiencia con la organización comunitaria de trabajo alimenticio (i.n., Proyecto Nueva Comunidad, New Community Project)

- 1) **Por favor provea una descripción general de su trasfondo y experiencia con el Proyecto Nueva Comunidad (New Community Project)**
 - ¿Cómo y cuándo empezó su trabajo con el proyecto Nueva Comunidad (New Community Project)?
 - ¿Qué le atrajo para trabajar y ser parte de la organización?
 - Por favor Comparta lo que sabe sobre la historia de la organización, su visión y misión en la construcción de comunidad.
 - ¿Denos un breve resumen organizacional del papel que usted desempeña y cumple? Esto puede incluir actividades diarias, programas y cuidado general de las personas y la tierra.
 - ¿Cómo o cuándo sintió personalmente que la organización estaba al tanto de sus necesidades y su situación?
 - ¿Cómo y cuándo se sintió bienvenido, seguro y confiado en la organización?

- ¿Qué actividades, programas y/o proyectos de la organización le parecieron más de apoyo, significativos y fortalecedores?
- ¿Puede contarnos sobre su experiencia de cuidado, resiliencia y su sentido de lugar dentro de la organización y su trabajo?
- ¿Cuáles fueron los momentos formativos y las experiencias de apoyo y cuidado al formar parte de la organización y participar en sus actividades, programas y prácticas?
- ¿Qué valores de la visión y misión de la organización le inspiran y motivan en su trabajo y función diarios?
- ¿Cuáles son las formas significativas en que la organización honra y dignifica a las personas de la organización y la comunidad, particularmente en relación con la experiencia, la cultura, la historia y el género?
- ¿Qué metas organizacionales y comunitarias le apasionan y con las que se siente personalmente solidario?
- ¿Quiénes fueron personas influyentes en su formación y experiencia con la organización, particularmente en relación con el cuidado de si mismo, de otras personas, de la comunidad, de la tierra y del medio ambiente?

Parte II. La historia experiencial reflexiva del cuidado, la resiliencia y la construcción de comunidad

- 1) Vayamos a la historia experiencial reflexiva que va a compartir. ¿De que practica, experiencia o instancia organizacional especifica nos va a hablar? Provéanos una breve descripción de la practica y/o experiencia**
- 2) ¿Comparte con nosotros su papel y contribuciones específicas en los programas, prácticas y experiencia general de la organización?**
- 3) En el transcurso de la conversación y escuchando la historia, podría usar las siguientes preguntas como indicaciones:**
 - ¿Como fue su introducción a la actividad y la practica? ¿Cómo introduce usted otros a la actividad y la practica
 - ¿Cómo eligió involucrarse? ¿Cómo se involucran otros?
 - ¿Cuáles fueron los factores sociales, físicos o ambientales que hicieron que las personas se sintieran bienvenidas y verdaderamente involucrados?
 - Con esta práctica y experiencia, ¿Cómo apoya usted la participación de personas, crea conciencia, responde a sus necesidades y proporciona un lugar seguro para participar?
 - Con esta práctica y experiencia, ¿Qué fue lo que usted y otras personas encontraron de más apoyo, significativo y personalmente fortalecedor? ¿Cómo fue eso?

- ¿Qué fuentes de apoyo considera críticas para la práctica o la experiencia para que otras personas se sientan apoyadas y cuidadas? ¿Por qué?
- ¿De qué manera la actividad y la experiencia fomentan el honor y la dignidad para usted y para los demás involucrados?
- ¿Quiénes fueron los mentores claves y personas que sirvieron como recursos?
- Como organización, ¿qué tipos de crisis y desafíos ha enfrentado?
- ¿Cómo manejo y enfrente la organización estas crisis? ¿Dónde encontró o donde encuentra resiliencia la organización?
- De la practica o experiencia, ¿Qué fue lo más gratificante e inspirador para brindar apoyo y cuidado para el crecimiento individual y colectivo? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué impactos tiene la practica o tuvo la experiencia en su organización en la comunidad en general?
- ¿Qué le pareció más desafiante? ¿Cómo superaron usted y la organización estos desafíos?
- ¿Qué valores le inspiran y le motivan en su trabajo?
- ¿Qué metas le apasionan y le impulsan personal y organizacionalmente?
- ¿Qué le da el mayor sentido de la posibilidad de una nueva “amada” comunidad?

4) ¿Siente que la práctica y la experiencia ejemplifican los valores que le importan personalmente para la organización y la comunidad? ¿Por qué? ¿Cómo es eso?

Parte III: Reflexiones y lecciones aprendidas

- 1) Al reflexionar sobre su experiencia con las actividades, programas y prácticas de la organización, ¿Qué le brinda la mejor sensación de apoyo, cuidado, significado y propósito?**
- 2) ¿Que lecciones compartiría de su experiencia y perspectiva sobre el cuidado, la resiliencia y la construcción de comunidades?**
- 3) ¿Cuáles son las fortalezas de la organización que le han ayudado a usted ya otros dentro de la organización?**
- 4) ¿Qué valores le inspiran y motivan en su reflexión y experiencia con la organización?**
- 5) ¿Qué objetivos le apasionan y le impulsan personalmente y para la organización?**
- 6) ¿Qué le da el mayor sentido de la posibilidad de una nueva comunidad ‘amada’?**
- 7) Al pensar en el futuro, ¿Qué le da más esperanza y sentido de resiliencia?**
- 8) ¿Donde le gustaría que el New Community Project este dentro de cinco a diez años?**

¿Me recomendaría que yo entreviste a otros colegas en su organización y su comunidad? Si es así, ¿Compartiría el nombre y la información de contacto conmigo? Gracias por su tiempo. Le agradezco su disposición para compartir su historia y responder estas preguntas. Un miembro del equipo se comunicará con usted una vez que se finalice la transcripción. Podría contactarle nuevamente si tuviera preguntas para aclarar la práctica y la historia. Si usted tiene alguna inquietud o pregunta, puede comunicarse con el equipo de investigación en cualquier momento: Eric Bendfeldt al 540-232-6006 o **ebendfel@vt.edu**, Kim Niewolny al 540-231-5784 o **niewolny@vt.edu**, Max O. Stephenson al 540-231-6755 o **mstephen@vt.edu**, o Tom Archibald al 540-231-6192 o **tgarch@vt.edu**.

Appendix D: Script of Semi-Structured Interview with Community Food Work Coordinators on Their Thoughts on Care, Resilience, and Community-building

A Research Study of the Ecotonal Nature of Community Food Work

Draft Script to Semi-Structured Conversation

Niewolny, K.L., Bendfeldt, E.S., Stephenson, M.O., Archibald, T.G., and A.L. Stewart

The goal of the first visit is to introduce the overall purpose, goals, and objectives of the study and gain a general perspective of the participant's experience in their organizational role with New Community Project as a community food work organization, and gather preliminary information to set up a structured conversation as part of hearing the participant's reflective experiential story and narrative. Immediately following informed consent, the structured conversation begins at a relaxed and comfortable setting at mutually acceptable location with a brief introduction to the participant's introduction, experience, history, and role with the organization

Stage 1: Introduction and preparatory questions

1) Please introduce yourself to the study participant, and ask the participant to introduce themselves?

2) Begin with a version of the following introductory script:

"I am glad you have agreed to be talk with us and be interviewed. I want to explain how this conversation will be structured and work. I'll do about a 45 to 60-minute interview that will be audio recorded, the audio recording will be transcribed, and then edited into what we call a "profile" that will include only your words. The specific questions will be edited out. With your approval, a portion of the audio will be preserved and used for educational purposes. As part of the conversation, we would like to focus on your perceptions, thoughts, and reflections on your introduction and experience with New Community Project. Specifically, what you have found meaningful and supportive of community, informed care, and new possibilities for you. As part of the conversation, you may reflect and share on a specific practice, instance, reason, and/or experience that makes your involvement with New Community Project rewarding and challenging. I specifically want to understand your perceptions of how an organization like New Community Project might provide meaningful participation and supportive interactions its overall care of people and the community.

Therefore, I would like to focus on your introduction and experience with the organization, and something others in the organization and community might find instructive and insightful in relation to care, resilience and support. You have the option of choosing whether or not you want to be identified or remain anonymous in the final profile. I will not use your profile in any academic or educational way you do not personally approve."

- 3) **Do you have a specific organizational practice, program, instance, and/or project you are involved in that you would like to focus on as part of the conversation and interview? Can you provide me an overview of the practice, program, and project?**
(Ask prompting and clarifying questions to hear what the story is and how they convey the story)
- 4) **Once you agree on the reflective experiential story, explain the interview will be divided into three parts of roughly the same length: (1) an overview of their background and experience with the community food work organization, (2) the reflective experiential story, and (3) reflections on lessons learned. Make sure they get a chance to provide feedback and are able to ask you any clarifying questions.**

Stage 2: Questions to Structure and Guide Conversation/Interview

The questions are structured with three main sections (1) background and experience, (2) the reflective experiential story, and (3) reflections and lessons learned. The questions are listed in numerical order as a guide but may be asked in response to the natural flow of the conversation and discussion. The time and interchange should be seen more as a “structured conversation” with someone whose story you want to hear and learn from rather than as a formal “interview.”

Part I. Background and Experience with Community Food Work Organization (i.e., New Community Project)

- 1) **Please provide an overview of your background and experience with New Community Project?**
 - How and when you did you get started with New Community Project?
 - What attracted you to working with and being part of the organization?
 - Please share what you know about the history of the organization, its vision, and mission in building community?
 - Give us a brief outline of the organizational role you play and fulfill? This can include day-to-day activities, programs, and overall care of people and the land.
 - How or when did you sense personally the organization was aware of your needs and situation?
 - How and when did you feel welcomed, safe with, and trust the organization?
 - What activities, programs, and/or projects of the organization did you find most supportive, meaningful, and strengthening?
 - Can you tell us about your experience of care, resilience, and your sense of place within the organization and its work?
 - What were formative moments and experiences of support and care in becoming part of the organization and being involved in its activities, programs, and practices?

- What values of the organization's vision and mission inspire and motivate you in your day-to-day work and role?
- What are meaningful ways the organization honors and dignifies people in the organization and community, particularly in relation to experience, culture, history, and gender?
- What organizational and community goals are you passionate about and feel in solidarity with personally?
- Who were influential people in your training and experience with the organization? Can you tell me about key mentors and formative people in your experience with the organization, particularly in relation to caring for yourself, other people, the community, the land, and the environment?

Part II. The Reflective Experiential Story of Care, Resilience, and Community-building

- 1) Let us move onto the reflective experiential story you are going to share. What specific organizational practice, experience, or instance are going to tell us about? Provide us a brief overview of the practice and/or experience?**
- 2) Share with us your specific role and contributions in the organizational programs, practices, and overall experience?**
- 3) In the course of the conversation and listening to the story, you might use the following questions as prompts:**
 - What was your introduction to the activity and practice? How do you introduce others to the activity and practice?
 - How did you choose to get involved? How do other people get involved?
 - What were the social, physical, or environmental factors for making people feel welcomed and truly involved?
 - With this practice and experience, how do you support people's involvement, build awareness, respond to their needs, and provide a safe place for being involved?
 - With this practice and experience, what did you and other people find most supportive, meaningful, and personally strengthening? How so?
 - What sources of support do you find critical to the practice or experience for other people to feel supported and cared for? Why?
 - How does the activity and experience encourage honor and dignity for yourself and others involved?
 - Who were key mentors and resource people?
 - As an organization, what types of crises and challenges has it faced?

- How did the organization handle and cope with these crises? Where did or does the organization find resilience?
 - From the practice or experience, what was most rewarding and inspiring in providing support and care for individual and collective growth? Why?
 - What impacts has the practice or experience had in your organization and broader community?
 - What did you find most challenging? How did you and the organization overcome these challenges?
 - What values inspire and motivate you in your work?
 - What goals are you passionate about and driven by personally and organizationally?
 - What gives you the greatest sense of the possibility of a new ‘beloved’ community?
- 4) Do you feel like the practice and experience exemplifies the values you care about personally for the organization and community? Why? How so?**

Part III: Reflections and Lessons Learned

- 1) In reflecting on your experience with the organization’s activities, programs, and practices, what gives you the best sense of support, care, meaning, and purpose?**
- 2) What lessons would you share from your experience and perspective on care, resilience, and community-building?**
- 3) What are the strengths of the organization that have helped you and others within the organization?**
- 4) What other organizations, groups, or individuals outside of your organization have helped in building a broader sense of community and emerging possibility?**
- 5) What values inspire and motivate you in your reflection and experience with the organization?**
- 6) What goals are you passionate about and driven by personally and for the organization?**
- 7) What gives you the greatest sense of the possibility of a new ‘beloved’ community?**
- 8) In thinking about the future, what gives you the most hope and sense of resilience?**
- 9) Where would you like New Community Project to be in five to ten years?**
- 10) What else could help the organization right now?**

Would you recommend I interview any other colleagues in your organization and community? If so, would you share their name and contact information with me? Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to share your story and answer to these questions. A member of the team will follow up with you once a transcription is finalized. I may contact you again if I have questions to clarify of the practice and story. If you have any concerns or questions, you may contact the research team at any time: Eric Bendfeldt at 540-232-6006 or **ebendfel@vt.edu** , Kim Niewolny at 540-231-5784 or **niewolny@vt.edu**, Max O. Stephenson at 540-231-6755 or **mstephen@vt.edu**, Tom Archibald at 540-231-6192 or **tgarch@vt.edu** , or Anne L. Stewart at 540-908-8288 or **stewaral@jmu.edu**.

Appendix E:

Narrative of Alicia

Thinking back about 9 years ago, unfortunately, I was diagnosed with a health problem. A disease because everything I ate hurt me. It was maybe a year after I had arrived in this country when this happened. I felt very bad, physically, my stomach... very bad. Thank God I was able to go to the hospital and they treated me and gave me a treatment that I am still undergoing, and my life has changed a lot. God put me.... I think... on my way to meet a friend who is from Guatemala, her name is Adela. She told me there is a place where you can go to help. I told her... but I don't drive; then she told me but they can help you, they can bring you and when Adela introduced me to a friend named Ian, he remembers (looking towards Thomas) Japanese and American and then Ian told me I can bring her tomorrow and he used his bicycle to bring me home the next day and I was surprised, there I was.... I was saying I'm going to have a job where I'm going to feel useful because I need to feel useful, doing activities. With that bad news of my diagnosis, I had to think about something positive in my life so I started to go to Vine and Fig. I realized that my life started to change when I started to remember at Vine and Fig to plant my first vegetables, healthy food for me, to plant my own food, my mentality started to change because I was very discouraged, very depressed because of the diagnosis I had been given. I had analyzed that in this country, unfortunately, there is a lot of processed food and the doctor had told me that you have to look for healthy food because your blood is low. The first vegetables I planted were beets. ... and I don't forget it... I started experimenting. I sowed beets and started to make my juice with carrots and oranges; then my health and sense of wellbeing started to change when I received the juice from the carrots and beets, and the oranges... I made my juice and drank it. And it came to me, I started to remember my roots, my grandfather, and my mother; she was a farmer, I come from a farming family where they planted corn, beans and

25 pumpkin. For me, it was something very motivating to start. I met Tomás and Tomás has for me
26 a lot of meaning in this country, he gives that freedom to the immigrant, to the people; no matter
27 where the person is from; but he follows with love and patience. I started to get involved in many
28 projects of Vine and Fig; I began to realize the magnitude that happens when you have your
29 community, even though in my country I did community through my church. In this country I
30 did not know how to do community and it was in Vine and Fig that I began to experience what
31 community is; maybe in the church I go to I only receive a lot of information in theory but I
32 think that God sent me to Vine and Fig to live that love of God, that community and to start
33 learning together... yes... thank you.

34 That's what brought me, the interest in finding my health; because I discovered that the
35 garden, through planting, it is therapy for me in my life, it has changed my life. When I am
36 outside planting a seed, a little plant, I feel good with myself and with others and I started to get
37 more involved, to represent the organization. I like the organization because our motto is to
38 cultivate the land but also to cultivate human relationships and that filled me, I identified with
39 that because no matter where you come from the important thing is that we can work together for
40 a good cause. For example, what you just said about Mr. Martin Luther King Jr., he is an
41 example of love passing through this earth, doing good and I like that; because we came here;
42 Harrisonburg is multicultural. I came for my family, I can only share that, I came for my family.
43 The important thing is to recognize that we are human beings, no matter where you come from,
44 that's what matters. We are human beings with virtues and defects but we are human beings, yes.

45 It has been a lot of learning because of the language. Because I don't drive, I can't go to
46 school. My school is this here. My school and my teachers are you because I listen to your
47 English, your language, one word. Because I don't go to school, I feel it is a family for me and it

48 has a lot of meaning to know that there is this place, this community. There are always
49 difficulties. I always say there are difficulties and one is not healthy all the time. But. for me
50 there are times when there are requirements and so on; but the important thing is to remain
51 united and recognize that sequence of what the land is giving you for example. For me
52 personally, I think that God is the best psychologist that is why he left us the plants, he left us the
53 soil. Because the soil centers me, it orients me, it reminds me of my roots, it reminds me that I
54 am from the soil.

55 With a lot of effort, I have hard-earned it as they say in my land. It is a lot of work. I
56 continue learning new things every day; the work is hard, it is more responsibility. It is also a lot
57 of responsibility because now you have to teach the new generations what can be done, to have
58 the initiative to always do something every day, to sow something good, something productive,
59 something of benefit for everyone. Because it is for the community and because we are a
60 community.

61 In regard to the health aspect because I don't know if I have mentioned that I have been a
62 health promoter for 10 years. How ironic... (laughing)? It is ironic because of my own health. I
63 continue with my treatment, thanks to God and the doctors, every 2 or 3 months. I am in
64 treatment; they are checking me. But in that aspect, I feel very supported and I am also learning.
65 For example, in projects related to roads and bicycles at the city level, the organization started to
66 care a lot. Like four years ago we had in mind with Tomás that we can talk to the municipality of
67 Harrisonburg to move forward with bike access on the roads and make bike paths. We want to do
68 more but we will see what happens; I was very interested in this matter because it is known, for
69 example, that bicycles take care of the environment, you don't waste gasoline, and in terms of
70 health, the immune system goes up when you ride a bicycle. So, you learn if you collaborate and

71 participate for the community, for the city; it is a project that fills me with satisfaction and the
72 families are like interested and say: I am going leave my car and I am going to ride a bike. For
73 example, families have told me that where they live near the bicycle path, they walk all that way
74 to get to the store, to buy their food and that is healthy for everyone, it helps to motivate people
75 to walk, to ride their bicycles. There are many projects! ... (smiles) that we have at Vine and Fig.

76 I think that as in the case of Tomás since I met him; he is one of the people I identified
77 with because he is very understanding, he puts himself in your place. As I was telling you just
78 now, he does not care where you are from, he does not care what country you are from, what
79 matters to him is understanding. He puts himself in your place and he is human, he is a
80 humanitarian. For example, what helped me is that being a humanitarian I felt that he identified
81 with me: he felt my pain, he said how can I help you? And for me, it is very helpful
82 psychologically because when they give you a little piece of land, you feel that the given is with
83 love. And you say, I am going to take care of that land... I am going to sow this seed, I am going
84 to take care of this plant so that it grows, and you feel useful. So, psychologically it helps you.
85 And that is what I noticed in him; he is humanitarian because he likes to help people. He does
86 not stay and stand with his hands crossed. If something is not right, he does something, he gives
87 you a blanket, he does it with love. That is what I have experienced during all this time, in this
88 process. I feel very blessed by him, even though there are problems, there are difficult situations,
89 sometimes tense situations. ... We have lost people who have been with us working, people of
90 different nationalities, and I no longer see them and it hurts me in my heart. It has been difficult
91 in that aspect; because, for example, personally, I have also lost people now because of COVID,
92 Now I have lost a lot of family in Mexico and I could not go to see them... it has been difficult...
93 ... There are difficult moments; but always with the hope of moving forward... yes...

94 For me, two people have been very understanding people, in particular Tomás and Missy.
95 For example, in some periods of my life, when I have a relapse or setback in my health problem,
96 they are with me, they are attentive to me. When COVID started 2 years ago, I was 5 months
97 without work and in very bad shape; because I relapsed with my health condition. I did not go
98 out from home, not at all; during all this time, they came, even if it was from far away, and saw
99 how I was and their presence made me feel supported. Yes, because even though I did not go
100 out, there in the house with my sister and my nephew I was planting in my garden there in the
101 house. Even if it was just a little bit of earth, but I was still planting. I was active even though I
102 was not in a strong health stage, very relapsed. Their presence motivated me to say: they are
103 waiting for me, they are waiting for me, and that was and is very important for me, yes. For me,
104 Missy has a lot of meaning. She is my teacher you could say of compassion, of love, because she
105 practices in her life that love and compassion for others.

106 I felt more part of the organization precisely doing this and, participating in the
107 humanitarian aspect. There is a project within Vine and Fig that is very delicate, it is the aspect
108 of working with the "homeless." These are people who need to be heard, not only to give them a
109 place to spend the night, but also people who need company to motivate them that they are
110 useful. It fills me with great joy when I see a homeless person that we receive at the Vine and Fig
111 house and he continues his process and to help us for example in the garden. Because I don't
112 know if you saw him there, he lives in the White House at Vine and Fig but Jimmy is a man who
113 likes to help. You saw Jimmy today, for example, he likes to help. That's what affects me the
114 most in humanitarianism, in giving your help, without getting anything in return. It hurts a lot
115 when you lose a human being there. For example, it touched me when a homeless person arrived
116 very delicate in health and died, and it hurts because he is a human being like everyone else. The

117 human being aspect is what touches me the most — the fact of teaching them and supporting
118 them. Because what is important is the life of the human being, the life of each one of us, and
119 what you are doing for that person.

120 Precisely talking about the vision inspires me, behind Tomás there is a gentleman called
121 David. You can say that he is the founder of the organization. When I met David, I realized that
122 David is a human being like everyone. But he has that humanity, to support morally and
123 spiritually and economically too. Because even though we do not see him here, he is always
124 motivating us, he had the mission and the vision, and now we have the action. So, maybe at the
125 time, he already did what he had to do, but now we continue with that action to practice the
126 values of the organization: respect, love, tolerance, patience, and all the values that we human
127 beings have to practice to get along well.

128 The value that we practice is compassion. Compassion that we all must feel to help each
129 other, recognize the dignity and their dignity as human beings because we all deserve respect, all
130 human beings deserve that. Love, because if God gives you love, even if you fall down, you get
131 back up. Yes.

132 And I think that helping them to make them feel useful, respecting their history, no
133 matter the person. Sometimes there are very difficult things that we have gone through, where I
134 have seen and heard very difficult stories in which you learn as a human being to give that
135 person the strength to continue their life. So, when they come here, when they arrive here to the
136 "White House", how can you say, to help them to feel useful, it is good when you see that. There
137 are young people who have come and asked for help, and you see them helping us, for example
138 to cultivate the land. They use their life, their time in positive things, they get involved and you
139 get them involved so that they have a project in their life.

140 In particular, it is a work that we have to continue doing. For example, here in this Jubilee
141 Climate Farm, a work of cultural communities is being done and that fills me with hope. They
142 continue giving the opportunity to everyone, not only to specific people, but to everyone the
143 information that they can have a place and make them responsible for their little plot of land and
144 that they can plant what they want to plant and what they can plant. Because there are many
145 people, for example last year an African and a Guatemalan. And this year, I think we have about
146 seven or more people who are invited to plant this year in the community garden. Yes here, that
147 is what motivates me to continue working. For example, the new generations, the students, they
148 help us a lot, when they come. They help us to till the land, to sow, and you teach them, and they
149 learn to be responsible with the projects they have in their lives. And we all learn because all
150 cultures have virtues and defects. Nobody is perfect, and what we do want is that we learn
151 together.

152 I think that in five to 10 years justice is being experienced. Because as I was telling you,
153 this place is multicultural so I think that we human beings must learn to be community if we can.
154 It is like a challenge, a challenge in life, but I would like that for this place. As I said, the
155 community has a diversity and culture, it is very rich. The United States is very rich in culture,
156 gastronomy, dance, music, agriculture, there is an exchange of knowledge. Because that is what
157 has happened to me in this community, I have shared my knowledge and there is an exchange of
158 knowledge. It is like the language exchange of English with Spanish. For me, it is like that
159 exchange where you can be my English teacher and I can be your Spanish teacher.

160 In ten years, I see a place where there is more freedom to receive more people, who are
161 working on those cultural projects. The work of agriculture is a little harsh. For example, now
162 that we are planting trees there in the mountain, it is important to give the knowledge to the

163 people to the new generations, the students come and help us, but it is accessible to all kinds of
164 people so we can continue exchanging knowledge. We check that it is convenient and effective
165 for us to plant fruit trees and trees for firewood. But there are many people that like agriculture
166 and others that do not like it, it is heavy work, but I, in particular, like to plant trees and plants
167 and vegetables. For me, it is important how that person is going to sow it. If you are going to sow
168 it with love, those plants are going to renew themselves. There are people who may say, “Hey, if
169 every year you always sow the same, it is the same!” But it depends on how you sow it, who
170 sows it. Because there are many people, there are many plants there, but if they do not have the
171 initiative to sow it, then they do not have it. The sower is the important thing: who sows it and
172 how they sow it. For me, that's very important, because if I see people who don't want to, I can't
173 force them. If they don't want to, they don't want to. (Laughing).

174 I hope what I shared with you helped you a lot, and now, the jubilee, and thank you for
175 considering our opinions and recognizing that before being Mexican, I am a human being.
176 (Laughing)

177 *Spanish version of Alicia's Narrative*

178 Haciendo memoria hace 9 años atrás...Desafortunadamente me diagnosticaron con un
179 problema de salud. Una enfermedad, que todo lo que comía me hacía daño. tenía tal vez un año
180 que había llegado a este país cuando pasó esto. Me sentía muy mal, físicamente, mi estómago,
181 muy mal. Gracias a Dios pude ir al hospital y me atendieron me dieron un tratamiento que hasta
182 ahorita lo llevo y mi vida cambió mucho. Dios puso.... pienso yo... en mi camino a una amiga
183 que es de Guatemala, ella se llama Adela. Ella me dijo hay un lugar donde tú puedes ir a ayudar
184 en él (refiriéndose al lugar en el que pueden ayudar). Yo le decía... pero yo no manejo; entonces
185 me decía pero ellos te pueden ayudar, te pueden ir a traer y cuando Adela me presentó a un

186 amigo que se llama Ian, se recuerda (mirando hacia Thomas) japonés y americano y entonces Ian
187 me dijo yo la puedo ir a traer mañana y él fue con su bicicleta a traerme a la casa al otro día y me
188 sorprendí, hay... yo decía: ya voy a tener un trabajo dónde voy a sentirme útil; porque necesito...
189 necesito para sentirme útil, hacer actividades. Con esa mala noticia de mi diagnóstico, tenía que
190 pensar en algo positivo en mi vida entonces empecé a ir a Vine and Fig. Me di cuenta que mi
191 vida empezó a cambiar cuando empecé a recordar en Vine and Fig a sembrar mis primeros
192 vegetales, la comida saludable para mí, sembrar mi propia comida, mi mentalidad empezó a
193 cambiar porque estaba muy desanimada, muy deprimida. Por el diagnóstico que me habían dado
194 había yo analizado que en este país desafortunadamente hay mucha comida procesada y el doctor
195 me había dicho tú tienes que buscar comida saludable porque tu sangre baja. Los primeros
196 vegetales que sembré fue la remolacha... y no se me olvida a mí... empecé a experimentar.
197 Sembraba yo la remolacha y empezaba a ser mi jugo con zanahoria y naranja; entonces mi salud
198 y el sentido de mi bienestar empezó a cambiar al recibir ese jugo de la zanahoria y el betabel, y
199 las naranjas... yo hacía mi jugo y me lo bebía. Y me venía, empecé a recordar mis raíces mi
200 abuelo y mi mamá; ella fue campesina, yo vengo de familia campesina donde sembraban el
201 maíz, el frijol, la calabaza. Para mí, fue algo muy motivante empezar. Conocí a Tomás y Tomás
202 tiene para mí mucho significado en este país, da esa libertad al inmigrante, a la gente; no importa
203 de dónde sea la persona; pero el sigue con amor y paciencia. Empecé a involucrarme en muchos
204 proyectos de Vine and Fig; empecé a darme cuenta la magnitud que hace cuando tú tienes tu
205 comunidad, a pesar que en mi país yo hacía comunidad por medio de mi Iglesia. En este país yo
206 no sabía cómo hacer comunidad y ahí fue en Vine and Fig es cuando empecé a experimentar a
207 vivir lo que es comunidad; tal vez en la Iglesia a la que yo voy, solamente recibo mucha

208 información en teoría, pero pienso que Dios me mandó a Vine and Fig para vivir ese amor de
209 Dios, esa comunidad y empezar a aprender juntos... sí... gracias.

210 Eso es lo que me trajo, el interés de encontrar mi salud; porque yo descubrí que, por
211 medio del jardín, de plantar, es terapia para mí en mi vida, ha cambiado mi vida. Cuando estoy
212 afuera sembrando una semilla, una plantita, me siento bien conmigo mismo y con los demás y
213 empecé a involucrarme más, a representar la organización. A mí me gusta la organización porque
214 nuestro lema es cultivar la tierra, pero también cultivar las relaciones humanas y eso me llenó a
215 mí, me identifiqué con eso porque no importa de dónde vengas lo importante es que podemos
216 trabajar unidos por una buena causa. Por ejemplo, lo que usted acaba de decir del señor Martin
217 Luther King Jr., él es un ejemplo de amor el paso por esta tierra haciendo el bien y eso a mí me
218 gusta; porque nosotros vinimos aquí; Harrisonburg es multicultural. Yo vine por mi familia, sólo
219 puedo compartir eso, vine por mi familia. Lo importante es reconocer, que somos seres humanos,
220 no importa de dónde vengas, eso es lo que importa. Somos seres humanos con virtudes y
221 defectos pero somos seres humanos, sí.

222 Ha sido mucho aprendizaje debido al idioma. Yo no manejo, yo no puedo ir a la escuela.
223 Mi escuela es ésta. Mi escuela, mis maestros son ustedes, porque yo les escucho su inglés, su
224 idioma, una palabra. Porque yo no voy a la escuela, yo me siento que es una familia para mí y
225 tiene mucho significado el saber que existe este lugar, esta comunidad. Hay siempre dificultades.
226 yo siempre digo hay dificultades y no todo el tiempo uno esta saludable. Para mí hay momentos
227 en que hay requerimiento y así; pero lo importante es seguir unidos y reconocer, esa secuencia de
228 lo que te está dando la tierra, por ejemplo. Para mí en lo personal, pienso que Dios es el mejor
229 psicólogo por eso nos dejó las plantas, nos dejó la tierra. Porque la tierra me centra, me ubica, me
230 recuerda a mis raíces, me recuerda que soy de tierra.

231 Con mucho esfuerzo me lo he ganado a pulso como, se dice en mi tierra. Es mucho
232 trabajo. Sigo aprendiendo cada día cosas nuevas; es fuerte el trabajo, es más responsabilidad.
233 También es mucha responsabilidad porque tú tienes ahora que enseñar a las nuevas generaciones
234 qué es lo que se puede hacer, tener la iniciativa de estar siempre haciendo algo, cada día, sembrar
235 algo bueno, algo productivo, algo de beneficio para todos. Porque es para la comunidad y porque
236 somos comunidad.

237 ¿Con respecto a la salud porque no sé si les he mencionado, tengo 10 años que soy
238 promotora de salud. ¿Qué irónico... (riendo)? Es irónico porque pues por mi propia salud. Yo
239 sigo con mi tratamiento, gracias a Dios y, los médicos, cada 2 o 3 meses estoy en tratamiento, me
240 están chequeando. Pero en ese aspecto, me siento muy apoyada y aprendiendo también. Por
241 ejemplo, en proyectos relacionados con caminos y bicicletas a nivel de la ciudad, a la
242 organización empezó como a importarle mucho. Como ya hace cuatro años teníamos en mente
243 con Tomás que nosotros podemos hablar con el municipio de Harrisonburg para avanzar en el
244 acceso de las bicicletas en los caminos y hacer caminos para bicicletas. Queremos hacer más,
245 pero vamos a ver qué pasa; a mí me interesó mucho este asunto porque se sabe que por ejemplo
246 la bicicleta cuida el medio ambiente, no gastas gasolina y, en los términos de la salud el sistema
247 inmunológico sube cuando tú manejas bicicleta. Entonces aprendes si colaboras y participas para
248 la comunidad, para la ciudad; es un proyecto que me llena de satisfacción y las familias están
249 como interesadas y dicen: voy a dejar mi carrito y voy a manejar bicicleta. Por ejemplo, familias
250 que me han platicado a mí, que donde ellos viven que está cerca al camino de bicicletas, ella
251 camina todo ese camino para llegar a la tienda, para comprar su comida y eso es salud para
252 todos, ayuda a que la gente se motive a caminar, a llevar la bicicleta ¡Hay muchos proyectos! ...
253 (sonríe) que tenemos en Vine and Fig.

254 Yo creo que en relación de Tomás desde que lo conocí; es que se puede decir que es una
255 de las personas con las que me identifiqué porque él es muy comprensivo, él se pone en tu lugar.
256 Como lo que yo les decía ahorita, a él no le importa de qué lugar seas, no le importa de qué país
257 seas tú, lo que le importa a él es ser comprensivo. Se pone en tu lugar y él es humano, él es un
258 humanitario. Por ejemplo, lo que me ayudó a mí, es que al ser humanitario yo sentí que él se
259 identificaba conmigo: sentía mi dolor... él sentía... él decía... ¿cómo la ayudo? Y para mí, es de
260 mucha ayuda psicológica porque cuando te dan un lugarcito de tierra, tú te sientes con ese amor
261 que te lo dieron. Y dices, voy a cuidar esa tierra... voy a sembrar esta semilla, voy a cuidar esta
262 planta para que crezca y te sientes útil. Entonces, psicológicamente te ayuda. Y yo es lo que noté
263 en él es humanitario pues le gusta ayudar a la gente. No se queda parado con las manos cruzadas.
264 Si algo no está bien, él hace algo, te da la cobija, lo hace con amor. Eso es lo que he vivido
265 durante todo este tiempo, en este proceso. Yo me siento muy bendecida por él, a pesar de que
266 hay problemas, hay situaciones difíciles, a veces situaciones tensas. Hemos perdido gente que
267 han estado con nosotros trabajando, gente de diferentes nacionalidades, y ya no las veo y me
268 duele en mi corazón. Ha sido difícil en ese aspecto; porque, por ejemplo, personalmente, también
269 he perdido gente ahorita por el COVID, ahorita he perdido mucha familia en México y no pude ir
270 a verlos... ha sido difícil... Hay momentos difíciles; pero siempre con esa esperanza de salir
271 adelante...

272 Para mí, dos personas han sido muy comprensivas personas, en lo particular Tomás y
273 Missy. Por ejemplo, durante algunas etapas de mi vida, cuando tengo una recaída o contratiempo
274 en mi problema de salud, ellos están conmigo, están pendientes conmigo. Cuando empezó el
275 COVID hace 2 años, y yo estuve 5 meses sin trabajar y en una muy mala condición; porque recaí
276 con mi problema de salud. No salí de mi casa para nada; en todo este tiempo, ellos venían,

277 aunque sea de lejos, y me veían como estaba yo y la presencia de ellos eso me sentía apoyada. Sí
278 porque a pesar de que yo no salí, allá en la casa con mi hermana y mi sobrino, yo estaba
279 sembrando en mi jardín ahí en la casa. Aunque sea un poquito de tierra, pero yo estaba todavía
280 sembrando. Yo estaba activa a pesar de que yo no estaba en una etapa de salud fuerte, muy
281 recaída. La presencia de ellos me motivó el decir: ellos me están esperando, ellos me están
282 esperando a mí, y eso tuvo y tiene mucha importancia para mí sí. Para mí, Missy tiene mucho
283 significado. Es mi maestra se podría decir de compasión, de amor, porque ella practica su vida
284 ese amor y esa compasión para los demás.

285 Precisamente haciendo esto me he sentido más parte de la organización y, participando en
286 el aspecto humanitario. Hay un proyecto dentro de Vine and Fig que es muy delicado, es el
287 aspecto de trabajar con los “homeless” (sin techo). Son personas que necesitan ser escuchada, no
288 solamente darle un lugarcito donde pasen la noche, sino que es gente que necesita compañía de
289 motivarlos a que ellos sí son útiles también es... a mí me llena de mucha alegría cuando yo veo a
290 un homeless que lo recibimos en la casa de Vine and Fig y sigue su proceso y de ayudarnos por
291 ejemplo en el jardín. Porque no sé si ustedes vieron allí, él vive en el White House en Vine and
292 Fig. Pero Jimmy es un hombre que le gusta ayudar. Usted vio a Jimmy el día de hoy, por
293 ejemplo, le gusta ayudar. Es lo que más me afecta en lo humanitario, en dar tu ayuda, sin recibir
294 nada a cambio. Duele mucho cuando pierdes un ser humano ahí. Por ejemplo, me ha conmovido
295 cuando ha llegado un homeless muy delicado de salud y ha muerto, y duele porque es un ser
296 humano como todos. El aspecto del ser humano es lo que más me conmueve. El hecho de
297 enseñarles y apoyarles. Porque lo importante es la vida, el ser humano, la vida de cada uno de
298 nosotros, y el qué estás haciendo por esa persona.

299 Precisamente el hablar de la visión me inspira, detrás de Tomás hay un señor que se
300 llama David. Se puede decir que él es el fundador de la organización, entonces cuando yo
301 conocía David me di cuenta de que David es un ser humano como todos. Pero tiene esa
302 humanidad, para apoyar moralmente y espiritualmente y económicamente también. Porque a
303 pesar de que no lo vemos nosotros aquí, él siempre está motivándonos, él tuvo la misión y la
304 visión, y ahora nosotros tenemos la acción. Entonces, tal vez en su momento, ya él hizo su
305 acción que tenía que hacer, pero ahora nosotros seguimos con esa acción de practicar los valores
306 de la organización, el respeto el amor, la tolerancia, la paciencia, y todos los valores que nosotros
307 tenemos que practicar nosotros los seres humanos para llevarnos bien.

308 Como que no entiendo, se está refiriendo en forma general. El valor que practicamos es la
309 compasión. Compasión que tenemos que sentir todos para ayudarnos, reconocerles la dignidad y
310 su dignidad como seres humanos porque todos merecemos respeto, todos los seres humanos
311 merecemos eso. El amor, porque si Dios te da amor, aunque te caigas tú te vuelves a levantar. Si.

312 Y yo creo que a ayudarles a hacer que se sientan útiles, respetando su historia, sin
313 importar que clase de persona sea. A veces hay cosas muy difíciles que hemos pasado, donde he
314 visto y he escuchado historias muy fuertes de las que tú aprendes como ser humanos a dar a esa
315 persona fortaleza para seguir su vida. Entonces, cuando ellos vienen para acá a la “White
316 House”, como se puede decir, ayudarlos a que se sientan útiles; es bueno cuando tú ves eso. Hay
317 jóvenes que han llegado y piden ayuda, y tú los ves que están ayudándonos, por ejemplo, a
318 cultivar la tierra. Usan su vida, su tiempo en cosas positivas, se involucran y los involucra uno
319 para que tengan un proyecto en su vida.

320 En lo particular, es un trabajo que tenemos que seguir haciendo. Por ejemplo, aquí en esta
321 Finca Climática del Jubileo, se está haciendo un trabajo de comunidades culturales y eso me

322 llena de esperanza. Que le sigan dando la oportunidad a todos, no nomás una gente específica,
323 sino a toda la información de qué si se puede tener un lugar y hacerle responsables de su
324 parcelita y que siembren lo que quieran sembrar ellos y lo que puedan sembrar. Porque hay
325 mucha gente, por ejemplo, el año pasado un africano y un guatemalteco. Y este año, creo que
326 tenemos como unas siete o más personas que están invitadas a sembrar este año en el Jardín
327 comunitario. Si aquí, eso es lo que me motiva a seguir trabajando. Por ejemplo, las nuevas
328 generaciones, los estudiantes, ellos nos ayudan mucho, cuando vienen. Nos ayudan a labrar la
329 tierra, a sembrar, y uno les enseña, y aprenden a ser responsables con los proyectos que tienen en
330 su vida. Y todos aprendemos porque todas las culturas tenemos virtudes y defectos. Nadie es
331 perfecto, y lo que sí queremos es que aprendamos juntos.

332 Creo que en cinco a diez años se ha venido viviendo la justicia. Porque como les decía,
333 este lugar es multicultural entonces yo creo que los seres humanos tenemos que aprender a ser
334 comunidad si podemos. Es como un desafío, un reto en la vida, pero eso sí me gustaría para este
335 lugar. Como le digo, la comunidad tiene una diversidad y cultura, está muy rico. Los Estados
336 Unidos está muy rico de cultura, gastronomía danza música, agricultura, hay un intercambio de
337 conocimientos. Porque a mí eso es lo que me ha pasado en esta comunidad, yo he compartido
338 mis conocimientos y hay un intercambio de conocimientos, es como el intercambio de idiomas,
339 el inglés con el español. Para mí es eso, el intercambio que hay donde tú puede ser mi maestro de
340 inglés y yo puedo ser tu maestro de español.

341 En diez años, yo veo un lugar donde haya más libertad de recibir más gente, que esté
342 trabajando en esos proyectos culturales. El trabajo de la agricultura es un poco fuerte pesado. Por
343 ejemplo, ahora que estamos sembrando árboles allá en la montaña, es importante darle los
344 conocimientos a la gente a las nuevas generaciones, los estudiantes vienen y nos ayudan, pero es

345 accesible a todo tipo de gente para que así podamos seguir intercambiando conocimientos.
346 Nosotros checamos que es efectivo y nos conviene sembrar árboles frutales y árboles para leña.
347 Pero, hay mucha gente que les gusta la agricultura y a otros que no les gusta, es un trabajo
348 pesado, pero a mí, en lo particular, me gusta sembrar árboles y plantas y vegetales. Para mí, es
349 importante como lo va a sembrar esa persona. Si lo vas a sembrar con amor, esas plantas van a ir
350 renovandose. Hay gente que podrá decir “¡Oye, Si cada año ustedes siempre siembran lo mismo,
351 ¡es lo mismo!” Pero depende de cómo lo siembras, quien lo siembra. Porque hay mucha gente,
352 hay mucha planta ahí, pero si no tienen la iniciativa para sembrarlo, entonces no lo tienen. El
353 sembrador es la cosa importante: quien lo siembra y como lo siembra. Es para mí, eso tiene
354 mucho importancia, porque si veo gente que no quiere, yo no puedo obligarla... Si, no quieren,
355 no quieren. (Riendo)

356 Espero que lo que le compartí que le ayude mucho, y ahora, el jubileo, y gracias por
357 considerar nuestras opiniones y reconocer que antes de ser mexicana, soy un ser humano.
358 (Riendo)

359 Y ahora.... el jubileo, y gracias que toman en cuenta nuestras opiniones... Que antes de
360 ser mexicana, soy un ser humano... Ja ja ja, con permiso.

Appendix F:

Narrative of Anita

Before I came to live here [at the White House], I was living over there with a neighbor.

And then, here was Alicia and Nicolas working, and I came to volunteer to plant the land. Then Nicholas told me to work with them. I experienced that there was a lot of pollen then and I could no longer work. So, I could only work for three hours and then I went inside the house. But there was a man who tried to rape me, so I talked to them to see if I could come and live here and they said I could live here.

I felt calmer, safer than when I lived there then. There was a drunk man who lived there and the man who tried to rape me was getting drunk with him. Then, I came here and I felt safer, and there are no drunk people here. Yes, I felt that it is my home. I don't have a car so this house is very much central. I feel that it is well in the center; I can walk to the store, to the church, to the bus, and many places.

Yes, I feel safe, I was telling you that I feel very comfortable, very safe. I feel very calm and safe when Missy and Tomás are here. I feel very happy because we can eat the vegetables here, the eggs from the hen, the meat too, and it's very healthy. O, yes. A lot of people, Tomás also says, say you are crazy because you live here in the United States. Sometimes you come here because you want to have more things than in Guatemala. And why do you live here and not in Guatemala? In Guatemala, it is so nice even Tomás tells me that. And yes, it is true.

Guatemala is very beautiful but there is no money. I thought I was going to have money here, but I got sick and I have no money. It is something crazy, right? But I thank God, because I am very happy participating in the church and for touching the hearts of people here to let me live here. It is not easy to live with many people nor to have many bosses. Because I tell Tomás I would like to have only one boss, and only Tomás or only Alicia or only Missy or someone. However,

25 sometimes you have to talk to everyone and that is very difficult. But what I like the most and
26 what I enjoy the most is everything here. I like that very much. Yes, we have a lot food, when I
27 don't have the rent they have waited for me.

