

THE FUNAMBULIST

Politics of Space and Bodies



**KITCHEN MARRONAGE
AND JERK IN JAMAICA**
TAO LEIGH GOFFE

CUISINE AS REPARATION
TUNDE WEY

**FROM INDIA'S KONKAN
COAST TO MARSEILLE**
ZURI CAMILLE DE SOUZA

BANANAS VS. PLANTAIN
AKIL SCAFE-SMITH

COVER: ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE BANQUET 1962

**VEGANISM SHOULD
BE ANTI-CASTE**
RAMA GANESAN

BEING A CHEF IN PALESTINE
FADI KATTAN (WITH KARIM KATTAN)

THE EMPIRE (EDIBLE) REMAINS
COOKING SECTIONS

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31 /// September-October 2020

POLITICS OF FOOD

BEHIND THE SCENES

Dear subscribers and readers,

I am writing to you on August 13, 2020, which is exactly five years after we originally launched The Funambulist magazine, at e-flux in Lower East Side Manhattan. About 100 people (many of whom are dear friends) joined us that day and we were blessed to have Sadia Shirazi, Olivia Ahn, and Minh-Ha T. Pham to present their contributions.

In the past three years, I had the great chance and joy to be joined successively by Noelle Geller, Flora Hgn, Nadia El Hakim, Margarida Waco, and Caroline Honorien (as well as Tomi Laja, Ella Martin-Gachot, and Sara Clark during the summers; and Carol Que & Chanelle Adams for our regular copy editing and translations!). Although I wish that, by now, we'd have the budget for me to no longer be the only full-time person at the office, the very fact that the magazine is still running today and is supported by about 1,700 subscribers (this includes our 500 student subscriptions), that, thanks to them, we're in a good financial health (not a single time in five years did we go overdrawn!), and that we have a worldwide network of mind-blowing contributors with whom we get to work with on a daily basis is a true dream come true!

And here's the 31st issue, which starts this sixth year of existence for the magazine. It is one of those issues that are rather open-ended in terms of topics, which allows us to curate its editorial line with a little less effort than our more-driven issues such as the two latest ones *States of Emergency* (May-June 2020) and *Reparations* (July-August 2020). Our 32nd issue will be one of those too: it will be dedicated to PanAfricanism (yes!) and Margarida Nzuzi Waco and Caroline Honorien will join me as co-editors-in-chief for this specific one! I'm personally very excited about this prospect!

May we still be there in 5 years, without having made a recipe of what we do, without having lost the passion and enthusiasm, without having renounced the possibility of self-critique and to change! There are so many of you who will read this message who have supported this project in subscribing, ordering an issue, contributing, advising, sharing, encouraging... I simply can't thank you enough for this.

Have a wonderful read.

Léopold Lambert,
Paris, August 13, 2020.

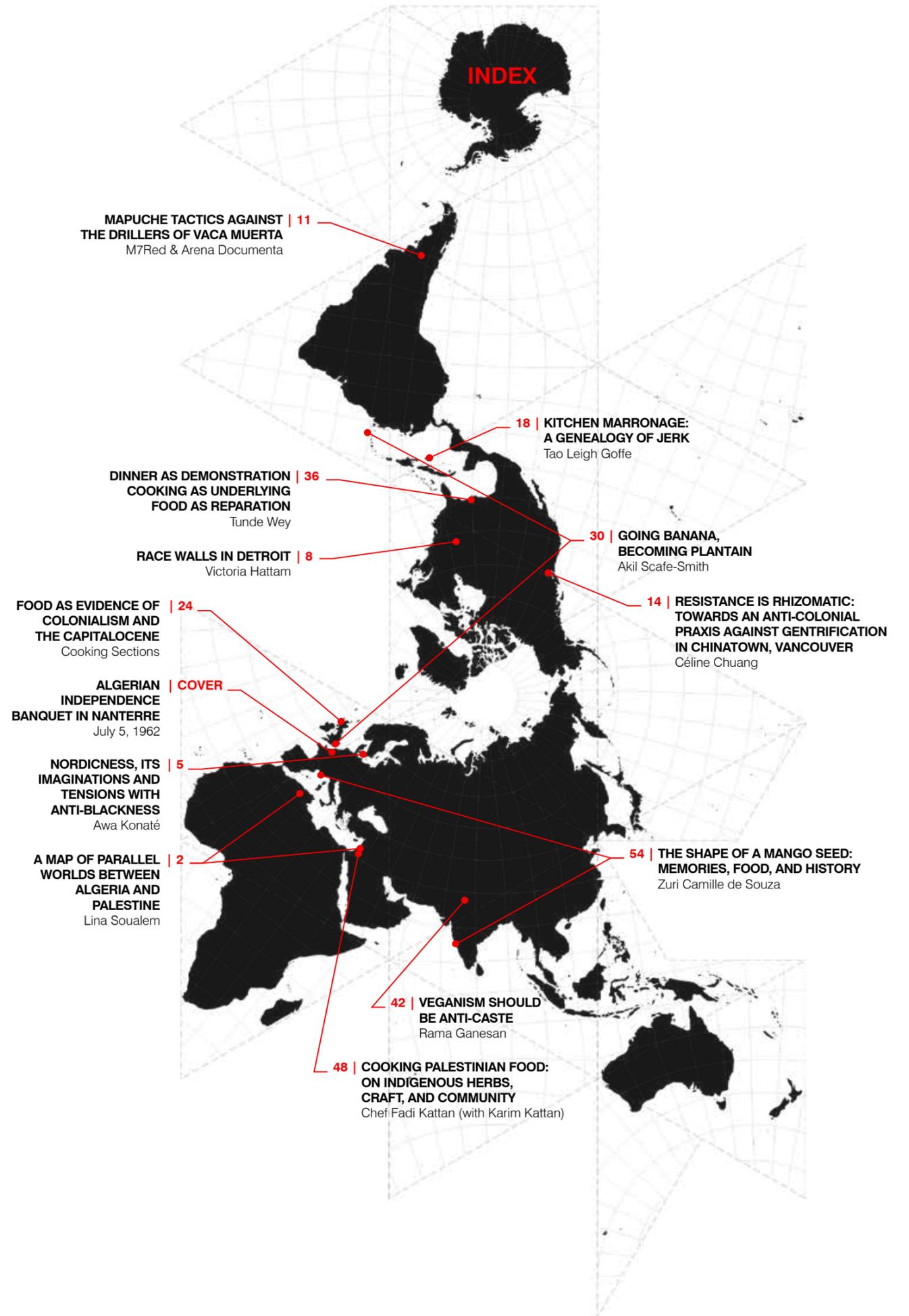


THE ISSUE'S COVER EXPLAINED

This powerful photograph was taken on the day of the Algerian Independence on July 5, 1962, almost eight years after the Algerian anti-colonial Revolution against France had started. The photo was not taken in Algeria however but, rather, in Nanterre (northwestern banlieue of Paris), where thousands of Algerians were living in shantytowns as well as in temporary housing called "transit quarters" (*cités de transit*; read Mogniss H. Abdallah's article "Reappropriating the Banlieue Space in Nanterre," in *The Funambulist* 21 (Jan-Feb 2019) *Space & Activism* for more on this), as this picture illustrates. A few months earlier, on October 17, 1961, about 30,000 Algerians living in the Paris' metropolitan area had demonstrated against a curfew taken against their sole persons. The police killed between 200 and 300 of them in the streets and on the bridges of Paris and arrested 6,000 others — many of them came from the Nanterre shantytowns, where the anti-colonial resistance was easier to organize.

In the context of this issue dedicated to the politics of food, it appeared to us as non-innocent that the ultimate political victory after 132 years of French colonialism was celebrated around a meal in the center of the housing quarters. May we all share a revolutionary banquet at least once in our life!

nb. This photo's rights is owned by the archives of the French prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis that did not deem to find the photographer. The Nanterre long-time activist friends we asked did not know either, but we're hoping that with this cover, we may be able to identify him or her and give them an appropriate tribute subsequently. **Si vous êtes à même d'identifier l'auteur.e de cette photo et/ou si vous êtes l'ayant droit de cette personne, n'hésitez pas à nous écrire à info@thefunambulist.net. Merci beaucoup!**



A MAP OF PARALLEL WORLDS BETWEEN ALGERIA AND PALESTINE

LINA SOUALEM

When a dermatologist told 15-year-old Lina Soualem what could be the cause of her skin condition, she refused to believe it as it involved a historical migratory link between her parents' respective countries: Algeria and Palestine. Years later, she realized that the dermatologist may have been right!

I was born with red, well-defined plaques all over my body and face, in the form of archipelagos or huge continents; a sort of intimate customized world map. They told my mother it was eczema. But she always knew it was something else. When I was eight years old, they finally established a diagnosis: Erythrokeratoderma variabilis. It is a rare syndrome, a female-dominated skin condition, due to what they call "the casual circumstances of human genetics."

In addition to dry skin, this syndrome causes the appearance of red patches of dryness on the body, constantly shifting in form and position. A disease with a mysterious name, hard to pronounce, which I loved repeating all the time, facing the astonished gaze of my young classmates. On my body lies a world map, which evolves as the seasons go by. In the winter, the continents become immense, thick, bright red, as the cold worsens my condition. In the summer, the continents transform into archipelagos and gradually disappear, as if submerged by the hungry ocean. The sun and the heat make me feel better. I recover in the summer. "You need to move to a warm and humid country" dermatologists would tell me. I have always lived in Paris; far from the safety of heat and humidity.

At the age of 15, I met with a renowned dermatologist, who specialized in rare genetic diseases at a Parisian public hospital. While she examined the world map deeply anchored in my skin, she asked: "Where are your parents from?" I told her that my mother is a Palestinian born in Nazareth, in the region of Galilee and that my father, born in France, is the son of Algerian immigrants from a small mountain village in East-Algeria, near the city of Setif.

The dermatologist then asked me if there had been crossed migrations between my parents' two countries of origin. I immediately thought to myself that she was drawing absurd and inaccurate parallels, I told her: "No! Palestine and Algeria are far away from each other, they are two different lands, two different countries!" She insisted,

explaining how sometimes these diseases can result from a crossing of different genes. Facing what I perceived as a tactless self-assurance on her part, I didn't respond. Meanwhile, fierce comments popped into my tormented adolescent mind: "What does she know about these countries? Algeria has its own history! Palestine as well!" While these thoughts were running through my head, I stayed silent, smiling politely to the dermatologist. As soon as I left the hospital, I was quick to share the anecdote with all my friends. They all agreed with me. Together, we mocked the dermatologist's ignorance. This anecdote stayed with me over the years. I told it a lot. It marked the originality of my skin condition.

As I grew up, I learned to master the diverse world maps drawing themselves on my body. Erythrokeratoderma variabilis stopped impressing me. I gave it sun, as much as I could, as well as a lot of shea butter and argan oil.

Since I was a small child, I have travelled every year to Galilee to see my maternal Palestinian family. Now an adult, I continue going every year. On the other hand, I discovered Algeria at the age of 21. I have gone several times since. I was 28 when I visited my paternal grandparent's village in the mountain of East Algeria for the first time. Laaouamer. This was two years ago.

I never drew parallels between these two countries. I never confused them. I always perceived them as two distinct lands. Algerian citizens have little chance to travel to Palestine, whose frontiers are controlled by the Israeli army. Palestinians have little chance to travel to Algeria, due to the restrictions of movement and travels imposed upon them. Beyond the ideological bond between the Algerian and the Palestinian people, which are symbolically close due to their common history of resistance to colonialism, I don't see any tangible links between these two lands that unite in me. All I can assure is that there is a concrete geographical, kilometric distance, precise and quantifiable between these two places.

"ON MY BODY LIES A WORLD MAP, WHICH EVOLVES AS THE SEASONS GO BY. IN THE WINTER, THE CONTINENTS BECOME IMMENSE, THICK, BRIGHT RED, AS THE COLD WORSENS MY CONDITION. IN THE SUMMER, THE CONTINENTS TRANSFORM INTO ARCHIPELAGOS AND GRADUALLY DISAPPEAR, AS IF SUBMERGED BY THE HUNGRY OCEAN."

"BEYOND THE IDEOLOGICAL BOND BETWEEN THE ALGERIAN AND THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, WHICH ARE SYMBOLICALLY CLOSE DUE TO THEIR COMMON HISTORY OF RESISTANCE TO COLONIALISM, I DON'T SEE ANY TANGIBLE LINKS BETWEEN THESE TWO LANDS THAT UNITE IN ME."



Lina's family photos in Galilee and Kabylie (1990s). / Courtesy of Lina Soualem.

At the age of 29, almost 15 years after my encounter with the dermatologist, history caught up with me and anchored me in its vicissitudes. On one day when I was scrolling through Facebook, I received an invitation to an event. I clicked and read: "Seminar: Algerians in Palestine / Palestinians in Algeria: An Interconnected History".

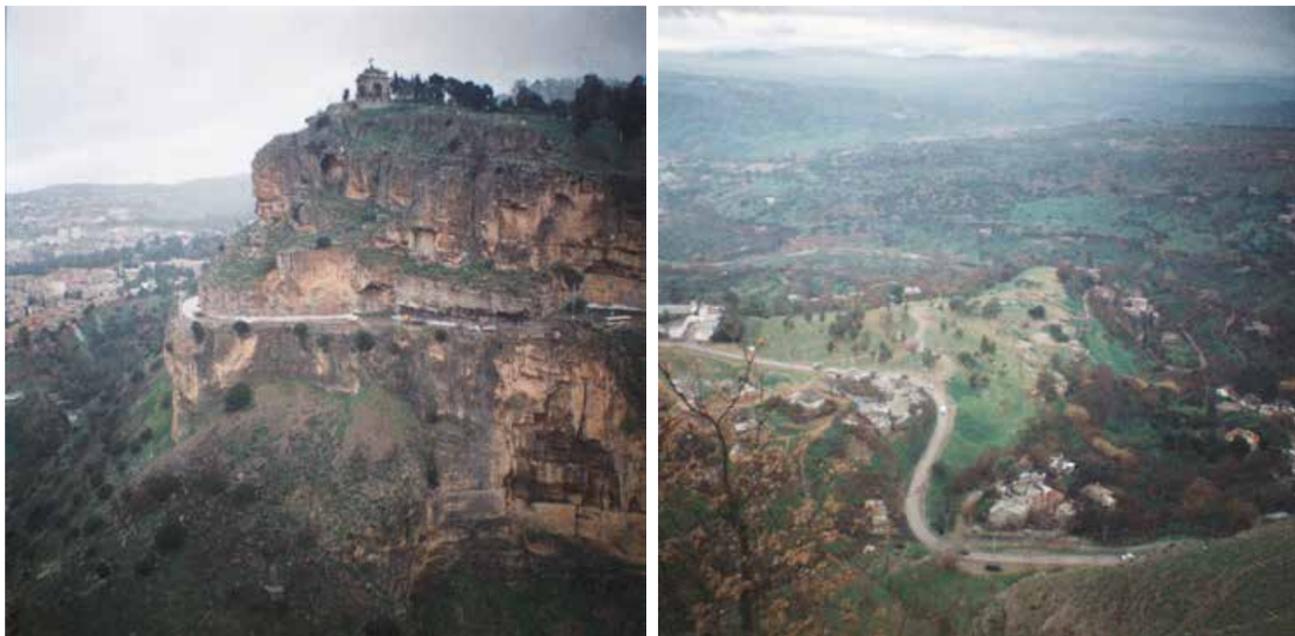
An interconnected history...? How could that be possible? I had never heard that in my whole life. Suddenly, I was intrigued, and very eager to attend this seminar. When I got there, I noticed I didn't know anyone. I sat on a chair, in the first row, and started staring at the speaker seated in front of me, with my eyes wide in anticipation and dubiousness. The speaker was a young master's student at the Higher School of Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris. I scrutinized him, wondering how he would be able to justify this connection that he pretended to have found between the two countries that are intermingled deep in my flesh. I was so impatiently waiting for him to start speaking. When he did start he presented his research work, telling the audience how in the 19th century, thousands of Algerians immigrated to Palestine because they were fleeing the French colonial occupation in their own country. He specified that most of these Algerians came from the region of Kabylie, the Djurdjura mountains, the region of Tizi Ouzou and East Algeria. They all settled in the Palestinian department of Galilee, scattered over a hundred houses and a dozen villages. They lived off fruit and vegetable harvest, olive plantation and animal farming, as they did in the mountains of Kabylie, where they had come from. They carried on their

culture and even their language, the Tamazight, which they transmitted to their children. During his research, the speaker had managed to find and contact some of these Algerians who lived in Galilee. He reported their testimony to us: when he asked them about their immigration to Galilee, they all told him that they decided to settle in this particular region in Palestine because the mountains of Galilee reminded them of the mountains of Kabylie.

I was blown away by these discoveries. I was fascinated, captivated, and speechless. Yet, I was just about to make another unpredictable discovery. As I watched the map of Galilee that the speaker had unveiled on his presentation projected onto a small screen in the cramped conference room, I stared, aghast for a few long minutes, unable to react. These Algerians settled mainly in the small Palestinian cities of Safad and Tiberias. In Safad, a quarter of the population was Algerian. Some Algerians became such an integral part of the local life and community that we couldn't tell them apart from the Palestinian residents.

I was amazed. My maternal Palestinian great-grandmother Aïcha was born in Safad and got married in Tiberias, where she had her nine children with her husband Hosni Tabari. Aïcha and Hosni carried the name of their hometown, Tabaria, in Arabic. My paternal Algerian great-grandmother, Fatima, was from Tizi Ouzou, in Kabylie. Her son Mabrouk (my grandfather) and his wife (my grandmother) also named Aïcha, and they were both born in the little village of Laaouamer in the mountains of East Algeria.

"I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY THESE DISCOVERIES. I WAS FASCINATED, CAPTIVATED, AND SPEECHLESS. YET, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO MAKE ANOTHER UNPREDICTABLE DISCOVERY."



Landscape around Constantine in East Algeria (2011). / Courtesy of Lina Soualem.

"THE SHIFTING WORLD MAP SKETCHED ON MY BODY WAS NOT AN ENIGMA ANYMORE. I FELT LIKE I HAD FINALLY UNRAVELLED THE MYSTERY OF WHAT THEY CALL 'THE CASUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HUMAN GENETICS.'"

At this precise moment, I thought again of my encounter with the dermatologist. I hadn't thought about that memory in a while. It seemed like it was not an anecdotal encounter after all. The dermatologist was right! There were actually crossed migrations between my parents' two countries of origin. I couldn't believe that she was right! My parents probably carry a common gene, dating back to this crossed migration. This common gene would be the cause of my genetic disease. Suddenly, Erythrokeratoderma variabilis stopped being a mystery to me. The shifting world map sketched on my body was not an enigma anymore. I felt like I had finally unravelled the mystery of what they call "the casual circumstances of human genetics."

The conference was about to end. I wanted to raise my hand so badly. I wanted to talk loudly about my skin problem. I wanted to tell everyone how much this interlinked history was so much more than just factual, it was engraved in my epidermis. I wanted the speaker to notice me, I wanted him to point at me and tell me: "You, I feel like you have something incredible to tell us." But of course, as my heart was racing, I stayed silent and anonymous. My story is only one story among the multiple intimate stories that compose our collective history.

"Under each of these faces, a memory. While they want us to believe that a collective memory is being forged, in reality there are thousands of memories of men who carry their personal heartbreak within the massive heartbreak of History."

Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil*, 1983. ■

Text originally published in French as "Une cartographie de mondes parallèles" in the participatory fanzine divine in May 2020.

Lina Soualem is a French-Palestinian-Algerian filmmaker and actress, born and based in Paris. After studying History and Political Science at La Sorbonne University, she started working in journalism and as a programmer in film festivals, looking to combine her interests for cinema and the study of contemporary Arab societies. Lina worked as a programmer for the International Human Rights Film Festival in Buenos Aires and the Palest'In&Out Festival in Paris, among others. In 2019, she released her debut feature documentary *Their Algeria*. These past years, Lina acted in three feature films directed by Hafsia Herzi, Hiam Abbass and Rayhana. She is currently developing her second feature documentary, and works as an author and assistant director on fictions, documentaries and TV series.

NORDICNESS, ITS IMAGINATIONS AND TENSIONS WITH ANTI-BLACKNESS

AWA KONATÉ

Scandinavian countries are often cited as examples of harmonious societies; it has even become a nationalist argument for many of their white citizens. In this text, Awa Konaté demonstrates how anti-Blackness in the Nordics go much beyond the individualized forms of racism: it is historical and structural.

"THE ONGOING REGULATION OF AFRICAN LIVES TO A PERIPHERY POSITIONALITY IS SITUATED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORKS OF EUROPEAN COLONIAL EXPANSION THAT IS INTERSECTED AND ONGOINGLY INTERTWINED IN THE NORDIC REGION THROUGH LEGAL AND POLITICAL ALLEGIANCES."

Historically, there has been very little literature about Black and white relations across the Nordics — a term denoting the broader Scandinavian region. The little that is available is often personal narratives of African American expats of the 1950s-1960s fleeing after they had fled from the overt state-sanctioned lethal violence that informs Black relationality in the United States. These personal narratives are largely employed to shape the racial imaginary of Nordic countries, always positioned as better and diverging from race relations present in the U.S.

Thus the Nordic region is imagined colorblind exceptionalism that is inherently tolerant. I base this statement on the notions of value and normative citizenship to which continental African migrants are lesser positioned. The Black diaspora fare "easier" by way of ability to correspond to a particular liberal understanding of value constituted visually and in the lingual captivity that forms current discussions on anti-racism.

Undoing this fabric demands we go beyond discourses on racism as having gained grounds over the recent decade, towards a wider ongoing historical framework of Nordicness, where anti-Blackness is constitutive of the contemporary conditions of peoples of African descent.

