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PURSUING ALTERNATIVES: JUSTICE, RACE, AND FOOD

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

POLITICS

with an emphasis in AMERICAN STUDIES

by

Randy Cota

December 2020

The Dissertation of Randy Cota is
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Abstract

Randy Cota

Pursuing Alternatives: Justice, Race, and Food

Antiracist mid-twentieth century civil rights movements drastically diminished broad-based support for racist ideologies and racial domination, yet the US is still plagued by significant racial inequalities. How do we explain this? This dissertation explores and analyzes the politics of justice and racial politics—what I refer to as the politics of race and justice—through avenues that are under/unexplored to provide further insight into racial injustice and inequalities. It does so in an effort to help us better understand the continuing existence of racial disparities despite widespread repudiation of racism and white supremacy. Understanding factors accounting for continuing racial disparities and their severe consequences, which the racially disparate impact of COVID-19 has laid fully bare, is crucial for addressing the problem of racial injustice and inequality. By exploring, analyzing, and discussing the lasting impact of racist ideologies and racial domination this dissertation illuminates possible paths forward in pursuit of justice and equality.

I argue that understanding predominant ideas in (what I identify as) power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice is pivotal to grasping (and responding to) how epistemic and discursive formations historically and contemporarily inform and shape structures, systems, institutions, policies,

practices, and material conditions in the US. I examine these predominant ideas through discourse and textual analysis that engages justice theorists' articulations of justice, critical race scholarship, and ideas and praxis aiming to alter the food system. Utilizing these methods to explore and examine discourse, knowledge production, and praxis engaging race and justice, I illustrate how temporally contingent predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice produce hegemonic epistemes that shape our understanding of and imaginative possibilities for justice and equality. Throughout US history these epistemes have undergirded racially disparate concentration of land (property), wealth, income, and resources. The rise of neoliberalism as political-economic orthodoxy not only exacerbates this concentration, but spreads political-economic disparities more broadly. I identify countervailing ideas contesting predominant ideas and forces underlying these disparities, each chapter elucidates these divergent positions that move us in differing directions with regard to justice and equality. The identification of countervailing ideas ultimately aims to excavate and desubjugate knowledge regarding materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice and equality, which I conclude are most capable of remedying racial injustice and inequality and, therefore, enable us to realize the full promise of liberal justice and equality.

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1. Introduction

Pursuing Alternatives: Justice, Race, and Food explores the relationship between the politics of justice and racial politics, and their bearing on the food system, with an aim of providing greater insight on paths forward in pursuit of justice and equality. *Pursuing Alternatives'* exploration of this relationship demonstrates that (in)justice and (in)equality—which justice theorists view as intimately, if not inextricably, entangled—are material experiences heavily grounded in and shaped by predominant epistemic and discursive formations in the politics of race and justice during different periods of US history. Therefore, *Pursuing Alternatives* contends that understanding predominant ideas and discourses in historic and contemporary power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of justice and racial politics¹ is crucial to engaging and responding to the ways epistemic and discursive formations inform and shape structures, systems, institutions, policies, practices, socio-political arrangements, and material conditions in the US.

Predominant ideas and hegemonic discourses in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice have impacted and shaped social, political, and economic conditions of people's lives throughout US history, amongst these shaping forces, racial domination, racialized power-effects,² and racial political-economic projects as extremely important. The discussion and analysis here, therefore, is particularly concerned with how predominant ideas and

hegemonic forces in these nexuses shape (and are intertwined) in understandings and conceptions of justice and equality, and the development of the US political-economy. Driven by this concern, this study, which is situated at the intersection of American politics, critical race studies, political and cultural theory, and food studies, intends to provide novel analyses and insights that shine a beacon on the social, political, and economic impact of predominant ideas and hegemonic forces in the politics of race and justice. We see their impact play out in various ways in different sites. The bright spotlight COVID-19 has shone on racial disparities in the food system demonstrates the material (life and death) impact of the predominant ideas and hegemonic discourses (and forces) in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice. This amplifies the gravity of *Pursuing Alternatives*' exploration of how ideas, discourses, and forces in these nexuses shape the US political-economy, and the food system and alternative food movement(s).

The exploration(s) and analyses undertaken here aim to push the discussion in the fields, sets of literature, and forms of activism engaged into avenues that are under/unexplored. For example, *Pursuing Alternatives*' discussion of conceptions of justice in the post-civil rights period identifies theorists/theories of justice as marked by a major distinction: whether they decenter or center domination in conceptualizing justice. *Pursuing Alternatives* contends that recognizing and understanding this distinction, and the hegemonic position theorists/theories decentering domination enjoy relative to conceptions of justice centering

domination, is pivotal to grasping the difficulty (and obstacles) facing efforts to redress existing racial disparities fueled by the reconciliation of racist ideologies and racial domination with liberalism and its ideals. This reconciliation engendered what I identify as racist liberalism and white supremacist equality. These forces, which worked through and were mutually constitutive with the US (liberal) white settler state,³ fundamentally shape(d) US political-economic structures and systems.

The destructive capacity of racism and white supremacy being historically reconciled with liberalism and its tenets of justice and equality is reflected in the massive racial disparities in the US political-economy and food system. The policies and practices (i.e. chattel slavery, share cropping, the Homestead Act, redlining, and racial covenants) forwarded by forces supporting the reconciliation produced subjects and communities of privilege and deprivation. This resulted in and is characterized by racially disparate geographic dispersal (segregation) wrapped up with and underpinned by racial inequality in land (property) ownership, wealth accumulation, access to resources, and labor force participation. This racial (economic) violence has for centuries been a foundational basis for the development of the US political-economy and food system.

While active support for racism and white supremacy played a foundational role in socio-economically/political-economically shaping the US, we must recognize it does not play the same role it did prior to the mid-twentieth century civil rights and other antiracist movements. These movements massively

diminished broad-based active support for racism and white supremacy. The continuation of racialized material disparities are, therefore, now primarily buttressed not by investment in racist ideologies, but by racism becoming embedded in US structures, systems, institutions, and practices being accompanied by conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracist politics, and cultural left identity politics' commitment to representational regimes providing limited inclusion. Therefore, I contend that supporting (implicitly or explicitly) conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracist politics, and/or representational regimes counters materially-grounded antiracist efforts to redress racial inequality or (broadly) substantively equalize socio-economic/political-economic relations. If we seek substantive equality we must understand this, and, thereby, understand we are in a different socio-historic period than we were when overt and active investment in racism and white supremacy upheld racial hierarchy and attendant privilege and deprivation. If we fail to grasp this, we will also likely fail to recognize how neoliberal corporatist on the right and, arguably more importantly, the left of the US political spectrum both forward politics of race and justice buttressing the lasting material impact of the reconciliation of racial domination with liberalism and its tenets of justice and equality.

Ultimately, I argue the most robust commitment to justice requires pursuit of materially-grounded visions of justice. I further argue that in order to realize the full promise of liberal tenets of justice and equality we need to place primary emphasis on remedying racial injustice and inequality in the US. Realizing this

promise entails transforming current efforts seeking political-economic change in the US; we must move away from seeking change through neoliberal systems and structures that concentrate property, wealth, and income in the hands of the privileged few, and seek change through materially-grounded visions of justice pursuing racial justice and equality aiming to equitably (re)distribute property, wealth, income, and other resources.

Each chapter illustrates that there are clear and distinct positions to take in the politics of race and justice, our choices regarding them provides insights into our understanding of the role we think racism and white supremacy has in shaping the social, political, and economic circumstances of people living in the US and what should be done about it. Crucial among these are the following. First, whether we support and/or advocate for visions of justice decentering domination or ones centering it. Second, whether we believe there are currently legacies of racist ideologies and racial domination shaping the conditions of our lives. Third, whether we think nonracism and cultural left identity politics offer antiracist responses to racism in its various forms. And finally, whether we believe we should alter the food system, and if so do we think this should occur primarily through the neoliberal corporate food system or by dismantling existing (neoliberal) political-economic structures altogether.

Our positions regarding these matters, as I suggest in the conclusion, are especially pressing given how open the current socio-political environment is to varying visions and directions for realizing justice and equality. The health and

economic crisis precipitated by COVID-19 for subjects and communities of deprivation via state and local lockdowns resulting in mass unemployment combined with the Congressional decision not to backstop lost wages and the labor conditions for low-paid “essential workers” (especially those in the food system), exposes the vulnerabilities and danger we implicitly or explicitly support or counter in the choices we make regarding the politics of race and justice. *Pursuing Alternatives* addresses these vulnerabilities and danger through its discussion and illustration of the development and bases of racially privileged and deprived subjects and communities.

Pursuing Alternatives’ assessment of post-civil rights (nonracist period) theories of justice suggests these theories are distinctive in how they approach and address the (lasting) impact of the reconciliation of racism and white supremacy with liberalism, which was an important basis for producing and supporting privilege and deprivation. This assessment further asserts theories decentering domination inhibits our understanding of the existing destructive impact of historic investment in racist ideologies and how this extensively influences the systems, structures, institutions, and practices shaping the US political-economy. I argue that the most robust commitment to (liberal) justice and equality demands we reject theories decentering domination as inadequate and incapable of confronting and remedying the legacies of centuries of investment in racism and white supremacy. In order to realize the full promise of (liberal) justice and equality, we must reject these conceptions in favor of supporting materially-grounded

conceptions of justice that center domination and recognize the need to dismantle these legacies. Given the expanding inequality in the US, if we do not take this approach to engaging and addressing socio-economic/political-economic structures and systems shaping our lives, and continue to expect (more and more) people to accept living in deprivation and having their lives devalued, we will ensure continuing routine upheaval (and likely mass physical destruction) throughout the country.

Pursuing Alternatives discusses different justice theories centering domination that provide alternatives to hegemonic theories decentering domination, and, thereby, might provide us a basis for redressing the lasting legacies of racist ideologies and racial domination. Among the alternatives to hegemonic theories currently holding sway in the public consciousness, progressive social justice provides the most appealing option for remedying injustice and inequality. However, precisely because social justice circulates and is invoked widely in the US, especially in left-leaning politics and activism, it is crucial that this conception is understood and deployed in the vein articulated by progressive social justice theorists. And this vision of justice should not be limited to confronting the most spectacularly violent legacies and vestiges of racial domination (i.e. police brutality) in pursuit of racial justice and equality. To remedy racial injustice and inequality, social justice must be understood and deployed as a materially-grounded (antiracist) conception. That is, as a conception with objectives, aims, and principles intending to remedy racial injustice and

inequality by pushing for substantive equality and confronting the broad range of legacies of domination.

In order for the most robust version of justice and equality to obtain in the US, one most in accord with liberal values, we (especially the most privileged among us) must recognize that wherever we seek change engaging socio-economic/political-economic systems and structures in the US we are immersed in the politics of race and justice. Thus, we are staking out positions in the politics of race and justice whether we realize it or not, but without recognizing this it is not possible to have a dialogue about the positions we take regarding justice and equality. *Pursuing Alternatives* explores and examines some food studies literature and alternative food movement⁴ activism, focusing particularly on food justice, to illustrate these points; and, show how the politics of race and justice plays out in the food system. Based on this exploration of the food studies literature and alternative food movement efforts to change the food system, I assert that food justice and food sovereignty activists' work to alter the food system significantly departs from the vast majority of other alternative food movements. Given that food justice has gained greater traction in US alternative food movement organizing, it presents greater potential to move the broader alternative food movement away from its alignment with conceptions of justice that do not center domination (i.e. libertarianism and communitarianism), and away from relying primarily or most heavily on market-oriented, consumer-based consumption in the neoliberal (food) marketplace to alter the food system.

While food justice activism may be, as Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi contend (and other scholars seem to agree), seeking “justice for all in the food system” (223), it is being pulled in different directions. Food justice’s grounding in a liberal framework and the differing directions it is being pulled in is captured by activist organizations’ rights-based claims, most of which feature a call for access to and/or control of food. Access, as *Pursuing Alternatives* suggests, may fit quite well within a neoliberal corporate food structure. Whereas control of food and resources necessary to produce it counters the concentration of land, wealth, income, and resources that provide the very bases and conditions upon which the neoliberal corporate food regime is built and operates. *Pursuing Alternatives* contends that to realize the most robust form of justice and equality in the food system, food justice activism needs to move more away from pushing for access and toward fully embracing control. In moving in this direction, activists should be guided by justice theorists/theories conceptualizing justice and equality as materially-grounded pushes for the redistribution of land (property), wealth, income, and resources, and work to pull other alternative food movement activism in this direction. This is how the food justice movement can make the food system much more racially just and equal, and contribute to moving the US toward a more robust version of liberal justice and equality.

1.1 Approach

Pursuing Alternatives' analysis of the politics of race and justice is guided by questions such as: what conceptions of justice do post-civil rights justice theorists articulate? What concern do their theories demonstrate with regard to material disparities (and their bases)? What are the contours and defining characteristics of racial politics in various periods in US history? What interactions are there between epistemic and discursive formations (in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses) in racial politics and the politics of justice? What can we glean from those interactions? How has/does racial politics shape the food system and alternative food movements? How are ideas about justice circulating and/or pursued by food system activists? What theorists/theories of justice do various alternative food movements align with? And where do possibilities exist for (or is work being done by) alternative food movements to support antiracism?

This study of justice, race, and food takes heed of Michel Foucault's trenchant observation: "Once we begin to talk about power relations...we are talking about domination, about an infinitely dense and multiple domination that never comes to an end. There is no escape from domination and there is no escape from history" (*Society Must Be Defended* 111). It is also mindful of Foucault's caution that analyses of power "must not assume" that "the over-all unity of a domination [is] given at the outset," and his suggestion that "power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in

the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization” (*History of Sexuality* 92).⁵ Not only does *Pursuing Alternatives* take heed of Foucault’s observations, it also attempts to meet Foucault’s call to “orient our analysis of power toward material operations, forms of subjugation and the uses made of...systems of subjugation on the one hand, and apparatuses of knowledge on the other” (*Society Must Be Defended* 34). In examining the force relations producing privilege and deprivation (subjugation), *Pursuing Alternatives* analysis agrees with and is animated by Susan Searls Giroux’ insistence that “the question for intellectuals is not how to remain neutral and impassive, but how to distinguish, with due consideration and care, the kinds of battles in which they can and should engage” (23).

Discourse and Knowledge

The understanding of discourse(s) in this study follows Foucault and Stuart Hall. Hall explains:

Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic...[they are] a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images, practices...These *discursive formations*, as they are known, define what is and is not appropriate in our formation of, and our practices in relation to, a particular subject or site of social activity; what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and ‘true’ in that context; and what sorts of persons or ‘subjects’ embody its characteristics. (*Representation* 4; emphasis in original)

Foucault describes and explains discourse as “not [a] majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself

may be determined. It is a space...in which a network of distinct sites is deployed” (*Archaeology of Knowledge* 55). Foucault further maintains the “‘economy’ of discourses—their intrinsic technology, the necessities of their operation, the tactics they employ, the effects of power which underlie them and which they transmit—this...is what determines the essential features of what they have to say” (*History of Sexuality* 68-69). Informed by Hall’s and Foucault’s understandings of discourse (and knowledge), the analysis and discussion here regarding race and justice moves between intentionality and unintentionality, as well as varied sites, tactics, and power relations; for example, between post-civil rights conceptions of justice, purposeful white settler state policies, scholarship on race and racism, unintended implications of racial politics, and alternative food movement ideas, praxis, and explications of justice. *Pursuing Alternatives* navigates these spaces aware of their historical contexts because, as Anthony Giddens tells us: “Contexts form ‘settings’ of action, the qualities of which [we] routinely draw upon in the course of orienting what [we] do and...say to one another” (99).

Following Foucault and Hall, discourse is considered more expansive than its verbal (either written or oral) dimensions. Discourse is conceptualized (and analyzed) as a totality of knowledge production and meaning-making, which, importantly, is intertwined with power and material relations. For example, discourse on criminality—elements of which, as chapter three suggests, are germane to race and justice in the US—constructs knowledge about “crime” and “criminal subjects” through clusters of ideas, images, and practices. This discourse

contains hegemonic episteme(s) (re)affirming its conceptual necessity and legitimacy (and containing possible counter-hegemonic⁶ responses) through the production of criminal (justice) courts, law enforcement bodies, prisons, and incarcerated subjects. Criminality discourse overlaps with other discursive formations (i.e. race and justice discourses) to shape imaginative possibilities for, affective responses to, and material circumstances of our socio-political world.

Discourse(s) may be longstanding—as is the case for both racial and justice discourse in the US—but they are also temporally contingent. Thus, there are discursive shifts, including crucial shifts in understanding and meaning of pivotal terms. This is evident in temporally- and contextually-specific meanings of race and racial categories. We might think of these as empty signifiers filled with temporal- and context-specific meaning—chapter three briefly addresses this. The temporality of discursive formations is crucial to understanding the politics of race and justice in the US. For example, viewing nonracism as still attached to broader antiracist/racial justice projects misreads contemporary racial politics.

Given that racial discourse is historically composed of a substantial variety of ideas, images, meanings, and practices constructing knowledge about race, it is probably not possible to address it in its totality here. The focus here is primarily on some extremely important constituent elements of racial discourse—i.e. racist ideology, racial domination, racialized power-effects, and racial political-economic projects—and their political-economic impact, and not necessarily racial discourse in its broadest possible scope. These elements of racial discourse, however, capture

the crucial productive capacity of discourse: in this case, how racial discourse, knowledge production, and power relations are inextricably wrapped together and significantly construct our socio-political world and material existence.⁷

Concentrating on the politics of race and justice makes this study both narrower and broader than a discourse analysis of (grand) racial and/or justice discourse(s).⁸ It is narrower, as I note above, in its focus on some constituent elements of racial discourse, but it is also broader because *Pursuing Alternatives* insists that discourse on (and politics of) justice is necessarily entangled with racial politics. There may be objections to this approach not aiming to comprehensively engage a (grand) discourse. I am inclined to embrace such (possible) objection and examine discourse(s) on both race and justice, to follow and borrow from Hall and Foucault, as ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic and looking at the economy of these discourses (and their sites of deployment) to determine what they have to say and the power relations embedded in them. This approach will provide us incisive insight into omnipresent power-knowledge-discourse nexuses (and by extension predominant ideas) in the politics of race and justice, which have grave political-economic implications in our lives.

1.2 Politics of Justice

The focus on post-civil rights theories of justice aims to provide a better understanding of how justice theorists/theories engage historic racial domination and racialized power-effects underpinning social, political, and economic relations

in the US. The exploration of post-civil rights theories of justice and pursuit of this objective begins with John Rawls' theory: justice as fairness. Rawls' theory is arguably the most influential theory articulated/conceptualized after the mid-twentieth century civil rights movements—what I refer to as the nonracist period.

In Rawls' theory of justice as fairness, equal basic liberties, procedural fairness, and fair equality of opportunity serve as the basis of “the most acceptable political conception” of justice. Rawls maintains that “the basic structure as the primary subject” of justice “enables us to regard distributive justice as a case of pure background procedural justice” (54). Distributive outcomes thus apparently only really matter where procedures in the basic structure are concerned. Rawls makes this clear in stating: “There is no criterion for a just distribution apart from background institutions and the entitlements that arise from actually working through the procedure [of justice as fairness]” (51). Rawls' identification of the basic structure as “the primary subject” of justice, along with his conclusion about just distribution should not be construed as a lack of concern with inequality. Rawls' concern with inequality is perhaps most evident in his argument that “A free market system must be set within a framework of political and legal institutions that adjust the long-run trend of economic forces so as to prevent excessive concentrations of property and wealth, especially those likely to lead to political domination” (44).

While Rawls recognizes the harm of inequality and domination, his theory elevates equal basic liberties (formal equality) and procedural fairness above

allocative justice. In the post-civil rights period, the predominant understanding and approaches to inequality stemming from domination follow Rawls, and similarly privilege formal equality and procedural fairness. However, there are also post-civil rights justice theorists/theories that take a different approach to domination and preventing “excessive concentrations” of property and wealth; they center material disparities and historic domination producing them. Thus, how theorists/theories situate material disparities and historic domination, as chapter two illustrates, produces distinct conceptions of justice and equality in the post-civil rights era. Rawls’ theory and those following justice as fairness’ engagement of domination contrasts with theorists/theories centering domination, this marks an extremely point of distinction in how justice is understood and approached in the post-civil rights period.

1.3 Racial Politics

The broad history of US racial politics highlights the importance of whether or not theories of justice center domination. Until the mid-twentieth century civil rights movements, US racial politics were marked by predominant epistemic and discursive formations, and corresponding policies and practices actively functioning to produce various forms of racial privilege and deprivation structuring social, political, and economic life. This occurred because for the vast majority of US history predominant ideas and discourses in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in racial politics supported racist ideologies. This meant there was open

support for racism and white supremacy. This further meant that throughout US history whites believing in their racial superiority devised and deployed a plethora of epistemic and discursive devices, as well as policies and practices to uphold a white power structure. These proved enduring and adaptable; they changed as necessary to prevent the white power structure and white settler state from being dismantled. *Pursuing Alternatives* examines these forces by primarily focusing on the political-economic impact of hegemonic epistemic and discursive formations existing in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in various periods of US racial politics.

From Racism and White Supremacy to Nonracism

From its colonial roots until the mid-twentieth century, US political and economic structures were shaped by hegemonic racist ideologies grounding US racial politics. Importantly, racist liberalism and white supremacist equality figured heavily in this, and played a large role in producing and supporting interconnected race and class privilege and deprivation. This privilege and deprivation is a hallmark of political-economic (capitalist) development in the US. This political-economic structuring is evident, as suggested above, in racial political-economic projects such as chattel slavery, share cropping, and the Homestead Act. Racial political-economic projects such as these form bases for racial disparities in agricultural land ownership, wealth accumulation, access to resources, and labor force participation in the current food system.

We see a shift in US racial politics when racist ideologies and their reconciliation with liberalism were directly challenged by materially-grounded mid-twentieth century civil rights activists' antiracist calls for racial justice. This ruptured the cozy relationship between racism, white supremacy, and liberalism (and its tenets of justice and equality). Furthermore, the broadening support for these movements' challenge to racial injustice and inequality fomented a shift in predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses of US racial politics, making it increasingly unacceptable to invest in or express support for racism and white supremacy.

John L. Jackson captures this shift in racial politics well: in “the decades following the civil rights movement” there is “a new paradigm of race relations [that] has arisen from the smoldering ashes of de jure and de facto racisms” wherein “statements betraying any personally held racial biases” are “altogether unacceptable in most of the public sphere” (86). This shift disrupted predominant ideas and hegemonic forces that for centuries held sway in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in racial politics. Racist ideology and racial domination no longer reigned supreme in racial politics. Racial politics were unsettled, and subjects believing in and investing in racial superiority needed some place to settle. So an epistemic migration took place. But this did not mean there was simply a transition to broad-based, full-throated support for materially-grounded antiracist politics and visions of justice and equality. Rather than a mass intellectual and political migration from racism to a materially-grounded antiracism happening, the

displaced (largely white) migrants settled into an emergent nonracist (racial) politics. This shift ushered in the hegemonic rise of nonracist politics.

Nonracist politics is best understood as a racial politics cultivated by (nonracist) subjects who engage in some combination of rejecting support for racism and white supremacy, committing to colorblind or race-neutral policy and rhetoric, and/or recognizing race through investment in representational regimes (especially cultural left identity politics). This stands in contrast to materially-grounded mid-twentieth century civil rights and other antiracist movements and projects. For roughly the last four decades, nonracism has become the predominant (and publicly sanctioned) response to racism, which effectively subjugated materially-grounded antiracism; but after the death of George Floyd this may be changing.

The mid-twentieth century shift in racial politics raises a question about how to engage the relationship between nonracism and racism. Do we analyze nonracism with an eye toward determining whether or not it masks secretly held beliefs in racial superiority? I do not think trying to identify who is racist or secretly believes in racial superiority and inferiority is the most productive way to think about and analyze nonracist (racial) politics. I think identifying someone as a racist subject is probably best left for describing those who believe in racial superiority and/or support policies and practices aimed at intentionally, to borrow from Charles Mills, producing racialized “power structure[s] of formal or informal

rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties” (3).

If we identify racists in this way, it surely means we must conclude the vast majority of people in the US are not racists. Working from this conclusion allows us to analyze racism and racialized power relations embedded in US institutions, policies, practices, and political-economy as structural (or systemic) phenomena no longer dependent on racist subjects to maintain them. This frees us from concerning ourselves with determining whether nonracists are secretly racist, and allows us to simultaneously address structural or systemic racism while focusing on the productive capacity of nonracism and/or other racial politics that are not materially-grounded. The freedom in this approach enables *Pursuing Alternatives* to focus on examining the work such politics is doing, and how this addresses the deep embedding of racist liberalism and white supremacist equality into the social, political, and economic fabric of the US.

1.4 Justice, Race, and Food

Regarding justice in the food system, Jill Harrison claims “it is neither accurate nor useful to think about the world around us...as generally devoid of justice” (11). I agree with Harrison’s contention and expand on it, arguing that regardless of whether race and justice are discussed, the politics of race and justice is shot through the food system and alternative food movement activism. Working from this position, *Pursuing Alternatives* explores food studies literature and

alternative food movements. Examining scholarship on alternative food movements in conjunction with exploring activism in these movements and explications of food justice sheds light on responses to the corporate food regime, providing us further insight into the politics of race and justice in the nonracist period.

Alternative Food Movement(s)

Alternative food movements have been identified with various monikers. For example, Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman call movements for sustainable, local, fresh, and/or organic food part of the “food movement” (3). Jill Harrison describes these efforts as part of the “alternative agrifood movement,” which is “the collection of these activist attempts to critique and reform existing agrifood networks as well as build alternative ones” (145). Whatever moniker is used, alternative food movements share a common aim to challenge processes and practices in the food system, particularly those of large-scale, industrialized food production. *Pursuing Alternatives* uses the term alternative food movement(s) to describe various forms of activism intended to alter the corporate food regime’s processes and practices. These alternatives range from minimizing use of pesticides to reducing the distance in the supply chain to improving pay and labor conditions for food system workers.

While alternative food movements pushing for a sustainable food system have arguably led the way in trying to alter the corporate food regime, other

alternatives (i.e. organic, local, fresh, food sovereignty, and food justice) are also instrumental in challenging its processes and practices. The emergence of food justice as an alternative is especially notable among these efforts, because it arguably generates the most extensive efforts (in both scholarship and activism) to directly address the impact of racism on the US food system. With the emergence of food justice, food studies literature's and alternative food movement(s)' critiques of and efforts to change the corporate food regime are increasingly turning toward analyses addressing the role of racism in the food system. This turn draws heavily from critical race studies and its analyses of how racial domination structures the US political-economy. *Pursuing Alternatives* contributes to this turn by exploring how the (implicit and explicit) circulation of justice in alternative food activism impacts the understanding, subjects, and site of justice, as well as the implications this holds for addressing the racialized structuring of the food system.

1.5 Structure, Analysis, Position, Approach, and Aim

The chapters in *Pursuing Alternatives* flow and work together as follows: chapter two discusses various theories of justice, focusing on theories of justice in the post-civil rights period. Chapter three examines the broad historical backdrop of US racial politics and addresses its significance for theorizing justice. Taken together, the discussion of the politics of justice and racial politics in chapters two and three provides an understanding of the socio-historical production and context of racialized disparities that place people in positions of privilege or deprivation.

Chapter four moves from and builds upon discussions in the preceding two chapters to further elucidate the politics of race and justice through discussing racial disparities in the food system, analyzing how food studies literature and alternative food movements address them, exploring explications of food justice, and looking at how conceptions of justice circulate in alternative food movements. Chapter four's discussion illuminates how predominant ideas and discourses in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice shape a broader public understanding of the subject and site of justice and equality, and the material implications this holds. The conclusion brings the explorations and discussions in the preceding chapters together to consider how to chart a course toward the most robust vision/version of justice and equality. It focuses on paths forward from the present, including grappling with how renewed energy for racial justice may offer responses to current struggles with a public health crisis and lasting legacies of racism and white supremacy revealed by the racially/economically disparate impact of COVID-19 and police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, and numerous others. The confluence of these circumstances has created an opening for reckoning with the US's foundational racism and the on-going impact of historical commitments to racist ideologies. *Pursuing Alternatives* meets this opening with an effort to push us toward actualizing conceptions of justice and equality aiming to remedy racial injustice and inequality (and growing material disparities in the US).

Analysis and Position

The way historical domination and its legacies are analyzed is crucial to pursuing alternatives in the present capable of rectifying enduring consequences of the past. *Pursuing Alternatives*' analysis, therefore, is informed by Foucault's conclusion that beginning "with the power relationship itself, with the actual or effective relationship of domination" should allow us to "see how that relationship itself determines the elements to which it is applied" (*Society Must Be Defended* 45). With this in mind, I emphasize the urgency of understanding the bases of racial disparities, and the choices we face for addressing them. While understanding historical bases for contemporary racial disparities is important, it is vital to grasp current forces that keep communities of privilege and deprivation (and their associated disparities) in place.

I have suggested that racist intentionality does not adequately account for maintaining lasting legacies of racism, white supremacy, and racial domination. I think identifying and emphasizing agentic culpability as a way of understanding and explaining the current and continuing impact of racist ideologies is probably overemphasized in the nonracist period. Upholding racial inequality is no longer dependent on intentional support and commitment to racist ideologies and racial domination. This work was already done in previous periods of racial politics through hegemonic epistemic and discursive formations in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice that embedded racialized

power relations and racialized power-effects into the social, political, and economic fabric of the US.

Even with the current uptick in active support for white supremacy and white nationalism, focusing on and trying to combat active investment in racist ideologies and racial domination is not the most productive way to address the legacies of racism and white supremacy. Moreover, focusing on or trying to determine racist intent in the absence of open commitment to racist ideologies places us in a morass of identifying/pronouncing whether or not individual subjects are racist. I am not suggesting agentic investment in racism and white supremacy perpetuating forms of racial violence and actively protecting racial privilege and deprivation are completely nonexistent. While they may still exist, I believe active support of racism and white supremacy is less influential than (implicit or explicit) support for conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracist politics, representational regimes, and/or neoliberalism in allowing the material legacies of racist ideologies and racial domination to continue structuring our lives.

Approach and Aim

Pursuing Alternatives' analysis takes a genealogical approach to identifying, discussing, and engaging the implications of hegemonic forces operative in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses. This approach traces the lineage of ideas, policies, and practices in the politics of race and justice that structure social, political, and

economic conditions in the US. Importantly, genealogy is engaged in a Foucauldian sense here, as “a sort of attempt to desubjugate historical knowledges” (*Society Must Be Defended* 11), which “have been disqualified as...insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges” (*Society Must Be Defended* 7). Desubjugating knowledge⁹ often requires excavating it from historic burial, which means *Pursuing Alternatives* has both a genealogical and archeological approach in its epistemic, discursive, and textual analysis. This approach and analysis illuminates the conjunction of knowledge and power, and the difficulties facing those trying to counter predominant epistemic and discursive formations in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses.

Hegemonic epistemic and discursive formations prevailing in the politics of race and justice, prior to the protests and unrest following the death of George Floyd, subjugate antiracist politics and visions of justice, and offer little, if any, hope of dismantling racial privilege and deprivation the US white settler state cultivated for centuries. Rather, commitment to these formations provides alibis for not directly addressing (and redressing) the enduring impact of racist ideologies, racial domination, and racialized power-effects. As we have seen, not redressing this impact assures racial injustice and inequality will continue. To combat this, *Pursuing Alternatives*' approach to and analysis of knowledge production, discourse, and power relations attempts to excavate and desubjugate knowledge regarding materially-grounded antiracist politics and visions of racial justice and equality. Ultimately, *Pursuing Alternatives*' analysis of the politics of

race and justice broadly, and in alternative food movements specifically, aims to direct us along materially-grounded antiracist paths capable of redressing the continuing impact of racism and white supremacy. My hope is that *Pursuing Alternatives* will provide some tools to forward and support this aim.

2. Conceptualizing Justice

In the mid-nineteenth century Pierre Joseph Proudhon observed that “the idea of justice...has gone on developing and shaping itself by degrees, until it has arrived at its present state” (38). In response to his own question regarding justice: “has it reached its last phase?” he says, “I think not” (38). The different post-civil rights theories of justice this chapter focuses on and discusses bears this out. Conceptualizing justice in these theories largely takes place on the ground John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* identifies and lays out: “Debates over the last century two centuries or so make plain that there is no public agreement on how basic institutions are to be arranged so as to be most appropriate to freedom and equality of democratic citizenship” (2). In engaging these debates, Rawls focuses on “the different philosophical and moral doctrines that deal with how the competing claims of liberty and equality are to be understood, how they are to be ordered and weighted against each other, and how any particular way of ordering them is to be justified” (2).

Importantly, a number of critiques of justice as fairness contend Rawls’ theory (and Rawlsian liberal justice) does not sufficiently grapple with historic domination and inequalities it produced and supported in ordering and weighting claims regarding justice. However, despite differences between them, Rawls and his critics stay within the bounds he sets out in a question driving justice as fairness: “What would a just democratic society be like under reasonably favorable

but still possible historical conditions, conditions allowed by the laws and tendencies of the social world” (4)? Like Rawls, his critics ground debates about justice, and their conceptions of justice, in liberalism and liberal democracy. For example, Rawls’ critics ground their theories in a liberal rights-bearing subject (making demands on a liberal democratic state). A number also uphold the high value liberalism places on private property and protecting it. Post-civil rights theories of justice, therefore, essentially settle into a liberal framework, one extensively grounded on liberty, equality, liberal democracy, (liberal) rights-bearing subjects, and defending private property. In the food system this liberal framework, as alternative food movement activism demonstrates, is increasingly met by a view that liberal subjects should direct their energy (and claims) for change through a neoliberal marketplace.

While conceptions of justice in the post-civil rights US settle into a liberal framework, theorizing justice does not historically take place solely in this tradition. Briefly zooming out into a broader historical and geographic view of justice elucidates the parameters set by theories of justice largely settling into a liberal framework; it illuminates how liberalism informs public understanding of and imaginative possibilities for justice and equality. When we zoom out we see that some of the theories discussed here coincide with elements of theories outside a liberal framework. For example, in *Social Justice Isn’t What You Think It Is*, Michael Novak and Paul Adams articulate a theory of social justice containing echoes of nineteenth century radical thought within and outside the US. This is

evident in their turn away from the state and individualism, which more resembles nineteenth radical century thinkers' positions on justice than it does Novak's and Adams' social justice theorist interlocutors. However, unlike nineteenth century radical thinkers, Novak's and Adams' turn away from the state and individualism is not accompanied by a turn to collectivism and (re)distribution. While they may not agree on where to turn instead of the state, the similarities Novak's and Adams' theory shares with radical nineteenth century thinkers is instructive regarding imaginative possibilities for justice.

Like Novak and Adams, radical nineteenth century thinkers outside the US were deeply skeptical of the state. Mikhail Bakunin captures this skepticism: "every state power, every government, by its nature and by its position stands outside the people and above them, and must invariably try to subject them to rules and objectives which are alien to them" (*Statism and Anarchy* 136). For Bakunin, justice requires the "Abolition, dissolution, and moral, political, and economic dismantling of the *all-pervasive, regimented, centralized State*" (*Bakunin on Anarchism* 78; emphasis in original). Max Stirner agrees, saying war should be "declared against the establishment itself, the *State*, not a particular state, not any such thing as the mere condition of the state at the time" (224). For Bakunin and Stirner the state is incompatible with justice.

Not only did radical nineteenth century thinkers have serious misgivings about the state, some, such as Proudhon, saw private property as an impediment to justice. Proudhon argued that "property is robbery" (12) and said "the last obstacle

[for justice] to...overcome arises from the institution of property which we have kept intact” (38). Proudhon’s position on property is similar to another radical thinker, Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin claims (liberal) individualist approaches to property and distribution of resources run counter to history and just distribution: “Search into their history and you will see how the civilization of the town, its industry, its special characteristics, have slowly grown and ripened through the co-operation of generations of its inhabitants,” because “there is not even a thought, or an invention, which is not common property, born of the past and the present” (Kropotkin 6-7). This assessment of property informs Kropotkin’s pointed question: “By what right then can anyone whatever appropriate the least morsel of this immense whole and say—This is mine, not yours” (9)? This question points to deep-rooted concerns regarding justice and equality in liberal thought. We find some response to these concerns in John Locke’s contention that “no Man could ever have a just Power over the life of another, by Right of property in Land or Possessions; since ‘twould be a Sin in any Man of Estate, to let his Brother perish for want of affording him Relief out of his Plenty” (*First Treatise* §42).

Novak and Adams do not extend their critique of the state’s role in justice as far as radical nineteenth century thinkers; they also disagree with nineteenth century radical thinkers regarding private property, and do not seem to support Locke’s position either. Novak’s and Adams’ skepticism of the state and their view of private property highlight the parameters of and contemporary conflicts in the politics of justice. These have significant import for alternative food movement

activists, whether or not they explicitly advocate for “justice” in the food system. Alternative food movement activists take different approaches to the state, market, and private property that are aligned with, if not informed by, conceptions of justice discussed here. For example, activists relying more heavily on the market to change the food system than the state are aligned much closer with libertarianism, communitarianism, and Novak’s and Adams’ conception of social justice (which draws heavily from libertarianism and communitarianism) than other (progressive) theorists’ conceptions of social justice.

These distinctions are important given the roles the state, the market, and civil society play (or could play) in producing and supporting existing racial disparities, and communities of privilege and deprivation in the food system. For example, where there is conflict between people using land to grow food to feed themselves and land owners’ private property rights. One of the most prominent cases of this is the razing of the South Los Angeles Community Garden and the Urban Gardening Program of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank (aka the South Central Farm), where the state upheld private property rights against arguments and protests in favor of saving the South Central Farm “that provided 350 primarily Latino households with space to garden” (Lawson 611). One clear position on this conflict is defending private property rights and the land owner’s right to raze the farm as a just outcome—the state would simply intervene to uphold a land owner’s private property rights against any action impinging upon it—which, as we will see, aligns with Rawls’ rejection of allocative justice, Ronald

Dworkin's position regarding the efficiency of the market, and Novak's and Adam's theory of social justice. Alternatively, the state could consider the claims of those growing food against the land owner's attempts to raze the farm and determine that the just outcome would be to allow the South Central Farm to remain, which is likely a position Brian Barry, David Miller, Frank Lovett, Ian Hunt, and Iris Young would take. Of course, given that the US is settled into a liberal framework of justice that values private property rights, the land owner would surely receive compensation. Either scenario highlights liberal ideas in power-knowledge-discourses nexuses shaping our understanding of justice. Liberalism is clearly the hegemonic frame of justice in the US, but there is a wide range of ideas about just outcomes regarding distribution of land, wealth, and resources within this frame.

While justice (and equality) may not have reached its last phase, the predominant understanding of it in the US (or what Rawls might refer to as a "plausible account" or "practicable scheme" of justice) has long settled into a liberal framework. This raises a number of questions, such as: is the most radical possibility for justice limited to pushing the boundaries of liberalism and liberal values as far left or right—in the US liberal political spectrum—as possible? How far can the boundaries be pushed? And how far can they be pushed to redress the impact of racial domination and combat racialized power-effects? What forces and/or theories of justice are working against pushing the boundaries of liberal

justice in this direction? This chapter's ensuing exploration and analysis of post-civil rights theories of justice is guided by such questions.

2.1 A Liberal Tradition of Justice

We begin this exploration and analysis of post-civil right theories of justice with Rawls' theory of justice as fairness, because it serves as a touchstone for so many theories of justice articulated after the mid-twentieth civil rights movements, and branch out from there. This initial discussion of Rawls lays the ground for examining other conceptions of justice articulated during the post-civil rights period. These theories largely suggest justice and equality are intimately (and perhaps even inextricably) intertwined. Thus, this chapter ends up dedicating much attention to how they address the relationship between justice and equality, which thrusts us into a consideration of how conceptions of justice engage historic domination. Finally, given the current expansive circulation and invocation of social justice the chapter extensively addresses conceptions of social justice.

Rawls' Liberal Justice

Rawls' theory of justice as fairness is arguably the most influential theory of justice in the post-civil rights period. Rawls situates justice as fairness, which he refers to as a form of political liberalism, in a tradition of liberal thought (40). As Rawls explains, justice as fairness follows in the footsteps of accounts of liberty, justice, equality, and democratic citizenship articulated by Locke, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant (1-3, 13). Rawls' justice as fairness is a political

liberal foray into the debates “over the last two centuries” regarding “how basic institutions are to be arranged so as to be most appropriate to the freedom and equality of democratic citizenship” (2). His theory extensively shapes post-civil rights considerations of conceptions of justice and, thus, serves as a cornerstone of discussions regarding justice in the latter part of the twentieth century and beyond. It is his theory that many other theorists in the nonracist period respond to in some fashion.

In *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls asks what a just democratic society would be like under reasonably favorable but still plausible historic conditions. This inquiry is accompanied by another he identifies as “the fundamental question of political philosophy for a constitutional democratic regime,” which is: “what is the most acceptable political conception of justice for specifying the fair terms of cooperation between citizens regarded as free and equal and as both reasonable and rational, and (we add) as normal and fully cooperating members of society over a complete life, from one generation to the next” (8)? Rawls’ answers to these questions largely drives his vision of a political liberal conception of justice—justice as fairness.

For Rawls, the “most fundamental idea in [the] conception of justice is the idea of society as a fair system of social cooperation over time from one generation to the next. We use this idea as the central organizing idea in trying to develop a political conception of justice for a democratic regime” (5). To fully understand how and why fair terms of social cooperation are so crucial to Rawls’ theory of

justice as fairness, as well as why he believes social cooperation serves as a legitimating basis for justice, we must understand the role Rawls thinks “cooperation” should play in justice. For Rawls, the idea of social cooperation “is worked out in conjunction with two companion fundamental ideas. These are: the idea of citizens (those engaged in cooperation) as free and equal persons; and the idea of a well-ordered society, that is, a society effectively regulated by a public conception of justice” (5). Rawls explains that “fair terms of cooperation specify an idea of reciprocity, or mutuality: all who do their part as the recognized rules require are to benefit as specified by a public and agreed-upon standard” (6). In Rawls’ theory a recognized public conception of justice is pivotal to developing and administering justice for a democratic regime.

Fair terms of social cooperation and a public conception of justice are crucial to Rawls’ theory, and the relationship between these *and* “free and equal persons” is vitally important to his conceptualization of justice (and equality) in a democratic regime. Rawls maintains that the basis for freedom and equality amongst citizens is that they “are all regarded as having to the essential minimal degree necessary the moral powers necessary to engage in social cooperation,” which enables society to establish “a fair system of cooperation” (20). The capacity for these moral powers makes persons free and equal citizens. More specifically, according to Rawls, for citizens to be free and equal they must have capacity for and the freedom to exercise two moral powers: 1) “the capacity for a sense of justice” and 2) “a capacity for a conception of the good” (18-19). The first

is “the capacity to understand, to apply, and to act from...the principles of political justice;” and, the second is “the capacity to have, to revise, and to rationally pursue a conception of the good” (18-19).