28 And sometimes when I am talking I start to cry. And I don't want to cry, but because
29 when I worked in a company my co-worker raped me. I didn't call the police because I was
30 afraid. I think I still haven't come out of that trauma; when I remember, I cry a lot. They helped
31 me a lot in the church and the psychologist helped me too, but it still hurts me a lot. I'm already
32 maybe 90% over it, but I cry a lot because I was raped; since then, my health was not good.

33 We all respect each other. We respect each other, and the people in charge also respect
34 each other. If a comrade or colleague is disrespectful, then they talk to him. And if he doesn't
35 comply, he has to leave. But I feel that we are all loved equally, but if someone violates the rules
36 and does not obey the rules, then they also have to leave.

37 So, to learn English, I'm studying, and I want to learn 100%. Because of health problems,
38 and because I don't have my social security number, I can't work in companies. So, in my free
39 time, I study the bible and I study English. I also like to study medicinal plants. That's what I do.
40 And I also want to have an NGO in Guatemala. I also receive clothes donated by other people
41 and send them to Guatemala for people who need them, I do a lot of things to try to help.

42 First, my hope is to have resources, I am looking for people who want to sponsor children
43 in Guatemala. Yes. Maybe only in Quetzaltenango for the moment, if we have more money,
44 then, to do more. I feel that there are a lot of relational issues because here you help the needy
45 who have no place to live, the sick, and women with domestic violence, you help a lot of people.
46 I want to help the people in Guatemala, for children to learn to read and write, especially to help
47 disabled children and those people with low resources.

48 Seeing how Tomás' works really catches my interest. I have a friend in Guatemala who
49 works in charity work and it also catches my interest to be able to work with Tomás or like her.
50 Yes. In the church where I participate, there are also two people and friends who inspire me to
51 continue working for values of respect, love for all persons, and good friendship.

52 As for practices, praying, visiting and being with the psychologist, dancing, walking and
53 being here in this place also helps me to forget many things. I can walk over there. There are
54 flowers and there are many vegetables, I am also going to plant now. Yes. In the whole city, I've
55 heard people say they like the recycling Vine & Fig does, the composting, and the way it helps
56 people live here.

57 The value that the NGO here gives me and for my work in Guatemala and own NGO.
58 Here, the NGO Vine & Fig lets me choose what I am going to cook, and that is good for me. And
59 they give me the opportunity to work to help with the rent. And for the Guatemala project, they
60 have given me ideas. For example, you, Tomás, has given me ideas.

61 What gives me hope in general, and also here, is to have God in my heart. Living in this
62 place, it has helped me a lot; so, it gave me hope to be here. Yes, it gave me hope to be here
63 longer.

64 Where do I want to see this Vine and Fig project within the next five to 10 years? I want
65 to see this Vine & Fig project bigger, have a bigger house and more land, more fruits and more
66 chickens, more money, more people working. Yes! Thank you!

67 *Spanish Version of Anita's Narrative*

68 Antes de venir a vivir aquí [en la Casa Blanco], yo vivía allá con un vecino. Y entonces
69 aquí estaba Alicia y Nicolas trabajando, y yo vine a trabajar voluntaria para sembrar las tierras.
70 Entonces Nicholas me dijo que estuviera trabajando con ellos, y luego yo me di cuenta de que
71 había mucho polen, ya no aguantaba trabajar, entonces sólo podía trabajar por tres horas y

72 después me iba adentro de la casa. Pero había un hombre que intentó violarme, entonces yo hablé
73 con Tomás para ver si yo podía venir a vivir aquí y ellos dijeron que allá, pues que si podía vivir
74 aquí.

75 Me sentía yo más tranquila, más segura que cuando yo vivía allí entonces. Había un
76 hombre borracho que vivía ahí y el hombre que intentó violarme se emborrachaba con él.
77 Entonces, vine aquí y me sentí más segura, y aquí no hay personas borrachas. Si, sentí que es mi
78 hogar. Yo no tengo carro entonces esta casa está muy céntrica, siento que está bien en el centro;
79 puedo caminar a la tienda, a la iglesia, al bus, y a muchas partes.

80 Sí, yo me siento segura, yo le decía que me siento muy cómoda muy segura, me siento
81 con mucho tranquilidad y segura cuando Missy y Tomás están aquí. Yo me siento muy feliz
82 porque podemos comer la verdura de aquí, los huevos de la gallina, la carne también, y muy
83 saludable. Oh sí. Mucha gente, Tomás también dice, mucha gente dice tú eres loca porque vives
84 aquí en Estados Unidos. A veces uno viene aquí por querer tener más cosas que en Guatemala Y
85 ¿por qué vives aquí y no en Guatemala? En Guatemala está tan lindo, incluso Tomás me dice
86 eso. Y sí, es cierto. Guatemala es muy bello, pero no hay dinero. Yo pensé que aquí yo iba a
87 tener dinero aquí, pero me enfermé y no tengo dinero. Es algo loco ¿verdad?, Pero yo le
88 agradezco a Dios, porque si yo soy muy feliz participando en la iglesia Y por tocar los corazones
89 de las personas aquí para dejarme vivir aquí. No es fácil vivir con mucha gente ni tampoco tener
90 muchos jefes. Porque yo le digo a Tomás a mí me gustaría tener sólo un jefe, y que sea solo
91 Tomás o sólo Alicia o sólo Missy o alguien. Sin embargo, a veces uno tiene que hablar con todos
92 y eso es muy difícil. Pero lo que más me gusta y lo que más disfruto es todo aquí. Eso me gusta
93 mucho. Sí mucho, tenemos comida, cuando yo no tengo la renta me han esperado.

94 Ya veces cuando estoy hablando me pongo a llorar. Y no quiero llorar, pero porque
95 cuando yo trabajé en una compañía mi compañero de trabajo me violó. Yo no llamé a la policía
96 porque tuve miedo. Creo que todavía no he salido de ese trauma; cuando yo recuerdo, lloro
97 mucho. Me ayudaron mucho en la iglesia y el psicólogo me ayudó también, pero todavía me
98 lastima mucho. Ya he superado tal vez un 90%, pero yo lloro mucho; porque desde que me
99 violaron, mi salud no estuvo bien.

100 Todos nos respetamos. Entre los compañeros nos respetamos, y los encargados también
101 nos respetamos. Si un compañero o colega falta al respeto, entonces hablan con él. Y si él no
102 hace caso tiene que irse de aquí. Pero yo siento que a todos nos quieren igual, pero si alguien
103 viola las reglas y no obedece las reglas; entonces también tiene que irse.

104 Aprender inglés, estoy estudiando, y quiero aprender al 100%. Los problemas de salud, y
105 porque no tengo mi número de seguro social, no puedo trabajar en compañías. Entonces, en el
106 tiempo libre, yo estudio la biblia y estudio inglés. También me gusta estudiar las plantas
107 medicinales. Eso hago. Y también quiero tener una ONG en Guatemala. Ella también recibe ropa
108 donada por otras personas y las manda a Guatemala para la gente que los necesita, Ella hace
109 muchas cosas.

110 ¿Qué yo me siento apasionada? Primero, tener recursos, estoy buscando a gente que
111 quiera apadrinar a niños en Guatemala. Si. Sólo en quizás Quetzaltenango por el momento, si
112 tenemos más dinero entonces a más.

113 Siento que hay mucha relación, porque aquí ayudan ustedes a los necesitados que no
114 tienen donde vivir, a los enfermos, mujeres con violencia doméstica, ayudan a mucha gente. Yo
115 quiero que la gente en Guatemala, que los niños aprendan a leer y escribir, y ayudar en especial
116 los niños discapacitados y a la gente de bajos recursos.

117 El ver cómo trabaja Tomás me llama mucho la atención. Yo tengo una amiga en
118 Guatemala que trabaja en obras de caridad y también me llama la atención el poder trabajar con
119 Tomás o como ella. Sí. En la iglesia donde yo participo, también hay dos personas y amigas que
120 me inspiran que me inspiran a seguir trabajando para respecto, amar a las personas, y buena
121 amistad.

122 Hay algunas practices: Orar, visitar y estar con el psicólogo, bailar, caminar y estar aquí
123 en este lugar también me ayuda a olvidar muchas cosas. Yo puedo caminar para allá. Hay flores
124 y hay muchos vegetales, también yo voy a sembrar ahora. Si. En toda la ciudad, he oído a la
125 gente que dice que le gusta el reciclaje que hace Vine & Fig, el abono, en la forma que ayuda a la
126 gente a vivir aquí.

127 El valor que me da la ONG de aquí y para su trabajo en Guatemala y su ONG. Aquí, la
128 NGO Vine & Fig deja que yo escoja lo que yo voy a cocinar, y eso es bueno para mí. Y me dan
129 la oportunidad de trabajar para ayudar con la renta. Y para el proyecto de Guatemala, me han
130 dado ideas. Por ejemplo, usted, Tomás, me ha dado ideas.

131 En lo general y también aquí, tener a Dios en mi corazón. Vivir en este lugar, me ha
132 ayudado mucho; entonces le dio esperanza de estar aquí. Sí, me dio la esperanza de estar más
133 tiempo aquí.

134 ¿Dónde quiero ver este proyecto Vine and Fig dentro de los siguientes cinco a 10 años?
135 Quiero ver a este proyecto de Vine & Fig más grande, tener una casa más grande y más tierra,
136 más frutas y más gallinas, más dinero, más gente trabajando. ¡Sí! Gracias!

Appendix G:

Narrative of Caroline

My name is Caroline. I'm from Northern Virginia. I got introduced to New Community Project (New Community Project) when I was a sophomore in college. I'd grown up in the Falls Church, Virginia area, and quite frankly environmental anything was entirely off my register. I have this very vivid memory of a friend of mine in high school, my senior year saying, "I'm gonna study like environmental something in college." Right, and you'd be like, "What in the world are you even thinking? Why would you study that? What are you talking about?" Like, I had no grasp on what we were facing and what was going on. I had never been exposed to and I'd never sought exposure either.

I went to JMU for my undergrad and started in 2015. In November 2016, I volunteered at New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center for the first time. After that start, I went back twice a week. I did a fifth year of study so I went back twice a week for four years. There would be times I'd drop off during exam week or whatever. It was one of the craziest eye-opening things for me. It was like discovering this passion that I had not even touched. It was one of the first things in my life, besides psychology that I started to read about and be like, "I can't put stuff down about this, I can't stop thinking about this!"

I met Tom and some folks back then, and other folks that work here now. It's been about six years or so. So, that's how I got introduced and the way that it affected me. I changed my major. I was studying psychology and then started studying geographic science. I knew like, "This is the only thing that I could do." There was nothing else that would bring me the same satisfaction, true joy, and fulfillment.

Since then, I just haven't stopped. I moved away during COVID and I came back 'cause I graduated in 2020. I pestered folks that work here enough, of like, "What are you doing? How

25 can I get involved? What's going on?" And they're like, "We're starting this new project would
26 you wanna be one of the staff members?" And that was that and now I work here as a staff
27 member.

28 Well, number one, the initial foot-in-the-door thing was like, "Whoa, this is a world I've
29 never experienced." But it was a world that brought me comfort and excitement. And then, it was
30 like, "Okay, I'm gaining my footing in this place." Part of it was the relationships with folks that
31 live at the Sustainable Living Center at Vine & Fig. Everything was a totally different experience
32 and place for me.

33 It was a stress-relieving place for me, while I was going through my undergrad. Like,
34 "Okay, I can put everything away and go be there for an hour and a half," or like, "I don't have to
35 think about the fact that I've not done my homework for two weeks." It just struck directly with
36 my values in a way that I'd never figured out how to put my values into action quite so physically
37 if that makes sense.

38 It was the first time I was like, "And this is how I do all these things I say I care about?
39 This is how I match my words to my actions, which was something I had been struggling with." I
40 was like, "I believe these things but where in the world is the outlet for those things?"
41 Ultimately, that was what kept me around in terms of New Community Project and Jubilee
42 Climate Farm.

43 Each one has a little bit of a nuanced mission, but overall, this place of trying to radically
44 change the way we envision the world and decide to be a part of that solution. The mission of
45 New Community Project is to do that directly. They're a global organization.

46 But specifically, here at the Jubilee Climate Farm and Vine & Fig, we are really focused
47 on this idea of experimentation and no fear of failure. Of course, we carry the fear of failure a

48 little bit but it's like, "Let's just try this, we're learning that this might be the next great solution.
49 This might be a huge way to combat climate change and this might be part of the way we can
50 rise to that challenge." And so, that's a big part of what it's about as well as being centered in this
51 justice-oriented approach based in equity, respect, and love.

52 Vine & Fig Sustainability Living Center is based on peace, justice, and ecology. We don't
53 have quite a catchy three-word thing out here at the Jubilee Climate Farm, but it's this
54 groundedness in the work too. So, it's not just total lip service but how do we ground ourselves.
55 This comes in the form of our morning meditations and our check-ins. We show our humanity in
56 prioritizing family and if someone's sick. "No, your mom's sick, go home." Whatever someone
57 needs.

58 In my role, I work alongside everyone else doing farm tasks. I do most things that involve
59 computers: website building, social media, accounting, making calendars, emails, and whatever
60 is needed. I organize some of the student groups and a lot of volunteer organizations that come to
61 the farm. Right now, a lot of my attention is focused on the community garden space and then
62 also working directly with the students who are doing and researching our annual carbon capture
63 beds.

64 It's funny 'cause so many students come through Vine & Fig and it takes a little bit of
65 time. Maybe this is a bad thing to say, but it takes a little bit to build that trust when there are so
66 many volunteers rolling through a place.

67 I've hit on already, honestly, this relational care of each other. It's built on trust. Like the
68 five of us started working here and we didn't really know each other. Especially, in this place,
69 where we're asked to share a lot. We're asked each morning to say what we're showing up with,
70 whatever that is. For example, last year my mom was having some heart issues and that was

weighing on me. There were mornings that I was just like, "I'm gonna need to work alone, I'm gonna need space and time today." And so, those personal boundaries in that capacity are fairly well respected and honored, but that's built upon this pretty big foundation of trust.

There's a really long ongoing "aha" moment for me, if I'm really honest one of my biggest things is also exploring what it means to look and be how I am in this space, to be a white person navigating this space. And so, that's a constant beautiful learning and "aha" moment for me that I really appreciate just like forming relationships and realizing that trust is the basis for so much. It also allows me space because I have a resistance to forced vulnerability. Trust allows you to conceal or share as much as you want. So, there's the trust of like, "I'm not doing well today I can't come to work," or, "I'm not doing well today but like without having to say anymore because there's that trust. And so, it's taught me a lot of relational skills in how to navigate that in terms of vulnerability with folks that I'm working alongside and trying to build community with.

One thing we haven't ever maybe explicitly said is part of our vision or mission, but I see it so embedded and it should be integrated is this idea of dreaming. Daring to dream about what things can look like has become a big part of me. There was nothing here this time last year. "Okay, let's dream what could this be?" And all that feels huge and daunting and scary. But then, "Wait a minute, like, we can do that?" Dream it and believe that we can do that, know those good things take time, and have patience with yourself and others when things aren't happening as quickly or the exact way you'd want. Honestly, daring to dream, is a brave thing to do in this world.

Dreaming has become dangerous, and that's why there are people that praise people like Octavia Butler who's a science fiction writer that's writing about these radically different worlds.

94 Because of that brave and different can be really scary to let your brain even go there. This place
95 does that in a way that's really beautiful, and it has challenged me to do that in my personal life
96 and take those skills from here to other places.

97 I was raised with this but not in explicit terms and I think very differently. I came from a
98 very conservative catholic family, but still rooted in the values of justice, everyone is equal, hear
99 people out, and respecting people you don't understand where people are coming from. That's a
100 really beautiful thing about this place, it's really human-focused as opposed to production-
101 focused. Even though there are things to be done, it's very relational. I've tried to focus on
102 weaving into my relationships, but, quite frankly, it's a ton of unlearning from every other job
103 I've ever done. We're slowly unlearning and relearning everything. The society I've been raised
104 in honestly prioritizes money and security over doing things that are actually beneficial and
105 meaningful.

106 We try to create safe spaces, in brave safe spaces for everyone where the dignity of each
107 person is respected. That means a ton of different things. As someone who identifies as part of
108 the queer community that is actually fairly new as someone working in this space. I can really
109 only speak to my experience on that end, but it's a pretty constant reassessment of our own biases
110 and our own everything. You have to come pretty ready for feedback, ready for openness, and
111 ready to mess up, at least in my personal experience. And the same way we are with our systems
112 we build here; we have to have that openness to failure 'cause without that we'll never learn or
113 succeed.

114 This place really does like have all of the best intentions about respecting the dignity of
115 each human. However, at the end of the day, it's still a system run by humans that have biases
116 and we have our things we're working through, right? And so, there's still a ton of learning.

117 There are people that come from all different places that work here, both physically, and
118 geography-wise we have folks from all over and then super different backgrounds. Even folks
119 that are all from the same area have a different history, life experiences, and current identities
120 that they carry with them.

121 I talked earlier we're still a little timid and building trust, but over time more and more
122 has been shared. And so, we're trying to create a safe space that means something really different
123 to each person. I've experienced where some people believe that, for example, the queerness of
124 my identity are still on different levels. How do I explain that? And this isn't meant to be a
125 negative comment, but just an observation, a person's identity isn't always integrated into what it
126 means to be a safe space in everyone's definition of a safe space. Whereas to me, that's an
127 incredibly huge component of that. And so, there's this mutual learning of like, "Well, to me, I'm
128 not comfortable calling this a safe space, if that's not incorporated into the meaning of that."

129 Whereas for other people, there's another value put on things that are like, "Well, this is
130 what's really important for me." 'Cause there are experiences that other folks that work here that
131 they've had that I've had nowhere near that experience. So, I'm sure there are things that I've
132 done in the past that are like, "Well, no, you're not really meeting my definition of what that
133 means to respect my humanity." But having this pretty open-door feedback for really open,
134 honest, and loving communication around the issue of identity and intersectionality is huge.

135 Exactly, good old Crenshaw on intersectionality, we got to give a shout-out to. When
136 you're asking people to come with vulnerability, you're gonna have huge spaces also then of
137 asking, "Okay, now, how the heck do we navigate all of these different identities interacting in
138 this space?"

139 I'm really passionate about the overall goal here combating climate change but doing this
140 in a way that approaches it like a challenge we can rise to. Not like a doom and gloom scenario
141 but this really hopeful optimistic view of this approach. Realizing like, "Wow, this is one of our
142 greatest opportunities." This isn't a call for eco-grief. We have eco-grief and everything, which is
143 all valid, but how do we overcome that? And turn this narrative of we're all doomed into – "Oh,
144 look at this, we're given this pretty neat opportunity... Let's do it, we're given this chance."

145 And honestly, I am probably not the person to speak fully on this but I have friends who
146 have experienced really deep eco-grief. But it's just like an outpouring of knowledge about the
147 state of our environment and the state of our world when it comes to climate change, and climate
148 catastrophe. With all the news and things that you can read out there today, it can feel really
149 overwhelming and create a true feeling of grief within us.

150 Exactly, you can feel this depressive, anxiety-filled grief, like the way we talk about grief
151 in terms of emotion, which is deeper than sadness and different than depression. You're just
152 grieving the world as you knew it; you're grieving what your reality is; you're grieving what you
153 pictured your future to look like. There's huge grief going on and there's this other idea within
154 grief. Brené Brown talks about it. It's called subliminal grief or something? She doesn't mention
155 it in terms of eco-grief, but I was just listening to one of her books. She's talking about grief that
156 isn't on the surface and one that people don't recognize as grief. Like the grieving of an unborn
157 child, the grieving of just things that aren't so public, right? People don't even understand that
158 you are grieving what could have been. And that this kind of grief goes under that idea too, with
159 what this eco-grief is like. I have friends that get totally shut down by it.

160 And that makes total sense, grieving what you thought the future would be like, grieving
161 even choices of our generation of like, "Should I have kids? Is that ethically correct of me?"

162 These are things about grieving that occur without the thought that you are grieving. There's so
163 much grief around climate and the environment, it can feel really overwhelming. But something
164 that I feel pretty passionate about is, how do we turn this narrative? It is our reality, so let's do
165 something but not in an insensitive way to people that are feeling that way. That emotion is
166 incredibly valid. I, myself, have felt that before, but how do we spin this story? How do we spin
167 this narrative that's become so doom and gloom; us versus them; and corporate versus individual
168 responsibility to we're all in this together?

169 And that's when this idea of the community gets tied in if we can reroute it back to a
170 resilient community base that's pretty badass. Excuse my language, but that's pretty bad ass --
171 like that's a pretty radical and cool transition, right? Sometimes we can take off some of that eco-
172 grief, because you're like, "No, we're in this together. I'm not alone figuring this out, I have a
173 community, right?"

174 But, how do you do that? That is something I'm passionate about but am still struggling
175 to always find an outlet for even myself. So, I do think I'm fortunate to live here in Harrisonburg,
176 where there's oddly a very huge cohort of like-minded folks both around my age, a bit older, and
177 a bit younger --- and that's really neat. It is something that draws me to here, obviously, but then
178 also into this space.

179 I remember when I first started, we were planting trees so it must have been like last
180 April or early May, and we were planting trees along the bank. And I was still new, Tom and I
181 hadn't really spent that much time one on one with each other yet. I remember he asked me like,
182 "What's your long-term goal? What do you envision?"

183 And I was like, "You know what would be pretty cool. My dream would be to have some
184 like queer farm coalition or because I've seen a rise in the area of queer farmers." And I've seen

185 that just integrates, for me at least, what queerness means to me too. Number one, it's just a part
186 of who I am, but it also diverges a bit from a structure. I don't have to fit into every patriarchal
187 structure, I don't have to fit into every relationship structure that comes under a power and
188 control dynamic, right? I'm not forced into those systems. And I feel like farming can do the
189 same thing, transforming the way the systems work. You're also changing and slowly liberating
190 yourself from the capitalist mindset, depending on how you farm. But I'm really privileged to be
191 able to think that way because when you are farming because most people who farm that's their
192 income.

193 A challenge specific to New Community Project would be possible employment.
194 Presently, none of us, except Tom, are employees of New Community Project. The rest of us,
195 technically, are independent contractors to the organization. So, I don't really get to participate in
196 what the vision of the overall nonprofit is but only the initiatives.

197 But I can think about this space at Jubilee Climate Farm and how that plays into a vision.
198 Here there's still a ton of growth to do. We're only a little bit over a year in so hopefully we have
199 a working composting toilet in the next ten years.

200 But in my ideal world, we'd have all of these systems we're working on, like silvopasture,
201 fully integrated. We'd have our sheep running through the field, we'd have community gardens
202 being a vibrant community space as well, not just gardening, but a place people just like to spend
203 their time. We'd have music, we'd have each other. This would be a place where people even
204 outside of this sphere, would just like to come and pass time, and spend time together. I would
205 love this to be a space where people feel like they can host events or create events or create
206 spaces. Because we all have our own skill sets and we're stronger when we share them, and,
207 yeah, leaning into creating loving and caring relationships with each other. And over this year, it

208 already feels more and more like family. Each day, me and even my coworkers here, feel more
209 like two moms, and it's pretty awesome. So, I'm excited to see this because relationships and
210 trust take time but to think about how that continues to me is one of the most exciting bits and
211 the foundation for our work.

212 No, I totally love thinking about a preferred imaginary as far as any community building.
213 It just takes time. Relationships take time, but creating a space in which that time can occur and
214 pass positively is so critical to creating any space like that. And also, just recognizing, we're
215 gonna mess up. Harrisonburg just started the Friendly City Safe Space, which is like a place for
216 LGBTQIA+ folks and like anyone who are allies to come and just spend time. And that's
217 something they talk about, I just had my first volunteer shift there yesterday. But they have a
218 whole volunteer training and it's like, "You're gonna mess up in this space. There are going to be
219 microaggressions. There are going to be things that I hope don't scare you from this space.
220 Envision that as a place to learn. And envision that as like room for growth."

221 That's the only way we can do this as a community, as a culture, and as a society, right?
222 Which is really exciting. I would love that attitude to be carried into most spaces, particularly as
223 I feel like trauma relates to this space in regard to relocation trauma, migration trauma, or
224 whatever in the broader spaces.

225 This makes me, hopefully, very optimistic about the future in terms of climate justice and
226 rising to the challenge that climate change provides us. When I think of this space, a little
227 graphic comes to mind of us eating under the mulberry tree on the picnic tables, with like music
228 notes up in the air, and people harvesting and picking right onto their plates. A picture of this
229 closed-loop system not just with our agriculture, but within agriculture and our relationships with
230 each other as well.

Appendix H:

Narrative of Charlotte

My name is Charlotte. I am a student at JMU in Harrisonburg. I joined a service fraternity called Alpha Phi Omega (APO) when I was a sophomore. And we have weekly service projects at a variety of different locations, one being New Community Project's Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center. So, I got introduced to more gardening and community building through a service project first. And then, I learned about Jubilee Climate Farm from Caroline. She was also in the service fraternity and just told me about this place and the project.

And it was like, "Oh, you should have APO people come out here and serve here, 'cause we're always looking for new opportunities and new ways to support growing projects in Harrisonburg, especially relating to things that people are passionate about like the environment or community." From there, I started volunteering. Eventually, I began an independent study with Dr. Teel because of his class, Ecological Perspectives on Sustainability, where I learned about agroforestry techniques, including silvopasture. And then, I became a researcher of agroforestry and am now an intern working on the actual implementation.

The whole reason why I'm in Alpha Phi Omega and why I am a geography major, and working here, is because I really like experiential learning. I really want to learn about community building and food access, and see what it looks like in action.

I like to get involved in any community that I'm in and Harrisonburg is a really great place. It has so many diverse opportunities. Finding an intersection between environment and people is really important to me because I am also very interested in people's stories, learning about their lives, what motivates them, or what perceptions they have that guide their lives and beliefs. And so, having the opportunity to work with a group of people with different

backgrounds and motivations, along with being able to work in an outdoor setting, is definitely what attracted me here specifically to the Jubilee Climate Farm.

I know more about Vine & Fig, and I don't know a whole about New Community Project as an organization other than it's facilitating these types of opportunities. Jubilee Climate Farm is definitely a place that focuses on long-term solutions and learning about the implementation of them in the context. We're taking agroforestry and putting it into the context of the Shenandoah Valley and bringing solutions locally and making them accessible to people through offering community gardens, or just creating learning opportunities for local people. A goal of the silvopasture research is to become a reference or longitudinal study to be able to say, "This has worked in this area. So, if you have this type of soil, or if you want this type of outcome for these trees, this is what you should do."

And those are key elements of the research. Jubilee's mission is also centered around mutual empowerment, food sovereignty, and access. And so, bridging the gap between a want or a need in the community, and in an area that can provide that in a way that's more holistic than conventional agriculture.

So, I started out as a volunteer organizing groups of APO students to come out here. And then, the independent study work and research is about tree species and learning about silvopasture as a whole system with trees, the livestock, and all the different components of it. I am taking that information and transferring it to an actual system through the planting of trees, building swales, and mapping the area. I was just now planting black locust trees along swale lines.

I was planting trees to kickstart everything, which can increase in soil health and add organic matter. We are planting black locust, which are considered a pioneer species. They're

47 really good at adapting to adverse soil conditions and can turn a place into a spot where other
48 plants can grow. A goal of the project is to mitigate invasive species and plant trees that can
49 benefit the ecosystem and the farm itself by producing woody biomass like from the black locust
50 that the same time provides fruit or fodder to feed the sheep.

51 I was comfortable almost immediately. The few times that I came out in April, they were
52 very welcoming in terms of creating a space where we could come and learn. And then, when I
53 expressed interest to Dr. Teel about working on the farm and doing more specific research on
54 silvopasture, they were very open and made sure immediately that I had the tools to do what I
55 could to contribute to the project.

56 I knew Tom a little bit from volunteering at Vine and Fig, and knew Caroline from Alpha
57 Phi Omega. I definitely looked up to them as people who are making a real change and deciding
58 this is something that they want to put their energy towards. They feel passionate about in terms
59 of serving a need and want in the community and more holistically in the world, given the
60 current climate crisis. Having friendly faces was very helpful and helped facilitate me learning
61 new people and about new things.

62 If you're working towards a common goal, then you already have a starting point for
63 building a relationship and friendship. Working on the community gardens or up on the swales
64 and just all working towards a common goal facilitates a mutually positive relationship.

65 One really big thing has been trying to learn some Spanish from Alicia and Indigo.
66 They've both been really kind and encouraging in terms of me asking, "What does this mean?
67 What does that mean?" I'm trying to learn more about their lives and they make me feel more at
68 home through being able to better understand the conversations and just get a better
69 understanding of the cultural context in which this farm operates.

I would say an aha moment is just realizing how dedicated this group of people is to getting all of this up and running. And also trying to look at it in a bigger context, someone said that a trial run for silvopasture is 25 years so I am contributing to a fraction of that. And just taking a step back to look at the bigger picture and the people's commitment to creating long-term solutions, it has definitely made my head hurt a little. Because what we're doing here and what we're working towards is really meaningful for all of these different projects to create long term success.

It's definitely taking a big step back because I was born in 1999. So that's hard to comprehend all of the change that could happen in what I lived in and then what I will see in the future.

As for rituals, during the morning meetings I've seen some in terms of just figuring out, "All right, what's going to work best for people today? What's gonna best serve the needs of the farm, but also meet people where they are?" But also writing things in Spanish and in English talking about the day and different things. Michael had brought tea or herbs from his garden and made tea. And he was telling me about this herb in East Africa that makes the most expensive tea.

And just being able to learn about people's cultural identities and other identities through sharing those with people in smaller and large contexts of language and food, which is really the bigger purpose of the farm. That's a smaller picture of the bigger purpose of the farm to demonstrate, "Oh, well, I'm getting shown this specific thing that relates to this person's culture and shows me a bit of them. And we are trying to create a food system that can contribute to people's lives in a way that benefits them and helps contribute to their identity."

One ritual that I would say is pretty important to the farm's processes and systems is all eating lunch together and trading off of different people making food with different influences to learn about people through that context: who they are, where they're from, what they find important, and what food they really enjoy. The ritual of food and context "All right, we're all going to sit down together and eat something that so and so made." It creates again a baseline connection of, "Oh, if we're all digging soil together, then we have something in common. If we're all eating and learning about this person's food and have this shared sense of community."

I'm trying to figure that out as I'm leaving my undergraduate education. As of recently, I'm very interested in cooking and food access and how that affects people's lives specifically in the context of post-incarceration. And so, figuring out how to eliminate the barriers to food access since not everybody that leaves the incarceration system is going to be at a place where they can prioritize food and health. And so, finding ways to make sure that that can be affordable and accessible in situations and context. Like Jubilee Climate Farm, where instead of focusing primarily on, "Oh, this is a problem." We need to focus on what are the solutions? How do we close the gaps? This is the biggest thing that I'm interested in.

That experiential learning process has influenced me in joining and contributing to organizations like this. I'm really grateful to have had such a really amazing experience in my undergraduate career. It's definitely shaped not only how I look at situations, but what activities I try to do and is how I ended up here with this organization. I've had really strong role models throughout my life that have helped shape who I want to become and I definitely want thank them for that.

Some key role models that I've found in college have been professors and also other service-learning partners. So, two specifically that I can think of right now. First is Dr. Kayla

115 Yurco. She is a professor in the Geographic Science department at JMU. Her classes focus a lot
116 on looking at the context, the scale, and the system that is creating this situation. I've taken her
117 *Environment, Nature and Society* class and *Environmental Governance* class. They're focusing a
118 lot on holistic solutions to problems that we're seeing. And so, that's really contributed to me
119 wanting to go out and see, "Okay, how are these systems working? What is happening and how
120 are these groups or these organizations finding solutions? I would consider Jubilee Climate Farm
121 as doing that and trying to find solutions.

122 As a part of Alpha Phi Omega's service learning, we've had the privilege to go to a farm
123 called Avalon Acres. The farm is run by Sully and Lorinda. They are really influential people in
124 my life and role models in terms of first even inspiring me to become a geography major. My
125 first goal in my life is to build community. When I came to college, it was a matter of finding
126 what avenue I could do that best in with the skillset and the interests that I have. At first, I
127 thought that was through speech language pathology because I used to be a nanny and I really
128 liked working with kids. After having the opportunity to serve at Avalon Acres, I realized that
129 that my passions and my interests lie more in an environmentally focused area. I was able to
130 experience a wide variety of tasks there: making biochar, tending to gardens, and Lorinda just
131 handing me something and saying, "Try this, it'll taste like this."

132 Well, the group of people here are so dedicated to this work and have invested so much.
133 Finding more people who are ready to continue that is something that everyone here will
134 definitely spend a lot of time and energy focusing on. Transitions are challenging in a lot of
135 organizations, but I think that it would be handled well here.

136 One thing that gives me a lot of hope is seeing the difference in the landscape and
137 knowing that this is one year. So, what could happen in 25? For example, that's the number I'd

138 used earlier. There's just a lot of potential here to do so much. And, if this plot of land is being
139 used for this specific purpose, how can we apply and expand to address issues related to
140 incarceration, food access, and all of those larger social things. Hopefully, this effort will spread
141 further in the Shenandoah Valley and throughout the world in terms of seeing the benefits of
142 agroforestry as a solution to climate change, food inequality, and to all of those different things.

143 The biggest thing that I would want for them is community engagement. Everyone has
144 done a really great job. A lot of people from JMU, Bridgewater, EMU, and different universities
145 come out here so having the recognition and ongoing community engagement. So, really having
146 community engagement through volunteering so more people can get excited about the many
147 projects: agroforestry, silvopasture, the stream bank restoration, water testing, community
148 gardening, carbon farming, and justice work. And so, seeing how people, who might not see a
149 direct relevance in their life or an agricultural setting they are not used to being in, can find such
150 love and passion for these things because of the community, the endless possibilities, and
151 projects that people can contribute to. And so, the people and the potential of this area give me
152 hope for a beloved community in the future.

Appendix I:

Narrative of David

Well, I guess you could say I (David) was around in the beginning. I was sort of the organizing principal, I suppose, of New Community Project. I'd been working for the Church of the Brethren (CoB) General Board, directing their Brethren witness office, which was the peace programs, environmental programs, and, also our Global Food Crisis fund, back up until 2003. Then things changed there – just as we were going to war with Iraq, they reduced that program quite a bit, and offered me a different kind of job, which I respectfully declined.

There was a lot of concern in the network of people that I knew that the church was making these reductions. And I was thinking, well, what am I going to do next? And I never had thought about starting an organization. But it sort of flowed right from that exodus from the Church of the Brethren National Office into starting New Community Project in the fall of 2003. There were a few key co-conspirators at that point. I mean, you certainly don't do something like this by yourself.

There were people around me who provided moral and financial support for us to hit the ground running. And I had plenty of contacts around the country from my work at the National Office of the church, and also around the world from my work.

As for our Learning Tours, I had been doing something similar with the CoB. We called them Faith Expeditions back then. But I would take groups of people for experiential learning immersion experiences. I had taken groups to South Sudan and Central America. And so, we were ready to go. And I had some experience previously with promotion and fundraising, and also brought along a network of people from around the country. And so, we just took off really, and never really looked back.

24 And then, just a few years later, Tom Benevento, who we both know and who I had
25 known through our common work for the Church of the Brethren and with whom I had a lot in
26 common, asked about moving from Goshen where he was at the time to Harrisonburg, wanting
27 to do something like he's doing now. And I thought, whoa, yes, that's great. Because at that point,
28 it was kind of me. And, you know, that's awkward, really, to have an organization and trying to
29 raise money and carry out programs where there's a person who sort of is at the vortex of
30 everything. And it's good to have someone else to share the responsibility. Plus, Tom would
31 really put facts on the ground.

32 I was more the idea person and the organizer, the fundraiser, stuff, and had international
33 connections. But Tom could put these things in place in space. So, not long after we got started,
34 Tom was on board and we've kind of kept going from there.

35 Well, the name New Community Project that just sort of came to me, honestly. Nothing
36 else seemed to match it in terms of what it carried for us in terms of the name. And that is really
37 what we're trying to do, is create opportunities for that new community, both in our own local
38 settings, as Tom is doing, and now Pete up in Vermont, with their associates at the Sustainable
39 Living Centers. So, in those communities, we're really working at bringing people together,
40 bringing people in who are on the outside, but also natural allies looking for alliances, soul mates
41 on this journey. And there's plenty of those in each of those communities.

42 We also wanted to bring people together from around the country – there are a lot of
43 people who feel like they aren't part of the thing that they really feel like they need to be a part
44 of.

45 And even in their local congregations, they may have a fire in their belly that's not
46 necessarily shared by other people in their congregation, school community, college, or whatever

47 it may be. And so, we sort of provide that sense of a kind of virtual community in that sense. I
48 have met probably most of these people in some setting, doing presentations, but then they get on
49 our mailing list and then they feel like maybe they're part of this broader something that fills a
50 niche in their life that wasn't being filled by something else.

51 We may not get together ever again, or they may go with us on a Learning Tour or
52 contribute to one of our campaigns – whatever it may be, there's that part of the community
53 building – sort of providing a home for people who are homeless in terms of their own values
54 and the things they care about.

55 And then more broadly, we have partners in eight countries where we are helping women
56 come together around economic projects. But these develop into more than that, actually. When
57 women get together and start to work together on an economic project in Myanmar, for instance,
58 they told us these projects have brought social healing to the women in this community. Because
59 before that you're comparing: “Is my rice row straighter than your rice row and maybe all kinds
60 of other dynamics any of us would have? And which, of course, we are missing in our own
61 society, those kinds of common interest enterprises, which is part of what our community centers
62 are doing in Vermont and Virginia, giving people a reason to come together and care about each
63 other and care about a common purpose. But that also works abroad in that same sort of way.

64 And the third thing I would say about community building, we're trying to reestablish our
65 sense of community with God's creation, with the environment around us. Because that's a
66 broken relationship and we all know it. So, we're trying to help people reestablish that
67 connection with the environment around us. You know there's a saying: familiarity breeds
68 contempt. Well, I think familiarity breeds compassion and connection and a sense of
69 commonality. And so, we're trying to familiarize on our learning tours, yes, but also at our

70 centers and just in my show and tell when I go to schools and show pictures of the Amazon or
71 the Arctic or the flooded river down the street from us, how do we reestablish that connection
72 with the environment around us? So that's part of the community that we see.

73 Since I was there in the beginning, perhaps in some ways New Community Project sort of
74 sprung from my needs. Because I had a real interest in carrying on this work that I had been
75 doing at that point for 15 years. And so, this was a wonderful outlet for me to be able to do that
76 and to feel that people also want to see that being carried forward. That was tremendously
77 affirming.

78 So, I guess there was a confluence of my needs and the organizational needs and interest
79 to carry forward this vision of this, of this new community with the environment, with our
80 neighbors, with our spirituality, and with ourselves. Because I guess my feeling from the
81 beginning was that we have to have this sense of integrity within ourselves that we are giving
82 space for the deepest needs we have and the deepest interests we have to play themselves out in
83 our lives.

84 And so, New Community Project has provided a tremendous platform for me, of course,
85 to be able to do that. And I'd like to think that it does that for other staff people too. And I think
86 they would probably tell you that it does. And also, for our network. I mean as I said earlier, I
87 would like to see their own feelings of what they need from life being in part fulfilled by this
88 organization in one way or another. Not everything that they need. We can't ...be all things to all
89 people and everything that every person needs. But for the things that we do, we would like for
90 New Community Project to be the vehicle for people to realize those things in their own lives.

91 Well, one of the main things we do to convey that we're a safe space is to be attentive to
92 other's needs and to their ideas. We don't come in feeling like we got it all figured out or that, "if

93 you don't do it, it's our way or the highway." I think that's one of the key things for people to feel
94 welcomed and safe in a place where they know they're being heard. And we try to do that, not
95 just literally hearing them what they have to say to us and about us and to us, to work with us,
96 but also, hearing them in a sense of being aware of their situation, their predicament, whether it's
97 a predicament in extremis of, ... I mean, we've had people from the streets come and live in our
98 centers, or just the predicament of being in this society now and not feeling heard there or feeling
99 welcomed there. They feel like they're out of place.

100 So, both very physically and practically, as well as theologically and, you know,
101 epistemologically -- I don't even know what that word means -- we are trying to let people know
102 that they've got a place. And I'd like to think our organization does that. That's one of our
103 strongest suits ...in my understanding.

104 Yeah. Well, we, of course, welcome people into our centers, our Sustainable Living
105 Centers in Virginia and Vermont where they can come to get their hands dirty, um, join with
106 others in common purpose, either some they know or some they don't know, people from other
107 cultures. I mean, we really want to be a space, a safe space for people to come and contribute to
108 building this better world, as well as they build their own self and their own self-esteem by being
109 a part of something like this. We want to give them that sense.

110 Another key place that we do this is the Learning Tours. I mean, we'll have eight to 20
111 people with us on a trip for a week to 10 to 14 days. And you know, you're together there with
112 people, most of whom you have never met, from different age ranges, from different parts of the
113 country, from other groups of all sorts, racial and ethnic and all kinds. And you're with them for
114 that amount of time. And, you realize you have more in common than you thought.

115 And even, and especially, I want to say between the ages. You know we don't have a lot
116 of meaningful interaction between old people and young people in our society these days. And
117 you get those two poles on the age spectrum together for a week in Denali National Park or in
118 Southern Africa, where we're going next month, and it just creates a fertile ground for
119 intergenerational cross-fertilization. And for a sense that, "golly, I didn't know this kind of
120 relationship could be had with those kinds of people." And so, the learning tours and the
121 Sustainable Living Centers, I would say those are probably the two main ways that we go about
122 bringing people from various places into a sense of community.

123 I also mentioned the groups we work with abroad in terms of our funding of women's
124 projects, girls' projects, as I said, at that point, these women, are organized through the work of
125 our partners, we don't do this ourselves. We work through grassroots groups. But when they
126 bring women together in these communities, I mean, they find a sense of community that they
127 had not had before often. So that's another place that it happens that we aren't directly involved
128 in making it happen. But we are helping facilitate it with grants and then our partners bring
129 women together. And again, they find that sense of community and support that they had not had
130 before.

131 All right, resilience, care, and sense of place... Well, I think being a part of an
132 organization like this makes you strong to the core. I mean, you feel like you're again doing
133 things that are purposeful, you're with people who care about you and who are on the same
134 journey with you.

135 I just got asked this last weekend: how do I keep hope alive? I mean, seeing what we see
136 and knowing what we do about our world, which we see from firsthand experience, as well as
137 from reading the paper and loads of books and things, how do you keep hope alive? And one of

138 the things I said to them, that person who was sitting in the room with me, I said, "People like
139 you and this group here, who are caring enough about these things to come and want to talk
140 about them today." And so that is one thing that gives me a tremendous sense of resilience and
141 ability to carry on in spite of the odds, you might say.

142 Another thing is our partners abroad who carry on ... You know we think we've got our
143 problems in the United States of America. And we certainly do. But it sort of pales when you
144 come to our friends in Myanmar right now with what's going on there, what is happening with
145 regularity in East Africa and places where we work there. You see how those people are able to
146 stand up and move ahead in spite of all these things.

147 Women from South Sudan, in Uganda in a refugee camp a couple of years ago, go
148 through the list of problems they have, and then say, "but we still give thanks to the Lord." I
149 mean, they still have that inner wellspring of resilience and hope to carry forward in spite of all
150 these things. And so that gives me a tremendous sense of hope. It helps me. It inspires me and
151 kind of keeps me going in that forward direction.

152 And the other thing is my own faith. There's the parable of the mustard seed from Jesus'
153 teachings. From the smallest of seeds comes the greatest of shrubs in which the birds of the air
154 make their nest. Our job is to sow the seeds. We can't be responsible for the outcomes, totally.
155 You hope for good outcomes, of course, and you want to have maybe some standards and
156 measurements to figure out if things are happening the way you want them to. But in the bigger
157 scheme of things, we can't control – thankfully – what may be more positive outcomes than we
158 could imagine.

159 So those things kind of helped me maintain resilience and optimism. Not optimism, but
160 hopefulness as this work carries on.

161 In the Church of the Brethren, we have some people in our denomination who have
162 launched off on their own to begin things in a way that eventually was blessed by others around
163 them, rather than seen as a, a renegade or a non-cooperator of some kind. You may know Dan
164 West, the founder of Heifer International. He was a Church of the Brethren person, who on his
165 own began that organization.

166 We had another person named M.R. Ziegler, who was instrumental in the founding of the
167 World Council of Churches and established a Peace Center up in Maryland kind of on his own.
168 So, there's some precedent of that in my faith history and our own beginnings as a church in
169 Germany, where we were non-cooperators really with a state religion. And so that's sort of
170 contrariness that's bred into my faith community.