"TODAY THE GRATUITOUS VIOLENCES ARE GRANTED AND ENACTED THROUGH JUDICIAL AND SPATIALIZED AUTHORISATIONS SUCH AS THE DANISH GHETTO LAW, SJÆLSMARK, LINDHOM AND THE SWEDISH 'MILJONPROGRAMM' — TO REMIND THAT THE WELFARE STATE IS CONDITIONAL AND FORTUITOUS FOR NON-WHITE LIVES."

It will pose us to inquire what is Nordicness? What are its particularities, historical depths that propagate attachment and sentiments of value so strong, that it establishes an illegality of Black presence so dependent on producing both its death and exclusion?

Nordicness, Coloniality and Anti-Blackness ///

Nordic colonialisms have a long and complex history. Nation-states and stakeholders across the Nordic region were active participants of the European colonial enterprise. A keypoint of the emergence of Nordic nation-states is the transatlantic beginning of Blackness's denial to humanity through establishment of global capitalism. Denmark and Sweden practised territorial overseas

colonialism forging occupying territories and trading posts in Asia, America and Africa. The ongoing regulation of African lives to a periphery positionality is situated within the frameworks of European colonial expansion that is intersected and ongoingly intertwined in the Nordic region through legal and political allegiances.

Tangible material heritages, images, texts, things held captive in archives betray these silences in demand of (re)witnessing and intervening the abundant forgetfulness. Yet, the historical engagements forming a two-century long imperative basis have largely been silenced. Positioned as benevolent, untainted socio-political temporalities.

The unadulterated reframing purposely absolves generations of Nordic eugenicists from Sven Nilsson to Carl von Linné, who were instrumental in cementing both the ideological and intellectual foundations through which colonialism constructs and marks Black people as non-human, essential for the makings of whiteness in which Nordicness comes to position itself. Today the gratuitous violences are granted and enacted through judicial and spatialized authorisations such as the Danish Ghetto Law, Sjælsmark, Lindhom and the Swedish "miljonprogramm" — to remind that the welfare state is conditional and fortuitous for non-white lives.

The Paradigms of Nordicness ///

Nordicness is a designation of nationality or citizenship that is tacitly tied to whiteness. It is a particular form and value of whiteness carefully constructed across centuries to identify and racially categorize. Colonial perceptions of white superiority, have largely been employed across the Nordics to construct a purer form of whiteness that forms the identity of the Nordics. Bio-political measures and the rise of nation-state supported institutes for racial Biology founded in the early 20th century to preserve the white Nordic race, positions a foundational framework for which white supremacy becomes preserved and institutionalized.

“WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN THE CURRENT TO EXIST WITHIN AN EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY IMAGINED SPACE, WHERE HISTORICAL NARRATIVES, ALTHOUGH ERASED, ARE DEEPLY EMBEDDED WITHIN AND INFORM YOUR PRESENCE?”

Bearing this in mind, it is dangerous how often the intimacies of Nordicness, socially and biologically, with such silent ease constructs the need for epistemic rigor of whiteness, that is transferable and positioned as a prerequisite politicization through the Nordic model.

What forms a unique cohesion within this intimacy is a transferability which for Nordics of African descent is to occupy what Saidiya Hartman calls the “position of unthought.” Nordicness and the Nordic model also register Hortense Spillers’ “captive body” as part of a condition “which brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for value so thoroughly interwoven in literal and figurative emphases that distinctions between them are virtually useless.” (“Mama’s Baby, Papa’s May-be: An American Grammar Book,” 1987).

It is employed as a distinct demarcation of belonging, where Black being is perpetually yet unnoticeably situated outside. What does it mean in the current to exist within an externally and internally imagined space, where historical narratives, although erased, are deeply embedded within and inform your presence? Informing not only the relations, but also the languages that do not disrupt abstract violences, therefore denies you critique of an afterlife that is your subjugation?

Growing up in Denmark, I knew for many years that Black death produces and determines from that where we are, not even we are outside the bounds of coloniality’s afterlife. As Wilderson poignantly reminds Black death is constitutive even of our region.

So deviating from my first point of inquiry, I now ask; what possibilities do we come to, and they to us, if we acknowledge or perhaps even accept that our peripherality, one that is not our own, is fundamental to our being across the Nordics? What colonial practices, power dynamics in the contemporary can we negate to establish for ourselves, and to ourselves in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway, other modes of Black relationality that do not emanate from the ontological terrors of Nordic whiteness?

Contemporary Blackness and Condition(s) ///

The cultural consumptions through which Black presence is embraced for its performance, propounds an environment by which a speculative fiction of race is formed, so it cannot address it as an open marker for anything that may or can go in opposition to what whiteness exists as. The implication for anti-Blackness is then that it is deemed rarely a reality in the Nordic region, although its foundation for Nordic Whiteness to exist and function.

Moral and liberal values are continuously reiterated and rearticulated to create hollow perceptions of mutual belonging, of identity and racial discourses. This is particularly central to the current framings of mutual belonging granted to wider and public anti-racism discourses absent of any consideration to the particularities of anti-Blackness, other than what is established and provided by limited cultural paradigms.

Media narratives amplify this violence forming any centring of Black being from a position that will not see its totality, and therefore cannot register its suffering.

I evoke the following names, few of many: Phillip Mbuji Johansen, a young Afro-Dane who was brutally murdered on the Danish island of Bornholm by white supremacists. Safiyo, an Afro-Norwegian Muslim woman in Oslo who was knifed in broad daylight whilst resting in a public park. Cecilia Chiluba Arvola, an Afro-Finnish woman who was killed by her white partner. Kwaku Yankyer-Annor, a sixteen-year-old Afro-Swedish boy in Lund who was denied ambulance service, waiting hours for care despite his mother’s concerns of urgency only to die the following morning.

To remind that for all of them, their subsequent mode of narrative inclusion operates within a logic of Black disposability. Disposability of both life and breath contingent upon a wider anti-Black climate, which functions to enforce Black lives at violent proximity to where untimely death resides. As of yet, the loved ones of the aforementioned have received no forms of accountability. Instead, they are left bereaved confined to exist within futile borders where colonial omnipresent continues to inform white relationality to Black life.

The visibility yet absence of Black Nordic lives forms part of larger racialized discourse, where our precarities are not worth comprehension nor visibility. The colonial imperative for us is to only occupy a paradoxical positioning. Either to be complicit in rearticulating assimilationist values that are nationalistic of nature, or to be framed as threatening to the order of civility. Sara Ahmed identifies this as “institutionalized whiteness” (“A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” 2007), whereby whiteness is not an ontological fact, but rather a performance of various and repeated orientations within public space that determines how “one takes up space.” White familiarity to the language and modes that constitute these discourses are in essence the only guarantee for their public recognition and value.

Testimonies from Black people about anti-Black racism have become compelling narratives, where self-retraumatization functions to give fluid and contemporary

“WHAT COLONIAL PRACTICES, POWER DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CAN WE NEGATE TO ESTABLISH FOR OURSELVES, AND TO OURSELVES IN SWEDEN, DENMARK, FINLAND, AND NORWAY, OTHER MODES OF BLACK RELATIONALITY THAT DO NOT EMANATE FROM THE ONTOLOGICAL TERRORS OF NORDIC WHITENESS?”



Left. Colonial dockhouse around Nyhavn in Copenhagen, where sugar and other commodities imported from the Danish West Indies were stored. **Right.** A young black man in the middle of den Røde Plads (Red Square) in Nørrebro, a neighborhood experiencing accelerated gentrification of which parts of it are within the Danish so-called “Ghetto Zone.” / Both photos by Stéphane Valère.

understandings of Nordic racism as personal matter, omisive of structural fabrics. A powerful centring of whiteness to educate and reinscribe ideas of individual bigotry — removed from a wider institutional framework through which Black people are seemingly viewed as pathological threats to notions of order and civility.

Such assumes that a willing incorporation and inclusion of Black presence, how limited it may be, renders null and void the historical continuum of anti-Black racism in the present. The stability of Nordicness as a mode of civility is dependent on a binary, that relies on testimonies of anti-Black racism to reimagine and reinscribe its values and itself.

It is not enough that the majority of Black lives being working-class are conditionally and materially compounded by bureaucratic obstacles that are shaped and informed by the conditions of a past, that never is past. It is not enough that Black people across the Nordics constitute some of the most vulnerable migrant and refugee groups to structural and institutional inequities. Are greatly marked by two-three times higher unemployment rates and extensively experience racism in education, housing and health care.

In the context of the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic, these precarities and vulnerabilities experienced by Africans, in particular Somalis, have been tragically heightened through exacerbated infection rates. So what does this mean for us as Africans across the Nordics to inhabit a refusal of these positionings ; to interrupt their habitual and hegemonic conditions; to take hold?

Perhaps, it means visualizing and narrating oneself outside of what seems an impossibility. Forging new catalysts and ruptures of care work that activates all our registrars as Christina Sharpe denotes, to which we as Nordics of African descent situate ourselves within a framework of anti-Blackness, that functions without geographical borders, and instead supports a Black Nordic refusal to compromise with the social and lingual distinctions instituted and ongoingly provided as white paradigms that inhabit upon us. ■

Awa Konaté is a London and Copenhagen based Danish-Ivorian writer and curator. She is also the founder of the interdisciplinary research platform Culture Art Society (CAS) founded in 2013 to research the cultural economy of African archives. CAS draws on multiple disciplines to form a critical curatorial practice called “memory” work integral to its programming, moreover advocacy for African cultural activism and accessibility to arts education for Black working-class people.

“SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US AS AFRICANS ACROSS THE NORDICS TO INHABIT A REFUSAL OF THESE POSITIONINGS ; TO INTERRUPT THEIR HABITUAL AND HEGEMONIC CONDITIONS; TO TAKE HOLD?”

RACE WALLS IN DETROIT

VICTORIA HATTAM

In the past, Victoria Hattam has written extensively about the militarized southern border wall of the U.S. settler colony. In Detroit, she encountered other politically-charged walls, which spatially enforced the racial redlining of U.S. cities against its Black residents.

I had heard about it. A race wall in the outskirts of Detroit. The U.S. southern border gone inland?

It is known variously as the 8 Mile Wall, the Birwood Wall, the segregation wall. I call it the "race wall" as it was a materialization of racist mortgage lending practices adopted in the United States at mid-20th-century. Redlining, as the policy is known, involved government officials, banks and real estate offices literally drawing lines on maps to guide bank lending. Race undergirded the whole system: Blackness equaled risk. Federal housing funds flowed unevenly depending on the racial composition of neighborhoods. The 8 Mile Wall — its bricks and mortar — were integral to the race-based mortgage programs. It was built to reassure the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) that white and Black neighborhoods, although proximate, would remain physically separate. Black residents were supposed to live on one side of the wall, and white residents in the new development for whites would reside on the other. In a quite literal sense, then, the 8 Mile Wall is redlining materialized from maps to walls.

Built in 1941, the wall is a half-mile long, six feet high and a foot thick nestled in amongst the houses in a northern neighborhood in Detroit. It is a solid construction, built out of cement blocks with square cement posts designating wall segments every five or six feet. Some parts of the wall are painted off-white; others are left cement grey. In 2006, an artist and Detroit non-profit, painted a brightly colored mural on a section of the wall that runs alongside the Alfonso Wells Memorial Playground. The wall still stands. The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office is trying to have the wall placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Monies flowed unevenly to adjacent neighborhoods. Live on the Black side of the wall and banks would not lend; live on the other side and monies flowed easily to the new housing development for whites. Race determined whether one had access to capital through the race based mortgage system. The FHA mortgage programs did more than just shape access to housing; it structured long term inequalities in the U.S., because wealth, scholars agree, generally is generated through property rather than work.

The wall is redlining made flesh.

Border Walls ///

Standing next to the 8 Mile Wall, the structure echoes in another direction — to the incumbent U.S. President weaponizing of migration through construction of a "big beautiful wall" along the southern border. From the very beginning of his presidential campaign, the border wall has been Trump's signature issue. Where Ronald Reagan positioned the Republican Party against affirmative action, Trump aimed to reinvigorate right wing political identifications by attacking migrants. Trump is not alone in this move; right wing political parties around the globe have tried to bolster their electoral appeal by opposing immigration. Border walls have become vehicles for right wing mobilization.

To be sure, the 8 Mile and the southern border walls are very different; each embedded within particular geographies and histories. Unlike the southern border, there are no formal security protocols at the 8 Mile Wall: one can walk around it quite easily via public roads located at either end of the structure. Tellingly, in the middle of the wall, in the public park, two large rocks have been stacked one on top of the other to form a makeshift sty to facilitate getting up and over. The Detroit wall serves as a marker rather than a barrier: a demarcation rather than a territorial limit. In some sense, it is an everyday wall; less spectacular than its border counterparts, but no less pernicious. The border wall, by contrast, is getting taller and more highly securitized by the day making passage across the wall increasingly treacherous. The differences notwithstanding, the Detroit and southern border walls echo. The resonances are politically telling.

The race wall's significance reaches beyond redlining. The object itself — its wallness — disrupts the longstanding separation of race and migration politics that has been a hallmark of so called "ethno-racial" politics in the United States.

Reconnecting race and migration in the U.S. is no easy task because considerable political work has gone into holding apart the two social categories. The term "ethnicity"



The 8 Mile Wall, Detroit. / Photos by Victoria Hattam, June 2, 2019.

was introduced in the early 20th century in the U.S. by Jewish activists as a means of distinguishing Jewish peoples from racialized others. Ethnicity was claimed, and ultimately institutionalized, as a different kind of difference to that of race. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) codified the distinction by mandating that all federal departments and agencies collect ethnic and racial data separately. Importantly, the OMB mandate had authority over the decennial census as well, and those data provide the denominator for all federal government policy. In the U.S., in contrast with Europe, many government policies and social practices have distinguished race from ethnicity thereby obscuring the parallels and entanglements linking slavery, imperialism, settler colonialism, and migration. The Detroit wall disrupts that separation and in so doing undermines narratives of American exceptionalism in which ethnic differences have been embraced through claims to cultural pluralism that do not extend to racialized others.

Objects emanate politically — material penumbras if you will. The Detroit wall is no exception. By bringing race and migration into a single visual field, it puts the question: how do the two relate? Political articulations shift as old distinctions are breached.

The challenge is to remain open to the emanations — alert both to extant differences and potential affinities objects afford. Sensing the emanations requires an expansive conception of the political — a multi-sensory politics that extends across objects, images, identifications, and places. The 8 Mile Wall is important in its own right, for its quite particular history of racist mortgage lending, but the wall has a wider reach. It carries with it an intersectional politics that opens possibilities of aligning anti-racist and pro-immigrant politics that resonate powerfully now.

Memory and Forgetting ///

I am not the first to write about the 8 Mile Wall: many have told the story before. In fact, the story has been told over and over in an unusually wide array of media outlets. Teresa Moon, who heads the 8 Mile Community Organization, has been interviewed by Al Jazeera, National Public Radio, and The Detroit News among many other media outlets. On June 14, 2019, the National Park Service awarded the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board a 40,000 dollar grant to preserve the wall. The press conference announcing the award was

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"THE 8 MILE WALL — ITS BRICKS AND MORTAR — WERE INTEGRAL TO THE RACE-BASED MORTGAGE PROGRAMS. IT WAS BUILT TO REASSURE THE FEDERAL HOUSING AUTHORITY (FHA) THAT WHITE AND BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS, ALTHOUGH PROXIMATE, WOULD REMAIN PHYSICALLY SEPARATE."

"THE DETROIT WALL SERVES AS A MARKER RATHER THAN A BARRIER: A DEMARCATION RATHER THAN A TERRITORIAL LIMIT. IN SOME SENSE, IT IS AN EVERYDAY WALL; LESS SPECTACULAR THAN ITS BORDER COUNTERPARTS, BUT NO LESS PERNICIOUS."



The 8 Mile Wall,
Detroit. / Photos by
Victoria Hattam,
June 2, 2019.

"MANY 8 MILE RES-
IDENTS CLAIM THE
WALL IN JUST THESE
TERMS: A VEHICLE
FOR REMEMBERING."

held at the wall and was covered favorably by the local Fox2 News channel. Six days later, while running for President, Senator Elizabeth Warren announced her housing policy in front of the wall posting a video of the announcement on her twitter feed and being interviewed by *The Detroit News*. That same year, Gerald Van Dusen, an English Professor at Wayne State University, published a comprehensive study of the wall. Almost all the news coverage is accompanied by images drawn from the Library of Congress. The wall is not hidden; it sits in plain sight — recognized by many as an important political object .

Present day racism is enacted through forgetting. The fact that the Detroit wall is not widely known is testimony to the ways in which we refuse to hold onto our history of racial violence and repression. Photographs of the Detroit wall have been shown time and again and the story of redlining told and retold. And yet, both repeatedly slip from view. This history needs to be told yet again; its specificity and reach recounted over and over so as to resist the willful desire for amnesia and repression. Many 8 Mile residents claim the wall in just these terms: as a vehicle for remembering. Teresa Moon, president of the 8 Mile Community Organization, has been asked many times whether the wall should be torn down: "Heck, no!" she replies time and again. The history of racial discrimination needs to be seen and heard. Even if official housing policies have been modified, racism continues. The wall stands as a badge of honor and as material testimony to the long, systematic, and multi-sited history of racial violence and discrimination.

Look, look sideways, remember. ■

Victoria Hattam is a professor in the Politics Department at The New School for Social working on economic and racial inequalities in the United States. Over the last decade, she has co-taught a series of critical studios on visual and spatial politics with faculty from The Parsons School of Design. Hattam's current research examines shifting relations between design and production in the global economy. She is a member of the Multiple Mobilities Research Cluster and a faculty fellow at the Graduate Institute for Design, Ethnography, and Social Thought at the New School in 2020-21.

MAPUCHE TACTICS AGAINST THE DRILLERS OF VACA MUERTA

M7RED & ARENA DOCUMENTA

Throughout the Americas, settler colonies not only established nation states on Indigenous lands, they also exploit the depths of the earth's resources. M7Red and Arena Documenta describe how Mapuche communities are organizing against oil companies in the Vaca Muerta region.

"One of the most polluting companies that had operated in the continent will soon arrive in our territory," announced a manifesto written by the Mapuche Confederation on the Mapuche new year. An Ecuadorian delegation of the Kofan and Siona peoples had visited Vaca Muerta to warn their brothers and sisters about the terrible damage caused to their territories by the activities of U.S. oil company Chevron in the Amazonian jungle. That night at the ruka of the Lof Campo Maripe a joint decision was reached: two oil drilling rigs will be taken by the community with the cooperation of the Mapuche Confederation and other allied organizations.

Security Forces arrived at Campo Maripe community territory the 16th July 2013 at 6AM with eviction orders. That same day, the agreement between Argentine oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (YPF) and Chevron would be signed at the provincial legislature. A small group of people of this Mapuche community went to the nearest town and bought lots of bottles of floor cleaning products. "We went to the towers, but first we stopped by the trailers where the oil workers sleep and told them: 'Don't worry, nothing's happening'." They started filling 5-liter fuel cans with the cleaning product — fuel as far as what the police could tell — and started pailing the tower base with firewood branches. "If you don't leave right now we set this on fire!", they warned the police forces. In the meantime, a group of women climbed the tower and chained themselves to the structure. For 48 days, six oil workers teams were stuck and were unable to work.

The Vaca Muerta oilfield formation covers a total area of 30,000 square kilometers (approximately the size of Belgium), most of them in the province of Neuquen in the Argentinian side of north Patagonia. This province is quite new in the process of consolidation of the Argentine territory. Neuquen (Newenken in mapudungun, the mapuche language) was a national territory before it was created as a province by decree in 1955 by Juan Peron, president at the time and military strategist.

This process illustrates the everlasting tensions between exploitation of natural resources, Mapuche land claims

and cultural heritage, the Argentine federalist system and the role of state-owned companies in the incorporation of Patagonia territory, a disputed territory in the 19th century between the newborn countries of Argentina and Chile. In fact, the conquest of Patagonia by these two nation states ended only through the accomplishment of infamous military expeditions: the "Conquista del desierto" in Argentina (1879-81), and the "Ocupación de la Araucanía" in Chile (1861-83). Both nation states advanced over Mapuche ancestral territory, which in scientific and military cartography appeared as "terra nullius" — an uncharted territory. This apparently uninhabited land was known as the "Wall Mapu" or ancestral territory of the Mapuches.

The Wall Mapu is represented as a map that covers territories in both countries. It was seen flaming in every protest and rally along with the Mapuche flag during the recent revolts in Chile and became a symbol of popular resistance, although is not officially recognized in any national cartography. The Wall Mapu is simultaneously a historical reconstruction and a vision towards the future.

In 1918 the first oil field was discovered in Plaza Huincul, one of the beginnings of the Argentine oil industry. Together with the building of massive hydro dams, this brought development and jobs to the region and made the province a strategic asset and geopolitical stake of a modern nation state in the south cone. The presence of oil and gas industries in the province, recreated demographic dynamics seen in other drilling areas around the world. Many of the exploration camps later became towns where most of the employment relied on state-run companies and hence the necessity for strong unions. Neuquen province has been governed since its beginnings by a provincial party the MPN (Movimiento Popular Neuquino) started by local politicians and oil union leaders focused on the management of its rich subsoil. Its resources were owned by the province but exploited by state and private oil and gas companies. The national constitution declares that all revenues from natural resources belong first to provinces and then to the nation state.

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The ladder road is the main access to the plateau region of Campo Maripe community's place. Each polygon has an average of six oil spills of shale oil and gas. / Photo by Arena Documenta (2019).

"THE VACA MUERTA BASIN HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN TRANSFORMED BECAUSE OF ITS NEW POTENTIAL FOR EXTRACTION AND IT NOW PLAYS A KEY ROLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS NEGOTIATION CAPABILITIES IN THE GLOBAL OIL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX."