Rawls’ discussion of social cooperation and free and equal citizens in the context of a state exercising political power further illuminates justice as fairness. Rawls says political power is exercised by states, but distinguishes how this power stems and functions through free and equal citizens in democratic constitutional regimes as opposed to other regimes: “Political power is always coercive power applied by the state and its apparatus of enforcement; but in a constitutional regime political power is...the power of free and equal citizens as a collective body. Thus political power is citizens’ power which they impose on themselves and one another as free and equal” (40). Rawls maintains that this power structures justice because the “role of the principles of justice (as part of a political conception of justice)” and free and equal citizens in a democratic regime “is to specify the fair terms of social cooperation. These principles specify the basic rights and duties to be assigned by the main political and social institutions, and they regulate the division of benefits arising from social cooperation and allot the burdens necessary to sustain it” (7). Thus, for Rawls, a(ny) conception of justice may be legitimized when entered into by “free and equal persons” through “fair terms of cooperation.” Social cooperation of free and equal persons, therefore, is pivotal to justice as fairness, because the “idea of cooperation includes the fair terms of cooperation”—Rawls believes these can only be “fair” when entered into by “free and equal

persons”—which are “terms each participant may reasonably accept, and sometimes should accept, provided that everyone else likewise accepts them” (6).

Social cooperation and free and equal citizens may be crucial to justice as fairness, but Rawls sees “the basic structure”—which he identifies as “the main political and social institutions and the way they fit together as one scheme of cooperation,”—“as the primary subject of political justice” (4, 10). Crucial to the basic structure is the “idea of a well-ordered society...a society effectively regulated by some public (political) conception of justice” that “provides a mutually recognized point of view from which citizens can adjudicate their claims of political right on their political institutions or against one another” (9). For Rawls, the essential elements upon which “some public (political) conception of justice” should rest are cooperation by free and equal citizens in a well-ordered society containing formal equality of opportunity, fair procedural rules, and fair equality of opportunity—Rawls argues that these should serve as bases for justice.

Rawls’ concerns with justice extend beyond free and equal citizens producing an agreed-upon conception of justice. According to Rawls, “free and equal citizens” cooperate “to produce the social resources...In a well-ordered society, in which both the basic liberties...and fair equality of opportunity are secured, the distribution of income and wealth illustrates what we may call pure background procedural justice” (50). What does this mean for material distribution in justice as fairness? And how does Rawls address the relationship between material distribution and historic domination? As noted above, Rawls clearly

demonstrates concern about the relationship between distribution of resources and domination. Recall that he argues that a “free market system must be set within a framework of political and legal institutions that adjust the long-run trend of economic forces so as to prevent excessive concentrations of property and wealth, especially those likely to lead to political domination” (44). To assure this, Rawls thinks justice requires principles regulating social and economic inequalities in life prospects. Rawls believes his “principle of fair equality of opportunity” will largely be able to accomplish this. While Rawls admits “fair equality of opportunity” might be a “difficult and not altogether clear idea,” he believes it is necessary “to correct the defects of formal equality of opportunity” (43). Fair equality of opportunity, Rawls says, is intended to assure that “those who have the same level of talent and ability and the same willingness to use these gifts...have the same prospects of success regardless of their social class of origin [or] the class into which they are born” (44).

While Rawls acknowledges there are defects in formal equality of opportunity, he is not very clear in identifying them, their origins, or their impact on justice. Other justice theorists make clear that racist ideology and racial domination produced and served as justification for one of biggest defects (and arguably the biggest one) in formal equality. Other theorists’ efforts to address this stand in contrast to Rawls’ self-acknowledged lack of clarity regarding fair equality of opportunity and its ability to correct defects in formal equality of opportunity. For example, where other theorists identify racial domination in

chattel slavery as producing long-term defects in US liberalism's formal equality of opportunity, Rawls suggests a question might be posed to justice as fairness: "How can one ignore such historical facts as slavery" (64)? For Rawls, the "answer is that we are *mainly concerned* with ideal theory: the account of the well-ordered society of justice as fairness" (65; my emphasis). This motivating concern is perhaps most evident in Rawls' principles of justice. We discussed the second, fair equality of opportunity, which holds the greatest possibility for directly addressing (and mitigating) inequality. This principle and the first principle, which Rawls' says holds that each person should have equal basic liberties, ground justice as fairness. Their sequencing is important, as Rawls explains, "the first principle is prior to the second" and the "second principle fair equality of opportunity is prior to the difference principle" (43). The explicit ordering of the principles effectively prioritizes them. This suggests remedying inequality plays a subsidiary role to assuring basic liberties.

The importance of the order of the principles is reinforced by the first stage of the "four-stage sequence" of their adoption. In the initial stage "parties adopt the principles of justice behind a veil of ignorance" (Rawls 44). The "veil of ignorance" is supposed to remove "differences in bargaining advantages," because none will know what social position they have (or might have) with regard to others in establishing the principles of political justice, which would presumably produce bargaining "parties [that] are symmetrically situated" (87). Adopting principles in this manner could probably only happen where people are somehow

unaware of their non-ideal conditions. Engaging in formulating justice in this manner makes it seem as though justice as fairness is not just mainly concerned with ideal theory, but really only concerned with it. This is certainly not how Rawls sees his theory. He clearly states that justice as fairness and “the idea of a well-ordered society” could “provide some guidance in thinking about nonideal theory, and so about difficult cases of how to deal with existing injustices” (13). Establishing principles of justice, much less an agreed-upon conception of justice, behind a veil of ignorance does not seem like an effective guide for dealing with existing injustice or formulating fair equality of opportunity capable of remedying current defects in formal equality of opportunity. Would it not be better to clearly identify existing injustices and address them? Many of Rawls’ critics seem to think so and are more specific about existing injustices, pointing out that effectively addressing existing injustice (and/or inequality) requires explicitly acknowledging, identifying, and addressing non-ideal circumstances set in place by historic domination.

Equality in Justice

Rawls states justice as fairness focuses “on the basic structure and on the regulations required to maintain...justice over time for all persons equally, whatever their generation or social position,” and is especially concerned with the “kinds of inequalities a well-ordered society would allow or be particularly concerned to avoid” (54-55). In addressing these, Rawls emphasizes “formal equality of opportunity,” “fair procedural rules,” “fair equality of opportunity,” and

his difference principle which holds that “the only defense of inequalities in the basic structure is that they make the worst off...better off than the worst off [would be]...under any alternative (practicable) scheme consistent with all the requirements of...justice” (71). In Rawls’ justice as fairness these elements of justice are supposed to work in conjunction with each other to produce a form of justice that assures justice exists over time for all persons equally, and makes the worst off better than they would be in any other formulations of justice. For Rawls, this means allocative justice and redistribution schemes are unnecessary to meet (and thus inconsistent with) these requirements of justice.

Rawls rejects “the idea of allocative justice” as a way to combat inequality and possible domination; he believes allocative justice is “incompatible with the fundamental idea by which justice as fairness is organized: the idea of society as a fair system of social cooperation over time” (50). Rejecting the idea of allocative justice in favor of the difference principle “as a principle of distributive justice in the narrow sense” (61) underpins Rawls’ position that “the basic structure as the primary subject [of justice] enables us to regard distributive justice as a case of pure background procedural justice” (54). According to Rawls, justice (and equality) means the “basic structure [should be] arranged so that when everyone follows the publicly recognized rules of cooperation, and honors the claims the rules specify, the particular distribution of goods that result are acceptable as just (or at least as not unjust) whatever these distributions turn out to be” (50). His position is clear: “There is no criterion for a just distribution apart from

background institutions and the entitlements that arise from actually working through the procedure [of the basic structure]" (51). Rawls' position on allocative justice and distribution suggests he does not think processes of redistribution are necessary for "fair equality of opportunity" nor required for justice more broadly. This raises questions about how formal equality of opportunity, fair procedural rules, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle—all requirements of justice—respond to existing inequalities.

Rawls identification and discussion of the "least advantaged" and insistence on their access to "primary goods," which are "things citizens need as free and equal persons living a complete life" (58), provides the greatest insight into what he sees fair procedural rules, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle working together to ensure. Rawls uses income and wealth to identify the "least advantaged." According to Rawls, "the least advantaged are those belonging to the income class with the lowest expectations" (59). Rawls says we should compare schemes of cooperation (for justice) "by seeing how well off the least advantaged are under each scheme, and then...select the scheme under which the least advantaged are better off than they are under any other scheme" (60-61).

The comparative analysis of schemes is structured by what Rawls claims are "objective features of citizens' social circumstances" which includes "their (reasonable) expectations of income and wealth seen from their social position" (59). While it is not entirely clear what constitutes these reasonable expectations, it is clear that taking allocative justice and redistribution off the table could limit

these expectations, and certainly limits the schemes we are supposed to compare. Moreover, the sequencing of Rawls' principles of justice, and their adoption behind a veil of ignorance, pushes domination and its political-economic implications away from the center of Rawls' theory. This narrows the possibilities for what would make the least advantaged better off under justice as fairness. In the post-civil rights period, liberal accounts of justice following Rawls' ideas in justice as fairness form the basis of a public conception of justice. In this nonracist period, conceptions of justice predominating the understanding of and approach to forming public conceptions of justice have been ones privileging formal equality and procedural fairness—they largely neglect fair equality of opportunity and, thus, are even narrower than Rawls' theory.

Justice theorists' critiquing the limitations of justice as fairness largely maintain that effectively combating injustice and inequality requires redressing historic domination and the material advantages and disadvantages it set in place. Their critiques suggest that not directly confronting the role domination played in producing disadvantages disconnects the "least advantaged" from the history of domination that positions so many as the "least advantaged" to begin with. This disconnection makes it easier to abandon fair equality of opportunity as part of an agreed-upon public conception of justice.

Not surprisingly, a number of theorists' most severe critiques of justice as fairness take issue with how it deals with domination and inequality. One early prominent critic, Michael Walzer—who agrees with Rawls in seeing the state as

the site of justice—argues that domination “should be the central issue” of “justice” (16). Furthermore, Walzer maintains the “experience of subordination—of personal subordination, above all—lies behind [his] vision of equality” (xiii). In Walzer’s view, justice *and* equality should address particular historical and political-economic circumstances; he does not believe Rawls’ theory does this and counters justice as fairness with his pluralistic approach to justice and equality that “aims at eliminating not all differences but a particular set of differences, and a different set in different times and places...[to prevent] the ability of a group to dominate their fellows” (xii).

While Walzer agrees with Rawls that justice requires some set of broader principles, he is critical of Rawls’ theory and others he sees as comprehensive conceptions of justice that lack historical contextualization. In particular, Walzer critiques Rawls’ theory of justice for not centering and confronting domination—Walzer believes domination, justice, and equality are intertwined—because, he argues, “justice and equality can conceivably be worked out as philosophical artifacts, but a just or an egalitarian society cannot be” (xiv). Given this view, Walzer is rather skeptical of liberal justice theories exhibiting “effort[s] to produce a complete account of justice or a defense of equality by multiplying rights [because it] soon makes a farce of what it multiplies” (xv). Walzer believes: “Men and women do indeed have rights...but these do not follow from our common humanity; they follow from shared conceptions of social goods; they are local and particular in character” (xv). The effort to multiply rights, according to Walzer,

reflects a desire for unity in a theory of justice. Walzer contends “that to search for unity is to misunderstand the subject matter of distributive justice” (4). In response, Walzer argues for what he calls “complex equality” in support of distributive justice that he believes will combat domination.

Rawls and Walzer both make claims about wanting to prevent domination, but domination is situated rather differently in their respective theories. Where Walzer believes domination should be the central issue of justice, Rawls is concerned with domination and its material implications but does not centralize these concerns in the manner Walzer does. Ultimately, Walzer and a number of other post-civil rights justice theorists/theories are critical of justice as fairness and other conceptions of justice that follow Rawls—whom I refer to as Rawlsian—and prioritize formal equality and procedural fairness over specifically redressing inequalities—especially as they manifest in material advantages and disadvantages—produced by historic domination. This decentering of domination is what many critics of justice as fairness (and Rawlsian liberal justice) find particularly problematic.

Walzer responds to theories he sees as not adequately addressing domination and inequality with his conception of “complex equality.” He contrasts this conception with “simple equality,” which he says provides unitary ideas of justice intended to make people as formally equal as possible. He maintains social goods do not exist in the same spheres, and, therefore, disbursement of all goods should not be based on a unitary principle of distribution. Instead Walzer’s theory of

complex equality posits that resources must be distributed in accord with the principle appropriate to its sphere, with the caveat that success in one sphere not foster or allow for domination in another sphere. While this means there need not be an overall comparison between individuals, complex equality demands that domination not exist based on inequalities experienced between spheres.

Walzer's notion of complex equality provides one way of centering domination via pushing back against liberal theories that simultaneously decenter domination while privileging formal equality and procedural fairness. Furthermore, Walzer rejects what he sees as singular inclusive formulas of justice articulated by Rawls and other theorists. While Walzer challenges Rawls' theory, he also agrees with justice as fairness in seeing the state as a primary vehicle for justice and equality. Their view of the state reflects the general position liberal theories of justice take regarding the state. The centrality of the state in liberal theories of justice raises questions about the state and domination. For example, how do you work through (or reconfigure) the various layers of the US liberal nation-state to combat domination and its legacies when the state has not only been shaped for at least two centuries by racist ideology, but enacted policies to operationalize them? Is it even possible to work through such a state—wherein racist ideology became embedded in its policymaking and implementation of it—to remedy the legacies of active investment in racist ideologies and racial domination? What role could or should this state play in pursuing justice and equality? Such questions are addressed later. Here we turn our attention another

theorist, Ronald Dworkin, offering both an early critique of Rawls' theory and a response to Walzer's conception of justice.

Dworkin echoes Walzer in identifying Rawls' justice as fairness as an inclusive formula of justice, and argues such theories "ignore the social meanings of goods they try to distribute. So they will inevitably be arid, unhistorical, and above all abstract" (215). Dworkin believes Walzer's theory of justice provides a more concrete political analysis of justice than theories attempting to articulate "some inclusive formula" of justice. Dworkin further maintains theories aiming to provide a singular, inclusive formula are unable to take "account of which of Walzer's spheres...goods are drawn from" (215), and argues Walzer's theory which distinguishes between different spheres provides greater nuance regarding the distribution of goods and resources. However, Dworkin contends that while Walzer offers "anecdotal and historical examples of how different societies, including our own, have developed distinct principles for distribution in different spheres," Walzer's theory of justice "offers no comprehensive description of what life in...a society" aiming for complex equality "would be like, of who would have what share of different types of resources he discusses" (215).

In an even more scathing assessment of Walzer's theory of complex equality, Dworkin argues that the complex equality Walzer "defines is not attainable, or even coherent, and...[Walzer provides] very little that could be helpful in thinking about actual issues of justice" (216). Dworkin says that Walzer tells us "to look to social conventions to discover the appropriate principles of distribution for

particular goods,” yet “the very fact that we debate about what justice requires, in particular cases, shows that we have no conventions of the necessary sort” (216). Rather, Dworkin asserts: “Our political arguments almost never begin in some shared understanding of the pertinent principles of distribution...Nor do we accept that everything we find valuable must be wholly subject to a single logic of distribution: if we recognize spheres of justice, we also recognize the need for interaction between them” (216).

Dworkin contends Walzer’s theory of justice ultimately has a deep relativism that could allow a society’s “traditions” to determine that an effort to distribute goods and resources equally is unjust. This is precisely what happens in the US regarding efforts to redress the legacies of racial domination (i.e. antiracist affirmative action programs); they are characterized as “unjust” because, according to those opposed to them, they violate formal equality. The characterization of antiracist affirmative action programs and policies as providing “preferential treatment” that is antithetical to (formal) equality allowed them to be largely dismantled throughout the 1990s. Dismantling these programs and policies in the name of (formal) equality not only illustrates Dworkin’s point about relativism, but also demonstrates deep, longstanding contention over what constitutes justice and equality, and how to achieve it. Dworkin captures this contention well: “What does it mean for the government to treat its citizens as equals? That is, I think, the same question as what it means for the government to treat all its citizens as free, or as independent, or with equal dignity...it is a question that has been central to

political theory at least since Kant” (191). Rawls’, Walzer’s, and Dworkin’s theories illustrates the centrality of this question in conceptualizing justice.

Dworkin directly addresses the question of what it means to treat citizens as equals; he says the question may be answered “in two fundamentally different ways” (191). The first way “supposes that government must be neutral on what might be called the question of the good life. The second supposes that government cannot be neutral on that question” (191). Dworkin weighs in on this this fundamental distinction through his identification and discussion of two different principles of equality as a political ideal. The first, Dworkin contends, “requires that the government treat all those in its charge as equals, that is, as entitled to equal concern and respect” while the “second principle requires that the government treat all in its charge *equally* in the distribution of some resource of opportunity, or at least work to secure the state of affairs in which they are all equal or more nearly equal in that respect” (190; emphasis in original). These two principles of equality as political ideal parallel principles of justice—equal basic liberties and fair equality of opportunity—grounding Rawls’ theory.

Dworkin believes there is broad agreement within modern politics about the first principle: government treating all those in its charge as equals. The agreement on the first principle of equality as political ideal and the fact that racial inequalities still exist illustrates how important Dworkin’s second principle of equality and Rawls’ second principle of justice (fair equality of opportunity) are for redressing historic domination and its continuing political-economic impact.

But do Rawls and Dworkin think their respective first and second principles (or for that matter do liberal theorists articulating similar principles think they) should stand on equal ground? While Rawls clearly states the first principle of justice is prior to the second, Dworkin seemingly suggests that following both equally, so to speak, is necessary for actualizing justice and equality. This is apparent in his support for antiracist affirmative action aimed at reducing how “American society is overall a racially conscious society,” which “is the inevitable and evident consequence of a history of slavery, repression, and prejudice” (Dworkin 294). Yet while trying to abide by both principles of equality, Dworkin ends up claiming rights of redistribution overriding the efficiency of the market have no place in liberal theory. But, as the next two chapters contend, racist ideology, racial domination, and racialized power-effects are foundational and built into the US (market) political-economy. What type of equality is possible when “the market”—contemporarily this is a neoliberal market we are referring to—built upon foundational racism, white supremacy, racial domination, and racialized power-effects is allowed to override redistribution intended to redress the lasting impact of these foundations? If justice and equality are as intertwined as Rawls’, Walzer’s, and Dworkin’s theories suggest, then how justice theorists/theories address the massive racial inequalities produced by racist ideology and racial domination shaping social, political, and economic life in the US is vitally important.

Remedying Domination

Rawls', Walzer's, and Dworkin's theories all exhibit concern with domination, but they have different ways of addressing it. These theorists might agree about citizens garnering equal concern and respect, but they have different ideas about how to safeguard against (and/or redress) domination to ensure justice and equality. This is generally true for other liberal theorists/theories, and especially evident in their responses to racial domination. Dworkin's disagreement with Walzer regarding antiracist affirmative action is instructive regarding how justice theorists/theories attempt to deal with racial domination. Where Dworkin sees antiracist affirmative action as necessary for redressing the legacy of racist ideology and white supremacy, Walzer believes so-called "racial preferences" corrupts the sphere of "office" and is incompatible with justice in that sphere. The divergent positions taken by Dworkin and Walzer reflect how, as Dworkin notes, people hold "very different conceptions of what [the] abstract principle" of equality requires (191).

Dworkin suggests the approach to justice and equality in the "last liberal settlement,"¹⁰ which he traces back to the New Deal, helps fulfill the second principle of equality as political ideal by extending visions of equality beyond an agreement to treat citizens with equal concern and respect. This settlement fosters "demands [that] inequality of wealth be reduced through welfare and other forms of redistribution financed by progressive taxes...They [liberals] support racial equality and approve government intervention to secure it, through constraints on

both public and private discrimination in education, housing, and employment” (187). According to Dworkin such “liberalism based on equality...rests on a positive commitment to an egalitarian morality and provides, in that morality, a firm contrast to the economics of privilege” (203).

Dworkin apparently has faith that those supporting approaches to justice and equality generated by the last liberal settlement will be spurred to address how “in the real world people do not start their lives on equal terms,” by insisting “on an economic system in which no citizen has less than an equal share of the community’s resources just in order that others may have more of what [one] lacks” (206-7). But Dworkin’s own argument about the market overriding redistribution casts doubt on his own faith in the direction the last liberal settlement will take us. Dworkin’s discussion of cutbacks on welfare in the early 1980s and the *Bakke* decision also cast doubt on his conclusion about where the last liberal settlement is moving us. Welfare cutbacks have not really been, as Dworkin argues they should, “accompanied by efforts to improve the social integration and political participation of blacks and other minorities who suffer most” (212). The response to cutbacks (i.e. dismantling antiracist affirmative action programs and undermining protection of voting rights) runs counter to Dworkin’s insistence that “reductions in welfare should not be joined to any general retreat from affirmative action and other civil rights programs” (212). In fact, retreat from antiracist affirmative action and other programs significantly color the political landscape from the 1980s onward. In the nonracist period, there

has been a broad-based public conclusion that a color-conscious approach to justice and equality has no place in (liberal) justice and equality. Thus, Dworkin’s mid-1980s conclusion that historical “prejudice denies equality of opportunity between members of different races and [the conservative] must accept the justice of the remedies designed to reinstate that equality” (201) was swept aside in the nonracist period. In the nonracist period, for a broad swath of the public historical racial domination and its legacies do not necessitate visions of justice aiming to bring about racial justice or equality—apparently many do not see the same “real world” that Dworkin does: a place where people start on unequal terms because of historical investment in racist ideology and racial domination—because they believe racism has little, if any, impact on contemporary social, political, and economic life in the US. Where people do see the impact, they often respond with a racial politics (i.e. nonracism and/or cultural left identity politics) that evacuates the material grounding of antiracist visions of justice and equality advanced by racial justice movements.

2.2 More Contemporary Critical Responses to Rawls and Rawlsian Liberal Justice

The discussion above demonstrates how varied and complex conceptions of justice and equality are. Frank Lovett further captures this complexity: “Whether it is more important for people to have an equal opportunity to secure resources, for example, or instead a sufficient level of actual functioning, or something else, clearly depends on our reasons for caring about...justice in the first place” (823).

Walzer's and Dworkin's theories of justice arguably suggest one of the most crucial reasons for them caring about justice is to address the historic relationship between domination and (in)equality, which they think Rawls' justice as fairness does not adequately address. In addition to Walzer and Dworkin, many other justice theorists extensively grapple with inadequacies they see in Rawls' justice as fairness. A primary reason for many critics caring about justice is grounded in remedying the material impact of domination, especially where they believe Rawls' extremely influential theory does not provide for this.

Justice, Privilege, and Domination

Writing more than two decades after Walzer's and Dworkin's critiques of Rawls, Ian Hunt responds to Rawls' basic structure requiring, as Hunt notes, "a collectively organized framework for cooperation between individuals to ensure that the circumstances of their upbringing, different natural advantages and differing fortune in life are made consistent with a fair balance between their claims to the burdens and benefits of social cooperation over lifetimes and generations" (157). Like some of Rawls' other interlocutors, Hunt thinks Rawls' basic structure, framework for cooperation, and fair balance in them subordinates substantive equality to formal equality and procedural fairness in conceptualizing justice.

Hunt identifies the elevated status of procedural fairness in Rawls' theory as particularly problematic, and argues that fairness of procedures should not trump

substantive outcomes in theorizing justice. Hunt contends: “We should concede that Rawls identifies important cases where the issue of justice concerns the fairness of procedures rather than particular outcomes. However, we should not so readily concede that a complete account of the just distribution of the burdens and benefits of social cooperation can be given in just those terms” (158). Hunt further maintains: “Entitlements of citizens, as initially set by Rawls’ principles of justice, are vulnerable to adversity, whether of misfortune or wrongdoing” (166). Hunt posits “regulative justice” as a response to Rawls. Hunt’s regulative justice addresses the problems he sees with the way justice as fairness (and Rawlsian liberal justice) deal with vulnerability to unequal distributive outcomes: “We may adopt the term ‘regulative justice’ for principles dealing with substantial vulnerability arising from misfortune or wrongdoing within the ambit of a just basic structure of society” (166). Hunt intends to lay a foundation for dealing with the vulnerabilities that “the basic structure” might allow for.

Hunt’s regulative justice does not call for a rigid formula of distributive outcomes. Rather, it maintains that vulnerability (which often stems from historical domination) needs to be taken into greater account in conceptualizing justice (166). According to Hunt, “Principles of regulative justice specify the obligations or duties of help that citizens collectively have to address [regarding] various types of vulnerability,” thereby enabling regulative justice to fill “gap[s] that emerge in pure procedural justice when serious vulnerability is taken into account in just but not well-ordered societies” (166). Hunt is not alone in seeing justice as fairness

(and theories similarly privileging formal equality and/or procedural fairness) as exposing people to substantial vulnerability and grave inequality. Frank Lovett's theory of justice as minimizing domination (JMD) also takes this position. Like Hunt, Lovett is critical about the vulnerabilities Rawls' theory allows for, and posits JMD as an alternative to Rawls' (and Rawlsian) liberal justice. Hunt's and Lovett's respective theories respond to Rawls and Rawlsian liberal justice by centering domination, because they believe this approach most effectively combats the impact of historic domination.

As with regulative justice, Lovett's JMD is driven by concerns about vulnerability (to domination). Lovett avers that JMD, "not only... provide[s] powerful (albeit instrumental) reasons for regarding serious socioeconomic inequality and poverty as unjust, but it moreover offers an account of that injustice more attractive on several grounds than the account offered by liberal contractualists" (818). Importantly, for Lovett, justice "concerns the appropriate definition or characterization of what would count as a just distribution of goods" (820). An example of this concern is "whether a given distribution is just when each persons' share of resources (or level of functioning or welfare) is the same, or when it is above a certain threshold, or when the smallest share (or lowest level) is as large (or high) as possible, or something else" (820). "From JMD's point of view," Lovett asserts, "the connection is straightforward: a distribution of goods will be just when it arises from the operation of those political and social institutions or practices most likely, given our present knowledge and expectations,

to minimize domination in the long run” (823). Lovett maintains that “being dependent on a person or group with the power to arbitrarily withhold the goods or services necessary to meet basic needs whose satisfaction one does not regard as optional amounts to suffering domination” (824). And he argues that exposure to domination “must be understood structurally, not in terms of how things happen to turn out” (824). Hunt’s and Lovett’s concerns with domination and how their conceptions of justice address them bear great resemblance to longstanding efforts to attain racial justice. Their account and analyses of domination capture the impact of racist ideology, racial domination, racialized power-effects, and racial political-economic projects on people of color throughout US history, which is discussed in the next chapter.

While Hunt, Lovett, and other theorists might agree about Rawls’ theory and Rawlsian liberal justice’s inability to adequately address domination, they have different ideas about how to respond to this. For example, Lovett says there is “considerable disagreement about how and where to draw the line between those choices people should be responsible for and those they should not” (823). And Hunt believes that in “the absence of a determinate distribution of burdens and benefits of social cooperation, we cannot define violations of prior rights or breaches of prior obligations, or define the normal, representative expectation of a fair distributive outcome that wrongdoing or misfortune might defeat” (167).

Even if it is difficult to determine “responsibility for choices” and/or just distributions of burdens and benefits, I believe a robust commitment to the liberal

value of equality demands that one's conception of justice offer some way of addressing the political-economic impact of racial domination. Agreeing on this baseline for justice entails acknowledging domination and seeking remedies to racial inequalities. Many theorists acknowledge (and offer varying responses) to domination shaping ideas, policies, and practices in the US. Walzer, Dworkin, Hunt, and Lovett, for example, each articulate a theory of justice aimed, in significant part, at combating the advantages and disadvantages historical domination produced, which they believe Rawls' justice as fairness does not do sufficiently to address defects in formal equality.

Iris Young similarly responds to shortcomings she sees in justice as fairness and Rawlsian liberal justice. Young claims "we need an account of large-scale systemic outcomes of the operations that constrain some people at the same time that they enable others" (4). Young does not think Rawls (or Rawlsian liberal justice) provides this. Young poses "political responsibility" to address this shortcoming. Young contends political responsibility allows us "to understand and criticize the way that many individuals and groups face too limited and unsavory sets of options" (4). According to Young, political responsibility aims to illuminate and challenge "structural causes of injustice that are normal and ongoing" which "most of us contribute... a greater or lesser degree to... precisely because we follow accepted and expected rules or conventions of the communities and institution[s] in which we act" (11-12).

Young's critiques of Rawls and Rawlsian liberal justice suggest they contribute to perpetuating causes of injustice that are normal and ongoing. Young identifies Rawls' explanation of the basic structure as a prime example of how this works. Young notes that Rawls' "basic structure" is composed of "the major social institutions [that] distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (qtd. in Young 4). Young also notes that Rawls thinks major institutions define "basic rights and duties, market relations, the system of property in the means of production, and family organization" (4). She contends Rawls says "little more" about what structure refers to, and asserts that Rawls' limited explanation regarding what structure refers to generally reflects justice as fairness' inability to adequately address how people are positioned socio-historically. Young explains and addresses this shortcoming in a discussion of "social structure." According to Young, "social structure consists of the connections among the positions [people occupy] and their relationships, and the way the attributes of positions internally constitute one another through those relationships" (4). Young further explains: "social structures exist only in the action and interaction of persons; they exist not as states, but as processes" (5). And the processes are shaped by us acting "according to rules and expectations," which are informed by how "our relationally constituted positions make or do not make certain resources available to us" (Young 5).

Importantly, Young observes: "Most of the conditions under which people act are socio-historical: they are the products of previous actions, usually of many

coordinated and uncoordinated but mutually influenced actions over them” (6). This discussion of social structure provides an important intervention to Rawls’ conclusion that “fair terms of cooperation specify an idea of reciprocity,” one where those who “do their part as the recognized rules require are to benefit as specified by a public and agreed-upon standard” (6). These bases of justice do not really account for how people’s socio-historic positioning allows for greater or lesser influence on them. Even if we aim (and are able to) to mitigate this influence, it certainly would not equate to deciding terms of justice behind a veil of ignorance, because we will still be differentially positioned socio-economically. Ignoring centuries of historic domination in conceptualizing justice will not remove its forces from structuring our lives or influencing processes through which we envision justice and equality.

To address the impact of domination, we must acknowledge and directly confront it. Even directly confronting what we aim to change provides no guarantees we will realize the outcomes we seek; we run the risk of reinforcing structures, systems, and processes that are antithetical to alternatives we envision. Indeed, as Young notes, “structured social actions and interactions often have collective results that no one intends and which may even be counter to the best intentions of actors” (6). We see this happening in alternative food movements working for change through the neoliberal market place. This produces consumer-citizens and consumer democracy as the locus of change for alternative food movements, and increasingly persuades people to view the market rather than the

state as the optimal site for pursuing alternatives (and arguably justice and equality) to the neoliberal corporate food regime. This elevates the neoliberal marketplace above the state, which is not conducive to making liberal rights-based claims or pursuing visions of justice seeking substantive equality, which arguably also subdues concern for the public good.

In this context, alternatives gaining traction in the food system marketplace depends heavily on their appeal to consumers and/or profitability for agribusiness. The neoliberal market is a space where privileged actors are incentivized to push back against changes cutting into their privilege. The state may be a fraught space for pursuing materially-grounded visions of justice and equality given its history of producing and supporting racist ideologies and racialized power-effects, but it holds the greatest possibility for pursuing racial justice and substantive equality. It was necessary and instrumental in putting racial disparities in place, and is necessary and instrumental for dismantling them.

Working for alternatives in the food system through the neoliberal marketplace illustrates how (as chapter four details) “mutually reinforcing processes...condition[ing] individual lives [are] difficult to change” (Young 6). It is indeed difficult to combat and change the racial disparities that racism, racialized power-effects, and racial political-economic projects produce in the food system, because they carry the weight of history which, to borrow from Young, “produce[s] and reproduce[s] injustice” (13). This means we need to be extremely careful and thoughtful in confronting what we seek to change. We should view our

efforts through a historical lens, and consider the ideas, systems, structures, and processes impinging upon alternatives we seek.

Looking into the past reminds us of the importance of historical processes producing and/or upholding domination. As Rawls' critics assert, we must acknowledge, directly engage, and combat the continuing impact of these historical processes if there is any hope of altering them. Theorizing justice as though (historical) processes of domination producing privilege and deprivation do not exist surely will not cultivate more equitable life chances or equalize material outcomes. Young's political responsibility recognizes this and "says that we who are part of these [continuing] processes [of injustice] should be held responsible for the structural injustice, as members of the collective that produce it, even though we cannot trace the outcome we regret...in a direct causal chain. A concept of political responsibility fills this role without attributing blame" (11).

Not assigning blame is Young's attempt to make people recognize that structures and institutions are subjects of justice. As Young puts it: "Justice and injustice concern primarily an evaluation of how the institutions of a society work together to produce outcomes that support or minimize domination" (7). Young's focus on the collective results of historical processes of domination, and the benefits people receive from them, might help alleviate tendencies people have of hearing "racism" as an accusation of individual wrongdoing and responding by tuning out rather than listening to calls for racial justice and equality. Suggesting we are collectively responsible for outcomes that support or minimize domination

(or the legacies of it) without assigning individual blame may be effective in getting people to listen to arguments for remedying racial inequalities stemming from domination. The way many social justice theorists address domination and its impact resembles Young's assessment and appeal regarding how to deal with it.

2.3 Social Justice

Social justice is arguably more widely (publicly) invoked as an alternative to Rawls and Rawlsian liberal justice than other conceptions of justice. In fact, social justice circulates very broadly (especially in left-leaning and progressive politics), and is invoked to address a range of social, political, and economic concerns. Social justice is used so broadly that David Miller, a leading theoretician of social justice, writes: "Among those who support it, it is [often] not at all clear what the idea means. Often it seems little more than a rhetorical phrase used to add luster to some policy or proposal that the speaker wants us to support" (ix). Miller contends the lack of clarity regarding social justice as an idea "increases our suspicion that the term may have emotive force, but no real meaning beyond that" (ix). Miller thinks social justice has meaning beyond emotive force, and says "a clear meaning can be given to the idea [of social justice]" (ix). We consider social justice (and the meanings given to it) at length here, because 1) it is invoked extensively and circulates widely in the US, which means 2) discussing distinctions in it will help further illuminate the current politics of justice, and 3) social justice appears to be the most widely invoked notion of justice in alternative food movements.

Social Justice Ideas

Miller's and Barry's—both theorists have written extensively about the meaning of social justice—accounts of social justice exemplify the meaning many other social justice theorists/theories attempt to give to social justice, as well as the position many social justice theorists/theories take regarding Rawls, Rawlsian liberal justice, and liberal justice more broadly. The meaning Miller, Barry, and other theorists attempt to provide for social justice might be best understood through reflecting upon some crucial questions Miller asks about social justice:

If social justice has to do with distributions, what precisely does this mean? What exactly are...the advantages and burdens, whose allocation is the concern of social justice? And, in thinking about social justice, are we thinking narrowly about how government policies, say, affect the fortunes of different groups in society, or is our concern much wider than that, encompassing all kinds of social activities that determine the shares of goods that people have? (1)¹¹

Miller's questions capture crucial elements of many, if not the vast majority of conceptions of social justice. Namely, that social justice is more concerned with the allocation of burdens, benefits, *and* distributive outcomes than liberal justice generally. But does this mean that social justice as a response to liberal justice generally necessarily puts it in conflict with liberal justice? Barry does not think so.

Barry insists “social justice is not in conflict with liberal justice but rather complements and completes it” (692). According to Barry, social justice completes liberal justice because social justice moves beyond a sphere of liberal rights and liberal theories grounded in procedural equality, which have limited concern with

material outcomes. Barry believes a “theory of social justice can provide a systematic critique and a [program] that follows from it capable of addressing historic inequalities to move us toward greater equality” (vii). Furthermore, Barry maintains the critique and potential program following from his theory of social justice are informed by the “revolutionary idea that the justice of society’s institutions could be challenged not merely at the margins but at the core” (5). For Barry this core is society’s “basic structure:” “If we ask what is the subject of social justice, we shall have an influential answer in the work of John Rawls...the ‘basic structure of society’” (16).

Barry is not alone in drawing from Rawls. Both Barry and Miller turn (in part) to Rawls in articulating their theories of social justice. Like Barry, Miller is amenable to drawing on some of Rawls’ ideas—neither Barry nor Miller share Young’s extreme misgivings about Rawls’ basic structure. Where Young moves away from Rawls’ basic structure in articulating a conception of justice and instead focuses on “social structures” and “processes,” Barry and Miller, while critical of the basic structure, work to reform it. This means they remain squarely within the same liberal framework of justice Rawls does. And perhaps even within the specific parameters for justice Rawls sets out.

Neither Barry nor Miller really repudiates the importance Rawls places on the basic structure. For example, following Rawls, Barry contends “the basic structure could be understood as being constituted by the major institutions that allocate (or bring about an allocation of) rights, opportunities and resources”

(16).¹² However, they think domination and (re)distribution are more important and central to justice than Rawls' account of the basic structure suggests. Not recognizing this, Miller contends, has grave consequences: "Relations of domination and oppression are drawn into" the basic structure and "the systematic presence of such relations is clear evidence that the basic structure is unjust" (17).

As I contend in the next chapter, racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, have been part of the US's main political and social institutions throughout its history (and thus part of the basic structure). They are integral to producing communities of privilege and deprivation. The impact of these phenomena is so ingrained in the socio-economic/political-economic fabric of the US that they are practically seen as natural occurrences—barriers or obstacles that are just somehow there—in society, and not social, political, and economic phenomena that were actively created. This is part of what makes it so hard to convince people that racially-coded geographic dispersal (segregation), and disparities in land (property) ownership, wealth accumulation, labor force participation (including pay and conditions in employment), and access to resources are clear evidence of an unjust basic structure. Rather than see it this way, many people think material disparities are attributable to hard work, individual responsibility, and/or merit.

While Barry and Miller may accept Rawls' emphasis on the importance of institutions in the basic structure, and see institutions playing a vital role in justice, this does not mean they see institutions the same way Rawls does. In fact, Barry

says “the primary subject of justice is not institutions themselves but the distribution of rights, opportunities and resources that exist in society” (17); he further maintains, “we can ascribe justice and injustice to actions by individuals as well as to institutions, in both cases judging by their effects on the distribution of rights, opportunities and resources” (18). Similarly, Miller’s concern with institutions and Rawls’ basic structure is about “the distributive effects” of Rawls’ basic structure (11). Elaborating, Miller asserts social justice “requires the notion of a society made up of interdependent parts, with an institutional structure that affects the prospects of each individual member, and that is capable of deliberate reform by an agency such as the state in the name of fairness” (4). Thus, Barry and Miller view institutions as “not an end in themselves” but as “a means of getting things done” (Barry 17). What Barry and Miller think could (and probably should) get done is making the basic structure (more) just by judging justice and equality based on material outcomes, not merely on equal concern and respect and/or fairness of procedures.

Justice and Inequality

Barry and Miller believe social justice should provide a conception of justice capable of substantially reducing inequality. For them, as Barry states, “social justice is about the treatment of inequalities of all kinds” (10). This belief informs Barry’s question: “what is the smallest extent of inequality that can be squared with justice” (185)? Barry and Miller contend that formal equality and procedural

fairness figuring so prominently in Rawls' theory allows forms of inequality to be squared with justice as fairness—I believe this is also the case for Rawlsian liberal justice—which their theories of social justice do not accept.

Miller's conception of social justice utilizes some of Rawls' ideas about justice, but in centering historic domination it draws more from Walzer in proposing "a different kind of...justice, one that may allow us to see some of Walzer's very illuminating examples in a new light" (25). Miller claims that considering Walzer in a new light makes it possible "to identify the *underlying* principles of justice that spring directly from" what he calls "the various modes of relationship" (25; emphasis in original).¹³ According to Miller, these modes of relationship help explain "the ways in which a range of social institutions and practices together influence the shares of resources available to different people" (11). He asserts that these shares of resources have historically been distributed in an unequal manner due to the relations of domination and oppression drawn into the basic structure. Thus, he argues that "for social justice to obtain, what is necessary is that each person's needs be met (fully or proportionately) according to a common standard of need that is recognized and applied across the whole society" (Miller 247). This common standard extends beyond Rawls' agreed-upon conception of justice and his particular concerns about distribution of resources and domination. For Miller, the common standard should be one that aims to remedy the systematic presence and impact of oppression.

Barry's theory of social justice articulates a similar view to Miller's regarding justice and equality. Barry argues justice and equality should not be primarily measured in procedural terms, and that conceptualizing justice merely in terms of liberal rights is also inadequate because "rights [not only] carry responsibilities, but...[also] oppress the vulnerable while exonerating the powerful" (693). Ultimately, Barry thinks liberal rights and procedural fairness alone have difficulty remedying the creation of "an unequal playing field right from the outset" (689); and he argues notions of liberal justice identifying justice as "the primary sphere of rights," need to "add...social justice, which is more the sphere of opportunities and resources" (689). He explains: "Social justice—concerned with the distribution of opportunities and resources—should be conceived as building on the foundation of liberal rights," because "liberal rights (and procedural equality) alone cannot lead to a just distribution of resources and opportunities when our lives start from a non-ideal condition of an unequal playing field" (Barry 22). Barry is effectively challenging "those who...[still] maintain that whatever distribution of opportunities and resources exists is just as long as it came about without force or fraud—and even then that force or fraud establish a clear title today as long as they occurred far enough in the past" (24).¹⁴

Barry argues that "those who profess to care about equal opportunity must also be concerned with [substantive] inequality," because "equal opportunity can be achieved only in a society that keeps the range of inequality narrow" (177). He says "the inadequacies of liberal justice prevent [this] from happening" (viii),

which effectively means “lip service is paid to the virtues of equal opportunity, but the usual incantation is ‘equal opportunity to become unequal’” (viii). Thus, Barry pointedly argues, to “say that you are in favour of *some* opportunities is not to say much” (7). He maintains that social justice (as he conceives it) says and does much more, by focusing on domination it is best positioned to ameliorate gross inequalities stemming from domination.

Barry’s theory of social justice speaks directly to justice as fairness and, importantly, also to the ways Rawlsian liberal justice has neglected Rawls’ fair equality of opportunity or (mis)interpreted it as an aspect of formal equality of opportunity. The murkiness of Rawls’ fair equality of opportunity enables it to be subsumed in formal equality. But this subsuming—even with Rawls’ prioritization of the first principle of justice over the second—surely distorts the distinction Rawls makes between the first and second principles. Thinking fair equality of opportunity is synonymous with or realizable through formal equality (or procedural fairness) alone merely pays lip service to equal opportunity. Rawlsian liberal justice and other liberal approaches to justice downplaying substantive outcomes and/or privileging formal equality seem particularly prone to abandoning or (mis)interpreting aspects of liberal thought such as fair equality of opportunity that could ameliorate substantive inequality.