171 Looking back on it, I wasn't necessarily thinking those things at that moment of
172 beginning New Community Project. But looking back on it, I can see that it's not too unusual to
173 the tradition I come from, that something like this would begin.

174 And then speaking of history, one of our best historians, Donald Durnbaugh, who's
175 written broadly about the Anabaptists, but also about the Church of the Brethren. I was having an
176 assessment meeting, a discernment meeting at his congregation up in Pennsylvania, right after I
177 ended my work at the Church of the Brethren and was thinking about starting New Community
178 Project. He had this long scope of history and understanding of some of these other movements
179 that had come out of our denomination, and on the spot handed me a check for \$500 and wished
180 us well. And we had some other people like that who gave significant financial gifts the first fall
181 that we were in operation – those were hope-giving gestures.

182 One good thing about not being part of a religious organization is the freedom to roam.
183 And as you may have seen from my own personal work, I spent a lot of time in schools and

184 colleges. College students are probably the number one audience these days, actually, in terms of
185 the actual number of people that I talk to and a number of presentations.

186 And I felt like these things would resonate with that group. And so, knowing that feeling
187 that this was something not only that they needed to hear, but maybe they wanted to hear and
188 would want to find a way to be involved... Although not necessarily be engaged financially; we
189 don't get a lot of donations from school kids or college kids, frankly. But the fact that they know
190 somebody cares about some of the same things that they deeply care about. And that also gives
191 you the courage to move ahead. If those kinds of constituent groups, I mean, if young people
192 don't think we're doing something right, we need to look at what we're doing. Generally, they do.
193 And so, it gives me the courage to carry on knowing that.

194 What inspires me about New Community Project? Lots! I mean the way we do things. As
195 I mentioned earlier, the willingness to listen and to defer to others and their ideas and to take our
196 lead from them, whether our local or international partners. I'm going to maybe talk about that a
197 little later, too. But the idea of being attentive to the world and not going into places like you've
198 got all the answers is very motivating and keeps me going.

199 I think of the practical things we are doing. We're keeping hundreds of girls in school this
200 year. We're helping dozens of women's groups around the world get going with economic
201 projects that they never had before. We're going to double our million-tree campaign over 10
202 years to a two-million-tree campaign because there's so much support coming in and our partners
203 are doing such good work. I guess both the way I see things being done and also the practical
204 outcomes of what we're doing is very inspiring, actually.

205 So yeah, I would say over the years, those things and the crowd we attract: people who
206 again are young people as well as old people, as well as people from ethnic communities around

207 the world. The fact that they think we're doing something right is tremendously encouraging. So,
208 all those things together are some of the main motivators for me, and encouragers for me to keep
209 me heading down this path.

210 And we continue to get strong support for our programs, financially, from the broad array
211 of people in our network, and we get money from foundations. Ben & Jerry's does not only give
212 us ice cream when we meet in Vermont, but they also donate through their foundation. And the
213 Waterwheel Foundation, which is part of the band Phish, gives us grants. So just the fact that
214 you're getting money from people who don't know you ... You know, we're not some big
215 organization.

216 We have to just prove it by what we're doing, not by any reputation we have. And so, the
217 fact that those kinds of people, institutionally, but also just individually and congregationally, are
218 willing to support what we're doing is tremendously encouraging.

219 At our site there in Harrisonburg, there's a tossed salad of people that we've got working
220 there from all over the world, from around the community old and young. I mean if we're not a
221 welcoming space for this wide array of individuals then we're not doing something right. But I
222 think we are because they come.

223 We find the same thing up in Vermont, where school kids come in, church people come
224 in, community people come in, wanting to participate in what we're doing, joining forces with
225 the local community up there. In the village of Starksboro, we're actively collaborating with
226 them on food justice gardens and a shelter for community meetings. Things that we've had in our
227 mind but they also then thought, "well, that sounds like a good idea."

228 And so, this way of letting all kinds of people feel like they've got a place with us if they
229 want it. And we'll have a place for them. I mean, it's not they've got to come on board our ship,
230 but what's the ship we can sail together? I think people feel that approach from us.

231 My colleague Tom was just in Mexico doing climate resilient food education and in
232 Jamaica helping them. And he met with some high up dude in the Jamaican government to talk
233 about making all their coffee production eco-friendly.

234 And so, he goes into those settings and one of the first things he does is talk to the local
235 people. What do you know from your history of good ways to do this? And so that sense they're
236 not only bringing themselves and what, but they're bringing their ideas, their culture, their values
237 to this process. I had someone asked me last weekend, "Well, why don't you just build some
238 wood-conserving stoves and give them to people in places like Nepal or other places where
239 women are dying from indoor cook smoke?" And I said, "Well, it takes time."

240 Tom, when he was in Guatemala, working as a volunteer, spent a couple of years
241 developing stoves in Guatemalan communities that were suitable to their needs and available to
242 them resource-wise. And you know, you just can't pop in, offer the goodies, and pop out. And so,
243 that's one of the ways we try to provide that space for collaboration for community building. But
244 that sort of deep respect for who people are and what they bring -- their values, their ethnicity,
245 their cultural patterns, whatever it may be.

246 ... Let me find a piece of paper, I'll be right back...laughs...But, you know, I teach some
247 classes at Elizabethtown College – online classes for adult learners on poverty and globalization,
248 things like that. So, one of the things I do with them is using this little schematic. I'm sure you
249 know the story about the person and the fish.

250 If you give a person a fish, you feed him for the day. If you teach him to fish, you feed
251 him for a lifetime, okay? And we've all heard this. So, I get that little schematic going. So, I draw
252 the person with the fish in their hand. That's the work of charity. And there are times when we
253 need to give people direct aid. You can think of the instances around our world, even as we
254 speak. So, there's always a time for charity.

255 Then you teach the person to fish. And there I've got a fishing pole and a fishing line.
256 That's the work of development, helping people get the skills they need, the training they need,
257 the education they need, whatever it maybe.

258 That's typically as far as this analogy goes ...laughs.... But then I say, well, what good is it
259 if they know how to fish, but don't have a place by the river or by the stream?

260 And so, I've got the person out there going by the stream, but because they don't have
261 access, because of race, because of gender, because of religion, because of a war, or whatever it
262 is, they can't practice the things that they know. So that's the work of justice. How do we level
263 the playing field, and give people access? So, I'm going to put the word justice here so that's the
264 third movement. We might say, charity, development, and justice.

265 And then what if they've got a place by the stream, but there's a gold mine upstream that's
266 putting mercury in the water? Or as we're hearing from on National Public Radio just yesterday,
267 there are so many nitrates in the water that you can't drink it. What good did it do to have a place
268 to fish by the stream? So then in terms of the eco-dimension of this story we've got the four
269 movements there. We've got charity, development, justice, and then a healthy environment so
270 that once you know how to fish, have a place to fish, the water is clean, or the environment is
271 stable, so, you can actually eat the fish. (Up in Pennsylvania, they've advised to only eat one fish

272 out of the Susquehanna River a month because all the stuff that's in a fish shouldn't be.) So those
273 four movements are there.

274 But then, a friend of mine said to me, "David, I think all that's fine. But I think probably
275 people really need is that sense of solidarity that we're there with them. We're not just outside
276 actors coming in and making things right." So along with all these things that I've been talking
277 about, I draw us in there on the bank with them.

278 We're standing on the bank with them in solidarity. So that's where I put the word
279 solidarity. And so those are sort of the five movements. There are probably more I haven't
280 thought of, but those are the five movements: charity, development, justice, environmental
281 sustainability, and then finally, solidarity, that we're all in this together. So, we want people to
282 feel that way here in the United States as well as abroad, and part of what we do with our own
283 lifestyles is try to reflect this.

284 I mean, we don't try to earn a lot of money from New Community Project. We try to live
285 thinking what if my neighbors from South Sudan came to visit? How would I feel?

286 So, we want them to feel like we are in solidarity... I mean, we'll never be at the same
287 level just because of all the amenities we have at our disposal. But what's the best we can do?
288 One of the reasons, I'm vegetarian is part environmental and health-related but also a lot of
289 people in the world don't eat much meat. They can't afford it. And so, we're just trying to show
290 that we're with you in this as best we can. And when we're there, we try to live low. In South
291 Sudan, we take vehicles. Even this is a luxury, to take a vehicle, but we take a vehicle from one
292 community to another, even over a day-long drive when a lot of these aid groups are flying there.
293 I want to make a quick story. So, we send some volunteers to South Sudan occasionally when
294 there's not a war going on. And these young adults spend the summer there.

295 And while there, they would walk from the place they spend the night to their project
296 sites each day. And one day, one of the young men in the community said to one of the young
297 women: “We didn't know Kwanzas (white people) had feet that moved.”

298 Because every other white person they've ever seen is in a vehicle, windows up, air
299 conditioning on, kicking up dust in their face as they [the Sudanese people] walk from point A to
300 point B.

301 And so, we try to model this as best we can. And when we're traveling, we try to take
302 public buses on our learning tours. I mean, I just got back from Nepal. We're taking public buses
303 wherever we can go, just to show that we're trying, although, again, we can never escape our
304 privilege. But where we can, while we can, how we can, we're trying to put ourselves as much as
305 we can with the people we're with.

306 In thinking about exemplary models, I go back to my seminary days and someone named
307 Dale Brown, an author, seminary professor at Bethany, the Church of the Brethren seminary, and
308 sort of combination of Anabaptism and radical pietism. His Anabaptism was revealed in
309 discipleship and peace protests, and pietism came out in his spirituality. And you know, it was
310 hard to be in a class with him when he didn't end up preaching at some point.

311 He just exemplifies that sort of passion and fire in the belly that I have tried to ... I mean,
312 this is not something you try to do. It comes as you experience other people doing it. And as you,
313 yourself, have the experiences that fill you and that you need to find expression for. And so that's
314 been part of my inspiration, people like him. And people like Tom and Pete, my coworkers.
315 People I met at the church last Sunday up in Pennsylvania, where they are doing these things in
316 their communities, in their own life in the best way they can.

317 And a letter I got from, ...laughs..., an aunt in Michigan about her nine-year-old nephew.
318 She had told him about our Girl on a Bike campaign in Malawi. He was so taken by that he
319 emptied his piggybank ... to buy a bike and a scholarship for a girl in Malawi who he likely will
320 never meet on the other side of the world. Those kinds of stories are very inspirational.

321 So, it goes back in my own case to my own parents. We can all talk about our parents and
322 the role they had in our lives and also other serious Christian people. With my mother, I can
323 remember she was losing her vision in the fall of 2001 to macular degeneration. She also had
324 cancer. She even said at one point, the macular degeneration was worse than cancer because she
325 couldn't see her grandkids.

326 She couldn't make her way around the house. Anyway, that was the same fall that we
327 were beginning ... That was after September 11, we began to bomb Afghanistan. My brother was
328 sitting with her here in the hospice bed sometime in probably October or November. She died
329 December 4, 2001, but sometime before that, the news reported collateral damage by a US
330 bomb, a family's home was bombed by mistake ... killing the mom, the dad, the grandpa, and the
331 kid. And my brother heard something and it was my mom sobbing.

332 “That was somebody's grandpa, that was somebody's mother, that was somebody's child.”
333 In her own last days, she still had empathy for somebody else beyond herself. And when I
334 preached here at my home church in Blue Ridge, Virginia and I would tell one of the stories of
335 some kind, I could always count on her being the one crying ...laughs.... And, that sort of
336 association with the people around you and around the world came to me, partly through my
337 parents, my mom in particular and then through people I've met along the way.

338 Well, how do we create space that gives people that opportunity? For instance, in
339 Starksboro, Vermont, and like every State in the Union, they've got the varying poles of politics

340 and sociology and all those things going on in their communities. And rampant poverty, one out
341 of three people is food insecure in these rural communities. So, they have been doing community
342 suppers, where there wasn't an agenda, there wasn't a speaker, and there wasn't me showing my
343 pictures. It was people coming together, bringing a potluck meal, and just sharing around, sitting,
344 and talking to each other. And so just trying to provide the space for these things to happen. We
345 do that, of course, at our site in Virginia in various ways. We try to do this with everything that
346 we do.

347 When I'm out leading a workshop somewhere, I'm trying to invite people to sit around the
348 idea of a better world and what's keeping us from getting there. And let's talk about that. Let's
349 don't put the focus on me or you or our differences or whatever. But here's the challenge we face.
350 What does each of us bring to it? What can we together do about it? So, trying to create those
351 spaces where people feel safe to express their ideas.

352 And again, on the learning tours, it's an all-comers kind of thing. So, you're getting
353 people who may not see things exactly the same way, but they know they've got to deal with
354 each other for 10 days. And I found people can be on their best behavior for about 10 days. And
355 so that's not a bad kind of cutoff point for our trips. And in Alaska, we're all pitching in on the
356 food prep and clean-up. Then hiking all day. And so, we're doing things together day by day.
357 And that gives you the platform from which to express your ideas, even if they're a little
358 different. So, we're trying to create those safe places like that for this kind of community
359 formation. And as I said, as a residual effect, that also happens in our projects with women
360 around the world.

361 Another little story in terms of bringing people together that maybe had been a bit
362 dissociated. Women in Myanmar told us that once they got their projects going, it made their

363 family life sweeter. I thought, what do you mean by that? They said, "Well, now, not all the
364 pressure is not on the husband to make all the money. I'm making money for the family so he can
365 take a little more time from work and be with the family."

366 So even, economic security provides that level of community within families and within
367 the broader community. People can realize things they didn't know before because they were just
368 having trouble making the ends meet. So anywhere we can help make that happen, which we do
369 with our food programs and both of our Sustainable Living Centers, giving people that little
370 cushion, one less thing to worry about that week and bringing a little peace to the family, and
371 maybe to the community, frankly, 'because hungry people are probably not nice people. I
372 wouldn't be.

373 Not to mention just the bigger justice issues that you can feel if you're not getting
374 something basic like food. So those are some of the ways we do that.

375 Well, we find a lot of support from groups and institutions around us. I mentioned up in
376 Starksboro about the town council, they want to work with us on this stuff. And we're doing a lot
377 of community building there and they see that as in their interest as well. I feel like, in general,
378 the idea that New Community Project is about offering a sense of community to our broader
379 network to make people want to give us their money, as well as their moral support.

380 Because they feel like we're doing something that needs to be done. And so, we get
381 regular support from lots of people in ways that I never really imagined would happen. Because
382 they feel like we're onto something that's important, which is community-building with nature;
383 with each other between disparate communities and within ourselves for a sense of integrity and
384 wholeness within ourselves. People see that and they want to support it.

385 So, one of the things that I think is most indicative of who we are, and how we try to
386 operate in this world, is the way that we try to listen to the needs of our neighbors. I mean, we
387 have certain things we want to accomplish: girls' education, women's empowerment, and
388 reforestation. But often, our neighbors' needs kind of go beyond either the available resources
389 we have or maybe the narrow framework of what we got in mind that we are capable of doing or
390 have as our focus.

391 On our January 2022 Learning Tour to Nepal, we visited a shelter for survivors of
392 trafficking. We had actually bought the land for the shelter after the 2015 earthquake. One of the
393 things we did at that point, when the earthquake happened in Nepal, which killed thousands of
394 people and left communities in shambles, we realized that once the earthquake is finished and all
395 the actors run off to other parts of the world with big needs that six to eight months later, there
396 might be needs in Nepal that had gotten kind of pushed to the background and let go.

397 So, we had our campaign the next fall after the earthquake. The campaign raised \$27,000,
398 and \$15,000 of that went to buy the land. This is a couple of years after that. The money went to
399 buy land to build this shelter. And now the shelter has been built, you see it there. In the total
400 shelter, there are 15 girls, aged 5 to 15. And so, they are looking over the rail. I can't show you
401 their faces because of privacy and security reasons but these are some of the girls at the shelter.

402 And so, we bought the land about 8 months ago. The local government built the building.
403 This is all good, but they're lacking a wall. And these girls are taking these traffickers to court
404 and the traffickers are upset about that. Plus, they would like to re-abduct these girls if they could
405 get their hands on them. So, what they needed was a wall around the shelter. I said, we were
406 there in January, we don't have money for walls around shelters. I said, "What's it cost?" They
407 said, "\$25,000 to \$30,000." I said, "Let me see what we can do."

408 So, I came home from that trip. I thought who doesn't want to see these girls be safe. And
409 so, we started a campaign called 'Keep Them Safe' with a goal of \$25,000, which then got raised
410 to \$30,700 when the firm estimate came in. Eventually, we exceeded the goal by \$8,000 – so will
411 also be able to build protective fences around hostels we recently built for girls in Malawi.

412 We also, about six years ago, our friends in South Sudan said, "We need a girl boarding
413 school." I said, "We don't really build schools, we do scholarships, sanitary products, shoes,
414 whatever, those kinds of things." They said, "We don't know who else to ask. And we need to get
415 these girls into school by themselves."

416 So, we raised \$35,000 one fall through a special campaign to raise the money for this
417 school. Now, it's home to over 600 girls, and they're looking to expand. So again, if you listen to
418 your neighbors and you believe that big trees can come from mustard seeds, then you follow
419 ahead with these ideas. We were there visiting the school in May of '19. While we were there, we
420 learned that 400 of the girls didn't have mosquito nets and it's a boarding school, so they sleep
421 there at night.

422 And so, six to eight of them were going to the hospital every week with malaria. Well, I
423 didn't even know that before we got there. And so, I thought we don't really have money for
424 mosquito nets, but I did a Facebook campaign. We raised at a cost of \$6 a net, 400 girls, \$2,400.
425 We raised \$2,500 in a couple of days.

426 We also want our relationship to be strong enough with our partners that they can put
427 questions to us, and it takes time to develop trust for that – to be more than the rich outsiders.
428 You don't want to step on anybody's toes if you're the benefactor or the beneficiary of that rich
429 largess. But starting two trips ago, a women's group leader in Myanmar named Mar Mar Win
430 when we were sitting around, talking after dinner, said, "Can I ask you a question?" I said,

431 "Sure." She said, "Can you tell me why are some people in the world so rich and the rest of us so
432 poor?"

433 Fortunately, I just read Jared Diamond's book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, who's an
434 anthropologist shared where a native person in Papua New Guinea had asked him the same
435 question: why did you invade us and we didn't invade you? So, I could at least tell her, it's not
436 because of your smarts or lack thereof, not your religion, not your work ethic. It's basically the
437 lack of the geographic draw, along with some history of colonialism in your area.

438 Then this last trip, in May of 2019, we were there. This is in the Delta of Myanmar.
439 Again, sea level rise is a clear and present danger to the rice paddies and coastal ecosystem in
440 general, not to mention the cyclones like Nargis a couple of years ago. So, in May of 2019, her
441 question as we were sitting around talking was, "How do we stop the waters from rising?"

442 So, I think giving people permission to speak their minds and to provide their ideas, their
443 concerns, whatever, is one of the hallmarks of our approach. As well as learning from nature: the
444 way nature works, and what nature is telling/warning us about.

445 Up in Denali, the ranger told us caribou graze lichen off the ground there, off the tundra.
446 They also eat the lichen in the wintertime but use the front part of their antler to get down
447 through the snow. Well, the ranger told us, now it's not staying below freezing all winter long in
448 Denali National Park. And so, when you get a freeze-thaw cycle going on, it creates a crust on
449 the snow, which makes it hard for the caribou to get down through the snow with their antlers to
450 get the food that they need.

451 Again, listening to nature to learn what we are doing to affect it dramatically, which we
452 typically have no clue about, and take our cues from creatures like the caribou.

453 So we are just trying to be responsive to what the felt needs are of our partners and trying
454 to respond responsibly. Since COVID hit, we've done \$70,000 in COVID relief in the last two
455 years. And we're not an emergency relief organization. But one of the first requests started
456 coming in like March of 2020, especially for food relief. In this situation, schools were closed in
457 South Sudan. So, all the other girls at another boarding school, not one we built, but one we give
458 scholarships to were going home from the boarding schools because the schools were closed.
459 While these girls couldn't go home, because one of the reasons they came to the school in the
460 first place was to avoid early marriage. So, if they went home, they'd be entered into forced
461 marriages and never make it back to school. So, they're stuck on campus, running out of stuff.
462 Again, through a campaign, raised \$2,000 bucks or something for soap, for Colgate, and other
463 things that they really need.

464 So again, trying to be responsive to the moment. In Congo, not far away, women were
465 being assaulted by men as they go on long walks to gather wood. So, our partner had an idea,
466 what if we plant trees near the villages? In other words, bring the forest to the women rather than
467 the women having to go to the forest. And so, we provided ... Oh, boy, this year, 8000 trees are
468 going to be planted near these communities.

469 Anyway, it's an ongoing project to bring the forest to the women. Again, trying to
470 respond to the needs that we hear articulated. T'wa women, pygmy women in Rwanda, were
471 driven from their forest homes and these communities decades ago because they were protecting
472 gorilla habitat, which I'm all for. But there's got to be some better way to do this, and big
473 agricultural interests. Anyway, the T'wa women end up in the squatter communities in Rwanda,
474 outside the big cities, where they don't have land, and they didn't have a regular income.

475 So, two falls ago, our partner said what these women really need is some land of their
476 own to grow their own food for food security and money to sell food like in times of COVID
477 when things are going awry. So, we raised \$7,500 bucks to buy seven-and-a-half acres. Those
478 are the T'wa women. These are the potato fields. I've seen T'wa women dance. They are dancing
479 in the potato fields. The only question is: are they doing the mashed potato?

480 And then there is Malawi. We met this woman, Taona Makunje, up in Starksboro,
481 Vermont. She was on an exchange program with 350.org from Malawi. She visited our site and
482 she fell in love with our work. And again, this is not something we had planned, we had no plan
483 for Malawi. In fact, I had to look it up on a map to see what part of Africa we were even talking
484 about. And so, she said, "You must come. We need you to come to Malawi." We went there.

485 And one of the things we learned among many things while we were there, was these
486 young women in Malawi, high school girls, walking 14 miles each way, each day to high school.
487 So, I immediately got the idea while we were there for a program we now call A Girl and A
488 Bike. I'm thinking who doesn't want a girl in this situation to have a bicycle? And so, \$110
489 bucks, a girl gets a bicycle and a first-quarter scholarship and rolls to school. Stiveria Vincent
490 was missing a couple of days of school a week because of foot pain and leg sores and all this
491 stuff. No more.

492 And that's so important in a place like Malawi, where half the girls are married before
493 they're 18. And one of the ways of keeping girls out of that predicament is to keep these girls in
494 school. So again, something that emerged from a moment. And we found it as a separate fund.
495 We have our ongoing Give a Girl a Chance fund, which is the scholarships, the backpack, the
496 sanitary pads, all that stuff. But now we have a special fund called A Girl and A Bike.

497 And we're also planting trees there because climate change is wreaking havoc. They're
498 down to a meal a day with regularity because the monsoon rains are failing. So, we're planting
499 50,000 trees in Malawi. Again, this all came from, I want to say, a chance meeting in Vermont.
500 Now we're planting 50,000 trees. We've sent a couple of hundred bicycles. We're working at
501 climate-resilient food production, doing some other things in Malawi that we never would have
502 imagined.

503 And we built hostels for girls attending boarding schools 30 to 50 miles away from home
504 and high schools, but they couldn't afford to live on-site because of the fees. They were living in
505 ramshackle rental rooms. So, we actually raised \$25,000 the fall before last to build boarding
506 schools, kitchens, and restrooms for these girls at two separate schools because that seemed to be
507 what was needed. It was a big deal in the community.

508 Again, we didn't have a real vision for these. Tom calls me out of the blue, back in about
509 2006 or so, and said, "Here's what I'm thinking, what do you think?" I said, "Let's go with this."

510 And there's Pete up in Vermont, who had Tom as a camp counselor when Pete was a
511 ninth grader. Tom was a wired-rim-glass-wearing, big-haired, groovy college guy. Then about
512 six years ago, Pete's mom died. He was going through his stuff at her house, found his diary from
513 that week at camp, saw Tom's name, and said I wonder what happened to that guy. Pete looked
514 him up on the web, saw he was working with us, and said I want to do that.

515 So, he calls me up out of the blue one day and says, "Hey, you're not going to believe
516 this, but here's who I am, here's what I want to do." And now, six years later, wonderful things
517 are going on in Starksboro, Vermont.

518 And then we try to inspire people here in our own network. Here's a picture of a polar
519 bear on melting ice drawn by little girl at a church session I was leading a couple of summers

520 ago. She was six years old at that point. I said to the assembled children's group, "What are you
521 worried about that humans are doing to mess with the earth?"

522 And this little girl Danielle raised her hand and said, "Noble warming." I said, "Noble
523 warming. What worries you about noble warming?" She said, "Well, I'm worried the mother
524 polar bears won't be able to take care of their babies."

525 Then she drew me this picture a little later with the mother clearly with the eyelashes, the
526 mother polar bear standing on melting ice. And now she's eight, a couple of weeks ago, she held
527 a bake sale for polar bears. Ooh, there's her little polar bear! She raised over \$100 to help us
528 plant trees to take a bite out of climate change to give those polar bears a little longer lease on
529 life. She even made a video ...laughs.... There she is narrating (laughing). And she even gave us
530 our website address at the end, which I don't usually think about doing.

531 So just trying to inspire and ourselves by being inspired by what we hear and see of our
532 neighbors, and then hoping to be a bit of inspiration to others for what they hear and see from us.

533 I saw that question on your list and I address where I see the organization in 5 to 10 years
534 with some trepidation.

535 Partly because of all the pictures I just showed you. I had no idea about Tom, had no idea
536 about Pete, had no idea about Malawi, and had no idea about women's projects in Myanmar. I
537 mean, we actually just talked about this at our board meeting last weekend. And we have an
538 envisioning session set up for next fall. We're going to have a retreat up in Vermont where Pete
539 is. And we'll be at his place there having our retreat.

540 And I'm hoping that will be an opportunity to outline the core features, or new features,
541 of New Community Project. Who are we at the core? Who are we, essentially? And then, what
542 are ways that we might see that playing out as we move into this, in many ways, quite uncertain

543 future -- not just for ourselves, but also for our world. Where I think our staff, particularly, and
544 maybe some of our board members, are reluctant to think about strategic planning in the sense of
545 saying: this is what we're going to be doing or this is a clear direction that we need to be taking.

546 We've had more of an organic process throughout our history as an organization. And I
547 think we also feel like that's characteristic of New Community Project. So how do we honor that
548 organic process while still doing what we ought to do?

549 I don't know if the word strategy ought to fit into this. I think if we're listening to our
550 network if we're listening to our partners abroad if we're listening to nature around us and we're
551 listening to our own spirits, I feel like this will emerge for us over the next 5 to 10 years. And I
552 honestly don't know where it will take us. I think it'll be somewhere in the same stream. I feel
553 like what we're offering is important enough and connecting enough with enough people and
554 getting that affirmation from that, that it feels like it's bona fide.

555 That it's something worth doing but the nuances of the channels where that stream may
556 split a bit as it has in our own paths as an organization. I hesitate to guess. What I hope most is
557 that we'll be open to where life guides us, our partners guide us, nature guides us, and our own
558 spirits guide us as we move into the future.

559 I think deep within the human character, there is a longing for this. I just finished a book
560 called *The Dawn of Everything*. And one or two things that it debunks, too, you might say
561 creation myths. One myth that it debunks is the one that we know from the Bible where there
562 was a pristine state and we fall in from that and are forever now stanced in sin to some degree.
563 We can't ever really return to the garden. And the other one, which I was not as familiar with as
564 the creation story, is the Hobbesian theory and Thomas Hobbes' understanding of life and reality

565 from whenever that was a couple of centuries ago. Or as, he was basically saying humans have a
566 brutish nature and are looking out only for themselves.

567 And both of these sorts of understandings don't give the opportunity or the possibility of
568 returning to some higher, better state. We're almost trapped in our sinfulness or our badfullness,
569 and we can't ever work our way back. Now David Korten, in his book a couple of years ago,
570 which is titled *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. And these two authors
571 said we'd been on a several thousand-year detour that we were, at some point, more amenable to
572 each other, more amenable to the creation around us, and God was closer to us. In the meantime,
573 we've kicked God upstairs into heaven.

574 We put nature separate from us, we put ourselves each on pedestals. Rather than
575 ourselves in a circle, we're on pedestals with individuality and private property and all this other
576 stuff. And so, all these authors give me hope that somewhere deep within us is that resonance
577 with each other. I mean, one of the clear indicators, one of the books that I read talked about
578 finding skeletal remains of people who were either wounded from an accident or are physically
579 not full and complete like we normally think of people being full and complete.

580 And yet, they were cared for, even at some expense to the hunter and gatherer community
581 with which they belonged eons ago. And if they went to that much trouble, when your life
582 depends on your mobility, really, because sabretooths and everything else that these authors are
583 saying must be hardwired into who we are, and they also use other illustrations.

584 So that, I guess is one thing that gives me some sense of that beloved community. And I
585 feel like if we think about our own faith tradition, think about Jesus and how he didn't look at
586 who people really were, he looked at who they really could become. I just preached this last
587 weekend on Zacchaeus, the little guy up in the tree who was extorting people for his income,

588 with his tax collection business. He comes down from the tree, Jesus shows him hospitality, and
589 he has a change of heart to who maybe he really could be, even if it wasn't who he had been. So
590 that sense that Jesus sees the potential in us.

591 And I have to think that way about God as well. If I make it to heaven, I may just want to
592 ask God: what were you thinking putting us in charge down here? But the better side of me says,
593 maybe God knows something about us that we don't.

594 That we have the ability to rise to the occasion and nowhere has that been more poignant
595 and pointed than it is right now in human history.

596 Well, and just to say that it's also an affirmation of us that someone like you is interested
597 in our work. I mean, you're a thoughtful, well-traveled, well-experienced person. And if you feel
598 like things about us are worth talking about, that's also a great affirmation. So, I appreciate that.

Appendix J:

Narrative of Indigo

Tomas: I can tell you something. I was just cutting the wood at my house and she came up to me and said: "Can I help you?" and I said, "Okay and she started cutting the wood with me, remembering her story that since she was very little and she used to take the wood out and there she started talking more about the love she has for working with the land, and the cultures."...

Right yes right....

Yes, it is something that I liked since I was a child. I am from the state of Chiapas, Mexico. It's near Guatemala and I don't know where that is exactly, but yes, the south... yes, the south. There in my town they always plant corn with beans that is more typical; here it is more different. It is the custom of us as Mexicans that we are. Then the land is different here, and it is planted differently then. When I was a child I felt that I liked the land, I like planting, the gardens. And now that I am grown up and when I came here, I discovered, and I am still discovering, that it is something very wonderful because I have always liked it. And then, I had the opportunity to work on this project and I feel happy working here.

Because I like the land, cooking and working, that is something that encouraged me, because it is something that I want to learn more. I like to learn. There are many things that I did not know. Every day I am learning, I am learning more about plants, trees, and many things. And it also comes because I met Mr. Tomás. It is something that I like to work with him too, I like to work together, I like to help people too. So, it is something that brought me here. And I am excited to work and thankful to God that this job was given to me. So, what is it that brought me: to learn more, to be encouraged, to always be positive and not negative, and to be able to help others. That is what brought me here and I feel comfortable. I feel happy to work here because I like working outside in the field more than working inside a factory. In a factory, I don't know....

25 I don't feel good, I would feel very closed in that place. It's something that in my way of
26 thinking, of feeling the nature, the wind, and that makes me feel good.

27 And well here, Mr. Tomás is a very good person (Tomás interferences, he says joking: if I
28 am paying him to say that ji ji ji ji). He is in charge of the project, and I feel very happy with
29 him, because he is a very kind person, and I have known him for four years, and before we were
30 neighbors. He was a good neighbor, he always came and asked me: "Do you need something?"
31 And I am very happy. I am very grateful to him and his family and his children. His children
32 have also come here to help, and they are very respectful too, and I love them as my family.

33 I lived in the other house because I moved. I was Tomás' neighbor. I had no job. I had the
34 situation of a violent man. So, I was married to him but he was very violent. Then I arrived with
35 Alicia's assistance and I found Tomás. Then I had no money so it is something difficult that
36 happened in life. Then with Tomás' help, they lent me a house to live near where he lives. They
37 lent it to me because I really had no job or I had no way to pay rent. Because I had a violent
38 situation I had to leave. I had a lot of help then from him and other people, then I started to go
39 voluntarily to Vine and Fig. I spent a little time helping as a volunteer, then and there, it is like I
40 also started to heal. I started to work the land, I started to plant, and it was there that I started to
41 feel good. In the first months, I started to feel good as a volunteer. I liked it and then we started.
42 He (Tomás) told me that he was going to pay me money to work there. So, I said yes, I accepted.
43 I was working there, but I only worked three days a week, right? I felt that I could not pay rent
44 with what I earned then at three days a week, then after a while, the work there ended. I did not
45 work because my situation was that I suffered violence. Then I started to go to court to sue the
46 man because I had a violent man. Then when he threw me out of the house. He put a restraining
47 order on me so that I could not go near him, and so that he would not come near me. That was

48 my situation. So, now after arranging all the paperwork, the papers as proof that I suffered
49 violence with him. So, I lived in that situation, and that was when I started going to court to get
50 the restraining order. I went and they told me that should I look for an immigration lawyer. Then
51 she told me that I had to work on my case to find out if I could have a work permit for domestic
52 violence. So, I also feel happy. It was also difficult... But I had to look for a lot of evidence to
53 prove that I had experienced domestic violence. But I did get all the evidence, it was hard. But
54 my lawyer started working and after a year I already had my approved work permit. So, thanks
55 to God and to Tomás and other people, I already have my work permit. But I have gone through
56 many things to get it.

57 Forgive me but I can't hold back these tears, but I can't talk about these things because I
58 start to feel it again. However, I think that in order for me to be well, I have to get this out. I have
59 to get this out so that I can be better, and that is why I feel that the earth has helped me to heal. I
60 feel proud of myself for what I am today compared to what I was in the past, and that has also
61 helped me in my situation.

62 I feel better about my situation. My situation is better because I want to go to visit my
63 mother in Mexico. My greatest desire is to visit my mother. I haven't visited her for 16 years, so
64 it is my greatest desire. And that is why I feel that my life has changed, in spite of my suffering
65 and everything that I went through, the abuse, the beatings. God is starting me over with
66 something wonderful, wonderful because I know that God is giving me permission to visit my
67 mother, the permission to go there in Mexico. My dad also was very addicted to drinking, he
68 drank a lot. So, my life was difficult there, too. When I was a child I was my dad used to beat my
69 mom and we were just kids. We could not do anything, so we felt like we could not defend our
70 mother; then when we grew up we each left for the same reason, so we would not see my mother

71 suffer anymore. Then we also suffered violence there. My father died at the age of 43, he is no
72 longer alive. Only my mother lives, but my mother has diabetes now. She is sick, that is why I
73 want to go to see her, because God still keeps her here; because I want to see her. Then we are 12
74 siblings, we are 12 altogether, 7 women and 5 men. But about 2 years ago one died, a brother a
75 little younger than me, because he drank a lot and used drugs too. And he did not live well with
76 his family also and he took his own life. He hanged himself so it was very sad for my family.
77 That is why I say that's what gives me more motivation to get ahead, seeing that I suffered and
78 then my brothers took their own lives. And then my other brothers, left for another place, and my
79 sisters there live near my mom so I would be the only one here. They are all over there.

80 And that's how the situation was, my whole life was difficult. But I don't know, only God
81 knows why he brought me to this place. That I am discovering what it is that he will want me for.
82 I feel good here. Thank you also for taking me into account, I believe that words count, and
83 opinions also count. As human beings, as children of God, we are all equal, there are not some
84 that are more, some that are less, and I don't know what else... Hehehehe...

85 Well, of Vine and Fig, I am now in charge of Vine and Fig, I can also talk about Alicia..
86 (turning to Tomás) Me and Alicia are in charge of the Vine and Fig community. So, we are in
87 charge there; and something that I feel proud of is having that place there. Also, when I began
88 there, I started working, so it is something that made me change. I felt a change because I feel
89 that I have a little more responsibility. apart from my two children that I have. Because I have
90 two children and am a single mother, I feel that it is one more responsibility apart from my
91 children. And I feel proud that here Mr. Tomás, he took me into account, he always takes me into
92 account, and that is what I feel here because that is who we are as human beings, we are worth a
93 lot and I feel proud to be here.

94 So, in front of the house where the cars go through is a part of the garden. Last year, there
95 were other people who coordinated there. There was another person in charge but now we are
96 here. Two months ago, she changed so two months ago things changed. Well, I was not
97 expecting the surprise that Mr. Tomás gave me. And when he asked me, “Do you want to be in
98 charge of Vine and Fig? Do you want to be in charge so you and Alicia will be in charge of the
99 coordination?” Well, I was so happy, because I did not expect that news and I am grateful to God
100 because it is God who has put me in Tomás’ hands and the people in my life. It is something that
101 I would not change. It is also something that has changed my life working the land, it has made
102 me be closer to people. Because before I didn't have that feeling of social interaction, I was
103 always sad and afraid. I had that fear that said no, no, no. I felt that fear and I would say no. It is
104 something that I locked myself up in. Then I discovered that I have changed a lot in my life. It
105 has helped me a lot. And it has helped me as therapy because before I was very angry with my
106 children, and now I feel that I have changed. And I am still changing and the earth helps me. I
107 have had problems because, with my marriage in the past, I suffered violence. Then I tried to
108 look for a person for therapy, normal therapy, like counseling but I felt that really did not help
109 me. So, I looked for other things. I feel that this has been helping me. I have not finished healing
110 yet, but this project with the earth is for me, my healing. Yes, I do not know what else... I just get
111 like this, sometimes I do not like to tell about my life because I get sentimental. And memories
112 come back, and sometimes I do not want to remember.

113 So, we started the project in March 2021, here at the Jubilee Climate Farm. The idea is to
114 plant. We started from scratch with the land, arranging the beds to plant the vegetables, and also
115 planting the trees because it is a community. Volunteers also come here, they help here. They are
116 volunteers from JMU, and from other schools. They also come from other places, from other

117 countries, and they also like this place and they feel happy here. And we also feel happy to see
118 them, they are very young men and women who are studying, but they also like the land, they
119 like to come here and they feel happy here. We are also happy that they come to help; that is a
120 great help for us because their help counts a lot. So, it is something that really helps. This place is
121 huge, so without their help, we would not be able to finish what we are doing: planting, fixing
122 the beds, and planting the trees.

123 Because we are living together, it is living and eating together also. And as I say, they
124 come from other places, and we feel good when there are more people. Then each person talks
125 about where they are from, then it is something that for us is good to know, and they also feel
126 happy to come here. Then it is something to be united. We are united, the food, the work, and we
127 learn as a community. I think that is something that we demonstrate, being like this. Then all of
128 us who have come here feel good, we feel appreciated, like family, that's how I would take it, as
129 a united family, and I feel happy.

130 For the food to be enough for everyone, it is communication and unity, and that is what
131 we call a community. That we are all united and express ourselves, talk, sometimes we have time
132 to tell our stories, sometimes there are guys who are serious, others who are smiling, so you can
133 understand that. Because they are young people, so I think we have gone through that too. Youth
134 is like that. These young people are learning more, they come here to learn, to discover what they
135 like, so that is what I think. We have to be in communication, and in union. As a family, we take
136 it, because sometimes in our homes, sometimes we do not feel like that, but sometimes this place
137 fills me. It fills me to come here because I feel like a family, we share, we drink, so it is
138 something nice, and the chickens too... Hehehehe, I like to take care of the chickens. Since I was

139 a child, chickens have fascinated me. So, I check the chickens, but I am fascinated to feed the
140 chickens, to give them their water, then we are fascinated.

141 So, we have 16 chickens. About a month ago, we brought the chickens and then the eggs.
142 we share, even the eggs we share, hehehe. But we are here to help and to serve the community
143 when we can. I also think that we cannot help all the time because we also have our families. But
144 it is part of doing it, and I can do it. But as I say, I have my children. My children understand
145 even if maybe they are small. Now, they might not really know, but when they grow up they will
146 discover what they like, and that is why it is a community. Well, and just as I appreciate the
147 volunteers and the community and the youth and all the people, I think that one day my children
148 will be like that too. So why? Because I am teaching them something good, something better,
149 what I like to do, and they respect my work decision to do what I like. They don't tell me that
150 you come home all dirty or you come all like that. No, they respect my work, and with time
151 maybe they will like that it comes from you. You bring it with you from birth, from the family, it
152 is hereditary, from the fact that you like the land. So, it is something that you pass on to your
153 children, to your family. I feel that my children will also like this, they will like to help a
154 community.... I think that because I am teaching them that helping others, spending time with
155 others, and sharing with others, and that is very important, but also to be able to heal and express
156 themselves. And well, I don't know if I'm saying it right but I'm trying to say what I have to say,
157 I hope.... Hehehehehe I got a little nervous.

158 Well, right now we are planting trees and trapping carbon. Capturing carbon is why we
159 are also planting trees to help the environment from everything we are doing to destroy the earth.
160 Climate change and global warming from carbon, that is something we would like to change too.
161 Because as the years go by, well, we are getting older. We want our children to live longer

162 because we are destroying the earth, it is something that we want to look out for the best.
163 Because if we do not look for a way to plant trees so that the earth is not contaminated and
164 warmed, then maybe our children are not going to make it, because we are killing the earth. So,
165 that is why we are planting trees to capture carbon. It is also something that I would like to
166 change and increase, because we have children and because I would like my children to be here
167 longer Maybe the young people are not going to have a future, because of the situation of
168 pollution, of the land, so that is also why we are capturing the carbon. We have made the
169 compost bins, we have three compost bins, which is also like an experiment, right? We are doing
170 an experiment because it is a community. I am considering everyone, those who have helped
171 here. So, this is an experiment we are doing to check how the compost bin can work as a
172 bioreactor to capture carbon.

173 And so, we have changed a lot, we are changing a lot. With everyone's help, it can be
174 done. With the help of people who donate money, it is a wonderful thing because they are also
175 taking us into account. So, with all of that, we are helping others who would like that to change
176 because of our children or for our children.

177 Hehehe, that is what I have learned about carbon, about plants... I did not know a lot
178 about all this carbon. Many things I did not know. I think that now I am learning a lot. And it is
179 true if we do not find a way, this world is going to end? Because there in Mexico, in my region
180 of Chiapas Mexico, there is a lot of shaking and quaking where the earth is moving. And there it
181 is almost never cold, it is too hot all the time. It is something that scares one because it was not
182 like that before. No, in the past years in Mexico, it was not like that. Now in these recent years, it
183 has changed a lot, because my family says that there has been a lot of shaking and quaking, and
184 it is not cold, it is very hot. I would like to change that and help where I can. That I would like to

185 see a change in my home region of Mexico like it is changing here at the Jubilee Climate Farm,
186 where the Jubilee Climate Farm is growing this place in many ways. Then we didn't talk about
187 that, we're going to lend land to people as a community garden... Can I talk a little bit about that?
188 (Tomás: yes of course) We are also working; we are making the beds and we will lend the land
189 to the people. We lend them the land so that the people who want to come to plant and harvest
190 their vegetables. There are people and families who are interested in that, then we are also
191 looking for people who are responsible, also, who give importance to the land. Because that is
192 what we like, just as the plants also need water, they need soil, they need to be prepared, put
193 compost down, and then to sow seeds! It is not just planting, everything has a process, to plant
194 vegetables, to prepare a garden, everything has a process. It is not just saying I am going to plant
195 vegetables there. It is not like that, it needs a lot of patience, a lot of patience to take care of it as
196 if it were a baby, a child. That is how I see it, it needs a lot of love too there are people who are
197 going to take over there to plant for a community also. One cannot say that it is only for me,
198 because we need to show that it is a community and they come from various places: Honduras,
199 Guatemala, East Africa, and Puerto Rico. Many people will come to plant, so the doors are open
200 to those who are interested with that heart, with that love to come and plant their vegetables, and
201 that is what we are seeing that is growing and is improving as a community. So here we are!
202 hehehe....

203 Well, thank you for also taking us into account, we need the voice to grow, and for the
204 young people to know. For the people, who sometimes have grandchildren, to know who are
205 afraid to discover themselves, to find out what they like. So, this is something wonderful to
206 discover, because sometimes that is why we do not heal. We need to discover, we need to try,
207 and we need many things for this to happen.... So, my goal is to continue working in this place.

208 And if one day this place is not going to be there, so with the pain in my heart I don't know what
209 is going to happen with my life. I don't know if that will hurt me. Yes, but there is also Vine and
210 Fig. Of course, this can also end, some unforeseen situations can happen. But I am who I am, I
211 come from the earth. Well, I say God opens the doors, he knows what you like, and God gives it
212 to you, although sometimes you don't expect it, that is something wonderful. As they say, God
213 gives you surprises, and thank you for taking us into account.