Privatization of YPF during the 1990s brought unrest to these oil towns. Unemployment skyrocketed, which led to picket lines blocking roads for months in order to make visible the claim of communities which were brutally neglected. This situation enabled the rise of a new political movement: the *piqueteros*. Piqueteros later embodied the resistance against the hard austerity measures imposed by the IMF during the financial crisis that struck Argentina in 2001. This movement was shaped outside the model of labor union organizing, as their members were formerly unemployed and excluded from unions itself. This enabled an alliance with the incipient Indigenous movement that was slowly growing after the years of military dictatorship in the 1970s.

The emergency law of 2006 declared a national emergency for all indigenous communities inside Argentinian territory. This law led to a cartographic survey of each community and a historical report of their lineage and territorial origins. Yet the application of this law has been continuously rescheduled, governments use an "intercultural" strategy to officially recognize claims, sometimes, with the intention to extend negotiations as long as possible in order to disregard them. Others, as a positive incentive to unlock negotiations.

While the productivity of the firsts oil fields in the Neuquen area was going down, in 2010 the reservoir of shale gas of Vaca Muerta was rediscovered. At this time the non-conventional shale gas extraction technologies were in process of being developed globally but, at the time, Argentina was caught in an energetic deficit and lack of investment in the subject. The Vaca Muerta basin has once again been transformed because of its new potential for extraction and it now plays a key role for the government and its negotiation capabilities in the global oil industrial complex. This situation is taking place while social tensions continue to echo the 2001 crisis. The Mapuche communities are the most affected, both by the constant advancement of concessions areas, pipelines and wells on their territories, and by the incipient process of environmental degradation. The Mapuche traditional organization is a loose federation of *LoFs* (familiar clan or lineage which recognizes the authority of a *lonko*). The Lof Campo Maripe is located in one of the more fracked areas of the Vaca Muerta basin. Due to its strategic position over the oil fields, the Lof Campo Maripe wasn't officially recognized then by national and provincial governments, so they were not allowed to access the benefits that came with the Indigenous territorial emergency law recognition.

In response, the Lof, allied with the Confederacion Mapuche del Neuquen, produced an anthropological report in order to verify and consolidate their belonging and ownership of their territories. Meanwhile, the Lof Campo Maripe obtained its legal recognition. The first map was traced to show the historical borders of the community, exposing how the Lof Campo Maripe



territory overlapped with those of the oil concessions of Chevron and YPF. The consequence of this map is important because it forced government and corporations to recognize the Lof, especially since it was not protected by the Indigenous territorial emergency law. Consequently, this map became the starting point of a "counter cartographic process" that brought unease to oil companies and media outlets. Since then, companies and landowners are suing the Lof Campo Maripe for usurpation.

The trial, with all its numerous altercations, has not been resolved yet. But in March 2020, a new political opportunity opened up to make an official survey of communal Mapuche territories. This would constitute a landmark effort to formally place the community on a spatial and political map, in recognizing their legitimate territorial sovereignty. But more importantly, the redefinition of these territories would create a "cartographic front of conflict," which would unravel in an uncertain and dramatic scenario for the global oil and gas industry, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The weakening of the modern Argentine State by successive social and economic crises opened up the opportunity of community-based claims. Amongst this, the Mapuche culture of resistance embodied not only a sense of belonging and fight, but also enabled ways of empowering other groups and individuals relegated by the state. While in Chile, the Mapuche activists have been labeled "terrorists" by successive governments, the Mapuche resistance in Argentina, in particular the Lof Campo Maripe, is more ambiguous, since it combines elements of long-dated Indigenous struggles with others, coming from the recent dynamics of social movements, especially those related to labor unions, social organizations, and ethnic minorities.

In Neuquen, a reconstruction process of the Mapuche people inhabiting the current Argentine territory is happening. The everyday struggles at Lof Campo Maripe show that reconstruction is not possible without fiercely searching for

political and territorial autonomy. But these struggles are now intertwined with those of the social movements with whom they share demands, claims and mutual support among the uncertain dynamics of the Vaca Muerta basin.

The oleophilics blankets are basically a duvet. Bird feathers are the ideal absorbent to control possible oil losses and spills during operation. They are also ideal for a takeover of the *Gendarmeria* (border guards) outpost. In mid-June 2017, the *Gendarmeria* broke the locks on the lands claimed by the Campo Maripe community to take control of the land. The following day, the affected Mapuches found their years of oil pit work experience useful when they loaded the oleophilic blankets in their trucks, traveled to the provincial capital and entered the *Gendarmeria* outpost. The women, once again, chained themselves to the door of the Detachment. Albino, then *longko* of the community, explained: "We went in and opened all the chicken down blankets. Do you know the smell of that? Even chicken feet are inside those blankets. There were feathers all the way down to the street. We told them that if the *Gendarmeria* did not leave our land, we would not leave the outpost." In less than 12 hours, the national security force had withdrawn from the Campo Maripe land. "We told them: Do you feel like your house was taken? We feel the same!", Albino remembers, between sorrow and humor. ■

M7red (Mauricio Corbalan + Pio Torroja) and Arena Documenta (Pablo Linietsky + Teo Bonilla) are independent research groups based in Buenos Aires. They are teaming up on a multilayer project on the conflict with the Lof Campo Maripe community since 2018. M7red and Area documenta are involved in an independent research on oil conflicts in Argentina since 2017. In 2019, they collaborated with Forensic Architecture on a research project on the conflict with the Lof Campo Maripe community. A special report was commissioned by The Guardian as a part of a shift on its environmental report policy in order to target the big oil and gas industry called "The Polluters."

Left. The stall of Suzana, one of the community members, in the upper plateau zone flanked by the oil drilling machinery. **Right.** Mabel Campo, *longko* (chief) of the community at that moment, points to the last cairn that indicates the west ending of their ancestral place. / Photo by Arena Documenta (2019).

"BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE REDEFINITION OF THESE TERRITORIES WOULD CREATE A 'CARTOGRAPHIC FRONT OF CONFLICT,' WHICH WOULD UNRAVEL IN AN UNCERTAIN AND DRAMATIC SCENARIO FOR THE GLOBAL OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC."

RESISTANCE IS RHIZOMATIC: TOWARDS AN ANTI-COLONIAL PRAXIS AGAINST GENTRIFICATION IN CHINATOWN, VANCOUVER

CÉLINE CHUANG

A lot has been already written on the violent forms of gentrification Vancouver is currently experiencing. In this text, however, Céline Chuang frames the struggle for Chinatown's survival in an anti-colonial framework that involves tribute to and solidarity with the Indigenous' fight for sovereignty.

Arriving at the drop-in center brings the familiar scent of sage smoke from the early morning smudge. As we ladle eggs on the breakfast line, an Indigenous coworker tells me she is seeing a Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner, because it's the closest thing she can find to the traditional medicine of her culture. It's a fitting conflux where the Downtown Eastside overlaps Chinatown, and displaced Native folks from across what is called Canada hail greetings to one another as bottle-picking popos (Chinese senior women) push carts across potholed streets. The settler colony's poorest urban postal code refuses categorization and subjugation, and although varying degrees of marginalization can intersect to form fissures — state-enforced scarcity breeds contempt among the injured — bridges and connective tissues too emerge, flexing muscle memory in the ongoing struggle against rampant gentrification.

Postmemory, which Marianne Hirsch defines as being mediated through imaginative creation rather than recollection, roots the struggle of the East Asian diaspora to protect Chinatown(s): exercised out of honor for our adopted ancestors, the working-class elders who labored in fish factories and on railroads, and in a context of solidarity with Indigenous communities against the multiple displacement of gentrification within a settler-colonial state. As Natalie Knight points out, the colonial front lines are everywhere; the city is where urban Indigenous sovereignty struggles manifest, and East Asian solidarity means grounding our work in recognition and alignment. At a public hearing discussing a new condominium at 105 Keefer Street, a patchwork coalition mobilized by outrage denounces the development: urban Native land defenders, neighborhood po-pos who lecture the mayor in Cantonese and Mandarin, a wide swath of us from the East Asian diaspora to whom Chinatown is a sacred space, a fragile ecosystem of intergenerational relationships, cultural nourishment, and invaluable sustenance

for the community. Speaker after speaker begins by naming the true owners of the land, the Musqueam, the Squamish, and the Tsleil-Waututh, connecting the dots between colonial theft and the displacement of the poor and racialized who call Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside home.

105 Keefer remains a touchpoint for community organizing in Chinatown, a moment of convergence that gestures towards an East Asian anticolonial praxis and the robust resistance made possible. If the anti-gentrification movement in Chinatown can be thought of as a body, it is rhizomatic: at once ancient and emergent, a root system of past and future possibilities multiplicitous and intertwined. Locating the anti-gentrification struggle in Vancouver within a larger anticolonial framework embraces an abundance of futures, an affront to the scarcity mindset of late capitalism, and nods to Native and East Asian healing which are similarly grounded in holistic balance and herbal medicine. Nodes of connection and mutual disruption nourish our shared struggle and send up new shoots, even in separation, for survival.

As the dystopian appetite of settler-colonial capitalism militarizes against Indigenous land defenders and consumes Chinatowns from Vancouver to San Francisco, it is the rootedness of Native relationship with place, and the fierceness of Indigenous matriarchal power, that must enliven our resistance. The fight for Chinatown drinks from a rich wellspring of grassroots activism, tended by warrior women like Harriet Nahanee, Stella August, and Rita Blind who birthed the Women's Memorial March in the 1990s and marched against the 2010 Olympics. Contemporary interventions to the urban development agenda honor their legacies and rupture, like roots through concrete, the city-state's modus operandi to contain and control the poor and racialized: Nikkei youth hosting cultural celebrations in the shell of



Artwork by Céline Chuang for the purpose of this text (2020).

post-internment Japantown, Indigenous Elders tending sacred fires in back allies and bringing bannock to the people. As the Musqueam 2015 exhibition/film *c̓əsnaʔəm: The City Before the City* illustrates, Vancouver is a young city. Its default state is imposition; beneath its polished glass veneer, subterranean rhizomes of solidarity, care and stewardship flourish, and this is where we draw our strength.

The fight against gentrification in Chinatown, Vancouver is one located at a nexus of contested neighborhoods: the Downtown Eastside, reputed (and surveilled and policed) for its open air drug use and high homeless population, less well known for its fiery advocacy, brash humour and boundless creativity, Railtown, palimpsest of pre-internment Japantown, and the former Hogan's Alley, at one time the heart of Vancouver's Black community before it was bisected by the Georgia Viaduct, the city's only major overpass. Layers of colonial violence and racist urban planning have long attempted the erasure of communities of color, a continued pattern evident in Chinatown as historic affordable businesses providing produce, traditional medicine, and other necessities are eroded to make way for the accoutrements of the white gentry: luxury boutiques, third wave coffee shops, high-end barber shops. Next to the dollar store, New Mitzie's serves up chop suey cuisine to low-income Chinese and Indigenous residents, and across Hastings Street, Sunrise Market sells discount produce to the masses. In a food desert where most inhabitants live off meager government assistance, cheap Chinese food and market produce constitute accessible supplements to free drop-in meals, an endangered symbiosis. Protecting Chinatown safeguards nutritional access for both Chinese seniors and Indigenous residents, a node of shared survival that roots both anti-gentrification action and food sovereignty. Food is perhaps the most salient image of East Asian-Indigenous commonality; the round tables at Chinese restaurants reflect an ethic of relationship and respect akin to the medicine wheel, and early Chinese restaurants served Indigenous customers when white-owned establishments denied them service, a lineage from which to envision community gardens of choi and plant medicine, feasts presided by songs and drumming, an equitable future for Chinatown.

On Lunar New Year, I run into Mabel, one of the Native Elders watching the annual tai chi performance at the women's center. She shows me photographs of herself in a group of other brown-skinned women, smiling around a birthday cake, and tells me about her days in East Vancouver fish factories, elbow-to-elbow with Chinese working-class immigrant women and the sisterhood nurtured across language barriers. Mabel is near her 90s, and only a few years ago walked the Highway of Tears to demand justice for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. When Chinatown business owners denigrate Indigenous drug users, or the realities of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex pit interests of

"THE FIGHT AGAINST GENTRIFICATION IN CHINATOWN, VANCOUVER IS ONE LOCATED AT A NEXUS OF CONTESTED NEIGHBORHOODS: THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE, REPUTED FOR ITS OPEN AIR DRUG USE AND HIGH HOMELESS POPULATION, LESS WELL KNOWN FOR ITS FIERY ADVOCACY, BRASH HUMOR AND BOUNDLESS CREATIVITY; RAILTOWN, PALIMPEST OF PRE-INTERMENT JAPTOWN; AND THE FORMER HOGAN'S ALLEY, AT ONE TIME THE HEART OF VANCOUVER'S BLACK COMMUNITY BEFORE IT WAS BISECTED BY THE GEORGIA VIADUCT, THE CITY'S ONLY MAJOR OVERPASS."

"IF THE ANTI-GENTRIFICATION MOVEMENT IN CHINATOWN CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS A BODY, IT IS RHIZOMATIC: AT ONCE ANCIENT AND EMERGENT, A ROOT SYSTEM OF PAST AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES MULTIPLICITOUS AND INTERTWINED."

marginalized groups as opposing, I think of her as one of the many ordinary instances of lived solidarity that informs an East Asian anticolonial praxis. Mabel reminds me that what we seek to build already exists; as we recognize common conditions, rooted in relationship, we build capacity for transformation.

**Language Sovereignty,
Land Sovereignty, Queer transgression ///**

After the City denies the 105 Keefer condo development, transphobia surfaces in a core organizing group and after repeated calls for accountability are ignored, the impromptu coalition splinters. Supporters rally around Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice 世代同行會, a community organization built ground-up by largely queer diasporic East Asians, and one of the only two non-profits amidst hundreds in the area who provide multilingual services to seniors. Language access is a key concern for seniors who speak little to no English, which Yarrow is working to implement from its own intergenerational programming to the labyrinthine bureaucracy of city policy. The future of grassroots organizing in Chinatown may be in flux, but queer diasporic East Asians are accustomed to liminality; we understand the priority of harm reduction, how spatial justice cannot be reduced to racialized settlers on stolen land. Our fight must include Indigenous sex workers, trans and Two-Spirit people, in order to be effectively anticolonial. The po-pos know it too — one senior, speaking on a newly-formed city committee liaising with Chinatown groups, advocates for a permanent Indigenous member. We live on unceded land, she tells the committee in Mandarin. At trans author Kai-Cheng Thom's *I Hope We Choose Love* (2017) book launch in Chinatown, Khelsilem Tl'akwasik'an Sxw-chálten, a spokesperson for the Squamish nation, offers words of hospitality in Squamish, and tells us about his work to restore the Squamish language through immersion programs with youth. Language rights and revitalization initiatives challenge English as normative, and bud collective action and shared flourishing.

At their trilingual-translated Chinese banquet, Yarrow organizers begin by acknowledging the land and expressing solidarity for the Wet'suwet'en struggle for sovereignty. We eat together a few blocks from the port, where Indigenous organizers will host an extended blockade after the militarized Royal Canadian Mounted Police descend on Unist'ot'en Camp, Wet'suwet'en re-occupied traditional territories. In the following weeks, queer diasporic East Asians mobilize to support interventions, translating signs into Chinese characters, and compiling vocabulary resources to educate immigrant communities. Jane Shi recalls how blockading

the railroad tracks that early Chinese laborers built is a transgressive act, an interruption of settler-colonial infrastructure and reclamation of historic solidarity. People's historian Bill Chu documents stories of reciprocity and collaboration predating Confederation: he Nlaka'pamux extending care to railway workers left to die — an estimated 4,000 Chinese laborers died in the construction of the railroad — and the expulsion of white gold miners, shared meals, and intermarriages in Sto:lo villages after the Gold Rush. We are transgressing, but we are also revising, revisiting, returning.

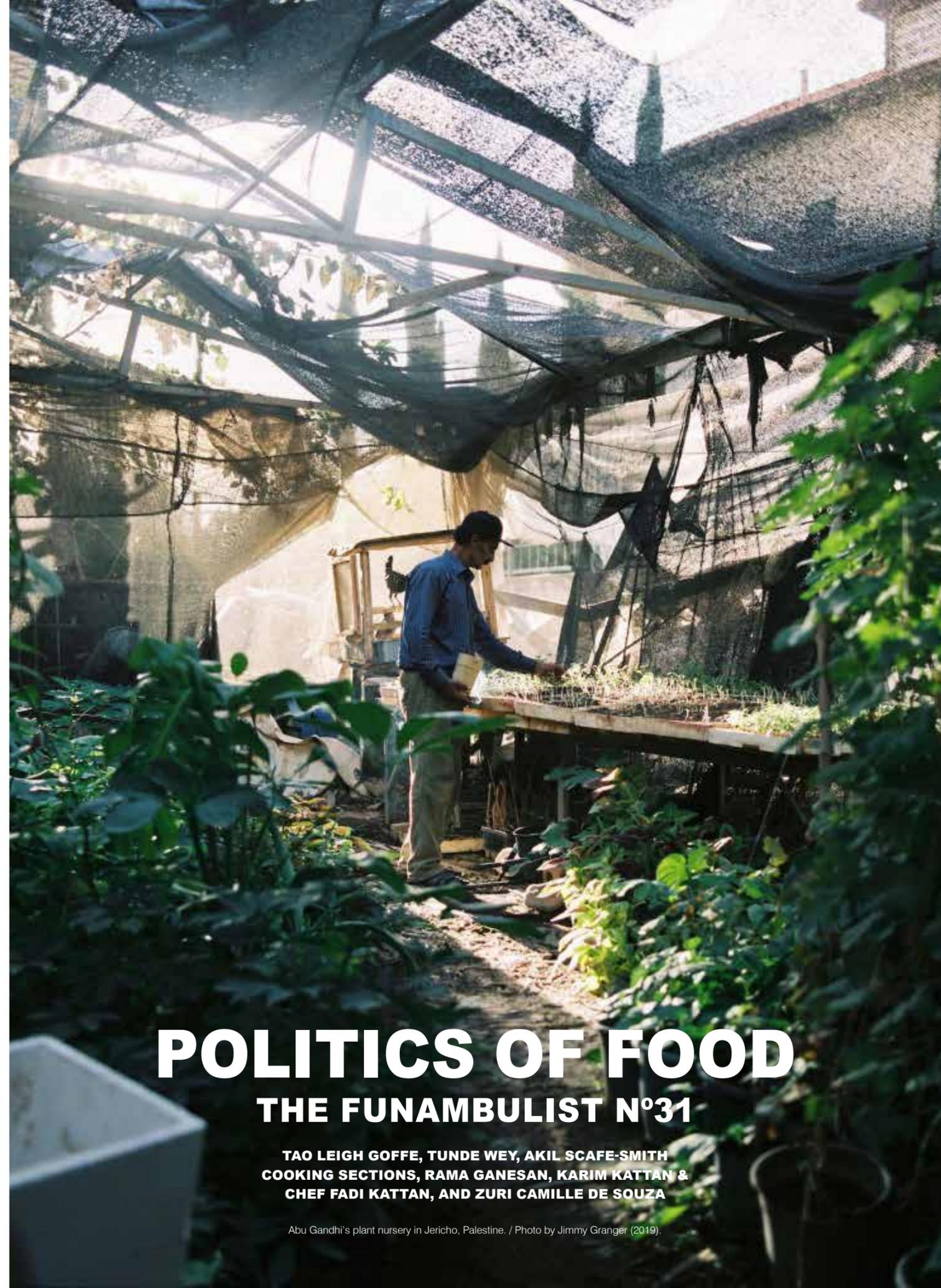
Laboring to Betray Whiteness //

In *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonialism* (2016), Iyko Day articulates how Asians serve the designated role as alien labor within the infrastructure of a settler-colonial state (here, Canada). If, in her words, "mixing alien labor with Indigenous land to expand white property was the basis and objective of settler colonialism," then we must see the collective labor of us in the diaspora, our fight to protect Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside from the maw of capitalist-colonial gentrification, as subversive responsibility, ancestor-ordained sabotage to the cogs of white supremacy. Whiteness relies on fulfilling designated roles in brutal hierarchy, and when East Asians capitulate to the rhetoric, such as framing racism as solely individual heinous acts and playing the part of the model minority, we enact exactly what whiteness wants; we participate in its poison. Instead, we need to unlearn the myths of meritocracy and good behavior: bite the hand that has fed our parents and grandparents the propaganda upholding what Desmond Cole calls Canada's "passive aggressive brand of racism" (2020). As Robyn Maynard and Audra Simpson remind us, state discourses of multiculturalism have historically worked to neutralize Indigenous uprising, such as the Red Power movement in the 1960s-1980s, masking strategies of dispossession and perpetuating the invisibility of Black lives in Canada. In the wake of magnified anti-Asian racism during COVID-19, refuting white supremacy's Faustian bargains becomes integral to our own anticolonial radicalization, combating gentrification, and growing freer futures. We need not look far to unearth augurs of transformation — indeed, the medicine that will sustain us may be right beneath our feet. ■

Céline Chuang is an organizer, writer, and educator based on unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh territories (Vancouver, Canada) with familial and ancestral ties to Fujian, Meixian, Mauritius, and Hong Kong. Her interdisciplinary work is interested in racial and spatial justice, troubling dominant narratives, and decolonizing the sacred.

"OUR FIGHT MUST INCLUDE INDIGENOUS SEX WORKERS, TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE, IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVELY ANTICOLONIAL."

"WHITENESS RELIES ON FULFILLING DESIGNATED ROLES IN BRUTAL HIERARCHY, AND WHEN EAST ASIANS CAPITULATE TO THE RHETORIC, SUCH AS FRAMING RACISM AS SOLELY INDIVIDUAL HEINOUS ACTS AND PLAYING THE PART OF THE MODEL MINORITY, WE ENACT EXACTLY WHAT WHITENESS WANTS; WE PARTICIPATE IN ITS POISON."