Just Outcomes

Like other theorists grappling with Rawls’ theory of justice, Barry and Miller have differing responses to justice as fairness (and the ideas, approaches, and

understanding of justice it gave rise to). Despite their differences, however, Barry's and Miller's conceptions of social justice are both, to borrow from Barry, "aimed at counteracting" the inequality justice as fairness allows for (690). To accomplish this they forcefully insist that substantive outcomes be used as a measure of justice. Measuring justice through substantive outcomes is a significant departure many, if not most, social justice theorists/theories make from other justice theories that prioritize formal equality and procedural fairness. A prime example of this departure is Barry's insistence that justice of individual and institutional actions be measured based on "their contribution to just *outcomes*, which are assessed by their contribution to a just distribution of rights, opportunities and resources" (17; emphasis in original). In a similar vein, Miller maintains a just society, one with a just basic structure, might allow for unequal income "but the range of inequality would be considerably smaller than now exists in almost all capitalist economies" (249-50).

Miller further insists "there is no inherent reason a market economy should not meet criteria of social justice," but a "just market economy will require a strong regulatory and corrective framework" (248). The call for a "strong regulatory and corrective framework" works with Miller's view of the state as the most effective vehicle for changing institutional structures: "theories of social justice [should] propose legislative and policy changes that a well-intentioned state is supposed to introduce" (6). Miller sees the state playing an integral role in social justice and argues that "to achieve social justice we must have a political

community in which [people] are treated as equals in an across-the-board way, in which public policy is geared toward meeting the intrinsic needs of every member, and in which the economy is framed and constrained” to produce greater equality in wealth and income distribution (250). We see Barry’s and Miller’s assessment of justice based on substantive outcomes echoed in Lovett’s, Hunt’s, and Young’s critiques of Rawls (which also implicitly critique Rawlsian liberal justice).

Theories of justice using substantive outcomes as a measure/basis of justice take seriously Young’s observation that conditions under which people act are socio-historical. And the conditions under which people currently act are characterized by gross material inequality stemming from historic domination, which produced and supported vast racial disparities in the distribution of land, wealth, income, and resources. Walzer, Dworkin, Hunt, Lovett, Young, Miller, and Barry recognize this. Their theories (and those aligned with them) respond to Rawls, Rawlsian liberal justice, and other liberal justice theories downplaying the importance of socio-historic domination, by articulating visions of justice intended to center and combat domination, and counteract its lasting impact.

Theorists using substantive outcomes as a measure/basis of justice appear intent on counteracting inequality allowed for by theories prioritizing formal equality and/or procedural fairness. For them, material outcomes as a measure/basis of justice offers a more effective approach to remedying inequality than Rawls, Rawlsians, and other liberal theories of justice. This more effective/radical approach to justice is a progressive-leaning (in the US political

spectrum) politics of justice. But how far in a progressive direction will those on the left move in supporting justice? For example, would many agree with Dworkin's assertion that redressing the legacy of racist ideology and white supremacy through antiracist affirmative action is necessary for realizing the full promise of liberal justice and equality? How many current supporters of social justice would agree with Barry's contention that if "we accept that the distribution of income and wealth is unjust, and that it would be more just if it were more equal, we cannot get around the answer that money has to be redistributed from the rich to the poor" (171)? Or agree with Barry's contention that "it goes without saying that it would be a complete waste of time to talk about a just distribution of resources unless redistribution of property by the state [is] on the agenda" (22)?

Social Justice, Another View

Miller says "'social justice' is one of the terms most often used in ethical and political discourse, but one will search in vain for definitions of it. Because of its fuzziness and warmth, everybody wants to share in it" (15). In *Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is*, Novak and Adams address the fuzziness Miller says exists and critique progressive conceptions of social justice. Adams says: "social justice is a term that can be used as an all-purpose justification for any progressive-sounding government program or newly discovered or invented right" (Adams 1). Novak maintains "the contemporary secular academy and media" use "at least six different connotations or meanings" for social justice, which spill over into each

other (Novak 29). Novak identifies these as: distribution, equality, common good, the progressive agenda, new “civil rights,” and compassion. Of these, this chapter has mainly focused on (and discussed) how conceptions of justice address distribution and equality. Thus, we will address Novak’s assessment of distribution and equality, which Adams apparently agrees with, and bracket the other connotations or meanings he identifies in other conceptions of social justice. Given the significant overlap Novak suggests exists in the connotations or meanings, discussing how Novak (with Adams support) addresses distribution and equality provides us with both a clear view of their understanding of progressive’s conceptions of social justice *and* their own theory of social justice.

Novak contends the fair distribution of advantages and disadvantages is the generic understanding most people have of social justice. He also says that this understanding “introduces a new key term...‘distribution,’” and this term “suggests some extra-human force, some very visible hand, that is, some powerful agency—the state—should do the distribution. And do it fairly” (Novak 30). Novak and Adams object to this. Their theory of social justice rejects the “powerful state” determining distribution or ensuring a notion of equality put forward by “many recent writings on social justice” (Novak 30).

According to Novak, these recent writings advocate versions of equality arguing for “equality-as-uniformity,” a “conception of equality [that] calls for some great power to sweep in and enforce on a society its strict measure of equality...To maintain strict equality, such power must measure out by its own

judgment the freedom and initiative allowed all individuals, families, associations, and communities” (Novak 30-31). Novak asserts that for those who hold this view of equality-as-uniformity “society as they imagine it is always under command...[and] the function of ‘social justice’ is to blame somebody else, to blame *the system*, to blame those who (mythically) control it” (43; emphasis in original). Novak says these “social-justice advocates seldom attempt to change minds and hearts one by one. Instead, they use political muscle to change the laws and to coerce mass compliance” (Novak 38). Novak and Adams oppose such conceptions of and approaches to justice and equality.

Novak’s and Adams’ theory of social justice counters leftist (especially progressive) conceptions of social justice they object to; they are particularly critical of visions of justice calling for state-guided (re)distribution. They assert that such conceptions of social justice are misguided and run afoul of an original understanding of social justice. Novak tells us to understand the meaning of the term social justice “we need to do two things: first, walk through the origin and early development of the term” and second “we need to seek out a fresh statement of the definition of social justice—one that is true to the original understanding, ideologically neutral among political and economic partisans, and applicable to circumstances today” (Novak 17). Presumably doing these two things will lead us to a different understanding and conception of social justice than ones posited by left-leaning theorists/theories.

Novak identifies the “ancient idea” of general justice “whose object was not just other individuals, but the community” as a precursor to social justice (16). However, Novak and Adams maintain social justice is distinct from general justice and trace social justice through Catholic social teaching:

Through the leadership of the popes, social justice slowly became a Christian alternative to the atheist socialism and secular statism. The popes have insisted (while relying on the thinking of devoted public intellectuals of many faiths) that there is a humanism that rejects collectivism. The popes also remind intellectuals that there is a humanism which rejects a vicious form of individualism. (Novak and Adams 275)

Identifying social justice as an alternative to socialism and statism does not mean Novak and Adams see no role for the state in social justice; Novak believes “social justice is not inherently hostile to the state. In fact, its organizations and energies are often focused on stimulating the state into action on behalf of the public good” (Novak 196). While Novak and Adams believe the state may play some role in social justice, they route us through a theological account of social justice that largely stands in opposition to the state: “in the Catholic tradition, social justice is a concept (a strategy, too) invented to block the domination of totalitarian states over all of civic life” (Novak 88). Given their position they argue: “we arrive at this conclusion: Social Justice is not what most people think it is, a building up of state bureaucracies which are impersonal, inefficient, and expensive far beyond their original forecasts” (Novak 24).

Novak’s and Adams’ theologically grounded conception of social justice also turns to Friedrich Hayek to critique leftist notions of social justice. According to

Novak, Hayek believed that liberty supported by the rule of law fostered “creative habits on the one hand, and on the other hand an economic system founded on rules that maximize free decisions, discovery procedures, and feedback mechanisms...such a system...[provides] unparalleled opportunities. But it could not and must not be expected to guarantee outcomes” (Novak 48). In agreement with Hayek, Novak also believes that conceptions of justice attempting to guarantee outcomes “would force a new and foreign architectural principle upon the system; it would strangle the liberty from which invention and discovery bloomed” (Novak 48). Novak and Adams follow Hayek in asserting “the free society will never be able to guarantee the outcomes by those who speak of ‘social justice,’ it [the free society] does, [as] Hayek observed, bring more rewards to all, on all levels, than any known system. It cannot and will not guarantee equal rewards for all, only higher rewards for all” (Novak 46).

With a theological genealogy and Hayek’s critique of social justice as a foundation, Novak and Adams argue “social justice is the preeminent virtue of free societies. It puts in place an alternative to statism and to ‘excessive’ individualism” (Novak and Adams 274). They also believe, as Novak states, “social justice names a new virtue in the panoply of historical virtues” and the “new virtue is called ‘social’” because “its aim or purpose is to improve the common good of society at large” and “not only is its end social, but so also are its constitutive practices” (Novak 22-23).

Novak and Adams maintain that social justice as “personal virtue” not only refrains from being ideological or partisan, but also “represents a decisive rejection of individualism and liberalism” (Adams 7). Novak further says social justice “is a specific habit of justice that is ‘social’ in two senses,” it “entails two or more persons acting 1) *in association* and 2) *for the good of the city*” (Novak 50; emphasis in original). And the “practice of the virtue of social justice consists in learning three new skills: the art of forming associations, willingness to take leadership of small groups, and the habit and instinct of cooperation with others” (Novak 23). Adams agrees with Novak, stating: “social justice rightly understood [is], namely, skills in forming associations to improve the common good of local communities, nations, and indeed the international community” (Adams 3-4).

Guided by their conception of social justice, Novak and Adams “reject any interpretive framework that understands political or policy choices or tendencies solely in terms of individualism or collectivism” (Adams 9). They maintain their theory of social justice rejects individualism and what they refer to as “individualist-liberal ideology,” because “to the extent it [individualist-liberal ideology] finds practical expression in selfish behavior, [it] ignores the needs of others and acts as if the individual lived, or could live, in splendid isolation from family community, law and custom, tradition and culture” (8). Moreover, Novak and Adams assert that with the aim (of their conception) of social justice being the “nonideological” and “nonpartisan” common good, social justice is something that can be practiced by people anywhere on the US political spectrum. We hear echoes

of nineteenth century radical thought in their assessment (especially in their rejection of liberalism and statism); however, Novak's and Adams' conception of social justice defends capitalism and private property, and is communitarian rather than collective (or merely individual). Even if we grant that their vision of social justice is nonpartisan, their theory's communitarian aspects along with their emphasis on personal responsibility and an economic system maximizing free decisions, as well as the way they defend liberty and private property, clearly suggests it is a right-leaning understanding and conception of social justice.

Novak's and Adams' theory of social justice does share something in common with leftist conceptions of justice, they see justice as not only addressing social and political circumstances, but economic ones as well. Novak and Adams argue that not only are individualist-liberal ideology and collectivism incompatible with social justice, but also with a flourishing capitalist economy. However, they do not defend capitalism writ large, because they believe there "are good versions of capitalism and bad ones. One test of the difference is how well and how rapidly the good system raises its poor out of poverty" (Novak 170). For them rapidity is not the only concern in lifting people out of poverty; they clearly see right and wrong ways to go about alleviating poverty. The right way is through their social justice approach, which opposes state intervention and relies on communitarian ideals. They argue against what they call the statist approach to helping the poor, wherein "the powers of the state [are turned] toward helping the poor in one after another of their many economic needs, such as food, housing, income, social

insurance of various types, employment, health care, and so on” (Novak 175). While they think there may be some role for the state in social justice, they nevertheless contend that the “state is neither equipped for achieving the full common good, nor fully trustworthy in its methods of envisioning it” (Novak 197). They believe a better paradigm than relying on the state to help the poor, which creates dependence, is one that promotes “personal initiative, creativity, enterprise, ownership, and cooperatives, together with a whole realm of voluntary associations (such as the Red Cross) and natural associations (the family)” (Novak 175).

The free society, personal initiative, and creative capacity they envision as part and parcel of social justice is wrapped up with private property: “the destination of the earth’s goods is the well-being of all humankind, both now and in the future. But the means for reaching that goal, as history shows over and over, is attentive cultivation by private owners” (Novak 86). For Novak and Adams, social justice also means: “No one may be excluded from the social benefits. All must be included” (Novak 86). How should this inclusion work? Not forcibly through the state, but through (their conception of) social justice, because “the virtue of forming associations, while turning to government as little as possible, is an immensely powerful way to build a better world” (Novak 25). Thus, they argue social justice and the common good demand opposition to the statist approach, which fosters dependence, and a lack of creativity and personal responsibility; because freedom, personal initiative, creativity, communitarianism, biblical force

and private property—as opposed to individualist-liberal ideology or collectivism—are what is best for the common good. And the “structures that most impede personal responsibility and reform are those of the bloated state, whose sheer size crowds out the liberties and sources of creativity in every able-bodied human person. Too enlarged a state sucks the oxygen out of personal responsibility” (Novak 193). Their defense of liberty, an economic system maximizing free decisions, and private property along with their demand for personal responsibility makes their claims about rejecting liberalism and individualism suspect.

Novak’s and Adams’ severe opposition to the (liberal) state playing a large role in realizing justice and equality seemingly serves as the primary basis for supporting their claim about rejecting individualist-liberal ideology and collectivism. While they strongly reject the state playing a significant role in realizing justice and equality, they do think it could play some (rather limited) role in working toward social justice and the common good. Novak cites the Homestead Act as exemplifying this limited role for the state and how it might engender creative capacity and personal responsibility. According to Novak, the Homestead Act gave “hundreds of thousands of citizens a stake in property, on the condition that they would use their own practical intelligence and labor to develop it” (Novak 51). Thus, Novak claims, the Homestead Act cultivated personal responsibility, creative capacity, and “did not create dependency; on the contrary, it helped families establish their independence” (Novak 51). Clearly they see some

role for the liberal state, and defend private property and freedom, which serve as a foundation of liberalism. So it is probably more accurate to say they reconcile the tension between liberty and equality in liberalism by supporting liberty guided by moral capital as a means for attaining equality. This is a decidedly different position than rejecting liberalism, individualism, private property, and/or the liberal state, which is more the position that nineteenth century radical thinkers took.

Novak's and Adams' theory of social justice, thus, fits in a liberal framework while countering other theorists'/theories' conceptions of social justice. Novak and Adams see the free society supported by capitalism fostering creativity and personal responsibility as the route to social justice, not state-guided (re)distribution and/or policies and programs designed to equalize material relations. In fact, they contend the "abuse [of justice] consists in taking the term justice out of the realm in which it properly applies to the acts and habits of individuals and using it, illicitly, to name an abstract standard of *distribution* which authorities ought to enforce" (Novak 41; emphasis in original). For Novak and Adams, the form of distribution and equality sought by progressive social justice advocates is anathema. They certainly do not agree with those, like Barry, who believe a theory of social justice could (and probably should) provide a systematic critique and state policies aimed at redressing and reducing historic inequalities. Rather they think, as Novak says, "God did not make individuals equal in terms of talents or in the will to succeed...Given the way any free world works, it is highly

unlikely that all individuals and families would attain the same levels in human skills, ambition, and daily habits” (Novak 31). Thus, they assert that “equality can be taken to suggest fairness, equality, or what is equitable. But what is equitable often requires that each receive not exactly the same portions but rather what is proportionate to each, given different efforts and different needs” (Novak 30).

Given their vision of justice, instead of turning to the state or advocating for redistribution or redressing inequalities produced through historic domination in pursuit of social justice, they look elsewhere. For example, Novak and Adams turn to religion and heteronormative marriage to pursue social justice. In fact, Adams says the “collapse of marriage is perhaps the cardinal social injustice of our time” (Adams 225). For Novak and Adams heteronormative marriage is central to the possibility of a just society and the public good: “Historically and universally our most child-centered institution, marriage and the marriage-based family, reduce the risk of poverty, crime, mental and physical illness, poor educational outcomes, domestic or intimate-partner violence, and so on” (Adams 220).

2.4 Politics of Justice

The genealogical tracing and foundation upon which Novak and Adams ground their theory of social justice contrasts with other social justice theorists/theories. In their effort to excavate buried knowledge and forward their argument regarding social justice as virtue, Novak and Adams do not really address the epistemic foundations for their theory of social justice beyond tracing

them through Catholic social thought. This is a rather odd maneuver given that other social justice theorists/theories share Novak's and Adams' assessment regarding the important role Catholic social thought played in the emergence of social justice. For example, Miller states: "in continental Europe progressive Catholics had begun to develop notions of social justice by the end of the [nineteenth] century, although it took another twenty-five years or so before the idea was officially endorsed in papal encyclicals" (3).

Their epistemic neglect is particularly inexplicable given that Novak and Adams otherwise provide basically the same genealogy of justice as other theorists.¹⁵ For example, Novak and Adams provide the same account of justice up until the late nineteenth century that Barry does: "Until about a century and a half ago, justice was standardly understood as a virtue not of societies but of individuals...Justice could, it was thought, also be ascribed to institutions, but only on a very limited scale" (4). Curiously, Novak's and Adams' account of social justice breaks with other accounts when they address it beyond the late nineteenth century. Their text does not mention formative texts in social justice theory, even those that could support their conception of social justice (especially in its opposition to socialism and statist ideologies). For instance, they do not discuss Westel Willoughby's *Social Justice*, which was published in 1900 and, as Miller notes, was partially dedicated to finding "ways of rebutting socialists arguments...or semi-socialists doctrines such as...the doctrine that the worker has

a right to the whole product of his labor, various communist proposals, and so on” (4).

The epistemic neglect in Novak’s and Adams’ genealogy effectively buries (subjugates) alternative accounts of social justice that trace its genealogy through different routes besides (only) Catholic social thought. For example, Novak’s and Adams’ book only mentions Barry once and does not say anything about Miller. This means we do not really know what Novak and Adams think about Miller’s identification of the “early sponsors” of social justice in the nineteenth century as “in the main [the] liberal social philosopher” (3). Nor do we see a response to Barry’s contention that the “modern concept of social justice emerged out of the throes of early industrialization in France and Britain in the 1840s” (5).

Without clear dialogue regarding why Novak and Adams make the epistemic and genealogical choices they do—the choices *and* the rationale for them are rather important—it is difficult to thoroughly assess the foundation they provide for their theory. Nevertheless, it is clear that Barry, Miller, and most other social justice theorists have drastically different conceptions of social justice than Novak and Adams. These distinctions in conceptualizing social justice, along with their divergent genealogies, illustrate the politics of epistemic production itself. Regardless of whether or not we fully understand Novak’s and Adams’ epistemic and genealogical choices and why they differ from other social justice theorists, we see that Novak’s and Adams’ theory of social justice provides a stark contrast to those articulated by left-leaning social justice theorists. This contrast illuminates

the politics of justice and highlights the importance of clarity regarding what people mean when they invoke a conception of justice; this is especially true for social justice and/or racial justice after protests over George Floyd's death, because they are currently circulating so broadly and loosely in the US.

Novak and Adams provide a very different account of social justice than other theorists/theories, since theirs is not a materially-grounded conception aiming to remedy the impact of domination. In fact, Novak and Adams reject efforts to do so—identifying and arguing against connotations and meanings (distribution, equality, and the progressive agenda), that according to them, underlie a broad public understanding of social justice and efforts to (re)distribute wealth and resources, which they identify with the secular academy and media. This is a rather generous, and I believe inaccurate, depiction of (neo)liberal corporatist media's pursuit (and, perhaps, understanding) of (social) justice. The (neo)liberal mainstream media (and I would argue to a large extent the cultural-left, including those in academia) demonstrates very limited concern with pursuing materially-grounded visions of justice. Their positions, as with Novak and Adams, are not the same as the materially-grounded, progressive conceptions of justice advocated by theorists such as Barry and Miller. The nonracist politics and representational regimes supported throughout liberal mainstream media and the cultural left—many of whom are privileged subjects whose positions in communities of privilege are fortified by legacies of domination—align with conceptions of justice decentering the material impact of domination. Neither

Novak and Adams nor the liberal media and woke cultural left, therefore, provide materially-grounded visions of justice as an effort to combat racial (material) disparities built up over centuries through colonization, and the formation and development of the US. Their respective politics of race and justice both counter antiracist politics, projects, and visions of justice, although in different ways.

Steering Us Right into Justice

It is telling that Novak cites the Homestead Act as exemplifying the role the state should play in social justice; it reflects how far afield Novak's and Adams' theory of social justice is from other social justice theories. The "hundreds of thousands of citizens" granted a stake in property via the Homestead Act, which Novak lauds, received this stake largely at the expense of racial (nonwhite) others. The Homestead Act is a prime example of racialized power-effects. This Act that "helped families establish their independence" (Novak 51) was—as the next chapter illustrates—a racial political-economic project. It was one of the many white settler colonialist racial political-economic projects in US history, which cultivated white wealth and privilege at the expense of racial others. These racial political-economic projects were crucial for building up communities of privilege and deprivation. One has to wonder if holding up the Homestead Act as exemplary means Novak (and Adams) think white privilege should be part of social justice. Probably not. Given their theory's failure to seriously consider how forms of historic domination contribute to injustice it seems more likely they are not very

concerned about historic domination and/or the material legacies of racism and white supremacy.

Therefore at most, Novak and Adams probably only agree with progressive conceptions of social justice where they are articulated “as a response to inadequacies of liberal justice” (Barry 23). While Novak and Adams may share other social justice theorists’ motivation to remedy liberal justice’s inadequacies, their ideas about what constitutes and how to remedy these inadequacies is quite distinct from progressive social justice theorists/theories. Novak’s and Adams’ conflict with progressive notions of social justice regarding justice and equality, particularly the latter’s attempts to redress historic domination and its legacies by redistributing resources, raises questions about what Novak and Adams think about the relationship between domination and inequality.

Based on Novak’s and Adams’ theory of social justice, I believe their primary contribution to understanding the relationship between domination and inequality is to map ideas about God-given “natural” inequalities onto social and state produced inequality stemming from domination. It is precisely this type of thinking that fuels arguments about (personal) responsibility and feeds into identifying “deficiencies” of the poor (especially among those in low-income communities of color) as factors accounting for their social, political, and material circumstances. Novak’s and Adams’ (re)conceptualization of social justice detaches it from the understanding and meaning the vast majority of theorists have been cultivating over the last century—much of this is done by simply ignoring

other genealogies and epistemic production regarding social justice—in a clear effort to blunt analyses of historic domination and corresponding structural phenomena as explanatory factors for social, political, and economic disparities. Novak and Adams also clearly aim to elevate personal responsibility in place of these analyses, which effectively holds people living in communities of deprivation responsible for the existence of (and their existence in) these communities.

Barry accurately assesses the impact of the line of thinking Novak and Adams support: “As we have seen, the ideology that underlies the acquiescence in or actual enthusiasm for inequality is the principle of responsibility” (142). Upholding personal responsibility as a path to (social) justice and a way to address the inadequacies of liberal justice effectively means, as Barry argues, ruling out “the notion that states have a duty to ensure decent material conditions for everyone...either by provision or by regulation” (155). And to put it more pointedly, Novak’s and Adams’ theory of social justice is an example of how, as Barry says, ideas about social justice are “being abused systematically to justify the massive inequalities that we see all around us” (viii).

2.5 Which Way Justice?

Rather than pushing for state involvement to equalize material relations it actively produced and supported, Novak and Adams follow Hayek and try to convince us that attempting to guarantee outcomes “would force a new and foreign

architectural principle upon the system; it would strangle the liberty from which invention and discovery bloomed” (Novak 48). In contradistinction, I demonstrate in the next chapter that the historic relationship developed between racist ideologies, liberalism, justice, and equality in the US shows how the white settler state was very much invested in designing a system guaranteeing outcomes. Thus, guaranteeing outcomes did not necessarily “force a new and foreign architectural principle upon the system,” because, in fact, this is at the heart of the “system.” We surely do not live in a (socio-economic or political-economic) system that “was already providing unparalleled opportunities,” but not attempting “to guarantee outcomes” (Novak 48). If it is, for whom and on what terms did/does this system provide said opportunities?

The system in place for most of US history, and during the majority of Hayek’s life, was one that attempted to guarantee racist and white supremacist outcomes, which oppressed and deprived many people of color. In a sense, therefore, Novak and Adams are right about “a new and foreign architectural principle” being forced upon the system, because progressive conceptions of social justice supporting antiracist efforts to equalize material relations are new and foreign to a system built on racist liberalism and white supremacist equality. Thus, I suspect Novak’s and Adams’ objection to a new and foreign architectural principle is (unintentionally, perhaps) not strictly objecting to designing a system attempting to guarantee outcomes; but, in significant measure objecting to designing a system that does not attempt to guarantee outcomes that keep in place

existing communities of privilege and deprivation. Novak and Adams may claim to share some other social justice theorists' concerns about inequality, deprivation, and poverty, but their theory and vision of social justice—other social justice theorists consider domination a cardinal social injustice in US history—clearly departs and conflicts with theories centering domination. Centering domination and redressing racial (material) disparities aims to restructure the system in a way Novak and Adams clearly cannot abide. Novak's and Adams' theory represents one of the further (right-wing) ends we could head to if we decenter domination in conceptualizing (social) justice.

The distinctions between how domination is situated in theorists' theories of justice parallels differences between positions food justice activists—and food sovereignty activism that significantly aligns with their work (but has not gained significant traction in the US yet)—take versus other alternative food movements. The former largely center domination, directly confront racial disparities, and aim to substantively equalize the food system. This position aligns them with Barry, Miller, Lovett, Hunt, Young, and to an extent Walzer and Dworkin. In contrast other alternative food movements, which rely heavily on the neoliberal market to work toward alternatives in the food system, are implicitly, if not explicitly, underpinned by libertarian and communitarian ideas about justice that decenter domination. Their appeal to foment change as consumers aligns with Novak's and Adams' (libertarian- and communitarian-informed) conception of social justice, as well as Rawls' rejection of allocative justice, and Dworkin's contention that rights

of redistribution should not override the efficiency of the market. This distinction between food justice (and food sovereignty) and other alternative food movements manifests, as Brahm Ahmadi posits, in “a great divide between food justice networks with communities of color, labor movements, and farmworkers on one side; and the sustainable, local-food, gastronomic-cultural movements on the other...on the one hand, we see tremendous proliferation” of the latter, “whose push for alternatives is heavily reliant on seeking change in/by consumerism;” but “we haven’t seen significant change in food deserts or the labor conditions of food and farmworkers” (162).

While alternative food movements relying heavily on the market for change may not explicitly position themselves against the state and/or redistribution of land, wealth, income, and resources, their ideas and praxis help uphold a neoliberal capitalist marketplace that bolsters racial disparities. Turning to the consumer for change is certainly not the same as a materially-grounded push for substantive equality and, thus, not really capable of (or apparently aiming at) remedying racial inequality. Relying heavily on consumer-citizens and consumer democracy to change the food system effectively subordinates materially-grounded efforts to seek racial justice and equality to conceptions prioritizing individual responsibility and market mechanisms. This is a politics of race and justice, as I illustrate and argue later, aligned closer to right-leaning conceptions of justice, neoliberal corporatism (on the right and left), nonracism, and cultural left identity politics, effectively abandoning concerns with and efforts to change material circumstances.

These are largely politics of privileged subjects and communities. Food justice should stand against elevating this politics and approach to altering the food system.

The next chapter's discussion of the role of racist ideology and racial domination in the development of US liberalism and its political-economy intends to show the obstacles (historically and contemporarily) facing activists seeking a substantively just and equitable food system. Chapter three's elucidation of the historic relationship that developed between racist ideology, racial domination, liberalism, and liberal values of justice and equality, therefore, meets Eric Holt-Gimenez's call for us "to understand and confront the social, economic, and political foundations that created—and maintain—the food system we seek to change" (273). The chapter demonstrates how racist ideology, racial domination, and racialized power-effects were reconciled with liberalism and liberal values, and generated *intentional* racial political-economic projects shaping material relations—especially through the (re)distribution of land, wealth, and resources—in the US, including within the food system. In demonstrating this, chapter three intends to show why the most robust visions of justice and equality, ones most capable of remedying racial inequality purposely set in place, comes from centering domination and directly aiming to redress current implications of the structures and systems whites designed to benefit themselves and subjugate their racial others. Ultimately, this is why *Pursuing Alternatives* cares about justice in the first place.

3. Racial Politics, Domination, and Material Relations in the US

As historical subjects, we bear the weight of the US's long history of privilege and deprivation, advantage and disadvantage, and equality and inequality produced and supported by racism and white supremacy. Critical race scholarship examines this history and forces within it. This scholarship provides insightful analyses into how these impact the social, political, and economic conditions we experience. This chapter follows critical race scholars such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant who insist we must understand how “the concept of race is subject to permanent political contestation,” because without doing so “it is difficult to recognize the enduring role race plays in the social structure—in organizing inequalities of various sorts, in shaping the very geography of American life” and it is nearly impossible to “acknowledge *racism* without comprehending the sociohistorical context in which concepts of race are invoked” (vii; emphasis in original). In agreement with critical race scholars, this chapter holds that US racial politics is critical to social, political, and economic relations; it maintains that historical commitment to and investment in racist ideologies, racial domination, and corresponding racialized power-effects significantly structure contemporary social, political, and economic relations in the US.

The preceding chapter demonstrates that justice theorists see justice and equality as intimately, if not inextricably, intertwined. These theorists articulate varying ideas and conceptions regarding how to ensure and/or obtain justice and

equality. Even where they reject substantive equality as a measure of justice (i.e. Rawls, and Novak and Adams) they do not reject the idea or belief in the liberal tenet of equality itself. If we accept this tenet of liberalism and the fact that it is bound up with justice, then it is imperative to identify and explain how we understand (in)justice and (in)equality existing in the US. As stated previously, *Pursuing Alternatives* contends that (in)justice and (in)equality (and their impact on life in the US) take shape through forms of domination constitutive with hegemonic epistemic and discursive formations in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice. This chapter forwards this position by addressing how racist ideology and racial domination developed alongside and informed the liberal tenets of justice and equality, focusing in particular on the political-economic implications of this relationship.

The chapter's discussion of racial disparities captures the materiality of justice and equality. It also illustrates how thinking about and conceptualizing justice and equality as primarily, if not exclusively, the domain of fair (or equal) treatment, formal equality and/or procedural fairness limits our consideration (and ability to address) racial injustice and inequality. Approaching justice this way evacuates materiality from our understanding of justice and equality, and narrows our conceptions, visions, and measures of justice and equality. These approaches to justice provide impoverished understandings of justice and equality, which reinforces (historically) actively produced and supported privilege and deprivation grounded in commitments to racism, white supremacy, and racial political-

economic projects. Such approaches and understandings subjugate materially-grounded conceptions and visions of justice and equality that center domination and/or substantive/material outcomes.

3.1 Racial Politics, the Politics of Justice, and the Food System

The racial politics discussed here serve as a backdrop against which movements for social and political-economic change take place. Since racism and white supremacy, and the white settler state's support of them—particularly through passage of racist legislation and implementation of racial political-economic projects—were foundational in structuring the US socially, politically, and economically, movements dedicated to changing socio-economic or political-economic conditions are necessarily engaged in racial politics. This is true for alternative food movements: alternative food movements seeking to change the corporate food regime do so in a food system extensively shaped by racial politics.

The forms of privilege and deprivation existing in the US food system do not exist in a historical vacuum; they reflect the material disparities and racialized communities of privilege and deprivation produced by predominant ideas and discourses (and attendant policies and practices) throughout the history of US racial politics. Racial politics, more specifically racist ideology, racial domination, and racialized power-effects, inform and shape the political-economic structure of the food system. For example, deprivation in the form of food insecurity, food deserts, and malnourishment cut along racial lines and reflect the structuring force

of racial political-economic projects. In addition, who owns land and controls food production, as well as the labor done in the food system illustrates the impact of racialized power-effects. Thus, to understand the structure and functioning of the food system it is necessary to understand how US racial politics underpins the way property, wealth, and material resources generally are distributed and accessed in the US. This chapter addresses these underpinnings.

Given that the current food system was significantly shaped by US racial politics, the way alternative food movements grapple with and respond (either implicitly or explicitly) to this fact tells us a lot about their positions in the politics of race and justice. For example, alternative food movements might draw on historic racial justice activism (i.e. black- and brown-led antiracist movements or civil rights movements) and/or align with current antiracist activism to push for equitable distribution of land and/or better working conditions and increased pay for low-paid food system workers. Or alternative food activism could be informed by hegemonic forces of nonracism and/or neoliberalism, and ignore or pay little attention to racial disparities in the food system. The critiques regarding the abundance of race- and class-privileged subjects involved in and guiding alternative food movements discussed in the next chapter provides reason for concern about which directions alternative movements will take. I do not intend to suggest here that privileged subjects are incapable of working for antiracist social and political-economic change, but history has demonstrated they are more likely

to take actions (intentional or not) protecting their racially and/or class privileged social, political, and economic positions.

Movements seeking social or political-economic change are not only engaged with racial politics, they also are informed by ideas about what is just. In other words, racial politics and conceptions of justice (either implicitly or explicitly) inform movements for social and political-economic change. Thus, the racial politics and conceptions of justice (implicitly and/or explicitly) informing alternative food movements are crucial to their direction and the change they seek in the food system. This is made clear in the next chapter's discussion of racial disparities in the food system and the (implicit and explicit) circulation of conceptions of justice in alternative food movements. Thus, the discussions in this chapter and the preceding one serve as a backdrop for the discussion in the next chapter.

3.2 US Racial Politics

The exploration of US racial politics here focuses on the broad socio-historical contexts in which, race, racism, and white supremacy were constructed and deployed. I discuss these broad contexts as different periods in US racial politics. These periods essentially correspond with the following designations for historic eras in the US: antebellum, Jim Crow, and (mid-twentieth) century civil rights and post-civil rights. These separate eras are characterized in part by different forms of racial categorization, particular debates regarding racial

difference, and varying forms of racial politics. For example, the antebellum and Jim Crow eras were characterized by broad-based *overt* and *active* investment in racism and white supremacy; this is not the case for the period of racial politics ushered in by the mid-twentieth civil rights movement. This period is characterized by departure from these investments in racism and white supremacy.

While mid-twentieth century civil rights movements pushed us away from these investments, this did not result in widespread and sustained commitment to these movements' antiracist objectives (especially their materially-grounded ones). Rather, in the post-civil rights era, US racial politics is characterized by a separation of nonracism from broader antiracist projects. This separation is marked particularly by nonracist colorblind public policy and race-neutral rhetoric, which avoids addressing the impact of racist ideology and racial domination (and their material legacies) on contemporary social, political, and economic relations. Nonracism has risen as a distinct racial politics, and for the last four-plus decades (until the killing of George Floyd and subsequent widespread protests) we were in a nonracist period: a time where racist ideologies and claims about racial superiority no longer receive open and broad public support, and racism and white supremacy are largely regarded as having little bearing on socio-economic or political-economic relations. This chapter is significantly dedicated to discussing this post-mid-twentieth century shift in racial politics and examining it against a broader history of US racial politics.

My discussion of US racial politics is informed by and agrees with Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's assessment that "racial categories have a history and are subject to change" (8), and Omi and Winant's conclusion that "race...is constructed and transformed sociohistorically through competing political projects, through the necessary and ineluctable links between the structural and cultural dimensions of race in the US" (71). Thus, to understand contemporary racial politics it is crucial to recount the history of racial politics, and the ways racial categorization, racism, and white supremacy functioned as historical forces shaping the US socially, politically *and* economically. While differing sociohistoric contexts shape the understanding of race and racial categorization, for much of US history there was a prevailing belief in white racial superiority that produced and sustained a racial hierarchy. This hierarchy was driven and upheld by commitments to racism and white supremacy.

The discussion and analysis here of US racial politics (and racism and white supremacy in particular) is motivated by Bonilla-Silva's conclusion that "the task of analysts interested in studying racial structures is to uncover the particular social, economic, political, social control, and ideological mechanisms responsible for the production of racial privilege in a society" (9). In addition to this motivation, recall that *Pursuing Alternatives* is animated by Giroux' insistence that "the question for intellectuals is not how to remain neutral and impassive, but how to distinguish, with due consideration and care, the kinds of battles in which they can and should engage" (23). Bonilla-Silva's and Giroux' calls to action arguably

reflect driving forces for critical race scholarship writ large. *Pursuing Alternatives*, and this chapter specifically, meets these calls and answers Lovett's question about why we care about justice in the first place through its objective to identify historic production of racial privilege and deprivation, what currently allows racial disparities to remain in place, and its argument for remedies to the lasting impact of racism and white supremacy. In line with these driving forces, the discussion and analysis in this chapter is guided by questions such as: what are racism and white supremacy? How has race, racism, and white supremacy historically shaped social, political, and material relations in the US? What characterized these relations in different time periods? What role did/does the state play in them? How has racial politics changed after the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement? In what ways were/are racial privilege and deprivation supported or challenged?

Guided by such questions and following critical race scholarship, the chapter discusses how racism and white supremacy were foundational building blocks for the development of the US socially, politically, and economically. These building blocks, which were set in place before the rise of nonracist politics, have important *long-lasting* implications in the US. To illuminate this, I look at the role racism, white supremacy, and the (white settler) state play as historical forces shaping the US politically *and* economically. In doing so, I identify and explicate racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, which fundamentally shaped US liberalism, state policy, and the US political-economy. Their legacies continue to reverberate, even in the face of nonracists' repudiation of racism, and their

commitment to colorblind policies and race-neutral rhetoric as a way of upholding and forwarding liberal ideals.

In fact, nonracist politics has effectively become an enabling force for the legacies of racist ideology and racial domination. Nonracists (and adherents of cultural left identity politics) “counter” responses to racism and white supremacy evacuate material concerns that drove mid-twentieth century civil rights activism and black- and brown-led antiracist politics and projects. Nonracist and cultural left identity politics forms of repudiating racism obscures the continuing impact of racist ideologies and racial domination. Furthermore, the hegemony nonracism, and its color-blind and race-neutral ideals, has enjoyed over the last few decades continues to influence public understanding of justice and equality, directing it away from materially-grounded politics and visions of justice. This makes it exceedingly difficult for antiracist activism aimed at redressing the legacies of racism and white supremacy to gain traction, even after the killing of George Floyd and subsequent mass protests throughout the country. Activism trying to remedy racial disparities in the food system faces similar difficulty, in addition to challenges posed by alternative food movements pursuing changes through the neoliberal marketplace.

3.3 Racism and White Supremacy

What is racism? What is white supremacy? Seemingly simple questions, but scholars’ explications of racism and white supremacy demonstrate that accounts of

these are fraught and complex. For George Fredrickson, a “working definition of racism” lies somewhere between notions claiming racism is a peculiar modern idea and the belief that racism “is simply a manifestation of an ancient phenomenon of tribalism and xenophobia” (*Racism* 5). Fredrickson says: “Narrowly defined, racism is a mode of thought that offers a particular explanation for the fact that population groups that can be distinguished by ancestry are likely to differ in culture, status and power” (*Racism* xii). Fredrickson further maintains: “It is when differences that might otherwise be considered ethnoracial are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable that a racist attitude or ideology can be said to exist” (*Racism* 5). Ultimately, according to Fredrickson, racism is “more than theorizing about human differences or thinking badly of a group over which one has no control. It either directly sustains or proposes to establish *a racial order*, a permanent group hierarchy that is believed to reflect the laws of nature or the decrees of God” (*Racism* 6).

In the US, racial categorization is wrapped up with distinctions in status and power, distinctions historically establishing racial hierarchy. The racial hierarchy is grounded on invidiously distinguishing through racial categorization, which is deeply informed and entrenched in a long history of anti-blackness. Moreover, the invidious distinction of racial categorization in the US has been intimately intertwined with racist ideology propagated by whites. Fredrickson illustrates how this functions through white supremacy. Fredrickson has explained white supremacy as “the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of

blatant forms of white or European dominance over ‘nonwhite’ populations. In other words, it involves making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily, if not exclusively, on physical characteristics and ancestry” (*White Supremacy* xi). Fredrickson makes clear the impact of intertwining of racist ideology and racial categorization—which is part and parcel of hegemonic ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses of racial politics—in explaining that white supremacy in “its fully developed form...means ‘color bars,’ ‘racial segregation,’ and the restriction of meaningful citizenship rights to a privileged group characterized by its light pigmentation” (*White Supremacy* xi).

The very brief account of Fredrickson’s explanations of racism and white supremacy begins to illustrate the complexity in just one scholar’s account of racism and white supremacy. When more voices are added, explications of racism and white supremacy are further complicated. For example, where Fredrickson says the conception of race that classified people on the basis of physical characteristics was not invented until the eighteenth century, Andrew Hacker believes this distinction began much earlier and also claims that for “at least half a dozen centuries, and possibly longer, ‘white’ has implied a higher civilization based on superior inheritance” (8). David Theo Goldberg adds another layer and posits race and “racist exclusion” as existing “across five broad regional terrains,” identifying race and racism specific to the US as “racial Americanization,” which he says has largely taken shape from the sixteenth century on (27). And Charles Mills maintains: “White supremacy is the unnamed political system that

has...shaped the world for the past several hundred years...and made the modern world what it is today” (1). Providing a definitive account of when racial differentiation, racism, and/or white supremacy began has proven difficult. This difficulty, however, should not dissuade us from analyzing the relevance racism and white supremacy have in the US contemporarily. Such analyses are especially urgent in the face of the hegemonic rise of nonracism and arguments suggesting the US is postracial.

Contemporary understanding of racist ideology and its lasting impact is not only encumbered by nonracism and postracial arguments, but also plagued by uncertainty regarding what constitutes racism. Hacker says that something called racism exists, but “the term has been so overused that it loses serious meaning” (26). Similarly, Fredrickson concludes that “racism has commonly been used in a broader sense, as a blanket term for all discriminatory actions from a dominant or ‘majority’ element” (*White Supremacy* xii). Hacker’s and Fredrickson’s observations about the expansive use of racism and the difficulty explaining and defining racism contemporarily capture a significant impact of the mid-twentieth century civil rights movements’ “success” in getting whites to no longer actively invest in white racial superiority. The open support for white racial superiority in the US prior to mid-twentieth century civil rights movements made the meaning and impact of racism much clearer in the antebellum and Jim Crow eras than it is in the nonracist period. While there may be contemporary uncertainty about what constitutes racism, Hacker maintains “racism is real, an incubus that has haunted

this country since Europeans first set foot on the continent. It goes beyond prejudice and discrimination, and even transcends bigotry, largely because it arises from outlooks and assumptions of which we are largely unaware” (26).

After the collapse of what Fredrickson identifies as the US’s longstanding “overtly racist regime” in the mid-twentieth century—a regime that “reduced African Americans to lower-caste status, despite constitutional amendments that made them equal citizens” (*Racism* 1)—scholars have gone to great lengths to explain the continuing impact of racism. Fredrickson maintains, for example, that since the fall of the “overtly racist regimes” we’ve “had the opportunity to observe situations in which ideologies that do not invoke race in the modern biological sense serve to rationalize caste systems or forms of exploitation that reflect the essentially racist vision of indelible, unbridgeable, and invidious differences between human groups” (*Racism* 141). Fredrickson further argues that the repudiation of racial superiority is met with new ways of engaging race, racial categorization, and racism: “What has been called ‘the new racism’ in the United States, Great Britain, and France is a way of thinking about difference that reifies and essentializes culture...[it does] the work of race” (*Racism* 141). According to Fredrickson, in the US, this enables “discrimination against African Americans [to]...be justified as ‘rational’ because it may be an appropriate response to the ‘dysfunctional’ subculture that has allegedly taken possession of the souls of many black folks” (*Racism* 142). Fredrickson, thus, contends that in the face of explicit,

broad-based rejection of white racial superiority forms of “new racism,” which produce *and* justify invidious differences have taken hold.