214 *Spanish Version of Indigo's Narrative*

215 Tomás: ...pero puedo decir algo. Yo estaba nada más cortando la madera en mi casa y
216 ella se acercó y dijo: "¿Puedo ayudarte?" y yo dije está bueno y ella empezó a cortar la madera
217 conmigo, recordando su historia que desde que ella era muy pequeña y ella solía sacar la madera
218 y ahí empezó hablar más el amor que tiene para trabajar con la tierra, y las culturas... Verdad
219 que si verdad.

220 Si, es algo que a mí me gustaba, desde que era niña. Yo soy del estado de Chiapas
221 México. Esta cerca de Guatemala y yo no sé dónde esta eso exactamente, pero si el sur... si el
222 sur. Allá en mi pueblo ellos siempre siembran el maíz, con frijoles eso es más típico; aquí es más
223 diferente. Es la costumbre de nosotros como mexicanos que somos. Entonces la tierra es
224 diferente aquí, y se siembra diferente entonces. Cuando yo era niña yo sentí que me gustaba la
225 tierra, me gusta plantar, los jardines. Y ahorita ya que estoy grande y cuando vine acá, descubrí,
226 y todavía estoy descubriendo, que es algo muy maravilloso porque siempre me ha gustado. Y
227 pues se dio la oportunidad de trabajar en este proyecto y me siento feliz trabajando aquí.

228 Porqué a mí me gusta la tierra, cocinar y trabajar eso es algo que me animó, porque es
229 algo que quiero aprender más. Me gusta aprender. Hay muchas cosas que yo no sabía. Cada día
230 qué pasa estoy aprendiendo, estoy aprendiendo más sobre las plantas los árboles, y muchas
231 cosas. Y viene también porque como conocí al señor Tomás. Es algo que me gusta trabajar con

232 él también, me gusta trabajar unidos, me gusta ayudar a las personas también. Entonces, es algo
233 que me trajo aquí. Y estoy emocionada de trabajar y agradecida a Dios que se me dió este
234 trabajo. Entonces qué es eso lo que me trajo: aprender más, estar animada, siempre ser positiva y
235 no negativa, y poder ayudar a los demás. Eso es lo que me trajo aquí y me siento cómoda. Me
236 siento feliz de trabajar aquí porque me gusta trabajar más afuera en el campo que trabajar dentro
237 de una fábrica. En una fábrica, no se... no me siento bien, me sentiría muy encerrada en ese
238 lugar. Es algo que, en mi forma de pensar, de sentir la naturaleza el viento, y eso me hace sentir
239 bien.

240 Y pues aquí, el señor Tomás es muy buena persona (Tomás interfiere dice bromeando: si
241 le estoy pagando para que diga eso ji ji ji). Él es el encargado del proyecto, y me siento que muy
242 feliz con él, porque es una persona muy amable, y yo ya tengo de conocerlo a él cuatro años, y
243 antes éramos vecinos. Éél era un buen vecino, siempre iba y me preguntaba: necesitas algo y yo
244 muy feliz yo le agradezco mucho a él y a su familia y a sus hijos, sus hijos también han venido
245 aquí ayudar, y ellos son muy respetuosos también, y los quiero como mi familia.

246 Yo vivía en la otra casa porque yo me cambié de lugar entonces. Yo era vecina de Tomás
247 yo no tenía trabajo. Yo tenía la situación de un hombre violento. Entonces, yo estaba casada con
248 él, pero él era muy violento. Entonces yo llegué con la asistencia de Irma y yo encontré a Tomás.
249 Entonces ahí yo no tenía dinero es algo difícil que pasé en la vida. Entonces con la ayudade
250 Tomás, me prestaron una casa para vivir cerca de donde él vive. Me lo prestaron porque yo
251 realmente no tenía trabajo o no tenía cómo pagar una renta. Porque tuve una situación de
252 violencia. me tuve que ir. En ese entonces tuve mucha ayuda de él y otras personas, entonces yo
253 empecé a ir voluntariamente a Vine and Fig. Estuve un poco de tiempo ayudando como
254 voluntaria, entonces ahí, es como que yo también empecé a sanar. Empecé a trabajar la tierra,

255 empecé a plantar, y fue que ahí empecé a sentirme bien. En los primeros meses me empecé a
256 sentir bien yendo como voluntaria. Me gustó y ya después empezamos. Él (Tomás) me dijo que
257 me iba a pagar un dinero por trabajar ahí. Entonces yo dije que sí, lo acepté. Fue que ahí estuve
258 trabajando, pero yo trabajaba solamente tres días a la semana, ¿Verdad?, yo sentía que no me
259 alcanzaba para pagar una renta con lo que yo ganaba en ese entonces con solo tres días a la
260 semana de trabajo, entonces después un tiempo se terminó el trabajo ahí. No trabajé ya que mi
261 situación desufrir violencia. Entonces empecé a ir a la corte, para demandar al hombre, porque
262 yo tenía un hombre violento. Entonces cuando él me botó de la casa. Me puso una orden de
263 restricción restricción, para que yo no me acercara a él, y para que no se acerque a mí. Así fue mi
264 situación. Entonces, ahorita después de arreglar todos los papeleos como prueba de qué yo sufría
265 violencia con él. Entonces, viví esa situación, y ahí fue pues cuando yo empecé a ir a la corte
266 hacer la orden de restricción. Yo iba y me dijeron que debería buscar una abogada de migración.
267 Después ella me dijo que tenía que trabajar mi caso para saber si yo podía tener un permiso de
268 trabajo por violencia doméstica. Entonces, también me siento feliz. Fue difícil también... Pero
269 tuve muchos, tuve que buscar muchas pruebas para poder comprobar que yo, si viví, violencia
270 doméstica. Pero si conseguí todas las pruebas, me costó. Pero ya mi abogada empezó a trabaja y
271 como al año yo ya había aprobado para mi permiso de trabajo. Entonces, gracias a Dios y a
272 Tomás y a otras personas, yo tengo ya mi permiso de trabajo. Pero he pasado muchas cosas para
273 llegar a tener eso. Perdóname, pero no puedo contener estas lágrimas, pero es que no puedo
274 hablar de cosas así de estas cosas porque empiezo a sentirla otra vez. Sin embargo, yo pienso que
275 para que yo esté bien, tengo que ir sacando esto. Tengo que ir sacando esto para poder estar
276 mejor yo, y por eso siento que la tierra me ayudado a sanar. Me siento orgullosa por mi misma

277 de lo que yo soy el día de hoy comparado con lo que yo era en el pasado, y pues eso también me
278 ayudado en mi situación.

279 Me siento mucho mejor con mi situación. Mi situación es mejor porque quiero ir a visitar
280 a mi mamá a México. Mi mayor deseo es visitar a mi mamá. tengo 16 años que yo no la visito a
281 ella, entonces es mi deseo grande. Y por eso me siento que mi vida ha cambiado, a pesar de mi
282 sufrimiento y de todo lo que yo pase el maltrato, golpes. Dios me está recomenzando con algo
283 maravilloso, maravilloso porque yo sé que Dios me da el permiso yo poder visitar a mi mamá, el
284 permiso para ir allá en México. Mi papá también tenía mucho vicio de tomar, tomaba mucho.
285 Entonces, allá también, mi vida fue difícil. Cuando yo era niña mi papá le golpeaba a mi mamá y
286 nosotros pues éramos solamente niños. No podíamos hacer nada, entonces nos sentíamos que no
287 podíamos defender a nuestra mamá; entonces cuando crecimos cada quien nos íbamos por lo
288 mismo, por no ver sufrir a mi mamá ya. Entonces también nosotros sufrimos violencia allá. Mi
289 papá se murió a los 43 años, él ya no vive. Sólo vive mi mamá, pero mi mamá ahorita tiene
290 diabetes. Ella está enferma por eso yo quiero ir a verla, Porque Dios todavía hace que ella esté
291 aquí; porque quiero verla. Entonces nosotros somos 12 hermanos, somos 12 todos juntos, 7
292 mujeres y 5 hombres. Pero hace como 2 años se murió uno, un hermano, un poco más chico que
293 yó, porque tomaba mucho y pues uso drogas también. Y ya no vivía bien con su familia tampoco
294 y se quitó la vida. Se ahorcó entonces fue muy triste para mi familia. Por eso es que yo digo Eso
295 es lo que me da más motivación para salir adelante, al ver que yo sufrí y entonces mis hermanos
296 quitándose la vida. Y entonces mis otros hermanos, ellos se fueron para otro lugar, y mis
297 hermanas ahí viven cerca de mi mamá entonces si yo sería la única aquí. Todos están para allá.

298 Y así fue la situación, toda mi vida fue difícil. Pero no sé, sólo Dios sabe porque
299 me trajo este lugar. Así estoy descubriendo para qué es que él me va a querer. Me siento bien

300 aquí. Gracias a ustedes también por tomarme en cuenta, yo creo que las palabras cuentan, las
301 opiniones también cuentan. Como seres humanos, como hijos de Dios todos somos iguales, no
302 hay unos que somos más otros somos menos, y no sé qué más... Jejeje

303 Pues, de Vine and Fig, ahora estoy encargada de Vine and Fig, puedo hablar de Alicia
304 también... (dirigiéndose hacia Tomás) Yo e Alicia somos encargadas de la comunidad Vine and
305 Fig. Entonces, allá somos encargadas; y pues algo de lo que yo me siento orgullosa es de tener
306 ese lugar ahí. También porque cuando yo empecé ahí, ahí empecé a trabajar, entonces es algo
307 que me hizo cambiar. Sentí un cambio. Porque siento que tengo un poco más de responsabilidad,
308 aparte de mis dos hijos que tengo. Porque tengo dos hijos y soy una madre soltera, y siento que
309 es una responsabilidad más aparte de mis hijos. Y me siento orgullosa que aquí el señor Tomás,
310 me tomó en cuenta, siempre me toma en cuenta, y eso es lo que yo me siento aquí, porque eso es
311 lo que nosotros somos como seres humanos, valemos mucho y yo me siento orgullosa de estar
312 aquí.

313 Entonces, enfrente de la casa por donde pasan los autos es una parte de jardín. El año
314 pasado, eran otras personas que coordinaban ahí. Era otra persona encargada. Pero ahora
315 nosotros estamos aquí. Hace dos meses, que se cambió entonces hace dos meses cambiaron las
316 cosas. Pues, yo no me esperaba la sorpresa que el señor Tomás me dio. Y cuando me preguntó,
317 ¿quieres ser encargada de Vine and Fig? ¿Quieres ser la encargada, entonces tú e Alicia van a
318 estar encargadas de la coordinación? Pues, yo me sentí tan feliz, porque yo no me esperaba esa
319 noticia y estoy agradecida con Dios, porque es Dios que me ha puesto en las manos de Tomás, y
320 las personas en mi vida. Es algo que yo no cambiaría. Es algo también que ha cambiado mi vida
321 con el trabajar la tierra, me ha hecho convivir más con las personas. Porque antes yo no tenía eso
322 de convivir, siempre tenía pena y tenía miedo. Tenía ese miedo que decía no, no. Sentí ese miedo

323 y decía no. Es algo que yo me encerraba en mi misma. Entonces yo descubrí que he cambiado
324 mucho en mi vida. Como me ha servido. Y me ha servido como terapia, pues antes yo me
325 enojaba mucho, antes me enojaba mucho con mis hijos, entonces ahora yo siento que he
326 cambiado. Y estoy cambiando todavía y la tierra me ayuda. Yo he tenido problemas pues con mi
327 matrimonio en el pasado, sufrí violencias. Entonces yo traté de buscar como una persona para
328 terapia, terapia normal, como consejería, pero sentí que eso la verdad no me ayudó. Entonces,
329 busqué otras cosas. Siento que esto me ha estado ayudando. No he terminado de sanar todavía,
330 pero este proyecto con la tierra es para mí, mi sanación. Sí, no sé qué más ... Es que me pongo así,
331 a veces no me gusta contar acerca de mi vida porque me pongo sentimental. Y me vienen
332 recuerdos, y a veces no quiero recordar.

333 Porque estamos conviviendo, es también convivir y comer junto. Y como digo, vienen de
334 otros lugares, y nos sentimos bien cuando hay más personas. Entonces cada persona platica de
335 donde es, entonces es algo que para nosotros es bueno saber, y ellos también se sienten felices de
336 venir aquí. Entonces es algo el estar unidos. Estamos unidos, la comida, el trabajo, y aprendemos
337 como comunidad. Creo que eso es algo que demostramos, al ser así. Entonces todos los que han
338 venido aquí nos sentimos bien, nos sentimos apreciados, como en familia, así yo lo podría tomar,
339 como familia unidos, y me siento feliz.

340 Entonces, nosotros empezamos el proyecto en marzo de 2021, aquí en la Finca Climática
341 Jubileo. La idea es de plantar, pues empezamos desde cero con la tierra, arreglando las camas
342 para plantar las verduras, y también sembrar árboles, pues es una comunidad. Seguido aquí
343 también vienen voluntarios, ellos ayudan aquí. Son voluntarios de la JMU, y de otras escuelas.
344 También vienen de otros lugares, de otros países y también les gusta este lugar y ellos se sienten
345 felices aquí. Y nosotros también nos sentimos felices de verlos a ellos, son unos mujeres y

346 hombres muy jóvenes que están estudiando, pero también les gusta la tierra, les gusta venir aquí
347 y pues ellos se sienten felices aquí. Nosotros también estamos contentos de qué ellos vengán
348 ayudar; eso es una gran ayuda para nosotros porque la ayuda de ellos cuenta mucho. Entonces es
349 algo que ayuda muchísimo. Este lugar es grande, sin la ayuda de ellos no alcanzaría terminar lo
350 que estamos haciendo: plantar, arreglar las camas, plantar los árboles.

351 Para la comida para que alcance la comida para todos, es comunicación, y unirse, y eso es
352 lo que se dice una comunidad. Que todos estemos unidos y expresarse, platicar, a veces nos da
353 tiempo de contar nuestras historias, a veces hay muchachos que son serios, otros que están
354 sonriendo, entonces se entiende eso. Porque son muchachos jóvenes, entonces nosotros yo creo
355 que nosotros hemos pasado eso también. La juventud es así. Los jóvenes están aprendiendo más,
356 aquí vienen ellos aprender, a descubrir qué es lo que les gusta, entonces es lo que yo pienso.
357 Tenemos que estar en comunicación, en unión. Como familia lo tomamos; porque a veces en
358 nuestras casas, a veces no nos sentimos así, pero a veces en este lugar me llena. Me llena el
359 poder venir acá porque me siento en familia, compartimos, bebemos, entonces es algo bonito, y
360 los pollos también... Jejeje.

361 A mi, me gusta cuidar mucho los pollos. Desde que yo era chica, los pollos me han
362 fascinado. Entonces, yo chequeo los pollos, pero yo estoy fascinada de darle la comida a los
363 pollos, de darle su agua, entonces estamos fascinados.

364 Entonces, tenemos 16 pollos. Hace como un mes, que trajimos los pollos y después los
365 huevos que compartimos, incluso los huevos compartimos, jejeje. Pero aquí estamos para ayudar
366 y para servir a la comunidad cuando podemos. También pienso que no podemos ayudar todo el
367 tiempo, porque también tenemos nuestra familia. Pero si es parte de hacerlo, y yo puedo hacerlo.
368 Pero como yo digo, tengo mis hijos. Mis hijos entienden a pesar de que quizás ellos ahorita están

369 pequeños. Ahora, ellos tal vez no saben, pero cuando lleguen a crecer van a ir descubriendo qué
370 es lo que les gusta, y por eso es una comunidad. Pues, y así como yo aprecio a los voluntarios y a
371 la comunidad y a los jóvenes y a todas las personas, yo pienso que mis hijos un día van a estar
372 así también. Entonces ¿por qué? Porque yo les estoy enseñando algo bueno a ellos, algo mejor,
373 ellos de lo que a mí me gusta hacer, y ellos respetan mi decisión de trabajo de hacer lo que a mí
374 me gusta. Ellos no me dicen que vienes toda sucia a la casa o vienes toda así. No, ellos respetan
375 mi trabajo, y con el tiempo tal vez a ellos les va gustar eso ya que eso viene de uno. Esto viene
376 con uno de nacimiento, de la familia es como hereditario, de eso que a uno le gusta la tierra.
377 Entonces, es algo que se va dando es algo que uno transmite a los hijos, a la familia. Siento que a
378 mis hijos esto también les va a gustar, les va a gustar ayudar pues a una comunidad... Pienso
379 esto porque yo les estoy enseñando que el hecho de ayudar a los demás, convivir
380 compartir con los demás, y eso es bien importante, pero también para poder sanar y expresarse.
381 ¡Y pues ya! yo no sé si lo estoy diciendo bien, pero trato de decir lo que tengo que decir, espero
382 que... Je je je. Me puse un poco nerviosa.

383 Pues, ahorita estamos en eso de plantar los de los árboles y eso de atrapar carbono. La
384 captura de carbono, es el porque estamos plantando árboles para ayudar al medio ambiente de
385 todo lo que estamos haciendo para destruir la tierra. El cambio climático y el calentamiento
386 global con el carbono, eso es algo que nos gustaría que cambiara también. Porque los años que
387 van pasando, pues, uno ya va para grande pues. Queremos que nuestros hijos vivan más tiempo,
388 porque nosotros estamos destruyendo la tierra, es algo que eso es lo que queremos buscar lo
389 mejor. Porque si no buscamos la manera para sembrar los árboles para que la tierra no se
390 contamine y se caliente, entonces nuestros hijos tal vez no van a durar, porque nosotros estamos
391 matando la tierra. Entonces, para eso estamos sembrando los árboles para capturar carbono. Es

392 algo también que eso me gustaría cambiar e incrementar, porque tenemos hijos, y porque yo
393 quisiera que mis hijos estén más tiempo aquí. Tal vez los jóvenes no van a tener un futuro, por la
394 situación de la contaminación, de la tierra, entonces también por eso estamos capturando el
395 carbono. Hemos hecho esas aboneras, tenemos tres aboneras, eso también es como un
396 experimento ¿Verdad? Este es un experimento que estamos haciendo ahora para probar como es
397 que el contenedor de compostaje puede funcionar como un biorreactor para capturar carbono.

398 Y pues, hemos cambiado mucho, estamos cambiando mucho. Con la ayuda de todos, se
399 puede hacer. Con la ayuda de personas que donan dinero, es algo maravilloso porque también
400 nos están tomando en cuenta. Entonces, con todo eso nosotros estamos ayudando a los demás a
401 quienes les gustaría que cambiara eso por nuestros niños o para nuestros niños.

402 Jejeje, eso es lo que yo he aprendido acerca del carbono, de las plantas... Yo no sabía
403 mucho de todo eso sobre carbono. Muchas cosas yo no sabía. Pienso que ahora estoy
404 aprendiendo mucho. Y es verdad si no buscamos la manera, este mundo se va a terminar Porque
405 allá en México en mi región de Chiapas México está habiendo mucho agitación y temblores
406 donde se mueve la tierra. Y allá casi nunca hace frío, está demasiado caliente todo el tiempo. Es
407 algo que uno se espanta porque así no era antes. No, en los años pasados en México no era así.
408 Ahora en estos años recientes ha cambiado mucho, porque dice mi familia, que ha habido mucho
409 agitación y temblores, y que no hace frío, hace mucho calor. Me gustaría cambiar eso, ayudar en
410 lo que puedo. Cambiaría también y me gustaría ver que mi región de Mexico est é cambiando
411 como aquí en la Finca Climática del Jubileo, la Finca Climática de Jubileo está creciendo este
412 lugar en muchas formas. Luego ni hemos hablado de eso, vamos a prestarle tierra a la gente
413 como un jardín comunitario... ¿Puedo hablar un poquito de eso? (Tomás: sí claro) Estamos
414 trabajando también, estamos haciendo las camas y nosotros prestamos las tierras a las personas.

415 Les prestamos la tierra para que las personas que quieran venir a plantar a cosechar sus verduras.
416 Hay personas y familias que sí están interesadas en eso, entonces buscamos personas también
417 que sean responsables, también que sean responsables, también quienes pongan importancia a la
418 tierra. Porque eso es lo que nosotros nos gusta, así como las plantas necesitan también agua
419 necesitan tierra, necesitan prepararlos, ponerle composta, y después para ¡plantar las semillas!
420 No es nomás eso de plantar, todo tiene su proceso, para plantar verduras, para preparar un jardín,
421 todo eso tiene proceso. No es nomás de decir yo voy a plantar ahí verduras ahí. No es así, quiere
422 mucha paciencia, mucha paciencia cuidarlo como si fuese un bebé, un niño. Así es como yo lo
423 veo necesita mucho amor también. Hay personas que van a agarrar ahí para plantar para una
424 comunidad también. Uno no puede decir que sólo es para mí, porque necesitamos demostrar que
425 es una comunidad y vienen de varios lugares: Honduras, Guatemala, Eritrea, y Puerto Rico.
426 Muchas personas vendrán a plantar, entonces las puertas están abiertas a los que les interesa con
427 ese corazón con ese amor de venir a plantar sus verduras, y eso es lo que estamos viendo que está
428 creciendo y está mejorando como comunidad. Entonces ¡aquí estamos!, jejeje...

429 Bueno, gracias por también tomarnos en cuenta se necesita que la voz crezca, y que
430 conozcan los jóvenes. Que conozcan las personas que a veces tienen nietos que si ellos estén con
431 temor de descubrirse a ellos mismos a averiguar qué es lo que a ellos les gusta. Entonces esto es
432 algo maravilloso el descubrir, porque a veces por eso no sanamos. Necesitamos descubrir
433 necesitamos probar, necesitamos que pasen muchas cosas para esto. Entonces, mi meta mía es
434 seguir en este lugar trabajando. Y si un día ya este lugar no se va a dar, entonces con el dolor en
435 mi corazón entonces no sé qué va a pasar con mi vida. No se, eso me va a doler. Si, entonces
436 pero también está Vine and Fig. Por supuesto, esto también se puede terminar, que alguna
437 situación inesperada pueda ser que pase. Pero no dejo de ser quien soy yo, yo vengo de la tierra.

438 Pues, yo digo Dios abre las puertas, él sabe qué es lo que uno le gusta, y Dios te lo pone, aunque
439 a veces uno no le espera, eso es algo maravilloso. Como dicen, Dios te da sorpresas, y gracias
440 por tomarnos en cuenta.

Appendix K:

Narrative of Jeff

My name is Jeff. I am the director of a project called GiveSolar, which operates under the umbrella of New Community Project and more specifically under the umbrella of New Community Project Vine & Fig. So, I have been working in that capacity since 2018 when I started this project. Initially, this work I've been doing has involved helping nonprofit organizations, that ordinarily do not have access to renewable energy, specifically to gain access to solar energy.

And so, we initially worked with two local nonprofits, Our Community Place and Gemeinschaft Home to help them to raise money for solar and get the solar installed. It was a model that utilized crowdfunding, as well as, a volunteer-supported solar installation event that came to be known as a solar barn raising. So that's just a quick little background.

More recently, I've been working with Habitat for Humanity with the goal of making solar energy accessible to households with low income. Solar is difficult to afford for most people and we're trying to figure out ways to make it possible for families with low income.

I've had various interactions over the years with New Community Project. I've been a friend of Tom's since our kids were in diapers. Even before they moved out here, my wife knew Tom in the late '80s when they were both doing volunteer service with the Brethren Volunteer Service.

And that's how my wife and I met as well through Brethren Volunteer Service. And so, what attracted me? Just my experience of knowing Tom and the organization, and seeing some of the initiatives that they were involved in with community gardens and the Northend Greenway. The overall engagement in the community seemed to be really strong and that certainly attracted me to them.

25 The other aspect is that I feel like there are very few organizations that are doing what
26 New Community Project is doing as a social incubator if you will. Working to try to identify
27 problematic social dynamics and then develop projects to address those dynamics. So, it seemed
28 like a pretty natural fit when I talked to Tom about situating my little project under their
29 umbrella. 'Cause I knew it'd be helpful to have nonprofit status.

30 And, I'm someone who's very unbureaucratic so I don't really care for the whole notion of
31 being my own nonprofit, having a board of directors, and doing all the 990 forms. The more
32 bureaucratic parts of running a nonprofit didn't appeal to me at all. So, New Community Project
33 has been an excellent place to explore creative solutions to social issues. And for me, I've always
34 been really interested in energy and climate change, and how our energy choices impact people
35 around the world.

36 I will make one mention another organization that's related to but not part of New
37 Community Project. So, in 2001, a group of us who were connected to EMU (Eastern Mennonite
38 University) started an organization called Voluntary Gas Tax. We decided that we wanted to tax
39 ourselves on our gasoline usage because we felt like the price that we pay at the pump doesn't
40 represent both the environmental harm that's being done, as well as the geopolitical harm that's
41 being done. So, for the last 20 years, that group has been operating in this community and I've
42 been a part of it pretty much that whole time, even though I was out of the country for a couple
43 of years.

44 Nancy, Ben, Earl, Ed, Ray who's no longer with us, and probably a bunch of other
45 people. (laughs). So, that group's still going. It's a really important realization that our lifestyle
46 choices have profound impacts. And so, we're trying to undo some of those impacts or seek out
47 the alternatives that maybe to put it into words and seek out the beloved community.

48 That's been a very meaningful part of my life since grad school. We only meet twice a
49 year but it's just a really interesting meeting. We usually raise about \$3,000 dollars and direct
50 those funds to projects that are seeking alternatives to fossil fuels. Sorry, that was a total tangent
51 but it is an example of what makes me tick. And there's the dog. (laughs)

52 Tom is quite a champion of bike riding and minimizing his footprint. I have a difficult
53 time living up to that example, but I think I do it in other ways.

54 Most of what I knew of the organization I just learned in person by being at the White
55 House and the New Community Project Vine & Fig's garden there, and involved in the
56 Carpenter's Guild. You know workdays and things like that happen at the site. I should also
57 mention another organization or another project that was founded within Vine & Fig and that
58 came to be known as Renew Rocktown.

59 Renew Rocktown was started in 2015 and it was basically started with the realization that
60 climate change is a real and present danger. Our group was organized around the Paris Climate
61 Agreement. And we did a local event called Postcard to Paris that basically was a message to our
62 political leaders that we need to take climate change seriously. So that group got started in 2015
63 and it evolved over several years. It's still going under a different name. We call it 50 by 25,
64 which refers to a goal of transitioning to 50% renewable energy by 2025. (laughs) My
65 involvement, in part, led to a bunch of great things including my project GiveSolar. And
66 reflecting back, it was New Community Project Vine & Fig creating the place for this group to
67 form and create the structural home, and even a place to meet.

68 It invited community members to be a part of that group. And so, I probably point to that
69 as the one thing that drew me into Vine & Fig and has kept me engaged ever since, for about
70 seven years now. That group also led to convincing the city of Harrisonburg that they needed to

71 create a climate action plan, convincing the city to create an advisory committee to the city
72 council called the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee.

73 I'm on that, Tom's on that, and a few other people that you probably know are a part of
74 that advisory committee. So, that's a long-winded way of answering your question of how I get
75 drawn into the work of New Community Project Vine & Fig and that would probably be the best
76 way to answer it.

77 It was a matter of me going to Tom and saying, "Hey, I'd like to apply for this grant.
78 Could I do it under your nonprofit umbrella?" I could only be eligible for that grant if I was a
79 program or a project of a nonprofit. It was somewhat opportunistic on my part to ask to be a part
80 of a project. But there's been other incubator projects that have got started and some even have
81 moved on like Silver Run Forest Farm and Folk School with Jonathan and Cornelius.

82 I really like the incubator model. Maybe the best way of putting this is that I've never had
83 a really strong profit motive. Most of us in society are socialized to pursue profit. And, what I'm
84 most motivated to pursue is social justice and so Vine & Fig seemed like a good place to pursue
85 what I was hoping to pursue through solar.

86 Well, I'll give you the elevator speech. GiveSolar is about access to clean energy for
87 households with low income, long-term economic security, and climate change solutions. So, it's
88 like three pillars of this work. I'll focus on the second one, which is economic security, just for a
89 minute or two.

90 What we're trying to do through providing solar is we're trying to put money back in the
91 pockets of low-income families by giving them access to solar. The project that we did locally
92 was with Habitat for Humanity. We did a pilot project where we just installed the solar system
93 on a Habitat Home. And, we've been tracking it for the last year to see what environmental

94 impact it has and what economic impact it has on the family. As of the last day of this month,
95 we'll have tracked a full year and then I'll be sharing that information with funders and
96 supporters and things like that.

97 But what we're finding is that homeowners are saving about \$50 dollars a month on their
98 electric bills. And, if they choose to, they can have a zero electric bill but that requires a little bit
99 of extra effort by homeowners. Some motivated homeowners ask questions like, "Well, what if I
100 want to have a zero bill? What do I need to do?" And so, we try to provide some information
101 like, "Well, you can look at doing a programmable thermostat or something and not have your
102 heating or cooling on at night. The thermostat takes care of itself."

103 So, that's one area that relates to your project. We're trying to address the economic
104 security issue and the cycle of poverty. I think solar is a really good way to do it. There was
105 another point with impressing those three pillars.

106 Well, Tom's a personal friend, and even though we didn't work together. We did work
107 together on this Renew Rocktown and 50 by 25 project. And, he's been involved in the
108 GiveSolar efforts. Back in 2016, we did a solar barn raising at Gift & Thrift, the thrift store in
109 town, where we got like 50 volunteers to help install the solar system. And that was the birthing
110 of the idea of GiveSolar even though it still took another two years before it officially launched.
111 It was pretty organic how it came together that I started working for them or under their New
112 Community Project umbrella.

113 The series of events were basically I became aware of a grant opportunity from Merck,
114 the pharmaceutical company. Merck's grant program is called Neighbor of Choice. And they
115 give money to nonprofits for various causes but environmental issues are one of the multiple

116 causes that they support. So, I did a grant application and was successful at getting that grant and
117 that was the launch of this project when I started working with Gemeinschaft Home and OCP.

118 People keep trying to make me call GiveSolar or categorize this work as being a social
119 entrepreneur. And I cringe at that description because it always seems to be about capitalism,
120 economic growth, and all of those aspects of capitalism.

121 So, for a long time, I struggled with, "Well, what do I call myself?" I'm a project, yes, but
122 what are the underlying goals that I'm trying to achieve? So, the term that I came up with to
123 describe this project and has probably been used by others, in fact, I'm sure it has, but I use the
124 term social impact organization.

125 I think the term is a good description of what I'm trying to do. But on the micro level,
126 what we're trying to do is make poorer families or those with low income financially better off --
127 - and financially better off for an extended period of time. As long as they stay in the house with
128 the solar, it's 25 to 30 years that they'll be financially better off by about \$50 dollars a month.

129 There's a bigger element of what I'm trying to do has to do with: what happens to our
130 country and to our communities if we have mechanisms for people to get their energy from the
131 sun? If it's possible for anybody and everybody to do it, then how will that transform our
132 society? Right now, we are pretty wedded to our fossil fuel use and addiction. But for me, one of
133 the underlying hopes for this project is that it creates new pathways for people to access
134 affordable clean energy. And so, there's a microelement and a macro-element that I'm trying to
135 pursue.

136 I haven't gotten into specifics on what we did with Habitat. We did a pilot project where
137 we put two solar systems up on a duplex in Broadway. That was our first Habitat project. And
138 while we were doing that, I went to the board of the local Habitat affiliate and said, "Hey, based

139 on the fundraising that we've been doing, I feel like it's possible to raise a larger amount of
140 money in order to pay for solar to go on all the houses that you're gonna build in the next five
141 years."

142 Our goal was to raise \$100,000 dollars. This was like February of 2021, a little over a
143 year ago. And the board said, "Yeah, sure. We'll let you raise money for us." And so, that kicked
144 off a campaign to raise money and awareness in the hopes of Habitat installing solar on all the
145 houses they build locally. Over the course of the next seven or so months, from February to
146 September, we raised that money. We got to our goal and then we surpassed the goal. By the
147 time we were done raising money for that project, we'd raised \$127,000.

148 Once that was done, we just wrote a check to Central Valley Habitat and gave them the
149 money to start what it's now called their Solar Seed Fund. When they build a house, they put
150 solar on it and they pay for the solar out of the Solar Seed Fund. Now, Habitat has a pretty strong
151 ethic of sweat equity of homeowners putting in their volunteer hours and their contribution to
152 building the house.

153 They're not an organization that is about getting things for free. The other aspect of what
154 we did with Central Valley Habitat is that we're expecting homeowners to pay \$20 dollars a
155 month for their solar. They're paying \$20 dollars a month to pay for the solar system but it's
156 spread out over the course of their mortgage. And theoretically, what's supposed to happen with
157 those \$20 dollars is supposed to go back into the Solar Seed Fund in order to make those funds
158 available for future homeowners.

159 What I'm trying to do is create a sustainable model for Habitat affiliates to do that. So,
160 with this success locally, I was in contact with the state office of Habitat. It's called a state

161 support organization, Habitat for Humanity Virginia, and they support all of the affiliates in the
162 state.

163 There are 40 affiliates and I was in touch with their executive director. And said, "Hey,
164 we've had a good project with Central Valley Habitat. I'd like to talk to other affiliates about
165 working with them and helping them do a pilot project to figure out ways that they could install
166 solar going forward."

167 As of December 1, 2021, just a few months ago, I launched a two-year project to work
168 with as many Habitat affiliates as have the interest to do pilot projects and help them develop
169 their solar program. So now, this project has taken me to working with other affiliates in the
170 state.

171 Big picture: I want Habitat to do this internationally. It makes sense. And again, going
172 back to that macro-goal, what would it look like if homeowners, low-income homeowners had a
173 way to transition to solar? Like it could shift the whole paradigm of us relying so heavily on
174 foreign fossil fuels or fracked natural gas, or whatever. I keep that in the back of my mind like,
175 "How can we get there?"

176 How can we get this very large organization to make the shift? I just went to a Habitat
177 conference down in Atlanta. They have an affiliate conference every two years and I was invited
178 to go. There were like 2,200 people there and that's just a small fraction of how many people
179 work for Habitat worldwide. So, they're an important player, especially in affordable housing.
180 My hope is the things that Habitat does will be adopted by others. So, we'll work and develop
181 that absolutely.

182 My website, GiveSolar, has become a place where I'm trying to disseminate information
183 to Habitat affiliates but also to Habitat homeowners about solar, how they can make it, and how

184 they can do it. And so, my project has become a resource intended for any Habitat affiliate
185 anywhere or any Habitat homeowner anywhere who's interested in possibly going solar.

186 So, I feel pretty fortunate to be working with Habitat because they're an organization and
187 their brand has very wide recognition around the world. So, I hope that this work may have
188 broader implications in the future. And right now, I'm just keeping my head low and trying to do
189 my work with the affiliates that I'm working with. I'm working with three other affiliates now,
190 one in Lexington, one is called Habitat for Humanity of the New River Valley out of
191 Christiansburg, and the other one is just north of Richmond over in Hanover and King William
192 counties.

193 So, I'm actively working on pilot projects with those three affiliates. And then, I'm
194 getting ready to put a call out to say, "Hey, I'm almost done with these three affiliates. Are there
195 any other affiliates who'd like to do a pilot project?" And I have funding to actually pay for the
196 pilot project. So, the pilot project is a way for Habitat to dabble, dip their toes in the water, see
197 what it's like for them to experience installing a solar system on a house, and see if it makes
198 sense for them.

199 This project has just gone in directions that I didn't anticipate. One example, we're
200 working with a potential donor right now who is wanting to offset the embodied greenhouse gas
201 emissions that will result from a major renovation of a building. They want to donate solar
202 equipment to Habitat that will go on families' roofs. It would be like 60 to 70 homes that would
203 get solar as a result of this carbon offsetting project.

204 And so, I'm exploring this as a replicable model for how to fund solar. I have an advisory
205 committee that I need to put a few of the members of that on this project to think more

206 intentionally about it. There are definitely some moral questions: are we helping matters by
207 doing carbon offsetting or not?

208 I feel like I have the support of their board since I presented to their board. A big part of
209 it is just feeling like you're a part of something. 'Cause I am working pretty independently of
210 New Community Project, but they have my back in some ways. And, just knowing these other
211 activities are going on that you also feel really good about and that you're connected to because
212 you are a project of New Community Project.

213 Like what Kathy is doing with composting and getting fresh vegetables in schools. And,
214 gardens at schools and all of that. And the education, it means a lot to be a part of that even
215 though I don't have much to do with it. And the same goes for Jubilee Carbon Farm, I have very
216 little to do with what they're doing out in Mount Clinton. But it's a perspective of liking what you
217 do and liking who you do it with.

218 For me, working with New Community Project just means a lot and provides a
219 foundation for working sustainably. If you're doing good work and your colleagues who are in
220 the same organization are doing good work, it makes you feel you can continue on for a period
221 of time. It sustains you.

222 I also want to get to collaborate with other community groups. So, thinking of the Silver
223 Run Forest Farm, they're a good example. When we wanted to do some landscaping here at our
224 house, we went to Jonathan and Cornelius. And had them come and create a drawing of what we
225 wanted as a collaborative effort to figure out what we wanted to do with the landscaping around
226 our house. And so, that was a meaningful thing for me and my wife 'cause it exposed us to a lot
227 of information about native species, planting for drought, and a lot of things that weren't really
228 on our radar.

229 I really relish those opportunities to get involved in some of the other projects that Vine
230 & Fig is doing because I am by no means an expert in all of these different areas. And I've been
231 out to the Jubilee Climate Farm a couple of times, but it's another example of something I'd like
232 to spend more dedicated time out there, instead of an hour at a time.

233 But going back to what I had said earlier, it brings meaning to your work when you see
234 other aspects of what New Community Project is doing and start understanding the value of
235 them.

236 So, community collaboration is extremely important. I'm about to launch a project
237 through GiveSolar, in collaboration with the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, which is
238 about sharing the history and culture of the African-American community in this region. They
239 have a library and a database. GiveSolar, through me, is organizing an effort to raise money to do
240 an energy efficiency audit and solar on Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project's building.

241 We've pulled in a bunch of like environmental organizations to this effort and there are
242 multiple aspects with racial justice being an important one. There's a reparations group that exists
243 here in Harrisonburg that has been supporting this organization that is part of this effort, along
244 with The Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Sierra Club, Climate Action Alliance of the
245 Valley, GiveSolar, Voluntary Gas Tax, Carpenter's Guild, and a couple of businesses JZ
246 Engineering and Gaines Group Architects. All these groups and businesses are coming together
247 to support this project.

248 That's also a really important part of what New Community Project Vine & Fig does,
249 they bring people together and they help to create coalitions and collaborations. And, I think that
250 just makes us stronger and better equipped to bring about those changes that we would like to
251 see.

252 Maybe the most compelling value that inspires me is the notion of walking lightly on the
253 earth and finding regenerative ways to live on our planet that respects future generations.
254 (laughs) That's it in a nutshell. I probably don't need to say any more than that. (laughs) Why
255 make it long when it can be short? (laughs)

256 I have a lot of really positive interactions with the guests at the White House. There have
257 been times in the past when I've felt like an outsider with the people who live there but I feel like
258 the intentional community that exists there at the White House is structured so all of the residents
259 seem like they have a place. It's an equal partnership, equal responsibility relationship. But, at the
260 same time, recognizing that some people have had a really rough go in life? So, that's definitely a
261 good example of how they honor and dignify people who have had a rough, rough time in life.

262 I've also appreciated the opportunity to get to know some of the Spanish-speaking
263 partners or co-workers. They're great site coordinators. (laughs) They're better than I am at
264 making an effort to learn English and talk to me in English when I'm so horrible at Spanish. I
265 think it's just my position of power and privilege that I don't work as I should to also learn their
266 language. What I've seen at Vine & Fig is a lot of intentionality to include them in the decision-
267 making, intentionality in making sure that they are included in the conversation, even when the
268 conversation is in English doing the translation for them.

269 New Community Project Vine & Fig has been a long-term place of employment for many
270 of them. And that's really impressive, several people have stuck with Vine & Fig for a long time.
271 And, Vine & Fig has been a supportive community to them. So, a strong aspect of what they do
272 is trying to live lightly and walk lightly.

273 I have lots of people that I consider to be mentors. For whatever reason, I tend to connect
274 really well with older people. In this Renew Rocktown/ 50 by 25 group, there are two older

275 individuals who are part of that: one's a retired physician and then she's retired as well. But I
276 don't know what she did in her career. I would say they're mentors but they're also just really
277 good colleagues. And we, we work really closely together. And we, it's unusual if we don't talk
278 to each other every day.

279 I worked as a contractor for seven years and the general contractor that I worked under
280 was Sam Petersheim. Does that name ring a bell? He's a farmer, a contractor who lives out in
281 Linville. Sam's family is from up in Pennsylvania. But anyway, with the whole mentorship thing,
282 he hired me when I didn't have much experience in construction. I learned from him, not just
283 skills but was just a can-do attitude. The seven years of working with him was really
284 instrumental in moving me into the GiveSolar project because I discover in my daily day-to-day
285 work that there are things that I don't look forward to doing.

286 And you just have to take the attitude, "All right. You gotta get 'er done because that task
287 is not gonna go away by itself." So, that was his leadership style, a just can-do attitude. Nothing
288 to it but to do it. I picked up on that attitude and I'm really grateful for that orientation. I don't
289 always follow it as well as I'd like to. (laughs)

290 One of my favorite parts of my job is organizing these solar barn raisings 'cause we're
291 inviting people from the community. If we're inviting the homeowner, we're inviting community
292 leaders. We've had members of the city council and the mayor up on the roof with us in the past.
293 And, it's just a great opportunity for people who wouldn't ordinarily get to know each other to get
294 to know each other.

295 But it's also a great opportunity for them to learn about solar power by doing. It just has a
296 great feel to it when we organize these events. We sit down and have lunch with each other and
297 the solar installers get to know the volunteers. And, we all finish that day feeling like we

298 accomplished something important. I think that probably can be described as beloved
299 community.

300 That's a tough one 'cause when I first started this project, I thought I'd be one year and
301 now it's turned into four. And it's most likely gonna turn into five if we get the donation of
302 equipment. There have been times when I've wondered whether it's the best match for both of
303 us? I've, for example, asked the question, "Would it make more sense for me to work for Habitat
304 for Humanity?"

305 But right now, I don't think it does. Being an outsider, coming into that organization
306 makes more sense right now. They're an organization that has a hard time changing from within.
307 So, right now, my positioning with New Community Project is the most effective way to effect
308 change within Habitat for Humanity. However, that could change in the future.

309 I'd like to see Habitat for Humanity, on a national level, have people who have a role
310 similar to mine but on a state level. Every state that has one of these state support offices or
311 organizations would have a solar coordinator who could assist the affiliates in implementing
312 solar. A solar coordinator who also could go after the funding that's needed.

313 So, that's where I'd like to see this go long-term. Those steps may or may not include
314 New Community Project, but I never could have done this and got to the point where I'm at
315 without having New Community Project as a home base and their support. So, if we do part
316 ways, it will be on the best of terms with mutual respect and mutual understanding. And, I think
317 that's the way it's gone with some of the other incubator projects like Jonathan and Cornelius
318 with Silver Run Forest Farm. They've taken off in their own direction.

319 New Community Project seems to be okay with being the incubator, fertilizing those
320 seeds to use a growing metaphor, and then just watching these projects take off or not take off?
321 (laughs)

Appendix L:

Narrative of Jonathan

I'm Jonathan and I have been in the orbit of New Community Project since 2011, which is when I first moved to the Shenandoah Valley. I came here for grad school and had friends who had already introduced me to this group called New Community Project in Harrisonburg. And when I moved here for grad school, I needed to get connected in immediately. And within the first couple weeks of moving to Harrisonburg, I called Tom, who friends introduced me to, and started volunteering.

At the time, New Community Project was still based at Tom and Margot's house, but they were moving to the current location, which is between Madison and Main Street. The White House had been purchased and some small gardens had been put in. But I got involved right at the transition over to the new house. Well, it's not new anymore, but the White House has become the main hub of New Community Project in Harrisonburg at the Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center.

I loved the kind of integrated approach to care, justice, and healing that I saw where they took care of the earth and took care of people with practices within the group of people that were tryin' to live out what the group was advocating for externally in the communities. So, there was community organizing goin' on, but also hospitality, healing, some prayer, mindfulness, or grounding happening as well.

And so, it was a fuller-bodied approach that I was looking for and drawn to at the time. It was defined, with Tom in particular, as like a Gandhian Ashram in North America in the heart of an urban setting. It was gonna be a constructive program in the Gandhian tradition as an alternative to how we actually want to be living, so let's put it into practice.