POLITICS OF FOOD

THE FUNAMBULIST N°31

TAO LEIGH GOFFE, TUNDE WEY, AKIL SCAFE-SMITH
COOKING SECTIONS, RAMA GANESAN, KARIM KATTAN &
CHEF FADI KATTAN, AND ZURI CAMILLE DE SOUZA

KITCHEN MARRONAGE: A GENEALOGY OF JERK

TAO LEIGH GOFFE

How to better open this dossier on the politics of food than with this powerful text by Tao Leigh Goffe linking Jamaican Maroons' cooking practices with their organized struggle for free existence and their relationship with Indigenous nations of the Carribeans?

"verb transitive. In Jamaican cookery: to marinate (meat, esp. pork or chicken) in a spicy mixture of seasonings (typically including allspice and Scotch bonnet chilli peppers) before smoke-curing or barbecuing it. (Jerking was originally practised by Jamaican maroons as a way of cooking and preserving the meat of wild hogs.)"

Oxford English Dictionary

Jerk, the spicy seasoning, is a global cultural export and it is almost as much the flavor of Jamaica as reggae is. Like reggae music that developed out of Rastafarian ethos and musicality, jerk is an African-derived ritual that was not developed for mass commodification and was in fact cultivated in opposition to it. Jerk is part of the material and immaterial culture of West Africa that can be tasted across the Antillean archipelago. Jerk is the taste of Black fugitivity, and you will not find anything resembling it on the African continent. Jerk is *kitchen marronage*. Put another way, kitchen marronage is a fugitive act of culinary sustenance. An African Indigenous and Indigenous Amerindian co-production, jerk is "the physical and psychological act of African survival" as Kamau Brathwaite defines marronage. Loosely defined marronage is any number of clandestine modes of flight from slavery by non-state actors. Jerk is thus a genre of marronage, as a cuisine outside of and in opposition to the European colonial and creole palate.

Like most complex flavor profiles, jerk is a technology of preservation that developed centuries ago out of scarcity. Jerky, for instance, the cutting of meat into strips that are desiccated is a related technique. Dating back to the 17th century long before refrigeration, jerk was a method for curing pork so that it could last for days at a time. Wild hogs, brought to the archipelago by the Spaniards, escaped the Spanish as enslaved Africans did too and served as sustenance to the people who became known as Jamaican Maroons.

Jerk, however, is not the myth of African purity or hermetically sealed cultural retention it would seem to be at first taste.

The spice blend cures the protein (pork, chicken, goat, shrimp, fish, tofu) as it is skewered with holes poked to infuse flavor and smoked in an underground pit over the course of a few days. This technique bears similarity to other Indigenous forms of island cooking, as in Hawai'i, where Native people slow-cook in an underground oven called a *kālua*. Much like barbecue, a word derived from Indigenous Caribbean peoples, *barbacoa* traces back to Haiti and Native techniques of how meat was cooked over a "wood frame on posts" by the Arawak.

Jerking is as much a technique of Indigenous cookery as it is Maroon gastronomy, and it calls into question what and who is considered native or indigenous to the West Indies. Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica in 1494, claiming it for the Spanish Crown. Africans, many of whom were Muslim, fled first the Spanish conquistadors who brought them there in the 16th century, and then later the British settlers after they seized the island in 1670. The Spaniards named the island "Jamaica," a bastardization of the Arawak name Xaymaca meaning land of wood and water. These unruly subjects, Maroons, are an example of what Latinidad and Spanish Empire was formed against, Africanness and Indigeneity. By the same dint the Maroons can never have been said to have been British or commonwealth subjects either. To be cimarrón is to exist in the category of identification beyond the nation-state of Latinx or the British West Indies as social formations. Maroon affiliation across the hemisphere is linked in a diasporic and archipelagic manner, anchored in the time capsule of seventeenth-century West Africa and the Indigenous Americas.

What I offer here is a genealogy of a jerk, at once a seasoning, a way of cooking across islands in the Caribbean, a marinade, and a philosophy. Evidence of jerk as an archipelagic flavor first appears in the colonial record in 1698, in the memoirs of white French clergyman and botanist Père Labat, who ate a jerk pork feast in Martinique, describing the sumptuous meal in rich detail. In 1802, the white New Jersey-born colonialist and wife of the Governor of Jamaica, Lady Nugent, described in detail the heavily spiced jerked hog in the Maroon style and how it was turned while



RJ

Drawing of a pimento tree by Romil Chouhan.

it cooked over pimento wood fires in her famous account. According to Caribbean cookbook author and personality Virginia Burke, jerk took to the streets post-emancipation, becoming a popular street food. In the 1930s in Jamaica in the Boston Beach area, jerk became popular near tourist resorts of the burgeoning luxury tourism industry. At this moment jerk made its world debut and now there are jerk championships held across the globe. And so Maroon cuisine is hidden in plain sight. Few are aware of the indeterminate lineage of the signature flavor of the Caribbean. Maroons continue to thrive across the hemisphere from Panama Haiti to Mexico to Martinique to Suriname, where they have been known archaically as the "Bush Negroes." The designation of bush speaks to what it means to be outdoors and part of the wilderness as refuge for Black life. Maroon hinterland settlements are known as *quilombos* in Brazil. In the southern United States, Maroons and Indigenous peoples found refuge in swamp landscapes and bogs. Embracing the local ecology of the Americas has been quintessential to the flavor of Maroon cuisine across the hemisphere. Maroons across Central America, and many people of Afro-Indigenous descent, such as the Garifuna, retain their distinct languages and cuisines when they enter mainstream diasporic society.

Jerk is a genre of cooking that depends on a secret blend and a decolonial sense of time. Maroon time depends on patience, lying in wait, and not being easily detected. Jerking is marinating. The moisture of the marinade (tamarind, scallions, ginger, garlic, bird peppers or scotch bonnets) infuses the protein as the spices (allspice, cumin, salt, pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon) cure the meat, also preserving it. As important as smoking the meat are the branches of the pimento tree, indigenous to Jamaica. It is said that guerilla warfare was invented by Jamaican Maroons. Not only did they find refuge in the bush, they found food, foraging in the lush mountainous landscape which provided cover against British armies. In Cockpit Country, the interior of the island of Jamaica, the place names, the toponymy, speak to the stakes of ongoing African warfare by Maroons and other plantation runaways; names such as "bad land," "Look Behind," "Retreat," "Me-no-Sen-You-no-Come," and "Quick Step." As historian Vincent Brown says, "Rebel strategy here drew upon African experiences of forest warfare and mountaineering even as British troops fought the rebellion as one battle in an integrated global conflict." He defines diasporic warfare across the Americas as ongoing intergenerational siege for territory across the hemisphere.

"JERK IS A GENRE OF COOKING THAT DEPENDS ON A SECRET BLEND AND A DECOLONIAL SENSE OF TIME. MAROON TIME DEPENDS ON PATIENCE, LYING IN WAIT, AND NOT BEING EASILY DETECTED. JERKING IS MARINATING. THE MOISTURE OF THE MARINADE (TAMARIND, SCALLIONS, GINGER, GARLIC, BIRD PEPPERS OR SCOTCH BONNETS) INFUSES THE PROTEIN AS THE SPICES (ALLSPICE, CUMIN, SALT, PEPPER, NUTMEG, CINNAMON) CURE THE MEAT, ALSO PRESERVING IT."

"WHAT I OFFER HERE IS A GENEALOGY OF A JERK, AT ONCE A SEASONING, A WAY OF COOKING ACROSS ISLANDS IN THE CARIBBEAN, A MARINADE, AND A PHILOSOPHY."

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DESCENDED FROM MAROONS? A FAMILY SECRET OR A BADGE OF HONOR IN DISTINCTION FROM THE BROADER AFRO-JAMAICAN POPULATION THAT WAS ENSLAVED? THE EXCEPTIONALISM OF MAROONS IN JAMAICA IS NOT STRAIGHT-FORWARD BECAUSE AS ÉDOUARD GLISSANT DEFINES THEM, MAROONS ARE PRODUCERS OF OPACITY."

"I HAVE DEFINED GASTROPOETICS AS THE POETRY AND POWER OF FOOD AS AN ARCHIVE OF HUMAN HISTORY, ECOLOGY, AND DESIRE. [...] GASTROPOETICS IS THE BUILDING OF AN ARCHIVE WHERE RECIPES ARE THE PRIMARY RESOURCE AND THUS ARGUMENT OR EVIDENCE FOR HOW HUMANS HAVE CULTIVATED AND BEEN CULTIVATED BY THEIR ENVIRONMENT."

II

My father told me we were Maroons. The past tense here speaks to the ways in which the Maroons of Jamaica continue to evade, even in uncertain bloodlines. What does it mean to be descended from Maroons? A family secret or a badge of honor in distinction from the broader Afro-Jamaican population that was enslaved? The exceptionalism of Maroons in Jamaica is not straightforward because as Édouard Glissant defines them, Maroons are producers of opacity. Do they still exist as a community in Jamaica? Yes. They have their own currency, their own language, Kromanti, kept secret from outsiders, and thus their own sense of sovereignty. Yet much like Indigenous peoples, minority communities across the globe, they are marginalized and impoverished because they are deemed left behind by time. The definition of what it means to be uncivilized, they live in defiance and refusal of coloniality as a philosophy. Maroons are hermetically sealed in a time capsule from the penetration of coloniality including Western forms of technology and infrastructure. Financial imperatives of the modern world that drew Maroons out of their settlements in the Blue Mountains and Cockpit country, Moore Town and Accompong, into mainstream Jamaican society.

The relationship to the broader non-Maroon community in Jamaica, which is 92.1% Black, has always been fraught because of the matter of maroon complicity in returning escaped African plantation runaways to slaveholders. Part of why jerk is so popular is that the flavor is not one note. It delights and surprises the tongue. The spicy sweetness of jerk is difficult to place because it is non-binary. Like the minority community of Rastafarians in Jamaica whose culture is revered and, at the same time, marginalized, and who have been the subject of targeted state violence, exalting Maroons risks romanticizing them as one-dimensional heroes against colonialism. As colonialism is an ongoing and triangulated project between British and U.S. interests in Jamaica (e.g. the Free Zone, IMF), what does the Maroon as isolated hero represent? The deification of Maroons denies the Jamaican project of freedom as one also of fugitive futurity. The epistemic violence against the Maroons is betrayed in the past tense conjugation of language that suspends the community in time, much like Tainos and Arawaks. My father told me we were Maroons. The three protagonists of Maroon lore in Jamaica, Nanny, Cudjoe, and Tacky are the legacy of a posthumous mythology, and were named as National Heroes post-independence in 1962. Not all Maroon settlements in Jamaica accepted treaties with the British, but the 1739 land treaty signed by Cudjoe is infamous for coming at a high price, the freedom of runaway enslaved persons. The treaty stipulated the Maroons were to return African runaways to

plantations for a bounty of two dollars each. To some then a sense of treason underscores Maroon identity. In spite of this fraught and heterogeneous history of refusal, what does it mean to be the National Hero of a sovereignty you do not recognize?

III

I have defined *gastropoetics* as the poetry and power of food as an archive of human history, ecology, and desire. It is cooking as a mode of invention and reinvention that draws on generational knowledge that is an act of generation itself. Gastropoetics is the building of an archive where recipes are the primary resource and thus argument or evidence for how humans have cultivated and been cultivated by their environment. It is located in the power of *making* in the classic sense of *poiesis*, the space of the colonial plantation as site of food production and consumption. Food becomes an argument, a mode of critique negotiating sustenance and a form of art. Kitchen marronage exists beyond the dominion of what has been called the plantationocene. If the kitchen is typically an architectural enclosure, the way Maroons embraced the rainforest as a kitchen is a form of Black spatial livingness in opposition to the containment of the nation-state. The earth is an oven, a kiln.

Maroon gastronomy is evidence of what philosopher Sylvia Wynter defines as "indigenization." Maroon gastronomy would be an example of what anthropologist David Scott has identified within Wynter's analysis as "a subject in the rehumanization of indigenization of 'native' black life." Adapted Indigenous techniques as well as shared Afro-Indigenous genealogies defy European coloniality's myth of annihilation. The smoke is enveloped in the architecture of the underground pit, containing it so that cooking does not give away the location to enemy forces. Jerk is precisely not *barbecuing* — another part of the lexicon derived from the early Indigenous colonial Caribbean.

In *Alimentary Tracts* (2010), literary theorist Parama Roy defines her sense of gastropoetics as the ways in which cookbooks are a form of life writing. Yet there is no Maroon cookbook as Maroon life writing; there is only a fugitive taste that narrates. Sumptuary laws regulated the consumption of food and other archives, governing the colonized appetite. A sensorial approach to Afro-Indigenous cultures forms an alternative historiography. The flavor of jerk penetrates and infuses the impenetrable. The Maroons are the ultimate producers of opacity. Did Nanny, Cudjoe, or Tacky tend to the fire pit, the underground oven? Is it possible these roles of kitchen marronage were not gendered and feminized in the way that the kitchen is viewed as a place of servitude and passivity in Western society?

"The women gather," says Nikki Giovanni in her poignant verse on Black women and mourning. The ritual act of gathering is as much a part of cuisine as the food. The communal politics of food is a question of the necessary conditions of solidarity. Among these conditions is breaking bread together. At the risk of gender essentialism, I make a statement in this gastropoetic genealogy as a *gatherer*. Former students of mine adopted this terminology of the *gatherer* in the face of the bullying of a classmate, who insisted that women were weaker than men because historically in the Stone Age, according to him, men were hunters and women were gatherers. What the student designated as a hotep positionality of women as innately passive was a position that some of my students and I interrogated and embraced. The women, my students, ended up building, producing, DJ'ing, and theorizing together. The gatherers were inspired by my syllabus of Third World feminisms and the poetics of Saidiya Hartman, Nicki Minaj, and Anna May Wong. I continue to be inspired by my students.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I have embraced the poetics of gathering and kitchen marronage amidst "physical distancing." I learned to cook. It was not an intention or a plan. I so happened in March to begin an elimination diet after undergoing surgery. It taught me what my body did not need, namely preservatives and processed foods. Kitchen marronage is a different sort of preservation. I grew up on microwaved meals and takeout from cuisines across the globe, from Peru to Senegal to Malaysia, as regular fare. My parents were not food nationalists, and being born in England my palate has always been engaged in the practice of diaspora. During the pandemic I have found a meditative calm in the repetition of keeping my hands busy, kneading dough, pan-frying *chaufa*, baking Jamaican shrimp patties, and making roti and mofongo. I feel possessed and this newfound talent is a shock to anyone who knows me well. I have discovered the power and sovereignty in cooking that is in the register of how Audre Lorde would define self-care as a radical act. Gathering is the poetry and strategy of survival and sustenance; it is a feminist genealogy.

I cooked with jerk seasoning for the first time in July. As a pescatarian it was a culinary inheritance I have felt denied, watching friends from the U.S. lick their fingers and sing songs while eating jerk chicken. I did what I could in my kitchen enclosure, I cooked jerk snapper with a blend of dried spices. I made do with what was in my pantry: garlic power, onion powder, brown sugar, salt, pepper, cumin, annatto, allspice, thyme, parsley. I placed them next to each other like an artist's palette before swirling them all together with a stick of cinnamon. Then the powder be-

came the familiar shade of brown jerk seasoning I had seen friends consume gleefully. When cooked the brown sugar forms a glaze that adheres and infuses the protein, snapper in my case. It is a veritable swatch of the Spice Wars blended together. While this shortcut method in no way approximates how Maroons cooked jerk, it is a remix of sorts (see next page).

The myth of jerk is one of the individual ingredients that the spices narrate because they are not all endemic to Jamaica or even the Western hemisphere at all. Allspice is Jamaican and grows on the pimento wood that is used to smoke the meat. Named for Scottish hats, scotch bonnets encode the strong presence of the Scottish on the island as administrators of the British empire. Bird peppers are also homegrown. Garlic is believed to have originated in Mesopotamia or perhaps China. "Skellions," as Jamaicans call scallions, and which the English called "Welsh onions," are Chinese. The first Chinese indentured laborers arrived in Jamaica in 1854. Which spices and roots did Asian laborers steal away in the hold of the ship? Thyme was used in Ancient Egypt and Greece. Sugar, of course, is a product directly of the monocrop violence of the plantation as ecological. Sugarcane originated in India and was imported by Columbus to be cultivated in the Caribbean on his second voyage in 1493. Who and what is truly endemic to Jamaica is always in question.

In the jerk recipe ingredients one can read complicity or one can read relationality. The Maroons were, of course, then never really hermetically sealed. Their survival depended on the outside as much as they were sovereign. The techniques of cultivation and cookery they learned from Indigenous peoples cannot be parsed out and do not need to be. Maroons captured and looted livestock, goods, and produce from plantations and provision grounds, but also occasionally traded with the same parties. At times Maroons assimilated and welcomed escaped people, at other times they returned them to plantations for a bounty. In this way the production of opacity was the secret, and the elusiveness of the jerk recipe is also part of the production of opacity. The origins of Caribbean cultural exchange, of knowledge about transplanted fruits, flowers, and herbs, remains murky.

"THE ORIGINS OF CARIBBEAN CULTURAL EXCHANGE, OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TRANSPLANTED FRUITS, FLOWERS, AND HERBS, REMAINS MURKY."

IV

There is power in the kitchen whether indoors or outdoors. Afro-Trinidadian intellectual C.L.R. James wrote of how the power of cooking on the plantation and how the administering of food has the potential to be a dangerous act. Poison is an underestimated tactic of warfare that could be described in the register of *peit marronage*,

"AS HISTORIAN VINCENT BROWN WRITES ABOUT THE MARTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRONAGE, 'RECOGNIZING SLAVE REVOLT AS A SPECIES OF WARFARE IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A NEW CARTOGRAPHY OF ATLANTIC SLAVERY.' THE WAR NEVER ENDED; SLEEPER CELLS LIE IN WAIT FOR THE SIGNAL IN THE ONGOING BATTLE AGAINST EUROPEAN COLONIALITY."

or more minor or temporary acts of opposition on the colonial plantation as opposed to *grand marronage* or permanent escape. James estimates a third of enslaved deaths were the result of enslaved people poisoning other enslaved people, at times their kin, especially children, to save them from the fate of perpetual bondage. He describes how, in many cases, death was viewed not only as a release but as a return to Guinín, Africa. The opacity of the kitchen provides cover not only for secret ingredients, but also for hatching such plans of toxicity. The kitchen has the potential to be an underclass site of collusion especially because of the way it is gendered as a space occupied by gatherers, women. The kitchen is full of weapons: knives, blades, cleavers, fire, poisonous mushrooms, etc.

The wilderness as the site of production of kitchen marronage makes eating central to an indigestible chapter of the history of the Americas — the *cimmarón*. The myth of the Maroons escapes the colonial palate. Maroon archives are the bush, the fleeting furtive taste of fugitivity. Jerk is strong, rich, and flavorful; it declares its presence and yet still demands "the right to opacity" in the sense Glissant meant. Jerk has survived over the course of 500 years by evolving, and it is not only a testament to African retention. On the contrary, jerk is a product of Black-Indigenous relationality, of the fraught indigenization that was more of a treaty than anything the British enforced upon the Maroons in the eighteenth century. Jerk connects two entangled presences we were told by the British no longer existed.

If, as cultural theorist Tiffany Lethabo King has suggested, the violence of conquest is quotidian and ongoing; liberation or the practice of "getting free" is too, like conquest, a verb. Eating is livingness, and cooking is a condition of eating and thus living. Getting free is gerund and exists in a Maroon temporality that exceeds colonial treaties or time zones determined by Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), set by the arbitrary location of the Prime Meridian, at the Royal Observatory in London. Maroon time determines freedom as a radical act of Black waiting (cf. Frantz Fanon). The jerk chicken recipe that takes half an hour to cook is therefore part of the elusive practice of jerk opacity. Colonialist recipes for jerk circulated by hipster chefs will only approximate and never conquer the "secret recipe," and so they do not need to be corrected.

Much like reggae, if what is decoded is other than what political theorist Cedric Robinson calls "the Black Radical Tradition" of what was encoded, the message still has meaning for those waiting to decipher the codeword, the signal to attack. To Robinson the tradition is "an accretion,

over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle." He points to the Seminoles in the United States as the inflection of Afro-Indigeneity "effused in myriad forms and locations." As historian Vincent Brown writes about the martial characteristics of marronage, "[r]ecognizing slave revolt as a species of warfare is the first step toward a new cartography of Atlantic slavery." The war never ended; sleeper cells lie in wait for the signal in the ongoing battle against European coloniality.

Jerk can be bottled and sold as much as reggae can, yet marronage by definition cannot be commodified because it is defined by the wild. It is feral; it is wild-life. Kitchen marronage embraces what theorists Sarah Cervanak and J. Kameron Carter have called "the Black Outdoors." It is a condition outside the category of Enlightenment thought and not so much excluded from the myth of modernity as exceeding its regulation and definition of subjectivity. Jerk is a philosophy then formed as the result of an alternative ecology of Black sociality, wilderness, and spicy livingness beyond colonial property and possession.