Other scholars have offered different accounts of “new racism” specific to the US. Goldberg identifies it as “born again racism,” which grounds contemporary “racial Americanization” (77). This variant, Goldberg explains, is marked by the rejection of white racial superiority being met with a (re)articulated understanding of racism in the form of antiracist politics wherein “a nominal categorical blindness under but neither before or beyond the law... [identifies] racism without race, racism gone private, racism without the categories to name it as such;” and, racism “where acknowledged at all [is seen] as individualized faith of the socially dislocated heart, rather than as institutionalized inequality” (25). Bonilla-Silva provides yet another explication of “new racism.”

Bonilla-Silva uses the term color-blind racism to identify “a new powerful ideology that has emerged to defend the contemporary racial order” (25). According to Bonilla-Silva there are four central frames in color-blind racism: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. In brief, the frames function as follows: 1) *abstract liberalism* rationalizes racial unfairness in the name of equal opportunity—in this frame equal opportunity is thought to be provided to all, thus racial inequalities and white privilege are explained as outcomes of meritocratic decisions about qualifications and/or individual choice; 2) *naturalization*, which explains social and geographic separateness as a natural occurrence, because people are drawn to social and racial

“similarities;” 3) *cultural racism*, which is a position that primarily holds that minorities’ standing is a product of lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values; 4) *minimization of racism*, simply put this is a belief that racism and discrimination factor in only minimally, if at all, in differential (unequal) outcomes, even if unequal outcomes are shown to cut along racial lines (28-30). Bonilla-Silva suggests color-blind racism manifests through limited inclusion, epitomized by the election of Barack Obama, which “bring[s] us closer than ever to a ‘multiracial white supremacy’ regime similar to those in Latin America and the Caribbean where ‘racially mixed’ folks are elected to positions of power without altering the racial order of things or how goods and services are distributed in the polity” (226; emphasis in original).

Bonilla-Silva’s assessment of Barack Obama’s election as president points to a particular difficulty in addressing race and racism in the nonracist period. For many, Obama’s election reflects the US’s movement beyond race and racism, a movement to a postracial society. Tim Wise, reaching a similar conclusion as Bonilla-Silva, captures the impact of Obama’s election on US racial politics. Wise contends that Obama’s election was a “blessing” to the commentariat of American politics, because he was “a man of color who despite his racial identity seemed at home in the center of the political spectrum, largely unconnected to civil rights and antiracist movements, and unthreatening to whites who had long ago turned off to identifiably black political struggles and leaders” (12-13). This form of (limited) inclusion of people of color, which feeds postracial arguments, is not motivated by

an aim to broadly, substantially, and substantively equalize racial (material) disparities; it is a racial politics complementing nonracist politics and epitomizing cultural left identity politics, which are both disconnected from materially-grounded antiracist movements and projects. The scholars discussed above provide important interventions to these racial politics and the rise of arguments about the substantially limited and continually diminishing impact of racism and white supremacy.

Their interventions attempt to illustrate the continuing significant and perilous impact of racism and white supremacy, as well as shifts in racial politics obscuring this impact. *Pursuing Alternatives* joins this effort by analyzing the rise of nonracist (racial) politics alongside predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses of racial politics in the antebellum and Jim Crow periods, which unleashed overt and violent forces that became deeply embedded in the nation's institutions, policies, and practices, and served as building blocks for the US nation-state. In its examination, *Pursuing Alternatives* takes nonracist rejection of white racial superiority seriously; and is open to the (paradoxical?) possibility that the US could simultaneously have few racist subjects while racism and white supremacy continue to extensively structure our socio-economic/political-economic experiences.

3.4 Racial Political-Economic Projects and the White Settler State

During the antebellum and Jim Crow eras, belief in racial superiority set in place foundational building blocks shaping political-economic experiences in the US. Investments in racism and white supremacy by the state and individuals built a racialized political-economy informed and guided by racist ideology and racial domination. Examining the US's racialized political-economy, which is underpinned by what I refer to as racial political-economic projects, during the antebellum and Jim Crow periods provides us insight into current racial disparities. Insight that helps us understand historic, destructive social, political, and economic forces that continue to reverberate.

Forming a White Settler State and Racialized Political-Economy

The fact that racial domination and racial hierarchy serve as a foundational basis for the establishment and development of the US nation-state is important because, as Stuart Hall accurately observes, states “do not just ‘maintain order’. They maintain *particular forms of social order*: a particular set of institutions, a particular configuration of power relationships, a particular social structure and economy” (“the State in Question” 22; emphasis in original). States also, as Pierre Bourdieu posits, “produce and impose...categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world” (“Rethinking the State” 1). The order and categories of thought actively maintained—after European colonization displaced and decimated indigenous populations in areas that would

become the US—for most of US history was guided by racist ideology. In fact, the US nation-state maintained a racial hierarchy produced and supported through multi-layered governance shaped by open commitment to racism and white supremacy.

Throughout US history we witness, as Mills argues, “a power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties” (3). This power structure initially forms via European colonialists displacing indigenous populations, which Fredrickson describes as the colonization of North America that led to “a long and often violent struggle for territorial supremacy between white invaders and indigenous peoples” as “land for agriculture and grazing quickly became the source of wealth and sustenance most desired by the European invaders” (*White Supremacy* 4). Thus, Fredrickson maintains, “divesting the original inhabitants of their land was essential to the material success of settler societies” (*White Supremacy* 5).

In North America, displacement facilitated resource extraction and wealth building pivotal to development and formation of the US as a white settler state/society. The history of the development and formation of the US reveals the “differential privileging of whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities” (Mills 11). This differential privileging was very much grounded in displacement of indigenous populations driven by, as

Fredrickson says, whites “land hunger and territorial ambition” that gave them an “incentive to differentiate between the basic rights and privileges they claimed for themselves and what they considered *just* treatment for the ‘savages’ who stood in their path” (*White Supremacy* 5; my emphasis). A prime example of this differentiation is the Naturalization Act of 1790, which limited naturalization to “free white persons.” This Act’s racial differentiation firmly signals the course of the US nation-state; it left little doubt the newly forming US nation-state would continue on a course set forth by white settler colonialism.

As a nation-state, the US built upon North American colonization which formed some “of the first ‘white settler societies’ emanating from Northern Europe” (Fredrickson, *White Supremacy* 4). The US white settler state’s overt and multi-faceted investment in racist ideology is evident in its formation and throughout its history. Well-documented manifestations of this are displacement and forced migration of indigenous peoples and chattel slavery. There is also a litany of legislation—functioning through a layered federal system—that demonstrates the racist and white supremacist ideological investments of the US nation-state far into the twentieth century. But a few examples of this are the Foreign Miners’ Tax (1850/1852), the Page Act (1875), the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), California Alien Land Law (1913), and anti-miscegenation laws. This entire chapter could be filled by simply enumerating racist/white supremacist-informed policies that actively engaged in oppressing and excluding non-whites, which was a basis for producing race- and class-privileged white subjects and their

subjugated racial others. The numerous state policies bolstering racial privilege, exclusion, oppression, and deprivation for most of US history were mutually constitutive with hegemonic ideas and forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in racial politics. Together they constructed understandings of race and racial categorization that actively produced and supported racial hierarchy, which impacts current social, political, and material relations in the US.

The violent differentiation between European (particularly Anglo-Saxon) whites and racial others is especially evident in the US expansion westward, it epitomizes the US white settler state's exploitation of nonwhite human bodies, land, and resources. US westward expansion was driven by the providential mission of "manifest destiny," A mission that was underpinned by racist ideology and racial domination that marked indigenous populations as existing in a "permanently prepolitical state" (Mills 13). Such racist differentiation served as a foundational basis for building the US political-economy. Territorial expansion by the emergent racist liberal state, grounded in accumulation by dispossession¹⁶ and racial-political economic projects, drives the development of the US political-economy, which is built on land and wealth disparities between whites and their racial others that remains with us.

The Homestead Act of 1862 and railroad land grants in the nineteenth century, which emanated from the US white settler state, are prime examples of racial political-economic projects and their impact on material relations. The Homestead Act along with the transfer of land grants enabled, as Lynn Stephen

notes, “white settlers and capitalists [to claim] more and more land, the native American population and the Mexican-origin population became the labor force for Anglo-American farmers, mine owners, and cattle ranchers” (61). This resulted in “the transfer of large Mexican land grants to Anglo capitalists and land speculation [which] led to the concentration of 8,685,439 acres of land in the hands of just 516 men in 1861” (Stephen 61). Recall that Novak cites the Homestead Act as exemplifying the role the state should play in social justice. Novak identifies the Homestead Act as engendering creative capacity and individual responsibility that “helped families establish their independence” and “use their own practical intelligence and labor to develop” their property (51). Identifying the Homestead Act, which facilitated a concentration of white land ownership and nonwhites as an available labor pool, as exemplifying social justice in fact exemplifies the types of conclusions and notions justice theorists reach when racial domination is decentered.

Shaping Racial Hierarchy

Racial hierarchy in the US is historically grounded on a white/black continuum, a continuum where whiteness is the height of racial privilege and blackness the depth of subjection. This is the racial politics and hierarchy the white settler state produced, supported, and invested in. This racial order is arguably the most potent force/form of social order structuring power relationships, institutions, and the political-economy in the US. Much of the remainder of this chapter,

therefore, focuses extensively on the impact of this racial order, which for most of US history white subjects and the white settler state sought to maintain.

Chattel slavery is emblematic of the racial order/hierarchy the vast majority of whites and the white settler state were trying to maintain. Chattel slavery is rightly thought of as epitomizing the white settler state's investment in racist ideology. It exemplifies the white settler state's production of, support for, and investment in racial political-economic projects. The racist and white supremacist beliefs used to justify chattel slavery have a broad historical length, range, and reach. The institution of slavery and beliefs supporting it shaped racial privilege and subjugation, and produced inequalities that continue to plague us. This so-called peculiar institution, therefore, was crucial in setting up long-lasting racialized power and material relations in the US.

Chattel slavery placed whites in a position to inflict physical violence against "racially inferior" blacks and, importantly, also positioned whites to profit from subjecting enslaved blacks to material deprivation. The impact of chattel slavery's subjugation of African slaves in the antebellum period was not limited to or only supported by the southern part of the US. The persistence of slavery required collusion by northern whites. Their collusion is especially evident in the return of slaves, who escaped to the North, to their masters in the South. This practice marking northern whites' complicity in upholding slavery also highlights the contours of US liberalism. Bettye Collier-Thomas, recounting the insightful critique abolitionist Francis Ellen Watkins Harper provides regarding northern

states collusive role in slavery's existence, is instructive here: "She [Watkins] emphasized that, while northern states such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont had abolished slavery and were viewed as bastions of freedom, in the streets of their cities fugitives were hunted and in their courts the rights of slaveholders took precedence over freedom" (45-46). Chattel slavery reflects the predominant understanding and practice of liberalism by white subjects and the white settler state during the antebellum period. It illustrates how racist ideology was reconciled with liberal values to provide a legitimizing basis for generating racial disparities fostering white privilege and wealth.

While chattel slavery may be the pinnacle of racialized power and material relations—where extreme racial privilege meets abject subjugation—its end does not (nor does the end of the Jim Crowism) signal the demise of the existing racial order/hierarchy or the racialized US political-economy, as current racial progress narratives suggest. Rather, racial political-economic projects and attendant inequalities are still a hallmark of life in the US. Importantly, chattel slavery was a crucial racial political-economic project that existed in a web of numerous, as Hacker calls them, systems of control (23). These forces historically deprive and subjugate nonwhite people in the US while socially, politically, and economically privileging whites.¹⁷ Whites' investment in racist ideology, racial domination, and racial political-economic projects demonstrates the relative lack of concern they had with the social, political, and economic costs of disparities being generated between whites and non-whites.

Hacker explains whites' attitudes toward the material impact of the racial order they produced and supported: "little attention was paid to the conditions under which black Americans lived," because it "was assumed...that a docile pool [of black labor] would always be available for the arduous labor required by white society" (24). A significant and lasting implication of the racial order whites set up and their attitudes regarding it, as Hacker notes, is that: "as long as records have been kept, in good times and bad, white America has ensured that the unemployment imposed on blacks will be approximately double that experienced by whites" (118-19). These patterns of (un)employment, as well as racial distinctions in types of paid work people do, contribute to racially disparate land ownership and wealth accumulation.

Sharecropping by freed slaves is a prime example of how such patterns of land ownership and wealth accumulation functioned in the food system. Sharecropping indebted sharecroppers to planters (landlords) who provided them loans for rent, food, seed, and tools necessary to farm, this often left black tenant farmers destitute. Like slave masters, landlords with tenant sharecroppers relied on subordinated black labor. Subordinating black labor in the post-bellum US, as Fredrickson notes, forced blacks to "stay 'in their place'" by subjecting them to "the paternalism that is often associated with vast powerful differentials" (*Racism* 93). Contemporarily, we continue to live with such vast power differentials. We see this in the racialized access to (and control of) land, wealth, and resources in the food system.

In the post-bellum era, anti-black racism and vast power differentials did not disappear. And racialized power relations and disparities do not manifest solely in material terms. Accompanying forms of post-Civil War racial political-economic privilege and deprivation was an “overarching...terror, with white people and prosecutors and judges possessing all but total power over black lives” (Hacker 62). In southern states, “physical force was blatant and unabashed. The whims of a sheriff, an employer, even the driver of a bus, could hold black lives in thrall. In the North, intimidation and oppression were less explicit but nonetheless real” (Hacker 23). And the “somewhat freer atmosphere of the urban North” did not contain a much altered perception of blacks by whites, who viewed (and treated) blacks as a “lower-caste people, born to serve,” because a “culture of racism, once established, can be adapted to more than one agenda and is difficult to eradicate” (Fredrickson, *Racism* 93).

The culture of racist ideologies (and their political-economic legacies) in the US have proven adaptable and exceedingly difficult to eradicate. In fact, racist and white supremacist agendas, and racial political-economic projects, transform to fit changing social, political, and economic environments. We see this in legislative efforts to dismantle legislation protecting civil rights (i.e. attempts to undermine or dismantle the Voting Rights Act of 1965), as well as the discursive normalization of racial inequality that is so deeply embedded in the US. The actively produced and supported disparities are now spoken about euphemistically as, for example, “difficulties,” “obstacles,” “barriers,” and/or “hardships” that poor communities of

color have to face. Such language renders inequalities—whose existence is significantly attributable to policies and practices designed to racially segregate the US, and produce communities of privilege and deprivation—as a non-intentional, and perhaps normal, occurrence. Narrating intentionally produced disparities in this manner hides how the basis of current racial disparities were built through a long line of racist policies and practices.

Discursively normalizing racial inequality simultaneously stymies critical engagement with disparities *and* narratives about progress. We see this in rhetoric that suggests the New Deal lifted the country out of the Great Depression through policies that broadly benefited people across the board. However, as with its abandonment of freedpeople after Reconstruction, the federal government's devolution of administration of New Deal policies meant it remained collusive in practices upholding a vision and practice of liberalism that was racially exclusive. As Ira Katznelson notes, states and localities were “franchised authority...to administer federal policy as they saw fit” (40) and, not surprisingly, found ways to administer New Deal programs that fit with traditions of anti-black racism.

New Deal forms of exclusion may reflect, as Katznelson argues, the influence southern Democrats had on federal legislation, and their desire to defend the prevailing racial order; but the prevailing racial order in the mid-twentieth century South was made possible by the continuing complicity of Northern legislators. The latter did little to challenge the subjugation of blacks, demonstrating their comfort (and arguably agreement) with the existing racial

order. This allowed implementation of New Deal programs and policies to bolster racist and white supremacist versions of liberalism and equality.

In the mid-twentieth century, racial political-economic projects producing racial disparities are evident in New Deal reforms. For example, in “the New Deal Era of the 1930s and 1940s, both the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act excluded farm workers and domestics from coverage, effectively denying those disproportionately minority sectors of the work force protections and benefits routinely afforded whites” (Lipsitz 5). Notable among New Deal policies and practices were those having a racialized impact on the food system; for example, the “explicit legislative exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers from New Deal labor legislation [which] first appeared in the National Labor Relations Act,” which was followed by similar exclusions in the Fair Labor Standards Act (Katznelson 57-58). These exclusions continued a legacy of deprivation and impoverishment of those who labor in fields—following a national tradition built upon forced labor of indigenous populations, use of enslaved black labor, and sharecropping—and in homes on property they do not own.

The longstanding racialized political-economy of the food system historically works in tandem with other policies and practices fostering unequal distribution of land and wealth. For example, sharecropping existed alongside restrictive state property laws prohibiting blacks from acquiring, owning, and/or passing on land to descendants, which prevented them from accumulating real property and building wealth even after the Civil War Amendments made blacks nominal equal citizens.

Such restrictions and unequal distributions of wealth are vitally important because, as Janice Sumler-Edmond says: “Then, as now, the acquisition and ownership of land constituted economic wealth” (114). The widespread denial of and barriers to land ownership for much of US history has lasting material repercussions. These repercussions stem from ideas and practices in racial politics that fostered reconciliation between liberalism and racist ideology and racial domination, this reconciliation works in tandem with intentional efforts to produce racial disparities. Importantly, this significantly informs the foundation and character of the US nation-state.

The nation’s foundation and character received important expression in implementation of New Deal programs and policies. Coming in the aftermath of eugenics being widely discredited, New Deal policies were, notably, characterized by what David Roediger refers to as “raceless” logic—for example, “pouring federal resources into stimulating means-tested loan programs” (228). However, these early attempts at “raceless” policymaking ran headlong into the nation’s foundation and character. George Lipsitz notes how this happened in housing policy: “[The] Federal Housing Act of 1934 brought home ownership within the reach of millions of citizens by placing the credit of the federal government behind private lending to home buyers, but overtly racist categories in the Federal Housing Agency’s (FHA) ‘confidential’ city surveys and appraisers’ manuals channeled almost all of the loan money toward whites and away from communities of color” (5). Here we see programs and policies that are supposed to benefit

people across the board being shaped by racial power relations and racialized power-effects, which underlie the development and character of the nation. This development produces longstanding conflict between commitments to racist ideology and racial domination that counters liberal ideals. These longstanding contradictory impulses are the backdrop against which (hegemonic) nonracist politics emerges.

Fredrickson captures this backdrop well: in early US history “Americans tried to embrace the democratic universalism of the Enlightenment, while at the same time being proud bearers of a specific ethnoracial identity that was sometimes conceived of as Anglo-Saxon, sometimes as northern European, but most often as simply European or white” (*Racism* 74). These contradictory impulses reflect how historical racism invariably “becomes enmeshed with searches for national identity and cohesion that vary with the historical experience of each country” (Fredrickson, *Racism* 75). In the US, national identity is wrapped up with support of liberal values, especially a commitment to (liberal) justice and equality. On this count, people are particularly enamored with quoting the Declaration of Independence. However, the nation also has an “ethnoracial” and political inheritance that allowed commitments to liberal values to simultaneously exist with broad-based support for racism and white supremacy throughout US history. A belief in liberal justice and equality may be fundamental to the development of the US, but so too are racism and white supremacy. And the latter shaped liberalism and commitment to its ideals in a way that placed nonwhites

outside of liberal values and ideals, as beings not possessing the requisite abilities to appreciate, uphold, or be fully and equally included in the liberal nation-state. This limited inclusion is wrapped up with racial economic violence; they are part and parcel of US liberalism and its attendant political-economy. We see it manifest in the continual existence of an available pool of deprived and impoverished nonwhite labor. This significantly characterizes the current US food system: most visibly in migrant labor in agricultural fields, and relatively hidden labor by low-paid workers of color doing food processing and back of house restaurant work.

The history and continuation of racial disparities vividly demonstrates that in the US, as Omi and Winant contend, “[h]ow one is categorized is far from a merely academic or even personal matter. Such matters as access to employment, housing, or other publicly or privately valued goods; social program design and the disbursement of local, state, and federal funds; or the organization of elections (among many other issues) are directly affected by racial classification” (3). Mutually constitutive racial categorization and racial disparity is a national tradition, and historically exists alongside commitments to liberal inclusion, justice and equality. Continuing racial political-economic violence, characterized especially by racially disparate land ownership and wealth accumulation, and the existence of communities of privilege and deprivation, calls into question what exactly the objectives are for supporting nonracist repudiation racist ideology.

The turn away from open and active investment in racism and white supremacy, and toward nonracism, is accompanied by narratives of racial progress

aiming to demonstrate that the US has moved beyond its past exclusion and deprivation of nonwhites. The relationship forged between racist ideologies and liberal ideals leading so many to support a liberal state and society steeped in racial violence is rhetorically swept aside by these narratives. Racial progress narratives discursively render the constitutive relationship between racist ideology and liberalism, and importantly, its lasting political-economic impact, to a distant past. These narratives readily and easily gloss over lasting impacts of this relationship, particularly the racialized political-economic disparities that are a legacy of this relationship.

Racial progress narratives, which now form part of US national identity, encourage us to think of current substantive racial inequalities as detached from a racist and white supremacist past. Such disparities are rhetorically rendered, as Novak's and Adams' articulation of social justice demonstrates, as matters of individual merit, decisions, and responsibility. Racial progress narratives work in tandem with whites' repudiation of racism; they laud rejection of racism and white supremacy without fully confronting the lasting impacts of state and societal embrace of racist ideology. This racial politics obscures how racism and white supremacy were foundational building blocks for the development of the US. Importantly, this politics discounts the lasting implications investment in racist ideology has on political and material relations. It minimizes the role racist ideology played in shaping US liberalism and its political-economy, which makes it easier to attribute disparities cutting along racial lines to something besides a

history of racial domination. This current racial politics is particularly problematic for critical race theory; theorists grapple with how to address and explain the lasting material impact of racial domination in a country populated by nonracist subjects claiming the nation has largely moved beyond its racist and white supremacist past.

Bonilla-Silva's assessment of colorblindness and push back against racial progress narratives illustrates how critical race scholars grapple with current racial politics. Bonilla-Silva argues that colorblindness reshapes the form racism takes, and describes the current form as "color-blind racism." He contends that "Shielded by color blindness, whites can express resentment toward minorities; criticize their morality, values, and work ethic; and even claim to be the victims of 'reverse racism'" (Bonilla-Silva 4). Regarding these positions, Bonilla-Silva asks: "How is it possible to have [a] tremendous degree of racial inequality in a country where most whites claim that race is no longer relevant? More important, how do whites explain the apparent contradiction between their professed color blindness and the United States' color-coded inequality" (2)? While I may agree with Bonilla-Silva about the work colorblindness is doing, I am skeptical about arguments identifying and attaching nonracist politics (i.e. colorblindness) to racism. Nonracist positions such as colorblindness are not racist. However, while nonracism repudiates racism, it is also not antiracist. This is what makes contemporary racist politics so complicated, opposing racism, especially as it manifests interpersonally and

overtly (i.e. the belief in racial superiority, practice of domination, or use of racial stereotypes), does not necessarily mean one is supporting antiracism.

Current racial politics is indeed complicated. Examining and understanding the relationship forged between racist ideology and liberal ideals, which generated racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, will further our understanding of the continuing impact of racism and white supremacy. This further examination of racial politics takes nonracist claims about being race-neutral or colorblind (and corresponding commitments) at face value, and critically analyzes the work nonracism is doing. In doing so, I focus especially on how nonracism influences understandings of the continuing impact of racism and white supremacy, as well as how justice and equality are conceptualized and pursued. I show how nonracist politics and its form of repudiating racism, which is significantly informed by nonracists' commitment to colorblind public policy and race-neutral rhetoric, works along with racial progress narratives and representational regimes to buttress the political-economic legacies engendered by reconciling liberalism with racist ideology. This engenders a politics of race and justice that complementarily pairs nonracist politics with conceptions of justice decentering domination to form "nonracist justice," which effectively counters antiracist efforts aiming to redress the impact and legacies of racial domination.

3.5 Racist Liberalism

According to Charles Mills, contractual rhetoric is “the political lingua franca of our times” (3). In the US, a social contract as the basis of establishing the US nation-state is taken for granted. In the US polity it is “common knowledge” the nation was formed by an agreement “of the people” to be governed by a liberal state. The constitutive parts of this contract (i.e. who did the agreeing) arguably receives little serious attention in public discourse. Considering who was included and excluded in forming the nation provides us greater insight into understanding the development and shape of liberalism, state institutions, and the political-economy in the US.

Mills argues that the account of liberal states forming due to an agreement by “the people” is “a profoundly misleading account of the way the modern world is and came to be” (3). Mills maintains that the formation of the modern world, and modern liberal states in particular, was accomplished on the basis of a “Racial Contract.” According to Mills, the Racial Contract solidifies the relationship between liberalism and white supremacy, establishing racial liberalism as a foundation for modern liberal states. Thus, the contract forming liberal states was, Mills argues, “not a contract between everybody (‘we the people’), but between just the people who count, the people who really are people (‘we the white people’)” (3). Moreover, Mills says, “economically in determining who gets what, the Racial Contract is an exploitation contract” (9) and “all whites are *beneficiaries* of the Contract, though some whites are not *signatories* to it” (11; emphasis in

original). It is this Racial Contract, Mills argues, that is foundational to the formation of modern liberal states (3).

In the US, which was formed by European colonists, a Racial Contract was operative from its inception. This contract was foundational in forming the US and its political-economy. We see this, for example, in the role ideas about white racial superiority played in granting citizenship, westward expansion, and chattel slavery, which helped solidify what Mills calls a “racial polity, a racial state” (13)—a state where those considered white count more than others. The racial polity in the US reconciled their commitment to racist ideology and liberal ideals in large part by identifying nonwhites—until the early twentieth century in the US this may have included those who are now considered white but do not have Anglo-Saxon heritage—as outsiders to liberal values and ideals. The forms of racialized exclusion from the liberal project, and the physical and economic racial violence wrapped up with this exclusion, amply demonstrates how liberalism in the US has historically developed in conjunction with racism and white supremacy. Given this conjoining investment, I believe “racist liberalism” best describes the form of liberalism historically existing in and shaping the US nation-state. Historically speaking the US, therefore, is most aptly described as a racist liberal state, because its commitment to liberal values, and the development of its institutions and political-economy are foundationally grounded on racism and white supremacy.

Forming and Upholding the Racist Liberal State

Chattel slavery may provide the best evidence (and example) of white supremacy informing the contract between “the people”—or as Mills says, “between just the people who count, the people who really are people (‘we the white people’)” (3)—forming the US liberal state. Chattel slavery (and legislative support for it) was pivotally foundational in establishing the US as a modern racist liberal (white settler) state. The “peculiar institution” of chattel slavery is a product of (and upheld by) the Racial Contract and the racist liberal state. The socio-historical and political-economic implications of slavery continue to impact us. Importantly, chattel slavery was crucial in the formation of racialized personhood and material disparities in the antebellum period. We can arguably draw a direct line from this to contemporary mass incarceration and racial inequality.¹⁸

Chattel slavery is the quintessence of deprivation, abjection, and recognition through violence. Saidiya Hartman captures this extremely well in her study of the “violence of the law” under slavery. Hartman’s study shows the recognition of slaves’ personhood via criminality, which illustrates slavery’s exclusion and deprivation. Hartman—examining and drawing on cases such as *Missouri v. Celia* and *Alfred v. State*—observes that the “slave was recognized as a reasoning subject who possessed intent and rationality solely in the context of criminal liability...It was generally the slave’s crimes that were on trial, not white offense or violation [against slaves], which were enshrined as legitimate and thereby licensed” (82). Hartman further maintains: “In positing the black as criminal, the state obfuscated

its instrumental role in terror by projecting all culpability and wrongdoing onto the enslaved. The black body was simply the site on which the ‘crimes’ of the dominant class and of the state were externalized in the form of threat” (82). Moreover, Hartman argues, that despite “the law’s proclaimed concern for slave life or recognition of black humanity, minimal standards of existence determined personhood...the law constituted the [black] subject as a muted or pained body or a trespasser to be punished” (94). There are vestiges of this recognition of personhood in how communities of color are policed, as well as stand-your-ground laws, and the white vigilantism it fosters.

The connection between race and criminality during the antebellum period is illustrative of the way a Racial Contract and the racist liberal state set racial violence in place. The recognition long attached to black bodies has also been attached to other nonwhite bodies—this is particularly prominent in current discussions of immigration, which often discursively attaches criminality to brown bodies—and forges a connection between criminality and whites’ racial others. This is especially evident in discourse about brown bodies that overwhelmingly constitute those laboring in agriculture and low-paid work throughout the food system—their bodies are discursively rendered as suspect, as trespassers, as bodies to be punished, and in some cases their mere existence is thought criminal. This rendering of brown bodies bears similarity to foundational anti-black racism.

The connection between race and criminality, as Michelle Alexander explains, illustrates how imprisoning black bodies “is consistent with, and

reinforces, dominant racial narratives about crime and criminality dating back to slavery” (97).¹⁹ These longstanding narratives of criminality function in the present to subject black and brown people to violence by the state. In contemporary policing of black and brown (especially low-income) communities and mass incarceration we see continuity with and manifestation of previous open investment in racist ideology by the white settler state. The demographics of current mass incarceration readily illustrates that personhood and determining how people’s lives count (or matter) is still done on a racialized basis in the US.

Contemporary policing of black and brown bodies and mass incarceration practices are consistent with the historic racialized differential value placed on people’s lives. Moreover, the prison-industrial complex, which is constituted in part by for-profit incarceration facilities, that depends on mass incarceration of black and brown people is a current racial political-economic project upheld by the state. The economic function of mass incarceration is clearly demonstrated by the captive labor pool it supplies—which was a function of chattel slavery—and the revenue it generates for for-profit prisons.

Mass incarceration as racial political-economic project is not historically unique; it is part of a long line of racial violence. It follows along the lines of chattel slavery, share cropping, and convict lease. These forms of violence have not existed without resistance. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and its protests against police brutality, push back against racially disproportionate incarceration, and push for racial justice and equality is a current form of

resistance, one that illuminates the historic racialized recognition of personhood, and sheds light on the history of “who counts” in the US, whose lives “matter,” and how lives have differentially mattered. The structure of the US food system, which is arguably its own racial political-economic project, and the expectation of sacrifice from low-paid workers in it amidst the COVID-19 pandemic also shows that the differential value placed on peoples’ lives is not relegated to US’s past.

Racist Liberal Traditions

Current law enforcement practices that lead to disproportionate numbers of poor, black, and brown people being incarcerated illustrate why, as Hacker observes, some institutions “have long had reputations for antipathy toward blacks and other minorities” (29). Institutions, as Hacker notes, develop “cultures of their own, which their members usually internalize, often without pause or reflection. Of course, organizational cultures take many forms. But in the United States an overarching feature is that they tend to be inherently ‘white’” (Hacker 29). Institutions cultivated by whites and white culture in the US during the antebellum and Jim Crow eras were significantly built upon a Racial Contract and racist ideology. Such institutions are underpinned by an anti-black racist belief, to borrow from Hacker, “that members of the black race represent an inferior strain of the human species. In this view, Africans—and Americans who trace their origins to that continent—are seen as languishing at a lower evolutionary level than members of other races” (31). This belief largely held until a shift in thinking

was ushered in by the mid-twentieth civil rights movement. This shift in thinking transformed predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses operative in US racial politics.

Mid-twentieth century civil rights and other antiracist movements helped convince whites that racist ideology was incompatible with liberal values. This shift in thinking was important for solidifying widespread repudiation of belief in and support for white racial superiority. However, by the time there was widespread repudiation of racist ideology, previous support for it had long set in place a racial hierarchy. This is why, as Walter Benn Michaels notes, you don't "need quotas to keep down the numbers of black people in institutions. The effects of several centuries of slavery and a half a century of apartheid have made artificial limits entirely supererogatory" (25). White subjects may no longer believe in their racial superiority,²⁰ but their transition in thinking (ushered in by antiracist movements) by itself will not alter centuries of racist liberalism and racist liberal traditions they benefitted from.

The wide range of existing racial disparities more than a half century on from whites widespread repudiation of racism and white supremacy provides ample evidence that the political-economic impact of racist liberal policies and practices remains. For example, whites continue to have significantly more wealth than Latinos and blacks. In fact, a Pew study found that "even as the economic recovery" from the 2008 subprime mortgage collapse began to "mend asset prices, not all households...benefited alike, and wealth inequality has widened along

racial and ethnic lines” (Kochhar and Fry). The study found that “the wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of black households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010” (Kochhar and Fry).²¹ The “recovery” from the 2008 Financial Crisis illustrates how, to borrow from Rey Chow, race and class privileged subjects “indeed” continue to “capitalize on...inequality” (ix).

Not only do they still capitalize on inequality—whether it is intentional or not is quite irrelevant to the persistence of racial inequality—but benefitting from it is based on conceptualizing justice in ways that does not support racial equality, it seems this is a national tradition. Perhaps this is captured best by Alexis de Tocqueville’s conclusion that equality was never meant to be extended to blacks (ch. 18). The history of anti-black racism in the US certainly supports this. Not only was equality not meant to be extended to blacks, equality was arguably more or less understood as the exclusive realm of whites. This means equality and inequality simultaneously mark racist liberalism: racial inequality exists alongside (what I identify as) white supremacist equality.

3.6 White Supremacist Equality

Fredrickson provides a crucial insight about equality in observing that what “makes Western racism so autonomous and conspicuous in world history has been that it developed in a context that presumed human equality of some kind” (*Racism* 11). According to Fredrickson, this meant equality doctrines and egalitarian norms

in modern nation-states required special reasons for exclusion, reasons that “could be justified only if the excluded were regarded as less than fully human or, at best, as inherently immature and thus incapable of assuming the responsibilities of adulthood” (*Racism* 104-105). In the history of US racial politics, predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses exist that qualitatively differentiate based on race, and provide a basis (a “special reason”) for various forms of social, political, and economic exclusion of nonwhites.

Whether or not scholars suggesting European colonists brought racist ideologies with them to the new world are right, predominant ideas and hegemonic forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses cultivating and supporting invidious racial categorization have existed in North America for centuries. In the US, they fostered a variant of equality steeped in racist ideology. I refer to this variant as white supremacist equality. White supremacist equality in the US was developed and maintained through investment in racist ideologies, including via policies and practices of the white settler state. White supremacist equality assured relative equality between those that had full access to whiteness. If you fit within the boundaries of whiteness, then you would be the social and political, and in some cases economic, equals to others within the boundary.

Racial progress narratives—which largely rest on whites theoretically accepting nonwhites as their social and political equals, which was accompanied by the state enacting legislation in the latter half of the twentieth century to support this shift in thinking—contrast current “equality” between racial groups with a

lack of equality existing prior to mid-twentieth century civil rights movements. These narratives inhibit critical examination of how liberal tenets in the US were articulated, pursued, and upheld alongside racism and white supremacy throughout most of US history. The fact that racial violence and severe forms racial inequality existed does not mean there was an absence of equality in the US. US history is marked not only by inequality, but also by equality; namely white supremacist equality. Thus, it is necessary to think about the work done by the existence of equality. In other words, we need to examine how various understandings, pursuits, and practices of white supremacist equality are counterparts to historic racial inequalities in the US. This is important given the intimate relationship justice theorists see between justice and equality. It is especially crucial to understanding the importance of the distinction between justice theorists/theories that center domination and those that do not.

Maintaining White Supremacist Equality

As long as slavery in the US persisted, white superiority over blacks was clear and indisputable. There was really no possibility that an enslaved people—whose racialized categorical recognition before the law was largely synonymous with being an enslaved subject—could be considered whites equals. While white abolitionists wanted to end slavery, their anti-slavery positions did not necessarily mean they supported racial equality, much less view blacks as their social and political equals. As Willi Coleman says, a commitment “to antislavery did not, in

the eyes of many, elevate the Negro to a level of social equality” (32). In examining black women’s role in pushing for social and political equality prior to the Civil War, Coleman identifies a number of antebellum “female” anti-slavery societies that refused to either admit black women or take up questions of social and political equality as part of an anti-slavery agenda; for many, if not most, abolitionists ending slavery did not mean granting freedpeople equality (32). Given the resistance to racial equality, activists such as Frances Watkins argued that there was no free soil in the US, because freedom required equal treatment (Collier-Thomas 46).

When the Civil War ended, the reconstruction period following it provided an opportunity to implement policies and practices supporting racial equality. The passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments along with federal troops occupying the South provided theretofore unprecedented inclusion of blacks in social and political life in the US. This inclusion was a ground for calls for greater equality. Freedpeople and their allies tried to extend the ideal and practice of equality. However, while the portions of Article 1, sections 2 and 9 of the Constitution that provided a legal basis for the existence of slavery were expunged by the Civil War Amendments, it was clear that newly freed slaves were not thought of by most whites as social, political, or economic equals. This is evident in, for example, how the Fourteenth Amendment provided codification of equal citizenship for citizens born in the US, but “civic and political equality for blacks during Reconstruction failed because the government proved unwilling or

unable to commit sufficient resources or apply enough force to overcome violent white resistance to black equality that erupted in the South” (Fredrickson, *Racism* 81). The immense juridical transformation provided by the Civil War Amendments could not alter the broad-based belief among whites that they were superior to nonwhites. Whites and the white settler state still upheld a white power structure, and broad equality remained the exclusive realm of whites. Even after the passage of the Civil War Amendments, therefore, equality in the US was still white supremacist equality. In fact, Jim Crow era laws, policies, and practices along with racial political-economic projects set up during this period clearly demonstrate the commitment to and expansion of white supremacist equality well into the twentieth century.

Expansive White Supremacist Equality

The twentieth century witnessed a broadening of the boundary of whiteness. Whiteness, Matthew Frye Jacobson argues in response to Omi and Winant, clearly became drawn around those of European origin by the end of the Second World War (8). This expansion and the advantages whites received through state policies and practices in the 1930s, 1940s, and after WWII mark the heyday of (expansive) white supremacist equality. During this period, liberal inclusion increased by opening up the category white. This was supported by the white settler state’s racially exclusionary policies, as well as implementation of supposed raceless programs and policies, which further solidified white supremacist equality for

those in the broadened category. In fact, as Katznelson states, “all major tools of the federal government deployed during the New Deal and Fair Deal created a powerful, if unstated, program of affirmative action for white Americans” (161).

In the 1930s, 1940s, and postwar period, equality was extended throughout the broadened white category. Equality throughout US history has been the domain of whiteness, so expanding (white supremacist) equality as the white racial category expanded did not register as affirmative action. However, as Katznelson concludes: “Federal social welfare policy [during the 1930s, 1940s, and postwar period] operated, in short, not just as an instrument of racial discrimination but as a perverse formula of affirmative action” (51). This “perverse formula of affirmative action” for whites resulted in “blacks [becoming] even more significantly disadvantaged when a modern American middle class was fashioned during and after the Second World War” (Katznelson x). According to Katznelson, the pinnacle of devoting money and resources “in the service of [a] generation completing education, entering the workforce, and forming families” was also “the moment the United States developed an increasingly suburban middle-class bulge, and Irish and Italian Catholics and Jews were advancing into mainstream white culture, [while] African Americans remained stuck, in the main, in economically marginal class locations” (Katznelson 143, 14). The “perverse formula of affirmative action” equalizing political-economic relations between whites—effectively fashioning an expansive white middle class—builds upon anti-blackness cultivated by whites and the white settler state’s investment in racist

ideology and attendant racialized power-effects (especially via racial political-economic projects). Whites and the racist liberal (white settler) state were continuing a tradition of producing policies and engaging in practices dedicated to maintaining a racial order designed to advantage whites and deprive their racial others.

Even though policies in the 1930s, 1940s, and postwar period equalized political-economic relations between whites, blacks were not completely excluded from social programs, they did receive “tangible assets in hard times that they otherwise would not have secured” (Katznelson 48). However, where it “did indeed stem some of the tides of adversity” it did so “at the cost of accommodation with racial oppression” (Katznelson 41). A prime example of this is the GI Bill. This bill provided “tangible assets” for some blacks, but the resources provided had limited value in the racially exclusive Jim Crow period. The GI Bill afforded whites much more socio-economic mobility, because they had more options to use the resources provided. For example, whites did not face limitations in education and housing that other racial groups did. Segregation in schooling, housing practices such as redlining (banks drawing red lines in geographic areas where they would not lend) and racial covenants (restricting property ownership based on race) denied access to pivotal means of social mobility and wealth accumulation.

Having nominal access to resources is not the same as having an ability to use them: without dismantling discriminatory policies and practices, the value of resources provided by the GI Bill, and other New and Fair Deal Legislation, was

substantially diminished for nonwhites and increased for whites. Katznelson provides a pointed conclusion of the effect this has: “[the GI Bill’s] ready accommodation to the larger discriminatory context within which it was embedded, produced practices that were more racially distinct and arguably more cruel than any other New Deal-era program. The performance of the GI Bill mocked the promise of fair treatment” (141). It is crueler and mocks fair treatment, because, “on balance, despite the assistance black soldiers received, there was no greater instrument for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America than the GI Bill” (121). The GI Bill ended up granting “white Americans privileged access to state-sponsored economic mobility,” and became yet another tool that perpetuated the “federal government...function[ing] as a commanding instrument of white privilege” (Katznelson 21, 18).

Katznelson believes viewing affirmative action as arising from the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement is a mistake. Katznelson argues against this view. His position is stated most clearly in quoted text above: “all major tools of the federal government deployed during the New Deal and Fair Deal created a powerful, if unstated, program of affirmative action for white Americans” (Katznelson 161). Katznelson is right to reject views that identify affirmative action as though it arose from the mid-twentieth century civil rights movements. Affirmative action would be more accurately thought of as not only action to work toward racial equality—this is an antiracist application of it—but an action that historically equalized relations in a way to help maintain the US’s

longstanding racial order. The “perverse formula of affirmative action” Katznelson identifies is part of a broader historical phenomena of white supremacist equality, which was a mutually constitutive force with racist liberalism; these are foundational building blocks for the social, political, and economic development of the US.

3.7 Threats of Antiracism

Two periods in US history witnessed significant challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality: the Reconstruction period after the Civil War and the mid-twentieth century materially-grounded antiracist push for civil rights (and racial justice and equality). The threat posed by challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality during these periods were paradoxically met by both concessions to these challenges and retrenchment of the material implications and disparities of racist liberalism and white supremacist equality. Given the differing socio-historic context, retrenchment took different forms in each period. Whites resisted threats posed to the racial hierarchy during Reconstruction by utilizing the white settler state to mend post-Civil War fissures in the racial order. This gave us Jim Crowism. A similar stance was not a viable response to the antiracist threat posed by mid-twentieth civil rights and other antiracist movements. Whites could not abide (re)investment in racist ideology in the post-civil rights period, because most found it irreconcilable with liberal ideals—Bonilla-Silva notes this shift in attitudes in surveys conducted on racial

attitudes since the 1950s (4). Instead, after the mid-twentieth civil rights movements shifted the vast majority of whites' position regarding the reconciliation of racist ideology with liberal ideals, the legacies of racist liberalism and white supremacist equality are upheld by nonracist politics—whites gradually and largely transitioned to this politics—which rejects racism and white supremacy but does little to dismantle their lasting material impact.