24 There's the language of being rooted in nonviolence all around the earth, towards people,
25 and our economic practices. If I was gonna take nonviolence seriously, it's gotta be everything. It
26 can't just be telling people who are being beaten down are oppressed, you should be nonviolent.
27 It's more like how is our whole system set up to be nonviolent so people actually have the ability
28 to be that way. With New Community Project, there was at least that attempt to envision at that
29 small scale what that could look like. At the time, it was very much channeled through Tom and
30 his openness and welcoming of me. And I think Tom was always lookin' for how somebody's
31 unique gifts or approach could serve within the group. How could this group make housing for
32 everybody and offer their gifts? What is and was one of the intentions? And so, I felt that desire
33 and a constant welcoming me into further levels of trust and leadership pretty quickly when I
34 was just starting to volunteer a day or two a week when I was in grad school.

35 I felt the most help or care just in the sense of being welcomed and valued for both the
36 little skill that I had to offer, but also just the passion, desire to be there, and excitement for that
37 even though I was really hesitant of stepping into any leadership or offering any opinions about
38 stuff that could or should happen. My plan was to leave Harrisonburg after grad school so I
39 didn't want to start helping make decisions that I wasn't gonna bear the consequences of (laughs).

40 But Tom kept encouraging me to still participate and to still have a voice and that what I
41 had to say was valuable. Tom invited me to be a part of the emerging partnership team and is still
42 the model that is somewhat there now. A group of people who were helping to hold the vision, to
43 welcome in new people, to set the tone, and to come up with guidelines or the rules of order in a
44 monastic sense of how are we gonna live together?

45 And so, I resisted that at first because I didn't know how long I'd be here. But Tom, in
46 particular, and then others who were part of that were really encouraging me to be a part of that.

47 And that just felt really affirming that I was clear on what I thought, they were aware of it, and
48 also felt like we really want you to be a part of this.

49 At the time, they had regular check-ins as a group, but also one on ones with people just
50 to see what was happening in life, how people were feeling, and how the work was going. Every
51 morning we started with a group meeting. I can't remember the full order of the meeting, but
52 there was a grounding, an emotional check-in, and then what were the tasks and who were gonna
53 do them. It was just a way to get oriented to the work and for a while, that felt really helpful.

54 And the partners, we had pretty regular meetings, which could be really hard and also so
55 important. It felt like we were entrusted to hold a vision and there was something very
56 meaningful about feeling like we knew what our role was and it was for a service to this group so
57 the group could work together.

58 All these things had wounds and gifts at the same time, but there was so much beauty.
59 We were collectively gardening and then times when that really slowed things down. And then,
60 it was really hard to do the market gardening stuff. There were the times when it was groups
61 comin' together and we were working and could have these deep meaningful check-ins and
62 conversations while we're shaping garden beds or something like that. There was a lot of beauty
63 in that. At the time, it was less a specific practice, but a tone of where there was a desire for
64 people to be well. The way that got expressed could be complicated, but there was a sincere
65 desire that people could be whole and how this place could be part of helping people do that.

66 Knowing that was part of the spirit or the tone of it was very helpful. Even the things I
67 found useful, weren't useful to everybody. Some of the wound is the sense that the deep
68 hospitality and desire for a place like Vine & Fig, as the place came to be known, to be a place
69 where everybody could be fulfilled.

70 Well, it was also complicated. There was so much dissonance, diversity, or a gulf
71 between people's lived experiences and the thought that a place can be everything for everybody.
72 And so, that beautiful desire, of how can you fit in this way, often led to being way overworked,
73 way overpopulated, overstretched, and very unclear in what to do and who was responsible for
74 what decisions. That was always a challenge. Some of that was just how a group figures out its
75 identity. It always happens in the process; you can't just plan it out ahead of time and do it. There
76 was that plan and then it had to get changed.

77 And working with very different models, drawing on the Catholic worker tradition,
78 Dorothy Day was a huge influence. But then, there's a long tradition of social farming in Europe
79 with embodied habits and responses or therapeutic communities where it's very intentionally
80 focused on people with significant mental, and emotional traumatized experiences who have
81 been locked up, beaten up, kicked out, and can't find stable work.

82 And that was part of the Catholic worker, but not in the sense of deep therapeutic mental,
83 and emotional support that comes from some of these therapeutic communities. Those are
84 different approaches to some similar things that then also rub up against the need to pay for stuff.
85 (laughs)

86 Market farming, on a small scale, is doable if you're really haulin' (laughs) and it's really
87 complicated. And so, the vision of providing stable meaningful employment for people in
88 therapeutic conditions at something like urban farming was always a really challenging thing and
89 not very viable. There was a lot of trying to do stuff that was really unworkable in some ways. It
90 was just hard to accept that we want to make this work, we want to do this thing, and we want
91 everybody to be able to do stuff here. Accepting the boundaries and accepting the limitations is
92 also a real gift, and that was a struggle.

93 Yeah, what are the seeds we sow and do that can grow into that bigger thing, but we can't
94 do it all at one time on that scale. So, what can we do at the scale that we are? What things does
95 it make sense for the group to focus on? I think that was always the challenge when the
96 hospitality was bigger than the capacity to receive everybody that wanted to accept that
97 hospitality. (laughs)

98 Absolutely, I remember one of the practices that were so beautiful was the affirmations
99 that we had. We had developed mindfulness stuff that still happens where once a day a bell
100 would ring, all work would stop just for a moment, and people could pray, ground themselves, or
101 stare off at a distance.

102 Doing those things felt very formative for me and set a different pace and a different
103 commitment to work. And then affirmations were pairing up with someone in the middle of the
104 work day and praising them in front of people. To say. "I see this in you, I really appreciate this."
105 I remember doing that early on with Tom, while we were putting in the pond that's there behind
106 the River Rock house. I was learning so much there. I was living just a five-minute walk around
107 the corner with Janelle and Jason and their family and farming with them there. I was in grad
108 school when I was helping start this new version of Vine & Fig and so I was learning so much
109 about land care, gardening, people's histories, and approaches to conflict.

110 Tom was that model and mentor for me. I remember part of a conversation I had with
111 him one time about affirmations. Tom didn't even really think of himself as the mentor, but he
112 was the older person who had such experience, especially at that time when I was coming in. I
113 had such respect, gratitude, and excitement about what Tom was doing, how he moved, how he
114 spoke, and the stuff he was integrating. I just felt such resonance with somebody who is right
115 around my dad's age, my parents' age and I just felt very affirmed and seen.

116 And so, there was a version of mentorship in that with Tom, but always feeling Tom was
117 framing more as your peer like we're in this work together. And, again, that also had a gift and
118 wound, not necessarily in some deep painful way, but there's just a limit to that peer relationship,
119 but we grew into that over time. Tom, in terms of a mentorship, was that person. I was very
120 grateful for that mentorship.

121 There were many moments of decisions that had to be made and relationships with
122 people with such different emotional and mental capacities, very different experiences of trauma
123 and violence in their lives, and feeling the weight of needing to help this group of people. The
124 partners were making decisions about people's housing, people's livelihoods, and that felt very
125 intense and formative to have that responsibility. There were questions about whether the
126 partners should have that responsibility and what would it look like to match that partner group
127 with the people who are affected most by those decisions. There was a lot of deep conversation
128 in those partners' meetings that felt very formative. The formative moments are more of senses
129 or experiences to me. I'm remembering when we were shaping the beds, while they are gutting
130 that whole house and then renovating it. And the meetings about somebody who had relapsed
131 again and questioning "Well, does it make sense to keep pathologizing this person who is self-
132 medicating in the way that they know how?" Tons of other people do it with legal things. "Why
133 is it bad just 'cause what they're using is illegal?" (laughs) And the stigmas around using
134 something illegal.

135 I was questioning and thinking through a lot of stuff. Many interns have come through
136 there over the years and there are a lot of people that came through Vine & Fig intentionally for
137 the short term, who would get reformed and move on. And then, others who came with visions to
138 be there for a long time and left with a lot of pain and a lot of frustration.

139 In particular, there were 11 or 12 people livin' at the house (laughs) at the time. (laughs)
140 It was an awful idea. (laughs) Some people in the partnership team liked the idea of pairing what
141 they assumed to be someone with less trauma, or more stability, with someone who had been
142 through more intense violence, repression, and oppression in their lives as like housemates. On a
143 theoretical level, I got it but I remember thinking on an emotional visceral level this doesn't seem
144 like a good idea. (laughs)

145 Young recent college grads paired with people who have been through sexual assault
146 many times lost children and grew up with parents who were selling their children's bodies for
147 drugs. The levels and cycles of generational violence and inherited trauma that is unfathomable
148 for a lot of people. Putting those folks together to be housemates without other support was a
149 recipe for more harm.

150 I remember sitting on the porch with one of those interns and she was just crying. She
151 was living with one of the most challenging dear people who is no longer alive because of this
152 intense life. This intern was saying, "I don't think I'm cut out to live in community. I don't think I
153 can do this."

154 This very clear image of we're on the porch, we were sitting, and recalling that
155 experience. I remember feeling this sadness if that's how people leave thinking that they can't
156 live in community because of this one version that wasn't even possible or set up for them well.
157 How is that gonna orient the rest of this person's life and how they see the possibility of being in
158 community? And at the moment, I also just encouraged them saying, "This isn't community, this
159 is co-housing."

160 It is an experimentation of a certain way of living in a house together with people with
161 very different lived experiences. In a community you could live in a house by yourself, but

162 you're still in community. What are different ways of understanding community and housing? At
163 the time, I remember sharing this quote from Wendell Berry where he said, "Practically
164 speaking, there's no such thing as autonomy, there's only responsible or irresponsible
165 dependence."

166 You can live in community, but do it irresponsibly. So, what's the responsible way of
167 being in community? Even if you find that it's actually healthier for you to have a little house to
168 yourself or have your own room (laughs) and have boundaries, which actually means we can be
169 in better relationship with people. That was just a reorienting moment for me and what I felt like
170 we could be offering to people, and less prescriptive and more emergent as we make it together.
171 (laughs)

172 But, in a beautiful way, in a gift way, there's a desire to support people and what they
173 needed. And it felt hard sometimes to name what I would need, partly because of my own
174 internal struggle at the time of figurin' out how to name what I needed or wanted, and not feeling
175 like a failure or feeling like I was asking for too much. And some of the social vibe of the place
176 was a few people were doing a lot of work for very little support, especially monetary. And to
177 have too many needs or requests could be a sign of selfishness or a sign of taking resources from
178 other people that needed it more. And so, there is a double sense of a lot of openness to
179 supporting, but also a lot of hesitancy to even ask or make requests. Not necessarily because of
180 anything in particular someone would say like, "No, I'm not gonna give that to you." Although
181 that happened sometimes, but more the sense of there isn't a lot to go around here and I don't
182 want to take more than I need. There's a tendency there for people to make themselves feel small,
183 because there was not a lot to go around and it was a very crammed place -- emotionally and
184 physically. (laughs)

185 I remember talkin' about or thinking through what's the difference between healing and
186 coping. Is healing possible for everybody? Maybe coping with trauma is what is the best hope?
187 That was probably because I was thinking in very limited terms about what healing was. The
188 way I was imagining healing meant you get healed and then you're healed, which leaves out the
189 conditions that can make people sick. It is not just within the person, instead there always is a
190 process of healing and wound, or sickness and better. Healing and wounding are very much
191 systemic. It's structural, it's contextual.

192 I was imagining what if healing is always in process and that's gonna look very
193 differently for people whose relationship to the systems that create so much sickness is different
194 from mine. There are more and different things for people to heal from. (laughs) Yeah, grief.
195 Grief was a core part of life and part of our society is so afraid of and resistant to death or dying.
196 It was the inability to hold grief well. I was given a lot of choice and voice probably because I
197 came into the partnership group, I think, partly, because there was a desire to make room for that
198 for people. But I also think the ways that small groups can enact the patterns of our larger society
199 were in play. I'm a white guy who was in grad school and I can articulate what I want pretty
200 clearly, and connect that to things that I had experienced, or read, or whatever. And so there's a
201 way in which my voice, even aside from the intentions of that group, is set up to be listened to in
202 a particular way.

203 I loved that we had a list of seven or eight pillars of the values and I remember one of
204 them was silliness and celebration. I loved the joyfulness and the playfulness of that, along with
205 the seriousness of the type of work that we were doing. And I really valued and loved that. There
206 were so many things that just became part of how I wanted to see things as a very integrated

207 approach to personal, ecological, social change, and well-being, and seeing all those as
208 interwoven.

209 The focus on living more sustainably with the earth and more justly with its people was
210 one of the phrases. There was just a language around cultivating and celebrating that I really
211 appreciated.

212 Some of that came more from David at New Community Project and then some from
213 Tom. And then there were group processes where we reframed everything. For a long time, I was
214 leading group processes soliciting language, feedback, and desires from people, and tryin' to take
215 all that input to craft the vision of the place. And so, there were many long, prolonged processes
216 like that as a connection between healing and justice, and a sense that it wasn't a choice between
217 caring for the earth and caring for humans, but that this is the same work.

218 The supposed tension between social justice and environmentalism -- without naming
219 environmental justice at that time -- New Community Project was just coming at it a different
220 way. Recognizing this all connected and related was really meaningful for me.

221 My experience was pretty mixed in who was dignified. There was a general desire to
222 recognize the dignity of everyone and treat people with dignity because the social landscape that
223 we inherit was very unevenly distributed.

224 Sometimes with intention and practice, there were disagreements among the core people
225 about how we treat people with dignity and what deserves dignity and respect. And that's always
226 political work. We're always working through power and how we treat and give our attention.
227 Some of that is fine to me as we struggle through that tension. But also noticing who was leaving
228 more regularly, who felt more welcome than others, or who were receiving quicker support, and
229 who had the ability to be there more often because they didn't need, as much paid work as other

230 people. Over the years, I remember feeling a lot of frustration and tension with that because I felt
231 like it ended up just mapping onto the social landscape that we were tryin' to recontour and
232 reshape. And yeah, there are a lot of mixed experiences with intention and practice. Maybe part
233 of the tension that often happens in groups like this, and is often associated with Christian
234 groups, is that there was a personal offering of dignity that was very real and sincere. However,
235 there was also a struggle to translate that into collective practices that offered dignity to people in
236 ways that could hold their lives materially (laughs) and actually make sure their needs were met
237 for the long term.

238 Making an economy out of that personal dignity or making a social architecture to hold
239 that dignity I think that was always what we were tryin' to figure out, but those were distinct
240 struggles. To offer personal dignity seemed to come easily and was very valued, but a lot of
241 tension came up in how do we make dignity something that is built into the system itself.

242 Some of the tensions would come up in multiple directions between a lot of folks who
243 were white, but who lived in incredible poverty, had lived without housing, had been
244 incarcerated, and those who had never had been assaulted and beaten in their lives. They're very
245 real lived experiences of oppression and then also having personal views and opinions that were
246 racist or sexist, and being able to hold both of those and not just dismissing one or the other.

247 And then folks coming from Central America or from Africa who were displaced through
248 different parts of Africa, the Middle East, and just what were some of the tensions happenin'
249 between who was extended dignity. 'Cause it never was stated this way, but it was a tension of
250 who deserves dignity more and who deserves the resources more. The group had a harder time of
251 connecting the dots on how both their experiences are really important and connected to a global
252 capitalist imperial system where this is different expressions of a very similar dynamic in the

253 world, or very similar systems of violence expressed. And people's needs will be different, but
254 can we connect these experiences together?

255 I experienced this with different peace-building groups who do international work as a
256 valorizing or praising of folks who are from overseas, and that's such a general vague term. But,
257 it's easier for a lot of white peace-builder folks to work with immigrants than it is to work with
258 black folks or poor white folks in the U.S. There's something easier and there's a whole lot of
259 different reasons for the distinction. But some of that was also repeated in Vine & Fig and that
260 was a challenge to work through. But I think figurin' out the dignity and nuance in that was hard
261 for people.

262 Whew, yeah, that is challenging. I'm tryin' to remember if solidarity was language that we
263 would have used very often. Definitely, solidarity was part of the practice, but unsure what
264 would it have been called at the time. Just living and living together like Dietrich Bonhoeffer's
265 "*Life together*" or somethin' like that had been more of it. Another one of the gifts and wounds is
266 the deep gift of solidarity and being in close relationship of rubbing shoulders or being in similar
267 situations so you have some experience of stayin' in a location and being, "This is what it's like
268 to see from this perspective."

269 I think that has real value. However, often that's really helping most the person who has
270 been in a position of a lot of power or privilege who comes in to solidarity and "Oh, now I see
271 things this way!" But it doesn't necessarily mean that the person you're in solidarity with is
272 supported. (laughs) And that can depend on just how we define the term. For example, there are
273 some folks that I know thinking in terms anti-racism of white folks and movements of moving
274 from social service or white savior to solidarity, which is so crucial and important. The next
275 move would then be to mutual aid or transformation where there's an actual deep relationship.

276 With Vine & Fig, sometimes, the call from some folks is like a Catholic worker-style Christian
277 downward mobility. The vision is to move, let go of your privilege, or get rid of your resources
278 and be in solidarity with the poor in a broad term.

279 There's something in that I still want to find some way to claim goodness in but it's really
280 complicated when the poor is undifferentiated (laughs) and the downward mobility means we're
281 all houseless together? (laughs)

282 People need shelter so where and how can we talk about a more liberating way to
283 leverage or shift the unjust things we have inherited to make it possible for other people to access
284 the basic means needed for thriving.

285 And so, if solidarity moves us in that direction that's great. But sometimes for me there,
286 the experience of solidarity with the greatest end was a personal spiritual transformation of
287 moving through downward mobility and just bein' in a similar deprived situation as other people.
288 To me, solidarity becomes, well, a really beautiful gift for the start of something -- and not the
289 end goal itself -- and that's where it has such beautiful power.

290 Often what happens with the version of solidarity that's part of that downward mobility, it
291 still puts priority on the person doing the downward movement and so it can still fit into this
292 white or outsider savior model. Because, typically, that person still has the ability to opt-out and
293 there's still a social system to support that person. So, it's not organizing for changing the
294 conditions, and that to me was part of the difference that can come from liberation theology then
295 dependin' on how that's framed. A lot of liberation theology was originally framed more from
296 below, the vision was base-grassroots communities organizing for changing the conditions of life
297 so that people could thrive and have beloved community.

298 And so, it's interesting. For people, those of us on however you want to call the more
299 privileged side of empire, moving and being downwardly mobile is the solution. Well, the folks
300 from where we're tryin' to move to are actually sayin', "We just want to redistribute all this."
301 (laughs) And for people to be in solidarity with that.

302 There were aspects of that perspective at Vine & Fig, but that was part of the tension
303 between the partner team. At the time, we were actually tryin' to create together very different
304 visions of that and so I was pretty frustrated in the early challenges, but it was also very
305 formative. Part of what it means to change stuff is that we've gotta work out and talk through
306 these different things we're tryin' to do. That's always part of it and so I'm also grateful for
307 learning to do that.

308 I saw the challenges. It was just the inevitable challenge of tryin' to do what we were
309 doing, (laughs) holding all these things together, tryin' to figure out how to be, and also do
310 therapeutic careful work. There were so much the people were tryin' to do with the care work,
311 while they hadn't worked through figuring out for themselves how to make it economically
312 viable to do what we were doing.

313 And so, that is the inevitable challenge that comes with the work. I was always noting
314 that tension and challenge. It was just very different visions for what we were tryin' to do, how
315 we should structure things, and having the hospitality for everybody to bring what you want
316 here.

317 We all came because we wanted to do community and do these integrated things.
318 However, someone would want to do more of a new monastic order, some people wanted to do it
319 more halfway house Catholic work or hospitality house style, and some people wanted to do it
320 like an organizing hub for change on the community. Each style has very different practices and

321 that could be really challenging when that wasn't clear to everyone that that conflict of styles was
322 happening. Well, we were all using the same language or a lot of the same language, but we kept
323 rubbing up against this challenge and having friction then partly because of these understated
324 things.

325 It was hard to have accountability and be accountable to decisions that were made out of
326 a desire to help or please people. Decisions that were made collectively, individuals would
327 change in the moment and not clear with others on how do we respond to that, how do we hold
328 to what we said we were gonna do. A lot of Tom's personality is woven into that organizational
329 structure. And so, sometimes that was hard to see early on, but became clear over time. It was
330 what often happens, the founder syndrome.

331 And I think that has been a pretty challenging thing for a lot of people to work through,
332 'cause the stated desires for inclusion and makin' it work for the people there. But I think it's been
333 hard for Tom to see ways in which he's not letting go of some power that he has there, even
334 though he holds it differently that's been an ongoing challenge at Vine & Fig to figure out. And it
335 was a big source of conflict during this period of time when I was a part of the partner team
336 which was 2012 to 2017. I moved away for a while, and I came back and I didn't rejoin the
337 partner team. Cornelius and I were starting the Forest Farm and then I stepped back into helping
338 at the White House. At the main White House, there's a mediator and facilitator for house
339 meetings twice a month. I would help hold these long meetings for the household to make
340 decisions together, work through conflict, and figure out chores.

341 So, when I moved back to start the Forest Farm with Cornelius, I was pretty clear that I
342 didn't want it to be a Vine & Fig thing, but I wanted to be in a relationship. The image that came
343 to me later was to be a good neighbor and where neighbors can partner on tons of stuff. And I

344 would like to have my house, and I'd like you to have your house. That actually meant we could
345 work better together. Because what I had come to realize, it was gonna be really hard for me to
346 fully express and do things I felt I should be doing within the structure of Vine & Fig as it was. A
347 big piece was there was no clear way how I could financially support myself doing that. The
348 most I ever made there was not enough (laughs) and I just had to do a lot of other stuff. And
349 that's still a challenge. An issue is figurin' out how, given the world that we live in and the
350 economic system, people are gonna sustain themselves financially. If you don't have a bunch of
351 inherited access or wealth, you're gonna have to make some money.

352 And so, in particular, that meant I need to have some way to do that and I still want it to
353 be deeply beautiful work that feeds what I want to do in the world and I'd like it to be connected
354 to this place 'cause I have access to things through this group or through this place. But I wanted
355 to make sure I had autonomy: to shape and make decisions, of language, and structure that feels
356 true to how I would like to do things and not keep getting stuck in what often was happenin' at
357 Vine & Fig.

358 And so, that image of New Community Project, as an organization, being more of an
359 umbrella for things to sprout out that could have some autonomy. There was already a precedent
360 when Tom had the vision to start what's become Vine & Fig doing it under the umbrella of New
361 Community Project and it still had a lot of autonomy.

362 New Community Project legitimately wants stuff that's gonna use their fiscal
363 sponsorship, or be under their umbrella, to have a lot more integration within. And it's very
364 understandable. But the model of an umbrella is what lots of nonprofits do that also offer fiscal
365 sponsorship to other groups. I would like to work with that vision thematically or at least in

366 terms of value or conviction. There's still a lot of kindredness in what I'm tryin' to do with New
367 Community Project and for a long time the overlapping use of the place.

368 There was a lot of conversation about how could this be a little bit more like village life,
369 where we're doing our own thing but next door to each other. And you're gardening right there,
370 I'm pruning trees over here, and we gotta check in to make sure we're takin' care of each other's
371 stuff? But we're not having a meeting every morning and are accountable to the same exact
372 things. That felt a lot more freeing to me to do that and worked relatively well in that. So, it was
373 born of both an animating desire to do other things we really want to do and some dissatisfaction.
374 Where I have a little bit more boundary, and where it would mean that we could be in a better
375 relationship.

376 Whew, where I see New Community Project as a whole being in five or 10 years? I think
377 that's been a growing edge. I've seen movement on that as well in knowing boundaries, knowing
378 the role, and knowing the scale of the work. To have an expansive imagination with a very
379 integrated analysis of our skill and scale is so important, and then from that analysis figurin' out:
380 what role do we play within that expansiveness? we can't do all the things but how do we fit into
381 that? That is really possible and really good.

382 There's a lot of clarifying that can happen within an organization; matching who the
383 organization is for, with the people who are leading it is really crucial. New Community Project,
384 as a whole, does a lot of international work. With those folks on the ground that you've partnered
385 with, how are their voices reflected in the power of the group in the decision-making? The same
386 can be true and asked locally. I think that should be true of any group of people, who leads the
387 organization is reflected in who it's for and vice versa. I hope there's growth happening towards
388 that end in terms of the structure rather than the focus that always feels to me like what could

389 that organization be doing? That's so dependent on who's involved and bein' locally adaptive to
390 the needs and the place. But some of those guiding visions or commitments to a solidarity is a
391 beginning point, not an end point. It feels like that can make so many things possible.

Appendix M:

Narrative of Kim

My name is Kim, and I have been a board member of the New Community Project since its inception. I have been engaged sometimes experientially in things that are being done, sometimes by visits, and sometimes by hearing reports. I was there from the beginning. Let's put it that way.

David was a staff person, as I'm sure you've heard, for the Church of the Brethren (CoB) national offices. And he was a friend of mine from many years past. As he began to transition out of that job and think about what was coming next, he was being offered a position with a denomination that was not really true to where his passion and gifts lie best. He could have done it fine, but he was toying with the idea of beginning something new.

I was in on those initial conversations and just an encourager. I don't know that my role was so substantive at the beginning except just that we worked together to get things off the ground and get an advisory board established, and our first board meeting was here in the DC area where I was pastoring.

I've been connected to all three of those arms or maybe it's really four in many ways. In my way of looking at it, it's the work that David does, and that is built on some of the things he was doing with churches already. Now it's expanded to so many other areas where he's speaking in schools and communities, a variety of places now. That's a public education advocacy role that he plays.

And then, international partnerships are a second in my mind, a second expression of the goals. And then Harrisonburg is a third and Vermont is fourth. It's pretty diverse as you've known all along and learned more about as you've talked to people. Not unlike some of the ideas, you're trying to pull together, but it's because they're connected. There are connections in these

25 concepts and justice is about not only the people who are in need, but it's about all of us and it's
26 about the earth and those connections are just so intrinsic.

27 It's unwieldy sometimes as we try to hold these different things together. But my
28 privilege really has been to have a finger, a light touch on a bunch of these different things and
29 be able to hear about it and just be supportive of it. I chaired the board for a few years. I've
30 played different roles, but now I'm just a board member. (laughs)

31 Originally, it was my sense that there is so much need in our church community, our
32 national church community, for being able to get its feet on the ground when it comes to peace
33 and justice and the connections that are there. And the work David had been doing was part of
34 that and his position was being phased out. Really it was being transitioned to something
35 different. For me, the passion was to not let that get lost and to continue to invest in something
36 that would make those connections kind of reach out on behalf of those issues in the church
37 explicitly, not circuitously, which sometimes happens anyway.

38 But I got involved because I myself have been compelled by the message of
39 peacemaking, by the needs of the world, and the cries for justice. This was just a concrete way to
40 address that. I've been delighted to see this effort expand beyond just the insular church, but I
41 also am really glad for its presence in the church and its impact on the church.

42 In those initial discussions that I was having with David, he was toying with an idea in
43 his mind, New Community Project. I think it's really central to the vision: what we're trying to do
44 is to participate in and build strength in a new vision of community that is really broad, that
45 unites all the people of the earth, the creatures of the earth, and the earth itself. It's not the
46 community that we live in as neighbors exactly, it's part of it, but it's so much broader.

47 I was drawn to that aspect of it. And what I was describing in terms of the tendrils that
48 have gone out all over the place, to me, is because there is this central vision of a new
49 community. It does reach in all kinds of directions. And it's part of what makes it a little bit
50 awkward in some ways to define the organization. And sometimes when I'm talking about what
51 we do, I think, "Boy, it's just such a big thing. It's a small-scale organization, but it's a big thing."

52 We used to say, "It's about turning the world upside down." And we have this globe that's
53 upside down. That got a little bit too (laughs) maybe ambitious, but now we talk about changing
54 the world in small and big ways.

55 As a board member, one of the things we've done is that we've made an attempt to move
56 around in the country itself based partly on where the board members are. But more recently to
57 be able to be a part of the communities in Harrisonburg and in Vermont at least for a few days,
58 when we can do that. COVID has, of course, made that a different thing and we've done our
59 meetings online. We're anticipating going up to Starksboro this coming fall. And we've been to
60 Harrisonburg a number of times.

61 I have not spent a lot of time independently at either of those places, although a little bit
62 at each maybe helping a little bit with some small projects, but nothing very major. Some other
63 board members may have done some more of that, but mostly we've made the visits, we've
64 gotten our feet wet by being present with the folks who are in the midst of gardening or in the
65 midst of doing food share work up in Vermont or whatever it might be. For the first time, I went
66 this year to Nepal on one of the learning tours, so that was a big dip in the experiential part of the
67 whole thing.

68 But we just get a chance to hear all the voices and the reports that we hear from our staff
69 as well as people who sometimes visit our board meetings or whose narratives we get to hear

70 because of some reporting. That's where I feel like I get to see a whole lot of aspects of the work
71 that not everybody gets to see. And it's really an incredible privilege.

72 I pastored for 39 years until last fall when I retired. My own journey meant that there was
73 ambivalence for me about that pretty continuously because there is so much that we need to be
74 doing to be living the faith and the gospel. And yet, the church can suck away energy. In other
75 ways, the church can be a vehicle for investing that energy and that brought me deep satisfaction
76 over many years.

77 But, the institutional quality of it and the way in which it can claim energy that could be
78 going someplace else was always a tension for me. New Community Project allows me and did
79 allow for all those years, a chance to be engaged with some of the stuff that I think is most
80 important.

81 I mean I get tired of meetings; I get tired of programs; I get tired of preaching, and all of
82 that stuff. It has been a part of my life and a significant part that I value in many ways, but I'm so
83 glad to have this other aspect. Personally, as I said, it's been a privilege and the interactions with
84 the people on the board have also been really rich.

85 There's a diverse group of gifts among our board members, but there's also a spirit that
86 reflects the goals of the organization in terms of valuing the community and taking each other
87 seriously in our own journeys. And also, being able to speak pretty honestly about things. It's a
88 little microcosm of what I hope we are building in other places. It's been a very rich experience;
89 I've been on other boards too and they haven't all been that way.

90 Part of what I was referring to in terms of the board, there is a really deep sense of
91 connection and trust among us on the board, and respect for each other. But it grows out of the
92 way that the organization has functioned and the valuing of those things. When I think about

93 what we try to do whether it be in Starksboro or Harrisonburg or with partners; or even when
94 David is speaking, or others of us are out; the valuing of each voice, the sense of mutual
95 responsibility, the care, and the respect for people, and the importance of listening to each voice,
96 all of those things are part of what we're trying to do in our work in Harrisonburg.

97 In all those places, it happens in a way that's not always very common. There can be
98 people as diverse as there are in say, Harrisonburg, and each one really has a role, a voice, and it
99 feels valued.

100 I'm sure there are times when that doesn't work perfectly, but it's fairly extraordinary.
101 And the same is true in Starksboro, with the people who are working together. It's not somebody
102 coming in from the outside and imposing a program. It's people working very closely. I know
103 you worked in Africa and MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) has that same explicit goal. But
104 I don't think that's common in the world, so it's so grassroots. Learning from the people that
105 you're working with is core.

106 It's hard work to have the people who are living in the White House in Harrisonburg have
107 as much to say about what's happening as anybody else does. Or for a refugee family to have a
108 significant voice when they're new and they're adjusting but they still have a sense of really
109 being valued. Or the people who live in the little tiny houses, there's just so much and it takes
110 work. There's so much sense that this process is as important as what we come out with across
111 the board. I've seen that in so many ways with New Community Project and it's inspiring.

112 The truth is that for me it happens in our board meetings that we have this exchange that
113 feel mutually encouraging and the energy that is given not just by the board members to the staff,
114 but all the way around is something that is just a very positive upbuilding feeling for me. It's

115 probably my board experience if I'm being really most honest, because I'm not as involved
116 regularly with the other things. I'm not a participant all the time to speak about rituals.

117 At the board meetings, we do spend some time reflecting at the beginning of each of our
118 sessions. And although New Community Project isn't defined as a Christian organization, for
119 many of us on the board, there's this spiritual element that's most at the root. We do take time to
120 try to lift that up, nurture that in some way, and people's leadership shifts. Every time we're
121 together, we do something, usually multiple things, that help us stay grounded in the vision and
122 the sense of call that we have.

123 I have been at Vine and Fig several times when Tom has rung the bell and there's a pause.
124 Attention to what is bigger than all of us is part of the goal, and maybe part of the strength as
125 much as anything. That's a small ritual, but I really value that he does that. And I have valued our
126 own board attempts at leading it and facilitating the reflection time. That shared leadership, and
127 rotating leadership, is really a nice element too.

128 I've been struck with how many stories we've heard over the years of people who have
129 come to one of the Sustainable Living Centers who have then moved into a whole lot of activity
130 and leadership within the organization at some point. It's a reflection of the fact that people feel
131 cared for much of the time and respected in a way that is new and different sometimes for
132 people.

133 I see it as one of the geniuses of the way the whole thing is structured in these places
134 where people come and work together. Everybody is playing this role and yet there is always
135 possibility for something more, something deeper that happens.

136 I also see this even when David is out doing his speaking, he has a genius for engaging
137 people of all ages. And even when they're in a mixed group together, I don't know if you've been

138 with him in these kinds of settings, but from the beginning the vision was that they would be
139 partners. They have felt that partly because groups do come and they feel valued because of that
140 sense of partnership. They feel like they're a part of something.

141 It was very interesting to me on this Nepal trip that the partner organization, which works
142 with a whole lot of different groups feels a little bit differently about New Community Project. If
143 they say this to everybody I don't know, but they value the fact that there would be people who
144 would come and be with them for not just a meeting, but for a period of days and to walk
145 together. So, all of that contributes.

146 I've seen David speak many times, of course. In church groups, he will invite the
147 participation of little kids and the kids respond so quickly to the attention and the care, and the
148 invitation to be a part of what's happening in a way that is hard to describe. And then, many
149 times these kids have come up with their own fundraising projects or then they get their families
150 to go on one of the trips and the trips are intergenerational in many cases. There's something
151 about having adults caring for kids who are not their own kids, and kids relating to adults who
152 are not their parents, and all of that is also a part of it. It's an ethos that is successful much of the
153 time.

154 With the partners, of course, it's being willing to let them take the lead and to be there to
155 learn from them, but also support them. And I have had a sense of that from many, many of the
156 partners in various countries for a long time.

157 At least for me, I know that I have benefited more from my involvement on this board
158 than I've given. Sometimes I have resources that I can give: I can give some money or I can give
159 some time, but honestly the ways I've received from people make it really hard to say that there's
160 that distinction in giving and receiving when it is truly reciprocal. I know that it's probably

161 privileged to be able to say that because maybe the people who are living in circumstances that I
162 can hardly imagine. On the trip to Nepal, I found myself several times saying, "I can't imagine
163 what life is like here." It's my white privilege curtain falling that I just can't quite step into that.

164 But in terms of the relationships with people and the way we talked about things, we
165 were able to ask questions and it was a different way of being. I give to other things too and
166 that's charity sometimes. But this is different.

167 I'm trying to think about an on-the-ground experience. But it had to be pre-COVID we
168 had a board meeting in Harrisonburg and the residents of the house made us a meal and sat down
169 with us to talk about what's going on there: the shared life, the challenges, how they're
170 interacting, and how they're playing roles in it. For me, that was a really eye-opening time
171 because I kept trying to pigeonhole people in my brain, get the category right: this is somebody
172 who came off the street and is here, this is somebody who came as a refugee, and I was having a
173 hard time doing that.

174 I couldn't place people really easily because of the flow and the way people were taking
175 the lead in the conversation. All of those things where in many meetings that you're in, you just
176 know who's in charge, who's doing what, who's the staff person, and who's the client. There was
177 just none of that.

178 It was really interesting to me. We didn't have a long time and we probably would've
179 uncovered some of the past experiences that all of us brought to it, but we didn't have that time
180 really. I came away from the meeting thinking, "Wow! This is possible. People can engage with
181 each other in a way that is not hierarchical."

182 It is valuing roles that people play, but it's not distinguishing among them according to
183 importance or anything. That was a little bit of a formative time in flipping things on the edge or
184 the side and to see real ownership.

185 It's just a clarity about the sense of mutual responsibility and engagement that was really
186 clear to me in that moment and doesn't always happen that way. The values of being willing to
187 look deeply at ourselves and our own lifestyles as we consider justice issues.

188 To hold the needs of all different kinds of groups up at the same time, but to hold
189 marginalized groups up and to hold the impact on the environment up along with the complexity
190 of causations and influences when it comes to justice issues and peacemaking to see and grapple
191 with how clearly justice and peacemaking are connected if there's going to ever be any chance of
192 peacemaking at all.

193 I find myself thinking about the world situation often. And making peace right now in
194 Ukraine is pretty connected. The war with Russia is pretty connected to bigger issues that are not
195 really being addressed very well. As this war is progressing, those values of being committed to
196 the flourishing of all people that's really key to me.

197 I'm certainly less knowledgeable about some of the sustainability issues than about some
198 of the others, but I've really been grateful for how I see that connection being made repeatedly in
199 the New Community Project life. The people who are going to suffer most from climate change
200 are the people who are also going to suffer from lack of justice in the world and are suffering.
201 Those kinds of things. I don't know if those are very simply named values, but compassion, care,
202 mutual respect, and all of those things that I've mentioned already are values.

203 It takes intention because we assume we're honoring everybody but don't always do it
204 because of all the internalized systemic kinds of factors that impact us. And as I look at some of

205 the people impacted who live in agricultural societies, I've been an urban person pretty much all
206 my life and it's very easy just to maybe pay less attention to those who have experiences that are
207 very different from mine.

208 I certainly don't see myself as any paragon when it comes to these sorts of things, but I
209 think that New Community Project tries very hard and with international partners. It's very clear.
210 But it's also clear with the partners who come to work at the Sustainable Living Centers to
211 recognize that those people have expertise and experience and wisdom that we need to learn
212 from and can learn from.

213 When the trips are planned, often the partners on the ground internationally do a lot of the
214 planning or then Tom and Pete and their staffs at the two places take leadership. They're leaders
215 and they take the lead in many ways, but they often are listening first to the people around them
216 and trying very hard to include all voices and there's been a great gender balance.

217 We're working hard right now on the board to think about race and how our own
218 practices and how our own connections with others that we're working with are transparent and
219 are open to self-examination. That's been a value that we are trying to work at right now with
220 some anti-racism reading. We did this last board meeting. We're trying to work at making sure
221 that we look at representation, gender representation, racial and ethnic representation in
222 leadership, not all on the board necessarily, but the board too. We have such a lot of that written
223 into the programming, but that's important stuff.

224 I'm a woman and I really love the fact that we work with a lot of women and girls'
225 education programs and micro businesses and things like that. That's an expressed goal. It's one
226 that I feel a very deep personal connection with because of who I am. But that's probably for me
227 the place I feel the most passion.

228 I grew and benefited pretty profoundly from mentors. I grew up in the Bethany seminary
229 community, which is the Church of the Brethren seminary. I had mentors and faculty members
230 whose impact on me helped expand my world. People like Dale Brown, who took us to civil
231 rights marches when we were 14 and people like that who really instilled in me some of the
232 values that would be significant for a long time.

233 I feel really like blessed by the many people in the bigger church, in local church too,
234 who have been so active in their own lives, in just committing their time and energy to make it a
235 better world, (laughs), to being, to building justice, to sometimes taking actions, and paying price
236 for doing so. I don't like to list individuals very well. I've always resisted that, but I would say
237 that that community of faith has been really inspirational for me.

238 It gives me incredible hope to see the numbers of people who have flocked to be
239 involved. I mean, we're a small organization, and when I listen to Tom reporting on the students,
240 the school kids, the neighbors, the homeless people, the interns, and everyone who is coming,
241 learning, and contributing. That's like a little microcosm but that happens in Starksboro, maybe a
242 little smaller scale, but it's happening.

243 And David, when I hear him. He was here overnight a month ago or so and he had just
244 come back from a speaking little excursion where he was in a bunch of schools. I helped him sort
245 through and record all these names of kids who had signed up to be on the New Community
246 Project mailing list. And, these were high school students. They were maybe 15 or 16 years old
247 and they would sometimes write a little comment and they'd put their name down.

248 And I just thought, he spoke to so many people and so many of them signed up. Now I
249 know it doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to stick or that they're going to adopt these

goals as their own for the rest of their lives, but just the interest, the commitment that he reports on from some of the kids and that I'm seeing in these projects that is very hopeful.

Okay, because I want to talk a little bit more about Nepal and the people there. The project there, as you've probably heard from David, was founded for and by survivors of human trafficking. Just meeting some of them and seeing their energy, their dedication, their rage at some points, and their patience at other times instead, all of those things were really inspirational to me. We had a couple guides, two of whom were very young, and we met a number of others who themselves were survivors of trafficking.

And the fact, they have a place where they can address these issues and take action. Their level of investment and dedication is and was totally inspirational to me. Seeing the woman, a pig farmer, who got a little micro business loan through her involvement with New Community Project or along with Shakti-Samuha, was funding these micro loans and she started out with two pigs and now she has 66 pigs. Maybe David talked about this too.

We climbed through a trash litter gully on the edge of and up onto a hill. And she has this little place staked out with her family and her 66 pigs that she's supporting. It's really the little anecdotal stuff that is most inspiring to me. The numbers can be inspiring too because it has grown. I've seen our staff members work with such incredible commitment and very little pay; they choose to do that. That incredible commitment is hope giving. There are so many things that are really gifts of hope that come from this work.

I looked at that question and I was thinking the challenges, of course, are to grow this within our own context. I don't think we have a goal to become a huge international nonprofit group, but to grow within our own context is one of the challenges. And, it has been growing, so that continues to be a challenge.

273 Currently, as a board member, our challenge is to think about what happens when David
274 particularly retires. He's not thinking about it at all much, except in so far as we push him to
275 think about it. But it will happen or something could happen to intervene and we're very
276 dependent on a small staff. It's a personality-driven organization in some ways, but not
277 exclusively. It has expanded, but it started out really that way with David and then others like
278 Tom and Pete. Tom is very charismatic and Pete is too. I mean there's a real reliance on those
279 individuals.

280 A challenge for the board is to think about how we train other leadership? How do we
281 engage people in sustaining the work? The work can change, the shape of it can change, but
282 sustaining this work and how do we take advantage of this great network of people we have to do
283 that training and sustaining?

284 We haven't had crises. They've had some smaller-scale crises in some of the projects.
285 When an earthquake destroyed the shelters in the Nepal or when flooding has destroyed crops in
286 Malawi and all that, those kinds of things are crises, of course. But, in terms of the real big
287 picture, we've been fortunate.

288 Seeing the way people are working together and interacting with each other in these
289 different settings, seeing American partners standing with people planting mangrove forests, or
290 the reaching across the differences and the distances that is one factor. The shared commitment
291 to the values that are driving all of it, there's so much of that in many human beings. Not
292 everybody can do that because of their own trauma.

293 And we talked about trauma-informed work, there are places to recognize that the trauma
294 has been so great for some people that they need to play a role that's different. They can work

295 together with others, but they don't necessarily feel they can as deal and cope with their own
296 trauma.

297 It takes a shift in cultures before that can happen very easily. However, I see so much of
298 that in the work we do, as I see these people coming together across the lines, that it feels like
299 there can be a community here that is beyond all the divisions that we've known and chosen.

300 In the next five to 10 years, we've been in operation almost 20 years now. I can imagine
301 that there would be other communities that would establish programs like have happened in
302 Harrisonburg and Starksboro. I'm not talking about all across the world in five or 10 years, but
303 I'm talking about a few more where maybe some other people are starting to do the same thing:
304 engaging diverse groups within the community to work together on sustainable living and
305 justice. I'd like to see a couple more sites.

306 We've been discouraging David because sometimes he'll go out and he gets many
307 opportunities to start or do something new. We've been holding him in a little bit because you
308 can only do so much. But I would like to see it grow so that we have staff who are as engaged
309 and as wise and experienced really as we have right now with David, Tom, Pete, and the others
310 that work with them. I don't want to discount any of them because we have a lot of others who
311 are working too.

312 I'd like to see that grow and to see maybe a couple other places in the world where we
313 have partner programs that would be flourishing, that there would be a little more diversity on
314 our board, would be good. We have some good diversity, but it's more with the partners that we
315 have than on our board. I'd like to see leadership from some other racial and ethnic groups.

316

317 Of course, the organization is actually doing fine financially, but money is always a good
318 thing to have, and it could enable us to address one of the challenges for us. We have staff who
319 are doing this at great cost to themselves and their families in many ways. And great benefit too,
320 but they've chosen this life. And when we look at growing the organization, I don't think we can
321 assume that everybody will do that.