Kitchen marronage simmers in relation to what Robinson identifies as the "social cauldron of slave organization." To be a Maroon is to be what cultural theorist Fred Moten has described as a "prophetic organization." The prophecy of what is to come is related to the way he says, "the maroons know something about possibility." Indeed, the Maroons have known the unmistakable taste of freedom from the 16th century to the present. To jerk is to infuse with flavor by curing; it is to penetrate. Jerky is derived in the English language from the Spanish *charqui* from the original Quechua *ch'arki*, which describes the process of sun baking, piercing meat, and salt-curing it. Though jerk may be eaten the world over it still defies commodification because there are so many varieties, and it is impossible to pin down. Jerk is then much more than a seasoning; it is a philosophy of enduring and a way of Black being. ■

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道 TAO'S RECIPE /// Xaymaca Jerk Seasoning: A Decolonial Recipe

Ingredients ///

- 2 eskellions (scallions) roughly chopped
- 2 scotch bonnet peppers, sliced
- a pinch of pink salt
- a pinch of allspice
- a pinch of garlic powder
- a pinch of onion powder
- a pinch of black pepper
- a dash of Demerara sugar
- a pinch of nutmeg
- a pinch of annatto powder
- a pinch of cinnamon
- a pinch of cumin
- a pinch of dried thyme
- 2 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 4 cloves of minced garlic
- tamarind paste
- a dash of Jamaican rum
- a dash of white vinegar
- opposition to Spanish and British coloniality
- refusal
- Petit Marronage
- Grand Marronage
- Taíno gastronomy
- 4 centuries
- Fanonian Black waiting
- grated ginger root

Directions ///

- Blend the dry spices in a shallow bowl until swirled into uniformly mixed seasoning
- Pierce (jerk) the protein so it is skewered and the blend can infuse the meat (protein)
- Add the spice blend to the scotch bonnet, ginger, tamarind, garlic, and fresh thyme, eskellions (scallions), rum, and vinegar. Puree all ingredients using a blender
- Marinate in the puree overnight (six hours)
- Slow smoke in a shallow underground fire pit fueled by damp pimento tree branches, using the pimento leaves to form a rack, cook until flavorful, seasoned, and blackened by the glaze formed by the caramelization of the brown sugar and rum

Note: Pork (Wild hog) is traditional. Chicken is more common nowadays. Any protein is possible. You will even find starches becoming popular such as jerk seasoned fries.

Prep Time: 3 days
Cook Time: Maroon time
Serves: Nobody or a Nation

FOOD AS EVIDENCE OF COLONIALISM AND THE CAPITALOCENE

WITH COOKING SECTIONS

Since 2013, *Cooking Sections* (Daniel Fernández Pascual & Alon Schwabe) has been examining the histories of colonialism and the geologies of capitalism through the prism of food. In this interview, we ask them about the research and installations they have developed.

"THAT IS THE OTHER SIDE OF CUISINE, AS A NATIONAL PROJECT LAUNCHED WHEN COLONIZATION AND IMPERIALISM STARTS TO CRUMBLE."

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: Could we start this conversation with a few definitions? How do you define "food," "cooking," and "cuisine?"

COOKING SECTIONS: Food became a very important tool for us since the moment we started working together back in 2013 — basically a tool to understand a landscape at large, not only from the perspective of growing, consuming or organizing territories in different ways, but also through political struggles behind power regimes. Through that lens of edible produce, we use food as a way to explore some of these questions, and imagine scenarios or alternative futures. Of course it relates to cooking, the act of mixing all of these ingredients in a more figurative or literal sense, but it was also important for us to bring multiple disciplines in that understanding of landscape, space or the built environment. So that's why we thought with *Cooking Sections* we could start other methodologies that could combine all of these different approaches.

In the past year, we have been reading about the history of food production in France, in particular two books; one is Rebecca L. Spang's *The Invention of the Restaurant* (2000) and how the restaurant came about; a class differentiation in society within post-industrialization and modernity if you want. When cuisine became "a thing", especially for certain elites, that materialized in space of the restaurant as invented in Paris — bouillons restaurants, a place to have a concentrate soup to restore the body. The word "restaurant" was popularized then as the place to restore bodies, but we like to connect that to more present conditions and think of the restaurant as a place to restore ecology and all possible organisms as well, not just human bodies.

The second connection is Emma C. Spary's *Feeding France, 1760-1815* (2014), which explores two approaches. One is, again, how to feed the elite, and the other how to feed the popular masses, especially around the time of the French Revolution. And that is when you need to start thinking about how a nation-state needs to produce sugar to fuel workers at a time when Caribbean sugar was no longer available

because of the Haitian Revolution. The nation then became invested in inventing alternative sugar sources, in the case of France, from domestically grown sugar beets. So that is the other side of cuisine, as a national project launched when colonization and imperialism starts to crumble.

LL: You are part of the few artists and designers who can explain their practice in one clear sentence. In fact, you write that *Cooking Sections* "explores the systems that organize the world through food." We'll talk further about some of these systems but could we remain within the abstraction of a definition for the moment with you telling us more about the extent to which the world is organized through food?

CS: It is not groundbreaking to think that the world is organized through food, as everyone consumes it several times a day (hopefully). And yet, the way we use it provides us with a tool to understand the different territories around production systems, large-scale infrastructures, transoceanic transportation, forms of livelihood... Alongside, you can actually also understand pollution, soil exhaustion, climatic changes, as well as class and racial inequalities among many other things. So in a way, food systems start conveying all different factors that, for us, are relevant, or at least interesting, to understand the capitalocene. In our practice the spaces that result from such complexities can be first critically used to tear things apart, which is sometimes easy. What is challenging though is to start thinking of interventions to keep things together, forms of action that can start modifying bits and pieces along the food chain to understand the implications of any of these disruptions and potentialities.

LL: Your project "Empire Remains" examines "the contemporary history of imperial fruit, sugar, rum, cocoa, spices, and condiments." Could you consider a few of these items or others and retrace their colonial lineage and exploitation?

CS: The "Empire Remains" started by looking at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) in Britain and their propaganda machine in the late 1920s. It was a governmental body to promote products from the colonies and overseas territories



of the British Empire. They commissioned films, posters, recipes to different artists, who were to capture colonial products and produce in their landscapes of origin to familiarize people and accustom the British imaginary with how they were farmed, distilled, or transported. Those depictions were visually appealing and yet racist, sexist and brutal, as they carried the whole colonial violence perpetrated in different "styles." The EMB also envisioned to run Empire Shops, as they called them, where you would find ingredients from all across the Empire. This was their way to indoctrinate the British public on how to consume more and more of them. Those shops never opened because the economy and tariffs system started to change in the early 1930s. So we decided to revisit that format and expose what would be the legacy of those lineages or supply chains today to understand the ongoing consequences of the British Empire, still very present today. We have seen that even more clearly with Black Lives Matter. But if you start looking at every banana cultivars or certain types of sugar, as I was mentioning before, you start understanding centuries of violence that are still inflicted upon people and landscapes and all kinds. The Empire Remains Shop was the framework we developed to explore these still very present remains of the Empire (not only British).

The type of produce that was coming back to Europe was the result of a very long engineering process. In the case of

the Cavendish banana, for instance, which is the yellow banana that we find in almost every supermarket today, it came about after a careful selection of cultivars that took years to perfect. That was the role of newly invented spaces in the past centuries, like greenhouses and glasshouses for artificial tropical climates, to provide for such colonial/agricultural experiments, which have a whole history of architecture embedded in them. Joseph Paxton, the architect of the Crystal Palace, was a key figure. He devised these glasshouses as Empire machines for the development and cultivation of the Cavendish banana, named after his employer Lord Cavendish. Eventually, that was the banana that took over the world: it resists travelling and shipping very well. What is important to understand is how all these parts of the story are intimately connected. On the one hand, the ambition of an aristocrat in England to cultivate bananas, and on the other, how that ambition translated into eradicating, or taking over, many varieties of banana cultivars that are not resistant enough to be shipped for months. This has led to an exponential increase in monoculture and different diseases... we all know this story that repeats itself; it happens with every animal or plant intensively farmed. But yes, you can start tracing all those links through certain foods, and the Cavendish banana is an interesting example of that.

LL: Could you tell us about the colonial history of the British pudding?

"What Is Above Is What Is Below." / Installation by *Cooking Sections* in Palermo (2018).

"THOSE DEPICTIONS WERE VISUALLY APPEALING AND YET RACIST, SEXIST AND BRUTAL, AS THEY CARRIED THE WHOLE COLONIAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATED IN DIFFERENT 'STYLES'."



"CLIMAVORE: On Tidal Zones." / Installation-Performance by Cooking Sections, commissioned by Atlas Arts, Isle of Skye, Scotland (2015-...).

"THIS NEOLIBERAL CONSUMERIST LOGIC HAS BROUGHT AN ONSET OF VIOLENT CONSTRAINTS OF LABOR RELATIONSHIPS, FORMS OF COLLECTIVITY, AND FARMERS RIGHTS THAT ARE ALL BEING MASQUERADED."

CS: The EMB also invented recipes for people to use some of their Empire products. They wanted buyers to use cinnamon or cloves; so they also had to teach them what to do with them, since it was a whole new ingredient for the masses. And that translated into the Empire Christmas Pudding — of course there were non-Empire puddings before. The pudding as a format was nothing unusual, but what the EMB did was to invent a mixture with all possible spices and condiments from the colonies in order for people to buy more: the Empire Christmas Pudding. We revisited the recipe and used it as a tool to understand the postcolonial legacy of the same ingredients. To make the "Empire Remains" Christmas pudding implied going to the supermarket and trying to find all these very branded ingredients with certain origins...you immediately realize how these origins have been replaced today. Most spices are no longer from specific countries, but packed in the U.K. — with an uncertain origin. That allows big chains to change the origin according to geopolitical conditions, war conflict here or drought there, they can just change the country of origin and sell everything as "packed in the U.K.", or "produced in the E.U.", or for instance in the case of flour "milled in the U.K.." This is an interesting shift, which tells you a lot about global economic dynamics and what we see as a shift from "made in" to made "nowhere." This neoliberal consumerist logic has brought an onset of violent constraints of labor relationships, forms of collectivity, and farmers rights that are all being masqueraded. That's how we used the pudding.

LL: Recently, you've held a conversation about food boycotts and other forms of food-based political resistance in

South Africa and Palestine. Can you tell us about it?

CS: That was also part of the Empire Remains Shop. We invited other people to contribute to the project, around forty participants that did performances, talks, sculptures...all kinds of contributions. One of them was a discussion between Elisabetta Brighi, Daniel Conway, Nitasha Kaul, and Laleh Khalili, around food boycotts in relation to identity and resistance struggles. Laleh put forward how za'atar (wild thyme) in Palestine has been instrumentalised as a way to restrict Palestinian movement in the landscape. Forbidding the foraging of za'atar has been a control strategy deployed by the Israeli authorities in the name of environmental preservation, but it also implies that Palestinians cannot just roam around the landscape looking for a plant that is key in their diet and cuisine. Daniel Conway presented how grapes and wine played a role in apartheid South Africa leading to an international boycott on grapes or wine from the country, as a way to put pressure in the racist policies in place, from the 1980s. He also talked of its legacy today in terms of contemporary vineyards owners in South Africa; who are the laborers that are working those vineyards; and, what are the unequal labor relationships...how the country has moved from apartheid into another system that has a whole set of problems as well. It is far from being solved, as class and racial divides between vineyard owners and vineyard workers are still ongoing. And finally, Nitasha Kaul, exposed the politics of beef in India, and how Hindu supremacists have used the act of banning beef, appropriating global environmental concerns around the impact of cattle farming to target and suppress the Muslim population.



LL: With CLIMAVORE, you're constructively thinking of food in a context of radical climate change that food either accelerates or decelerates. Could you start by describing a few projects you worked on for this series?

CS: CLIMAVORE started as a way to understand how to eat as humans are changing climates and the new seasons that have emerged. In the Global North, it is not rare to find strawberries all year round, or salmon, or certain fruits. So, if summer, winter, autumn, and spring are diluted in mainstream supermarkets, we need to start thinking of the other seasons that are starting to appear and are radically shaping the landscape in different ways. For instance, in a period of drought or a period of polluted ocean, how would you shift food practices accordingly? What we have been doing with CLIMAVORE is to think of those seasons and have different iterations according to the different locations where the project takes place. In the Isle of Skye in Scotland we have been looking at all the pollution from salmon farms and how all of their excrements, antibiotics and food colouring substances are leaking into the seas and creating dead zones. It's pretty much like battery chicken farms but under water. As a response, CLIMAVORE has been working out a transition for the island to divest from salmon farming and venture into regenerative aquacultures.

LL: With a very strong focus on the notion of tides and a beautiful installation where you invited people to eat during low tide what the high tide had brought.

CS: We built an underwater structure that appears and

disappears with the tides. We used it more as a platform to have performative meals with politicians, residents, and different stakeholders to discuss alternative aquacultures. We started in 2016 with the intertidal structure, and now the project has been evolving and working within pedagogy in local schools, establishing a whole network of restaurants that removed salmon off the menu and introduced CLIMAVORE ingredients, and creating a program of cooking apprenticeships for the future chefs on the island to think of intertidal ingredients as alternatives to farmed salmon.

Another CLIMAVORE project that we started in Paris began by looking into the *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC, protected designation of origin), which is a system that became quite popular in Europe over the past decades to connect origin and quality of produce/products. The original idea was to promote and help small producers to market their products. If a cheese is produced by a small farmer in a traditional way, it may carry better qualities than what is produced by a mega-scale farm. On the other hand, the AOC has also this darker history of how it came about in France with the colonial project in Algeria. The 1907 wine revolts in Languedoc exposed the clashes in the wine industry that had moved to Algeria, making the north and south shores of the Mediterranean compete for the "French" wine market. This later translated into the AOC system that would certify what product comes from where and whether you are allowed to grow vineyards here or not, what belongs to a territory, and what does not. Now we are seeing with the climate emergency that all these regional food laws can be contested because you might

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"SO, IF SUMMER, WINTER, AUTUMN, AND SPRING ARE DILUTED IN MAINSTREAM SUPERMARKETS, WE NEED TO START THINKING OF THE OTHER SEASONS THAT ARE STARTING TO APPEAR AND ARE RADICALLY SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. FOR INSTANCE, IN A PERIOD OF DROUGHT OR A PERIOD OF POLLUTED OCEAN, HOW WOULD YOU SHIFT FOOD PRACTICES ACCORDINGLY?"

not be able to harvest the same type of grape in Bordeaux within the boundaries of the Bordeaux region with the current Bordeaux climate, and then, what do you do? This is a huge debate in France, but also in other parts of the world. How do you shift the boundaries of a food-growing region when they no longer work anymore in terms of the wine that has been traditionally associated with that region: do you change the type of grapes, the traditional method, regulatory laws, or you start irrigating vineyards which is kind of a cultural sacrilege? With that project we have been developing a new vocabulary to link products with climatic changes and think of a wine that does not taste like strawberry, oak or gunpowder, but wine that tastes like a hot July, or cheese that tastes like a flowerless prairie. When cows graze in monoculture meadows, they are no longer eating a variety of micro-bacteria, which degrades milk quality and eventually affects the flora of the cheese and in our guts, so we better start shifting that understanding of what comes out of the ground.

LL: You describe how, if it was not for Algeria, French wine could have disappeared at some point, because there was a disease on the grapes that made all the vineyards sort of perish; is that right?

CS: Right, it was the phylloxera disease in the mid-19th century that made the whole wine industry in France collapse, and then pushed wine makers to move to Algeria. Algeria became the second largest wine producer in the world, which is quite insane, and again, created a whole social clash with the Muslim Algerian population.

LL: A technocratic paradigm to address climate change only thinks in terms of solutions. This led to situations where food would be suddenly used in huge volumes to “feed” scenarios where gasoline, for instance, was replaced by something deemed less ecocidal. Of course, this has for consequences the brutal disruption of entire ecosystems and, in that case, produced food scarcity. How do you think we can design a non-solution-based approach to climate change in relation to food?

CS: This is a question we ask ourselves a lot. The key point is to understand the complexities first; so, there is no direct cause-effect in the world we live in. There are so many stakeholders, and processes, and probabilities, and substances, and all kinds of tremendous amounts of things going on that it is very hard — probably not even possible — to find one solution for a problem because everything is so interconnected and the amount of agents involved is astronomical. What we try to do, sometimes, is to first map out all (or at least some) of the most obvious stakeholders as part of that context and see how through

small interventions, things might shift a little bit to one side or to another side. For instance, food scarcity is not about the classic rhetoric blaming that there is not enough food to feed the world. This is not true. There has never been so much food production, but how is that food being evenly distributed, is it used to feed people, cattle, or biofuel plants... those are the questions that need to be debated. More importantly, we should not legitimize any mega-high-tech decision to resolve the problem of feeding the world in one go, because it will not. There is a whole set of political structures and political will that has to evolve to start addressing what is actually going on. A non-solution-based approach is to avoid direct cause-and-effect. When you shift something a little bit this or that way you start understanding all the side-effects of that little intervention.

LL: Many of your projects, from Taiwan to Crimea via Palestine have to do with massive landscape modifications/erosion. Could you tell us how this relates to the politics of food?

CS: Certainly in many different ways. The project in Ukraine, for instance, had to do with the exhaustion of the soil and what happens after decades of adding fertilizers and chemical compounds to accelerate food production. But when the soil collapses and starts falling apart, what do you do? Again, there is a whole set of farming policies around the use of chemicals, or even land ownership schemes, that facilitate one model or others. Understanding these entanglements between policies and soil exhaustion can perhaps shed some light on the political statements behind actual food production. In the case of Taiwan, which has been facilitating the opening of fish farms to provide food, there is nonetheless a certain moment when the upscaling of that system surpasses a limit and then pumping groundwater implies that the region starts subsiding several cm a year. And there is no way back. You cannot just pump water back into the underground and then expect the land will levitate. The question is then how do we deal with the resulting landscape, exhausted and depressed, and you shift to other forms of food production. Otherwise the land will keep sinking. There are no direct solutions. It is more about how to start taking some sort of action, or at least, tackle some of the causes that have led to that scenario.

LL: And, of course, the question of infrastructure is very central to this. When we think of infrastructure we think of the North Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), or other pipelines in various Indigenous land from the Amazon to British Columbia. But in the case of Taiwan you have pretty incredible infrastructures that are much less sort of state induced and much more each fish farm creates



its own infrastructure, but then with this incredible entanglement and everything... could you both describe it and tell us more about it.

CS: In the case of fish farms it is very different in different parts of the world. In the case of Scotland, like we were mentioning before, it is a business that has been taken over by mega-big corporations, mainly Norwegian that have been farming salmon in places that have less environmental restrictions than in Norway. That’s why they moved to Scotland, or to Chile, Tasmania, Ireland, or Iceland. That move has a very big corporate structure behind, whereas perhaps in Taiwan it has been much more an initiative of smaller fish farms or shrimp farms that slowly grew, which have a completely different structure. But in both cases they are regulated by created supply and demand. The question that remains is how do you regulate the environment and whether we can/should at all; how do you create certain limits to certain scales of things, and more importantly, how do we start regulating humans, the most invasive species on this planet. It is always a matter of relative size. Growing a single cow is very different from farming a million cows next to each other. The question is perhaps not the poor cow, but the sheer numbers of them. So let’s start limiting the size and scale of things through policy, global supply and demand, and more common sense international trade agreements of imports and exports; there are many many factors that affect that. We just need perhaps to look at ourselves from a certain outside. ■

Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual & Alon Schwabe) is a duo of spatial practitioners based out of London. It was born to explore the systems that organise the WORLD through FOOD. Using installation, performance, mapping, and video, their research-based practice explores the overlapping boundaries between visual arts, architecture, ecology and geopolitics. Since 2015, they are working on multiple iterations of the long-term site-specific CLIMAVORE project exploring how to eat as humans change climates. In 2016 they opened The Empire Remains Shop, a platform to critically speculate on implications of selling the remains of Empire today. Their first book about the project was published by Columbia Books on Architecture and the City.

Left. Entangled water pipes pumping groundwater for fish farms in Jiadong County, Taiwan. The sheer volume extracted over decades has led to subsidence all over the region. / Photo by Cooking Sections, 2019.
Right. Soil erosion in central Ukraine, April 2011. After decades of excessive tilling to work the soil to exhaustion, gullies are starting to appear across the country. / Photo by Yuri Kravchenko.

“THE QUESTION THAT REMAINS IS HOW DO YOU REGULATE THE ENVIRONMENT AND WHETHER WE CAN/ SHOULD AT ALL; HOW DO YOU CREATE CERTAIN LIMITS TO CERTAIN SCALES OF THINGS, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW DO WE START REGULATING HUMANS, THE MOST INVASIVE SPECIES ON THIS PLANET.”

GOING BANANA, BECOMING PLANTAIN

AKIL SCAFE-SMITH

**Bananas and plantain, although both belonging to the Musa-
ceae family are not the same things. Examining the history of
exploitation and displacement of both fruits, Akil Scafe-Smith
unfolds their political significance, as well as the links they es-
tablish between the Caribbeans and the diaspora.**

“READING FOOD
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In a Youtube video by the South-London-born comedian Michael Dapaah, an African man and Caribbean man, both played by Dapaah, engage in an argument about the pronunciation of the word “plantain”:

“Listen ‘ere,” says the gold-tooth wearing Caribbean character, “is it mountAYN or mountIN, tell me dat smart man?” To which the African character replies, “You know, you are a kwasia [fool], it’s not an English quiz! This is called a plantAYN because you are not planting anything. Where’s the ground?”

At the end of the minute-long clip, an English man (also played by Dapaah) wades in on the debate. “Woah, woah lads, relax! This right ‘ere, is a banana mate,” he says, alluding to a plantain he’s holding in his right hand. “You know... small banana [now holding an actual banana in his left hand], big banana [alluding again to the plantain]. What’s all this plantAYN, plantIN stuff?”

Beyond invoking a well-versed conversation between the African and Caribbean diaspora in the United Kingdom, and beyond reflecting, perhaps unknowingly, a deeper global ambiguity over the exactitude of the *Musa paradisiaca*, Dapaah’s satire is a critical entry point into a geopolitics of fruit that continues to influence how space is organized across the Black Atlantic. For the work of all those, myself included, who’ve used the banana as a lens through which to understand how flows of labor, commerce, and cultural capital have helped underpin Caribbean diasporic identity and spatial politics for over a century, it illumines a crucially overlooked question: what about all that plantain stuff?