Reconstruction

During Reconstruction the existing racial order faced its first serious challenges. The Civil War Amendments opened up space for challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality. These Amendments were an important shift toward greater liberal inclusion of nonwhites and, notably, also placed onus on the federal government to take action to move the country toward racial equality and inclusion by granting Congress power to enforce the Amendments through appropriate legislation. The Civil War Amendments helped engender a radical reimagining of liberal tenets of inclusion, rights, justice, and equality. Some newly freed slaves formed conceptions and movements that interpreted and pushed for a version of liberalism that would include black people (for example, electing blacks in an effort to change policies of racial exclusion). They conceived of and worked toward an insurgent equality that challenged the white supremacist racial order. But this post-Civil War reimagining could only be realized by gaining support of whites, and political and legal force through the white settler state and

its legal apparatuses that provided legitimization for racial domination and violent racial exclusion. It was after all whites and the white settler state who made slavery possible that were now tasked with interpreting the liberty, equality, and enfranchisement newly enshrined by the Civil War Amendments. Given that ensuring liberty, equality, and enfranchisement of blacks depended on whites who by and large believed in their racial superiority it is not surprising that blacks' (and/or other people of color's) liberty, equality, and enfranchisement was not hardily protected.

The increased participation of blacks in social and political life during Reconstruction was intolerable to most whites who continued to believe in their superiority. The concern for most whites during Reconstruction was not how to foster greater social and political inclusion or social, political, and economic equality for blacks. Rather, the concern was with how to maintain the white supremacist racial order—the racial order and privilege that had historically been so taken granted by whites—that the Civil War Amendments was undermining. The challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, and the fear this instilled in whites begat a violent backlash and retrenchment of racial hierarchy in the Jim Crow era. Brutal racial domination in the form of Jim Crowism was the severe response to greater inclusion of and increased equality for freedmen in the US polity and social life during Reconstruction. The Jim Crow period continued the US tradition which characterized the antebellum period preceding it: overt and active investment in racist ideology and racial domination. Jim Crow as a response

to black gains and movement toward racial equality supports Fredrickson's conclusion that "efforts to extend the meaning of black civil and political equality awakened the demons to a greater extent than polemical defense of slavery had done" (*Racism* 82).

The white settler state, which so effectively subjugated blacks and other nonwhites during the antebellum period, remained a vehicle for racial subjugation. Again, racial subjugation was particularly vicious in the South where a "combination of social conventions, racist ideas, economic compulsion, theological justification, political institutions, and harsh enforcement by police, courts, and prisons [was] buttressed by private violence [that] supported the unyielding inequality mandated by Jim Crow" (Katznelson 5). As with chattel slavery during the antebellum period, Jim Crow racial subjugation in the South required complicity by northern whites. They obliged through their indifference "to southern arrangements [which] combined with their own softer, yet still harsh practices of racial discrimination" (Katznelson 5).

Jim Crowism as a response to a shift toward greater inclusion and equality for freedmen highlights how fundamentally a Racial Contract, racist liberalism, and white supremacist equality informed whites' understanding of the way social, political, and economic life should be structured in the US. Whites utilized the white settler state and white power structure to thoroughly quash movement toward increased inclusion and equality for freedmen ushered in by the Civil War Amendments and black activism. After the Civil War, white attitudes and their

anti-black racism was relatively unaltered, and even by the turn-of-the-twentieth century “most white Americans” still “believed that blacks were innately incompetent in all ways that mattered” (Fredrickson, *Racism* 90). This meant, as Sumler-Edmond observes, from the passage of the Civil War Amendments through the beginning of the twentieth century that “promises of equality under the law, due process, and other constitutional rights remained unfulfilled because of widespread racial segregation, prejudice, economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and even lynching” (100-101). It would take almost another century before most whites’ attitudes and views changed enough for them to consider forms of equality black activists pushed for in the post-bellum US.

Mid-Twentieth Century Antiracism

In the middle of the twentieth century, antiracist activists’ push for social, political, and economic justice and equality was largely organized based on racial identity and led by people of color. This push for justice and equality during the 1960s and 1970s was by and large aimed at “the elimination of all social deficits...that is the eradication of cultural and social stereotypes and patterns of isolation and group exclusion generated by white structural racism over several centuries” (Marable 5-6). This antiracist organizing offered broad-scale challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality in the US. Such serious widespread challenges had not been witnessed since Reconstruction.

Antiracist civil rights movements fostered a shift in conceptions of liberal justice and equality, ushering in challenges to the cozy relationship between racism, white supremacy, and liberalism that existed in the antebellum and Jim Crow periods. Activists effectively engaged the white settler state, forcing it to end various forms of legal discrimination, as well as pass civil rights legislation and implement antiracist affirmative action programs. The challenges and ultimate changes to white supremacist legislation, policies, and practices ushered in by mid-twentieth century antiracist movements would not have been possible without white support. Perhaps the best example of the heights this support reached was President Lyndon Johnson's announcement of "a 'Great Society' effort to eradicate poverty and complete the New Deal, which was widely understood to be an effort directed at black poverty and the exclusion of African Americans from the middle-class mainstream" (Katznelson 14). The promise mid-twentieth century antiracist movements and white allyship held for moving away from racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, and toward racial justice and equality gave way under pressure from moderating forces. New nonracist racial politics and political projects developed in the vacuum produced by this pressure and its production of "years of racial quiescence when the racial minority movements of the previous period seemed to wane" (Omi and Winant 2).

Given their abandonment of efforts to substantively equalize existing political-economic racial disparities, it seems many whites only intended to support some procedural forms of justice and equality. Thus, Hacker is probably

right in observing that historically “there is scant evidence that the majority of white Americans are ready to invest in redistributive programs, let alone give of themselves in more exacting ways” (xiii). In place of white support for racial minority antiracist movements, sometime “during the mid-1970s, changes began to be observed in the attitudes of white citizens who had earlier been willing to support measures intended to bring...parity” (Hacker 230). This change in attitudes suggests moving beyond formal equality and procedural fairness—which conceptions of justice decentering domination advocate—and toward substantive equality elicits a reactionary response from many whites who *feel* their white privilege being undermined.

Whites’ reactionary responses engendered efforts to dismantle antiracist affirmative action, and fueled white claims about reverse racism. Whites’ shift in attitudes when they began to realize that equality might actually move beyond formal equality and procedural fairness is telling. In the aftermath of mid-twentieth century civil rights gains, “white Americans are more open about opposing measures for racial redress, largely by denying that they have gained advantages because they are white” (Hacker 230). Given whites apparent change in attitude toward antiracism since the mid-1970s, it is not surprising that challenges to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality—i.e. what President Johnson posed for combating racialized poverty and deprivation—were not supported broadly enough by whites to result in substantive racial equality. White support for antiracist politics and projects waned so precipitously that by the end of the twentieth

century, as Katznelson concludes, “Johnson’s vision came to seem like a mirage from a bygone time, and no social movement has since developed that could transform society in this thoroughgoing way” (144). In place of supporting antiracist politics and movements, whites largely committed nonracist politics.

During the nonracist period, whites’ former support of color-conscious antiracist politics by and large shifted against calls for color-conscious policies and practices that take race into account in addressing inequalities historically produced and supported by racist ideologies and the white settler state. In opposition, many whites suggest that antiracist color-conscious politics is misguided; this position is tinged with the paternalism upon which racist ideology rests. Instead, whites champion nonracism, which has been separated from materially-grounded antiracist politics and works more against antiracist movements’ threat to racist liberalism and white supremacist equality than it does to combat legacies of racism and white supremacy. But nonracism was only part of broader antiracist civil rights visions of justice and equality aimed at combating the existing racial order. Being in a racially privileged position and supporting nonracism—which is not a politics capable of substantively equalizing racialized material disparities through redistributive practices—does not require substantive sacrifice, much less challenge the systems and structures keeping racial privilege and deprivation in place.

3.8 Nonracist Period

Pushing for an end to color-conscious discrimination was part of the strategy antiracist activists used to challenge racial domination and work for racial equality. These activists maintained race should not be used as a basis for exclusion or denial of opportunities (i.e. for receiving home loans, enrolling in academic institutions, or voting in elections). They argued color-conscious discrimination was inimical to (liberal) justice and equality. The mid-twentieth century witnessed more widespread white support for this position, which generated support for legislation aiming to prevent racially discriminatory policies and practices. For antiracist proponents, a race-neutral push to prevent discriminatory policies and practices was a way of forwarding broader objectives: dismantling the white power structure and redressing the impact and legacies of centuries of racial domination. After legislative gains fostered by mid-twentieth civil rights movements directed the country toward racial equality, a nonracist politics that was separate from broader antiracist objectives began to emerge and rise.

The rise of nonracism as a distinct racial politics effectively results in producing three distinctive forms of racial politics: racism, nonracism, and antiracism. This tri-partite racial politics distinguishes the post-civil rights period from the preceding Jim Crow and antebellum ones. I refer to the period after support for the antiracist politics and movements began to wane as the nonracist period. In the nonracist period, most whites reject racism, white supremacy, and racial domination that previously received widespread support from white subjects

during the Jim Crow and antebellum periods. Nonracist politics, thus, displaced racism as the hegemonic racial politics, and has retained its hegemonic position for roughly the last four decades. This current tenuously hegemonic nonracist (racial) politics is best understood as a racial politics filled with nonracist subjects who engage in some combination of rejecting support for racism and white supremacy, committing to colorblind or race-neutral policy and rhetoric, and/or subscribing to racial refusal (except where representational regimes are concerned). The hegemony of nonracist politics may be declining after the mass protests following George Floyd's death—what happens in the current epistemic and discursive struggle over the explication of racial justice and systemic racism will likely determine the fate of nonracist politics' hegemony.

Nonracist politics is significantly characterized by what Goldberg calls the “refusal of racism reduc[ing] to racial refuse” wherein “racial refusal is thought to exhaust antiracism” (1). Racial refusal is epitomized by nonracist claims about not seeing race, just people. The nonracist way of repudiating racism, utilized by many white subjects, is captured by a number of other scholars. For example, Fredrickson says: “No one, at least in our time, will admit to being a racist” (*White Supremacy* xii). Also, based on survey data, Bonilla-Silva concludes “[that] few whites in the United States claim to be ‘racist,’” rather, “[m]ost whites assert that they ‘don’t see any color, just people’” (1). Hacker observes that “virtually all white people will deny that they have racist tendencies, and they resent the implication that they do” (26). Whites’ nonracist rejection of racism may

ultimately be captured most succinctly by Hacker's conclusion that "most white people prefer not to perceive their nation and its major institutions as 'white' and consequently racist. They will say that the United States is a multiracial society and becomes more so everyday...In their view, to claim that the white race holds so preponderant a sway is both untrue and gratuitous" (29).

Where some scholars express skepticism about whites' nonracist beliefs, I take whites' belief that they are not racist and their commitment to nonracism at face value and critically engage it. I take investment in and commitment to nonracism seriously because for many it is a deep and abiding commitment. In approaching commitment to nonracism this way, I examine the work nonracist rejection of racist ideology is doing. In particular, I focus on the work broad-based commitment to nonracist ideology and politics does as a response to the way historic investments in racism and white supremacy structured social, political, and material relations in the US. Ultimately, I conclude this politics divests from racist ideology and racial domination, but does not support materially-grounded antiracism.

Nonracist Work

Mid-twentieth century white support for antiracism rapidly and significantly dissipated after the passage of civil rights legislation, their rejection of racism and white supremacy found a new, less transformative outlet in nonracist politics (which separated from antiracist politics). This separation and (hegemonic) rise of

nonracist (racial) politics provides whites an avenue to reject previous investments in racism and white supremacy, while simultaneously not supporting materially-grounded antiracism aiming to dismantle the white power structure and remedy the impact of racial domination. Moreover, where nonracists' support recognizing race, they seem mostly, if not exclusively, willing to do so through cultural left identity politics' (celebratory) representational regimes that do not aim to broadly and substantively redress the political-economic legacies of racism and white supremacy.

In the nonracist period, responding to racism through nonracist ideology and politics appeals to broad swaths of the public. And many nonracists are apparently convinced that rejecting racist ideology and embracing colorblind or race-neutral policy and rhetoric provides the best path to realizing liberal forms of equality. In line with this position, they also seem convinced that the best way of combatting racial inequalities, where they think may still exist, is through following visions of justice prioritizing formal equality and procedural fairness. For them, colorblind, fair and equal processes have effectively addressed racial disparities, and any remaining racial inequality is most effectively addressed by policies and practices assuring these processes.

Thinking about racism and racial inequalities in this way obscures the legacies of racial domination, and allows whiteness and white privilege, as Patricia Williams concludes, to be “beyond the realm of race” (7)—in a realm nonracists seemingly believe we need to move toward to overcome our racist past.

Apparently, nonracist subjects have somehow transcended race and in doing so remedied the impact of the US's racist and white supremacist "past." Perhaps nonracists (especially nonracist white subjects) have, in fact, broken free from US history. I doubt it. Rather, I believe nonracist subjects and nonracist (racial) politics does not break free from the past, but instead obscures the impact of the past and neutralizes the threat antiracism poses to redressing the lasting impact of foundational racism and white supremacy.

Nonracism's effective neutralization of the threat of antiracism—which may not be whites' explicit rationale for supporting nonracism—is laid bare at the beginning of every year around/during Martin Luther King Day. At this time, predominant nonracist politics is reaffirmed and amplified via honoring King by focusing on his arguments invoking colorblindness as a response to racism, and downplaying or (more often) ignoring his positions that pushed for substantive racial equality and/or directly challenged the white power structure.

Nonracists seem especially enamored with honoring King through incessantly quoting a particular line, one now burned into the national consciousness, about his children from his "I Have a Dream" speech: "they will not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character." This annual reaffirmation and amplification of nonracist politics ups the ante on any push for materially-grounded antiracist policies and practices. It does so especially by (re)narrating mid-twentieth century antiracist movements as efforts to merely realize colorblindness, rather than color-conscious materially-grounded

movements for racial justice and equality, with objectives aiming to remedy racial disparities constructed through racist color-conscious policies and practices—i.e. the Homestead Act, redlining, racial covenants, initial exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers from New Deal labor legislation, and implementation of the GI Bill—designed to benefit whites.

The detachment of nonracism from antiracism, and the subsequent hegemonic rise of nonracist (racial) politics foments an ahistorical understanding of the work antiracist movements engaged in. Nonracism discursively alters antiracist movements' objectives, and relegates the impact of racial domination on social, political, and economic life to the past. This helps ensure the continuation of racial privilege and deprivation set in place by racist and white supremacist policies and practices. Privilege and deprivation is also further solidified by nonracist views that see the impact of racist ideology as only really present where racist subjects (those expressing overt and blatant racist beliefs) are present. Thus, for many nonracists, “even raising the term ‘racism’ turns them off, and makes them unwilling to listen further” (Hacker 26).

Without discussing racism and white supremacy it is exceedingly difficult to substantively address racial disparities, much less critically engage how liberalism and US institutions are historically shaped by racist ideology. To the extent nonracist politics inhibits these discussions, it upholds racist legacies and racialized power-effects. In suggesting nonracism upholds racist legacies and racialized power-effects, I am not saying a commitment to nonracism is

synonymous with whites' previous longstanding investment in white supremacy. Contemporary nonracist beliefs and commitment are clearly not the same as believing in and supporting policies and practices dedicated to upholding racial hierarchy.

Rather, nonracist politics discursively relegates racial hierarchy, as well as socio-economic/political-economic legacies of racism and white supremacy, to the past, which undermines antiracist efforts to address racial disparities in the present. Even if the vast majority of people in the US now reject racism, and embrace and commit to nonracist politics, this will do little to root out racial inequalities and racialized power-effects from the social fabric and political-economic structure of the US. Racial privilege and deprivation will not disappear with the rise nonracism in state policymaking, because, as Roediger concludes, “the absence of preferential options for the racially oppressed poor...increase[s] the value of ‘whiteness as property’” (228). Ultimately, nonracism helps uphold a racial hierarchy and attendant material disparities, but works differently to do so than support for racist ideology does.

The work nonracist politics, discourse, policies, and practices do to alter (erase?) the past without dismantling the white power structure or substantially equalizing racial disparities functions in tandem with some recognition of racial difference. Broadly, nonracists forward a racial politics that suggests being colorblind—not seeing race in social life or considering it in public policy—effectively brings about racial equality. This is often attended by recognizing

difference through racial progressive narratives²² and/or cultural left identity politics that recognizes racial difference through its commitment to (and celebration of) diversity and multiculturalism, which offers limited inclusion. This recognition, which buries political-economic privileges bestowed upon whiteness and/or those who embody it, is not synonymous with materially-grounded antiracism and racial justice. Nonracist politics and representational regimes not only mask the historical legacies of racism and white supremacy, especially racial disparities in property (land) ownership, wealth accumulation, and access to other economic resources, but they also position whiteness and white subjects (and maybe even white privilege) as somehow neutral, as normative. This normative whiteness is shot through alternative food movements.

Neutralizing the Threat of Antiracism

Nonracist politics demonstrates little, if any, concern with racist liberalism, white supremacist equality, or the white power structure. Hegemonic nonracist politics neglects dealing with these forces and the white settler state which supports them. This is far from benign neglect, as nonracism and cultural left identity politics effectively (re)narrate antiracist objectives engendering historical amnesia regarding what antiracist movements and activists were actually pursuing. This induced historical amnesia moves us rapidly toward public understanding and dialogue regarding antiracist movements' efforts to redress the impact of racial domination being merely about formal equality (and equal concern and respect)

and not also about efforts to redress the lasting material impact of racism and white supremacy.

The absence of widespread public dialogue about the material impact of racist ideology—an absence which is being forcefully challenged by progressives—contributes to legacies of racial domination structuring the socio-economic/political-economic fabric of the US. Over the last four to five decades, the hegemonic rise of nonracist politics and discourse has largely taken materially-grounded antiracism off the table as a viable response to these legacies. This has enabled racism, white supremacy, and racialized power-effects to continue being destructive and violent forces in the lives of people of color, forces that no longer need support through active investment in racist ideology, because widespread support for nonracism effectively blunts antiracist activism most capable of addressing the continuing impact of these forces.

With the rise of antiracist movements, we are witnessing a sort of doubling down on the most destructive aspects nonracism. This is probably most notably marked by the “all lives matter” response to the refrain “black lives matter,” which is invoked by activists combating institutional racism in US law enforcement and criminal justice apparatuses. The “all lives matter” response to antiracist activism is a clarion call to supporters of nonracism. This call is made as a response to BLM giving rise to the first serious broad-based challenges to nonracist hegemony in the nonracist period. In response, some nonracists harken back to the mid-twentieth century antiracist movements via their (re)narration of it, and deploy nonracism as

though it is still attached to antiracist politics to identify colorblindness as the ultimate objective of antiracism. Fabricating a continuing inextricable connection between nonracist and antiracist politics obscures the fact that these are now separate variants of racial politics.

Those who benefit/ed from racism and white supremacy have a stake in clouding the change in racial politics—even if they don't realize or acknowledge it—because functioning as though nonracism is an antiracist politics protects the privileges and advantages granted by racism and white supremacy. Moreover, deploying nonracism and/or cultural left identity politics as antiracism bypasses addressing the material privilege—marked especially by being in communities of privilege—many whites experience. The work nonracist politics, racial progress narratives, and cultural left identity politics do to either situate racism and white supremacy in the country's past or (re)narrate antiracism and/or challenges to systemic racism allows those reaping socio-economic/political-economic benefits from racism and white supremacy to continue to bypass addressing racialized material privilege. This is especially evident in the naturalization of segregation.

Current segregation, which is rooted in racist liberalism and white supremacist equality, but no longer *de jure* and formally assured by legislation, is extremely difficult to counteract because prevailing nonracist racial politics and racial progress narratives function like a whiteout during a blizzard; it makes such legacies of color-filled racial domination supported by the racist liberal white settler state almost impossible to see. Richard Rothstein captures how this operates

in discussing school and residential segregation: “our ability to desegregate the neighborhoods in which segregated schools are located is hobbled by historical ignorance. Too quickly forgetting twentieth century history, we’ve persuaded ourselves that the residential isolation of low-income black children is only ‘*de facto*,’ the accident of economic circumstance, personal preference, and private discrimination” (1). Similarly, Bonilla-Silva concludes respondents in his study primarily attribute racial apartness to privatized, personal choice—one that reflects a “natural” desire—that is uninformed by racial domination, and not indicative of a form of or contributing to racial inequality (28). The fact that “residential isolation” of low-income black and brown people significantly rests on white subjects’ ability to isolate themselves due to wealth, income, and resource advantages provided from racial political-economic projects is hidden by the whiting out of history. Whiting out history renders contemporary segregation as a natural occurrence, as just the way things are, and not grounded in a history of racial domination.

Obscuring the history of the white settler state’s racial political-economic projects allows race and class privileged subjects to believe (and contend) *de facto* segregation has little to do with their position in privileged communities or the existence of communities of deprivation. Such historical amnesia regarding material dis/advantages is part and parcel of nonracist politics and racial progress narratives obfuscating how, as Wise tells us, “inequities are themselves too often the result of racial discrimination and race-specific injuries perpetrated by whites

against people of color—and not...the result of race-neutral economic or cultural factors” (17). For nonracists, taking a color-conscious approach of redressing such inequities would run counter to their racial politics.

Wise offers a pointed assessment of such racial politics: “given the potential downsides of the post-racial narrative and colorblind universalism (when pushed to the exclusion of any race-specific policy directives), it may be that all [such racial politics] accomplishes is to take antiracism off the table, while leaving racism—in both its institutional and interpersonal forms—dangerously in place” (60). Indeed, hegemonic nonracism takes antiracism off the table, and feeds into a backlash against color-conscious antiracist efforts to redress legacies of racial domination. Bonilla-Silva elucidates how this operates: “Most whites believe that if blacks and other minorities would just stop thinking about the past, work hard, and complain less (particularly about racial discrimination), then Americans of all hues could ‘all get along’” (1). They “insist that minorities (especially blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever ‘race problem’ we have in this country. They publicly denounce blacks for...demanding the maintenance of unnecessary and divisive race-based programs” (Bonilla-Silva 1).

The rise of nonracist politics alongside racial progress narratives has significantly opened up space for backlash against anyone suggesting racism and white supremacy still have structural, systemic, and/or material effects; they are derided as clinging to the past and not being able to move forward. This discursive maneuvering positions color-conscious antiracism as something of a relic of the

past, a racial politics gone awry in the nonracist period. Not surprisingly, those supporting materially-grounded, race-conscious policies as a way to redress legacies of racial domination are even met with charges of racism: they are called “reverse-racists.” In the nonracist period, therefore, any who make materially-grounded, color-conscious arguments for substantive racial justice and equality might be labeled racists—regardless of whether or not their politics supports racial domination, or seeks to establish or uphold a racial hierarchy—and have their calls for justice and equality derisively dismissed.

Nonracist Justice and the Subordination of Antiracism

Nonracist politics has serious implications for contemporary understandings and visions of justice and equality. These implications are important given the centuries of intertwinement between racist ideology and liberalism, which has shaped the politics of race and justice. Nonracists’ rhetorical repudiation of racism and white supremacy complementary pairs with theories of justice decentering domination to form what I call nonracist justice. Nonracist justice privileges colorblind or race-neutral policies, formal equality, and procedural fairness; it generally rejects substantive outcomes as a measure of justice, thereby fostering narrow understanding and commitment to liberal tenets of justice and equality.

Nonracist justice counters antiracist racial justice, making possible a rejection of racist ideologies and racial domination without a corresponding commitment to materially-grounded racial justice and equality, which redresses racial disparities

already set in place. It appears nonracist justice may be taking Rawls' "veil of ignorance" as a starting point for working toward justice and equality, while largely ignoring the historic existence and impact of racial domination. This is an appealing understanding and approach to liberal justice for the broad portions of the public supporting nonracist politics. It lines up with nonracists' commitments, and effectively narrows plausible visions justice (and equality) to pursuit of colorblind or race-neutral policies, formal equality, and/or procedural fairness. This position not only rejects substantive outcomes as a measure of justice—a measure that heavily grounds theories of justice centering domination—it is also rejects and delegitimizes materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice and equality. Thus, in the nonracist period, the complementary pairing of nonracist politics and theories of justice decentering domination have substantially delimited opportunities for materially-grounded antiracist movements pursuing racial justice and equality to gain more broad-based support. In doing so, nonracist justice blunts antiracist visions of justice and equality that demand we acknowledge, center, and seek remedies to racial domination and the political-economic legacies of centuries of investment in racist ideology.

Nonracist notions of justice and equality are bolstered by commitments to diversity and multiculturalism which engender, as Dylan Rodriguez claims, "'people of color' [being] selectively and incrementally solicited, rewarded, and absorbed into the functioning of historically white-supremacist institutions (e.g. the military, the police, and school) and discourses (e.g. patriotism)" (25).²³ The

election of Barack Obama as US President is perhaps the most significant example of this in the nonracist period. Nonracists often point to the election of President Obama as proof of racial progress and to counter claims about the lasting effects of racist ideology. While this may demonstrate progress for limited forms of inclusion, this does not necessarily translate into broad-based substantive equality, or structural or systemic changes that mitigate racial privilege and deprivation.

After all, it was under the Obama Administration's guidance in implementing Temporary Asset Relief Program (TARP) that financial institutions (headed predominantly by race and/or class privileged subjects) responsible for the economic collapse were bailed out, and no one in them was prosecuted. They were also allowed to foreclose on millions of homes, buy back stocks, and provide executive bonuses. Furthermore, under the Obama Administration we witnessed record numbers of deportations, continued support for trade liberalization (Obama was pushing for approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership as he left office), and the federal minimum wage staying at \$7.25 (where it still remains) after increasing in 2009 as part of a 2007 Congressionally-approved increase. Thus, it is not surprising the economic "recovery" from the 2008 Financial Crisis was marked by doubling down on neoliberalism and widening wealth inequality cutting along racial lines. This created greater precarity for many people already experiencing political-economic vulnerability. The current Congressional response to COVID-19 triples down on neoliberalism, and fertilizes the poison fruit of the Obama Administration's handling of TARP, which buttressed structures and systems

maintaining racial disparities. Especially hard hit by these neoliberal (re)investments and the legacies of racism and white supremacy it exacerbates are low-paid workers laboring in the food system.

President Obama's election serves as a blueprint for arguably the most effective way(s) for race and class privileged subjects to capitalize on substantive racial inequality. Selectively including racial others in powerful positions who are (or could be turned into) neoliberal skills provides a path to support "racial progress" and diversity, be against racism and white supremacy, and forward conceptions of liberal justice that do little to dismantle racial privilege and deprivation or advance antiracist racial justice and substantive equality. This nominal path forward in "race relations" can garner widespread support, especially among privileged subjects; it contains elements appealing to nonracists who lean either right or left on the political spectrum, as well as nonracist neoliberals, the cultural left, and the mainstream (neo)liberal media. Nonracism's and nonracist justice's limited visions of justice and equality effectively counters materially-grounded antiracist politics of race and justice, and emboldens and encourages people, especially race- and class-privileged subjects, to play the nonrace card, and make amnesia-filled, ahistorical arguments about why racial disparities exist in the US.

Only recently in the nonracist period have we witnessed viable *broad-based* antiracist movements capable of countering this blueprint. Movements that challenge the ways nonracist politics and justice narrate and address racial

disparities in our social, political, and economic conditions. The recent antiracist activism, particularly the BLM movement, has spurred broader efforts and support for addressing the impact of racial domination and racialized power-effects. This activism is leading some whites to once again recognize the existence and detrimental impact of racial hierarchy in the US, and to understand why “[t]he boundaries of one’s skin” still functions as a “starting point for negotiating access to power and resources within a society constructed around racial hierarchies” (Marable 3).

Alternative food movement activism is open to a number of paths for pursuing alternatives to a corporate food regime. Given the whiteness of alternative food movements generally there are serious questions about the paths alternative food movements may take in challenging a corporate food regime. Most seem to take a path through the neoliberal marketplace via hailing consumer-citizens and pushing them to make the “right” choices with their votes in the consumer democracy. Food justice (and food sovereignty) stand apart in recognizing racial hierarchies and racial disparities, and how race and racial privilege are starting points for access to power and resources in the food system. In many ways, this recognition, which the next chapter discusses, serves as a point of departure for food justice efforts to alter the food system. The different approaches alternative food movements take to altering the food system, and how these combat the impact racist liberalism, white supremacist equality, nonracist

justice (or other forms of justice decentering domination), and neoliberalism raises questions about where they fit in the politics of race and justice both inside and outside the food system. The next chapter addresses this.

COVID-19 is exposing the horrific consequences of massive inequality existing in the US food system, as well as the forces arrayed against substantively equalizing distribution of land, wealth, income, and resources. For example, thus far, the federal government has not enacted legislation assuring comprehensive coverage of healthcare costs for low-paid workers who have lost their jobs or for those still employed as essential workers. Nor has it guaranteed consistent income for the duration of the pandemic to low-paid workers who have lost income due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, the Congressional and corporate response to COVID-19 demonstrates that privileged subjects are more than willing to continue investing in redistributive programs funneling resources from the poor to the wealthy. This type of resource extraction, marked historically by land and wealth accumulation by privileged whites via exploitation and denial of opportunities to nonwhites, is foundational to the US food system and broader political-economy. The expectation that exploited laborers within and outside the food system give of themselves in more exacting ways (and with COVID-19 this includes giving their lives) is also historically a fundamental aspect of the US and its political-economy. These significantly form bases for disparities in the food system. The next chapter addresses the extent to which alternative food movement activism implicitly or explicitly supports knowledge and praxis acknowledging and confronting racial

disparities, and what this tells us about various food movement activism with regard to the politics of race and justice.

4. Race, Justice, and Food

This chapter builds on the preceding chapters' discussions to further elucidate the politics of race and justice. It explores how alternative food movements seek to alter the corporate food regime—which is significantly characterized by agribusinesses' large-scale, industrial food production, and virtual monopoly power—and examines the responses this offers to the racialized political-economy of the US food system. The chapter also explores the ways race and justice are engaged and examined by food studies scholars.²⁴ The exploration and examination of alternative food movement activism and food studies literature in this chapter shows us how ways of engaging predominant ideas (and hegemonic forces) in power-knowledge-nexuses in politics of race and justice could work to either forward or further subjugate materially-grounded antiracist politics, knowledge, and praxis pushing for racial justice and equality.

This chapter, thus, illustrates the implications of predominant ideas and forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in racial politics and politics of justice as they play out in the practical application of theories of justice (implicitly or explicitly) informing work to alter the food system. If the repercussions of these forces were not already clear, then the disparately destructive impact of neoliberal corporatism and Congressional responses to COVID-19 on communities of deprivation, including on low-paid food system workers who are expected to endanger their lives—working in conditions that make it impossible to follow

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines on social distancing and/or not being supplied with or allowed to wear personal protective equipment—and in some cases lose their lives should make this undeniably clear. What should also be abundantly clear is that communities of deprivation, and subjects in them whose lives are differentially valued, are expected to labor to maintain a hierarchy that assures the existence of and benefits enjoyed by privileged subjects and privileged communities. This is particularly evident, as the chapter discusses, in racial material disparities in the food system. Seeking to alter the food system in a way that is not primarily driven by concerns with material disparities and/or guided by materially-grounded approaches for change has grave consequences. Doing so supports (either implicitly or explicitly) understandings and approaches to justice that decenter domination and marginalize substantive/material outcomes as measures of justice, which allows devastating racialized material relations to remain intact.

4.1 Race in the Food System

The preceding chapter documents the political-economic impact of active investment in racist ideology and racial domination being reconciled with liberal ideals. This produced intimately interconnected race and class privilege and deprivation. This interconnection and impact from it—notably, racialized access to land, wealth, and material resources—were substantially built up through the US white settler state’s policies and practices. The subjects and communities of

privilege and deprivation resulting from this are disparately situated in the food system, and largely reflect the broader socio-economic/political-economic composition of the US. Thus, the US food system is, as Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman contend, “not racially neutral” (332). It is not racially neutral because it is part of processes (historically) systematically structuring the US political-economy through racism and white supremacy.

We see evidence of this structuring impacting the US food system in, for example, exclusion of agricultural workers from New Deal labor legislation, migrant Latino labor in agricultural fields, and the (oftentimes invisible) labor done disproportionately by people of color in food processing and food service work. We also see this, as the preceding chapter discusses, in racial political-economic projects historically fostering white land ownership—accomplished especially through discriminatory mechanisms restricting property ownership (i.e. red lining and racial covenants)—disproportionate to ownership by nonwhites. Again, this tradition of racial deprivation historically developed in conjunction with commitments to liberal justice and equality. This means in a broad systematic and structural sense, people of color’s political-economic inclusion in the US has historically and largely taken place as a subordinated and deprived class relative to race- and class-privileged whites.

A growing body of literature examining race in the food system documents the impact of race racial privilege and deprivation in the food system. This literature on race in the food system is significantly comprised of food studies

scholars' analyses of race and racism in the food system and alternative food movement(s). This work draws heavily from and/or follows critical race studies analyses. Food studies scholarship informed by critical race studies clearly and explicitly acknowledges how the food system has been infused with racialized power relations that produce and support racial disparities. This work ranges from Rachel Slocum's extensive scholarship on how race and whiteness impacts the food system and alternative food movements to Julie Guthman's work on whiteness in alternative food movements and constructions of "healthy" bodies to Brahm Ahmadi's analysis of the relationship between segregation and food deserts to Eric Holt-Gimenez's exploration of how interconnected racism and capitalism shaped the food system.

This literature often features analyses emphasizing cultural racism, institutional racism, and/or systemic racism. Cultural racism analyses focus more on ideological and rhetorical bases of racial privilege, exclusion, and deprivation. Institutional racism analyses examine racial privilege, exclusion, and deprivation taking place through institutional in/action (especially via policies). Systemic racism analyses address the embedding of racism, and racial privilege and deprivation in the development and function of social, political, and economic systems (and, thus, may be thought of as drawing from/on cultural and institutional foci). Racial disparities in material relations could be viewed and examined through each of these lenses, for example: ideas about superiority and inferiority or how communities might be more deserving of resources (cultural), redlining to

determine who gets loans (institutional), and the distribution of land and wealth that serves as a basis for political-economic development in the US and its food system being built on displacement—i.e. of indigenous and Mexican-origin populations—and resource extraction (systemic).

Though I identify and suggest distinctions between these analyses, we should not think of them as necessarily demarcated. Food studies literature may draw from one, or emphasize one more than others in examining race and racism in the food system. The point here is not to determine whether analyses fit one particular mode, because these analyses share many overlapping concerns, bleed into each other and, importantly, draw on similar theoretical accounts of race and racism. Rather the focus here is on what food studies literature may tell us about the impact of racial domination, and racialized power relations and power-effects on the food system. With this focus in mind, the chapter discusses a number of racial disparities—but does not try to document all manner of them—that are emblematic of how racist ideologies, racialized power relations, and racialized power-effects structure the food system. These disparities illustrate the material impact predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in racial politics have on the food system.

While scholarship on race in the food system and alternative food movements may focus on different ways race and racism impact the food system, what drives much of this scholarship are efforts to illuminate the ways the “food system is not racially neutral” (Alkon and Agyeman 332). Indeed, the food system

is far from being racially neutral. For example, as previously noted, state supported racial political-economic projects fostering white land ownership resulted in people of color primarily laboring (forced, tenant, or paid) for white land owners. Such racialized power relations and power-effects undergird the development of the US food system, which is arguably a racial political-economic project unto itself. Food studies literature's more recent focus on race and racism, which draws heavily from critical race studies, recognizes this. In fact, Guthman's contention regarding land and labor points to perhaps the most significant root upon which the food system took shape: "American agriculture was built on racialized land and labor relationships—many whites received land nearly free, while others were prohibited, discouraged, or disenfranchised from owning land, and worked as slaves, sharecroppers, indentured servants, or undocumented workers" (*Weighing In* 191). These relationships, along with corresponding wealth and resource distribution, laid the political-economic foundations for contemporary inequalities in the food system.

Food system researchers focusing on race in the food system have documented racial disparities—historically race and class are intimately entangled—impacting one's experience in the US food system. For example, researchers document food insecurity, a dearth of supermarkets, lack of freshness, and generally lower quality food in low-income communities largely populated by people of color. It is important to remember, previous periods of US racial politics *actively* constructed these communities (and, in turn, privileged communities)

through systems, structures, institutions, and policies depriving people of color that effectively concentrated them in segregated geographic spaces throughout the country. Food studies literature addressing race and racism in the food system focuses significantly on documenting the relationship these deprived communities (and people within them) have to the food system. Less attention is typically devoted to explaining how these communities came to exist and what keeps them in place. While understanding these communities relationship to (and how they are situated in) the food system is important for addressing political-economic disparities, understanding the production and continuation of communities of privilege and deprivation is also important to redressing disparities and dismantling systems, structures, institutions, and policies that keep them in place. Alternative food movements' (implicit or explicit) engagement with racialized land and labor relationships, material disparities, and the systems and structures upholding racial disparities demonstrates where they are positioned in the politics of race and justice.

As this chapter will illustrate, US food movement responses to the corporate food regime is typically characterized by, as Holt-Gimenez says, “people and organizations...working to counteract the externalities inherent to the ‘corporate food regime’” (271). Food movement activism addressing these externalities is wide ranging, including, for instance: food security (which works for access to sufficient, safe, and healthy food); organic farming (trying to assure organic inputs in growing crops), local food (efforts to reduce distance in supply chain); GMO-

labeling (aiming to identify use of genetically modified organisms in food); slow food (working for a healthier food system for people eating and growing food); pesticide drift (activism significantly advanced by low-paid farmworkers working for reduction or elimination of pesticide use, as well as for safer working and living conditions), and animal welfare (which seeks better treatment of non-human animals in the food system).

These movements exhibit varying degrees of focus on communities of privilege and deprivation in the food system. They range from local food and GMO-labeling that do not exhibit much concern with labor conditions of low-paid workers to slow food (in which activists envision a food system that is good for people who eat and grow food) to pesticide drift activism (that centers the work and living conditions of low-paid farmworkers). While some forms of activism (i.e. pesticide drift) are similar to food sovereignty and food justice in centering racial (material) disparities in their work, what distinguishes the food sovereignty and food justice movements is that they not only center these disparities and the (historic and contemporary) processes underlying them, but they do so to alter the food system as a whole.

Documenting Racial Inequalities

Low-income communities typically spend a greater portion of their income on food than higher-income communities, and receive diminished returns for this expenditure. In one study, Elizabeth Baker et al. found that in St. Louis poor white, mixed-race, and *all* majority African-American areas were less likely to have

access to “healthy” food choices than those living in white higher-income enclaves. Latetia Moore and Ana Diez Roux conducted a broader study in Maryland, New York, and North Carolina which showed that census tracts with predominately African-American residents had far fewer supermarkets and natural food stores than census tracts with mostly white residents. They also found that poorer and non-white communities tended to have fewer fruit and vegetable markets.

Communities experiencing a lack of access to supermarkets and their broader range of food options are often referred to as “food deserts.” Food deserts are not uncommon in low-income communities of color, which often experience abandonment by the handful of companies controlling the majority of grocery retailing. These food deserts are often accompanied by higher numbers of convenience and liquor stores. For example, David Sloane et al. found that zip codes in New York City with mostly poor African-American residents had more convenience stores and fewer supermarkets than wealthier, whiter areas. John Romley et al. also found that low-income communities of color have significantly more liquor stores—which don’t have the broad selection of foods that supermarkets do—per square mile than white, wealthier communities. Food deserts along with increased numbers of convenience and liquor stores, Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi note, “tend to reinforce the problem of the prevailing poor food choices available,” because convenience and liquor stores offer and often prominently display “highly processed foods, candy, snacks, and sodas” (48).

The existence of food deserts is wrapped up with racialized property ownership and capital flow. Ahmadi instructively documents and explains how this process took place in Oakland. Ahmadi says that “modern planning ideology and doctrine first began to take shape” in Oakland in the 1940s and 1950s (151). According to Ahmadi, during this time “development patterns, intended to facilitate suburbanization, were essentially used by Oakland’s white political and economic establishment to dismantle and undermine nonwhite communities” (151). An important method through which this took place was redlining working in conjunction with developing white suburbs in Contra Costa and other parts of Alameda County (Ahmadi 151). This led to a capital outflow to the suburbs. At the same time, supermarkets were being built in the suburbs, which enabled the consolidation of spending power in these “larger geographic ranges and...[supermarket chains made] far greater profits by having significantly fewer stores” (Ahmadi 154). This facilitated supermarket chains shutting down their smaller, urban stores, and “the urban food-retail sector disappeared, along with the rest of the economic foundation...and smaller mom-and-pop stores...also began to disappear as spending power fell through the floor” (Ahmadi 151). This reflects how policies (i.e. redlining) and processes of marketplace divestment work in tandem to produce deprivation in communities of color. As Ahmadi states, “the basic story behind the current conditions of food access is rooted in systemic patterns of structural racism in policy, urban development, migration, construction,

and industry. It is no coincidence that over 400 communities devoid of grocery stores...are mostly communities of color” (154).

Not only are food deserts a problem in communities of color, but Alisha Coleman-Jensen et al.’s study shows food insecurity in the US was definitively more pronounced in low-income, single mother, African-American and Latino households. Food deserts and food insecurity in low-income communities of color are part and parcel of a racialized political-economy and food system. The detrimental systemic impact of racist ideology, racial domination, and racialized power-effects extends beyond forcing low-income communities of color to live in food deserts and/or with greater food insecurity than their white, wealthier counterparts. These forces also significantly impact distribution of resources, control of food production, and division (and conditions) of labor in the food system, they reflect the racialized material relations in the US.

Perhaps farm (land) ownership and food system labor most readily illustrates the broad disparate effects of racialized material relations in the food system. White people own roughly ninety-eight percent of farmland (Horst and Marion 1). This means people of color are almost completely shut out of farmland ownership. In addition, the acreage of farms operated by Latinos and African Americans is about three percent of all US farmland acreage. In contrast, as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) notes, “Farm laborers...are more likely to be Hispanic of Mexican origin, and are less likely to be citizens than are workers in other occupations in agriculture and than the U.S. wage and salary workforce as a

whole” (United States, Dept. of Agriculture). More specifically they say, “Many hired farmworkers are foreign-born people from Mexico and Central America, with many lacking authorization to work legally in the United States” (United States, Dept. of Agriculture). Many of these workers often earn poverty-level household incomes (Liu and Apollon 12).