322 Having more resources financially would probably make it useful to us to be able to
323 reach out like that. On the other hand, we recognize that that could create a funny double
324 standard in the organization. But that's a bit of a challenge

325 And the whole beloved community idea can happen in a microcosm, but the goal is that
326 it's everywhere. That international aspect of it is important too. For me, the experience at New
327 Community Project is one example as a microcosm. I was activist-oriented earlier and did a lot
328 of demonstrating and I do much less of that now. The incarnation and modeling of a small thing
329 can probably have more impact than standing with a sign in front of the Pentagon does. I feel
330 like small scale stuff addresses the big systemic things if you do it right. And I'm sure there are
331 plenty of ways that we haven't done it right, But, it's a hopeful thing. (Laughs)

Appendix N:

Narrative of Michael

My name is Michael. I've been here for about 12 years since 2009. Two years ago, at the end of 2020, Tom just came to my house and told me about New Community Project and the Jubilee Climate Farm here. I didn't know that I was getting paid but I thought Tom was telling me to share my knowledge and my experience. And I said, "Yeah." And then, we later talked about the pay. I said, "Oh, you're telling me to work for you and get paid?" Then I said yes.

So, I said yes and I had to cut my hours with my work in Harrisonburg down to working two days and I work three days here. I got to know Tom. He just suddenly showed up at my house (laughs) because he knew about me through another friend. So since then, I've been working here. We started the climate farm in March 2021. We've been working here at the garden and trying to make the world better. (laughing)

Well, my role is like anyone else. We do plants. We plant and we harvest. The first time, especially, we dig lots because it was empty as you might remember. So we had to prepare the beds and we do everything. I do from weeding and planting and harvesting. Also, whenever volunteers come to the farm, we show them what we're doing and how. We give some overview of the farm.

Since I was young, like maybe 10, 11. Well, I grew up with my dad, who was a farmer. It wasn't like a big farm like here in the United State but everyone has, of course, a little farm where they could live and survive. I grew up with my parents who had a farm and I grew up plowing lands with oxen just like tractors do here. Actually, my oldest brother had a little garden that he started, then he left for the military. He was forced to leave and I started working on the gardens at this early age so I had a garden and I was growing all kinds of vegetables.

24 And I was helping myself and also supporting my parents and family I remember. I had a
25 garden until I left East Africa. It wasn't a huge garden but it was a garden near a stream, which I
26 had to fetch the water by hand and water it to get food for our family.

27 When Tom explained to me what kind of organization this is. It was something that I'd
28 been interested in and I've been gardening here in Harrisonburg before I even had my house,
29 which was 2019. I had gardens with other friends at their house. Sometimes we shared the
30 produce because it wasn't my land. I've always been wanting to start my own garden. I believe
31 that the food that we are getting from different sources at this time are not really good. I believe
32 in organic farming and that is what I've been doing since 2018. I've been growing my own food.
33 I save and preserve my own food -- for not all but still some of my foods for during the winter
34 and half of the summer.

35 And I freeze and I preserve them. I believe in organic food and also this is a community
36 garden, which is supporting others while also showing the way of farming in a morally good way
37 and practice. We talk about what farming it is -- like organic farming with no pesticides, with no
38 spray, and no tilling. That type of farming is something that I've been interested in and wanting
39 to do for a long time. This is something that I really enjoy.

40 Like I said earlier, from my experience and from my background, if you go back 10 years
41 ago or 15 years ago, my country in East Africa was like green, not all green, but there were lots
42 of trees. And at this time, there is almost none. And the organization helps with reforestation,
43 planting trees and they also plant edible trees. When you are farming you just don't plant crops
44 and wait for the harvest season, but you could plant companion crops and you could plant edible
45 tree crops at the same time.

I'm still learning about the organization's mission and vision but I know that they work internationally in South America and also some parts of Africa. They help the farmers who are affected by climate change and deforestation. Of course, many people around the world depend on farming and forestry. Close to 80% of the population live and subsist by farming. Crops all over the world are affected now by the constant change of the climate. The New Community Project also supports farmers and organizations in other parts of the world and that is a little bit about the organization that I know. This organization is not like the aid organizations that support those who are in need. Like I said, they work with people and countries in South America, Africa, and maybe elsewhere who are really affected with climate change. And that is something big corporations should also do: support others who are affected by climate change that is not their fault.

We met with Tom at the end of 2020 in December. He just came to my garden and I was at work at the time. He met my daughter and said, "Where is Michael?" And she said, "Why do you want him, do you want to him to teach you about the garden?" (laughs) "Well, I want to learn it and also share my experience about gardening." And she told me that a guy called Tom came and he wanted to see you. He's going to come next week and he came by then. I said, "Ah, you must be Tom."

We talked about the garden and he said, "We will need you to work with us." And I said, "Yeah." This was at the end of 2020. After the first time we met, we came here maybe in January to see what the farm looks like. And we started in March 2021. I've been working here since 2021.

Well, Tom is our director here. Tom's not like a boss, because he works like us. But he's the person that gets us. (laughing) From my experience, sometimes when you are the person in

69 charge of something, people just sit and give you directions. Tom, of course, is the person who
70 shares in whatever we do. He works with us. He works the same job that we do here.

71 Like when Tom approached my house, he was welcoming and knowledgeable about the
72 way of farming that we are doing here. And he shared with me a little bit about what they've
73 been doing internationally. I've been welcomed since the first day that I met Tom and everyone
74 here respects each other. And we, of course, eat and we dance and so I've been welcomed.
75 (laughs)

76 It is something that we all need. Like when we come early in the morning here, we talk
77 how we are doing, and if there's anything that we could do to support each other. I believe that is
78 something very good. We never know how one person could be affected through life with many
79 things. We just share our prayers and maybe support the person who's in need.

80 Of course, we share food, we eat together. That's also how we cultivate love and respect
81 for each other. I really love it. Regardless how many people came to the farm, we serve food and
82 we all eat together. For some people, it might look like a waste of time. (laughing) I mean, it's
83 not wasteful or too much, but we share and we eat food to show love and respect to each other.
84 And I mean, a little could be enough for everyone.

85 Agroforestry is something that I've been sharing information about with others. Sharing
86 your experience and your knowledge is very important for farmers all over the world. Maybe
87 they're doing the old way of farming, which is good, but they cannot survive by doing the same
88 type of farming that they've been experiencing. New Community Project helps sharing
89 knowledge, information, and an orientation with farmers in whatever places they work with.

90 War affects the whole thing and causes depopulation and displacement though. People
91 are leaving the countries because they don't have food and military are cutting the trees down for

92 revenge and also sanction. Not all countries in East Africa are democratic states. And of course,
93 a sanction does not hurt them but the ordinary people by the way. When there is no fuel and
94 there's no electricity, of course, the people would cut the trees. And the government is not
95 encouraging people to replant trees but whenever you cut one tree, you have to replace it with
96 many more. This replanting is not happening in East Africa and many parts of the world. Rain
97 would also affect it because when there's no trees around, it's very hard for the rain to be
98 consistent. Everything is affected because of that; many people are just giving up, leaving the
99 country, and living in exile.

100 Whenever you feel cared for, have a sense of resilience, and any type of feeling you
101 belong, you have a sense of welcome, being at home, and the right peace.

102 We all here care for each other, and we don't just give something hard that we cannot or I
103 cannot do. We all share the same task. It's not exactly the same, but we all just support each
104 other. And if there's something that someone needs help with, we go approach them and give
105 them an extra hand and they would do the same with me. Everyone is welcomed and cared for
106 here. (laughs)

107 Well, it's always a new day here. It's stressful to work at the house sometimes. And when
108 you are here, you forget everything about being outdoors. Not many people actually know this,
109 but for me just being outdoors here, the quiet environment gives me some peace of mind and so I
110 am always happy here to work.

111 If I go back to my country, that is something I would like to start, and would share my
112 experience from here and what I've learned. And I would like to do agroforestry and work on
113 ways that could improve farming. There are ways you could do lots of things in some parts of the
114 country. Where I came from, they plant barleys. Barleys require more rain, which if there's no

115 rain like almost every three years. There you expect some drought every few years in East
116 Africa.

117 But there are some crops that are resistant to the drought-like sorghum. Sorghum is not
118 very common in the highlands of East Africa. It is more common in the west, which is hotter.
119 But sorghum could be planted in other parts of the country. And just because plants are from the
120 west, they could be planted elsewhere. There are things that we talk with Tom about, and also the
121 New Community Project are doing globally to encourage farmers to plant drought-resistant
122 crops. That is something that I'm really interested to share and to do if for some reason I get to go
123 back to my country.

124 This organization really gives respect and dignity to those who have been here farming
125 traditionally like the Native Americans. They also respect and work with those really affected or
126 with low income and with immigrants. That is something that you don't see everywhere. That is
127 something I feel we should work more with. When you invite others like with the community
128 garden that we are doing, people should be encouraged to know and feel they are welcome and
129 they're part of the community.

130 I wish we could have more community gardens elsewhere and that you would see less of
131 lawns around the area, which nobody uses to garden or farm. Some people have a big backyard
132 and front yards and they don't do anything besides just little flowers around their house. And like
133 I've been saying for long, I wish it could be my house and could be my land. (laughs) I always
134 like to wish that I could offer some land for those in the community who are willing to do
135 farming.

136 And we are starting here at a small level, but hopefully, that will continue to grow and
137 welcome more people and they're really part of the community. I have a vision hopefully to one

138 day go back to the country where I grew up. The rivers and the streams that I have known since I
139 was born and a very young age, I found them dry when I visited East Africa in 2018.

140 And there's not much rain. And then, the trees that I remember were all dry and people
141 just cut them, they dig the trees from the roots and they use them for firewood and for charcoal.
142 Rain is a very crucial and scarce narrative there; drought is very common. Almost every three
143 years, the people and country experience drought. At the same time, almost every 10 years, you
144 expect locusts to attack. On top of the droughts, there are locusts, and there's everything.

145 Instead of just waiting for the stream water or for the rain, you could dig wells and also
146 reserve the water during the rainy season. Sometimes the rainy season in East Africa is really
147 huge and then suddenly after three months it stops raining.

148 There's a way you could conserve the water in reservoirs. And in many ways, that is
149 something that I wanted to do with the agroforestry and you could garden and raise like dairy
150 animals along the garden. You would have some weeds and leftovers from the garden so instead
151 of just wasting them and throwing them away you could feed them to sheep or goats or whatever
152 you raise along your garden or the farm. That is something that I am interested to design if I'm
153 successful.

154 Well, there are so many people that made me, like strive and stay stronger, especially
155 when I came to the country. And being in a country that you are not familiar with culturally and
156 geographically, it is not easy. Like many immigrants and refugees here experience lots of
157 trauma, depression, and many things, but thankfully there were people in my life that supported
158 me to just stay strong with what I've been going through, and also here at the farm. Tom is such a
159 great person, and he does understand your feelings and emotions and your needs and wants -- not
160 all wants, but your needs. (laughs).

161 My father is one of those who I always respect. I admire him for all the little things that
162 he had, but he was always a person who encouraged us to do more -- to do big. And he was not
163 educated, but he was a person who believed in education and did his best to feed his children and
164 support his children and also give all the encouragements that you expect from parents.

165 Well, for the next five to 10 years, I want to see more people, either through the
166 organization or private citizens, do the same project that we've been doing here. And if you have
167 the land, you could do lots of things. You could offer land for others who could do gardening.
168 And also, this is a farming technique that is very helpful for the next generation to survive rather
169 than killing all the richness of the soil with lots of pesticides. We could do lots of things naturally
170 like agroforestry so that important food sources continue. Our food, compared to many parts of
171 the world, here in the United States is very cheap but we waste lots of food anyway. (laughs) I
172 wish to see more people start the same programs that we are doing here and more people could
173 learn the techniques that we are using here.

Appendix O:

Narrative of Missy

My name is Missy. I met Tom at Our Community Place (OCP) in August 2011. And, I've stuck with New Community Project here on North Main at the White House and Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center. I was going to OCP for lunch. And Tom used to come on Mondays and Wednesdays. And, someone told me that he does garden work and was looking for help. And I was looking for a place where I can work and be outside. No drinkers, and no craziness going on. I eventually moved over into this area near the White House. I'm a partner, I do financial work here also. And, I help the people here seven days a week. Being outdoors, I love it and I just really like working with the land.

I was homeless for like 30 years or so. Yeah, I drank. I tried to live places but I just couldn't and would get beat up a lot. So, it's been a rough road. And I'm still not completely settled from being homeless, it'd be nice just to be at home and not think I have to move. I will find that peace of feeling at home but I've been through a lot.

See, I came to in 2008. My ex did something really horrible and I was with him. And, I spent 30 days in jail because I really knew nothing about things. And he spent two years in jail for what he did. And then, I quit drinking. In 2009, I quit. So, I've been sober since and this area here, just kind of took me away from the bad environments. I feel in control of my life now. And I feel so relieved I'm not drinking. And, so it's been 12 years and here really helped me, just the environment -- it's just natural and caring about life too. And see me, and see who I was, and what I can do, and that kind of branched into what it is now. The other aspect is just that we all have different life experiences. Exactly, we come from different cultures, different histories, and genders.

24 Yes. I've been a partner for about five years now with Tom and Alicia who's running the
25 gardens this year. But what I do a lot here is help with the people that live in the house that have
26 disabilities and I take care of them. And, we help people that just don't have nowhere to go to
27 have somewhere -- and have food, friendship, and get on their feet. To find work maybe if they
28 wanted to and find their own place eventually. But it's hard being on the streets nowadays and
29 times are hard.

30 I do breakfast five days a week and I do dinners. So, there are all different needs, I see all
31 kinds of different caring. And then, I'll clean up after people just because they don't really know
32 no better. I believe in the loving way of doing things. Period.

33 You know people get treated bad. It takes quite a while but I just grow every day and I'm
34 still growing. I can't say, "Oh, I'm done. I healed four years ago." Well, it's not like that 'cause it's
35 a life I was living and this is a life I'm now living. (laughs)

36 I do artwork a lot. I paint and do murals here for Tom -- like the signs for Ukraine and
37 Black Lives Matter. I did the mural on the White House. And I also go to Immanuel Mennonite
38 church, which I painted their three lines of the "We're glad you're our neighbor!" sign that's all
39 over. I did the original for Immanuel Mennonite Church.

40 Well, for the people that move in here, it's our job to try and make them feel at home or
41 make them feel safe and secure. If they need help cooking and everything, I do it to give that
42 sense of being okay and safe. Families are rough. And you love them. And you love them 'cause
43 you know them and who they are. But you don't know why they're doing and acting that way.

44 But I want everyone to feel like they're important. It's like Alicia needed a tooth out and I
45 told her I would pay for it. And then somehow it got to Tom and Tom said "No, we'll pay for it."
46 But I do things like that for them quietly, I don't really tell because I do care.

47 But I like each one to feel like they're someone, not a lump under the carpet because
48 everyone's individual and people are very special. I got very hurt at one time so I stayed more to
49 myself in my free time until I healed. And I can help others and then will heal eventually. And if
50 I don't that's fine. I can still live in my realm of where I feel good about what I'm doing here.

51 I find peace just doing what I'm happy doing here. I like people and I like Harrisonburg. I
52 like to travel and I lived overseas when I was little. My dad was in the Air Force and we lived in
53 Tripoli, Libya, and Misawa, Japan. I loved traveling and meeting different people. So, I grew up
54 early with different people and I'm one of six kids. So, we had a big Air Force family.

55 I find the students refreshing -- just their spirit and their joy. I hear them laughing and
56 talking Spanish with Alicia, Anita, and Indigo. Yeah, I just enjoy other people. I just like people
57 to feel good about being alive. A lot of people come here very rugged, whether from the streets
58 or bad relationships, or being thrown out of the house. So, it's very hard.

59 Well, when people have problems here. They know I will defend them; I stand up for
60 them. I'm pretty strong in that area. I get protective because I know they might not have a lot but
61 don't pick on them. Don't say they're not good enough. Who knows if they're good enough
62 because they never had a chance to show them? I'm more like just back off.

63 It shows in their confidence daily. I've seen him grow. And, he's been here five or six
64 years. And he was really rough when he got here. It took a few years. He comes from a family
65 with alcoholism and he has fetal alcohol syndrome from a baby. But he does work here twice a
66 week and he's grown so much emotionally and mentally. And he's just really grown.

67 And, that's where I see the good work that we put into him. And, everything takes time.
68 People need time to heal. They just can't heal in a few weeks, a month, or two years. It takes
69 really maybe about eight or nine years just so they can get a secure footing on the earth and be

70 themselves finally. And then, they see it's okay. They don't have to be scared or be brutalized
71 into changing, 'cause that is only fear. That's scary for people. And, you just can't mold people.
72 You got to work with them for who they are. That's the way I really feel.

73 I have my routine here daily. So, I'm here at 6:30, I start coffee, and then I feed the cats.
74 And then, at about quarter till 8:00, I start toast and eggs. We eat together. Oh, we used to have a
75 lot of rituals -- the silence, the bell, and mindfulness in the morning. We have the Wednesday
76 well-being meetings which are when the whole house and everyone get together. Another ritual
77 would be that before our lunches we sing a song and the bell of mindfulness that we ring to start
78 the day.

79 Being here, working with the people and seeing them grow and develop. Because they
80 start off really rough and then like a couple years in, they just start to grow and just be more
81 themselves and more mature. They just learn a lot here 'cause your mind is really receptive of
82 what you're around, who you're around, and who they're listening to. Week after week it just
83 shows and it's just the people. And that's one part of here I'll always love the most -- the caring
84 for them. It's a lot of work and it takes a lot of energy to do all the time, but they're worth it. It's
85 worth it. (laughs)

86 It would be neat if every neighborhood was like this because it would make for a bigger
87 scope instead of just in one spot. Harrisonburg is a very caring place. They have a lot of great
88 churches, even businesses help and give. And so, I'd love to just have a couple more like me in
89 the White House there. And, just have people come in and if they need help, then we can really
90 help them mentally, financially, and physically. And just to see people getting better just like I've
91 seen here. Life is so around us and in us and around us. (laughs)

Appendix P:

Narrative of Pete

My name is Pete. I grew up here in Vermont. My family goes back to settlement times in the late 1700s, and I've been here the whole time with the exception of a couple of years. I went to college outside of Boston, and a couple of years I worked seasonally over in New Hampshire. But by and large, I have been in Vermont. And, up until I began working for New Community Project back in 2015, I worked for about 23 years or so for a statewide nonprofit called the Green Mountain Club. Around 2015, I was starting to look for other opportunities to continue working in the nonprofit field, but also to start to connect issues of both justice and the environment.

Where I previously worked, I mainly focused in natural resources management, recreation management, and the environment field, but my personal passion was in social justice. I'm a Quaker and so have a strong connection to social justice and wanted to find a way to bring those two things together. How I got connected to New Community Project was a bit of an accident or if you're looking at it from a more spiritual perspective would be considered a 'leading' in Quaker terminology. Back when I was in fifth grade, I attended an environmental education camp with my class outside of my hometown of Middlebury at a place called Camp Keewaydin.

And my cabin counselor was a young guy with longish dark hair, big round glasses, and a big bushy beard named Tom. (laughs) And, Tom made quite an impression on me as a young person. So much so that I had him put his name and address in the back of the little journal that all the campers got. And I kept that. I didn't really have the courage at the time and age to write him a letter. But I kept the journal and it ended up in my box of things that subsequently disappeared to the sands of time somewhere in my mother's possessions that I rediscovered probably 12 years ago now. After she passed away and all those things came back to me.

25 Cleaning out her home, I found the journal and I opened it up. I thumbed through it
26 remembering Camp Keewaydin, and found Tom's name in the back. And I said, "Oh, Tom
27 Benevento, that guy. Yeah, he was pretty neat. I bet you he did something really interesting with
28 his life." And so, I looked him up, using the internet, (laughs) and discovered his connection to
29 New Community Project. And I was immediately captivated by the mission because it was a
30 synthesis of the new direction that I wanted to take my personal and professional life and career -
31 - in that idea of the intersection of justice and environment. And, so I reached out to Tom and
32 reconnected with him. And from there, I decided to take a chance and reach out to David and let
33 him know that I was interested in working for the organization and perhaps starting a branch of
34 New Community Project up here in the Northeast.

35 In fact, it turns out in talking to David, they only had two people on their mailing list that
36 had addresses in the New England region. It just so happened that at that time, the board had
37 been discussing wanting to branch out. And so, it was a perfect convergence of my direction and
38 New Community Project's direction. So, I submitted a proposal to the organization to start a local
39 project here. I started that conversation back in 2014 and then officially began on the ground in
40 2015.

41 Absolutely, I was not only looking for a new place to work, a new organization to work
42 for, but I was also looking to make some pretty fundamental changes. This commuting never
43 squared with me if for nothing else than just a complete waste of my life, sitting in a car (laughs)
44 for any period of time. But I was never really comfortable with the environmental impact. And
45 so, I was looking for a way to re-localize because that fit into a broader, personal ethos — where
46 to address some of our bigger environmental problems and societal problems — re-localization
47 is what we need to be focusing on.

Well, I guess from my own interaction with New Community Project, I felt welcomed and safe from the first time I visited Tom at his center back in 2014. The atmosphere that is created at the Vine and Fig is an embodiment of the beloved community. Or the new community that the organization aspires to see, which is it doesn't matter what or where your background is we can all come together to be an instrument of love and change for the world?

I felt that right away in just how I was welcomed and just brought into. It's a nonprofit organization, but it also feels like a big extended family in a way. Coming from having worked in a much more formal setting, and not that we're informal as an organization, but by comparison, is informal to the organization I was previously working for.

Like Tom, I am the coordinator of what the organization calls a sustainable living center. And unlike Harrisonburg, which is a separate standalone. Campus isn't the right term, but it has its own physical presence independent of Tom's home. Although that's not how it started, that's how it exists now. I'm still very much based out of my house and I would describe us as being at this point in our development of this program. I see my role as a community organizer and I see our Sustainable Living Center as a hub from which we can go out into the community and create constructive programs that help to further New Community Project's mission. In our particular area and context, we are, unlike Harrisonburg, a much more rural area and much less culturally diverse area. Vermont being one of the whitest states in the union. But the one thing we do have in common is we have a large portion of our population that is struggling with some level of poverty or marginalization.

And so, we're working at those places where we can try to be of service and help to people struggling with rural poverty and finding those connection points where environment and justice meet. And in our case, our biggest constructive programs are centered around food and

71 nutritional security and trying to address energy, poverty, and how that relates to justice and
72 climate change.

73 Well, it's the Gandhian nonviolence concept of having your three areas of change, where
74 you have your personal change and then you have constructive programs, and then you have
75 activism to try to affect deeper, systemic change.

76 We've only recently started delving a little bit more into that broader activism work, per
77 se, and that largely has to do with just the scale of what we are and what we do. But, it's that idea
78 to be the change you wanna see in the world, you need to change yourself, and then you need to
79 try to create programs that help to bring that change out to the broader community around you.

80 So, our place is less of a destination, it is my home. While we're trying to embody the
81 values of New Community Project of simple living and sustainability at our site, and we
82 certainly have plenty of things to show people. We've really focused on going out into the
83 community and really putting a lot of the emphasis in our work on those constructive programs
84 in the broader community, and then trying to even take it beyond that to affect policy if we can at
85 the statewide level.

86 Well, an analogy I can draw for you is: so, I have lived in Starksboro since 2004, and for
87 much of that time I lived there, I was like many people who live in that community in that I
88 commuted to another community for employment. I had very little actual interaction with the
89 community at large, beyond my immediate neighbors and my backyard.

90 And when you think about that concept of a margin or a border or a dividing line, what
91 became very clear to me living in this community is that like many Vermont towns, that is rural
92 towns, there are two populations of people. There are two communities there. It largely reflects
93 our broader socioeconomic demographics in this country. You have a more economically,

94 successful mobile educated class and then you have other people who may not have had access
95 to those levels of resources.

96 What I discovered is that people in our community don't even know each other; there is
97 this border that's created by class. For me, the term margin or marginalized accurately describes
98 this whole swath of the local population, which is largely invisible to the broader community, the
99 broader culture. People use the expression flyover country for rural America -- that could easily
100 describe where we live. As I've worked more deeply with people who are most affected by
101 poverty in our communities, I realize they really are part of this whole subset of the United States
102 population that as we have moved to an economy of no longer producing things ourselves have
103 just been left behind in the margins to eke out whatever existence they can.

104 With all the associated problems that creates for people, what we're trying to see now
105 with new eyes to see what's actually going on at the individual level. In recent years, I have been
106 trying really hard to get some of our legislators to come and join me in our work to meet, see,
107 witness, and hear from these people that I feel are largely invisible or ignored by the ruling
108 leadership or however you wanna describe it.

109 New Community Project really tries to offer a functional working alternative, too, in
110 recognizing the harm that the status quo is causing to us here in the global north, as well as
111 people in the global south. And so, looking for ways to operate and affect change within the
112 current structure that we're stuck with or maybe to use an analogy from the Catholic Worker
113 Movement, the idea of building the world you wanna see within the shell of the old. It has that
114 feeling to me.

115 So, we still have to keep all of our important financial records and we still have to work
116 with a financial management service, and we still have to submit a 990 like any other nonprofit

117 and get a good rating on GuideStar online. All those things are important right in the current way
118 we operate. But, yet, it just has a very different feel in the way we operate and the way we
119 conduct ourselves. It was just such a refreshing alternative to where I had been coming from. The
120 difference was stark and palpable to me once I joined this group.

121 The work that we do and our general mission tend to create an atmosphere of
122 welcomeness and safety. Most of my interactions with volunteers are at our main garden site
123 where we produce food for the food program we run every Sunday afternoon in the village.

124 We have a large area located on town property in the village, adjacent to the community
125 garden. And so, when people come to visit and work with us, by and large, they're coming within
126 that context. They come knowing that the purpose is to help us grow food for people to help
127 them. They come into it with that backdrop. So, there's a sense of belonging and welcomeness
128 because it's just a concept that people can feel good about and get behind pretty easily if that
129 makes sense.

130 Well, I would describe the role of our program or our site within New Community
131 Project. New Community Project started off originally being the overseas learning tours and
132 trips, right? That built solidarity with people in those parts of the earth where the people and the
133 planet are in crisis because of some facet or impact of our global economy.

134 The idea of the Sustainable Living Centers and these programs were also recognizing
135 some of these same issues. The issues that drive the problems that are happening in countries
136 overseas are coming from where we live, our lifestyle, what we demand of other people in other
137 places in order to prop up our lifestyle, and what's required to do so. By having a place here in
138 the United States, it did two things: one, it served as a viable, visible alternative to the traditional

139 culture and what the traditional culture is doing to people and the planet; and two, it also gave a
140 place for people to come and be of service and connect to these ideas.

141 Maybe like the elementary kids that I work with, the Sustainable Living Centers give
142 access to a lot of different groups of people to be a part of our work, be a part of our mission, and
143 get connected to these ideas in a way that they might not have otherwise done if the only option
144 was to participate in one of the overseas learning tours.

145 That's the real role because people are always like, "Well, why are there the two centers
146 in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and Starksboro, Vermont? What's with those places? Right?" And
147 really, this work can happen anywhere in the United States. If you look around anywhere, the
148 overarching issues that face us as a culture and as a planet are intersecting everywhere.

149 It really just so happens to be that Tom lived in Harrisonburg and I lived in Starksboro
150 Vermont. And that's why we're doing this project (laughs), 'cause that's where we live. You can
151 take the New Community Project mission and hold that up as a lens to the world around you and
152 say, "Oh, justice issue, environmental issue: here's where they come together wherever you
153 look."

154 I don't know how it is for Tom, but for me here, there are a lot of other nonprofit
155 organizations. Vermont has the highest number of nonprofit organizations per capita in the
156 United States in spite of being one of the smallest states with the smallest populations. And there
157 are lots of great organizations doing great work, but I didn't see an organization that was taking
158 New Community Project's approach.

159 There are two layers to that approach. One was the idea of intersecting justice and the
160 environment together. The other real piece that really spoke strongly to me was the idea of
161 offering a model that to me meshed a little bit better with how I see the direction that we need to

162 go as a society. We have lots of people around here who are very well-meaning in their interest
163 in caring for the environment but may feel like they just have to put up some solar panels, drive
164 an electric car, or install a heat pump, and they can check that box off on the list.

165 I feel and see personally, through my connection with New Community Project, that the
166 work needs to go a lot deeper than that. It needs to be a functional change in our attitude about
167 what we really need in life to have a life that's joyful and abundant but doesn't create more
168 economic and climate chaos through consumption.

169 I have a great way to explain this needed functional change. I had the opportunity to fill
170 in for David at a college conference that happens every year called the Green Allies Conference.
171 I was included on this panel and people were asking about all these different technologies and
172 approaches. What can you do to help the environment? You had other people talking about these
173 standard things like electric cars and how and where we need to go with alternative energy.

174 I started talking about walking, riding a bicycle, and drying your clothes on a line. It's
175 that reduce reuse, recycle mantra. There's also another R that I saw added to that one time, which
176 really struck me that is refuse. The real issue comes down to consumption. Our whole sense of
177 what need or are entitled to as Americans or the global north is just completely out of sync with
178 what the earth can truly sustain and what creates an atmosphere of fairness and justice for every
179 person that lives on this planet.

180 The idea that we're gonna solar panel or windmill our way out of the issues that we're
181 facing. To me, that's not the best we can do and we need to go deeper. The way New Community
182 Project addresses the issue of consumption and lifestyle really resonated with me personally
183 better than what I was seeing around me.

184

185 Not that those other things don't have a role to play, but they are also part of the same
186 extractive, consumption economic model that depends on and requires mining, right? There's a
187 toll that has to be paid by people and the earth to create those things. And so, for example, when
188 I think about transportation is it really about what we power our cars with or is the personal car
189 ownership paradigm in the long run, functionally not sustainable for the earth and people?

190 The defining characteristic of New Community Project's approach has to do with our
191 connection. What Tom learned from living with people in Guatemala and David's experience
192 working with people in other countries is that you could see cultures where people functionally
193 lived and thrived without all of this consumption and all of this impact. Although their lives still
194 had challenges, they could find joy and happiness in a way. We have these holes in ourselves
195 that we keep trying to buy stuff and throw things into the hole to fill the hole in our souls.

196 And it's never enough. We just keep buying and consuming, trying to make ourselves feel
197 better, and it just never works out in the end.

198 Well, one thing that's been really interesting and formative for me has been that each
199 summer we welcome interns to come and work with us. And for the last several years, we've had
200 interns coming from the University of Laverne, which is outside of LA.

201 Laverne was founded by Church of the Brethren, and so there's a long connection there
202 through Church of the Brethren to New Community Project through David's connections and
203 past work. What's been really powerful and formative to me has been the students that have
204 come to live and work with us because they are coming from very different cultural backgrounds
205 than what we're used to here in Vermont. As I mentioned earlier, we're one of the whitest and
206 least diverse states in the union and we've really had wonderful folks who've come to us from
207 backgrounds in the Latinx and African-American communities.

208 We've had a student who wasn't from Laverne, but connected through another Brethren
209 college, Manchester, out in Indiana. She was from Liberia. So, many really wonderful positive
210 experiences and making connections with people from very different backgrounds coming to a
211 place like Vermont, which to them must be like coming to another planet because the lack of
212 diversity is so stark. But yet, people here through our organization and in our community have
213 been so welcoming. It had a positive experience for me and my family and all of our volunteers
214 who got to work with them.

215 And then on the students themselves, hearing about the choices they made after their
216 experience with us and how that affected them. To see that one of the students who had actually
217 come from a background of experiencing homelessness and hunger herself and the experience of
218 working with our food share program and being involved with growing food in the gardens
219 inspired her. When she went back to Laverne, she actually made a proposal to the college to start
220 a food pantry for students like herself at the school who struggle with food insecurity because of
221 financial limitations. A lot of people think that sounds like an oxymoron: someone's in college,
222 but they're struggling with food insecurity. However, it's actually a thing and people don't know
223 about it.

224 And so, she petitioned the school and started a food pantry program. Another student
225 ended up changing her career decisions and has gone on to do stints with AmeriCorps and done
226 some really interesting work with different nonprofit organizations. We have our interns try to do
227 a lot of our work, as much as they're able, on bicycles to again take that idea of what sustainable
228 transportation means a bit further. And believe me in a rural place with lots of hills where seeing
229 folks riding around on bicycles, unless they're spandex clad and like doing it for exercise, is a
230 rarity. It is rare to just see people using a bicycle as a tool to get from point A to point B. Seeing

231 how those students continued to use bicycles, even though when they came to us a lot of 'em
232 hadn't ridden bicycles since they were a little kid.

233 I feel like that relationship and that opportunity has been really meaningful, powerful,
234 and transformative for all involved. That's been a really cool thing that's come out of this
235 connection with New Community Project in Starksboro.

236 What I've discovered in this work is that so much of it is about building relationships
237 with people and breaking down barriers that would normally exist between people. I talked to
238 you about the stark divide in our community. Through my work with New Community Project,
239 I've really worked to break down those barriers. For example, this past winter, a lady reached out
240 to us whose furnace had broken. She lived in a trailer; she was a grocery store worker who did
241 not qualify for other assistance. And for some reason, even though she made a very low income,
242 she still earned too much money to qualify for state assistance. We were able to partner with
243 three other nonprofits to pull together the resources necessary to get her a new heating system.
244 So, it goes beyond just the providing of aid, it's actually providing a connection, a relationship,
245 and a level of support to someone who feels unheard otherwise.

246 Simply listen to folks and make sure they feel heard and try to help them in any way that
247 I can. And if nothing else, other than to listen and have them feel like they're not ignored. I spend
248 a lot of time communicating, I get phone calls and communicate with a lot of people who fall
249 into rural poverty because they are elderly and on a fixed income. A lot of these folks are
250 isolated and the pandemic made that even worse.

251 It really goes beyond the tangible handing somebody a box of food to that sense of that
252 idea of the beloved community, it's really about meaningful relationships, authentic relationships
253 with everyone.

254 Well, I guess I'd mentioned earlier about the integral non-violence model of Gandhi's,
255 where there are the three areas that you try to address. The third area was trying to create more
256 systemic change. Part of that listening, in trying to actually hear people, is to try to affect change
257 by amplifying their situations and their voices.

258 Using my agency, which I have through New Community Project, to try to connect with
259 people who are making policy decisions that affect these people's lives directly. Presently, there's
260 a piece of legislation in the Vermont Senate that would greatly affect the goal of the project to
261 reduce the carbon footprint of Vermont's thermal sector. Our heating sector, which next to
262 transportation, is the next big carbon footprint area on the individual and institutional levels.

263 We are trying to come up with a state policy to address that issue. Unfortunately, the way
264 the current bill has been structured, it's really a form of a carbon tax. The carbon tax part will
265 raise funds by raising the costs of traditional heating fuels and then try to use those revenues to
266 get more into a series of credits to get people into lower carbon heating alternatives.

267 But what I've experienced and come to see through working with folks around here, these
268 people really need to stop losing money and causing undue pollution because their housing is
269 inadequate -- we need to address the building envelope through weatherization before moving to
270 a different heating system. Like that lady we helped with the furnace this winter, it doesn't matter
271 what heating device we put into her place, she's still gonna be struggling with energy poverty.
272 She's still gonna be disproportionately polluting the environment because her building is so
273 poorly insulated and drafty.

274 Trying to amplify these stories and voices to help people who are making these policy
275 decisions understand what people really need to make the functional change that they're looking
276 for when it comes to the carbon footprint. In investing public dollars to make a functional

277 change, it needs to be more of a tiered priority, particularly in helping middle- and low-income
278 people with improvements.

279 We have some of the oldest housing stock in the country. My house was built in the
280 1850s. We have a lot of people who live in really old homes that have very poor insulation and
281 it's really expensive. It can be complicated to weatherize your home correctly. Tom told me once
282 why weatherization is so important. He said that the number of leaks and drafts in the average
283 home if you were to put them all together into one hole, would be like three or four feet in
284 diameter. Imagine having a three- or four-foot diameter hole in your wall if you were to add 'em
285 all up. And so, one of our roles is to be an advocate to affect systemic change, to help people,
286 and the environment through thoughtful policy changes. To make sure that these people are not
287 ignored or forgotten, or that these situations are not included in the calculus when thinking about
288 how to do these things.

289 Well, I can tell you that our food program is run by a core group of volunteers. It's about
290 a dozen people. One of the really cool things is that it reflects diversity. It may not reflect
291 cultural diversity, but it certainly reflects a diversity of socioeconomic, educational, and gender
292 backgrounds. We have a nice mix of people all working together towards a common cause.

293 To me, that's a really great expression of what we're trying to achieve lived out. There
294 were a lot of divisions that existed economically and ideologically prior to 2016, which were
295 only then amplified even further. And the wonderful thing about New Community Project and
296 our work is that most people can agree on some of the fundamentals that we're trying to do –
297 addressing hunger and poverty crosses ideological boundaries.

298 The idea that people should not be allowed to go hungry is something that most people
299 can get behind, right? Maybe we're keeping them fed, but just feeding them white pasta and

300 white bread and calories. That's very different and that's not justice compared to a nutritionally
301 diverse diet of whole foods that allows them to thrive and meet their full potential as human
302 beings and a citizen of this country.

303 So, there are these concepts, we have people from different religious, faith traditions that
304 are part of our group, some more conservative, some more liberal, and yet we're able to bridge
305 those divides and those issues which are so magnified and so amplified to such a detriment to
306 real progress in the United States.

307 To me, that's the power and tangible result of what we're trying to do. Before the
308 pandemic, we even started a free community meal. And it wasn't just about free food, which it
309 was. But it was also about trying to get people together in the community that might not
310 ordinarily sit down around a table with one another to find and remember the common culture of
311 things that we can all agree upon.

312 Because if we can't do that, we're not gonna be able to tackle these big existential threats
313 that face us. In the end, if people are just trying to figure out how to survive day-to-day
314 economically, they're not gonna have the wherewithal to honestly try to address issues like
315 climate change or structural racism, or you name the problem that we're facing.

316 Well, the idea of trying to embody, through lifestyle, the principles, and goals that we
317 espouse is one way to acknowledge our solidarity if eight billion of us are gonna share the planet
318 together. Cliff Kindy, a friend of ours, talks about this concept of downward mobility, right? In
319 the Western world, we're all stuck in this concept of upward mobility. However, perhaps in order
320 to lift other people up around the world and give them a fair chance at a decent life, we've got to
321 engage in some downward mobility ourselves.

322

323 So, the solidarity concept comes back to this idea of, again: what does it take to have a
324 life that's full of joy and abundance, but that doesn't cause injustice or climate chaos to other
325 people? And part of that idea is equity in sharing resources, developing a lifestyle that reduces
326 harm to the greatest extent possible within the context of where you live and what your
327 capabilities are, and approaching life with that mindset. To me, that is an acknowledgment that
328 we are part of one global family and our actions and behaviors have an impact on other people
329 and that we have to pay attention to that when we make choices in this country.

330 What's really great about New Community Project is that we're not just like a local food
331 shelf, but we're part of this bigger project, right? That's always part of our discussion when we
332 have groups come in to help us in the gardens. We're not only trying to help feed people here, but
333 we're trying to export these ideas of small-scale, local, low-impact agriculture with our partners
334 around the world so that everybody has access to nutritionally, diverse supplies of food. And that
335 idea that we're in a partnership, right? So, you're working in the garden today in Starksboro, but
336 in doing so you are joining hands with all the other people that New Community Project works
337 with around the world. You're joining hands with kids your age in Malawi, South Sudan, Nepal,
338 and all these other places who are all trying to make the world a better place.

339 I'm seeing in our town people that ordinarily wouldn't have crossed paths with one
340 another, because of those physical and invisible divides, margins, and boundaries, are able to join
341 hands in a common cause to try to make the world a better place. I see that happening on a
342 weekly basis and a seasonal basis when we bring people together in the gardens.

343 And so that gives me hope that it's possible, particularly in a place where we could be so
344 easily divided religiously, economically, or politically, given the way things are now. I just see
345 the work that we're doing transcends that. And when you can find those points, where people can

346 connect and bridge those gaps, that's when really great and positive things can happen in the
347 world.

348 I mean we're our own worst problem. We get in our own way of solving the issues that
349 face us. A lot of the obstacles we face are really about just changing our mindset. They're really
350 less about physical impediments and just our own selves. And so, that's what gives me hope as I
351 see this play out in my little community of 1,700 people.

352 Well, like any small nonprofit that has a big goal like ours to change the world, the only
353 way you're gonna do that is through the idea of throwing the pebble in the pond. And, it's not
354 about how big the splash you make initially, but it's all the ripples that go out and touch other
355 things. Our model of change that we're trying to enact is the idea that if we can change people's
356 ideas, thinking and perspective, they can then go out and not only change their own lives but
357 then affect others around them. And that's how we're gonna affect change.

358 In five to 10 years, my hope is that people who encounter us will go out and affect
359 change in their own places, whether they create something like New Community Project where
360 they live or elements of our work or our mission, and affect others. Gandhi was the one who said
361 we need hundreds of thousands of little experiments to try to make the world a better place,
362 right? It wasn't about one big experiment in India, but we needed lots and lots of successful little
363 experiments. And not all of 'em would be successful, but in aggregate if you do it enough in
364 enough places you can effect change.

365 What could help the organization right now? Well, I'll start with our own program and
366 within the culture that we're very much tied to. Our capacity to affect change often is connected
367 to financial resources. Right?

368

369 As much as I hate to admit it, as much as I'm trying to create a world that presents an
370 alternative to that, it still is the reality we have to face. I'd like to see having some more financial
371 resources and having it done in a way to frees us and allows us to spend less time having to find
372 those dollars, to allow us to do more good work.

373 You could make that analogy to any nonprofit or any small nonprofit or even with the
374 larger group I used to work with, which is we had to spend X percentage of our time simply
375 raising the dollars so that we could do what we do. But there's only so much time, right? And so,
376 the more you have to spend doing that, the less time you have for your mission. For me, it's
377 always been about what ways can there be to increase the amount of available time to do the
378 work and spend less time attending to the fundraising.

379 As far as the main organization, in a general context, you could probably say the same
380 thing about balancing available time. But if you were to ask others, you would get a different
381 answer. You'd get a different answer from probably David and Tom. But how do we take it from
382 being something that's small and localized and create a template from which other people can
383 emulate what we're doing and enhance it with their own local knowledge and experience and use
384 it to continue to affect change? Right?

385 When you look at Tom's work, for example, in moving into this new Jubilee Carbon
386 Farm and the connections he's trying to bridge. It's not just about a neat little project that you can
387 visit out on the outskirts of Harrisonburg, but it's a functional model that can be exported to other
388 places. He's working really hard right now with our partner in Malawi to help her develop a
389 carbon farm model with carbon farming techniques there too because of its potential for
390 regenerative agriculture.

391 If we look at the whole current fossil fuel-powered agribusiness model, it is not long for
392 this world. It just doesn't comport with the realities of limited resources and a big population,
393 population overshoot, or whatever you wanna call it. It's just not a long-term viable model. And
394 in many cases, we're already seeing it, If you go out to the Midwest and you pick up a handful of
395 the soil, it blows away in your hand because it has no organic substance left to it. It's completely
396 predicated on fossil fuel-derived fertilizers and pesticides to be productive.

397 So, knowing what the carbon impact is with the need to feed ourselves as a world of eight
398 billion and counting, the need to create a model to reduce carbon that could actually perpetuate
399 itself into the future. We need to be able to create and inspire people to move in that direction.
400 One of the reasons when I went into this wasn't just about me creating an interesting sustainable
401 living center homestead for people to come and tour and be in awe of what we're doing, but on a
402 personal level, it was about creating these community programs and models other people could
403 export to wherever they are.

404 For example, a woman, who we used to work with, is doing a food share program like
405 ours now in another part of the state. She had to move and so she started something there. That's
406 the idea and way we magnify. For a small organization with a big goal to change the world, we
407 need lots and lots of partners to help us get that mission out there to make that change. (Laughs)

408 Unfortunately, I come from a long line of stoic Vermonters that have always had the false
409 impression men aren't supposed to cry and that's always been a little bit of a challenge for me to
410 overcome as far as my own emotional nature. (laughs)

411 Well, you hit on something very important, which we talk about a lot with leadership,
412 which is how do we create a model for this to sustain going forward? Because, as much as David
413 and Tom like to joke that I'm the youngest of the three of us, that doesn't mean I'm young

414 anymore. At some point, we'll have to think about how the work carries forward. So that's always
415 in the background, how do we create something that can sustain and go on, not just from a
416 personality perspective, but has institutional wherewithal to continue with different people
417 running it?

1 **Appendix Q:**

2 **Narrative of Reed and Sophie**

3 *Reed:* Well, I'm Reed. I've been involved in philanthropic activities for probably 50
4 years. I was involved with the HundrED project when it got started. I worked with Muhammad
5 Yunus in microcredit. I started the Grameen Foundation for him here in the United States. And
6 I've worked closely with Jane Goodall in Tanzania with her work with the chimps. I didn't work
7 with the chimps, but mostly interested in the preservation of habitats of that nature, and a variety
8 of other things dealing with poverty, women's issues, and hunger.