Reading Food ///

First, a few steps back. Though using a banana as anything other than something to eat (certainly not a “lens”) may sound strange; “reading food,” meaning looking critically at the histories, supply chains, preparation and consumption rituals, mythologies, nomenclatures, agricultural-technological shifts, and architectonics of foods, is a powerful way of understanding world histories. This is not only true in a Eurocentric sense, where we might perhaps think of certain spices, coffee, tea, or sugar as both archives and apparatuses of colonial expansionism. Reading food resonates just as much in how we tell our own stories and carve collective identities within and for our own communities.

Reading food also has important implications for how we understand different modes of spatial production. By thinking of space through our mouths (and all the ways food ends up in them) researchers, practitioners, professionals, activists, and denizens across the world have been able to make profound changes to the way we live with food and the spaces in which we live with it. Reading foods to understand space and politics can seed (pun intended) immediate, albeit often small-scale changes in our personal and collective food politics. Whether it’s by dissuading the purchase of certain products, encouraging the cultivation of others, prompting conversations about recipes, rituals, histories, and identities, or merely providing the sustenance for those conversations and others, framing space through food posits change at the tip of our tongues.

Reading Diasporic Space with Food ///

To read food as a way of understanding diasporic spaces — spaces that are created, inhabited, and used by a people dispersed — is to read foods that register the *longue durée* of architectures or spatial politics caught at the littorals of stasis. Many unambiguously diasporic spaces across the world, defined by the movement to, through, and of them, bear distinct relationships with the infrastructures that facilitate these movements; of people, goods, and information. Diasporic urban markets and self-built housing settlements, for example, often share physical or ontological proximity to railways, highways, and ports, the urban trajectories of which profoundly shape the existential threats faced by these spaces of managed decline, discriminatory urban policies, landlord malpractice, and land speculation. These relationships precipitate a disconcertingly familiar, and notably spatial, triptych of practices — resistance, ephemerality, and “informality” — which are visible to varying degrees in the architectures of diasporic space, but by contrast often distinctly readable in the foods that are ritually produced, prepared and consumed in them.

In the case of the Caribbean diaspora in the U.K., diasporic space (family kitchens, restaurants/clubs/bars, public spaces, urban markets, and now a plethora of digital and textual spaces) are principle sites for the production of collective imaginaries of satellite nationhood and identity through food preparation and consumption: many of our earliest recollections of any notion of being diaspora will have undoubtedly been in some of these spaces, through

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our noses and with our tongues. However, when not consuming but reading these foods, we are often able to challenge the assumed fixity of diasporic identity and space and reveal their causal relationships with infrastructures of movement. This is evident in a plethora of food readings of Caribbean diasporic space, from what hardough bread can tell us about spaces of Chinese and Indian indentured labor in Jamaica, to what yam can tell us about the production of new folk cultures and social orders in slave spaces across the pre-emancipation Caribbean.

The banana, as a commodity, a technology and an artefact, is particularly adept at framing events in the post-emancipation Caribbean; it is a unique point of contact between lived realities of post-colonial colonialism, intra-region fortune-seeking, syncretism, and the managerial logics of global modernism. Moreover, it bridges a temporal gap, allowing us to draw meaningful comparisons between our diasporic relationships to practices, spaces, and modern infrastructures now in the United Kingdom as well as in the Caribbean basin at the turn of the 20th century. Yet, through the banana the taste of modernity is perhaps an overstated flavor. By reading the banana, the demonstrably infrastructural role of phenomena like lyric networks, which transported syncretic-African traditions across the oceans by verse, risks being understood as only ancillary to infrastructure that physically governed the movement of consumable and corporeal commodities and not a means of spatial production in and of itself.

Beyond the Great White Fleets, the canals, the railway lines, and the plantations, and prior to the modernist logics of movement we read through the banana, is the plantain. Plantain is widely confused with bananas today although entirely bereft of modern readings from prominent “banana scholars.” The banana confusion is perhaps taxonomic, due



to what botanist Normand Simmonds would refer to in 1991 as a “science in which the errors of the past are preserved by law to confuse the present”. It is perhaps also linguistic, the hangover of centuries of indiscriminate use of the word “*plátano*” to refer to both plantain and banana in the Spanish Caribbean. And yet, despite this global ambiguity and its relative conceptual obscurity, plantain persists as an extremely evocative and almost incomparably embedded foodstuff for various African diasporas. In this way its prevalence is both pronounced and exhaustively quotidian; present in the revelry of the inter-diasporic “barber shop conversations” Michael Dapaah caricatures in his video, present in the frying pans and pestles of our kitchens. It occupies a space in collective African and Caribbean diasporic imaginaries that seems to ignore, or at least be ignored by, agricultural commodification and non-African food discourses, hiding strategically in the shadow of the banana for others until it is time for us to discuss how to pronounce its name. Importantly, plantain is a robust way of framing the pre-emancipation Caribbean, from the dynamics of internal plantation economies to the culinary inhibitions of the white slave-owning populations.

Top. Shop in the Brixton market in London. / Photo by Vishnu Jayarajan. **Bottom.** Big banana, small banana! / Screenshot of Michael Dapaah’s sketch (2017) cited in the text’s introduction.

“IT OCCUPIES A SPACE IN COLLECTIVE AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN DIASPORIC IMAGINARIES THAT SEEMS TO IGNORE, OR AT LEAST BE IGNORED BY, AGRICULTURAL COMMODIFICATION AND NON-AFRICAN FOOD DISCOURSES”



Top. Banana harvest in Costa Rica in 1879. **Bottom left.** United Fruit Company (UFC) check (1967). **Bottom right.** Ports of the Great White Fleet 1917-1970. / Gordon Shunway.



But more than this, their reading offers, where the banana does not, new inferences of what diasporic spatial relationships to infrastructure might be outside of the prefigurative dance with practices that differentiates yet drains us.

This text is a dual reading of the banana and “that plantIN stuff” which hopes to offer more than just food for thought. Together, these readings inform a richer understanding of these resistance, ephemerality, and informality that have become so unquestionably familiar to Caribbean diasporic spaces, engendered by their relationships with infrastructures of movement. There is a desire, in these readings, not just to analyze but to encourage: to move those of us in the diaspora today to utilise our profound relationships with these foods in order to creatively change and affect the precariousness of many of our realities.

Bananas: Permanent Infrastructures, Precarious Spaces ///

During the early 20th century, in the post-emancipation Caribbean, the intra-regional movement of labor, commerce, and cultural capital was forging a Caribbean identity at the geographical and political margins of the region. In this period, the global banana trade was controlled by an organization called the United Fruit Company (UFCO), a large U.S. corporation whose stranglehold on the Caribbean and Latin America is often argued as having been a form U.S. crypto-colonialism in the region. From facilitating coup d’etats and prompting a civil war in Guatemala, to massacres in Colombia and the ability to pay off countries’ national debts with single loans,

the UFCO aptly became known as “El Pulpo”; a monster with its tentacles gripping the breadths of the Caribbean basin.

UFCO set parameters that reshaped entirely novel geographies of labor and capital in the Caribbean and Latin America, controlling agricultural production through the coercion of political leaders and military factions, but also through the construction of vast amounts of infrastructure and ownership over the territories it dissected. This infrastructural yoke not only transformed the Caribbean coastal regions of Latin America into tributary states of a voracious U.S. food industry but also guided and facilitated the movement of an entire generation of Black British West Indians who had left home to labour in where became known as the Banana Republics: Colombia, Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Contrasting poetically with the permanence and fixity of colonial infrastructure in the Banana Republics, was the ephemerality and mobility of Black British West Indians, a consequence of their relative youth and the stagnant post-emancipation economies of their homelands. As a guaranteed supply of young, resilient workhands, with no apparent desire to naturalise and sovereign rights that were largely abandoned by the British Crown, these laborers made up an essentially dependable yet expendable workforce. Life in this way was often insufferable. They were subject to numerous racist campaigns, economic repressions and even deportation. Their physical conditions were deplorable: diasporic space in the form of the banana enclave was

designed for infrastructural resilience and human precarity. The archival work of the anthropologist Phillipe Bourgois’ in his book *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labour on a Central American Banana Plantation* (1989), unearths a quote from an unknown/unnamed contemporary commentary that is perfectly summative of this relationship: “A banana plantation is a poor place to live unless you’re a banana.”

However, the movement of Black bodies formed the basis for a syncretic Caribbean identity that reflected not the confines of an island’s shore but the vast expanse of an ocean and its moving currents. During this period, despite the perceived (or indeed, desired) Afro-Caribbean ephemerality, familial and social networks were spread across the Caribbean and the Latin American coast, dialects and aesthetics converged, and places became intrinsically connected through song, poetry, language and spiritualism. Consequently, Latin American cities in the former Banana Republics such as Colon, Limon, Puerto Cortés, and Bluefield are still shaped today by their remarkably Afro-Caribbean identity. Lyric networks play an important part in connecting and having connected an intra-regional diaspora between the islands and continental littoral banana enclaves. Generations of children in the former British West Indies will have grown up with a sense of the Hispanic reaches of the Caribbean as a recurrent cultural motif through folksongs and poems such as “Colon Man” and the story of Solomon’s Grandpa without having ever been there. The calypso lament “Matilda” recorded by the artist King Radio in the 1930s and popularized by Harry Belafonte in 1953, discloses a familiar leitmotif at the time of an intimate relationship stretched by the regional connections between the islands and the basin’s shoreline regions. In the song, Belafonte depicts an imaginary woman who takes her lover’s money and runs away to Venezuela, with the song becoming so popular in Jamaica it became the melody for the “Happy Birthday” song. Similarly, poetry like the work of Afro-Costa Rican poet Eulalia Bernard Little, whose oeuvre constructs a political and aesthetic reclamation of the Black body in Costa Rica, and also more recently artists like West Indian-born Panamanian early reggaetonero, Leonardo “Renato” Aulder, and Afro-Panamanian reggaetonero “El General,” works to reveal Black Caribbean identity not as fixed to insular locales but having been borne from an archipelagic call-and-response.

Demonstrably, the inequitable relationship with infrastructures of movement which left Black Caribbean laborers bereft of political rights and visible permanence in the Banana Republics, are not estranged from the asymmetries that threaten diasporic spaces in places like the United Kingdom today. Caribbean markets such as Brixton exemplify this relationship where banana boxes, an essential infrastructure in these spaces, have become a currency on which the market’s day-to-day running entirely depends. Rarely do they ever contain bananas and instead they become tables, chairs and display plinths by day, and storage cupboards, shelters, and bins by nights, exhibiting a resilience that posits them in distinct contrast to the volatile circumstances of some of the businesses and vendors. Printed on the boxes are almost always the names of the old Banana Republics and very rarely the Trinidads, Jamaicas,

and Barbadoses that populate our collective imagination of the archetypal West Indies. Today the Banana Republics are still the world’s leading banana exporters and, though UFCO no longer exists, its successor, Chiquita, alongside other household names, have filled the space it left, controlling 65% of the global banana trade. As an invaluable mechanism of a 8.9 billion dollar industry that surreptitiously populates precarious spaces of pronounced diasporic cultural significance, these companies’ boxes in Brixton Market disclose an asymmetry where diasporic identity inauspiciously rests, sometimes quite literally, on unwavering commercial infrastructures in urban spaces. And by reading diasporic space through the movement and trade of the banana, this is as true for the containers that construct Afro-Caribbean urban markets now as it does for the railways and shipping routes that constructed an entire Caribbean region then.

Plantain: Proselytizing Infrastructures, Preservative Spaces ///

Both plantain and bananas were carried to West-Central Africa via an unknown route around 3000 BCE, with the botanical histories of the Musa family group bearing important implications for theories of early human movement between Africa and the Oceania, across the Indian Ocean. They both reached the Americas after the 16th century, however, through Iberian transportation via the Canary Islands, along routes and sea lanes that also facilitated the industrialized movement of enslaved African lives. Notably though, prior to early U.S. (and UFCO) expansionism in the Caribbean, the banana was a fruit of comparative insignificance.

During the centuries of African slavery in the Caribbean, “provision grounds” were communal slave spaces that countered the logics of the plantation complex. These were spaces, born out of planters’ desires to reduce plantations operating costs, for enslaved persons to grow their own food and were often away from (or out of sight of) the plantations. Provision grounds were usually located on rocky, mountainous ground, unsuitable for cane cultivation, and as such, whatever was grown was often testament to the resourcefulness of many slave societies. Amidst a plethora of other plants recorded as having been grown in these spaces, such as yams, corn, dasheen (coco), the banana made up a small minority. However, contemporary sources suggest plantain was prolific.

Provision grounds, having held significance as creolizing, economic, and spiritual spaces, communicate the experience of slavery through the agency of the enslaved; they are an insight into what was grown by enslaved persons, for enslaved persons, when and why. That plantain was so ubiquitous in these spaces gives some insight into the nature of the agency, internal economy, and even relative autonomy present in slave space in the pre-emancipation Caribbean. African or creolised-African plantain recipes in the Caribbean then and today help piece together a cultural archaeology of the provision grounds as particularly African diasporic space in a violently oppressive colonial but also highly syncretic Caribbean. These recipes hold as much culinary archival

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“PROVISION GROUNDS, HAVING HELD SIGNIFICANCE AS CREOLIZING, ECONOMIC, AND SPIRITUAL SPACES, COMMUNICATE THE EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY THROUGH THE AGENCY OF THE ENSLAVED; THEY ARE AN INSIGHT INTO WHAT WAS GROWN BY ENSLAVED PERSONS, FOR ENSLAVED PERSONS, WHEN AND WHY.”

value as they do lyric archival value, retaining uncommonly precise West African names amidst a context of widespread linguistic creolization in the provision grounds and systematic eradication of African dialects and beliefs across the regions' plantation complexes. One powerful example of this retention is *fufu*, a version of which is the national dish in Barbados known as *coocoo*, and *dokunu*, which, although often called "tie-a-leaf" or "blue draws" in Jamaica, is still recognizable by its Twi variation. These powerful instances of cultural persistence cannot be satisfactorily explained by a relationship between diasporic space and infrastructures of corporeal movement and subjugation that methodically led to human and cultural erasure and ephemerality in the Caribbean; not just of enslaved Africans but also indigenous Taino, and later indentured South and East Asians. Instead, they reveal the primary importance of lyric infrastructure, the transmission of language and narrative, in driving the historical logics of diasporic space and spatial practice in the Caribbean.

The primacy of plantain, coupled with the primacy of lyric infrastructure over infrastructures of physical movement also challenges assumptions of the nature of resistance, ephemerality, and "informality" in diasporic space in the Caribbean. During the 18th and early 19th century, plantain began to be grown in both the provision grounds and as a crop of the plantation complex, straddling a dichotomy between "plot and plantation" that Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter would later describe as central to an understanding of Caribbean history and literature. Multiple colonial contemporary commentators in the 18th century in Jamaica describe the white partiality for plantain (and plantain recipes, which were accompanied by their African names), with Edward Long, author of the controversial work *The History of Jamaica* (1774), even stating: "many white persons, after being accustomed to it for some time, actually prefer it to bread." Almost prefigurative in its mobility and global connection to the 20th century banana, the plantain, though still profoundly African in its implication, transected domestic and agricultural space for both slave and master. Its preference on the plates of colonists, however, is suggestive not merely of a lyric infrastructure that statically retains the "African-ness" of diasporic space as an act of resistance, but of an infrastructure that operationalizes retention orally and connectively; absorbing new customs, products, and bodies into the remit of African Caribbean diasporic space by exuding words and tastes, as a critical means of persistence. Exemplifying this, the popularity of West African technologies such as *conqintay* (the name stemming from the Twi and Ga *kokonte/konkonte*), a flour made from dried sliced plantain, amongst slave-owning classes can be read as the proselytization of (the oppressor's) space, imbuing their languages and kitchens with the logics of African Caribbean diasporic space; a quietly subversive resistance planted directly in the mouths of the masters.

Even today, after the end of slavery and the rise of the banana, which coincided with a diminishing prevalence of plantain, the fruit is still an incomparably powerful way of understanding a global relationship between diasporic space and lyric infrastructure that works to both persist and proselytise identity. In Caribbean, in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, two islands whose relationships to plantain and African spiritual traditions through slavery are still particularly distinct, the word "*aplatanada*" / "*aplatanado*" (sometimes literally translated as "plantainized") is used colloquially when a foreigner has become fully integrated in the islands' customs and cultures. In the U.K., *Plantain Papers*, a zine run by young members of the African and Caribbean diaspora Lemara Lindsay-Prince, Tamika Abaka-Wood, and Tahira Edwards-Byfield, uses the fruit as means of starting conversations that centre diasporic lives, bringing together our narratives through textual space with an ethos that Abaka-Wood brilliantly calls "people with a side of plantain." In doing so this the zine powerfully echoes the provision grounds by facilitating the persistence of connective African identity within a type of diasporic space. It also demonstrably exists in dialogue with a lyric infrastructure that proselytizes, in this case, European means of visual and textual production, in order to propagate and make accessible the logics of African diasporic space to a community of plantain-lovers and eaters across the world.

Reading plantain, regardless of how you eat or pronounce it, offers a reinvigorated understanding of resistance, ephemerality, and informality in diasporic space. It allows us to think of these practices as not merely acts and consequences that we are habitually forced to by the infrastructural violences that dispersed and disperse us. They instead become acts and consequences that others are brought into, imprinted by, and made cognate with. Perhaps "plantIN" is an accurate pronunciation for this reading since, contrary to Dapaah's humorous retort, we are actually planting something: the potential to, if nothing else, consolidate different infrastructural relationships for the connection and persistence of our diasporic spaces. ■

Akil Scafe-Smith is one third of RESOLVE, an interdisciplinary design collective that aims to address multi-scalar social challenges by combining architecture, art, technology, and engineering. RESOLVE have delivered numerous projects, workshops, and talks, in London, the U.K., and across Europe, all of which look toward realizing just and equitable visions of change in our built environment. In addition to his work with RESOLVE, Akil also works as a researcher for the London School of Economics with Dr. Julia King, working with young people in Brent to co-design a public space in Wembley Park and an accompanying set of policy recommendations.



AKIL'S RECIPE /// Banana Fritters & Fried Plantain

Banana Fritters ///

Perfect for a delicious Sunday breakfast.

A couple of soft, brown bananas.

Beat these with a fork and add flour to make a puree.

Add one or two eggs, depending on preference.

Add brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon to taste.

A pinch of salt.

Heat oil to a high temperature in a frying pan.

Spoon into the hot frying pan until golden brown — it should look and have the consistency almost of a pancake.

Turn regularly.

Enjoy with syrup!

Fried Plantain ///

A key side to any meal, breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Or even just a snack to keep you going in Babylon!

Cut a whole plantain in two.

Slice lengthways holding one half in the palm of your hand — this takes practice to not get the slices wonky!

Alternatively cut short rings.

Heat oil to a high temperature in a frying pan.

Fry until golden brown, adding salt to taste.

"ALMOST PREFIGURATIVE IN ITS MOBILITY AND GLOBAL CONNECTION TO THE 20TH CENTURY BANANA, THE PLANTAIN, THOUGH STILL PROFOUNDLY AFRICAN IN ITS IMPLICATION, TRANSECTED DOMESTIC AND AGRICULTURAL SPACE FOR BOTH SLAVE AND MASTER."

DINNER AS DEMONSTRATION COOKING AS UNDERLYING FOOD AS REPARATION

WITH TUNDE WEY

Imagine a restaurant where white clients have to pay three times more than their Black counterparts; or a dinner in a gentrifying neighborhood where a gentrifier is placed at the table of a long-time resident... only two of many scenarios Tunde Wey instigates in his cooking demonstrations, as he explains in this interview.

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT: Ingredients /// There is something vertiginous in thinking that each ingredient that we use in each dish we cook has a long political history, a part of which always takes us back to colonialism. We often think of sugar, chocolate, tea, or coffee, but this is true for many many others. How do you exhume such histories in your various projects?

TUNDE WEY: As Leeds United coach Marcelo Bielsa said, “the answer is in the question.” The answer is in the question because everything is collected back to this history of exploitation, but my work is not forensic about the ingredients. For me it is not important to pick one or two things out, unless as a demonstration of something. But usually my demonstrations in my works and my dinners where I gather folks together, we have conversations with these demonstration projects where I use food to highlight different disparities. That is when, if it helps the demonstration, I will use an ingredient in a metaphorical way.

Here’s an example: I am starting this prepackaged foods brand. I am selling salt to white people for 100 dollars, an outrageous price because Black life is outrageously devalued. I am using the salt to speak to a different truth that I saw as elemental; I do not know a single culture that does not have some sort of salinity in their food. So, salt as a base, racism and colonial exploitation as a base, those are the metaphors that I draw. The literal examination of ingredients and actual food I don’t do. For me food is always in the background even though it is what is present and what draws people together, food is always in the background. We don’t examine the food unless it is important to the examination of larger issues. Food is also a large issue, or the large issue. But for me it is primarily a lens, like I think of it as oxygen: it is *necessary*. So you are breathing air, but the only time you are aware of it is maybe when you are meditating or usually when there is something wrong with the air like somebody farted or there is some terrible shit happening around, or there is not enough air; then, we bring it up. But in this place where food is generally plentiful even though the distribution of food is engineered such that it is

unavailable to some folks. I don’t generally talk about food scarcity, but I talk about food as a metaphor for power.

LL: Serving /// In your projects, food is always an event. The restaurants or sites you create for this event are very deliberate in the way food is served and, often, this way depends on who is the receiver of it. Could you tell us more about what we could perhaps call a political choreography?

TW: I am actually not very deliberate, but, let me put it this way: I don’t believe in things materializing from nowhere. What is spontaneous is a product of subconscious, unconscious, and some-conscious deliberation that is happening because things come up and they go away, at least for me. So, I always have things percolating. I can use the metaphor of a stove where there is always a kettle at a slow boil in the back, and it’s just about when I bring it to the front, when I pour the water and contents into something else. I think what I do is I create a basic framework for the project that I am doing. So I say, these are the parameters that I want to explore. I’ll say what is the theme, what is the question that I am trying to ask here? And then, what are the constraints for the consumer who is interacting with the food or with the food demonstration or product. And then I go into it, and I just see what happens. I try and learn lessons and then adapt it in the moment to what is happening. I will give you an example because this is all super conceptual.