In addition to poverty, farmworkers are also exposed to many occupational and environmental risks resulting in comparatively high rates of physical injury and illness (Liu and Apollon 3). Despite this exposure, farmworkers receive limited, if any, paid healthcare benefits. The barriers to accessing healthcare—which may include, but are not limited to, a lack of insurance, inadequate healthcare facilities, legal barriers to using healthcare programs, and lack of transportation—exacerbate physical and mental health issues. Farmworkers also suffer from discrimination, separation from family, unsecure employment, and long and grueling work hours; these increase risks of anxiety and mental illness. Farmworkers face a marginal existence because, as Guthman maintains, “marginalizing and even rendering invisible those who do the labor has been one of farming’s most abiding strategies” to produce cheap food and maximize profits (*Weighing In* 134). The treatment of farmworkers and other “unskilled” laborers who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation makes the food industry something of a leader in a race to the bottom.

The experience of farmworkers and other low-income communities of color discussed above is broadly reflective of many people of color’s experience in the

US food system, they live in food deserts, experience rates of food insecurity disproportionate to whites, have almost no control of food production, and/or work in low paying food production, processing, and service work (which is often accompanied by poor labor conditions). Not only do these forms deprivation demonstrate how the food system is not racially neutral, but the comparative advantages many whites enjoy also show this. Whites have comparatively greater access to and control of resources, as well as higher paying jobs in the food system than people of color (Liu and Apollon 7-14). The racial disparities in the food system correspond with the social, political, and economic structuring of the US generally.

Whiteness in Alternative Food Movement(s)

In documenting the impact of race and class in the US food system, some food studies literature focuses on the impact of whiteness and white privilege on alternative food movements, which work to alter the corporate food regime in various ways. Slocum—who has done as much (and perhaps more) work than anyone on whiteness in the food system and alternative food movements—contends “whiteness as the norm” informs and shapes alternative food movements while remaining “largely invisible” (314), which enables white activists to believe that “alternative food claims [are] just about good, healthy food and bringing people into the ‘foodshed’” (314). This discursive rendering of whiteness as neutral informs many contemporary alternative food movements; it reflects how

universalized whiteness, what I refer to as normative whiteness, extensively shapes social, political, and economic relations in the US. Normative whiteness results in “much [of] alternative food discourse hail[ing] a white subject,” which “codes alternative food space and practice as white” (Guthman, “If They Only Knew” 264).

Normative whiteness, which is abstracted and cloaked by nonracism, feeds paternalistic narratives, proffered by largely white-led alternative food movements, about a lack of knowledge regarding healthy food choices and habits in communities of deprivation. We see this play out in alternative food activism working for a “broad range of practices and programs designed to bring producers and consumers in close proximity and to educate people of the value of local, sustainably grown, and seasonal food” (Guthman, “If They Only Knew” 264). Whether intended or not, practices and programs “educating” those in resource-deprived communities about good, healthy food (and choices) “laud[s] the lifestyles of those with class and race privilege” (Guthman, *Weighing In* 87); implicitly “linking...good food, good bodies, and political activism allows those who are already privileged to achieve even higher status by virtue of their bodies and food-purchasing habits” (Guthman, *Weighing In* 193). This linkage inhibits privileged whites in alternative food movements from being able to see the subtle exclusivities woven into alternative food narratives (Alkon and Agyeman 3).

Coloring food politics through paternalistic normative whiteness treats those outside the foodshed “as if they were foolishly standing outside” (Slocum 314),

and upholds race and class privileged “healthy” lifestyles as the norm to which others should aspire. These lifestyles represent what Guthman calls “healthism,” which buttresses normative whiteness while obscuring race and class privilege, further entrenching a racial divide in the food system. Alkon and Agyeman argue that alternative food movements informed by such “colorblind and class-blind approach...fails to recognize the privileges enjoyed by many of its strongest supporters” (332-33). In a similar vein, Holt-Gimenez maintains: “The food movement itself is not immune to the structural injustices that it seeks to overcome. Because of the pervasiveness of white privilege...in our society, racism in the food system can and does resurface within the food movement itself, even when the actors have the best intentions” (272). Guthman contends this manifests as privileged-infused “alternative food movement help[ing] convince people that the injustice in [the food system is] unequal access to high-quality food rather than, say, disparities in wages, employment, or working conditions as they apply to health and safety—or exposures to toxic chemicals” (*Weighing In* 161). These disparities cutting along racial lines are steeped in the history of US racial politics and racial political-economic projects structuring the food system. Recognizing such racialized phenomena informs Holt-Gimenez’s call to action: “Understanding why, where, and how racism manifests itself in the food system, recognizing it within our movement and our organizations and within ourselves, is not extra work for transforming our food system; it is the work” (272).

If we believe Holt-Gimenez, alternative food movement activism that fails to critically engage race and class privilege is not capable of substantively transforming the food system. Not approaching activism through a lens critically engaging race and class privilege may doom alternative food movement activists to upholding racial hierarchy, and furthering privilege and deprivation. Many scholars seem to think this is the case. For example, Alkon and Agyeman suggest that “already-existing food movements”—which they juxtapose against food justice—are “largely created by, and resonate most deeply, with white and middle-class individuals” (3). Guthman contends white-led alternative food movement has “a chilling effect on people of color” that “colors the character of food politics more broadly and may thus work against a more transformative politics” (“If They Only Knew” 264). Food movement activism faces the weight of the history of US racial politics, including how normative whiteness manifests as a force in the food system, which influences how alternatives to a food system dominated by large-scale, industrialized food production (the corporate food regime) are imagined and pursued.

4.2 Alternative Food Movement

Whether we use the term alternative food movement, food movement, or alternative agrifood movement (or some other term)—different terms have been variously used by scholars and activists—to describe movements to change the current corporate food system, ideas (and politics) of justice are (implicitly and/or

explicitly) shot through this activism. Growing claims about working for justice by alternative food movement activists have engendered more analyses regarding justice in the food system. However, while some food studies literature provides varying accounts and analyses of the relationship between food movement activism and justice, there is limited focus on which theories/conceptions of justice inform alternative food movements. In this section, we address alternative food movement efforts to change the food system, as well as ways ideas about justice (implicitly and/or explicitly) broadly inform this activism; the next section will discuss food justice in more depth.

Consumer Choice

Food studies scholars observe that some alternative food movement activism (i.e. advocacy for sustainable, organic, local, slow food, fresh food, fair trade labeling and/or animal welfare) largely relies on consumer choice—encapsulated by alternative food activists’ calls “to vote with your dollars” or “vote with your forks”—in a capitalist (neoliberal) marketplace as a primary vehicle for altering the food system. Jill Lindsey Harrison, for example, says that sustainable agriculture and “organic, fair trade, and local food systems are all key examples of the ways in which some agrifood activists have embraced the market as the primary mechanism of social and environmental change” (161). Robin Roff concludes that with “increasing globalization, industrialization, and concentration of North America’s food supply it is the consumer not the citizen who is often

called upon to bring forth a more socially sustainable and environmentally just commodity system” (511). Guthman likewise maintains that “food system activists have tended to focus more on consumption than production, and more on markets than policy” (*Weighing In* 115).

Josh Viertel’s hailing and imploring of consumers, along with his explanation about the importance of consumer choice in shaping the food system, epitomizes market-based approaches that, as I explicate, call on consumer-citizens to vote in a consumer democracy to change the food system. According to Viertel: “We create our food system by the choices we make about what we eat. More and more people feel that we should apply our values to the choices we make about food” (138). Regarding his choices, Viertel says, “I don’t want to support chickens being debeaked, or hogs having their tails cut off, so I buy meat from a farmer who has practices which I can abide. I don’t want to support the chemical pollution of groundwater, so I buy organic” (139). Furthermore, Viertel states about buying cheese and yogurt at a local farmers’ market: “I am casting a vote for a grass-based, sustainable, local dairy product” (139). Such alternative food movement activists’ turns to the market lionizes ideas and practices grounded in consumption, and elevates privileged consumers with the means to “vote.” This approach leads “some agrifood scholars [to] contend that the community built through farmers markets, the Slow Food movement, and other alternative food institutions frequently serve to reproduce, rather than confront, white privilege and other forms of inequality” (Harrison 164). Lucas Benitez of the Coalition of Immokalee

Workers has a more biting assessment of these privileged-infused approaches when they are not driven by materially-grounded concerns for low-paid food system workers: “What good is it to be vegan and eat a plate of organic mushrooms, if the salaries paid to the workers are lousy, and they have no medical benefits and no overtime pay? This means that nothing changes, and they are just paying more for organic mushrooms” (169).

Food studies literature contains not only critiques of consumer-based approaches to changing the food system, but recognition of its usefulness as well. For example, while Alkon and Agyeman critique consumer-based change they also believe consumer-based activism has encouraged some to “turn away from the industrially produced and processed goods created from monocultures” (1). They also suggest activists like Viertel might be right about some of the possibilities consumer choices hold; voting with your fork has fostered consumer-based turns to environmentally sustainable, organic, and/or local food producers as alternatives embracing small, family-owned farms, biologically diverse polycultures that favor avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers (Alkon and Agyeman 2). Holt-Gimenez also sees some possibilities in market-based approaches, but contends it cannot create structural change, because “the food system cannot be changed in isolation from [changing] the larger economic system. Sure, we can tinker around the edges of the issue and do useful work in the process” (273). Similarly, Roff concludes that “while the successes [of consumer-based approaches] are in no sense unimportant, market-based activism and its goals of ‘ethical consumption’

and ‘freedom of choice’ present openings for structural changes, which are antithetical to...progressive goals” (513).

Importantly, working through the neoliberal marketplace could alter or undermine some changes alternative food movement activism seeks. This happened in the fair trade movement. This movement, as Christopher Bacon explains, started from and functioned through a connection made between European and North American alternative trade activists with Mesoamerican small cooperatives and southern women’s artisan groups (140). This global North-South partnership and movement was met with the establishment and aggressive push of a product-based Fairtrade label and certification project(s) that expanded neoliberal corporate participation, dramatically increasing sales, which “resulted in another, disappointing, trend of selective enforcement, low returns to farmers and sliding standards” (Bacon 140). The fair trade case demonstrates how readily voting with our dollars or forks may be incorporated into a neoliberal, corporatist profit-making agenda antithetical to change sought by alternative food movement activism.

Pursuing Alternatives shares concerns raised by a number of scholars about the type of change market-oriented, consumer-based alternatives are cultivating, including the doubts they express regarding the ability of this approach to substantially transform the food system. Some, like Roff, are skeptical that individual consumption habits in a (neoliberal) marketplace will provide the impetus or possibility for the structural change progressive activists envision. For

example, Guthman asserts that pursuing alternatives to large-scale, industrial food production through consumption in a neoliberal marketplace creates “alternatives” that “produce places and people that for various reasons cannot be served by *an alternative* and therefore are put beyond consideration” (*Weighing In* 6; emphasis in original). E. Melanie DuPuis et al. observe that the drive for “buying local” in California’s major agricultural regions often ends up “disproportionately reflect[ing] the economic interests of the dominant agricultural elites, while sidelining and rendering invisible the concerns of the farmworker communities” (295). Holt-Gimenez points to a major issue with consumer-driven changes, which could account for them serving the economic interests of the well-resourced: “the structures that determine the context of these hopeful alternatives remain solidly under control of the rules and institutions of the corporate food regime” (271). This has a limiting effect on these routes for change. Some scholars suggest the limiting effect of consumer choice subordinates, if not eliminates, considerations of justice from the purview of alternative food activism. For example, Patricia Allen argues “workers as actors and justice as principle are often missing in both theory and practice of alternative agrifood consumer efforts” (306). And Guthman asserts, access to and eating “local, organic, seasonal food that you prepared yourself” is not “tantamount to effecting social justice” (*Weighing In* 5).

Despite scholars’ doubts about consumer-based change, alternatives such as organic, local, fresh, and third-party labeling (i.e. GMO or Fairtrade) have gained broad appeal. The broad appeal of market-/consumer-based change elevates

consumer choice in efforts to change the food system. To borrow from Guthman, elevating consumer choice as the prime selection in an alternative food menu generates “a fairly delimited conception of the politics of the possible, with a tremendous emphasis on market-driven alternatives, which often take root in the most well-resourced localities” (“If They Only Knew” 277). This has meant, as Guthman argues, the proposal of a “limited menu of solutions to a deeply problematic food system reflect[ing] the cultural values and social power of those who have fared reasonably well under contemporary capitalism” (*Weighing In* 17).

Market-oriented, consumer-driven change, which combines critiques and challenges to a corporate food regime with privileged-inflected consumer-based remedies, effectively “marks a particular set of food ways as...right and proper” (Alkon and Agyeman 12), pricing some people out of alternatives. This materially-privileged pathway to changing the food system comes at a time, as Holt-Gimenez observes, when “critical knowledge of capitalism...has largely disappeared from the lexicon of social change, precisely...when neoliberal capitalism is penetrating every aspect of nature and society on the planet and is exacerbating the intersectional oppressions of race, class, ethnicity, and gender” (273). Thus, to the extent that consumer choice drives visions and praxis of alternative food movements, some people and places (and possibly even ideas) are being put out to pasture when it comes to crafting alternatives to the corporate food regime.

Pushing/pricing some people out of possibly being agents of change clearly runs counter to seeking structural change aiming to ameliorate disparities, and, as

Slocum says, treats some people as though they are foolishly standing outside the foodshed. In fact, relying heavily on class-privileged consumer-citizens for food system change may actually work most effectively not as a means to produce structural change but as means of (re)instantiating race and class privilege under the guise of structural change. Guthman captures this possibility and the racial implications of this materially-privileged form of altering the food system in expressing an “underlying concern...that because alternative food tends to attract whites more than others, whites continue to define the rhetoric, spaces, and broader projects of agrifood transformations” (“If They Only Knew” 277). Defining and grounding alternatives through a consumer-based approach to change falls in line with and solidifies the neoliberal political-economic confines of the contemporary US food system, which calcifies interconnected race and class privilege and deprivation. This approach is not without irony, as Benitez captures in observing the selection of food in his farmworker community: “We have the experience of knowing how to work the land...[yet] what we get here is what they don’t want at the nicer stores where they pay more.” (168). Farmworkers with knowledge and ability to work the land could produce sustainable, organic, and fresh food for themselves, but this would require redistributing land, wealth, and resources, which is not on the table in materially-privileged market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to changing the food system.

Market-/consumer-based alternatives are shifting “‘democratic’ decision-making” (and the site of liberal democracy) away from the state and into the

market, which “reflects an acceptance of the neoliberal logic of devolution of responsibility from the state to the consumer,” and conflates “consumerism with citizenship” (Brown and Getz 1188, 1193). Importantly, this conflation collapses the consumer and citizen into one another, cultivating a consumer democracy wherein a (collapsed) consumer-citizen serves as an agent and locus of change for many alternative food movements. These agentic subjects called on to vote with their dollars or their forks are shot through with race and class privilege. Thus, collapsing the consumer and citizen together through elevating market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to pursuing alternatives, reinforces race and class privilege, as well as normative whiteness, and strengthens white-led, top-down alternative food movement activism, which positions individual responsibility via choice in a consumer democracy in the public consciousness as seemingly the best method for changing the food system. There are significant echoes of Novak’s and Adams’ theory of social justice in thinking about and pursuing “alternatives” in this way. This method of seeking change—which aligns with Novak’s and Adams’ rejecting state (re)distribution, Rawls’ rejection of allocative justice, and Dworkin’s insistence that rights of redistribution not override the efficiency of the market—props up the neoliberal marketplace, and effectively counters ideas and efforts aiming to alter the food system political-economy through redistributing resources in it more equitably.

Given the pervasiveness of consumer-based alternatives for changing the food system, it is important to remember that these efforts do not encompass nor

reflect the entire history of food movement activism. Allen provides an important reminder of a different approach in the past, which was undercut by acquiescence to neoliberalism: early on alternative food movement organizations in California—where much of the early food movement organizing happened—included civil rights’ “justice claims in their agendas,” but when “neo-liberal arguments about the individual responsibility” replaced these claims “AFIs [alternative food institutions] withdrew from direct opposition to powerful political and economic structures and framed their programs in terms of the rights of consumers to choose alternatives, rather than in their rights as citizens” (qtd. in Harrison 150-51). Despite the widespread appeal of market-oriented, consumer-based change, it is not the only current or past approach to altering the food system nor is it intractable.

Changing frames

Food system change is not sought solely through the market. One alternative food movement approach notably departing from this model is food sovereignty. Madeleine Fairbairn describes food sovereignty as “both a reaction to and an intellectual offspring of the earlier concepts of the ‘right to food’ and ‘food security’” (15). These three concepts and “freedom from hunger” all aim to address hunger—which distinguishes them from most of the other alternative food movements previously discussed—but provide distinct conceptions and remedies for doing so. Looking at distinctions between the two more recent of these

concepts, food security and food sovereignty, provides further insight into possibilities for change in the food system. Fairbairn, following Harriet Friedmann, provides an excellent account of these distinctions. Fairbairn identifies and explains the right to food, food security, and food sovereignty as providing different framing—Fairbairn explains framing as the mobilization of language and ideas—to address hunger.

According to Fairbairn, “the first universally recognized frame for food access emerged [after World War Two] in the form of the ‘right to food’” (19). This frame arose alongside “freedom from hunger” as a way to address hunger. The food crisis in 1972-73 gave rise to another frame, food security, which largely displaced the right to food and freedom from hunger frames (Fairbairn 20). Though it displaced the right to food and freedom from hunger frames, Fairbairn says food security shared similarities with them. Importantly, all were “conceptualized in the corridors of global power; thus while [food security] attempts to remedy a faulty system, it does so without questioning the dominant political-economic wisdom” (Fairbairn 22). Following this wisdom meant the “concept of food security originally centered on how nations could better control their food supplies through market intervention, increased production and external food aid” (Fairbairn 23).

The frame and concept of food security shifted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The food security frame that emerged during this period “has individual purchasing power at its analytical core and is coupled with policy prescriptions

that favour liberalized agricultural markets and a decreased role of national governments” (Fairbairn 24). In short, food security neoliberalized. This placed governments and agribusiness in a position to pursue “food security by promoting increased agricultural trade liberalization and the concentration of food production in the hands of fewer, and larger, agri-business corporations” (Wittman et al. 3). Fairbairn argues this version of food security contrasts with its conceptualization in the immediate aftermath of the 1972-73 world food crisis: it is “now a frame about the micro-economic choices facing individuals in a free market, rather than policy choices facing governments” (24). Food security activism may make greater claims on the state than forms of US food movement activism relying heavily on the market, but like most of this activism food security does not reject the political-economic wisdom of a food system dominated by large-scale, industrialized food production (the corporate food regime).

Domestically, food security, as do market-oriented, consumer-driven US alternative food movements, works through neoliberal political-economic structures, institutions, and rules. However, the problem of food access is not really *sustainably* resolvable through reliance solely on the neoliberal political-economic system. Thus, current food security activism in the US contains vestiges of the prior food security frame and still pushes the state to address hunger. But food access policies and programs (i.e. the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) do not challenge the neoliberal project. In fact, government aid produces stripped-down (neoliberal) consumer-citizens, ones participating in consumer

democracy—which buttresses the dominant neoliberal corporate food regime—through purchasing restrictions imposed by entitlement programs. While this may provide a semblance of food security, it does so by producing a stilted consumer-citizen that does not possess the same privilege as the ones hailed (and urged to vote with their dollars or forks) by many US alternative food movement activists.

Food sovereignty’s different way of addressing hunger and food access, which departs from food security’s incorporation of aspects of the neoliberal corporate food system, was carved out by peasant farmers and provides an alternative to acquiescing to neoliberal corporatism in the paths and ways they forge to think about changing the food system. The food sovereignty concept and movement, Gottleib and Joshi inform us, traces its roots to a group of Guatemalan Kaqchikel Mayan peasant farmers. These peasant farmers formed the Kato-Ki cooperative and bought “eroded coffee plantations” and (re)distributed land to the cooperative’s members (114). Even though the land was eventually abandoned, Gottleib and Joshi maintain the Kato-Ki cooperative served as a springboard for food sovereignty: “Two decades after the Kato-Ki events, perhaps the most dynamic and far-reaching of the campesino groups [La Via Campesina] emerged, identifying a new approach called *food sovereignty*” (115; emphasis in original).

This new approach introduced by La Via Campesina, Fairbairn asserts, “express[es] both the truth of power relations within the food domain and the hope for the democratic, widely dispersed, just distribution of those powers over food” (11). Fairbairn succinctly describes a pivotal difference between food sovereignty

and food security: “it can be argued that food sovereignty has been just as heavily influenced by the existence of the corporate food regime as was food security. The difference is that, while food security incorporates many aspects of the regime...food sovereignty embodies a self-conscious rejection of almost everything they stand for” (26-27). Food sovereignty’s roots and objectives, according to Fairbairn, are unique in arising from oppressed peoples and attempting to “demolish the regime within which it arose and construct an entirely new one in its place” (16).

Led by La Via Campesina, food sovereignty drew from the experience of farming peoples to critically analyze national and international agricultural policy changes made during the 1980s and early 1990s (Wittman et al. 2). With this critical analysis, food sovereignty “emerged in the mid 1990s as a strategic challenge to the hegemonic neoliberal concept of food security,” providing “a creative alternative to privatized conceptions of ‘food security,’ represented in the ‘feed the world’ mantra of the development establishment” (McMichael 168). Not only does food sovereignty push back against food security’s understanding of and remedies to a lack of food access, but it also provides a grassroots challenge to neoliberal logic and capitalist commodification of food. Via Campesina’s own self-description captures this:

the international movement which brings together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a

way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature. (“Mission Statement”)

In its self-description we see that Via Campesina aims to marshal those on the bottom of the food chain and views food as both a basic need and, through distribution and control, a reflection of justice. The way Via Campesina defines food sovereignty reinforces this and situates it in a liberal framework of justice: food sovereignty is “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems,” which “puts the aspirations, needs and livelihoods of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (“Food Sovereignty”).

Via Campesina’s opposition to corporate-driven agriculture, Phillip McMichael contends, values social access over market supply, and grounds decisions about food production (what is produced and how) in democratic exchanges (168). Via Campesina’s vision, Raj Patel similarly argues, counters “the whole scope of power through ownership—be it of land, intellectual property rights or gene patents...This represents a fundamental challenge not only to neoliberal trade and policy strategies but also to the foundations of capitalism itself, insofar as it advances through enclosure and privatization” (193). Teresa Mares and Devon Peña concur and call on “[s]cholars and cultivators...to depart from focusing on issues of equal access as dictated by the food security paradigm,”

and instead pursue food access through “a more comprehensive food sovereignty framework,” which supports “autonomous struggles for the exercise of entitlements to land and community-based decision making, along with democratic and participatory control over natural resources” (215-216).

Scholars’ support of food sovereignty is strongly grounded on how they view it tackling inequality. Perhaps Patel captures this best in concluding that “challenging deep inequalities of power...[is at] the core of food sovereignty” (195). Thus, food sovereignty opposes the “modern food system [which] has been architected by...privileged people. Food sovereignty insists this is illegitimate because the design of our social system isn’t the privilege of the few but the right of all” (Patel 191). Patel’s and other scholars’ assessment of food sovereignty stands in contrast to the way many scholars assess US alternative food movements’ general efforts to change the food system, which bolster power relations and political-economic systems reinforcing privilege, deprivation, and their attendant disparities.

Food sovereignty offers a vision of change that opposes the corporate food regime and decenters privileged consumer-citizens as the locus of change. Via Campesina’s aim to organize those on the bottom of the food chain, along with its invocation of social justice, connects food sovereignty to conceptions of social justice centering domination. Gottlieb and Joshi see connection between food sovereignty’s ideas about justice and food justice, claiming food sovereignty is “a rich and multilayered concept and framework for action, paralleling in many ways

the concept of food justice” (116). Via Campesina’s invocation of social justice and Gottlieb’s and Joshi’s claim raises questions about the relationship between alternative food movements and conceptions of justice. Exploring this relationship is important regardless of whether or not alternative food movements are explicitly seeking justice, because as the previous chapter demonstrates, the US political-economy, including within the food system, developed through the relationship (and reconciliation) between racial domination and liberal tenets of justice and equality. This relationship is foundational to the food system, so working to change the food system places us squarely in the realm of the politics of race and justice.

4.3 Justice in the Food System

The emergence of food justice in the US fosters invocations of and calls for justice by alternative food movement activists. In response, food studies literature has increasingly examined activists’ explicit pursuit of justice in the food system. But much of this literature has not really paid attention to the circulation of justice where it is not explicitly invoked. Furthermore, the literature does not devote much attention to examining the meaning of justice when it is invoked. DuPuis et al.’s “Just Food?” and Harrison’s *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice* are notable exceptions. These two works provide trenchant analyses of ideas and meanings of justice informing alternative food movement activism (and, therefore, are considered at some length here). “Just Food?” addresses conceptions

of justice with regard to “local food” and posits a notion of justice the authors think could remedy some problems in consumer-based local food movement activism. *Pesticide Drift’s* insightful analysis of pesticide drift, environmental justice, and environmental politics illuminates ideas of justice underpinning alternative food movements more broadly. Taken together, these two works provide a broad and nuanced examination of how ideas, understandings and meanings of justice circulate in the food system and alternative food movement activism.

In “Just Food?” DuPuis et al. examine relocalization efforts and activists’ beliefs that they will lead to a more equitable and democratic food system—a food system fostering sustainability, democracy, and justice (283-84). Regarding the presumption of justice in local food activism, DuPuis et al. state that “while food activists and scholars have repeatedly examined the idea of *the local*, they seldom explain what they mean by the term just” (284; emphasis in original). This critical assessment serves as a springboard for DuPuis et al.’s discussion regarding how conceptions of justice implicitly inform alternative food movements (including the local food movement), as well as their argument for a reflexive notion of justice.

Their discussion is grounded on what they say is the central debate in modern political theory: the tension between “the democratic ideals of individual autonomy and sovereign notions of ‘the common good’ as a particular vision of ‘the good society’” (285). According to DuPuis et al., this tension is epitomized by the “social contract-based, perfectionist view of justice” and theorists (i.e.

utilitarian philosophers) who find that perfectionist view of justice antithetical to personal freedom and the ability to choose one's own idea of "the good, just life" (286). We see this tension between individual autonomy and the common good play out in the distinctions between Novak's and Adams' theory and other social justice theories. Novak's and Adams' rejection of "equality-as-uniformity"—in effect rejecting other social justice theorists' push for distributive justice as a common good—is based on their defense of "freedom and initiative," which they contend equality-as-uniformity and distributive justice as a common good impinges upon. Novak and Adams come out decidedly on the side of individual autonomy and in opposition to allocative justice as a common good, as well as against the state being involved in distribution of resources.

As with many contemporary theories and discussions of justice, Rawls' theory is a focal point for DuPuis et al.; they believe Rawls "initiated an intense debate over the nature of justice in contemporary society" by providing "the most prominent attempt to reconcile" the central debate through formulating a theory of justice that takes "seriously the utilitarian notions of liberty from authority while maintaining the social contract idea that there is one universal idea of justice as 'fairness'" (286-87). Rawls may not identify his position on freedom (liberty) as stemming from utilitarian notions, but he is trying to reconcile a tension between freedom (liberty) and equality (which he arguably sees as a common good). Recall that he explains his political liberal conception of justice as fairness as responding to: "Debates over the last two centuries or so mak[ing] plain that there is no public

agreement on how basic institutions are to be arranged so as to be most appropriate to the freedom and equality of democratic citizenship” (Rawls 2). Rawls insists that justice requires free and equal citizens—perhaps this is what DuPuis et al. mean by Rawls’ reconciling the central debate they identify—as well as the principles of justice he lays out. For their part, DuPuis et al. identify and discuss three alternative perspectives/theories of justice that critique Rawls’ theory: political economy, communitarian, and cultural. They see a productive tension between these perspectives/theories and draw on it to argue for a reflexive notion of justice. A notion of justice they describe as having “a clear understanding of the complexities of justice in terms of its various and contradictory meanings” (DuPuis et al. 284).

According to DuPuis et al., political economy perspectives primarily locate injustice in the structure of capitalism and its market-based individualism (287). They tell us political economy perspectives draw on Marx in identifying and illuminating the exploitative relationship between capital and labor as forming a prime basis of social injustice. However, DuPuis et al. see alignment in Marx’s and Rawls’ critique of “perfectionist ideas of social justice,” and suggest this aligned critique signals agreement with utilitarian views of freedom “insofar as the solution to social problems was not the reestablishment of particular normative values, but the establishment of better political processes (although [there] is disagree[ment] about the nature of those processes)” (287).

DuPuis et al. also consider the political economy perspective against communitarian and cultural views on justice, perfectionist ideals, and freedom. DuPuis et al. say communitarian theories—which “begin by reembracing ideas of the good life as shared-community values”—argue in favor of forms of social justice “supporting community-based autonomy, in which people join together to articulate decisions about the good life and how to go about making a good society” (288). According to DuPuis et al., the idea of the good life for communitarians is grounded in and developed through “particular relationships of trust,” typically based on close geographic proximity and/or voluntary association (288). This position, they argue, counters liberal egalitarian notions of social justice, “which defines the good life as equal political representation within a ‘neutral state’” (DuPuis et al. 288). To the extent that social justice theorists/theories take liberal egalitarian positions, the good life for them is about much more than political representation.

DuPuis et al. maintain that progenitors of cultural perspectives—which they identify with feminism, postcolonial, and/or critical race studies—may believe justice requires shared norms, but are critical of communitarian particularism. They contend cultural theories find that communitarian particularism advocating shared norms, as well as universalist notions of justice, tend to derive from “a particular type of person, generally the Western white male citizen” (DuPuis et al. citing Lipsitz, and Omi and Winant 288). Moreover, according to DuPuis et al., cultural perspectives are critical of the perfectionist ideals underlying

communitarian formulations of the good life, but nonetheless agree with communitarians “that justice requires shared norms, although in different ways” (288-89). They also say cultural perspectives advocacy for justice derives from identity-based theories of justice and the good life; ones that “begin by uncovering the racialized aspect—‘whiteness’—of seemingly universal ideals of the good life, and argue that all universal ideals are, in fact, embedded in particular forms of racial dominance” (DuPuis et al. 289).

Though they provide differing views of justice, DuPuis et al. argue that food movement activists tend to work at the nexus of political economy, communitarian, and egalitarian conceptions of justice. They believe local food movement epitomizes this approach in bringing together political economy perspectives “anti-corporate critiques with a communitarian preference for value-based food systems that are based on group interconnections in local moral economies” (DuPuis et al. 291). They maintain working at this nexus has resulted in alternatives to the industrial food system posed by food movement activists moving away from “Marx’s revolutionary ideas of radical social restructuring” and instead seeking justice through alternatives such as “communitarian relocalization through consumer support for local farmers—and the utilitarian solution of the market—as the ideal” (DuPuis et al. 292). But they also assert local food politics enables an alliance between Marxian anticorporatists and communitarians, because “local food solves the ‘justice problem’ as defined by both perspectives” (DuPuis et al. 292). They say we need to wade into the muck of this “pragmatic politics”—

a politics of aligning those with distinctly different views about the meaning of justice—rather than simply spurning it as incompatible with particular (pure?) ideas of justice. They propose doing so through a reflexive approach to localist food politics (DuPuis et al. 293).

DuPuis et al. argue a reflexive perspective on localism (and justice) works “within awareness of the tensions between different definitions of justice, environmental and bodily health, and good food, while admitting that localist strategies are imperfect and contradictory (297). Their reflexive approach follows David Hess in seeing the potential for localist politics, though problematic, moving us toward a progressive politics of justice and equality. Reflexivity as a progressive politics of justice is a “contingent process by which people pursue goals while acknowledging the imperfection of their actions” (DuPuis et al. 297). DuPuis et al. believe that by acknowledging and working within imperfections and contradictions a reflexive approach to food politics and justice “will enable a more complex and inclusive discussion about what a just food system should look like, rather than reflecting certain ‘community values’ as if all communities were defined by a monolithic set of values” (301). Reflexive justice, they argue, “brings activism back to the imperfect politics of process and away from the perfect politics and privileged politics of standard setting” (DuPuis et al. 302). Ultimately, they see reflexivity as the key to a generative localist food (and alternative food movement) politics, and seemingly think reflexivity could help redress racial disparities in the food system.

DuPuis et al. provide a valuable account of ideas of justice offering alternative perspectives to Rawls' theory, and how these perspectives inform alterative food movements. Their argument for a notion of justice wading into the tensions between these perspectives to produce "pragmatic politics" drawing on disparate perspectives is useful. It provides us a way of thinking through the complexities and tension in conceptions of justice. A number of justice theorists/theories discussed in chapter two recognize and work with/in the tensions, messiness, and imperfection of disparate conceptions of justice. Many of these theorists' conceptions (i.e. Walzer, Barry, Miller, Young, and Lovett) arguably work at the intersections of the perspectives/critiques of Rawls DuPuis et al. identify and explain, and have "a clear understanding of the complexities of justice in terms of its various and contradictory meanings" (DuPuis et al. 284) while doing so. For example, Barry's and Miller's critiques of Rawls acknowledge his basic structure as an important grounding element of justice, even though they believe domination may be drawn into it. This highlights the importance of what grounds accounts of justice. For Rawls, the basic structure, social cooperation between free and equal citizens, and his principles of justice ground his theory. Barry and Miller largely ground their theories on remedying the impact of domination through redistributing resources. Their grounding aligns more with political economy and cultural perspectives DuPuis et al. explicate. For their part, DuPuis et al. apparently ground reflexive justice on bringing "activism back to the imperfect politics of process and away from the perfect politics and privileged politics of

standard setting” (302). Their discussion of how localism works at the nexus of political economy, communitarian, and egalitarian conceptions of justice approaches is instructive on this point.

DuPuis et al. laud localism that moves away from “Marx’s revolutionary ideas of radical restructuring” to combine political economy perspectives’ anticorporatism with “communitarian relocalization through consumer support for local farmers—and the utilitarian solution of the market—as the ideal” (292). This is the type of approach they advocate, an approach to changing the food system through “pragmatic politics,” which works with/in the imperfection and possible contradictions of utilizing disparate conceptions of justice. Their theory of reflexive justice aims to do this. Given its aim, DuPuis et al. are right about reflexive justice enabling a more complex discussion regarding what a just food system looks like.

However, their notion of reflexive justice working with/in contradictions in perspectives they identify and explicate raises serious questions. For example, given the material privilege and deprivation packed into in the US’s racially segregated social structure and its food system, what sort of progressive politics or just food system are you pursuing by utilizing a combination of political economy and communitarian perspectives without an intent to radically restructure the political-economy or social structure? There need to be some clear objectives, aims, and principles guiding conceptions of justice. Otherwise, what is the point of having a theory of justice at all? The theorists/theories discussed in chapter two

articulate clear objectives, aims, and principles—which are in some cases incommensurable—but DuPuis et al.’s reflexive justice does not have discernible ones. Justice should be grounded on more than bringing activism back to the imperfect politics of process. How do you work through incommensurable contradictions in theorists/theories via an “imperfect politics of process?” It is probably impossible to do so. Without clear objectives and aims one is left without a basis for taking a position when confronted with incommensurable “contradictory meanings” or ideas regarding justice or what constitutes justice and equality.

Harrison’s identification and critique of notions of justice underlying alternative food movements bears similarities to DuPuis et al.’s analysis of justice in alternative food movements, but Harrison provides some basis for deciding between incommensurable ideas and theories of justice. In a similar vein as DuPuis et al., Harrison notes the role of political philosophy in conceptualizing justice: “Western philosophers...have long debated the meaning of political justice,” which demonstrates that “justice is not an uncontested concept” (11). Maintaining that justice is a contested concept has echoes of Proudhon’s conclusion in the nineteenth century that justice has not reached its last phase. Not only does Harrison consider justice a contested concept, but recall Harrison also maintains “it is neither accurate nor useful to think about the world around us...as generally devoid of justice” (11).

According to Harrison, in the US the state took a utilitarian approach to justice throughout the twentieth century. Harrison contends this approach, which entailed undertaking interventions to provide the greatest good for the greatest number, allowed “environmental problems [to bloom] under the watch of utilitarian-based environmental apparatuses” (16). Harrison also maintains the blooming of environmental problems led to increasing critiques of utilitarianism, and in the last three decades these critiques enabled two prominent alternative conceptions of justice to take hold in mainstream Western environmental politics: libertarianism and communitarianism (16).

Harrison describes libertarianism as viewing “individual liberty as the hallmark of justice” and identifying “private property as the institution that best nurtures and protects liberty and endorse[s] the free market as the only socially just institutional mechanism of exchanging property” (16-17). Harrison further contends: “Neoclassical economists like Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman applied libertarian ideas to the realm of economic, social, and environmental policy analysis, and [beginning in the 1970s]...major leaders in the Western world have stridently put those libertarian-inspired recommendations into practice” (118). This enabled, Harrison argues, the “libertarian conception of justice” to become “the ideological heart and soul of the ‘neoliberalization’ of environmental politics of the past thirty years” (118). It is also central to Novak’s and Adam’s conception of social justice. This rise of a libertarian conception of justice, Harrison contends, engendered a “shift by the state, industry, and many activists

alike toward voluntary and market-based solutions to” pesticide use in conventional agriculture and as a response to other environmental problems (118). Harrison says the mantra of voting with your dollars is emblematic of this shift.

This mantra, Harrison contends, invokes “prescriptions of libertarian politics” by “solving problems through increasing consumer choice in the marketplace, framing problems as individual rather than structural, and dismissing the need for state interventions into industry” (162). Market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to changing the food system, therefore, probably best captures the influence of libertarian notions of justice in the food system and on alternative food activism. Harrison argues this “libertarian model of change [and justice] is one in which social and environmental benefits are tied to isolated, individualized purchases, and thus are problematically undemocratic, contingent on ever-shifting consumer whims and abilities, enjoyed mostly by relatively privileged consumers” (162).

This approach to justice not only runs the risk of abandoning those who cannot afford to purchase their protection from the harms of conventional agriculture, but, as Harrison maintains, it additionally abandons “the state as a crucial actor in protecting the public from problems like pesticide drift...effectively absolving the state of its responsibilities to ensure environmental protections for all people” (162). This, Harrison posits, also “effectively absolves the state of...responsibilities to ensure the conditions of social justice” (163). I agree with Harrison’s observation regarding a libertarian model of change and

justice absolving the state of responsibilities, but also think it does more work than that regarding the relationship between the state, democracy, and justice. It displaces democracy *and* justice from the state to the market.

According to Harrison, the other prominent alternative conception of justice, communitarianism, “argue[s] that members of a ‘community’ possess a shared understanding of the good life and thus are in the best positions to identify their own conceptions of justice and injustice” (17). Similar to DuPuis et al., Harrison finds communitarianism shot through food localization projects and local food activists’ arguments that direct relationships between producers and consumers create the conditions for a just food system. Harrison is skeptical about this: “historically, environmental localization politics in California and elsewhere in the United States have...served the economic interests of local elites rather than some generalized community,” thus, “local politics cannot be *presumed* to foster progressive viewpoints or otherwise facilitate EJ [environmental justice]” (164; emphasis in original). Harrison contends that “communitarianism is quite compatible with libertarianism,” and believes these conceptions of justice shape political institutions and policies, as well as underlie calls for and pursuit of change by alternative food movements (165).

Harrison concludes that the influence of libertarianism and communitarianism on agrifood activists has meant “some of the predominant forms of alternative agrifood activism have come to rely extensively on market mechanisms...[o]rganic agriculture, fair trade, and local food systems are all key

examples of the ways in which some agrifood activists have embraced the market as the primary mechanism of social and environmental change” (161). The influence of libertarianism and communitarianism on policymakers has led them to “inaccurately assume that the marketplace (for libertarians) or local politics (for communitarians) can provide the incentives needed for effective solutions to environmental problems, and accordingly dismiss state interventions” (Harrison 120). In dismissing state interventions and prioritizing the marketplace, libertarian and communitarian visions of justice “do not help us deal with environmental inequalities like pesticide drift. Instead, they ignore those inequalities, reinforce them, and render them more difficult to see” (Harrison 204). In order to confront inequality, Harrison thinks local food system (and other alternative food) advocates “need to compel people to act as citizens beyond their purchasing decisions and to fight the...ideological, industrial, and other structural roots of social and environmental exploitation” (165).

Harrison maintains that pesticide drift activists’ work and the EJ movement both resist the path laid out by libertarian and communitarian justice: pesticide drift activists operationalize a notion of justice that corresponds with the broader environmental justice movement, which rejects the “libertarian and communitarian assumptions that unfettered markets and communities mythical shared understandings can produce socially just outcomes” (139). These activists largely reject libertarian and communitarian conceptions of justice as incapable of remedying environmental harms, and “assert that justice is a process of accounting

for and combating inequality, oppression, a lack of meaningful participation, and inadequate capabilities” (Harrison 139). In contradistinction to reflexive justice, this vision of justice clearly centers domination, and has an objective and aim—it does not value processes for their own sake—of remedying the (lasting) impact of domination.

Pesticide drift activists are not the only activists Harrison identifies as straying “wildly from communitarian and libertarian visions of justice” (165). Harrison asserts that “community food security activism and other food justice efforts” work “from the perspective that accessible, affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food is an essential capability for any community to function properly;” thus they advocate a more radical approach to justice geared toward combating structural inequalities (165). This vision of justice would align with progressive conceptions of social justice, like Barry’s and Miller’s, which insist on using substantive outcomes as measure of justice. Harrison clearly finds rejecting libertarian and communitarian conceptions of justice in favor of visions that prioritize redressing economic inequalities as more capable of producing structural change, because they “both illustrate and emphasize the need to combat...race and class-based institutionalized inequalities...through collective action and confronting the state” (166). In taking this position, Harrison is forwarding conceptions of justice along the lines of those articulated by Barry, Miller, Lovett, Hunt, and Young.

DuPuis et al.'s and Harrison's analyses of justice circulating in alternative food movement(s) illustrate how conceptions of justice undergird alternative food movement activism. This should make us keenly aware that alternative food movement activism is filled with ideas about justice whether or not activist make claims about seeking justice or a just food system. Their analyses should also make clear that the politics of race and justice is shot through alternative food movement(s). Together DuPuis et al.'s and Harrison's work demonstrates how vital it is to understand what justice means and how it circulates in alternative food movements regardless of whether or not activist make claims about seeking justice or a just food system. With this in mind we turn to a discussion of food justice.

4.4 Food Justice

Current alternative food movement activism, as food sovereignty amply demonstrates, extends beyond market-/consumer-based approaches. Food justice activism has a pronounced strand that departs from pursuing alternatives through the neoliberal market and consumer-citizens. Furthermore, food justice advocates largely work for equitable distribution of resources in the food system, but this does not mean food justice is monolithic. There is complexity in conceptualizing, defining, and pursuing food justice. Why does such complexity exist? This might be explained, in part, by the vastness of the food system, and the number of groups working toward "just" alternatives to practices and processes of the corporate food regime. It is also due to the fact that pursuing justice in the food system does not

exist in a vacuum; it is connected to broader social, political, and economic phenomena impacting understandings of justice.