9 And then, recently, in the last 10 to 15 years, I became more acquainted with sustainable
10 farming and permaculture through my children. One of them is on the phone here, Sophie
11 (laugh). When she first introduced me to the idea, it sounded like a fantastic way to provide a
12 better service product to two-and-a-half billion small-scale farmers. But I would have to say that
13 my whole vision of everything would be significantly different if I had not met Tom Benevento,
14 long ago in 1988, maybe 1989, down in Guatemala. I was working on the board of a group,
15 which I'm still on the board of called Trees for Life. And we had been very successful in
16 developing a format to empower villagers to plant fruit trees in India, and we planted several
17 hundred thousand trees. And to really test the model, we felt it had to be applicable anywhere in
18 the world, otherwise, you're just doing a postage stamp and it's not going to amount too much.
19 So, we decided to test it in other parts of the world, specifically in Guatemala.

20 I'm not sure of the genesis of Tom's relationship with Trees for Life, but I believe it
21 started there. And, Tom had gone down there to test our model and work with people up in the
22 highlands of Guatemala. I'll probably not get all this right and Sophie will correct me 'cause she
23 has a better memory for this stuff than I do. But it was just marvelous what Tom had been able to

24 accomplish and what you really got from that was that it was never ever about planting trees but
25 was about the people.

26 And, Tom was probably the finest person I know when it comes to empowering people to
27 realize the differences they can make in their own lives, in the normal activities in their lives,
28 very powerful. And Tom has always been sort of a guru to me ever since in that regard. I just
29 have complete respect for all decisions he makes and everything he does, 'cause I know he's just
30 coming from a vast reservoir of personal experiences and a passion, and tremendous ethics. And
31 so, years later, we got in touch, and he had moved to Virginia.

32 I think it was after he got his master's or something, up in Minnesota or Montana or
33 somewhere (laugh). And, he was telling me about the project, the New Community Project, and
34 it just sounded like a fantastic program for what he was, something perfectly suited for Tom, and
35 I kept hearing about it. We've helped fund small portions of initiatives and they were always very
36 segmented. "Well, I need this so can we...." (laughs). I'll say, "Yeah, sure. I'll do that. Like a path
37 to the YMCA, yeah I will do that." (laughs) Whatever it was.

38 And then, I went out to actually see it years later and was totally impressed with what
39 he'd done in the community. Clearly, the community had a great deal of respect for him. He
40 worked with some, I guess there's no nice way to say, crack houses and fixed them up, helped
41 rehabilitate the people that were there, and was doing some tremendous stuff within the refugee
42 community. But the thing that interested me the most is that, generally, when you work in
43 developing countries and in the United States too, you have the haves and have-nots and there's
44 always a real straight divide of where that is.

45 And some, you know, might as well be like a caste system in India; people don't want
46 anything to do with them. And that was not true in Harrisonburg. They were growing food on

47 this farm, run by a lot of volunteers and some people that had been highly suspect at one time,
48 and selling that food to the schools. I said, "Okay, well yeah, you crossed some real barriers
49 there. (laugh) I don't know how you did it, Tom, but congratulations." And that always
50 encouraged me. Just being around Tom and hearing what he was doing was, it gave me a great
51 sense of empowerment.

52 I remember a story, and I'm going to get all this wrong, but the city had wanted to do a
53 park and connecting bike trails and things like that, and the trails were going to this place and
54 that place. And Tom said, "No, no, we need to go to the YWCA and the food stores (laughs) and
55 the food bank, and places where people actually need the trails, where people actually walk
56 'cause they don't have a car." And it was just things like that. He's just an incredible resource for
57 any community. And, that's mostly what I can say about Tom. And now, I'm fascinated with
58 what he and others are doing with carbon farming. I work with conservation easements now and
59 do things of that nature. I believe that there's an enormous amount of work to do with carbon
60 sequestration. A lot of time people don't understand it and there are a lot of opportunities.

61 We continue to get better at fighting climate change and global warming. And I think he's
62 onto something there. It's not about carbon dioxide, it's about creating carbon to offset what we
63 already did and not what we're going to do. We're trying to work with Tom right now on a
64 project that we can figure out a better way to monetize carbon creation so that it doesn't go
65 simply into offsets for Chevron, but more create an asset base or an investment vehicle where
66 people can recognize the value of carbon, actually own it for long-term appreciation.

67 Because as we get more serious, it's going up and I think it's foolish to sell your carbon to
68 some polluter. I buy it and buy other people's carbon, to drive that price up so they have to so the

69 carbon becomes less of assuaging your guilt and more about behavioral change, which is where
70 and what we want to get.

71 *Sophie:* Well, my name's Sophie. My background is in food policy and applied nutrition
72 and also public health epidemiology and biostatistics. Professionally, I focus mostly on
73 monitoring and evaluation. Over the years, currently, I help run The Valley Foundation, which is
74 an organization run by my family, and we help to spread permaculture and regenerative
75 agriculture across the globe. We focus mostly on the United States, East Africa, and Central and
76 South America, but we aren't super picky about location necessarily.

77 But my dad took me to Guatemala when I was 11, and that's when I met Tom. And just
78 that whole trip, I think greatly shaped my focus in life overall, because it was the first time, I
79 realized just how lucky I was being a middle-class person born in the United States in terms of
80 kind of physical assets and meeting people from other countries and just seeing the tight-knit
81 family structures. As a little kid, you're like, "Oh, everybody is just like me." And the trip gave
82 me this kind of mission or at least a perspective. At least, this is how my 11-year-old brain
83 processed it.

84 In order to justify what I have, I need to be sharing and giving, and empowering. And so,
85 from there, I just grew kind of in that direction, but my dad and Tom were great influences. So,
86 that's our and my focus now, improving community and livelihoods through food, which is also
87 good for the environment, and climate change and really everything if it's done right.

88

89 *Reed:* Well, I'm not sure how Tom and I reconnected after Guatemala, but it was about
90 10 years ago. I'm not sure how it actually happened, but then I learned about what he was doing.
91 I thought, "Well, this is a fantastic program." I'd always wondered what he was going to do

92 because he'd done such a marvelous job in Guatemala. And I was trying to figure out, "What the
93 heck is he going to do up here?" And sure enough, (laughs) he's doing quite similar stuff. It must
94 have been 10 years ago, but I may be off a few years.

95 And he told me what he was doing with the homes he was trying to rehab. I may have
96 helped him with that a little bit, but it was a need he saw in the community. He thought he could
97 have a solution to it and that really encouraged me to support his work financially. And at that
98 point, it was all financial, 'cause I wasn't traveling and doing the things I used to do as much, and
99 certainly not in Virginia. I would more likely (laughs) be going to DC to deal with those people
100 (laugh) at that point and that's how it was initially.

101 *Sophie:* I was just going to say that my younger brother Luke and I got to go up and visit
102 the New Community Project a few years ago. And, it was really amazing. We had the
103 opportunity to interview a lot of people. My brother's a photojournalist and so we interviewed
104 staff and some of the people living there and some of the people that just kind of come and go,
105 and it was pretty amazing. And if we're talking about a trauma-formed approach and equity-
106 based work, I think it's a great example.

107 It was the first time I'd really seen a program like that. I don't even want to say holistic
108 because it's even more than that. It seemed to have tendrils kind of creeping out. It was almost
109 like a plant itself, right? And going where the needs arise in a very organic way. So, just from
110 growing the food and then rehabbing the area, but also the people who would come and go
111 allowing people to live there, who may not have had an opportunity to live like that in any other
112 way.

113 And then, just the kind of open conversations, and there was structure, but also flexibility.
114 I think just Tom in general but he's interwoven with this kind of an ethic or something that I don't

115 even know if it's spelled out, but it's just the way Tom is interacting. The language he uses is
116 very gentle in the way he interacts with people. And when talking about a trauma-informed
117 approach, a lot of it is just the person-to-person interaction and realizing that everyone has
118 experienced trauma in different ways and that people can be triggered in all kinds of ways.

119 And so, if you think about nonviolent communication techniques and respecting everyone
120 and maintaining boundaries, I just felt he did that in a very real and natural way. So, it was really
121 impressive to see and it was just so natural for Tom. Like my dad said, I just don't know how he
122 does it, but it's impressive to see.

123 *Reed:* Well, I had actually had a chance to go up and see the program with my son, Luke,
124 who went up there with Sophie years later. I think it had already been up and going for several
125 years by the time I got there. But just the way he interacts with the community when you see so
126 many communities that are not inclusive in nature, it seems that everything Tom does has
127 become inclusive for everybody (laugh) you know?

128 And that really impressed me. At that time, I don't know if it's still a part of his model,
129 but he was also using some of these homes there were tear-downs that they had rehabilitated and
130 were now housing refugee families there that were in transition. And I was impressed with that
131 and how he was able to help them move on to the various stages of their transition into the
132 United States. And then, of course, I guess Sophie that's the first time I saw one of those Dutch
133 oven things that you guys don't like, the pizza thing they were making while I was there.

134 But the quality of the people that he was able to attract, the volunteers that also
135 recognized that he was doing something really important, and were coming there and
136 volunteering. Three or four of those guys could have taught agro-economics and sustainable
137 agriculture at any university. And they were all like 20 to 25 years old, (laughs) incredibly

138 knowledgeable, very dedicated, and totally bought into Tom's methodology. And you just know
139 they were going to stay there another six months and then go somewhere and do the same thing
140 somewhere else. Tom was infectious that way.

141 *Sophie:* Well, I would say that Tom's general approach just mirrors a lot of values that we
142 hold through our family foundations. So, it's specifically his focus on permaculture that attracted
143 us, but through RJOF, it's my dad's previous relationship with him and just seeing how he works.
144 As a foundation, we like to give funds, open-ended, without any requirements. And so, to do
145 that, it really takes trusting the person. And so, because we've seen Tom work over the years and
146 what he does and how he's extremely community-oriented is what keeps us as a locked-in
147 supporter for him. And we're just happy to be involved.

148 *Reed:* One of Tom's great strengths, 'cause you might think by hearing all this that he's
149 just a really nice soft guy that just wants to help people, is his ethics and accountability. And
150 while he may be the nicest, easiest-going individual, one of the keys to his success is that when
151 you make an agreement with Tom, you've got to keep your side of the agreement. "If you say
152 you're going to bring two goats, don't show up with one." "If you're going to be there at six in the
153 morning, you better be there at six in the morning. Don't come in at noon with some story." He is
154 the nicest and easiest guy to get along with, but he will hold you accountable.

155 And with the populations he deals with sometimes, especially dealing with the people
156 that have had drug issues and things like that, you have to be that way. And Tom was just as hard
157 as a rock. You never knew it until you actually witnessed it. But, his ethics and accountability are
158 probably as important to his success as his humanity. If you can understand that, they go hand in
159 hand. It's not an either/or situation. Do you agree with that, Sophie?

160 *Sophie:* Definitely. And the way he does it is you'd never know it at first but it's subtle.
161 He can be subtle and kind of that gentle, strict hand (laughs) because he respects people for who
162 they are and he builds that mutual respect so that he can have tough conversations.

163 *Reed:* That accountability comes out of his respect for people.

164 *Sophie:* Well, I mean when you hold people accountable, by default, it's saying, "I know
165 you can do this. I trust you to do this." And that's a very dignified approach 'cause if things aren't
166 expected of people, then what's there to even build their own self-esteem, right?

167 *Reed:* And, Tom has a tremendous experience, knowledge, and education in this area that
168 he works in. And yet, when he goes into a community and deals with people, I don't think he
169 goes in there with the idea he's going to teach. He goes in there with the idea he's going to learn,
170 and they get that, people get that. They're just as important as he is in the process.

171 So, that's really important. He doesn't go in there thinking he knows everything or
172 anything for that matter, but he is a quick study and that's a real key to his success.

173 When did I realize that we were on the same page? Oh, well, in Guatemala. It wasn't the
174 same page, I didn't have a page. And then I saw Tom, I said, "Oh, I want to do that. I want to be
175 that guy." (laugh). I, at least, want to support people like that.

176 I can never even hope to be doing what Tom does, but I recognize the value of it. And
177 then quite frankly, whenever I try to fund anything now, I look for Tom in that project. Does the
178 project have these characteristics to it that I know lead to success? Oh, not success, I mean that's
179 a horrible word, but to accomplish the mission of empowering people, and that for me comes
180 through Tom.

181 A previous mentor, we both had was Balbir Mathur, who was the founder of Trees for
182 Life. And he's the one that had found Tom to do this project in Guatemala and that organization

183 had worked a lot with the Church of the Brethren so most of their volunteers came from that
184 service organization and still do.

185 *Sophie:* For me, obviously coming in late, 'cause my dad's been supporting him for years,
186 but I worked for five years at a consulting company, and our clients were foundations. I just felt
187 like my world was full of jargony words. And you hear, "Empower the community." Blah, blah,
188 blah! But at the end of the day, the foundations have these buckets, rules, and metrics.

189 And, I saw a lot of nonprofits bending to where the funding streams are. And, some do it
190 better than others and sometimes it's a great fit, but some lose a little bit of that community-
191 driven spirit, right? Because the community says they need something, but they say, "Well, the
192 funding only supports this, so this is what you're getting."

193 I've been in a lot of rooms where there's this elephant in the room where you have a
194 community-held conversation and the community's saying one thing, but you know you can't
195 meet that need so there's this kind of power struggle. And when I first saw how Tom worked
196 when I was 11, I didn't know what I was witnessing at that point, but, it has remained as a
197 foundation in the back of my head.

198 And now going back to New Community Project, it was just refreshing and a great
199 reminder. Oh, this is what it looks like. It's messy, it doesn't always fit in neat, little metrics and
200 packages. And some little roots fizzle out and some grow into trees. But I mean, it's one of the
201 only examples I can actually think of that's as inclusive and community-driven as everyone's
202 kind of jargony words portray. (laugh)

203 *Reed:* Well, from my perspective, the very nature of Tom, the project itself is fantastic
204 and I wish it could be replicated all over. And I think it has proven that it really can be (laugh) if
205 you just get out of the way of the project. And that's one thing, it has probably steered me in a lot

206 of the projects that I've supported in other areas to learn from what Tom has done. But, it's a hard
207 question to answer. Sophie, do you jump in as savior? Sophie's more on the ground. On the
208 projects we do support, Sophie's actually on the frontline, and I'm not anymore.

209 *Sophie:* Well, it's interesting because Tom is a great example of how we think projects
210 should go. And so, the characteristics that he embodies, the way he even talks about the
211 communities he's working in and how the projects originate, and how he wants to move forward.
212 All of those things I use when someone approaches me for funding or if I see a project I'm
213 interested in funding. I want to reach out and learn more and there are certain things I listen for.

214 And a lot of it is showing respect for other people they're working with and a good
215 process or mechanism for listening to the community, or adapting to community needs and
216 things like that. So, I guess, he's just a great example of someone in who we feel very confident
217 in investing. And so, I look for those aspects in other organizations, and particularly other
218 leaders.

219 *Reed:* One thing that Sophie touched on and I've seen so many organizations that lose
220 their way or become perverted by mission drift, or that the tail wags the dog with the funding. A
221 community or organization may want to have a library for kids and somebody comes in, "Well,
222 I'll give a million dollars if all the books are blue." So suddenly you have a library full of blue
223 books instead of books that could educate (Laughs).

224 That is obviously a poor analogy, but I don't think Tom ever lets that happen. He knows
225 what he wants and if you want to give a million dollar for blue books, he'll say, "Well, I'm sure
226 there are other people who would love to have blue books, but not me." (laughs) He'll turn the
227 money down. He sticks with his mission and what the community wants to be done. And he
228 doesn't get mission drift 'cause he's not chasing the money.

229 In fact, as far as I know, he lives on almost no money at all anyway. As money didn't
230 seem to be that important to Tom to accomplish what he wants to accomplish. He was never
231 really much about money. I mean the things he's accomplished; you could not accomplish with
232 money. You could throw a lot of money at it and never get to where Tom is in any of his
233 projects.

234 *Sophie:* And that probably loops into the mutual respect and people realizing that he's on
235 their side. With who knows how many organizations, other people have been touched by in their
236 lives and seen services change, or we're not doing that any more or whatever. And so, just
237 through his actions in the funding area, he continues to build dignity and mutual respect that I
238 think ultimately makes him successful.

239 *Reed:* Well, I think you just nailed his program. (Laughs) Three very important things are
240 embodied in all of Tom's work: he is resilient to me, everything he does is designed to last one
241 way or another, either in people's minds, their hearts, or a tree planted, and it's never a short-term
242 fix. He always has something on the horizon he's looking for. And of course, as Sophie has
243 clearly said, it really comes from his respect and cares for people that drives all of those
244 programs.

245 *Sophie:* Yeah. I don't know if you can have the kind of resilience that he seems to have
246 without the deeper structure or the social structures that he built in mutual respect. I don't think
247 you would have the resilience if you're relying solely on funding and not care, resilience, and
248 what was the best third one?

249 With New Community Project, they really focus and thrive on the kind of sense of place
250 in multiple ways internally and externally. It's not just about funding, they're literally putting
251 roots down in the ground, gardening, and seeing something grow seasonally, year after year is

252 really therapeutic, and naturally builds that sense of place. But then a sense of place includes the
253 sense that people feel welcome and it's kind of family-based in the way that they eat and live and
254 maybe have arguments and makeup. And, because of all those things, people feel more grounded
255 than they've probably felt at a lot of times in their life.

256 I have an easy one about influences. It was my college essay actually. (laugh) Well, mine
257 was going to Guatemala, but it was specifically visiting the Guatemala City trash dumps. And if
258 you've ever been to a large landfill or a trash dump, first of all, people are living off the trash.
259 Their houses are built of scrap metal and things they could find. People would crowd the dump
260 trucks as they came in every day. And, there were even accidents because that was the new stuff
261 coming in -- you were kind of getting first dibs. And so, for me as an 11-year-old kid, I'm
262 running around playing with the other kids and they're like throwing peace signs in my camera
263 and loving seeing themselves on film. And, they're running around and playing just like any
264 other kid would, and yet, happy and smiling and there's this kind of sense of community that's
265 there. And so, there was a shift in me when I first entered the landfill thinking, "Oh my gosh,
266 these poor people!" When I left, I'm like, "Oh, they're just surviving like anyone else. They're
267 people, and they're just peopling like everyone else."

268 For me, that was what solidified this idea that I mentioned earlier, which is that we're all
269 the same -- we're just born into different circumstances. And, we would all probably do very
270 similar things depending on what circumstances we're in. Right. And, the whole reason we went
271 there was because Tom had a program where people living in the trash dumps could find these
272 recycled plastic cups and then turn them in for some cash. And so, I think that was just an
273 extremely pivotal moment for me.

274 Just seeing people living in different circumstances, but the humanity and the nature of
275 people, the family-oriented friendships, the laughter, the hardships, and everything just kind of
276 standing across circumstances.

277 Oh yes, (laughs) I mean there is no place on earth. It's amazing how resourceful people
278 are and this might be obvious, but it's not really maybe a huge revelation the low-resource places
279 on earth are actually where you find the most resourceful people because you have to be. And so,
280 we were in some place in Kenya, and all the toilet seats were missing from the toilets. And at
281 first, you look around and you're like, "Oh, maybe they're repurposing them. Like, what are they
282 using 'em for?"

283 But as it turns out, they're just broken. But, the point is, people can repurpose so many
284 things. I've seen paddles made of the lids of plastic containers. The lids are tied to a stick as a
285 paddle for the fishermen in Lake Victoria. Yeah, you just see the most amazing things.

286 *Reed:* Just thinking about honoring and dignifying people, you've spoken to this, Sophie,
287 that we're all people. But, then, realizing that people do come from and have different
288 experiences, different cultures, history, and ways of respecting and dignifying gender as well?

289 I don't know but around Tom, it just seems that none of that actually exists, 'cause I don't
290 think he distinguishes between any of that (laughs). I know it's a strange thing to say, but let me
291 back up to when I was involved with Trees for Life. We started in India, and I'd given them a
292 small grant as we were planting trees, fruit trees, so people could feed themselves, and so on.
293 And we started, and we got to where we planted 10,000 trees and I thought that was a lot, and
294 then I gave them more money and we planted a hundred thousand trees, and that seemed like a
295 lot.

296 And then we got up to 10 million trees, and I'd never been to India. I had this scrap of
297 thought, "We're planting a lot of trees, it's supposed to be a good thing." I had done some other
298 work with charitable organizations and seen people driving around their new range rovers and all
299 that stuff, and having air-conditioned offices and things of that nature (Laughs). And so, I had
300 avoided going on the field trips with Trees for Life, 'cause I figured they don't need me to count
301 trees. Do you know? Anybody can count trees.

302 And when I went down to Guatemala and met Tom for the first time. Here he was riding
303 the public buses and had no car, living in the villages with people on the floor. We were actually
304 in a hut during the volcano and the earthquake they had in Guatemala.

305 Sleeping on the floor of one of the village huts, I realized this is probably the most
306 important thing I've ever realized in my life when it comes to my philanthropy. It was never
307 about the trees, it was about the people. And that was because of Tom, Tom is the one that just
308 exuded that it's always about the people, never about the project, and it's about the people you're
309 serving. And that was probably the most profound thing I've ever realized, and my work really
310 expanded dramatically after that because of Tom's perspective.

311 *Sophie:* For me, the difference in culture, gender identity, people's experiences, I think
312 that a lot of conflict and violence and hurt feelings and misunderstandings and all that come from
313 a lack of exposure to the way other people live, and also perspective-taking and just open
314 communication. So, I've traveled and experienced different cultures and the way people live.
315 You can never ever know exactly where someone comes from or what they've been through, but
316 you can create space by just listening, and starting to get a sense of what they've been through,
317 why they do what they do, and how they communicate.

318 You see it even in the United States between the West Coast and the East Coast. I would
319 say Westerners are offended by some of the ways the East Coast people communicate, but when
320 you spend time living there, you realize it's just a different form of communication. And
321 nobody's trying to offend anyone, it's just the way people communicate. And so, it's even bigger
322 when you're talking about different countries, different socioeconomic statuses, and different
323 gender identities. I think it just takes time to build that. In the context of Tom and New
324 Community Project, and other organizations that I've worked with, it's about creating the space
325 for people to have those conversations without feeling threatened or just able to be open and
326 listening, and also have disagreements.

327 And, where that it's okay if you don't agree. So, it takes time to understand where people
328 are coming from and the experiences they've had and also be sensitive to the language you're
329 using. I'm sure everyone offends someone without meaning to and if you can't hear, "Hey, you
330 know, actually I come from this background, and that was offensive, and here's why!" You'll
331 never know and you'll never grow.

332 The whole mechanism of storytelling is beyond powerful. My example is from Tanzania.
333 One of the organizations we work with is a home for abused, abandoned, and neglected street
334 girls. And so, they have about 45 girls living on campus at this point. They stay at about 40, or
335 45 girls, and then as girls graduate, they accept more. But you first go and they look like happy
336 children, and they're happy to be where they are. But I remember one time, in particular, they
337 were all going to put on plays for each other and for the guests that were there on campus. And,
338 there was just this hugely qualitative difference in the topics that the plays addressed.

339 It was just such an insight into the real lives of and the histories of some of these girls.
340 Because I'm talking about men abusing women, people getting dismembered, things that are real

341 that have happened to these girls. However, there were always these life lessons that emerged,
342 and they're just openly sharing these lessons through play form that was just so touching and
343 really bridged that gap.

344 You get this snapshot into the lives and experiences of some of these very young girls.
345 We're talking anywhere from four years old to sixteen or 18. I think storytelling can really be a
346 huge tool in providing that insight you cannot really get by maybe just telling someone.

347 *Reed:* Well, I think that when Tom works with the community and the individuals that he
348 works with, he gives them a sense that they're not just passengers on the bus, they get to drive the
349 bus. They're an integral part of working together with other people. Somehow, he's mastered how
350 certain people can work together, not in conflict but just in the very nature of their being that's a
351 possibility -- and that's what attracts people to Tom and New Community Project with the ability
352 to do that with a variety of people.

353 *Sophie:* That's what contributes to the feeling of solidarity with other people and part of
354 it is that sense of place. You can band together against something and you can also band together
355 for something. And he obviously focuses on the latter.

356 And so, it is that sense of place and creating something to care about and a place that also
357 cares about them helps. People, who are in touch with the New Community Project in whatever
358 way, feel a sense of solidarity.

359 *Reed:* Well, I'm hoping, I'm sure it's going to happen, is that the methodologies he's using
360 are applicable in other areas and it's scalable.

361 That he will demonstrate that this works and other people like Tom or close to Tom will
362 say, "I could do that." And, take it to other areas and starting with the Blue Ridge, onto the
363 Appalachians, and then across the world. He and New Community Project are doing that in

364 Malawi right now. He's going down to Jamaica. I've seen his work in the Dominican Republic.
365 And that's just the very nature of Tom, he comes in and does programs alongside people that are
366 replicable.

367 There's nothing magic about him, the projects and programs don't require a lot of money,
368 it just requires a community, or people working together. And that's probably the real power of
369 Tom and New Community Project.

370 *Sophie:* Yes, and just to build on that idea of scalability. For me, the reason it's so
371 successful is more about the process. It's not about the individual components of the program, it's
372 the process with which Tom approaches the community and integrates everything. So, I've often
373 thought that to be successful in scaling some of these types of community-driven models, it's
374 really more about focusing on the process that was used rather than any intervention or whatever
375 activity or component. So, I think that's a huge piece. And then, what we always hope to see is
376 projects take on a life of their own and survive past the founder.

377 Everyone in the nonprofit world, always jokes you're hoping to work yourself out of a
378 job. And so, that's what we hope to see eventually in all the projects that we help support. And, it
379 seems like New Community Project is on that track.

380 *Reed:* Well, for me, a community means people realizing their inclusiveness rather than
381 exclusiveness, people realizing they can accomplish great things when they work together.

382 *Sophie:* The greatest sense of the possibility with New Community Project specifically is
383 that all I know is when I was there I had this feeling that I can't really describe. I mean if you've
384 ever been in an old-growth forest, it's just different and you can just sense the difference. And in
385 some ways, it's impossible to put words to but that's how I can sense that you're living in a
386 beloved community. It's the feeling of being at ease or at peace, but not without conflict just with

387 confronted and addressed conflict. For me, it's hard to put words to but the sense I get once I live
388 this up. I guess it's that feeling of thorough connection. You know I don't think you're supposed
389 to use your phones during certain times of the day. It's that feeling of being completely present.
390 Like there's nothing nagging at the back of your head like, "Oh, I got to check this email or
391 whatever." You know you're there. And then there's space to just be, and you don't have to be
392 entertained or stimulated the whole time.

393 Similar to other places, I remember when we first went to the garden and we just took a
394 moment to appreciate and recognize the history of the land that the place was actually in. And so,
395 when you have time to have that reverence or that reflection, or just sit here in silence and
396 receive. I've seen that be hugely powerful, and Trees for Life does that every morning with each
397 other, and first of all it really gets everyone on a similar wavelength from the very beginning of
398 the day.

399 And I think that sets the foundation. I think there's something maybe science hasn't
400 explained yet, but it puts you in a similar wavelength, maybe the vibrations of your cells are
401 aligned or something but I've seen that practiced in different forms in some of the places that I've
402 felt the most connection and presence with others.

Appendix R:

Narrative of Robbie

Well, my name is Robbie. I am more or less a lifelong resident of Bridgewater. I was educated here at Bridgewater and went on to get my master's at Divinity and doctoral degree elsewhere. I have been working here at Bridgewater for 32 years now as college chaplain. I have a wife, two children, all of whom went through Bridgewater, as did my siblings and my parents. So, I bleed crimson and gold as they say. Obviously, I have interests that align with New Community Project (New Community Project) but that will come out with the questions.

I actually came on the New Community Project board in 2009, but I had known about it for some time because David and I have been friends for a very long time. I was familiar with his work when he was working for the Church of the Brethren. I'm not sure what his position there was, but director of peace witness or something to that effect.

He was doing much of the same kind of work that he's now doing with New Community Project. When the general board of the church downsized and eliminated his position, he then created New Community Project as a way to continue the work that he was doing and maintain many of the same connections with constituencies within the church. And, the Church of the Brethren continues to be New Community Project's primary demographic if you will.

So, I was aware of the creation of New Community Project. Although in its first several years, I didn't know that much about it. I just knew that David was working at this with a few others. Fairly early on, I was invited to consider serving on the board. But I was involved with On Earth Peace (OEP) and that organization and I didn't wanna take this one on. However, when I concluded my work with On Earth Peace, it felt like a good time to make this transition.

23 And so, I came on the board in 2009 and then became advisory chair in 2014. So, that
24 was the way I got on board. I was invited several times by some members of the board to serve
25 and didn't find my way to serving on the board until 2009.

26 Well, it just very strongly aligns with my personal beliefs and values in terms of
27 environmental sustainability and social justice. It's an organization that really embodies those
28 values and works at them in a very hands-on way through our partnerships and countries around
29 the world as well as our work here in the U.S.

30 We work with people in a way that really engages them and engages our partners in a
31 very respectful, mutually beneficial way. We have, as I'm sure you know, these learning tours
32 where we go not to step in for a week and do a service project, but we really go to genuinely
33 learn the issues and the needs of the communities there. And then, we've developed partnerships
34 within a number of those countries to provide assistance but always with the goal of it being the
35 folks there on the ground who are actually doing the work and using our support in ways they see
36 fit. So, everything about New Community Project is really the embodiment of the values that I
37 hold and a way to make a small difference in the world.

38 Well, it's called New Community Project (laughs) So, community clearly is a central
39 focus. And I guess the 'new' part is a reference to this vision of creating a new community where
40 the focus is on dignity, social justice, equity, equality, and all of these things that any real
41 community should value. (laughs)

42 We say in our vision we're a small nonprofit organization with a big goal to change the
43 world, right? Or to turn the world upside down? And so, the values of New Community Project
44 are rooted in the Judea-Christian tradition, specifically the Church of the Brethren's roots. New

45 Community Project is, of course, welcoming of anyone who shares those values and wants to be
46 a part of the organization.

47 So, the mission is to create a new community where social justice, environmental
48 sustainability, and peace are at the heart of what the community is about and how the members
49 of that community value and treat each other.

50 I'm involved in Harrisonburg in a very limited capacity. I participate very occasionally in
51 some of their activities. I've taken groups of students there before from the college. I'm hoping in
52 retirement, a year after next, to become much more engaged at a personal level. At this point, my
53 primary involvement is serving on the board and supporting our two sustainability centers in
54 Harrisonburg and in Vermont through my service on the board. Because of my proximity to New
55 Community Project Vine & Fig, I've been more engaged there, but I have hopes of being more
56 personally involved once I move into a new phase of my life. (laughs)

57 Well, at New Community Project Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center, the emphasis is
58 very clearly on creating a healing community both a healing of the land and healing of the
59 humans that associate with New Community Projects. So, a part of the focus, of course, is in the
60 White House where they provide care for and build community with folks in the community who
61 have all kinds of challenges -- physical, emotional, and mental.

62 And, New Community Project just seeks to provide a safe and healing environment for
63 those folks where they can begin to develop some autonomy and some sense of control in their
64 lives and where they can make a contribution to the community. It's not them just receiving
65 assistance from Vine & Fig, but it's them becoming a part of the community and making a very
66 significant contribution to the community.

67 So, it happens in that way. It happens with the work with the refugee families that are
68 housed there on the campus, who work in the gardens and on the farm. And more broadly, we
69 really take the same approach in terms of our partners. Again, David leads these learning tours to
70 countries around the world: Africa, Southeast Asia, here in the U.S. as well as the Dominican
71 Republic, and Ecuador. In all those places, our first and foremost objective is to go and to learn
72 and to engage in relationships and build community with those folks. And to have them share
73 with us what their needs are, and their challenges are, and then try to respond to them.

74 Primarily by providing financial resources, either monetary or another kind, but to really
75 try to address the specific needs they have in those communities. And, to do that in a way where
76 there's a real sense of mutuality in the relationship. And it's not just us going there to provide a
77 service, but it's us learning from them and them contributing to our awareness and educating us
78 as to the particular needs and challenges that they're facing in their context.

79 Well, I think Vine & Fig is a great case study of that. For example, the folks that come to
80 live in the White House over a period of time become leaders of that community. Have you met
81 Missy there?

82 So, Missy has been there for quite some time now. And over time, she has become a
83 significant leader of the community where they've recognized what gifts she has to offer and
84 have empowered her to use them and to become a very significant leader in her own way of that
85 community.

86 As I said, even though New Community Project is a faith-based organization, it's
87 absolutely open and welcoming of persons from every walk of life, of every religious and
88 spiritual sensibility. Again, anyone who shares the vision of creating this new community is
89 welcomed as a member and participant in that community.

90 Well, the work that David does in terms of traveling around the country and doing his
91 educational pieces in colleges, universities, schools, and churches, I find that very meaningful
92 because David is a very effective communicator. And so, I've experienced that myself on
93 numerous occasions, but I've also seen the response of others, particularly younger folks who are
94 still in their formative processes and who haven't been reified into particular positions or
95 perspectives. The impact that David has through his speaking engagements is quite profound in
96 terms of the way that it helps to shape and transform the perspectives of people in general -- and
97 I would say young people in particular.

98 So, I find that very meaningful as a person who works with young adults every day to see
99 the impact that he's had on the attitudes and perspectives of young people in particular, with
100 regard to issues of social justice, environmental sustainability, and the focus on agricultural
101 sustainability. I mean that's not really in my wheelhouse.

102 And so, while I deeply appreciate it and value it, I do that from a distance in a way.
103 Because it's not something that I'm as familiar with. At our annual or our semi-annual board
104 meetings, when Tom reports from New Community Project Vine & Fig and when Pete reports
105 from New Community Project Vermont, I'm just so amazed at the stuff they do and get done.

106 They certainly have more hours than a day than I do. (laughs) I greatly appreciate what
107 they're doing at the Sustainable Living Centers. I'm just not as conversant with that in terms of
108 my own background. And so, I tend to personally resonate more with the work that David does
109 in terms of the educational piece that is so central to New Community Project.

110 New Community Project's focus on relationships is what sets it apart from a lot of other
111 NGOs, because everything that we do is really based on developing relationships with our

112 partners around the world with those we encounter and work with at our sustainability centers.
113 And resilience is very much rooted in relationships.

114 Many organizations have some of the same goals as New Community Project. And they
115 are, of course, doing very good work, but perhaps because of the scale of the work they're doing
116 they don't probably have the ability to connect as directly as we do with our constituents, those
117 who support the organization, and those with whom we work.

118 In terms of care and resiliency and those kinds of things, I think that's a particular
119 strength of New Community Project because we are so focused on the relational aspect of our
120 work. Those things are certainly enhanced by the relationships that we develop with our partners
121 around the world. And I'm thinking about Myanmar, where they had the typhoon years ago and
122 just utter devastation and destruction.

123 The work that we've done there since then through our local partners helped to empower
124 the resiliency of that community and those folks with whom were working because we didn't just
125 send money. We were a physical presence there and we focused on the relationship we had with
126 our partner there in terms of providing the kinds of support that they said they needed.

127 So, it seems to me that the issue of resiliency and care is very much rooted in the
128 relationships one builds with one's partners and constituents. And that's a particular strength of
129 New Community Project, in part because of our size, but also because that's so central to our
130 mission and our way of working with our partners.

131 For example, 100% of the money contributed to New Community Project for these
132 projects goes to these folks, goes to these projects. And that's because we operate on a very lean
133 staff budget (laughs). Yeah, we kinda operate on a shoestring that way because our leaders,
134 David, Tom, and Pete are not well compensated financially.

135 They certainly, very willingly sacrifice for the good of the organization. And in part
136 because of that, we're able to really support our partners in a way that has a great deal of integrity
137 and effectiveness. Because as I said, all the money goes where it's supposed to go.

138 Well, (laughs) I haven't yet been on a learning tour, which David won't let me forget. I
139 fully intend to. My son has been on one. I need to do that because that certainly would be a very
140 impactful, informative event. However, because of my work here at the college and some other
141 things, I just haven't gotten that done.

142 Anytime I do go to Vine & Fig and just be there in that community, you just feel such a
143 sense of care and belonging, respect and dignity, and all of those things. It just pervades the
144 place. And it's not that they don't have their challenges. (laughs) They certainly do. And it's not
145 that they're a perfect place, but that just reflects Tom, his personality, and his approach that
146 everybody there is just treated with such decency and care.

147 And so, I can't point to a specific experience but just being there one just feels cared
148 about and cared for. And that to me is probably the most impactful personal experience that I
149 have with New Community Project when I'm there at Vine & Fig.

150 Well, the two major foci, social justice, and environmental sustainability are the values
151 that I hold most dear and that I see embodied and on display every day at New Community
152 Project and in everything we try to do. I don't know what to say beyond that but just to focus on
153 the environment and on the just treatment of not just people, but the entire world. I think that's
154 what it is for me.

155 Well, as I've said before, it's in our DNA to approach every person, and every partner
156 with a real sense of respect, mutual respect, and dignity. One example was one of our partners in
157 Africa. I can't recall which country, but David took a learning tour there and he was talking to a

158 group of women. Women and girls are a particular focus of New Community Project and these
159 partnerships. David and the learning tour group were having a conversation with this group of
160 women. Our group was asking them about their perspectives and views. And one of the women
161 said, "Of all the groups that have ever come here, you're the first that have asked us what we
162 think!" That to me is illustrative of New Community Project.

163 For that woman to recognize that of all the groups that had ever been there, whose
164 intentions were certainly good, it was New Community Project that was the very first group that
165 had ever really asked them what they thought and what they needed. And, I mean that's the
166 approach.

167 Well, with the focus on environmental sustainability and social justice, one area is not
168 more urgent than the other, but the environmental side of things is just increasingly urgent. We
169 are running out of time. And so, I would say that there's an urgency in terms of environmental
170 sustainability.

171 I try to live that out in my own life, however inadequately. Being a part of New
172 Community Project and being on the board, gives me a special sense of responsibility to live that
173 out in my own life, and to do whatever I can to support New Community Project in its work as
174 well.

175 Because as a society we are not in good shape and it's getting very, very critical. And so,
176 that makes my desire to support the work events at New Community Project all the stronger.
177 Even though we're a small organization, we punch above our weight (laughs), if you will, in
178 terms of the impact we have in the tangible, material impact of really working with our partners
179 to identify what it is they really need and providing those resources but also the impact of just

180 changing minds and transforming perspectives through the educational work that David does
181 around the country.

182 Well, I would say Kim, who is now the only remaining charter member of the board. She
183 actually worked very closely with David in terms of forming New Community Project. She was
184 the original board chair and I've known Kim for a long time. We were in seminary together and
185 knew her well before New Community Project. Kim's continual presence on the board and her
186 occasional encouragement of me to consider being on the board. Even though Kim and I don't
187 have frequent contact between board meetings, I would say beyond David and Tom, Kim was
188 probably the other most influential person that encouraged me to get engaged with New
189 Community Project in a more significant way.

190 Well, at the Sustainable Living Centers, the one in Vermont is not currently hosting
191 marginalized people the way they are at Harrisonburg. Their focus is more on agricultural
192 sustainability, providing food assistance and firewood to the local community, and addressing
193 rural poverty.

194 Again, it comes back to relationships. New Community Project Vine & Fig has limited
195 resources, but the environment there is very safe, very welcoming, and very respectful of
196 individuals. And so, it's that relational approach that New Community Project has that provides
197 the care and the dignity everyone needs.

198 (Laughs) I would like it to be more sustainable. We have had conversations recently at
199 our board meeting, we're talking about how New Community Project becomes a more
200 sustainable organization. We've established an endowment – very, very small at this point. We're
201 aware that David has been the heart and soul of this organization since its beginning. And we're
202 aware David is not gonna go on forever.

203 One of the ongoing challenges for us is to determine what a post-David New Community
204 Project will look like. There's not anybody who is gonna be able to do all the things that David
205 does and the way that he does them. And so, my hope would be that in five to 10 years, we
206 would have a plan in place that would move us forward as an organization with the same values,
207 and the same mission, but would not be as reliant upon one individual for the work going
208 forward. And so, that would be my primary hope.

209 Certainly, we want to expand our impact in terms of the people we touch in this country
210 and also with our partners around the world, but our goal isn't to just grow for the sake of
211 growing. We want to be very strategic about how we move forward and the countries we develop
212 partnerships with. Presently, much of it is organic, it happens as David travels. He makes
213 connections with people in these places and these countries. And some of them turn into ongoing
214 partnerships. Again, our approach is not on quantity but on quality and relationship, and that will
215 be our focus going forward.

216 One of the things we're focusing on now quite is the whole issue of racism and how we
217 can as an organization become, I do not know if I wanna say less racist, but certainly more aware
218 of the issues of racism and the way in which they impact our organization. Our advisory board is
219 all white with the exception of one member who lives in Malawi and is one of our partners there.

220 And so, we're trying to become more aware of the impact of racism, structural racism, on
221 our organization and the way that we operate. We are recognizing that we can't be a truly open
222 and welcoming space and place for people so long as we're affected by racism and the racial
223 inequalities that pervade our society. So, understanding the impact is a cutting-edge concern for
224 us.

225 I don't think we're aware of any particular ways that we're affected by that but we are
226 aware that we are affected. As an organization that has primarily white middle-class leadership,
227 we are aware we're a very privileged group and that we need to be ever more aware and ever
228 more vigilant about the ways in which we and our organization are impacted by racism in our
229 country. I would say that's definitely a growing edge for us in terms of work we have yet to do.

230 And, actually, we're in the process of developing a survey that we plan to share with our
231 partner groups around the world to gain their perspective on us as an organization and their
232 perceptions of the ways in which we are limited by our own views, perspectives, and privilege.
233 And so, right now we're in the process of designing and refining that survey so that we can get
234 some direct input from our partners as to how we can become a better, more welcoming, more
235 caring organization for them to relate to.

236 Our organizational sustainability needs to be an ongoing focus for us, along with more
237 diversity. As I said, we don't have a very diverse board and that's partly because we're (laughs)
238 kind of a homegrown, very organic organization. We started out that way. And so, friends
239 invited friends to come onto the board. That's how I got invited on -- just through personal
240 connections. But, as we go forward, we need to be more diverse because our partners that we
241 relate to are far more diverse than we are.

242 And so, that is one of the things that would strengthen us as an organization. To just
243 become more diverse, both in terms of our advisory board, but also in terms of the connections
244 that we make, particularly in this country, to get into schools and other institutions that are
245 themselves more diverse. There are limits to what we can do, but that's a focus for us going
246 forward.

247

Appendix S:

Narrative of Sarah

My name is Sarah. I am currently based in Southern Illinois but I grew up in central Virginia and went to school in Harrisonburg, Virginia. And during my undergraduate degree program, I was a communication major and minored in nonprofit studies and creative writing. I stayed at JMU because I made such good connections both personally and professionally in the community, partly because of Vine and Fig. And so, I stayed for my Master's degree in Communication and Advocacy.

I had to go back to a couple of different reflective journals and figure out where I first heard about New Community Project's Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center. I realized that it was back in 2017. It was around the time the white supremacy rally in Charlottesville happened and that really stuck with me for a long time. And the next semester in my creative writing minor, I was in a class where I could do a journalistic research article. They said you can pick any topic, go research it, go interview people in the community, and learn what you want to learn about it. I said, "Well, I want to learn what church and community groups are doing about what happened in Charlottesville from that last semester, especially the ones who had been very vocal about love and justice. The white churches that had a black pastor speak the next week and then didn't anymore." So, I was looking around for some sort of organization or group to sit with me in these questions. And I got to know a number of pastors to interview them for my little piece as a little eighteen-year-old in college with the question: what do we do in the world? Of course, not asking too many big questions. But then I came across New Community Project's Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center probably through Google, just googling justice and love and something along those lines. And so, I came across their site and I thought I guess I can go talk to them. They seem nice. Tom was very gracious to meet with me -- who he had no contact

25 before. And I remember walking into Vine & Fig that White House and just taking in a deep
26 breath. It was like walking into someone's house. I was immediately calmed because I had come
27 in with so many big questions and just distress. Talking to Tom and hearing about Vine & Fig's
28 mission and their approach to justice work he made me fresh tea from the garden right outside.
29 That really calms a person down when they are trying to answer really hard questions and just
30 taking the time to talk with me was the very first introduction to Vine & Fig. And I said this
31 place is special. In my master's program, a colleague and friend of mine who actually worked
32 and interned with them said, "Hey, you should come hang out at Vine & Fig!" "Oh," I said. I
33 know them and that is how I really got plugged in.