In a project that I did — and this is a simple example for the purpose of this — I had asymmetric pricing based upon how people identify racially. I knew that I wanted to charge people different amounts; so there was a regular price and then a price that reflected the racial wage disparity here in New Orleans. And that is basically what I do. I also knew that I wanted to take the money that was made over the regular amount and redistribute that back to the Black folks who had come to purchase the food. That was the basic premise. But then when I started the project and folks came up to me, I realized that I just could not offer them two prices. I had to share with them what the project was,

“HERE’S AN EXAMPLE: I AM STARTING THIS PREPACKAGED FOODS BRAND. I AM SELLING SALT TO WHITE PEOPLE FOR 100 DOLLARS, AN OUTRAGEOUS PRICE BECAUSE BLACK LIFE IS OUTRAGEOUSLY DEVALUED.”

“IN A PROJECT THAT I DID — AND THIS IS A SIMPLE EXAMPLE FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS — I HAD ASYMMETRIC PRICING BASED UPON HOW PEOPLE IDENTIFY RACIALLY. I KNEW THAT I WANTED TO CHARGE PEOPLE DIFFERENT AMOUNTS; SO THERE WAS A REGULAR PRICE AND THEN A PRICE THAT REFLECTED THE RACIAL WAGE DISPARITY HERE IN NEW ORLEANS.”



and so when every customer came, it became a conversation about racial wealth disparity and, honestly, then, reparations. The other thing too that I knew I wanted to do is I wanted to collect the opinions and perspectives of the people who were coming. So, I did a survey. The first thing I realized in the project was I needed to have a conversation with folks to prime them otherwise the project would be meaningless.

One time somebody came, it was like around 8pm, and they wanted to buy some food, and they had a family. They were travelers and had like four kids, three grandparents, two stepsisters... It was a huge family, and they just wanted to eat. I told them you can pay 10 dollars, or you can pay 30 dollars, and they were like “What is happening?!” I told them because you are white, you can pick one of the two, and they were just confused. They said: “We need to eat and have been walking in the rain all day; this does not make any sense!” So, I knew I had to do a better job of communicating that. Then the other thing that I realized is when I started having these conversations, all the white people were happy to pay the extra. And I was like “No this is not part of my plan; I want to discredit white people [laughs], and this is fucking up my plan!” So, I had to think why was this happening? I started examining the ways in which they were choosing to pay extra. There was all about negotiation. They would be like: “Oh, can I just pay you a bigger tip?” This was a bribe to get the lower amount. Some of the people started asking me questions: “Where is the money going?” And then when I would tell them they would say, “Okay, all of the money is going back to the Black folks who have bought food here,” then people were visibly comfortable with that because it became a charity scheme which was not what I wanted it to be.

I decided to change that. There was no negotiation, and I did not tell people that the money was going back to Black folks. So, anyway, this is the way in projects that I escalate, or refine, the stakes or propositions. And I don’t think this is unique to me in terms of iterating as things are happening. I like to think about Kanye West; he released an album, I think it was *The Life of Pablo*, and, after he released it tentatively, he still went back. He took out

“NO THIS IS NOT PART OF MY PLAN; I WANT TO DISCREDIT WHITE PEOPLE [LAUGHS], AND THIS IS FUCKING UP MY PLAN!”

Top. “White Tears Edition” Bottom. “Plain White Edition.” / “Lot of Salt,” a project by Tunde Wey with a package design by Kazvare (2020).



Tunde Wey's "Love Will Trump" dinner in Pittsburgh. Citizens and immigrants in the U.S. set on a blind date. / All photos by Joey Kennedy (2019).

"SO, IF I SAID 'PEOPLE COME TO THE TABLE AND THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE,' THEN MY DINNERS BECOME 'DISCOMFORT DINNERS.' AND THEN IF I SAW SOMETHING EXPERIMENTAL, THEN THE PROJECT HAS BECOME 'EXPERIMENTS.' THEY ARE JUST LIKE LITTLE WAYS, IN MY MIND, THAT UNDERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK"

some songs, edited some songs, lengthened and shortened. So that is an iterative process in creating work. It is something that I appreciated. And I was doing it but somewhat understanding that it was possible in all of these other different formats and frames. It gave me more confidence about how to move about the work.

So, just to answer your question, I create a framework and then I try to be as nimble as possible and feel all of the gyrations of the moment even when it is hard. What's important to remember is that these are not experiments; they are demonstrations. There have just been times maybe I have said something about "experiments," and then it became synecdoche: it came to mean the entire thing. So, if I said "people come to the table and they are uncomfortable," then my dinners become "discomfort dinners." And then if I saw something experimental, then the project has become "experiments." They are just like little ways, in my mind, that undermine the purpose of the work. I hope my purpose is not to make white people uncomfortable, like I have bigger aspirations than being white people's disturber. And the work is not experimental because it is demonstrative of ongoing disparities. So, I do not want to relegate the work or the purpose to a particular idea.

LL: Location /// Your projects, whether restaurants or other, are situated geographically, which is to say that they are situated in very particular political conditions. You know how this aspect of things is crucial in the way we approach political engagement in The Funambulist and I wanted to ask your perspective on this, when you are in your city of Detroit, but also in New Orleans, Nashville, or Oakland...

TW: Some of the framework is to engage with whiteness. A lot of the folks who interact with my work are middle class to upper-middle class affluent folks, Black and white and Brown, across the spectrum of race. It is definitely a particular social economic class that interacts with my work. For right or reason, one of them is the price points that I employ, the distribution methods that I use (for example you have to register online), the media that covers the work attracts a certain kind of clientele. Again that also depends on the project: I have done some projects where it is mostly Black or all Black folks; some projects where it is mostly white folks. To the degree that it is possible that part is intentional because that is necessary to the

dynamics of the project or the dinner that I am doing. So, I think again and I create a space apart from the space that we are in, while also acknowledging that we are *in a space*. I use the particular geographic space as the beginning of the question. So maybe if I am doing a dinner in Oakland, I'll do some research of what is happening in Oakland because all of those things come to bear in this space.

But the actual dining space, or project space, or demonstration space is its own space that I am beginning to define more. At the beginning, my dinners were just a group of people dining without me necessarily thinking about what the space was. In more recent dinners — I have not done a dinner in a while to be fair — I actually spatially organize folks based on their different class and race positions and then also based on some sort of element from the dinners, some sort of conceit for the dinners. For example, if we are talking about gentrification or if we are talking about appropriation say I will seat folks based on race and income, and this is information I collect beforehand: income, race, education level, all of these symbols of status. Depending on who you are, when you come in you get selected into a randomized pool and then you get put in all these different places. If I am trying to subvert certain privileges then the identities that are most at risk outside of that dinner space get preferential treatment in the dinner space, and then the privileges that are the most rewarded in public go into this pool. So, in the dinner space some people receive terrible service, they are cramped, there are no seats — just things like that that affect the dining experience. The biggest thing about that experience is that the diners are not expecting that to happen until after the fact. So, at the close of the dinner it then becomes an opportunity for conversation. That's mostly how I am using space now. I am creating this spatial disparity, or disparity within the space, to reflect certain hierarchies that I am either critiquing or I want to see imposed in the spaces outside of the dinner.

LL: Craft /// A recipe is by definition the transmission of a certain form of crafts. A white understanding of recipes always encourages this transmission to be as broad as possible in a tradition of universalization of European culture and the appropriation and assimilation of the South/East's ones. What is your strategy to negotiate between transmission that is intra-communitarian

— I'm thinking of communities the scale of a family, a neighborhood, a diaspora... — and those that could be inter-communitarian?

TW: I think fundamentally everything is neutral, but very soon after, or even right before it is born, it becomes politicized. But maybe everything has a neutral character to it, and so, if we think of cookbooks as, say a method of communication it may in some instances need to be voluminous to communicate a lot of information. We don't pick up a dictionary and say, "oh my, this is too big!" Yeah it is big because it is communicating a lot of things. But, a dictionary or cookbook can also be a hegemonic device. So we have a couple of choices: to reflect back the neutrality of the item, to use or impose or reflect back different hegemony on it, or to critique the oppressive hegemony of the work. And I am sure there are other things that can be done too.

I say all of this because the way that I learned to cook was through Youtube, and Youtube is a compendium, everlasting tome of information visually. And because of the way that I have learned to cook and when people ask me for recipes I am hesitant to provide it because I do not own the recipes. And they belong to everybody. But, of course, there are many caveats in that, and the biggest one is that white people steal shit. So even though stuff belongs to everybody [laughs], white people steal it — and not just white people but folks with a certain capitalist interest steal shit: men steal shit, folks with power steal stuff... And so I think depending on what the work is (a cookbook or a recipe), we have to use it for that purpose. For me, like I said earlier, cooking is an opportunity to get people somewhere where I can sit and talk about a different thing. I don't use recipes in any way except to bring people to a table or to a demonstration so that I can then talk about other things. I mean, I rarely do that.

When I think of the transmission of that sort of knowledge or craft, I think of it as personal. I think of it as collecting this for myself, not for white people or for people with different kinds of power positions, which I also hold. When I think of the food that I cook — which is Nigerian, specifically I cook southwestern Nigerian food like Yoruba ethnic Edo food, that is the food that I cook because Nigeria is a huge place — I just think of collecting the knowledge, like what are the

"IN MORE RECENT DINNERS [...] I ACTUALLY SPATIALLY ORGANIZE FOLKS BASED ON THEIR DIFFERENT CLASS AND RACE POSITIONS AND THEN ALSO BASED ON SOME SORT OF ELEMENT FROM THE DINNERS, SOME SORT OF CONCEIT FOR THE DINNERS."

"I AM CREATING THIS SPATIAL DISPARITY, OR DISPARITY WITHIN THE SPACE, TO REFLECT CERTAIN HIERARCHIES THAT I AM EITHER CRITIQUING OR I WANT TO SEE IMPOSED IN THE SPACES OUTSIDE OF THE DINNER."

basic skills, what are the techniques. And this has nothing to do with craft; the craft part is the repetitiveness of the work, how I learn to collect those techniques and distill them so that I can transform food from ingredients into a dish.

The craft is how I move through commercial kitchen space and use what is available and what is not available to get what I need, and that stuff is the product of experience. For me it has also been the product of not just experiencing creating but experience in consuming the food, and so I have fundamentally a historic perspective of my food because my palate was shaped by that food; *my palate is that food*. And so I understand every other thing that I eat through that perspective. That is what craft is for me. To be fair my craft is also about critiquing whiteness, and a tool of my craft is hyperbole. I say shit like “White people should never cook cultural food.” I know that that is not possible; I know that white people are going to cook this kind of food, and specifically I mean that they should not cook this type of food publicly for profit — and profit does not only mean money there are all sorts of profit. Obviously, privately people can do whatever they want to do. The hyperbole that I use is part of my craft to dissuade white folks from their overly consumptive tendencies, and consumptive is too neutral a word. It is more like rapacious colonial tendencies.

LL: Labor /// The history we have talked about is linked to land theft, resource extraction, and transplanetary displacements. But it is also strongly linked to a history of the exploitation of labor that brings an ingredient from the soil to a dining table. In the context where you live, the United States, this mobilizes a history going from the exploited labor of enslaved Black people to that of undocumented central American Indigenous people. Could you talk about this aspect of things in your work?

TW: Part of my I like cooking for the public is how theoretical questions become realized. So, when I think about labor, it’s a theoretical proposition until you have to hire somebody. And I am not sure how it is for you and your magazine, what you think about compensating or not compensating them, these are really tough questions. I remember I had this experience when I was doing a dinner about interrogating whiteness sometime in 2016, and this work that I was doing was not profitable — I think now all of those efforts are slowly realizing some benefit financially for me, but just a little benefit. Anyway, at that time it was not profitable, so I would do a lot of work and make just enough money to keep going. And so I sold dinner tickets, let’s say, for like 50 bucks per person. I was in Los Angeles and I did not have a place to stay, so I was staying with a friend. I could not afford to stay in a hotel or anything like that. By the time I had bought my ingredients I realized that I could not afford to

pay anybody. What had happened was that the restaurant that I was cooking in I had told the owner who is a friend that I would need some people to help me because it was a lot of work. I was cooking for like one-hundred people. And so she had told those people that I would need them, but then the day before when I had realized I had no money that I could not afford it I think I called them directly that I am sorry I don’t need them anymore. And so I cooked everything by myself, and I spent like two nights in the kitchen. And this is normal, when I am cooking by myself I cook eight or nine hours straight, usually overnight, because that is when the kitchen is available for use since I am using other people’s kitchens. And then we do the dinner, and they come with their own emotional sort of responsibility because there is this tension and competition that is happening.

Anyway, after the dinner, one of my friends was upset with me, which further threw me off. She was upset with me because I did not pay her people. And I said “yes I know because I could not use them.” She was saying, “well you talk about power, you talking about disparity, but if you make a promise to people you should follow up on that promise.” And I was struggling with that concept. I feel like my tendencies towards a more socialist enterprise, but I grew up capitalist, so I know I still have all of those things in my head. So I was struggling with the idea; did I somehow exploit these people? I felt like I exploited myself to try and get the dinner done, and these folks were not supposed to work on that day anyway. It was the off day, and they were going to make extra money. So, I had thought I had not done anything, but anyway she thought I had done something inappropriate, so she compensated them herself. And I was like, I cannot let that happen. So, I then went into my pocket and paid her back for paying the people. I just remember feeling just terrible about it because I literally had no money, and so I used the money that I didn’t have to pay her. Anyway, the moral of the story was that I was broke. But the second moral is how difficult it is to understand what to do, what is right, what is wrong in terms of labor.

That’s now my use of labor, because I have exploited labor in a variety of ways. I often try to pay people as well as I can within the realm of possibility that does not bankrupt me. But, I feel this is what every capitalist does; they set some sort of value for labor that they control, and then they are the ones that get to disperse the funds and manage all of these relationships. So, I want to keep in my work exploring ways that I can complicate for myself the labor question, and make it real. I am not interested in theoretical frameworks that have not been stress tested in realtime in reality. That is how I think about the labor that I interact with, and I am also conscious of the labor that I expend personally in my work. So when I am cooking I am generally doing all of the work.



I’m also conscious of the labor that I don’t expand in conventional ways. I am in essence striking from work currently. I want to create as many scenarios as possible where I am not working, but I am getting compensated very well. So that is another thing that I do, but in terms of thinking about labor as separate from my experience is that, through my work, I want to push the burden of responsibility away from labor to ownership— not just the burden of responsibility, but the burden of struggle, the burden of trying to accumulate resources to meet your bills. I want to push that away from labor to ownership. This is mostly theoretically in that it is stuff that I talk about, but I have not necessarily figured out a project that can hold this, yet. So it is mostly things that I come about in my writing obliquely and my talks that I give when I am invited to speak in certain places.

LL: I wonder if when it comes to the ownership you’re describing, one of the ways to address this in the context of the U.S. as a settler colony, would not have to do with engaging with this settler colonial condition of the land.

TW: I have been in some spaces where I have seen white people honoring the Indigenous people who came before them, and I do not understand that practice because there is no reparative conclusion to that practice; it seems like virtue signaling. And I also think virtue signaling is fine if you have the virtue, so that’s okay. The conceptual problem that I have with that, and I have not done enough research to know if it is really a problem, is that the idea of ownership is not one

that I think was practiced by Indigenous folks, and to transfer our current systems of thought and thinking to Indigenous folks but not actually transfer the resources to them just seems very complicated and seems it is missing a lot of pieces.

What I am trying to do now with my work is resource transfer and resource redistribution, so any project that I start I try and make a distinction: if the project is communal then it is communally owned. So I am starting this salt company and the goal is to have it be communally owned by Black folks and then step away. But then I also want to do personal work because I also don’t believe in everything being communal; I think we should hold things dear and personal. I want to do personal work like writing or speaking, or something that I use my own energies for and accumulate as much resources as possible for those things and then use that to satisfy my needs, the needs of my family, and then also move some of those resources back into the community. ■

Tunde Wey is a Nigerian artist, chef and writer currently residing in New Orleans, interrogating exploitative power.

Tunde Wey cooking for his “Love Will Trump” dinner in Pittsburgh. / Photo by Joey Kennedy (2019).

“IN TERMS OF THINKING ABOUT LABOR AS SEPARATE FROM MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT, THROUGH MY WORK, I WANT TO PUSH THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY AWAY FROM LABOR TO OWNERSHIP”

“BUT, I FEEL THIS IS WHAT EVERY CAPITALIST DOES; THEY SET SOME SORT OF VALUE FOR LABOR THAT THEY CONTROL, AND THEN THEY ARE THE ONES THAT GET TO DISPERSE THE FUNDS AND MANAGE ALL OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS.”

VEGANISM SHOULD BE ANTI-CASTE

RAMA GANESAN

In this text, vegan activist Rama Ganesan describes how the ruling party in India (BJP) and Brahmanists have instrumentalized vegetarianism to deepen their commitment to structural islamophobia and casteism. She argues that the struggles for humans and animals cannot be undertaken separately.

"In myriad ways, over centuries and millennia, the oppression of humans and of other animals have been connected and intertwined [...] the social changes that will lead to the liberation of both humans and other animals will and must be inseparable. The question is, how is true liberation to be achieved, particularly in a society in which stratification and oppression are inherent elements of the social structure?"

David Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights*, 2002

There is an uneasy relationship between veganism, which is intended as part of the animal liberation movement, and vegetarianism, which is part of the oppressive system of Brahmanism. I have been a vegetarian all my life, but it was only relatively recently that I came to learn about animal rights theory. My previous vegetarianism had little to do with animal rights, and more to do with ideas of purity and pollution that are prevalent in Hindu culture. Brahmanism, which is the predecessor to current-day Hinduism, is the ideological structure that stratified the Indian subcontinent's societies and oppressed human and animal groups, assigning to each of them prescribed roles and functions, for millennia.

Veganism is a subjective praxis, spanning from a dietary choice to an overarching multidimensional liberatory framework. The term "vegan" was coined in the 1940s by Donald Watson, and later formally defined by Leslie Cross, both of whom were from the United Kingdom. As stated by The Vegan Society, the definition of veganism is "A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude — as far as is possible and practicable — all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals."

Recognising sentience of non-human animals — their personhood and their rights — has not been a significant feature of human cultural development. Much of human

civilization has involved the domestication of animals for labor, food and clothing. Animals, as well as many human groups, continue to face oppression today. But even as we struggle to free a number of human groups from oppression, human rights activists, in general, resist animal rights. A common rationalization is that it will take attention away from their main focus, which rightfully ought to be human suffering. But we ask: is it even possible to dismantle all human oppressions, and all paradigms of hierarchical ordering of humans, if we do not confront our supremacy over other animals and nature itself?

Yet it does seem paradoxical that much of animal activism, in seeking more animal-friendly conduct on the part of humans, takes on oppressive language and frameworks. Terms like "fur hag" used to denigrate women who wear fur reproduces sexism and misogyny. After all, men wear leather, wool and down, yet there is no similarly vicious terminology for them. Virulent hatred for those who eat dog meat poorly hides racism against East Asian people, specifically the Chinese, because dogs have a special place in Western culture. But the use of animals for food (meat, eggs, dairy) is ubiquitous. The "white veganism" of the West uses facile analogies from Black struggles to advance animal rights, without interrogating its own privilege, or working to end the oppression of marginalized humans. It is no surprise that Black people in the U.S. feel veganism is an unwelcoming space where animal lives are elevated above Black lives.

But there is also a developing framework of total liberation, which examines the fundamental structures of domination and oppression which operate in any human society. Under this framework, our goal is liberation for all humans as well as animals, rather than liberation for one group at the expense of another. Much of the work on multidimensional liberation is being forged by African American and Latinx theorists.

Veganism is a controversial subject. Just the very mention that one is vegan may be enough to send non-vegan companions into a series of unbidden explanations on

"WE ASK: IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO DISMANTLE ALL HUMAN OPPRESSIONS, AND ALL PARADIGMS OF HIERARCHICAL ORDERING OF HUMANS, IF WE DO NOT CONFRONT OUR SUPREMACY OVER OTHER ANIMALS AND NATURE ITSELF?"

"THE 'WHITE VEGANISM' OF THE WEST USES FACILE ANALOGIES FROM BLACK STRUGGLES TO ADVANCE ANIMAL RIGHTS, WITHOUT INTERROGATING ITS OWN PRIVILEGE, OR WORKING TO END THE OPPRESSION OF MARGINALIZED HUMANS. IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT BLACK PEOPLE IN THE U.S. FEEL VEGANISM IS AN UNWELCOMING SPACE WHERE ANIMAL LIVES ARE ELEVATED ABOVE BLACK LIVES."



why they cannot be vegan, questions on nutrients, or philosophical enquiry into hypothetical, desert-island scenarios. Psychologists have suggested that this is a form of "cognitive dissonance" — people consider themselves kind, humane, and as animal lovers; yet they enjoy using animal products, many of which are produced under the most brutal conditions. The mere presence of vegans thus triggers an automatic defensive reaction to justify non-vegan inconsistency to their values.

If veganism is controversial under normal circumstances, it engages other dimensions of contention and deep division in South Asia and among the diaspora. India has a reputation for vegetarianism, Hindu metaphysics, yoga, meditation, *ahimsa* (non-violence, especially as associated with Gandhi), sacred cows, and by extension a presumed respect for other animals. But in reality, only a minority of Indians practice vegetarianism. India is not only home to Hindus, but also home to a sizeable population of people of other religions, in particular Islam — in fact, no less than 182 million Indians are Muslims. Even for Hindus, the appropriateness or otherwise of eating animal flesh has more to do with purity and pollution than concern for animal life, and largely correlates with a social class structure known as caste. Specifically, it is the Brahmins and other "upper" (privileged) castes who are expected to abstain from meat to preserve their purity and moral superiority over the other caste and out-caste groups, including the Dalits (formerly derogatively called "Untouchables"). So, the idea that India is particularly concerned with animal welfare is a fabrication, a brand narrative created and sold by the dominant groups to outsiders. Within all this, the oppressed voices of India have not been heard. Considering that the ruling castes of India are of the minority population, the oppressed number around some hundreds of millions of people on the sub-continent.