Food studies literature provides varying accounts of conceptualization and pursuit of food justice. *Food Justice*, Gottlieb's and Joshi's formative study of food justice, captures the complexity of pursuing justice in the food system and the difficulty in defining food justice. Gottlieb and Joshi found that groups embracing food justice "vary in agendas, constituencies, and focus" (6), and observed that food justice activists and others working for justice in the food system "are still grappling with core issues of equity, empowerment, and social change to better define their own place among a diverse and sometimes divided set of food advocacy groups" (5). Yet they argue that while "interpretations of food justice can be complex and nuanced...the concept is simple and direct: justice for all in the food system" (Gottlieb and Joshi 223). According to Gottlieb and Joshi, "justice for all in the food system" is probably best understood as "ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly" (6). Gottlieb and Joshi contend that this means despite food justice advocates variegated conceptions and definitions of food justice, food justice advocates "share a commitment to...achieve equity and fairness in relation to food system impacts and a different, more just, and sustainable way for food to be grown, produced, made accessible, and eaten" (223).

While the difficulty in conceptualizing and defining food justice captured by Gottlieb and Joshi may remain, in the time since *Food Justice* was published Gottlieb's and Joshi's assertion that "food justice remains little explored in print, film, and other media" (6) does not reflect the current circulation and use of the term food justice. We have certainly moved beyond food justice's limited circulation and use in alternative food movement(s), activist films such as *Food Justice: A Growing Movement*, and assessments in food studies literature. Food justice has experienced broad use and invocation by alternative food movement activists and greater consideration beyond food studies literature. Food justice has been addressed in venues ranging from food studies literature to *Ted Talks* to film (i.e. *A Place at the Table*). It has also been discussed in news media, and touched upon in network television shows such as ABC's *Food Revolution*. Food justice even reached the hallowed halls of Harvard Law School with the *Just Food? Conference*. Food justice advocates' concerns with justice and equity/equality have gained traction in food system activism and beyond, making conceptions and analyses of it more complex. Nonetheless, Gottlieb's and Joshi's claim that at the heart of food justice—and increasingly central to other alternative food movement activism and rhetoric—is a notion of "justice for all in the food system" seems to ring true. But, as Harrison avers, what justice means and how to realize it is (bitterly) contested political terrain.

Scholars Accounts of Food Justice

Food studies scholars provide varying explications of food justice. While scholars identify connections between food justice and other alternative food movements, many conclude that what sets food justice apart from most other alternative food movements is that food justice advocates center race, injustice, and inequality in their efforts to change the food system. For example, Alkon and Norgaard contend “food justice places the need for food security—access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food—in the contexts of institutional racism, racial formation, and racialized geographies... and links food insecurity to institutional racism...[by] emphasizing race and power” (289, 301). Alkon and Agyeman think food justice addresses race and class differently than the broader “food movement”: “food justice movement combines an analysis of racial and economic injustice with practical support for environmentally sustainable alternatives,” and food justice’s “race- and class-conscious analysis expands that of the food movement to include not only ecological sustainability but also social justice” (6). They further maintain: “Essential to the food justice movement is an analysis that recognizes the food system itself as a racial project and problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food” (Alkon and Agyeman 5).

Alfonso Morales similarly asserts that food justice organizations “borrow from most every strand in the web of interrelated organizations and ideas, but they focus on issues of racial inequality in the food system by incorporating explicit

antiracist messages and strategies into their work” (150). Morales maintains that by focusing on race and class in the food system, the “food justice approach aligns movement organizations explicitly with the interests of communities and organizations whose leaders have felt marginalized by white-dominated organizations and communities” (158). In a similar vein, Alkon and Agyeman assert that “communities of color are beginning to engage in *food justice* activism in order to provide for themselves while imagining new ecological and social relationships” (5-6; emphasis in original). Holt-Gimenez sees an even stronger connection between food justice and communities of color: “Underserved communities of color in the Global North—as the result of recent and historical waves of colonization, dispossession, and exploitation—form the backbone of the food justice movement” (273).

While centering race, injustice, and inequality may distinguish food justice from many alternative food movements, it also links it to other movements. Alkon and Norgaard suggest that through a “focus on racialized access to the environmental benefit of healthy food, food justice can link sustainable agriculture to environmental justice theory and practice” (292). Alkon and Agyeman see another link between food justice and environmental justice: “Although definitions of environmental justice vary, the two most common components are equal protection from environmental pollution and procedural justice. The food justice movement mirrors these two key concerns through the concepts of food access and food sovereignty” (8). They also believe that “food justice and environmental

justice movements” are connected due to both relying “on an institutional concept of racism consistent with those of antiracist activists and the academic literature” (Alkon and Agyeman 8). Guthman also sees a connection between race, food justice, and environmental justice: “Like the environmental justice movement, the food justice movement has arisen in response to a more mainstream movement dominated by privileged whites” (*Weighing In* 153).

The connections scholars see between food justice and environmental justice illustrates scholars’ expansive view regarding the possibilities food justice holds. For example, Alkon and Agyeman posit that the connection between environmental justice and food justice highlights how the “vision” of “many food justice activists goes beyond one in which wealthy consumers vote with their forks in favor of a more environmentally sustainable food system to imagine that all communities, regardless of race or income, can have both increased access to healthy food and the power to influence the food system that prioritizes environmental and human needs over agribusiness profits” (6). Gerda Wekerle also sees food justice pushing back against agribusiness, arguing that it challenges “the prevailing corporate globalized food system” and shows “by example and precedents that alternatives are possible” (382). Ahmadi thinks food justice goes even further, and that it “is in a battle to prove that there is another way: that we don’t have to sell our local wealth, our land, our environment, and our health to corporate America just to bring superficial change in an expedient manner” (157).

Scholars' assessments above suggest food justice is critical of large-scale, industrialized food production, locating injustice and inequality in processes and practices of the racialized corporate food regime. Their assessments also suggest food justice is following in the footsteps of antiracist politics and justice centering race, injustice, and inequality. These assessments effectively place food justice into the political economy and cultural perspectives DuPuis et al. identify. This marks a possible departure from market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to altering the food system, opening wide possibilities for activism and broader alternative visions.

Accordingly, food studies scholars' have broad-ranging views of the possible alternatives food justice is ushering in. Wekerle maintains that "theoretically, the food justice frame opens up linkages to a wider range of conceptual frameworks drawn from the literature on democracy, citizenship, social movements, and social and environmental justice" (379). Wekerle further contends food justice movements "provide insights into...the role of civil society and urban movements, particularly those focused on social and environmental justice; the subaltern strategies of resistance to globalization...and the transformation of urban governance" (379). Charles Levkoe sees similar possibilities: "Through food justice movements, a vision of food democracy has been adopted which directly challenges anti-democratic forces of control, exploitation, and oppression" (91). Levkoe says "food justice movements promote a strategy of food security," and claims that by "utilizing local grassroots initiatives" food justice has "the ability to

provide [an] opportunity [for] citizens...to work together to raise awareness, put pressure on governments, and build alternatives to the current system” (91-92).

Gottlieb and Joshi may see the most expansive potential alternatives in food justice, asserting it holds a possibility to “reorient” local, organic, and sustainability food movements in ways similar to the direction environmental justice groups were able to guide the environmental movement. They believe food justice could help address: the growth and production of food; the current push for locally produced food; environmental concerns regarding food; economic development; hunger; public health and nutrition; access to fresh and healthy food; and race, ethnicity, class, and gender issues (Gottlieb and Joshi 223-230). In large part, scholars’ accounts of food justice suggest it alters conceptual and theoretical possibilities for activism in the food system, and agree with Gottlieb’s and Joshi’s conclusion that food justice articulates “its own set of arguments” (224) that hold the possibility to “transform what we eat, where the food comes from, and how it is grown and produced” (225).

Identifying broad agreement in food studies literature regarding food justice—especially as it is distinguished from most other alternative food movements by centering race, injustice, and inequality—does not mean all scholars view food justice in a similar fashion. While the emergence of food justice as a concept and movement ushered in greater critical analyses of the impact of race and racism on the food system, some scholars express skepticism about this focus translating into redressing racial disparities in the food system.

This doubt is significantly driven by the composition of alternative food movements. For example, Guthman apparently thinks that despite food justice arising as a response to alternative food movements dominated by privileged whites, it is not as distinct from most alternative food movements as other scholars suggest. Guthman argues: “Not only does the food justice movement define high-quality food much as the alternative-food movement does (fresh, local, and seasonal, albeit with less emphasis on organic per se), it also gives scant attention to other injustices in the food system, particularly those arising in food production: exposure to toxic chemicals, poor working conditions...and disparities in wages and employment” (*Weighing In* 155). Guthman also suggestively expresses a “concern that a very vocal subset of the thin and privileged are shaping the strategies and practices of the food justice movement and the alternative-food movement more broadly, based on their own desires and aesthetics...in ways that don’t challenge their own privilege and body” (*Weighing In* 160). Such skepticism of food justice highlights the significance of Gottlieb and Joshi’s question about structural change and food justice: “In light of the vast reach of the dominant global food system and the expected responses of the major players, the question for food justice advocates remains, can more fundamental or structural change truly happen” (231)? With this question in mind, we explore food justice activism.

A Food Justice Alternative

DuPuis et al. and Harrison insightfully identify and explicate conceptions of justice underlying alternative food movements, and also explain how some of these conceptions (particularly communitarian and libertarian ones) undergird and complement market-driven efforts to change the food system. Food studies scholars studying food justice typically conclude its approach to understanding and seeking change of the food system is not heavily reliant on market-/consumer-based approaches underlying many other alternative food movements' praxis. To the extent food justice activism moves away from heavy reliance on the market for change, it also significantly departs from communitarian and libertarian ideas and conceptions DuPuis et al. and Harrison identify as generally undergirding market-oriented, consumer-based alternatives to the corporate food regime.

While food justice activists may depart from communitarian and libertarian ideas and conceptions undergirding other alternative food movements, this does not signal a uniform understanding of meaning and praxis of food justice. Even if food justice activism is animated by a drive to seek justice for all in the food system, as Gottlieb and Joshi conclude, this activism has variegated conceptions and praxis. Alkon and Agyeman suggest this is a strength of food justice, insisting that given what food justice tackles it warrants "a broad definition" (5). Whether or not we agree that a broad (and non-uniform) definition is a strength, exploring how food justice activists conceptualize justice is important to fully fleshing out the ways justice circulates and/or is deployed in alternative food activism.

Though food justice activism may be seeking justice for all in the food system, it contains distinctions indicative of a concept and movement still being forged. Complicating this is the veritable explosion of alternative food movement organizations claiming their work supports and/or is a form of food justice. The expanding claims of support and invocations of food justice make it nearly impossible to address all deployments of the concept by alternative food movement organizations. And I do not aim to do so. Rather, the discussion here of alternative food activists' explications of food justice—which focuses especially on organizations with longer histories working on alternatives in/to the food system and/or conceptualizing food justice—aims to capture a range of conceptions, understandings, and visions of food justice. Exploring these should further elucidate the politics of race and justice.

Just Food, founded in 1995, was an early leader in conceptualizing and articulating a vision of food justice. Just Food describes food justice as “communities exercising their right to grow, sell and eat healthy food,” and maintains a just food system is one where “healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers and animals” (“What is Food Justice”). Just Food contends “people practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities and a healthy environment” (“What is Food Justice”). Just Food’s description of food justice as a rights-grounded push for healthy, fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food is repeated, with slight variations, by many other

alternative food organizations. For instance, the Community Alliance for Global Justice’s Food Justice Project described food justice as “the right of communities everywhere to produce, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community. Good food is healthful, local, sustainable, culturally appropriate, humane, and produced for the sustenance of people and the planet” (“Food Justice Project”). Food First says food justice “sees the lack of healthy food in poor communities as a human rights issue and draws from grassroots struggles and US organizing traditions such as the civil rights and environmental justice movements” (“Food Justice”). Thus, as some scholars above do, Food First also sees a link between food justice and environmental justice.

The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance sees another link, one between food justice and food sovereignty. It suggests these movements share “a common link” in their “efforts to win community access to and control over land, water, seeds and the oceans” (“Teams”). U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance believes these efforts “can enhance and frame all struggles” for justice in the food system (“Teams”). In a similar vein, the Community Alliance for Global Justice’s Food Justice Project “seeks to challenge and transform the globalized, industrial, corporate-driven food system and promote existing alternatives” (*Food Justice Project*). Urban Growers Collective’s (UGC) Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative (GFJI) also aims to similarly transform the current food system. UGC’s “vision” for GFJI “is to establish a powerful network of individuals, organizations and community-based

entities all working toward a food secure and just world” (“Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative”). UGC envisions GFJI and its network as working to ensure “every neighborhood in low-income communities and communities of color has full access to fresh, healthy, local, affordable, culturally appropriate food every day through a variety of retail channels ranging from farmer’s markets to locally-owned small corner stores and supermarkets” (“Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative”). Furthermore, UGC believes that residents of these neighborhoods should “own and operate the small businesses that produce, distribute and sell the fresh, healthy food consumed in the neighborhood” (“Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative”).

UGC’s current iteration of GFJI inherits and builds upon the GFJI established in 2006 under the auspices of Growing Power Inc., which was partially rooted in a critique of community food security.²⁵ Morales’ documentation and analysis of Growing Power’s GFJI, before Growing Power disbanded, provides crucial insight into it. Morales found that Growing Power’s GFJI focused “most explicitly on using the food system as a means to dismantle racism,” and “served as a hub for bringing together alternative food organizations and activists to consult with and learn from each other’s efforts to combat racism and support sustainable food systems” (157-58). Morales argued that Growing Power’s GFJI was “particularly important in light of the overwhelming challenges involved in challenging the deeply entrenched and richly funded agribusiness industry, in

addition to government agencies with deeply racist histories, such as the USDA” (158-59).

Agribusiness’ and the USDA’s deep histories of producing and/or buttressing racial disparities in the food system are emblematic of the development of the US political-economy and the current (neoliberal) corporate food system. *Pursuing Alternatives’* discussion and enumeration of racial disparities and their bases amply illustrates this. As we see, many alternative food organizations pursuing and/or supporting food justice articulate visions engaging these histories, and aim to challenge forces and processes producing and supporting racial privilege and deprivation. Food justice activists’ explications of food justice and its objectives corroborate assessments many scholars have regarding food justice as a concept and movement: it largely departs from market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to altering the (neoliberal) corporate food system, and in doing so centers race, racism, and inequality.

However, not all food justice activism eschews the neoliberal marketplace in pursuing alternatives to processes and practices of the corporate food regime. The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) established a Food Justice Certification Program that works through the market and hails (institutional, organizational, and individual) consumer-citizens to address the continuing impact of racial domination and current racial inequality in the food system. AJP argues the existence of racial inequality and mechanisms of injustice have “given rise...to the need for racial and environmental justice,” and “have led to the need for food

justice,” because “structural racism...has enabled consolidation of...power in the hands of few via a foundation of strategic exploitation of black, brown, immigrant and native peoples” (“About”). The Food justice Certification Program is part of AJP’s aim to steer the food system to “greater fairness and equity” by empowering “those most marginalized by the current food system” (“Food Justice Certification Program”). AJP developed the program “over a decade long process of compiling input from stakeholders world wide” such as farmers, farmworkers, restaurant owners, and food process workers, as one tool to accomplish its aim (“Food Justice Certification Program”).

As Roff asserts, market-oriented, consumer-based approaches like AJP’s Food Justice Certification Program are not unimportant. This is evident in Los Angeles Food Policy Council’s use of AJP’s Program to support one of the five values, “valued workforce,” of its Good Food Program. Utilizing and adhering to stipulations in AJP’s Program in procurement decisions for food system purchases by the city of Los Angeles could possibly help increase protection of the health and safety of food system workers. Moreover, Los Angeles Food Policy Council’s utilization of AJP’s Program signals a willingness of state (or state-affiliated) apparatuses to incorporate aspects of food justice into their policymaking decisions and practices. This is demonstrated in other food policy councils; for example, in the Detroit Food Justice Task Force’s work with the Detroit Food Policy Council to develop a set of food justice principles. While adoption of food justice principles via certification programs might increase health and safety protections

(or possibly pay), it may also turn into just another way to incorporate and dilute challenges to the neoliberal corporate food system along the lines of what happened with the Fairtrade label and certification program. In any case, certification programs just tinker around the edges of the corporate food system, and do not aim to change its core of being a profit-based, large-scale, industrial system that concentrates land, wealth and resources in the hands of privileged subjects and communities.

4.5 Just Connections

Food justice activism does not only stand in contrast to other alternative food movements. There is overlap between food justice organizations' conceptions and work for justice and other alternative food movement activism; they share concerns, values, and, in some cases, visions of justice. For example, Why Hunger's pursuit of a socially just food system aiming to ensure "racial, economic, environmental and health equity for all," by addressing "the root causes of hunger, such as poverty, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression and structural inequities that create disproportionate barriers to food and land access for communities" ("How We Work") greatly resembles many food justice activists' visions of justice. Furthermore, Why Hunger's reference to social justice and its conclusion that "food justice is about everyone's individual and collective right to grow, distribute, access and eat healthy food, no matter who we are or where we live. It's about community power" ("Toolkit") demonstrates

overlap between food justice organizations' and other alternative food movement organizations' explication of food justice, and the growing influence of food justice in alternative food movement(s).

Food justice's shared concerns and values with other alternative food movements enables food justice activists to tap into and harness the appeal and support for change generated by other alternative food movement actors. But this ability appears limited because food justice activists also operationalize visions of justice (and equality) that directs their activism away from, and in some cases directly challenges, other alternative food movements' heavy reliance on the market, consumer-citizens, and consumer democracy to bring about change in the food system. Food justice activists primarily articulate visions of justice spurning consumer choice as a way to change the food system, this not only eschews and/or contests neoliberal corporate food processes and practices, but also clashes with alternative food movement activism heavily informed (implicitly or explicitly) by communitarian and libertarian conceptions of justice. Despite this tension, food justice activists' visions of justice, as well as conceptions of justice underlying other alternative food movements, essentially fit within a liberal framework of justice—a framework grounded on a liberty, equality, liberal democracy, rights-bearing subjects, and defending private property. However, while food justice fits in a liberal framework and advocates might address some of the same problems as other alternative food movements, their ideas about a just food system may not

necessarily correspond with all aspects that undergird this framework nor ideas other alternative food movements have for altering the food system.

For example, while some food justice activism may work for change through consumption in a neoliberal marketplace, as AJP's Food Justice Certification Program does, many food justice activists agree with Gottlieb and Joshi in seeing the neoliberal marketplace as exacerbating "justice-related issues" impacting "producers, the farmers, farm laborers, food processing and manufacturing workers, and all those who toil at the markets, restaurants, and other venues where food is produced and sold" (179). Food justice appears conflicted: it contains activism looking to the marketplace to change the food system, as well as ones contesting this approach. The former turns largely to consumer-citizens and consumer democracy to alter the food system. This contains productive capacities for altering the food system, and to the extent this route is guided by those (or concerns for the) most marginalized by the current food system it could foment some change that increases pay, improves labor conditions, and provides greater protection of food system workers' health and safety, but that is not all it does. Working for change through a neoliberal marketplace clearly runs the risk of more deeply embedding normative whiteness and buttressing legacies of racist liberalism and white supremacist equality in the food system. COVID-19 is exposing how fraught and destructive this is and why alternative food movements need to prioritize objectives and aims intended to equitably (re)distribute land, wealth, income, and resources.

Working through the (neoliberal) marketplace to alter the food system also situates privileged bodies (and privileged subjects' choices) as a locus and engine of change in the food system. This works against projects trying to empower those most marginalized in the current neoliberal corporate food system, and stands in contrast to subjects and communities of deprivation making materially-grounded claims on the state to remedy injustice and inequality. Marginalized subjects (and their privileged allies) making demands on the state to redress legacies of racial domination in the food system situates those throughout the socio-economic strata as subjects of change and justice, effectively pushing back against displacing justice and democracy to the market and elevating choices made by privileged subjects and communities. It is not clear that pursuing change through the neoliberal marketplace could work in unison with approaches possibly undermining the neoliberal corporate food system.

The relationship between food justice, food security, and food sovereignty is illuminating regarding correspondence, tension, and possible incommensurability in efforts to change the food system. Food justice activists' turn to the state and rights-based claims bear significant similarity to food security activism; some seem to think food security and food justice are working for the same alternative vision. Recall that Harrison identifies community food security activism as a food justice effort. However, recall also that the GFJI established by Growing Power Inc. was in part rooted in a critique of community food security and the way it addresses how racism structures the food system.

Growing Power's GFJI aligns more with food sovereignty, and against the corporate food regime. Though food security and food sovereignty share some objectives (i.e. food access), and activism for both is strongly grounded in rights-based claims—this could explain why some proponents of food justice seemingly want to simultaneously hold food security and food sovereignty positions—there are clear distinctions between them. Food security and food sovereignty notably differ in how they deal with food access: food security argues for a right to have access to food, while food sovereignty argues for a right to have both access to and ownership of land for people to grow/produce their own food. Their respective positions regarding food access reflects how markedly they differ in response to a neoliberal, corporatized food system, thus holding both positions simultaneously may be impossible. As Fairbairn notes, food security works within and incorporates aspects of the corporate food regime, whereas food sovereignty wants “demolish the regime and...construct an entirely new one in its place” (16).

The disjuncture between food security and food sovereignty—marked by their responses to the corporate food regime—and how food justice activists' visions of justice align with each could illuminate how radical a vision of justice (and equality) activists are willing to support. Food sovereignty has a much more radical approach to changing the food system. Where some scholars or activists see or aim to closely connect food justice with food security, others connect food justice more with food sovereignty. U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance does the latter, viewing both food justice and food sovereignty as supporting “movement away

from the dominant, corporate-controlled food system, which is shaped by systems of power and oppression” through seeking “solutions [to] dismantle systemic food injustice rooted in race, class, and gender oppression” (“Visions and Operating Principles”). Community to Community, a farmworker-led organization, posits and supports a different connection between food justice and food sovereignty. Community to Community, perhaps in agreement with Guthman’s critique of food justice, says they “discovered that food justice was not enough;” they maintain food sovereignty offers something additional, a “notion of being a sovereign human being” who has “control of the food that we eat. This includes knowing where the food comes from, what it is, and whenever possible, having access to land to create our own food sources” (“Food Justice”). Given the forces and politics impinging upon food justice activism there is a question about the extent to which food justice activists’ visions of justice will be (re)articulated to fall in line with and/or be incorporated into the current neoliberal corporate food system. Will food justice follow the path of food security (and other alternative food movements) and neoliberalize?

Food justice activism contains various explications and praxis, providing multiple possibilities for changing the food system. Even if the various directions activists push the concept and movement in remains in a broad liberal framework of justice, activists can push for greater or more limited transformation within it. As chapter two makes clear, the liberal framework is expansive; it contains within it theories of justice that marginalize domination, ones rejecting allocative justice,

ones relying heavily on the market, as well as theories centering domination, ones seeking and measuring justice based on substantive (material) outcomes, and/or conceptions that view the state as the primary vehicle for justice.

Food justice activism's potential alignments with food security or food sovereignty reflect the broad possibilities for food justice activists' visions of justice. Even if there is not a settled upon vision or definition regarding food justice amongst food justice activists, it is clear much of food justice activism has pushed for (and been instrumental in spurring further) critical engagement regarding the role race and racism play in the food system and alternative food movements. For example, as Alkon and Norgaard maintain, food justice activists have emphasized the link between food insecurity and institutional racism. Food justice activism has also, as Alkon and Agyeman observe, provided analyses identifying the food system as a racial project that shapes the production, distribution, and consumption of food.

Many food justice activists' own explications and praxis of food justice support food studies scholars' concluding that food justice activism centers race and racism, and pushes for a racially just and equal food system. There are implications for viewing the food system through this lens. Where alternative food movement activists center racial domination in their analyses and praxis, they not only challenge other alternative food movement concepts and praxis of change that do not center domination, but also theories of justice decentering domination. *Pursing Alternatives* believes centering domination opens up great possibilities for

redressing the foundational racism and white supremacy upon which the US food system was built. *Pursuing Alternatives* also contends that theories of justice centering domination that primarily measure (and judge) justice and equality based on substantive/material outcomes provides the best bases for addressing racial disparities and realizing racial justice and equality in the food system.

Regardless of whether or not there is a widely shared vision or definition of food justice, many activists' conceptions of food justice correspond with antiracist materially-grounded pursuits of justice and equality. This correspondence helps excavate buried knowledge and discussion about racial justice and equality. However, even with food justice analyses and explications pushing the concept and movement in an antiracist direction to pursue racial justice and equality, there remain questions about the extent to which it will follow this path. Food justice activism faces some formidable forces pushing against this path (not necessarily ones that offer direct racist opposition to racial justice and equality). Rather these are forces that, for example, separated antiracist civil rights projects and visions from prior alternative food movement activism. Such forces are often underpinned by privileged subjects who oppose racism and support equality via nonracism and representational regimes. This is perhaps best illustrated by the woke politics of the cultural left—whose adherents and champions are often privileged subjects and communities (a number of food studies scholars describe how such subjects populate many alternative food movements)—that (re)interpret materially-grounded antiracist politics, movements, and projects into cultural left identity

politics advocating/offering limited inclusion that does not seek systematic or structural transformation. These forces, politics, and subjects—through various mechanisms, techniques, and tactics—prop up a neoliberal political-economy, including a neoliberal corporate food system, built upon a history of racial domination and racial-political economic projects.

In light of this, Guthman is right to be concerned about “privileged [subjects]...shaping the strategies and practices of the food justice movement and the alternative-food movement more broadly, based on their own desires and aesthetics...in ways that don’t challenge their own privilege” (*Weighing In* 160). If this is the direction food justice activism primarily moves, it may turn into nonracist justice and be dominated by the hegemonic forces in US racial politics that position materially-evacuated conceptions of justice as racial justice, abetting privileged subjects and communities virtue signaling and cultural left identity politics that are incapable of transforming systems, structures, institutions, policies, and practices upon which their continued privileged existence rests. This politics of race and justice opposes racism but it is not a materially-grounded anti-racist pursuit of racial justice and equality.

The reinvigorated antiracist and racial justice movements of the last several years, which seem to have grown exponentially after George Floyd was killed, have opened up greater possibilities for conceptualizing justice in a liberal framework, (re)activating ideas that have long been subjugated by hegemonic racial politics and politics of justice in the nonracist period. This along with

COVID-19's exposure of (and the growing resistance to) the pay and conditions food system workers labor under expands the possibilities for food justice activism; it opens up more viable visions of justice, and activists must grapple with how radical a path to take. Will food justice activism heed scholar activists like Mares and Peña who call for food justice to follow food sovereignty rather than food security and "head in a more radical direction that could pose a direct challenge to a global, corporatized food system" (216)? Will alternative food movement activists and food system workers advocating such a radical progressive path to change be subdued and subjugated by subjects and communities invested in predominant ideas and violent hegemonic forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice? We are in a socio-political moment where more fundamental or structural change can happen, and food justice activists could help lead the way by directing alternative food movement(s) to support materially-grounded antiracist efforts to transform systems, structures, institutions, and policies buttressing racial disparities in the food system, which would challenge predominant epistemic and discursive formations in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice.

5. Conclusion: Paths to Justice

Pursuing Alternatives' exploration and discussion of distinct positions in the politics of race and justice provides insight into and illuminates the urgency of paths forward in pursuing justice and equality. Our choices regarding possible paths sheds light on the impact we think racist ideologies have in shaping the social, political, and economic circumstances we face in the US. They also shed light on what we believe should be done to address inequalities, including how to address the racially/economically disparate impact of COVID-19. One starting point for thinking about different available paths in the politics of race and justice could be through considering how food movements seek to alter the food system and how they respond to racial inequalities existing in it.

Many alternative food activists' efforts to alter the food system rely heavily on consumption in a neoliberal marketplace. These efforts to alter the corporate food system are implicitly and/or explicitly underpinned by (and parallel) theories of justice decentering domination. Thus, within alternative food movement activism, perhaps expectedly given the (normative) whiteness of it, there is a pronounced practice of largely neglecting the foundational role racial domination played in structuring the US food system. While this knowledge and neglect may not fuel privileged subjects' commitment to consumer-driven change in the food system, it is hard to believe those benefitting from this approach do not have some awareness of the inordinate benefits they receive by attempting to alter the food

system through the (neoliberal) marketplace. Like Robin Roff, I do not suggest consumer-based change is unimportant: consumer-based approaches to altering the food system could change practices (i.e. increase organic and/or sustainable food production), and spur more critical engagement of various practices entailed in producing the food we eat. The point here, therefore, is not to assert that consumer-based initiatives are incapable of producing some alterations to the food system, but to push us to think critically about the limits of these (and other) market-oriented efforts for change, and their connection to the productive capacities of predominant ideas and hegemonic forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses operative in the politics of race and justice.

Working through a neoliberal marketplace to alter the food system means bolstering a neoliberal political-economic system that builds upon on foundational racism and historic racial political-economic projects. This political-economic system has for the last three-to-four decades, as Holt-Gimenez maintains, “privatized public goods and deregulated all forms of capital worldwide,” and in the US it has “crippled our capacity to respond to problems in the food system by destroying our public sphere. Not only have the health, education, and welfare functions of government been gutted...social and political institutions have been restructured to serve global markets” (271, 272). Furthermore, the rise of neoliberal capitalism and its role in the food system means, as Ahmadi contends, “the system of capital is [a] giant brick wall the food movement keeps running up

against. The issue is not simply a lack of capital but capital itself, and the present ideology behind it” (159).

Alternative food movement activists must ask themselves if relying heavily on consumer-based change in a neoliberal corporate food system is conducive to the change they seek. If it is, then I would suggest their work is probably also significantly conducive to upholding racial disparities and maintaining the existence of communities of privilege and deprivation. In market-oriented, consumer-based approaches to altering the food system redistributing land, wealth, income, and resources is almost certainly off the table (unless it could somehow be achieved by neoliberal purchasing power.) A broad-based commitment to change via the neoliberal marketplace will not substantially (or substantively) equalize political-economic disparities, which were produced and supported by privileged subjects’ historic investment in racist ideologies and the white settler state reproducing this investment through its policies and practices, nor will it bring about racial equality in the food system or beyond.

Neoliberalism, which is the present political-economic orthodoxy of capitalism, builds upon and exacerbates racial privilege and deprivation. Neoliberalism bolsters racial disparities in the food system, which do not exist in a vacuum, by further concentrating ownership and control of land, and exacerbating unequal (racialized) distribution of wealth, income, and resources. Disparities in the food system are part of a broader socio-historical/socio-political context. Importantly, socio-economic disparities in the food system are intimately

connected to the politics of race and justice in the US. Thus, to understand the structure of (and racial disparities in) the food system, and the implication of efforts to alter the food system, we need to consider them in the context of the politics of race and justice in the US more broadly.

5.1 Envisioning Justice

Novak and Adams tell us: “Humans in all their factions and all their parties have different visions of how justice ought to be institutionalized” (284). *Pursuing Alternatives*’ discussion of the wide range of theories of justice in the nonracist period—ranging from Rawls’ justice as fairness that serves as a touchstone for justice theorists/theories in this period to Walzer’s pluralistic approach and notion of complex equality to Young’s political responsibility to Barry’s, Miller’s, and Novak’s and Adams’ differing conceptions of social justice—bears this out. For example, Novak and Adams juxtapose their rejection of “equality-as-uniformity,” which they argue seeks equal rewards for all and imagines “society...is always under command,” against their understanding of progressive’s conceptions of social justice that function “to blame somebody else, to blame *the system*, to blame those who (mythically) control it” (43; emphasis in original).

Novak’s and Adams’ view of justice and equality also stands in decided conflict with Lovett’s position and concern with the relationship between domination and justice and equality. Lovett contends injustice and inequality are grounded in domination, which he describes as people “being dependent on a

person or group with the power to arbitrarily withhold the goods or services necessary to meet basic needs whose satisfaction one does not regard as optional” (824). Thus, for Lovett, domination is pivotal to understanding the institutionalization of justice and equality—this position markedly departs from Novak and Adams. Novak’s and Adams’ theory also directly contrasts with Dworkin’s view that inequality of wealth should be reduced through welfare and other forms of redistribution financed by progressive taxes, and his belief that government needs to intervene to prevent discrimination—for example, in education, housing, and employment—to assure that the economics of privilege do not prevail over justice and equality (187, 203).

While *Pursuing Alternatives* acknowledges and discusses complexity in theories of justice, it identifies two distinct, broader approaches to justice in the nonracist period. One that decenters domination and another centering domination in conceptualizing justice. These distinct broader approaches provide different grounds for conceptualizing justice and dealing with domination and its legacies in the US. These two approaches pair with different understandings of and approaches to racism and racial domination in contemporary US racial politics. Theorists/theories of justice decentering domination complementarily pair with nonracist politics and its engagement of racist ideologies and historic racial domination. From a nonracist perspective, the material impact of racial domination is largely past. This means it is unnecessary to center domination in thinking about or designing policies and practices to pursue or ensure equality. From this

perspective, race and racism are centralized, at most, in supporting representational regimes providing selective social, political, and economic inclusion for nonwhites. Nonracist (racial) politics stands in contrast to materially-grounded antiracist politics, which seek to redress social, political, and economic legacies of racism and white supremacy through centering racial domination in pursuing justice and equality (especially via policymaking and institutional practices).

While there may be a distinction in theorists/theories decentering or centering domination and how they pair with ideas in racial politics, they share an extremely important commonality: their respective engagements of race, racism, and racial domination remain within a liberal framework—one grounded on liberty, equality, liberal democracy, rights-bearing subjects, and private property—for conceptualizing justice and equality. This liberal framework holds a broad range of possibilities for and pursuits of justice and equality. In the power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in this framework, ideas articulated by theories of justice decentering domination predominate. Crucially, these ideas are hegemonic in significant part due to the extent they have been able to subjugate and marginalize materially-grounded conceptions of justice centering domination and measuring justice based on substantive outcomes. In a sense, this is largely the point of critiques of Rawls' influential theory of justice as fairness, especially by those taking issue with how Rawls addresses domination, distribution of resources, and/or substantive outcomes. This position is epitomized by Young's critique of Rawls' theory for not providing "an account of large-scale systemic outcomes of

the operations that constrain some people at the same time that they enable others” (4). Young argues the overarching concern guiding conceptions of justice should be whether they “produce outcomes that support or minimize domination” (7).

While Young and many of Rawls’ other critics think justice as fairness does not sufficiently account for how domination has socio-historically positioned people, this does not mean they all thoroughly reject his political liberal account of justice. For example, Barry and Miller both think the basic structure Rawls identifies could be made more just by centering domination and substantive equality rather than prioritizing formal equality and fairness of procedures. Barry’s, Miller’s, and Young’s position(s) regarding Rawls’ theory largely encapsulate the difference between decentering and centering domination in conceptualizing justice. Theories decentering domination prioritize formal equality and procedural fairness as a basis/measure of justice, whereas those centering it view material (substantive) equality as just as important, if not more so.

Materially-grounded conceptions of racial justice, which view justice and equality through a historical lens, coincide with theorists/theories centering domination. Materially-grounded racial justice aligns in particular with theorists/theories centering domination that aim to redress inequalities produced by domination and believe this production impacts present conditions, such as Barry who believes “there is a strong tendency for positions in the [social] hierarchy to be inherited” (17), which means that “on the basis of just a few facts about a child, such as its social class and its race or ethnicity, we can make a good prediction of

where it will finish up in the distribution of earning, the likelihood that it will spend time in jail, and many other outcomes, good and bad” (41); therefore, Barry argues, we must identify and challenge “the multifarious ways in which advantage and disadvantage are perpetuated over generations (15).

The distinction between approaches decentering and centering domination (and why materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice aligns closer with theorists/theories centering domination) is arguably best illustrated by Dworkin’s identification and discussion of two separate principles of equality as political ideal. Recall that Dworkin states the first principle “requires that the government treat all those in its charge as equals, that is, as entitled to equal concern and respect...The second principle requires that the government treat all in its charge *equally* in the distribution of some resource of opportunity, or at least work to secure the state of affairs in which they are all equal or more nearly equal in that respect” (190; emphasis in original). Dworkin accurately observes that there is broad agreement within modern politics about the first principle. This broad agreement, which elevates the first principle well above all others, has long underpinned public understandings of (liberal) justice and equality.

Throughout the nonracist period the agreement on the first principle set the conditions for conceptualizing a plausible account of justice. This explains why for many George Floyd’s death, which shows that the first principle is not being observed, demonstrates we are living in an unjust society. However, where Rawls and others decentering domination, as well as much of the public, prioritize the

first principle Dworkin identifies (which parallels Rawls' first principle of justice) theorists'/theories' centering domination clearly think the two principles should be on the same plane. The belief that these two principles should be weighted equally in understanding and conceptualizing justice and equality aligns with (and arguably grounds) conceptions of antiracist materially-grounded visions of racial justice.

Where theorists and the broader public stand regarding these two principles is crucial to how they envision justice and equality; it tells us a lot about the role people think redressing historic domination and its lasting impact should have in understanding and pursuing justice and equality. Some theorists take prioritization of the first principle even further than Rawls and Rawlsian liberal justice. For example, Novak and Adams seem to think seeking and supporting anything beyond the first principle is a distortion of justice and equality. With this position as a guiding force, they argue against the pursuit of substantive equality and for limiting state involvement where justice and equality are concerned, because they believe it is not "equipped" nor "fully trustworthy" for "envisioning" the full common good (Novak 97).

Pursuing Alternatives clearly disagrees with Novak and Adams, as well as others who prioritize the first principle over the second, and argues that (in)justice and (in)equality are material experiences heavily grounded in and shaped by predominant epistemic and discursive formations throughout the history of the politics of race and justice, which necessitates pursuit of racial justice and

substantive equality in order to realize the most robust vision/version of liberal justice and equality. To address in/justice as a material experience and remedy racial inequalities we must recognize and contest predominant ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice, which are arrayed against materially-grounded antiracist visions of (racial) justice and equality—doing so could very well address defects in formal equality of opportunity that Rawls maintains need remedying (to which he posits fair equality of opportunity as a remedy). *Pursuing Alternatives* argues against positions it believes subordinates antiracist visions of justice and substantive material equality to formal equality and procedural fairness. *Pursuing Alternatives* argues for a materially-grounded antiracist vision of racial justice, which addresses how, as Barry notes, “our lives start from a non-ideal condition of an unequal playing field” (22). If we do not strive to actively redress the unequal playing field produced by racism and white supremacy, and dismantle systems, structures and institutions protecting racial inequality, we will continue to be plagued by what Tim Wise astutely observes: “In the absence of constructive action intended to truly equalize opportunities and life chances between whites and persons of color, institutionalized white privilege...will remain a fixed and normative condition” (191).

Pursuing Alternatives believes the state should be used as a vehicle for the realization of materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice and equality, visions that not only assure the state maintains equal concern and respect for all, but also, to borrow from Dworkin, provides “a firm contrast” and seeks to dismantle “the

economics of privilege” (203). Actualizing such visions will entail transforming much of the public’s understanding and state’s approach to justice and equality. In taking its position, *Pursuing Alternatives* not only disagrees with Novak and Adams, but also with Rawls’ rejection of allocative justice, Dworkin’s belief that rights of redistribution should not override the efficiency of the market, and the libertarian and communitarian understandings and pursuit of justice implicitly and/or explicitly informing much of alternative food movement activism.

Conditions of Justice

For much of US history the conditions for conceptualizing a plausible account of justice were underpinned by racism and white supremacy informing liberalism. This reconciled illiberal racist ideologies with liberal ideals, which was integral to envisioning and pursuing liberal justice and equality. This historical melding is also foundational in structuring social, political, and economic life in the US, including in the food system. Racist liberalism, white supremacist equality, and the production and cultivation of communities of privilege and deprivation epitomize the implications of melding racist ideologies (and racial domination) with liberalism and its tenets. Racist liberalism and white supremacist equality (and attendant racial disparities), thus, have long informed and been a part of plausible accounts of justice (and what Rawls refers to as the basic structure) in the US.

The mid-twentieth century civil rights movements persuaded most people to view racist ideologies and racial domination as incompatible and irreconcilable with liberal values. This undercut then-existing predominant ideas and hegemonic forces in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice that supported reconciliation of racist ideologies with liberalism and its tenets. The historical difference that distinguishes the nonracist period from preceding periods in racial politics (and the politics of race and justice), therefore, is that mid-twentieth century civil rights movements were successful in persuading most people, especially race- and class-privileged subjects, to withdraw their investments in racist ideology. While support for liberal ideals remains, for most whites racist ideologies can no longer be reconciled with liberal values (especially liberal tenets of justice and equality). Consequently, the vast majority of racially privileged subjects would not abide an openly racist response—as they did in responding with Jim Crowism to black social, political, and economic gains during Reconstruction—to mid-twentieth century civil rights gains. This shift in racial politics ushered in by mid-twentieth civil rights movements displaced many subjects previously invested in racism and white supremacy. This created (largely white) epistemic migrants who needed a new place to settle. They found one with the post-civil rights detachment of nonracism from broader materially-grounded antiracist political projects, movements, and visions of justice and equality.

The epistemic migration and hegemonic rise of nonracism as its own racial politics provided a “counter” response to racism, through a politics devoid of the

material grounding of mid-twentieth century antiracist projects and movements. In the nonracist period, this has meant whites by and large reject belief in racial superiority and have abandoned support for openly racist policies. However, alongside the denunciation and abandonment of racist ideologies (and attendant policies and practices) we also see the continuation of racial disparities. This seemingly paradoxical occurrence exists in the nonracist period because, as Fredrickson trenchantly observes, the lasting impact of “racism does not require the full and explicit support of the state and the law...Discrimination by institutions and individuals against those perceived to be racially different can long persist and even flourish under the illusion of nonracism” (*Racism* 4).

The rise of nonracism alone does not fully account for the difficulty antiracism faces in gaining traction in the nonracist period. Aside from nonracist (racial) politics, cultural left identity (racial) politics’ ascension during this period provides perhaps the most formidable obstacle to materially-grounded antiracism garnering broader public support (even in the face of massive racial inequalities). Like nonracism, cultural left identity politics also primarily, if not exclusively, commits to non-materially-grounded visions of justice and equality. This politics is prominently displayed in virtue signaling gestures—i.e. Democratic Congressional members adorned in kente cloth kneeling to honor George Floyd or having BLM block letters displayed in cubby holes behind Senator Elizabeth Warren during her 2020 Democratic National Convention Speech—and/or support and push for (limited) inclusion via representational regimes. This is powerfully epitomized by

the cultural left's push for a black woman as presumptive 2020 Democratic Presidential Nominee Joe Biden's running mate, which he met by selecting Senator Kamala Harris. This politics of virtue signaling and support for identitarian representation encapsulates the non-materially grounded politics of race and justice of the center-left and cultural left. It also reflects how recognizing and addressing the US's historic illiberalism is widely met by support for materially-evacuated racial politics *and* theories of and ideas about justice that decenter domination, which do not challenge neoliberal corporatism nor seek to redistribute resources. Such politics and ideas have become predominant in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice.