34 I mentioned earlier that a colleague and friend who originally worked with Vine and Fig
35 and interned with them. He was really working on a project of his own that really focused on
36 food waste and trying to figure out how to assess that in the community. He brought me into that
37 group and he said: "Hey you should stick around and see what other projects Tom can put you on
38 if this one does not pan out?" And food waste assessment petered out, which was fine. We got
39 some interesting research from it in many ways. But as things started shifting gears, I really
40 started to focus on wherever I could help at Vine & Fig instead. Because I had come in wanting
41 to do food security and food-focused things but I realized stepping into the organization I could
42 be a lot more flexible.

43 One of the things was the way Tom answered my initial questions about what people who
44 are either Christian or claim to follow God or have a sort of faith what do we do. What do we do
45 with all this racism and injustice? And you know being this big and having way bigger
46 problems? And I really appreciated his answer, in a way that never minimized any problems but
47 was always excited to be part of the solution. And so, I kept hearing that reiterated by anyone

48 who I talked to who knew Vine & Fig or who is involved in Vine & Fig. They were always
49 excited to see and be part of the solution and part of the bringing together of lots of different
50 people and really decentralizing what their goals were. Making it a real 'community effort' feels
51 like such a small word compared to what they actually do. But like the feeling that you are
52 welcome at the table even if you do not know where to sit yet.

53 I was an intern with New Community Project's Vine & Fig for my second year of
54 graduate school. In 2019, during the August timeframe and I worked with the 50 by 25 campaign
55 in January and February and then was remote in March and April of 2020 when the world shut
56 down due to the pandemic.

57 The primary bulk of my work was with the 50 by 25 (50 by 25 is a campaign based out of
58 Renew Rocktown, which is a project of Vine & Fig—a bit of an umbrella within an umbrella)
59 campaign that is when I was mostly in the office and working directly with Vine & Fig. In my
60 second year of graduate school, I started interning with Vine & Fig and had done school garden
61 stuff with them and had helped them revamp their website and their logo. These projects were
62 part of the internship during grad school, rather than in previous years. After these projects
63 finished in late fall/winter is when I started to join the campaign. Tom offered for me to hop on
64 board the 50 by 25 Campaign. He liked how quickly I worked on the website and turned that
65 around and asked if I would be interested in doing the work with them. He asked me after coming
66 into one of our weekly meetings. He handed me a doodle drawing and asked me if I could make
67 this the logo. “Can we do that in the next little bit?” I said: “Sure I can do that. When do you
68 want this by?” “Well, they are printing in thirty minutes so if we could that...” laughing...So we
69 got in the office and whipped it up and I thought, “Yah, I could help onboard this. It sounds
70 fun!”

71 Yeah, 50 by 25 is an incubated campaign in Vine & Fig, and today they are calling for
72 more localized energy in Harrisonburg. So, they have a few asks and they may have added more
73 since I had been there. The main ask is getting 50% renewable energy into the Harrisonburg grid
74 system by 2025 hence 50 by 25. So that was the main goal of that campaign and just really
75 making it affordable was a huge push. To not only do it for people who can afford solar or who
76 can afford these renewable energy sources but others who can benefit from it by having more
77 weatherized housing whether that was in affordable housing complexes or apartment complexes
78 They wanted to make benefits as accessible as possible.

79 ...And their lunches! It is so funny. As I was preparing for this chat, I had forgotten that I
80 had posted about a very specific moment when they had rung the bell right after our meeting. We
81 were running over in that little meeting space in the corner office. And they rang the big lunch
82 bell that everybody around could hear and you know in our meeting we are like okay we've got
83 lunch coming up let's wrap this up. And someone knocks on the door and says, "No, you need to
84 pause, you need to eat, you need to feed yourself. Come join us." The person was not going to
85 have it. ...Laughing...So we all paused and we all got up we were like we are good. That was a
86 fun moment of remembering that we are all still humans and we need to eat.

87 One of the things that I remember was that when someone was new and stepped foot on
88 Vine & Fig grounds, they always got a tour, like always taken around and shown even if they did
89 not fully understand what they were looking at. People who were giving the tour were so excited
90 to tell you about like the micro-climate or the way they would set this up and the new projects
91 that were happening around. I remember that always happened immediately and feeling that you
92 were not only welcome here but let's get you invested and involved... and that was fun.

I remember at lunchtime they would all stand in a circle and someone either says a prayer or blessing of some sort. And everyone is invited to partake in that however you see fit. And that was another really, not a ritual, but a thing that drew me in because it was always about how you want to participate in it and how we can make you feel invited in and not forced into saying anything you do not want to say or doing anything you do not want to do. I always appreciated that.

A moment that comes to mind was when I had gotten to Vine & Fig a little bit early for when Tom and I were to be meeting. And I remember coming in and being a little hesitant about whether I should go in because I did not see him and he was my 'in' at the moment. And instead, Missy was at the door and she said hello. Okay, I can be here, I am allowed in this space that is very much yours. So, she opened the door and we sat at the kitchen table. It was a very cold day and she said you could sit by the stove fire if you want. Oh great! So, we sat there and Alicia was coming in and out of the kitchen and was very welcoming. And Tom eventually came in and I was like you know we can go meet in the office. But he said, "Oh no, this room has the fire on. Let's sit right here." So, we pulled up the rocking chairs and sat next to the fire. It seems like such a small thing but it wasn't. It was definitely a moment where we are a community -- and we are just hanging out together and happen to do work together.

I remember a couple of days where I was struggling with some personal health issues that every once in a while, really interrupts stuff. There was never a time when I was made to feel bad about that. So, that was another instance where looking back at my reflective journals of some really big flares I was very much cared for and I was asked the next day by somebody in the place, "Hey, how are you feeling?" Which again I always appreciated.

115 Lunch probably but sitting around the table and watching the community talk to each
116 other. An Engineering group that works downtown and near Vine & Fig every once in a while,
117 would come to have lunch at the same time that I would be there. So, it would be fun to watch
118 people who do not probably have a lot of day-to-day things in common just talking and chatting
119 and being excited about community work and what they were doing in the community. Even
120 when volunteers would join us, it was just like the table absorbed everybody who was around it
121 and if they could not fit around they would just flow into the living room and made space to be
122 part of the conversation. For me personally, everything seems to happen around the kitchen
123 table. All the good and bad conversations happen around the kitchen table and you grow together
124 around one.

125 In thinking about a sense of place, what comes to mind is... they say the best way to
126 learn something is to teach it and then you realize what you do not know so you then go and
127 learn those things. That happened with me. I gave a little tour of Vine & Fig to a group of middle
128 schoolers and realized how little I actually knew about the systems and what was actually in
129 place. Before that Tom had recommended that I take a permaculture design course, and so once I
130 did that I started to see the Vine & Fig differently and started to recognize what another farm is
131 doing similarly that I got to visit. So, once I started to tour farms around Virginia, I started to
132 recognize more systems and really started to feel more connected to the physical and
133 environmental space of Vine & Fig. And so, when I watched volunteers follow Alicia around, I
134 would know what they are doing. I have never done it but I recognize that now and it was helpful
135 to get that suggestion to attend the course.

136 Building the characteristic of resiliency as an organization was definitely part of my
137 permaculture education experiences and seeing how intentional they were in not only taking on

138 the issues of climate change but they were proactive in creating a better literal environment in the
139 earth and as an organization. I think working with the 50 by 25 campaign, although it was not an
140 organization itself, it showed me that it really takes somebody out loud asking: who is not in the
141 room and who has concerns who are not being addressed? I think that can definitely be in the
142 category of equitability and social justice, it inherently can build resilience and create this
143 measure of not only having one group on board with this campaign and these three asks. But
144 everybody is involved so we are going to be doing this for the long run and building a more
145 resilient front for this ‘ask’ on the front side.

146 It really takes somebody out loud asking who is not in the room and who has concerns
147 that are not being addressed. Yes, honestly, I had never been in a room where at the time we
148 were mostly white people and one of the men in the room was like: do we know anyone in the
149 African-American community who would be interested in this project? I was like that is a great
150 question. Yeah, do we know anyone who is in a similar organization as this? So, that was really
151 great to hear and to know that is a question that is being asked by an older white man and that
152 was such a helpful moment for me in general.

153 I remember sitting in the room when it was very intentional to get everyone to talk, the
154 women, and even the quieter people. And when Eric C. voiced concerns of his and said: “I have
155 people in the Spanish-speaking community who are business owners who are concerned about
156 XYZ.” Everyone took a note. Everyone wrote it down. And then we started to plan, I do not
157 think it ever got off the ground because the world semi-collapsed. But we were talking about a
158 really unique idea of having a townhall-esque thing where we would have someone from the 50
159 by 25 campaign come and speak about the ‘asks’ and have a Q & A time for how much solar
160 would cost but there would be a translator there and a community liaison or representative. If

161 Eric C. would want to speak, we would want to help him do that. So, it was really about meeting
162 where people were and the idea that we could travel to them as opposed to rather how can we fit
163 them into the asks. How can we incorporate their concerns into our asks?

164 There were quite a few a'ha moments for me. I remember one of them. It was a weird
165 day. It was actually a weird stressful week. After reviewing my reflection journal, I remember
166 offering to pick-up a volunteer to go to another school garden that Vine & Fig was part of. "No,"
167 I said. I will pick her up and we can go and I can introduce her to people. We stopped at Vine &
168 Fig, the White House for seeds and then I realized that I had never really actually planted a
169 garden. I had never done this and so Tom without any panic in his voice just explained how you
170 plant cilantro and how you plant this... laughing...And the volunteer and I are trying to take as
171 many mental notes as we can. It was an a'ha moment of building a community space where
172 people feel like they belong almost requires a sense that we have to learn as we go. I am a
173 personality who use to struggle with perfectionism -- and like I need to have a plan and I need to
174 know this and here we go. But that was a huge a'ha moment for me like you have room to grow
175 and learn, and if you do not know something that is not a flaw, you can ask and that is
176 okay. You can have someone teach you and how fun is that for that person to be able to teach
177 something.

178 At Vine & Fig, they really showed me in looking at their mission statement what caught
179 my attention initially, and what I kept seeing over and over was their celebrating the works of
180 mercy, social justice, and ecological sustainability. And that word 'celebrate' was new to me. Up
181 until graduate school, I had really been involved in hunger relief and so a lot of those types of
182 communications would really be looking at the problems and convincing people that there are
183 problems here and you have to be paying attention. And so, taking the approach of celebration

184 really opened up a completely new world for me and that has influenced my life in ways that are
185 just insane. And to take an approach of celebration reminded me that you can have fun in really
186 difficult work. So, getting outside and digging in dirt, or digging in the soil, planting things --
187 even if you do not know how to plant cilantro at first -- you can still celebrate learning with
188 people and doing little tiny things that add up to really big actions and big inspirations for
189 others.

190 In regard to respect and dignity, a few things come to mind. There was one day when one
191 of the people there was having a really rough day. He and I had been friendly and had interacted
192 before. And for some reason, there was just a very strange vibe and he was going in and out with
193 his head down. And Tom noticed that I had noticed that and he explained a little bit of his
194 background and his story of coming from certain traumas. And that really showed me how much
195 they really truly are invested in the relationships there. And it is not just about putting on a face
196 for people but lets us know where people are coming from. And that showed me what respect
197 and dignity could look like. And then, with culture and gender, it is important to honor and
198 acknowledge different backgrounds and experiences.

199 Another thing that comes to mind, is when I first got there or one of the first times to
200 have lunch with Tom, Alicia, and others at Vine & Fig. We were passing around the tortillas and
201 I said and asked them, "How do you make these?" And so, they told me a little about the process
202 and how they make them every day. And I told them that my granny, my grandmother taught me
203 to make tortillas but it was like a scoop full of Crisco. They were great but she would make
204 tortillas from my mom and my aunt every day after school and that would be my mom's favorite
205 snack. And that moment of connection, they were so excited. They were like: "Where is your
206 grandmother from?" And I said she is Mexican and grew up in a Mexican family down in the

207 valley of Texas where everybody was always in the kitchen making tortillas. And my
208 grandmother was not about it then and like I am leaving but she still made tortillas for her
209 family. So, I remember those kinds of moments they were always encouraged to celebrate. And
210 so, they immediately began to share, I am from Guatemala, I am from Colombia, and we would
211 share and trade. And me, this white girl sitting at the table not knowing any Spanish. And I am
212 like, I am so sorry to be such a disappointment but I am learning. They were always so nice
213 about it and they were like do not worry. They were always so gracious but they were definitely
214 excited to share their culture and it never felt like it was an issue to share and celebrate culture.

215 Another thing that came to mind was when Tom would talk about his time overseas and I
216 am learning about different environmental, not strategies, but environment developmental kinds
217 of farming and agricultural practices and such. He was always so quick to give credit to different
218 cultures and that was really, really refreshing. In having come from a mindset and permaculture
219 class that this is all indigenous knowledge, this isn't new and these two white men are really
220 profiting off of this stuff. So, that was always refreshing to remember, here are the cultures that
221 have been doing this for centuries.

222 Definitely decentering whiteness. I had not realized that decentering whiteness was a goal
223 that I was really passionate about until I actually left Vine & Fig and started realizing that this is
224 not the way for everybody. And I started to realize this is how intentional they were that it almost
225 felt like they were not intentional. It was not an issue but an intentional practice: to celebrate
226 cultures, to acknowledge different backgrounds, just really give a sense of a diverse community,
227 and put people who are historically underserved and ignored in the forefront of our minds when
228 we ask what we can do in the community. Not everyone does that.

229 In thinking about decentering whiteness, of course, no organization is perfect, no person
230 is perfect, and we all grow and learn as we go. But seeing it as an example and seeing it practiced
231 in so many different facets from the composting stuff to other areas. Vine & Fig was really
232 adamant about wanting to come to you in that if you do not have a vehicle or you cannot get to
233 city hall or live in an area where this is not a priority or a concern, we want to make it as easy as
234 possible. Yeah, I never really thought about these issues before so seeing it in practice so
235 smoothly from my perspective, it was probably not always smooth.

236 Definitely, Tom. I joke that I am probably a super fan that he does not know about but he
237 definitely is in just the way he approaches working with people. He just makes time for people
238 very intentionally and invites anybody and everybody who wants to join in. It might not be
239 exactly tied to it, but I got to work with Tom on a research project for the Virginia Governor's
240 statewide Environmental Justice Council. And when I went to go present with Tom in Richmond
241 I had never done anything like that before. I had never really driven downtown before and had
242 really never done anything like that. And so, the trust that he and I had built professionally at
243 Vine and Fig really translated into that we had each other's backs in a professional setting and in
244 a new space for me. So that is when I realized that: "Oh yeah, I really do trust this person from
245 Vine & Fig." And, he represents a lot of what Vine & Fig was for me.

246 And, Alicia was really one who was so upfront with saying "You are doing hard work."
247 She was very much that she really reminded me of my "grandmother?" And between the accent
248 and the intensity of things, she would say: "You are doing work that changes lives." Oh my God,
249 this is so lovely...And just hearing her stories and her willingness to share. Just hearing how
250 much Vine & Fig affected her was beautiful to hear. Missy was another person who I had not too
251 many moments with but every moment I got to chat with her she was always, what's a good

252 word... she has such a gentle strength that whenever she talks with someone it is like you are in.
253 She is the person that if she says hello to you, you are in. At least, I felt that way. The talented
254 artist who looks up from her beautiful work of painting -- like you get the 'hello of the day' you
255 know you are in. One who I have not mentioned yet who is not on staff at Vine & Fig but
256 Everett. He was the person and colleague in graduate school who first invited me to Vine & Fig.
257 And he did not hesitate. He'd say, "You are interested in this? Then let's go!" He was always
258 inviting to me and opening tables for me that I did not know existed. And was really adamant
259 about not selling yourself short. Speak up if you have an idea, I want to hear it, we want to hear
260 it. And that was really a professional development experience for me and personally so he was
261 hugely influential as well.

262 Everett invited me to attend the meetings on food waste and they were holding meetings
263 at Doug and Nancy's house. And that was something I had never done -- just go to someone's
264 house who I did not know. Like to learn about food waste, that sounds like such a dream. They
265 had like such great snacks and like it was such a normal thing and I had never been welcomed
266 like that. "We are so glad you are here!" "You have a whiteboard in your living room this is so
267 cool!" And then just the excitement they both had for stuff that I thought I was the only one in
268 my whole town who ever cared about. And then I moved there and I was like "My People!"

269 I felt supported definitely with education support for sure but also emotional support as
270 well. When Tom recommended that I take the permaculture course that was a game-changer. I
271 did not know that I liked agriculture and farming stuff until that class and now that is all I think
272 about. And definitely emotional support, I am going to include work-life balance in that category
273 as well. I am a person who says yes because I get really excited. Tom and Margot both, when I
274 worked with her at Great Oak Academy on the school gardens, at different times but during the

275 same week said, “No, nope. You have to say no to this.” And that was a good lesson even
276 physically. I do not know if he remembers this, but I was in enough of a fret from different
277 chronic illness ailments with my muscles and nerves that it started affecting my schoolwork and
278 my work. And so, I noticed that the good chair was always free when I was around and I noticed
279 that if I was shifting around you know it was not a question for me to get up and just go and do
280 something else. I never felt the need to stay in a position of discomfort physically, mentally, or
281 emotionally. It was always an open environment to say what is bothering you? How can we fix
282 it? Let's do it! It was not a huge deal.

283 I do remember one challenge that I did not ever think about but there was someone who
284 was excited about one of the projects who wasn't really showing up for it that I heard out of the
285 corner of my ear. There was one day when I was in the conversation and Tom was explaining
286 what was happening and so there were some challenges with people really being excited and
287 saying yes and then either not physically showing up or the resources possibly were not there.

288 Another challenge was occasional ‘town and gown issues’ to step into by accident. Cause
289 I had known when you get a bunch of university students anywhere there is always some tension,
290 especially in organizations that are very adamantly intentionally working with populations who
291 are either historically underserved or are coming from trauma. There could be some challenges
292 in whether it is in personalities or sensitivity or cultural acknowledgment. So, there were
293 challenges. There was nothing that exploded that I saw or really hindered a whole lot but I would
294 be curious about those kinds of issues. I remember sitting in a 50 by 25 meeting and it was at
295 city council and I had gone with Tom and Joy too. I was asked as a JMU student what I think
296 about affordable housing or something like that or what do you think about the campaign and
297 how it affects the cost of housing or something. And I tried to answer the best I could because I

298 was just getting introduced to the campaign and learning all of the electricity stuff. And then they
299 followed it up with: “Well, JMU students do not make it more affordable to live here!” Sorry,
300 but I did not know what to do with that thankfully Tom sort of swooped in and changed the
301 subject. That was a nice but interesting thing that I had not been personally asked about but I
302 have noticed other organizations with challenges like that.

303 But another instance that I saw a beloved community came to mind when we were
304 hosting at Vine & Fig a tour of middle school students from Skyline or so. I remember having to
305 scrounge together a station at the last minute and that we were going to sit out on the porch and
306 we are going to draw and we got a bunch of papers and crayons and colored pencils. And so half
307 of the middle schoolers are off --you know -- lounging around, taking a nap, and you know that
308 is great, get some sun. Then others were actually coloring and doing strange doodles. But there
309 was one student who made a sign and said, “I need this big paper. Can I rip this off?” “Sure, go
310 ahead.” And he said, “I am going to make a poster, Okay!” Okay, so he made a poster about the
311 theme of that field trip which was change the earth or for the earth. And he made a sign that said:
312 We are for the earth or something along the theme of the day. And he said, “Can I go stand on
313 the sidewalk?” And I am looking at the other chaperone, and I am like: “Am I in charge of this
314 child?” So, I went and stood with him. So, this student and I are standing on the sidewalk and he
315 is holding a sign for the cars. And the drivers of the cars start waving and the student starts
316 waving back he is so excited. And then all of the students who were on the porch were like:
317 “Hey, we want to go do that!” So, they all start ripping off paper and making signs for Earth Day
318 without hesitating. It was such a better station than mine. They really loved that idea so much
319 that half of them went and stood with their ‘For the Earth’ signs on the sidewalk calling ‘For the
320 Earth’ so some of the trucks passing by honked ‘For the Earth’. Maybe it is not in the classic

321 sense that this is a community that belongs. But the fact that that one kid made them feel that
322 they could do it and they can be a part of it and that student came back to me and said that is
323 what he wants to do: "I want to do that. I want to lead people!" And I am like great: "Go do
324 that!" And that is such a cool way of seeing what a community can become with one person who
325 had this idea and I loved that. Nothing I could have planned would have the same result. If I had
326 planned it they would have been like "No thank you!" But the fact that community can be so...
327 forgive the pun... but be so organic at Vine & Fig -- it makes me smile.

328 The fact that I did not really know about Vine & Fig until I was almost leaving college
329 tells me that there are more and tells me that if they are not marketed that maybe they are still
330 there and there are still lots of little Vine & Figs all around and that would be the dream just little
331 incubators of community and beloved communities. And that gives me hope, that even if we do
332 not see it and even if we do not see the long-term effects of it, there is great work being done.

Appendix T:

Narrative of Taona

My name is Taona. I came to know about New Community Project in 2018 when I came to the USA. I was on a fellowship for a couple of months and I was based in Vermont. I got to meet Pete, who is with New Community Project, but his project is in Starksboro. So, I got to meet him through the organization I was working with 350Vermont, and he was friends. There's a community where people meet, and families eat together to talk about climate change, its impact on our communities, and trying to build our own little communities wherever we are. So, 350Vermont has something going on in Vermont.

I attended one of the meetings, and then I got to meet Pete. He invited me for dinner. He said, "Our directors are coming. Can you come for dinner in Starksboro?" It was quite a drive from Burlington. (laughs)

I said, "Okay. I will come." So, I had somebody give me a lift and we went there. So, I was sitting next to Tom. I did not know who Tom was, and I just sat down in the church. We were really sitting listening to David's presentation about climate change, its impact in different places, where New Community Project has been, and how it's been helping people.

He talked about how they're able to work with the soil and all sorts of stuff. I was sitting next to Tom, and I was like, "You know what? I'm coming from Malawi, and I am trying to figure out how we can bring life back to our soil."

"I'm coming from a community and an organization where I have over 3,000 beneficiaries. We are still trying to figure out how we can work with the soil so that it can start reproducing food once more."

23 Because we have vast land that has been productive over the years. Our ancestors and our
24 parents used to grow their food there. But, with colonization, we had maize or corn brought into
25 our country, and then fertilizers, chemical pesticides, and herbicides were introduced.

26 We started as a country growing food that was not really conducive to our land. And
27 then, all these fertilizers or these pesticides started to kill our land. There were monocropping
28 practices and a lot of practices that were introduced. Sometimes it's due to agendas of political
29 leaders, or even the colonizers themselves because it was bringing in a product and creating a
30 demand for it.

31 Now, it had ruined a lot of our land, and a lot of people were unable to grow food. The
32 impact of climate change on our country, and especially the area where I'm working, has been
33 hard for our communities. We're experiencing extreme weather conditions. We have a drought
34 for almost seven months of the year, and the rest of the months if it's raining, we're getting
35 flooded.

36 It's tricky to grow food. The only land where we can grow food is the one that we are
37 unable to productively grow our food on because nothing is growing there.

38 I said, "Okay, I'm trying to figure out how to do this." I didn't know I was sitting next to
39 somebody who was an expert in gardening, he knows soils, and he's worked with other people. I
40 was like, "Who is this guy who's presenting?" I'm talking about David. (laughs).

41 I said, "Who's this guy that's presenting? I'm really captivated by how he presents." I said,
42 "I really wanna know more about this work, and how they're working with these communities,
43 and wanting to learn more." When we started the conversation with Tom over food, we started
44 talking about land, the soil, and how we can help our people become more food secure, work
45 well with the land, and start taking care of our soil.

46 And then, he introduced me to David. David was like, "Oh, I need to talk to you more
47 about your projects, and what you're doing in Malawi. I wanna hear more about you." So, I met
48 David the following day, and that's how I got to know about New Community Project. It was
49 simply stumbling onto them over dinner. (laughs).

50 When I heard about their work, I shared with them my work. We thought perhaps we can
51 start working on something together. After he visited, he said, "We can partner, and work on a
52 couple of projects together."

53 The passion for the people. I met several people because I was in the United States for a
54 couple of months. I was able to meet a couple of groups, but you could tell that this particular
55 group of people really cares about people. New Community Project really cares about the planet,
56 and they're taking their time, learning more about different cultures and learning how they can
57 best protect the people, provide security, and build their community that's stronger beyond just
58 what we're seeing.

59 I could tell from the passion that they had, the experiences that they shared; the countries
60 they had been to; and what they had done. I was like I'm talking to the right people. They really
61 do care about the planet. And, not just the planet, but the people as well. That's what attracted me
62 to David and Tom and to New Community Project and what they're doing.

63 They also have a very catchy phrase. We say, "It's a small organization with a big heart to
64 change the world." "It's a small organization with a big vision to change the world, something
65 like that." I don't know if I'm phrasing it right. So, that caught my attention as well because my
66 organization is quite small. But, with the limited resources, we're able to impact a lot of lives and
67 we're able to do more.

68 As I said, we have a lot of similarities. We might not have everything in the world; we
69 might not have all the resources, but we've got this big dream and this big vision. And, what
70 they're saying to me, it really corresponds. We're doing quite the same thing in essence, this
71 might be a very good partnership.

72 But, not only that, New Community Project, in their approaches, in their strategies, they
73 would not want to come and impose in an area or place they want to help. Like saying, "You
74 should do this. This is how things should be done or for things to go well, this is what you do."
75 They respect the community in which they are in.

76 When they come, let's say to Malawi, they'll respect the culture of Malawi. Respect the
77 people's view. They would want to learn more from the indigenous leaders, what they do, what
78 they have done, how they're strengthening the community, and how they're working together
79 towards fighting climate change, or any challenges that the community's facing.

80 I could tell it was an organization that's coming in and is willing to listen, and just be part
81 of the community. Not like you're imposing a certain culture on them, we're not imposing
82 anything on them, but you're willing to learn. Even learn from them, on what they have done
83 before, and what works well in their land.

84 I think that shows a lot of respect. For me, I was like okay, I'm talking to the right
85 organization. They're not coming to change us, or to change things, but they're really interested
86 in helping us out, to figure out how to do things, and maybe figure out how we can best become
87 food secure, and face the challenges that we're facing.

88 In my organization, I'm the executive director for Creative Solutions for the
89 Environment, but I'm also the co-founder for the organization, and I also sit on the board for
90 New Community Project.

91 With my organization, it's more a role of providing leadership. I have a team of about
92 nine employees, and the rest are volunteers that we work with. So, it depends on the season,
93 sometimes we work with bigger groups, but we're working with over 3,000 community
94 members.

95 We have built our own community, and we have family everywhere in Balaka. (laughs)
96 They are all part of the family now. Yes, it's mainly figuring out the organization, it's about
97 climate resilience. We're looking for solutions to combat climate change and become food secure
98 to where we're reducing poverty of the people as well.

99 Most of our communities are facing food insecurity because of the impact of climate
100 change. Our organization is basically doing reforestation work where we have a couple of forests
101 that we're protecting. Now, we have 51 forests that we're taking care of and protecting. We're
102 also doing reforestation, so we have new wood lots that we're planting trees in. Planting trees in
103 schools as well. We've got a Green Schools Project. We have schools that we adopted, and
104 students that we work with, and they're planting trees in there as well, apart from the
105 communities.

106 We have sustainable agricultural projects. Now, that's the food part of trying to make our
107 community more food secure. We want to go beyond food security, but we want also to go into
108 sustainable agricultural businesses as well. With the excess, they can be able to sell, while
109 families are able to sustain themselves and be more resilient.

110 Now, for the past few years, we were focusing more on the food security part, and just
111 providing food for the families. Now, we're more focusing on growing beyond that as well. So,
112 we are in the process of building a market structure, where we want to get all the food from the
113 gardens, and bring it to a market, where we can sell our organic produce to various stakeholders,

114 and create a market infrastructure and business with these community members. These women
115 and men are doing great work so that they can find more support for the work that we're doing
116 with them.

117 Apart from that, we have education projects. The seventh solution to climate change,
118 according to Project Draw Down, is education for girls.

119 In Malawi, though I haven't done a conclusive study, I believe educating girls could be
120 the number one solution to climate change. So, we have education projects, where we're
121 educating girls and providing scholarships. That's a project that New Community Project is also
122 sponsoring to provide scholarships and bicycles. Last year, we constructed two hostels for girls,
123 and it's just been a good project.

124 So, educating these girls so when they go back to their communities, they'd be able to
125 bring the change that is required. They'd be more informed to make better decisions for the
126 lands, for the environment, and to be able to protect our environment. Yeah, it's basically what
127 we're doing.

128 In regards to New Community Project, I'm just a board member, yeah. The first time I
129 met them (laughs)... I started talking about the challenges I was facing. When I was talking to
130 Tom, I didn't even know which organization he was coming from. Like, he was just the person I
131 was sitting next to.

132 He was so interested in learning about our organization and learning more from me about
133 what we have done so far, and what works well in our country, what challenges. I felt that I
134 found a listening ear and somebody who is willing to help. He would say, "Okay, I have worked
135 in Guatemala, and I can be able to help with this and that." I said, "This is somebody who really
136 is understanding me, and wants to support me."

137 When I met David, who's the founder and director of New Community Project, the
138 following day he asked me questions. Don't tell him I said this (laughs). He asked me questions
139 the whole day. He wanted to learn from me.

140 He wanted to hear more about Malawi, and the challenges that Malawi's facing. And if
141 New Community Project was to come in, how it would be able to assist? He was really
142 inquisitive, and he wanted to learn more about the people themselves and the entire situation in
143 my country: what is it like, and what are you doing on your own to assist? He wanted to just
144 learn and learn.

145 Even questions about the vision for the organization, how do you see yourself in the next
146 coming years? And, what are you gonna do? And this and that. And regardless of New
147 Community Project coming in or not, who are we? And where do we want to be? And all the
148 efforts that we're doing right now? So, he was really interested. I could tell I'm talking to
149 somebody who was really interested in what we're doing, and our people, and bringing solutions
150 as well.

151 Yeah. Tom and David, (laughs) they make you feel like you are part of the family already
152 (laughs). So, I was welcomed at Pete's house. Pete, who's from Starksboro, really welcomed me.
153 At first, I said, "Maybe it is because they are pastors?" Because I heard that Pete was a pastor,
154 and David also is a pastor or reverend for the Church of Brethren. I said, "Maybe it's because of
155 their faith." But then, it's in their personalities, it's who they are. They were really welcoming,
156 really accommodating, and they've always been like that. Since then, even now, they're always
157 like that.

158 They're very helpful, they want to hear, they gladly offer support, and they gladly come
159 in and say, "How can we help you with this and that." So, I really feel safe with them.

160 Their desire to work with us. I represent very poor communities, and they're vulnerable
161 people, and they're in the most hard-to-reach areas. And, New Community Project is an
162 organization that's willing to support people like those communities who rarely have a voice.
163 Even in our own country, if they raise their voice and say, "This is what we want, or maybe we're
164 facing this challenge." Their own country is not able to reach out to communities like this.

165 This is an organization coming all the way from the United States, and is willing to listen,
166 and reach out to communities that are hard to reach, and support them in whatever way that they
167 can. Just the fact that they're willing to listen to these communities, that they're willing to learn
168 more from the community, and are respecting the indigenous values and knowledge of the
169 people. And then, coming in to say, "How can we help you?"

170 They're not imposing, but they're rather listening and seeing opportunities to offer support
171 based on what the community is facing, based on what the community is asking for. So, that's
172 what I appreciate about the support that we get from New Community Project. They put the
173 community first.

174 And then, also the solidarity within the team, and the solidarity that they encourage even
175 in the communities -- it's also quite encouraging as well.

176 Okay. When you're trying to live in harmony with the land, the soil, and the people, it
177 really shows in how you're conducting your day-to-day life. The manner in which New
178 Community Project presents themselves when they come into a community, they're respecting
179 the indigenous values, they're respecting the land that you're working on, and they're respecting
180 the people.

181 And, also, learning more about the community itself is the thing that binds us. We already
182 have values, we already have character traits, things that we practice, and things that bind us as a

183 community. We're talking about a community that's working together, although it might be a
184 community from Malawi. But we have friends from New Community Project and friends from
185 all over the world that are also working together with us in terms of trying to fight climate
186 change; together with us in terms of restoring the lands, and taking care of the soil.

187 We find there is great solidarity there because we might be people from different
188 countries, people from different worlds but when it comes to an understanding of how well are
189 we taking care of our soil? How well we are living together? How well are we living in harmony
190 with nature and everything that's surrounding us? Are we taking care of it and is nature is taking
191 care of us?

192 I find great solidarity and great unity in that. We might be people from different worlds,
193 but at the moment, we are sitting together at one table. Regardless of our different cultures, we
194 have this understanding and this solidarity that everyone knows that we are one people.

195 I didn't say in the beginning how I started my work. I studied other things (laughs). I
196 studied marketing, I did social sciences in college and I had a very thriving marketing career.
197 And then, I had come across this community that was struggling. They were suffering. You can
198 tell that as the years are going by, our people are becoming poorer and poorer because of the
199 impact of climate change.

200 The worst thing is if you can't grow food on your own land and if you've been dependent
201 on the land for years and years, where generations and generations have depended on the same
202 land and it has never failed. But, this time around, you can't find even food for your own family,
203 because you can't grow anything there. So, that's what attracted me to start this work.

204 It was more about looking at a community that needed my help. I needed to jump in and
205 see how I could best help with the challenges that they were facing. We started with the

206 forestation projects, and educational projects, and went on from there to teach them about this,
207 share my knowledge as best as I could. We tried to do this together so that, maybe, we can
208 reverse the trends, and maybe we can have food next time, and learn more also from the
209 indigenous parents from these communities, and hearing more from them, like, “What worked
210 well before? What can we do now? Can we do the same thing that we used to do in the past?”

211 For me, I thought it also worked that was healing because we're talking about healing
212 people that are facing challenges and, they were just looking for a solution. Like communities
213 that don't really know what climate change is, and they have a lot of questions such as in, “This
214 is happening to us? We used to have this much food, but now, as the years are going by, we're
215 going hungry?” And, you'd sometimes find some homes that were down to one meal only and
216 some were even dying of hunger.

217 We say, “Okay, this shouldn't be our story, this shouldn't be our situation. How can we
218 reach out and help each other?” If the help is not coming from outside, but within us, all the
219 resources that we've got, the knowledge that we've got among us, that's passed on from
220 generation to generation, what can we change? What can we do to make sure that we are
221 working together with the land and together as a community? And together, we can also provide
222 food for our community.

223 That's where and how my work started. It was more of, “Okay, this is what I know, what
224 do you know what has worked well?” “Okay, if we put it together, and we experiment with this
225 and that, can we find a solution?” So, it's been like that throughout. We try this, we say okay,
226 we've been successful, and we say, we've been unsuccessful. If we haven't been successful, we
227 say, “Hey, maybe we should find more support, and learn more about how we can do this and
228 that.”

229 That is healing to a community that's facing challenges, and it also works that unites us
230 because we are all hoping for the same thing. We all have only one goal, we want food on our
231 table, we want to reverse the trends that climate change has brought unto us, we want to provide
232 for our families, and not fear that tomorrow we won't be able to have food on our table.

233 Issues of climate change, first floods, and then there are longer dryer periods with
234 drought every year. We want things to go back to the way they used to be. But, how can we do
235 that? Perhaps we plant more trees so it becomes cooler, and we have this hedging, and maybe we
236 can control water when it starts flooding. Maybe we can create a barrier, so that it doesn't go
237 with our soils, and make it hard for us to start growing our food anymore and require disaster
238 risk management of this and that.

239 It's work that brings us together, it's work that unites us, and work that you feel is not
240 only benefiting our communities, but it benefits even the world.

241 Because, if we're planting a lot of trees, and if we're treating the soil and trying to heal the
242 soil, the land as well will provide healing to our souls. Not just us, but even other people all over
243 the world as well.

244 It's funny enough. I didn't have anything to say. (laughs). Well, I grew up with a mom,
245 maybe I should start from there. I grew up with both parents at first. And then, we lost
246 everything. When my dad died, we lost everything. We had to start from scratch. I was 15 when
247 my father passed away. I had an older brother and older sister, but, yeah, I had younger siblings
248 as well. However, I had a mother who was really resilient and persistent, and she did everything
249 she could to provide for us.

250 There was never a day that we slept without eating something, or slept on a hungry
251 stomach. No, she made sure that she provided. She did, she was quite resourceful.

252 She would grow vegetables; she would do little small businesses. Even if meant making
253 and selling some sweets, a little snack, she'd sell out on the road to some students going to
254 schools. With that money, she would buy food and put it on our table.

255 We were five children, and all of us were well-fed. She encouraged us a lot to remain
256 resilient, and to give back to the community, and to people as well.

257 For me, I grew up with a mom I admired so much. She made me believe that I could be
258 anything and I could help as many people as I could if she was able to provide for her family.
259 Sometimes we could take in even cousins and other people, and she would still manage. You'd
260 wonder how we were managing all those years, but yeah, we managed (laughs).

261 Until we got to university, we all went through education. We received a good education.
262 She provided, but her resilient spirit that's what inspired me a lot. Growing up, I looked up to her
263 a lot. I had grown up in town and had never been to communities that were poorer than I
264 experienced. So, I met a friend who came from that community and went to a funeral of a close
265 relative, and he took me there. When I went there, I could not believe there were people that
266 were poorer than I was.

267 I was like how is it that we have people like this in my own country? And I was really
268 shocked. So, when I came to meet this community, I learned they were poor, but they were
269 giving. When I went there and when I was going back, I had all these gifts of fruit from the trees,
270 vegetables, this. They were just a solid community that worked together, and they believed in
271 giving.

272 But they didn't have much. They didn't have any proper clothes, very poor housing, and
273 everything was in a very sad state. But they were giving. The little that they had, they could give,
274 and they gave me. I've never met a community like this in my life.

275 Years went by, and the next time I went there was when I joined a certain research
276 project, where I was supervising certain research when I had just graduated from college. And
277 then, during the research, we're supposed to go cover that area and do an assessment. But the
278 drivers, the organization, the leaders said, "No, it's very hard to access that place. We can't go
279 there. Let's just write reports with this and that." "Let's not go there, it's a very hard place to
280 access. If we get there, we will probably get stuck."

281 I asked and told the team that there are people there. As hard as it is to get there, then
282 who else is going there to help them?

283 Because if everyone thinks that: they are too far and it's hard to get there, we'll get stuck
284 for days, for us to come back, it would take us ages, this and that and all these needs. That's
285 probably what everyone else is thinking. No one was going there and reaching out to these poor
286 communities, because everyone feels like they were hard to reach.

287 When I started talking to different offices within the government, you'd still get the sense
288 that nobody really wants to care enough to go to the hard-to-reach areas because they feel like it's
289 a lot of work for them.

290 But that is why these communities are this poor because nobody goes there to help them.
291 They have no hospital, they have no water, and they have no access to education. Literally, they
292 are remote and kept from having a lot of things.

293 For me, I didn't know anyone else that was doing this, but I just wanted to help them. I
294 went back to that community with the aim to help. And then, when I went there, I stayed there
295 for months learning from that community and living the life that they lived so that I could
296 understand better the challenges that they're facing -- the situation which they are in. And then, I

297 would get more insight on how best I could come in and help them. That's how I got to know this
298 community, and continue to stay there.

299 I never really had a mentor. So, it's been working backward, trying to find somebody
300 who's a specialist in this area and who can groom me and help me learn more about growing
301 food. Who's a specialist in running an organization, somebody like David who says how he's able
302 to run this organization and help these people. How do I learn more from him about managing a
303 nonprofit, and doing this, and maybe finding funding for an organization? Who's an expert in
304 agroforestry and learning from them, and coordinating and bringing all the resources together?

305 At first, it's just been me, being somebody who didn't have any resources. I didn't have
306 anything, but I was more a link. I knew who to approach so I said, "Okay, maybe a woman from
307 the village might not be able to go to an office and say, "Okay, we are facing these challenges."
308 But I can go there, because I've been to school. So, I would go to that office and know who I
309 would talk to. And perhaps if they offer us this expertise, I can talk to another person and they
310 will offer us this expertise. If they come together and they come to our community, maybe they
311 will help us figure out how to change this, and how to do this and that.

312 That's how it's always been. So, I would say, "Okay, I'm just the center point, and I can
313 link everyone together to all these opportunities." And we started working like that at first.

314 With time, I started learning more about how we should treat the land, this is how we
315 worked with soil. Tom provided me books on gardening, and we're learning now about carbon
316 farming. It's been a lot of learning on the job. (laughs). Learning on the job and finding mentors
317 along the way. (laughs).

318 The work itself started when my mom made me believe that I can do anything and I can
319 help as many people as I can. When I found this community, I was drawn. And for me, it was a

320 calling. It still doesn't make sense to a lot of people, but, for me, I felt I was called to be there for
321 a purpose. And I really just wanted to be there and serve the people. It's just what I've been doing
322 for the past few years.

323 We are humans and everyone deserves respect and dignity, regardless of the gaps that we
324 have or differences that we have. Sometimes there are educational gaps and literacy gaps as well.
325 As a human being, I believe that everyone has value, and you can learn from anyone regardless
326 of where they're coming from or their background.

327 If you give people the respect that they need, listen to them, and learn from them, I
328 believe that there's more that you can achieve.

329 I'm not sure about the challenges that they face per se, but New Community Project
330 doesn't really have an office, which it's not an issue. It's working online these days, and I'm not
331 really sure also about the structure like how many employees they have. I know Tom, David, and
332 a few other people from the board.

333 The only thing that I have asked myself is about their succession plan for continuing to
334 the organization. Where is it coming from? The main question that I've had revolved around a
335 succession plan for the organization because David seems to be more of the main person. And
336 there's Pete, of course, and Tom, but also the way he travels as well. When he travels, who's
337 there? Who's doing this and that? Is it mainly one person running most of the things? That's the
338 only thing that I can foresee as a crisis in the future.

339 If David's leg is broken, then what happens? (laughs). Who's going to lead that tour to
340 Myanmar or to this place and that? Those are some of the questions that I ask sometimes. How
341 do you build shared leadership and co-created leadership of New Community Project and your
342 own organization as well?

343 As for a vision, I'll start with my own. In the next five to ten years, I would want our
344 communities first of all to have planted 10 million trees. We're growing and planting a lot of
345 trees, (laughs). So, we'd have planted 10 million trees, maybe even more.

346 As regards to the girls, I'd really love to have leaders come from these communities. The
347 development comes from within, not from outside, but from the work that we're doing. The
348 community building a hospital itself and becoming more resourceful. Using the locally available
349 resources, I believe that they've got more strength and their own abilities to do more. So, we can
350 do a lot more for ourselves than depending on government support or maybe this and that.

351 I will be looking for development, more resilience, and self-sustaining families as well as
352 food on the table. The idea is to reduce poverty in these areas.

353 In five to ten years, I'd want to see more homes food-secure, people in safe housing, and
354 that we are not in a fight with climate change anymore. But, also, we at least would be able to
355 live in harmony with the land and be able to stay in safe places without being flooded or
356 experiencing drought all the time.

357 The other thing is production because to get there we need to have our sustainable
358 agricultural projects become more business projects. With the reforestation projects, we're
359 already starting beekeeping projects.

360 I want to see a honey factory in five to ten years. (laughs). A factory making bee
361 products, whether it's honey candles, beeswax candles, and all sorts of products from bees but to
362 be able to have a processing plant as well so we can dry, process, and store our foods here for
363 longer periods. And, we can use some but also sell and make more money for the community.

364 It's all about strengthening the community's resilience.

365 As for New Community Project, the organization is already in a lot of countries and it's
366 helping a lot of people. So, hearing stories of how it's changed people's lives and how it's kept
367 girls safe who are facing trafficking in Myanmar and Nepal. We talking about protecting women
368 from traffickers, having more women protected, and more women empowered in the next
369 coming years. It's something that I look forward to because it's already good work that New
370 Community Project is doing, in terms, of protecting and providing security for women and girls.

371 And also, hearing success stories of women who have achieved a lot through education.
372 Now, they're more self-reliant, they're into good careers, they're doing things on their own, and
373 then they are replicating the same and helping others that are in need.

374 Because it might look like something small, it's a seed that's been planted. But, imagine
375 all these lives that are being changed through New Community Project. Once they're empowered
376 and doing well, they, in turn, will help a lot of other people. It's hard to forget how you've passed
377 your journey, how others have held your hand, and helped you along the way.

378 You have all these women, girls, and men who have been assisted. So, I can see that the
379 impact that New Community will have over five to ten years will be quite big, and maybe we're
380 not even ready for it yet as we start our own carbon farming training center.