The liberal mainstream media focus on the apparent rising support for white supremacy and white nationalism in the last few years suggests we are in a time when active investment in racist ideologies poses the most dangerous oppositional force to the promise of liberal justice and equality. However, this apparent rise in open support for white supremacy and white nationalism was met with widespread rebuke in the form of support for nonracism (by the center-left and center-right) and cultural left identity politics. The politics of this rebuke, which is readily posed as an "antiracist" response to racist ideology, is not the antiracism antiracist activists have long pursued. Their antiracism is a materially-grounded politics seeking racial justice and substantive racial equality. Nonracist and identity politics are dangerous and debilitating oppositional forces to materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice and equality, and pose a greater long-term threat to pursuit and

realization of these antiracist visions of justice than rising support for white supremacy and white nationalism.

As *Pursuing Alternatives* demonstrates, politics of race and justice that reject racism and white supremacy while simultaneously marginalizing materially-grounded efforts to redress the lasting impact of racial domination effectively subjugates and delegitimizes antiracist politics seeking substantive equality. This politics fosters broad-based opposition to much of what materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice and equality stand for: it cultivates and supports forms of counterinsurgent equality that work against redressing the material impact of racist ideologies; it engenders retreat from supporting antiracist policies aiming to substantively equalize racially disparate material relations; it facilitates crafting narratives of racial progress that could be used to suggest the impact of racist ideologies is in the distance past; and, it helps fuel whites' claims about being colorblind and their willingness to play the nonrace card against those suggesting race and legacies of racist ideology still impact peoples' life experiences in the US.

We are currently witnessing a shift in the landscape of the politics of race and justice with the rising support for racial justice and calls to address systemic racism in the aftermath of protests and unrest following George Floyd's death. This shift has been met by various (and in some cases directly oppositional) forces. Some suggest there is not systemic racism in the US (notable among those holding this position is US Attorney General William Barr). Among those supporting racial justice and opposing systemic racism, there is a question about what they/we

understand racial justice to mean and how to combat systemic racism. Pursuing racial justice and combatting systemic racism is clearly contested political terrain, including among those who nominally support both endeavors—this is epitomized by the (neo)liberal Democratic Congressional establishment’s opposition in the 2020 Democratic primaries to progressive Democratic candidates whose conceptions of racial justice and equality include (re)distributing wealth, income, and resources equitably.

Even with the recent shift in the politics of race and justice, and the rise in support for antiracism, neoliberal center-left politicians have not moved far from their commitments to conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracism, and/or cultural left identity politics, which are not robust commitments to racial justice and equality. Neoliberal center-left politics and its adherents provide narrow visions of racial justice and equality, ones dedicated primarily, if not solely, to challenging the most horrific forms of racial (physical) violence, which are buttressed by systemic racism. Supporting racial justice and combatting systemic racism through this limited scope makes it possible to subjugate materially-grounded antiracist politics and projects that actively pursue substantive equality and work to dismantle mechanisms, institutions, and policies upholding the legacies of racist ideology and racial domination.

Individually and even more so in combination, commitments to conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracism, cultural left identity politics, or understandings of antiracism and racial justice which primarily (if not exclusively)

aim to address the most physically violent legacies of racism provides privileged subjects a narrow way to be “against” racism and/or for (racial) justice and equality. Such commitments allow one to support antiracism or racial justice without supporting efforts to redress the material inequalities set in place by racist ideologies, racial domination, and racialized power-effects. Many privileged subjects find refuge in this politics of race and justice. It enables, to borrow from and adapt Foucault, “a privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness” that allows those supporting nonracist politics, cultural left identitarianism, conceptions of justice marginalizing domination, and/or non-materially grounded visions of “racial justice” to preserve “against all decenterings, the sovereignty of the [privileged] subject,” assuring that “time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity” that maintains social, political, and economic privilege and deprivation (*Archaeology of Knowledge* 12). Ultimately, subscribing to and investing in conceptions of justice decentering domination, nonracism, cultural left identity politics, and/or the center-left’s narrow understandings of antiracism and racial justice buttresses racial disparities built up through historic commitments to racism and white supremacy, which are exacerbated by neoliberalism. In the food system, this means buttressing racial disparities that manifest in, for example, people of color living disproportionately in food deserts, experiencing greater food insecurity than those living in whiter communities, and/or working disproportionately in low paying food production, processing, and service jobs (which is often accompanied by poor labor conditions).

5.2 Pursuing Change

The many alternative food movement(s) utilizing market-/consumer-based approaches to altering the food system face similar pitfalls as theories of justice decentering domination, nonracist politics, and/or cultural left identity politics do. A number of food studies scholars and alternative food movement activists recognize these pitfalls. They express grave concerns about these approaches to changing the food system. Guthman's concern about privileged subjects "shaping the strategies and practices of the food justice movement and the alternative-food movement more broadly" is illustrative of these concerns (*Weighing In* 160).

Even some activists hailing and imploring consumer-citizens to vote with their forks recognize problems with and have concerns about these approaches. Viertel, for example, avers: "not everyone can vote with his or her fork...because for too many people, there are no polling stations because there is only one candidate, the incumbent: fast food" (139-40). In recognizing and responding to wealth differentials impacting consumers ability to participate in a consumer democracy, Viertel calls on us to alter the universal call for people to vote with their forks and instead say "'People who *can* vote with their fork should'...At the same time, we need to right the structural injustice that prohibits many people from accessing or affording the food they need to keep themselves, their children, farmers, workers, and the environment all in good health" (141; emphasis in original). To do this, Viertel maintains that, "people who are disproportionately hurt" by the corporate food system need to be "at the core of the mainstream [food]

movement. For organizations that have power, that means sharing it, and redirecting it. It means making certain our work is first relevant to those with the least, before it is relevant to those with the most” (142).

Ahmadi similarly argues that people most adversely impacted by food system disparities should “be at the forefront of generating ideas and solutions. This issue is also important as it pertains to the role those from privileged backgrounds can play: supporting and forming bonds of solidarity with impoverished communities” (162). Viertel’s and Ahmadi’s positions point toward problems in seeking to alter the food system through consumer-citizens and consumer democracy via “voting” in a neoliberal corporate food system: how do alternative food movement(s), especially white-led ones, understand structural injustice? How do organizations shot through with normative whiteness make sure issues concerning those most deprived in the food system are at the forefront of their efforts to alter the food system? Do activists pursuing structural change think it is possible to combat structural injustice without addressing the underlying impact of racial domination creating disparities in the food system? Are privileged subjects in these movements willing to take a backseat and/or give of themselves in more exacting ways to bring about structural change to address injustices and inequalities?

Viertel’s own analysis is instructive about the difficulty of recognizing structural injustice and putting injustice facing communities of deprivation at the forefront of analysis and change. Viertel suggests not everyone can vote with their forks, because there are no polling stations where there is only fast food (which

Viertel refers to as the incumbent candidate). Viertel seemingly does not understand that fast food (and for that matter convenience or liquor stores in food deserts) are “polling stations.” They are the type of polling stations the neoliberal corporate food system produces and supports in resource-deprived communities. Moreover, when placement, ownership, and supply of these polling stations is controlled by those outside the communities they exist in, these polling stations facilitate wealth and resource extraction, which assures there is not capital for other polling stations to be established.

This highlights a major problem with turning to and/or relying on consumer-citizens and consumer democracy to alter the food system; communities of deprivation often have limited options to vote (i.e. due to placement of “polling stations” and/or prices at these sites) for anything other than the neoliberal corporate food system. And being essentially forced to vote this way is often held against them, considered reflective of their poor health/food choices and diets (a position which Whole Foods neoliberal corporatist founder John Mackey holds)—in the midst of COVID-19 there is even rhetoric about disproportionate death rates among low-income people being due underlying conditions from their “lifestyle choices”—which need to be remedied through paternalistic education about healthy food choices (as opposed to working for structural change or racial equality). The structural injustice that Viertel speaks of is based on concentrated control of land, wealth, income, and resources. To assure that alternative food movement(s) “work is first relevant to those with the least, before it is relevant to

those with the most,” activists need to push for and support structural and systemic change that aims to (re)distribute land, wealth, income, and resources equitably. Alkon and Agyeman suggest food justice pursues this type of change, but some scholars are skeptical about food justice activism doing so. Recall that Guthman maintains food justice “gives scant attention to other injustices in the food system, particularly those arising in food production: exposure to toxic chemicals, poor working conditions...and disparities in wages and employment” (*Weighing In* 155).

Food studies literature and alternative food movement(s)’ explications of food justice discussed above largely counter Guthman’s assessment, suggesting that food justice seeks to construct an alternative political-economic functioning of the food system that counters neoliberalism. A number of scholars suggest that alternative path(s) laid out by food justice activists not only puts communities of color and their experiences at the forefront of efforts to change the food system, but also centralizes antiracism and structural change. For example, recall that Morales concluded that Growing Power’s GFJI was focused “most explicitly on using the food system as a means to dismantle racism,” and “served as a hub for bringing together alternative food organizations and activists to consult with and learn from each other’s efforts to combat racism and support sustainable food systems” (157-58). Similarly, also recall that Ahmadi contends food justice “is in a battle to prove that there is another way: that we don’t have to sell our local wealth, our land, our environment, and our health to corporate America just to

bring superficial change in an expedient manner” (157). In large part, scholars’ accounts of food justice and alternative food movement explications of it suggest food justice *is* paving paths that alter conceptions, ideas, and grounding for activism in the food system. This assessment is encapsulated by Gottlieb’s and Joshi’s conclusion that food justice articulates “its own set of arguments” aiming to “transform what we eat, where the food comes from, and how it is grown and produced” (224, 225). But what will guide this alternative alternative path?

The exploration of food justice activism here suggests it envisions change in the food system that differs from that of many other alternative food movement(s). The changes sought are in part underpinned by materially-grounded objectives and aims to combat racial injustice and inequality. *Pursuing Alternatives* has concerns about the ways food justice activism (and other alternative food movements pursuing similar change) seek to realize these objectives and aims. *Pursuing Alternatives* has clearly laid out its misgivings about working through consumer-citizens and consumer democracy in the neoliberal marketplace to alter the food system. However, given that food justice does not rely nearly as heavily on market-oriented, consumer-based change as many other alternative food movement(s) do, there is another (perhaps related) concern regarding the path(s) for change food justice activism may take.

These paths are reflected in explications of food justice. Just Food explains food justice as “communities exercising their right to grow, sell and eat healthy food,” and contends food justice strives for a food system in which “healthy food

is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers and animals” (“What is Food Justice”). UGC envisions GFJI and its network as working to ensure “every neighborhood in low-income communities and communities of color has full access to fresh, healthy, local, affordable, culturally appropriate food every day,” and believes residents of these communities should “own and operate the small businesses that produce, distribute and sell the fresh, healthy food consumed in the neighborhood” (“Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative”). Other alternative food movements, ones not specifically identifying their praxis as food justice work, have similar views about food justice. For example, Why Hunger states that “food justice is about everyone’s individual and collective right to grow, distribute, access and eat healthy food, no matter who we are or where we live. It’s about community power” (“Toolkit”). The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance says food justice and food sovereignty are linked by their “efforts to win community access to and control over land, water, seeds and the oceans” (“Teams”).

As illustrated above, various explications of food justice contend it works toward a just food system that seeks access to and/or control of resources within the food system. While these may be pursued together, access and control are two distinct objectives (and may also be in tension). They are, in fact, markedly different responses to a neoliberal, corporatized food system. Whether access to or control of resources is more important to activists pursuing (or supporting) food

justice tells us something about how radical their visions are for changing the food system.

As we know, having access to food (or other resources) may be relatively compatible with the neoliberal corporate food system. For example, “access” to food may be fulfilled by food banks. Also, the government provides “access” to food and resources through entitlement programs. In the midst of COVID-19, forms of access, especially food banks for the food insecure, have greatly expanded (for the time being). This means increasing access is taking place alongside the CARES Act facilitating (re)distribution of wealth and resources on a much broader scale to privileged subjects and communities. Access, therefore, may well take place alongside growing concentration of property, wealth, income, and resources in the hands of privileged subjects and communities, which is the very function of and basis for sustaining the neoliberal political-economy and neoliberal corporate food system. Thus, supporting access may be used to undercut the realization of a just food system based on control of production and distribution of food by the less privileged. While seeking access to resources in the food system moves beyond efforts for change wherein wealthy customers vote with their forks, food justice that solely seeks or prioritizes access over control may not be able to simultaneously increase “access to healthy food *and* the power to influence the food system that prioritizes environmental and human needs over agribusiness profits” (Alkon and Agyeman 6; my emphasis). To ensure the latter you need control over production, if not distribution, of food.

If, as *Pursuing Alternatives* argues, we consider injustice a material experience grounded in domination that produces deprivation and inequality, then we need to radically reconfigure current political-economic structures and systems propping up and exacerbating material legacies of historic investment in racism and white supremacy. In the food system, broad-based commitment to change via the neoliberal marketplace will not do this. It will not substantially (or substantively) equalize political-economic disparities produced by whites' historical investment in racist ideologies and the white settler state supporting this investment through its policies and practices. It is precisely neoliberal political-economic orthodoxy and the neoliberal corporate food system—which are built upon historical racial domination and its legacies—that buttress and continue to produce the deprivation, vulnerabilities, and danger experienced by “essential workers” in the food system. Therefore, relying heavily on the neoliberal marketplace for change will not substantially alter how the neoliberal food system functions to create precarity for “essential workers.”

The vulnerabilities and danger experienced by “essential workers” in the food system before and during the COVID-19 pandemic are baked into the neoliberal corporate food system, and alternative food activism implicitly or explicitly underpinned by conceptions of justice decentering domination will not substantially alter the predicament of “essential workers.” Moreover, even where change via consumer-citizens and consumer democracy in the neoliberal marketplace is guided by those (or concerned with the) most marginalized, and

somehow foments changes that increase pay, improve labor conditions, and/or provide greater protection of food system workers' health and safety, the breadth and depth of these changes are still heavily impacted by how they affect the profitability of corporate players in the food system. These corporatists have power over the life and conditions of others via control of property and resources. But should we accept this as compatible with (liberal) justice and equality?

Ultimately, pursuing change via consumer-citizens voting in a neoliberal marketplace will not radically transform material relations in the food system or beyond. Pushing for access to resources is also a limited approach to changing the food system, and not really capable of radically altering the longstanding racialized political-economy of the US and its food system, which developed through mutually reinforcing racist policies and practices. These include housing policies and practices limiting black and brown property/land ownership and producing segregated communities (as redlining and racial covenants did), not indexing and raising the minimum wage, and tying health care to (racially disparate) employment. Disparities fostered by such policies and practices have been exacerbated by the rise and predominance of neoliberal political-economic orthodoxy—its logic, structures, and systems dominate the food system—over approximately the last four decades, which assures the continued unequal distribution of land, wealth, income, and resources.

The racial inequality produced and supported by longstanding *and* relatively recent policies and processes shaping the US political-economy are intensifying

due to Congressional legislative responses in the form of the CARES Act and other policies and practices (i.e. initially disbursing loans from the Paycheck Protection Program through large financial institutions that made the economy collapse in 2008) to state and local government lockdowns amidst the spread of COVID-19. These policies and practices epitomize what Holt-Gimenez means by neoliberal globalization restructuring social and political institutions to serve global markets, which cripples our capacity to respond to problems in the food system (272). Transforming the political-economic orthodoxy, as well as dismantling systemic and structural racism and the inequalities it produces and supports, needs to be met with more than casting economic votes from within these system and structures. It also needs to be met with more than a push for access to resources in the food system (and beyond), which is more easily diminished or eliminated when people do not have ownership and control of the resources or the financial sustainability necessary to implement and maintain alternatives to large-scale, industrialized food production and distribution at the heart of the neoliberal corporatist food system.

COVID-19 lays completely bare the ramifications of not radically changing the political-economic core (neoliberal corporatism) of the food system and thereby allowing racial disparities to remain in place. This is especially evident in low-paid food processing, fast food, food delivery, and farmworkers doing “essential work,” many of whom have to labor in conditions increasing their exposure to the virus, and at the beginning of the health crisis often being forced to

do so with little or no protective equipment provided by employers. Perhaps the most glaring and widely reported example of this is in meat processing/packing plants, which have heavily Latino workforces. By early May 2020 there were over ten thousand *confirmed* coronavirus cases linked to these plants (Grabell). In the midst of these outbreaks President Donald Trump used the Defense Production Act to force meat processing/packing plants—an industry that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes, in clearly understated language, has barriers to preventing the spread of COVID-19, including difficulty distancing workers at least six feet apart and implementing COVID-19-specific disinfection guidelines (Dyal et al. 558)—to stay open.

Work conditions facilitating the spread of COVID-19 among low-paid food system workers and their communities are part and parcel of the neoliberal corporate food system. In the face of a global pandemic, these “essential workers” must continue to work, and for some in an industry that is forced to remain open, not just for the survival of everyone—which is the subtext of discursive production of “essential work/workers”—but to uphold structures and systems that perpetuate racial socio-economic/political-economic hierarchies. In other words, “essential” low-paid food system workers are expected to perform labor that is essential to maintaining the existence of subjects and communities of privilege. What this reveals is that neoliberal corporatist actors (especially government officials) will hold firm in support of structures, systems, institutions, and processes privileging (and enriching) themselves, even in the midst of a global health crisis and even if it

means producing a domestic economic crisis. This shows us how likely it is privileged subjects will ardently resist efforts to redress material legacies of racism and white supremacy, and why, as Barry argues, justice needs to be informed by the “revolutionary idea that the justice of society’s institutions could be challenged not merely at the margins but at the core” (5).

5.3 Let America Be America

Those of us pursuing materially-grounded racial justice and equality run the risk of being individually and collectively crushed by myriad actors invested in the systems, structures, processes, and institutions upholding privilege and deprivation that currently exists. Nevertheless, this should not deter us from seeking racial justice and substantive equality through more radical approaches to addressing the forces upholding and producing socio-economic/political-economic disparities inside and outside the food system. To do this we must push people to not just acknowledge the socio-economic/political-economic impact of legacies of racial domination, but also to redress them. This is especially important where policy/lawmaking is concerned, we need to elect lawmakers that support materially-grounded visions of racial justice—Congressional Districts that are Democratic strongholds are set to do so after antiracist progressive challengers, BLM activist Cori Bush in Missouri’s First District and Middle School Principal Jamaal Bowman in New York’s Sixteenth, won their 2020 Democratic primaries despite the neoliberal Democratic establishment coming out in full force against

them (notably the Congressional Black Caucus endorsed the incumbent opponents of these progressive black candidates)²⁶—and push those claiming to support racial justice toward these visions.

The forces (and tactics) arrayed against materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice are formidable. With the very recent shift in racial politics, one of the most formidable obstacles (and perhaps now greatest long-term one) to these visions is Democratic neoliberal corporatists who ostensibly support racial justice, but are attempting to (re)narrate racial justice and challenges to systemic racism as aligned primarily, if not exclusively, with the first principle Dworkin identifies, this (re)narration evacuates the material concerns and objectives long driving racial justice activism. In light of this attempted (re)narration of racial justice, it is not surprising that the neoliberal Democratic establishment opposes progressives that support policies that envision justice and equality beyond equal concern and respect, and support Medicare For All, raising the federal minimum wage to fifteen-dollars-an-hour, universal basic income, progressive taxation, and defunding the police as ways to redistribute income, wealth, and resources (for the benefit of communities of deprivation and) to move us toward the full promise (and a racially just version) of liberal justice and equality.

While pushing for materially-grounded racial justice provides no guarantees we will realize the outcomes we seek—we run the risk of reinforcing forces that are antithetical to alternatives we envision—we still need to push for these progressive approaches to justice and equality that challenge the predominant ideas

in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice, no matter who subscribes to or supports these ideas. Furthermore, in our support of racial justice and equality in the food system we should think about change along the lines of what Ahmadi proposes: “We must revolutionize our perception of land and the role it plays in society; we must examine land ownership, land use, and land tenure in urban neighborhoods. This has a direct correlation to environment and food” (155). But what will guide such revolutionized perceptions?

It should be clear that theories of justice decentering domination, nonracist politics, cultural left identity politics—and the ways they inform current understanding and support for racial justice—and neoliberal political-economic orthodoxy should not guide us in pursuing racial justice and equality; they run counter to antiracist visions of racial justice and substantive equality. Realizing the full promise of liberal justice and equality requires working from a position that recognizes how (in)justice and (in)equality are material experiences and contests the epistemic and discursive hegemony theories of justice decentering domination, nonracist (racial) politics, and cultural left identity politics enjoy. Realizing this full promise also requires rejecting the current neoliberal political-economic orthodoxy, and working to radically restructure the political-economy with an objective of substantively equalizing material relations.

Pursuing Alternatives asserts that the most robust commitment to realizing the full promise of liberal justice and equality demands a long and deep commitment to materially-grounded antiracist racial justice and equality. This will

reactivate the possibilities that black- and brown-led mid-twentieth century antiracist movements and white allyship held for remedying racial inequalities and creating a level playing field. For those of us who believe (in)justice and (in)equality must be met by supporting materially-grounded antiracist conceptions of justice acknowledging, centering, and seeking remedies to racial injustice and inequality—actualizing these conceptions surely requires privileged subjects to support efforts to undo material inequalities set in place by racist ideologies, racial domination, and racialized power-effects—there are theorists/theories from whom we can draw support. For example, Walzer, Dworkin, Hunt, Lovett, Barry, Miller, and Young articulate theories of justice that emphasize redressing legacies of domination.

Due to its wide circulation and appeal, of all theories considered here, *Pursuing Alternatives* believes social justice holds the greatest possibility for a broad-based challenge to hegemonic ideas in power-knowledge-discourse nexuses in the politics of race and justice, which buttress the legacies of racial domination. Social justice, which may complementary pair with racial justice, provides arguably the best path to realizing the full promise of liberal justice and equality. However, as our discussion above demonstrates, understandings and deployments of social justice (and racial justice for that matter) are fraught. Miller's caution about social justice possibly being an empty signifier—one that is invoked and used for its affective appeal—is particularly instructive regarding the danger of the term's deployment. This caution, along with the distinct difference in explications

of social justice by theorists, capture important ways in which the concept is fraught and why there must be clarity on its meaning and intent when it is invoked and deployed, especially by left-leaning political actors.

Of course, whether or not there is clarity regarding the meaning and use of a conception of justice, there is no guarantee, as DuPuis et al. contend, of attaining the outcomes we seek. Even if our vision of justice provides no guarantee about outcomes, I do not think we should take DuPuis et al.'s seemingly relativist (reflexive justice) approach—which apparently values processes for the sake of process (to bring food activism back to the imperfect politics of process)—to seeking justice in the food system (301). While outcomes may not be guaranteed, our ideas, visions, and pursuit of justice still should have clear objectives and aims guiding them. And we need to be clear on what these are when we invoke conceptions of justice (i.e. social or racial justice) in seeking justice and equality. There is certainly a big difference between the objectives and aims of Novak's and Adams' theory of social justice and where it seeks to lead us and progressive social justice theorists' ideas, objectives, aims, and direction.

Novak's and Adams' rejection of progressive social justice theorists' conceptions and visions of justice demarcates the ideas and views of their respective theories. Recall that, alongside Novak's and Adams' rejection of "equality-as-uniformity," rests their argument against (re)distribution and the state "helping the poor in one after another of their many economic needs, such as food, housing, income, social insurance of various types, employment, health care, and

so on” (Novak 175). Remember for them, this is not social justice: “Social justice is not what most people think it is, a building up of state bureaucracies which are impersonal, inefficient, and expensive far beyond their original forecasts” (Novak 24). Their positions stand in stark contrast to progressive conceptions of social justice.

Progressive conceptions of social justice, such as Barry’s and Miller’s, have a definitively different view of equality, distribution, and the state than Novak and Adams do. For example, Barry believes that “approximate material equality [is] a necessary condition of a socially just society, so the spread of unequal rewards must be constrained,” and argues for state redistribution of property, wealth, income, and resources from the rich to the poor (44, 22, 171). As previously noted, Miller has a similar position and argues: “to achieve social justice we must have a political community in which [people] *are treated as equals in an across-the-board way*, in which public policy is geared toward meeting the intrinsic needs of every member, and in which the economy is framed and constrained” in order to produce substantive equality (250; my emphasis). Progressive conceptions of social justice push for not only equal concern and respect, but also to substantively equalize opportunities and material outcomes; they maintain the state is best suited for realizing their visions of justice and equality. We see glimpses of what they are pushing for in the broad ranging policies and programs of the New Deal, which move beyond Rawls’ first principle of justice (that parallels the first principle Dworkin identifies). While the New Deal brought some political-economic benefit

to people in an across-the-board way, the prevailing hegemonic racial politics of the Jim Crow era led to New Deal programs being administered in racially exclusive ways. But if similar policies and programs are enacted and implemented as a response to the current economic crisis to benefit people across the board, and the state works to actively ensure they are not administered in exclusive ways, this could start to dismantle the legacies of racial domination, racist liberalism, and white supremacist equality.

Over the last four decades, we have been reaping the harvest of subjugating progressive social justice conceptions, and materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice they complementary pair with, which challenge and seek to reverse legacies of centuries of white subjects' and the white settler state's investment in racist ideologies. COVID-19 puts the fruits of this labor on full display via its racially disparate health and material impacts, and the Congressional response to this demonstrates how racial domination's devaluing of black and brown lives embeds itself in US structures, systems, and institutions. The protests and social upheaval in the wake of George Floyd's death at the hands and legs of police officers in Minnesota is wrapped up with the US's failure (and privileged subjects in particular) to reckon with the implications of the US being socially, politically, and economically built on racist ideologies and racial domination. The implications of this failure are reflected not just in the most physically violent manifestations of a widespread lack of equal concern and respect for human life,

but also in the racialized political-economic disparities that characterize our lives, which we see throughout food system.

Reconstruction and the mid-twentieth civil rights eras provided, I assert, the only heretofore two socio-political moments in the US for the country to broadly reckon with the impact of its racist and white supremacist foundations. These periods witnessed insurgent pushes for justice and equality that challenged the white supremacist racial order. The challenge during Reconstruction was met by whites' continuing investment in racism and white supremacy as a response to social, political and economic gains by freedpeople. The mid-twentieth century antiracist civil rights challenge was met by whites' broad-based rejection of melding racist ideologies and racial domination with liberal egalitarian ideals (most whites could no longer abide this reconciliation). The mid-twentieth century civil rights period, therefore, has provided the only historical opportunity to *fully* reckon with the US's foundational racism and white supremacy and, thus, opened the possibility for forging paths to realize the full promise of liberal justice and equality. I think we are now in a third moment of reckoning—reinvigorated support for white supremacy and white nationalism under the Trump Administration has in an odd way contributed to this moment by spotlighting historic racist foundations of the US society and state—and only the second wherein large-scale abandonment of racist ideologies engenders an opening to fully reckon with the impact of racial domination to allow for realization of the full promise of liberal justice and equality.

The confluence of COVID-19 and its disparate health impact, the various layers of governmental response to this health crisis (and economic crisis it precipitated), and the protests and unrest following police killing George Floyd have torn open socio-political space for a potential reckoning with the *full* implications of active investment in and attendant embedding of racism and white supremacy into the US social, political, and economic fabric. The direction the country will take in this moment is undetermined and open to different possibilities. The protests, along with the neoliberal corporatist Congressional response to COVID-19, have set us down a path of adjudicating the most horrifically physically violent manifestations of racial domination, and systemic and structural racism, while simultaneously intensifying the concentration of property, wealth, income, and resources in privileged hands. Thus far, the vast majority of neoliberal corporatist actors, including ones within the food system, appear comfortable with this emerging path. We witness their comfort in a spate of public statements (i.e. statements by McDonald's, Taco Bell, Wendy's, and Starbucks) of "support" for "racial justice," "antiracism," and/or "combatting systemic racism," including by those whose low-paid workforce is disproportionately people of color, released across social media platforms. Supporting racial justice and/or standing against systemic racism is now good for business.

The fact that actors who previously remained silent about racial justice and/or systemic racism are speaking out now, even if they are motivated by

economic self-interest, demonstrates how wide the socio-political space for racial justice has opened in this moment. The epistemic and discursive ground of the politics of race and justice is shifting toward antiracism and racial justice, but this shift comes with an opening for different visions of justice to fill this ground (and predominate). The question is what conceptions and actions will do so. What will be borne of this nascent socio-political opening for racial justice is an open question. At this unfolding moment, we must realize that the arc of history does not bend toward justice on its own; it must be *bent* toward visions of justice.

We are in a moment where this arc is particularly flexible and there are different directions it can be bent toward. There is now a broad public outcry (especially by those on the left in the US political spectrum) to bend it toward racial justice. There is also an accompanying brewing battle over the meaning of and how to pursue racial justice. This battle is marked by a current epistemic migration by center-left neoliberal corporatists and the cultural left, a move to occupy the terrain of racial justice and equality with their (re)narrated conceptions of them. Thus, we are facing an epistemic and discursive struggle regarding the meaning and visions of antiracism and racial justice and equality.

A number of corporate public statements meet this moment by “supporting racial justice” through pledges to support diversity and inclusion (Salaky). This moment has also been met by those on the cultural left taking a knee in various settings throughout the country and/or posting their support for BLM on social media. With neoliberal corporatist backing, it appears the understanding and

commitment to visions of racial justice are moving to a laser focus on identity politics and criminal justice reform. This settlement of racial justice and equality undermines antiracist activists' long existing materially-grounded political projects and efforts to push for substantive (material) equality. Thus, it seems the historic opening for racial justice and equality may be (fore)closing as suddenly as it appeared.

In the face of this, we are left with looming questions: will racially privileged subjects be able to finally grasp and reckon with the full impact of the US's racist and white supremacist foundations, and give of themselves in more exacting (especially material) ways? Will privileged subjects meet this historic socio-political moment with support for materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice and equality? Or will the current widespread support for racial justice end up being met broadly by bending vision and pursuit of it toward virtue signaling, supporting representational regimes, and/or aiming to adjudicate the most horrifically physically violent manifestations of racial domination, and structural and systemic racism, while continuing to facilitate (especially via the state) the (re)distribution of property, wealth, income, and other resources to privileged subjects and communities? Will combating systemic racism and pursuing racial justice get pushed away from broader political-economic demands antiracist and racial justice activists have long pushed for? Will Hacker's observation that "there is scant evidence that the majority of white Americans are ready to invest in redistributive programs, let alone give of themselves in more exacting ways" still

ring true (xiii)? Or will support for racial justice be broadly bent in directions that aim to both eradicate horrific forms of physical violence and bring about material/substantive racial equality? And what will it take to get privileged subjects to widely support bending justice in this direction?

At this moment, various actors and movements are situated in different socio-economic/political-economic spaces with different capacities and abilities to bend justice in the direction of materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice and substantive equality. In the food system, activist organizations could work to bend justice in this direction. Some are doing this, for example Why Hunger combines food justice with social justice to push for access and control of land for members of resource-deprived communities to grow food. The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance has laid out a vision for dismantling the corporate-controlled food system. The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) supports “a food system centered on justice, and [asserts] we know that we cannot achieve food justice if we’re not willing to do racial justice work...There is no food justice without racial justice” (Dombalis). Farm-worker led Community to Community has organized to push lawmakers to enforce worker protection for all workers, dismantle the E-Verify database, make immigration-status threats from employers a crime, and ensure that guest workers can organize and join unions. Furthermore, activist organizations are pushing back against actions taken by neoliberal corporatists in the midst of COVID-19 that exacerbate the harm of existing racial disparities (which could also help forward antiracist racial justice): the Food Chain

Workers Alliance started the “Food Workers Are Not Disposable” campaign to resist President Donald Trump’s use of the Defense Production Act to force meat-processing plants to stay open despite virus outbreaks; the Rural Community Workers Alliance filed a lawsuit against a Smithfield meat-processing plant to try to force the company to protect workers’ health and safety; and Migrant Justice successfully organized to push Vermont Governor Phil Scott to include money in his proposed budget for immigrant families impacted by COVID-19.

This activism moves us toward actualizing (or as Novak and Adams might say “institutionalizing”) racial justice and equality, and in some cases may facilitate (re)distribution of resources to benefit those experiencing the greatest deprivation in the food system, but this activism could be pushed even further. There could be more direct efforts to gain control of resources along the lines of what the “Reclaimers,” which formed after the beginning stages of the spread of COVID-19, did by occupying vacant California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) owned homes/properties—this has echoes of how the South Central Farm used private property. With the continuing health and economic crisis (and looming eviction crisis) disproportionately impacting those on the bottom of the socio-economic strata within and outside the food system, now may be the most necessary (and opportune) time for direct action to push us to realize the full promise of liberal justice and equality.

Realizing this promise must be guided by conceptions of justice pursuing material redistribution and substantive equality, ones that would be on the side of

projects like the South Central Farm and the Reclaimers in conflicts over control of land. In the food system, this cannot be accomplished by relying primarily or heavily on consumer-citizens and consumer democracy to alter the neoliberal corporate food regime. *Pursuing Alternatives*, therefore, argues for and supports efforts to meet the current socio-political opening for realizing the full promise of liberal justice and equality, both within and outside the food system, by drawing on materially-grounded progressive conceptions of justice (namely antiracist racial justice and/or social justice) that center domination, and seek material redistribution and substantive equality. As these conceptions recognize, while fraught, the state and its policymaking and governing bodies are the sites most capable of altering political-economic structures and systems in place in order to redistribute concentrated land, wealth, income, and resources. The state was instrumental in setting material disparities in place, and it is capable of dismantling them. It may seem paradoxical given the history of the white settler state, but the assistance of the state is necessary to attain antiracist racial justice and substantive equality; in the food system attaining this will necessitate dismantling the neoliberal corporate food regime.

Activists pursuing materially-grounded antiracist visions of racial justice and equality face great difficulty in figuring out how to work through the state—which is currently controlled by and does the bidding for neoliberal corporatists—to enact their visions. Control of the state by neoliberal corporatists means, unfortunately, where material conditions are concerned we are heading on a path directly

opposing substantive racial equality. The election of lawmakers supporting materially-grounded visions of racial justice may slow or (if enough are elected) prevent our journey down this path. However, I expect our journey will rapidly intensify in the wake of lockdowns by state and local governments to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Congressional legislative responses to address the economic fallout of the pandemic and lockdowns largely facilitate rapacious extraction and transfer of property, wealth, income, and resources from deprived subjects and communities to concentrate in the hands of the privileged. For example, the twelve hundred dollar one-time stimulus payment and the additional six hundred dollars per week in unemployment (that expired at the end of July 2020 and was not extended as of late September), which were by far the most significant of the few offsets to the upward transfer of wealth and resources are no longer in place to mitigate these transfers. This illustrates how the path we are currently on abandons the full promise of liberal justice and equality; I believe this is untenable, and will lead to more social upheaval. We need an immediate change in direction. The state (and what Rawls identifies as the basic structure) need to be transformed at the core. This means we need to not only reject materially-evacuated conceptions of social justice and racial justice wherever they are posed, but also insist that supporting social justice or racial justice means supporting materially-grounded antiracist visions of justice and substantive equality. These are the visions most capable of enabling us to realize the full promise of liberal justice and equality.

Given the disparate impact of COVID-19 on people of color working in the racially hierarchical US food system, alternative food movement(s) should put the full force of their resources behind providing support for materially-grounded visions and pursuits of racial justice and substantive equality, ones that excavate the buried path carved out by black- and brown-led (and white allied) mid-twentieth century antiracist movements, draw from progressive conceptions of social justice, and are driven by ideas and praxis with objectives and aims to dismantle legacies of racist ideologies and racial domination. As I assert, we are in a third moment of reckoning with the US's foundational racism and white supremacy. And only the second viable moment in US history where broad support for traveling down a materially-grounded antiracist path to attain justice and equality is possible. I hope *Pursuing Alternatives* convinces readers this is the best pathway for realizing the full promise of justice and equality.

Footnotes

¹ This study treats and illustrates how these politics of justice and racial politics are intertwined throughout US history, and hence will often refer to them as “the politics of race and justice.”

² I use the term racialized power-effects to describe mechanisms, techniques, and tactics operationalized by racist ideology and racial domination.

³ In state and nationalism literature there is contentious debate about how state, nation, and government should be understood, and whether or not these terms should be used interchangeably. Detailing and weighing in on this debate is outside the scope of what *Pursuing Alternatives* addresses. *Pursuing Alternatives*’ identification and discussion of the US white settler state rather draws from the plethora of accounts in this literature that describe a “state” as an authority ruling over a defined territory—though, obviously, this territory has changed throughout the US’s existence.

⁴ Karl-Dieter Opp concludes that the term social movement is “used in different and often ambiguous ways” (33). *Pursuing Alternatives* does not aim to explain or identify what constitutes a social movement. It uses the term “movement” throughout to identify the work (i.e. knowledge production, advocacy, and praxis) of alternative food activism seeking to alter process and/or practices of large-scale, industrial food production (the corporate food regime).

⁵ While Foucault’s postulation and explication of sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower are important, parsing through them is beyond the scope of what *Pursuing Alternatives* addresses. Here reference to and discussion of power mainly involves relations of power. Thus, for example, when discussing a power-knowledge-discourse nexuses of racial politics, power should be understood as referring to relations of power (power relations) interacting with knowledge production and discourse regarding race.

⁶ While discourse may be heavily inflected by power relations and produce hegemonic understandings of a topic (i.e. race), Foucault importantly reminds us that “discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (*History of Sexuality* 101). This means power-knowledge-discourse nexuses, though producing and supporting formidable hegemonic knowledge, are not sealed off from oppositional knowledge and counter-hegemonic responses; because, as Foucault notes, discourse may transmit and reinforce power (relations) “but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (*History of Sexuality* 101).

⁷ While discourse and its constitutive elements may not produce the physical world, they are productive in the sense that they inform and structure our understanding of it. One could viably argue there are aspects of the physical world (i.e. bodies of water) that are pre- or extra-discursive, even in the face of discursive renderings that give them meaning, especially through language. Even if we agree with this, discourse nonetheless has productive capacity for constructing a social world that contains physical aspects (i.e. human bodies) that work in conjunction with discourse(s) (i.e. criminality and justice).

⁸ I could further discuss various understandings of discourse analysis, for example, ones that emphasize language and rhetoric. Or others seeing discourse more broadly as constituting social existence. I could also discipline discourse by, for example, identifying and explaining how it fits in disciplinary boundaries (i.e. constructivist approaches/analyses in political science). But definitively defining, explaining, legitimizing, and disciplining discourse analysis (and the analysis of discourse) undertaken is really beside the point of this study—what the understanding and analysis of discourse is informed by here is laid out clearly above.

⁹ *Pursuing Alternatives*’ refusal to discipline discourse analysis illustrates how desubjugating knowledge may require highlighting (and pushing back against) the parameters of legitimate

knowledge production and valid questioning of knowledge in existing hegemonic boundaries of knowledge production. This push back, however, is delimited by the extent to which *Pursuing Alternatives* adheres to accepted bases of knowledge production. For example, *Pursuing Alternatives* analyzes extant archives—i.e. texts theorizing justice, texts theorizing and/or documenting the impact of racism, and alternative food movements’ explications of food justice. Thus, while *Pursuing Alternatives* pushes back against hegemonic understanding(s) and boundaries of knowledge production, it also buttresses them by partaking in recognized and legitimized forms of knowledge production. It even buttresses them in its effort to desubjugate knowledge, for example, by excavating existing (archives of) historical knowledge (i.e. antiracist politics and praxis in various periods of racial politics), which further silences subjugated subjects who were not in a position to produce and/or retain written or other records of their understanding or experience of racist ideologies and racial domination. Thus, *Pursuing Alternatives* is unable to move completely outside or beyond power relations and hegemonic epistemic and discursive formations, which demonstrates the ubiquity of power-knowledge-discourse nexuses.

¹⁰ Dworkin explains the last liberal settlement as the most recent broadly settled upon liberal formulation addressing equality.

¹¹ The last question might be asked of theories of justice more broadly, not just social justice ones.

¹² Barry distinguishes between a right, which exists if you are not prohibited from having or doing something, and an opportunity. Barry says an opportunity “to do or obtain something exists for me if there is some course of action lying within my power” that enables me to do so (20). And, Barry states that “the category of resources is a bit of a rag-bag,” but consists “of things external to themselves that people own or to which they have access—things with the characteristic of enabling [people] to achieve their ends, or at least improving their chances of doing so” (21). There are echoes of Rawls’ two principles of justice in Barry’s rights, opportunities, and resources.

¹³ According to Miller, three modes of relationship are crucial for social justice: solidaristic community, instrumental association, and citizenship. Miller explains these modes: “solidaristic community exists when people share a common identity as members of a relatively stable group with a common ethos;” “instrumental association” is characterized by people relating “to one another in a utilitarian manner; each has aims and purposes that can be best realized by collaboration with others;” citizenship applies to “members of a political society” wherein a citizen is “anyone who is a full member of such a society [and] is understood to be the bearer of a set of rights and obligations that together define the status of citizenship” (26-30).

¹⁴ Barry provides a more critical assessment about ideas of social justice “being abused systematically to justify the massive inequalities that we see all around us” (viii).

¹⁵ These genealogies essentially limit their understanding and tracing of justice to ideas and traditions found in Western thought.

¹⁶ There are arguably vestiges of this in current forms of gentrification.

¹⁷ The parameters of whiteness (and how those fitting in the category white benefit) fluctuate in US history. For example, in early US history indentured whites and those without property were not in the position to benefit from racial privilege as propertied whites did. And whiteness was not open to non-Anglo-Saxons in the same way as it was after implementation of the New Deal, which did not benefit whites in a uniform way.

¹⁸ The 2020 Democratic National Convention illustrates the increasing public discussion of these links, as well as the lack of policy prescriptions to redress racial disparities.

¹⁹ Given the text of the Thirteenth Amendment, some argue that slavery continues through mass incarceration. It could even be argued the state has transitioned in its support for slavery from upholding chattel slavery to engaging in mass incarceration (wherein the white settler state now exercises control over, if not ownership of, large numbers of nonwhite human bodies).

²⁰ While it is beyond the scope of what *Pursuing Alternatives* addresses, we need to think about how centuries of whites’ belief in their superiority has lodged itself into the cultural consciousness

of white subjects. There may be residue of white superiority that subsists in white culture for many generations in spite of white subjects' historically recent commitment to nonracism. Moreover, the effects of long-held belief in white superiority may continue to shape white culture in a way that predisposes many whites to resisting efforts to attain equality for black people, this influence could well take many more generations of antiracist work to dislodge.

²¹ After the Great Recession racialized material inequalities increased—is it possible that privilege and deprivation increase during and/or after political-economic crises?

²² While I argue that contemporary racial progress narratives obscure the history and legacy of racial domination, this does not mean to suggest I think there have not been juridical, social, and political changes minimizing the impact of domination.

²³ Similarly, Bonilla-Silva argues a threefold stratification of identity is emerging: “white,” “honorary white,” and “collective black,” and becoming “honorary whites” allows for greater inclusion (179).

²⁴ The distinction between scholar and activist in the food system is not necessarily rigidly demarcated.

²⁵ Growing Power existed for twenty-five years before disbanding in the fall of 2017.

²⁶ In Bowman's case this included the Congressional Black Caucus endorsing his white, more conservative opponent. This points to the limits of cultural left identity politics where visions of racial justice and policy are concerned, especially when they challenge the prevailing neoliberal order. Notably, Bowman's vision includes breaking up agribusiness monopolies.

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