The current political government in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has ruled the slaughter of cows as unlawful across most of the country, because, ostensibly, the Hindu religion deems the cow a sacred animal. This should, on its surface, seem aligned with an animal-rights vision for the world, but we don't have to look far to find evidence that animal well-being is not what motivates these policies. India is the world's

"Buffalo has a significant place in Adijan (Dalit) and Indian Mythology, as animals have a prominent place in all stories of Indigenous peoples. Buffalo is considered as the ancestor of the Adijan people. For Adijan (Dalit) people buffalo symbolizes their hard working nature." / Caption and painting by Preetam Casimir (2014). "Brahmanism considers the cow as sacred but not the buffalo. The buffalo is a dark-skinned animal that is indigenous to the subcontinent. Both the buffalo and the native people have been subjugated as 'low caste' beings." / Complementary caption by Rama Ganesan.

"EVEN FOR HINDUS, THE APPROPRIATENESS OR OTHERWISE OF EATING ANIMAL FLESH HAS MORE TO DO WITH PURITY AND POLLUTION THAN CONCERN FOR ANIMAL LIFE, AND LARGELY CORRELATES WITH A SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURE KNOWN AS CASTE."



Reject Casteism.



Reject Speciesism.

"Reject Casteism /
Reject Speciesism."
/ Diagram by Rama
Ganesan.

top producer of dairy milk — a cruel industry that forcibly impregnates cows, separates newborn calves from their mothers and kills them both when convenient. But as privileged castes are avid consumers of dairy products, this form of exploitation and cruelty is ignored. Moreover, India remains one of the top countries with the largest export of beef and leather, indicating that a great extent of cow and buffalo slaughter has continued unabated. Finally, the ban is targeting Dalits, Muslims, and other marginalized people who have customarily eaten or traded in beef. No alternative sources of income or nutrition have been provided for the millions who depend on the slaughter industry. The ban has stoked and brought to the surface long-standing animosity and people have taken punitive measures into their own hands. Cow vigilantism and lynching of those found to eat beef have increased and perpetrators often go unpunished.

Rather than any concern for animals, cows or others, the beef ban is part of the nationalistic "Hindutva" project to bolster the state identity as a "Hindu Nation." The function of Hindutva is to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life over competing ideologies, specifically Islam. Hindutva considers that India is the land where the ancestors of Hindu people lived, and therefore the birthright of all Hindus. Hindus revere cows, ostensibly because cows produce sustenance in the form of milk. Even though India is home to over 10% of the world's Muslims, Islam is considered the religion of violent invaders. Muslims eat beef, and many Muslims eke out a living as butchers. So, the beef ban elevates the Hindu above the Muslim way of life, to the extent of taking away what Muslims consider an important food option. Of course, the Indian State's Islamophobia is about more than cows and beef. In 2019, the BJP government annexed the Muslim-majority

states of Jammu and Kashmir and passed the Citizenship Amendment Act which makes religion the basis for acquiring Indian citizenship, both of which constitute ruthless attacks against Muslims. The assault is further compounded by the recent inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, a Hindu temple built atop the site of an ancient Muslim mosque that was demolished in 1992 by a Hindu mob.

Despite the ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political party, the BJP, it was not always the case that Brahmanical Hinduism eschewed beef. In fact, vegetarianism is a relatively recent adoption by Brahmins. The earliest religious scriptures for what later became Hinduism, the Vedas, describe animal (including cow) sacrifices as part of religious rituals, and speak of the priestly caste, the Brahmins, as presiding over the sacrifices and partaking in eating animal flesh. So, at that point, there was no contention over who eats meat, who is vegetarian; and further, no correlation made between animal flesh and pollution.

In fact, both archeological and genetic evidence indicates that the people who composed the Vedas and established Vedic culture did not even come from what is now known as India; they were immigrants, who settled in India around 1500 BCE, well after an indigenous Indus Valley culture had been established. Areas to the northwest of present-day India, and areas of Pakistan, have had human agricultural settlements since around 6000 BCE. The Aryans were nomadic pastoralists who rode in on horses and traded in cattle.

The ancient Vedas not only describe religious rituals, they also outline a system for dividing society into four hierarchically ordered groups. In later scriptures, specifically

Manusmriti (composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE), the caste system is fully elaborated as the pre-ordained duty of Brahmins to be scholars, Kshatriyas, warriors, and Vaishyas to be farmers and merchants. The fourth varna, Shudra, were described as peasantry and slave laborers for the Brahmins, under threat of inhumane punishment were they not to comply. There are also people not included in this system. These are the outcaste groups, the so-called "Untouchables," who live on the margins of society, and the Adivasis who live in forests outside of society. Rules and sanctions to prevent marriage outside of caste have ensured that, even to this day, genes associated with Aryan settlers are disproportionately represented in the priestly "upper" caste, the Brahmins.

Considering that the Vedic culture was imported into India, and considering that Hindus, including even the vaunted Brahmins, ate beef, it is difficult to argue that India is the land of the Hindus where cows are sacred and protected. To fit this fabricated story, actual historical events need to be manipulated. History textbook writers have been asked to amend their accounts to fit the Hindu nationalist narrative — which is that the Vedic Hindu culture is indigenous to India, that the Hindus did not eat cows, that the "lower castes" were treated well, and that Muslim invaders were violent terrorists who were out to wholly destroy Hindus and Hindu culture.

Brahmanism has deemed the cow as sacred and worthy of protection, but does not offer the same consideration to the buffalo, even though both animals are a source of milk and meat for human consumption. The cow is closely associated with the Aryan settlers who brought along their own cows for sustenance. The buffalo on the other hand, is an animal indigenous to the subcontinent. Effectively, these animals have become casteized - the cow as the upper caste and the buffalo as the lower caste. To further reinforce this distinction, cows in India are by and large light-skinned animals, and the buffalo is a dark-skinned animal, aligning with the racial distinction between the Aryan settlers and the native population.

The caste system from its inception has been an economic system. The oppressed caste and out-caste people were denied opportunities for education and advancement, sometimes through violent means. Their existence depended on the whim of the ruling castes, and they were often denied remuneration for their menial and degrading labor. Not able to afford food, they depended upon the discards of the upper castes, often dead cows and other animals that they were called upon to clear away; while at the same time reviled for eating the flesh of cows. In current day India, among the world's top exporters of beef, people are dying of starvation. It is apparently acceptable to make money by selling cow flesh to people in other countries, but unacceptable for people in India to eat the same cow flesh. It becomes apparent that untouchability is an economic system, a framework to keep some people destitute, downtrodden, malnourished and hungry enough to continue to perform cheap or free labor.

Short-sighted vegan activism takes advantage of the beef ban. These activists seek to uncover small, illegal butcher operations, and report them to the police. But they are just reinforcing the systemic discrimination against Dalits and Muslims. In reality, the largest slaughterhouses are headed by Hindu, privileged-caste individuals who work through legal loopholes — for instance, by getting "fit-for-slaughter" certifications for cows, and by slaughtering buffaloes instead. It is always easier to attack those who are already marginalized rather than address those in power.

From these histories and realities, we can understand that Brahmanism is definitely not veganism. The Hindu religion venerates Krishna, the butter-stealing, milk-drinking god. Dairy milk, butter, and ghee are considered "pure" ingredients that are essential parts of religious ceremonies. Conversely, veganism is not Brahmanism. Veganism that is pro-intersectional,

"IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT UNTOUCHABILITY IS AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM, A FRAMEWORK TO KEEP SOME PEOPLE DESTITUTE, DOWNTRODDEN, MALNOURISHED AND HUNGRY ENOUGH TO CONTINUE TO PERFORM CHEAP OR FREE LABOR."

"SO, THE BEEF BAN ELEVATES THE HINDU ABOVE THE MUSLIM WAY OF LIFE, TO THE EXTENT OF TAKING AWAY WHAT MUSLIMS CONSIDER AN IMPORTANT FOOD OPTION. OF COURSE, THE INDIAN STATE'S ISLAMOPHOBIA IS ABOUT MORE THAN COWS AND BEEF."

aligned with total liberation and consistent anti-oppression, is certainly *not* about casteist food rules and nor is it about classifying people as impure or polluted.

For Dalits and other oppressed groups, their very liberation is entwined with being able to eat meat without re-cremination. In efforts of subjugation, they have long been told that their lives are worth less than a cow's life — this is precisely the message that is being conveyed when someone is lynched for eating beef. Dalit activists take to social media to state that they will sit at the same table (as Brahmans, presumably), and eat Michelin-grade steak as an expression of their self-determination. They might take pleasure in convincing a casteist privileged person into eating meat. They might even request of someone who wants to show solidarity with the Dalit struggle to eat beef. Contemporary author and activist Kancha Iliiah Shepherd has promoted meat-eating as a tactic to abolish caste. Accordingly, many liberal and anti-caste Indians speak against vegetarianism and conflate it with veganism. So the rights of animals, which have always been ignored, are set back even further in the struggle for Dalit liberation.

"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT VEGANISM IS NOT CONFLATED WITH RIGHT-WING BEEF BANS, COW VIGILANTISM, OR DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES THAT PLACE ANIMALS ABOVE HUMANS."

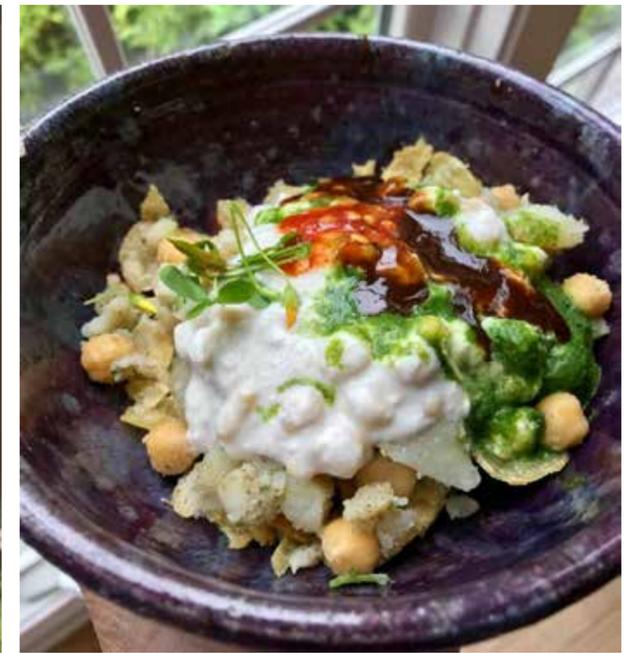
It is important that veganism is not conflated with right-wing beef bans, cow vigilantism, or discriminatory practices that place animals above humans. This is really not how we have envisioned total liberation! As an anti-oppression movement, veganism needs to model its goal in its tactics. It is counter productive to our stated goal if we have to resort to coercive methods to achieve animal liberation at the expense of human liberation. Second, these methods do not really work — they merely trigger a backlash by those who are discriminated against and their allies. Finally, as we have seen, the beef ban does not even protect cows from slaughter or exploitation.

My decision to shed light on the contradiction between Hindu practices and veganism has not been popular amongst vegans. Hinduism, *ahimsa*, Gandhi, yoga and other related concepts have been appropriated by white veganism, and the movement is reluctant to let go of its props. Leaders of various vegan and animal rights groups in the West have adopted a Hindu façade, they sign their emails with "namaste," call their companies "Om," and glibly give talks on *ahimsa*. Vegans who are caste Hindus believe their own hype, invent vegan gods and goddesses, and posit that Krishna was in fact drinking plant milk. Many, especially those privileged by race or caste, are reluctant to have their cause of animal liberation further stymied by human struggles against caste or Islamophobia. Even those pro-intersectional vegans, who focus on dismantling white supremacy, are befuddled and frustrated by Brahman supremacy.

My understanding of the atrocities of animal agriculture began when I read *Eating Animals* (2009) by Jonathan Safran Foer some years ago. In the book, Foer embeds his own investigations into animals in the food industry within the context of his own Jewish identity and lineage. I also reflect on my own background and learning. As a woman from a privileged caste, I have a vegetarian upbringing, but it certainly did not include learning to love or respect other animals. Caste practices have been integral to many aspects of my life. Just as veganism prompted me to dismantle my privilege over other animals, it also made me reflect on the unearned benefits of being born Brahman. I benefit greatly from, and have been complicit in, the oppression of both humans and animals. I live in a civilization that advanced by exploiting animals, their bodies, and by plundering their habitats. I benefit from the caste oppression of people for millennia, I live on land stolen from Indigenous peoples, in a country built by the forced labor of enslaved Africans.

There remains an uncomfortable tension between my vegan advocacy and my solidarity with the anti-caste movement. The first step is that the anti-caste movement should accept staunch animal-rights vegans in its ranks. A couple of days ago, I heard this statistic from college professor Dr Balmurli Natrajan: currently, one-third of Brahmans are meat-eaters, and one-third of Dalits are vegetarian. So, however we may have been divided in the past, and however casteists still choose to discriminate, there is no actual difference between us with respect to food habits. This gives me hope that we can disentangle casteism and vegetarianism, to show that concern for humans and for non-human animals can go together, as they so naturally do. ■

Rama Ganesan lived in Chennai, India until the age of 10 when she emigrated to the UK with her family. She then moved to the U.S. in her 20s with her spouse, and she has lived there ever since. She has two grown children, a dog and two cat companions. Rama received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Oxford, her PhD in Psychology from the University of Wales and her MBA from the University of Arizona. She has worked as a lab scientist, a marketing professional and as college faculty. After reading *Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer, Rama began to explore the philosophy of animal rights and veganism. Over time this developed into an interest in the roots of oppression of both humans and animals, what some theorists are now referring to as "multidimensional liberation theory."



RAMA'S RECIPE /// Soy yoghurt

Yoghurt is an important food in India, especially in hot South India where I am from. Traditionally, it is a way to keep dairy milk for longer when one lives in a hot climate without refrigeration. In addition, the cool temperature, sour taste and creamy texture of yoghurt are a great compliment to hot and spicy foods. When I first became a vegan, I didn't have a replacement for yoghurt that I used to eat every day. So when we learned how to make large quantities of soy yoghurt at home it was a significant inflection point. If you already make dairy milk yoghurt, making yoghurt from soy milk is much different. The method is simple, and once mastered can be made routinely. The following recipe was first shared by Ranga Ramesh. In hot climates, yoghurt is left to ferment on countertops, but in cooler climates or in air-conditioned homes, we can use a preheated oven to keep the culture warm enough to ferment.

Ingredients ///

64 oz carton of organic soy milk, with no additives (best if ingredients list ONLY organic soy beans and filtered water)
1 packet yoghurt starter or ¼ cup non-dairy yoghurt (for culturing)
1 tsp sugar (optional)
2 tbsp coconut cream or ¼ cup lite coconut milk

Preheat the oven to about 110 deg F.

Heat soy milk on stove top until hot but not boiling, about 195 deg F.

Remove from heat, pour into a large bowl and leave to cool for about 20 minutes until just warm to the touch, 105-115 deg F.

Add your choice of culture, coconut milk, and sugar if using. Stir well and cover with lid.

Place in the oven, and turn off the temperature. Turn the oven light to maintain the warmth for longer.

Leave for 6-8 hours.

You should have some great set yoghurt! Remove from the oven and keep refrigerated.

Note: If left to culture for too long, the yoghurt will become tart. You may need to experiment with the amount of culture you use and with the amount of time it takes for the yoghurt to set.

You can do many different things with this yoghurt. Here are three ideas.

Raita is chopped cucumbers, tomatoes or onions mixed with yoghurt, and goes well as an accompaniment to rice and curries.

Lassi is a traditional Indian smoothie made by blending mango pulp and yoghurt. Just add 2:1 yoghurt to mango pulp and blend for a great lassi! You can add a little water or soy milk if too thick.

Chaat is a beloved snack and street food. It is a layered dish that is assembled on the spot.

In order, the layers are:

A savory crispy layer — potato chips work well;

A potato-chickpea layer or seasoned boiled potatoes with garbanzo beans. Look for chaat masala at the Indian store for seasoning;

A generous dash of soy yoghurt;

A dash of cilantro-chili sauce, which can be purchased or easily made at home with cilantro leaves, green chilis, lemon juice and salt.

Optional—a dash of date-tamarind sauce for sweet tanginess. This can be purchased, or made at home with blended dates, tamarind and cumin powder.

COOKING PALESTINIAN FOOD: ON INDIGENOUS HERBS, CRAFT, AND COMMUNITY

AN INTERVIEW OF CHEF FADI KATTAN BY KARIM KATTAN

This discussion between Karim Kattan and his brother, Chef Fadi Kattan, attempts to illustrate, sometimes with humor, several political dimensions with which one has to negotiate when owning a restaurant in Bethlehem and cooking Palestinian food.

KARIM KATTAN: I'm really happy to have the opportunity to interview you for this issue of *The Funambulist*, which focuses on food politics. Full disclosure: I am your brother, but we luckily tend to disagree on a lot of subjects so I hope this conversation won't be too complacent. Fadi you are, among many other things, a chef and the founder of Fawda, a restaurant in the old city of Bethlehem. First of all I would like to ask you to introduce yourself and your work. I would love to hear you speak about the way you came to food but also what cooking means to you as a chef but also as a Palestinian living in Bethlehem.

FADI KATTAN: Thank you, Karim. Well, full disclosure: yes, you are my brother, it is very bizarre to be doing this interview over Skype and in lockdown in Bethlehem when you are only a couple of kilometers away!

I come from an old Bethlehem family. We've been around for a very long time and I was brought up in the world of food without being in the world of food. On my mother's side, I had a fantastic grand-mother who not only cooked a ton of great food but also set up the Arab Women's Union. One of their projects was creating jobs for women in food production. As for my grand-father, he would take me by the hand when we were in Paris and had me try things like *tête de veau* or *jambon persillé* when I was a kid. On my father's side, my grandparents traveled the world and lived in India, where my father was born, Sudan, Japan. Though I sadly didn't get to meet my grand-mother, we would go every week-end to my grand-father's and we ate a mix of traditional Palestinian food and Italian recipes that had filtered across the family because, in his generation, quite a few of the family members were married to Italians. And then a bit of Indian influence: we still do an impressive shrimp curry as a family dish. All of those influences came together.

Coming from a business family, I was not set to study hotel management and become a chef. I studied in France and after that, I came back to Palestine in 2000. I started

working in the Intercontinental hotel in Bethlehem, before it closed at the start of the Second Intifada. So I did eventually join the family business. We sell industrial kitchens and laundries, so in a way I stayed in the sector, not as an actor but as a supplier.

I used this position to create the first Palestinian Culinary Competition. In the first edition I was shocked because, although we gave the chefs free reign, all the finalists — except for one — cooked things that had nothing to do with our local cuisine and terroir. So we had coquilles Saint-Jacques, we had sushi, we had some kind of frozen salmon dish, quite the chamber of horrors! And this one guy did *dala'a* which is stuffed lamb ribs. Fantastic! He stuffed it with courgette and vine leaves. But then he goes and puts so many Palestinian paper flags on the dish that it also felt wrong! And that idea stayed in my brain. What do we do? How do we use those amazing produces we have? They offer interesting, different types of cuisine, and not for the "Black-Skin-White-Masks," totally colonized cuisine that people want us to do. And without falling on the other end, by being picturesque Palestinians, like we'd want to participate in the International Colonial Exhibitions of the 20th century, during which people from the "colonies" were put in cages and their food habits were examined by Westerners.

We are in a very particular space now. Five years ago I started Fawda restaurant. It is just two minutes away from the Bethlehem market in the old city where we still have amazing farmers that come from the villages around us. It seemed only natural to create a local and locally-sourced cuisine. I have a young team of predominantly women both in operations and in the kitchen who each has a bit of the inheritance of their family stories and family kitchens. I put all of that together with my identity and came up with a modernized Palestinian interpretation of local dishes.

KK: So you're talking about the fact that your restaurant is near the market, and that your work stems from the very



local culture you're located in. You just said "Palestinian food," you also mentioned these two dangers we face: on the one hand, the possible appropriation of one's food, one's culture and on the other, the way we ourselves commodify our identities and self-orientalize. Going back to this locality: would you call your menu Palestinian food or food from Bethlehem?

FK: I would say it's Palestinian food because I do use recipes that are not necessarily from Bethlehem. I interpret them differently. Something like the national dish like *musakhan*, a dish made of onions, sumac, a lot of olive oil and crispy chicken. It is not really a dish from here, it's more from the north of the West Bank. But I play around with it because north of Hebron, not far from Bethlehem, you have the best sumac trees that I've come across. So it's really Palestinian. And it is also food from Bethlehem in a sense: I mostly use fresh products that come from a 20 km radius around Bethlehem. For the non-fresh products (salt, sumac) they come from further away.

To go back to the issue of self-orientalizing. Sadly we self-orientalize under labels such as Middle-Eastern, Levantine or Mediterranean cuisine, which don't mean anything, to me. If you're having a meal in Northern Algeria it has nothing to do with the meal that you could have in South Turkey. And if you are having a meal in occupied Jaffa, most probably the only thing in common with Marseille is that some of the fish are the same, but it stops there.

Look at the countries from the Middle-East exporting their cuisine abroad. When the Lebanese started opening restaurants, they called them Lebanese. But then the countries or nations that could have negative images in terms of marketing, like the Palestinians or the Syrians, they just called their cuisine Middle-Eastern. Hence, today's appropriation by a lot of Israeli chefs of Palestinian cuisine under the label "Middle-Eastern food."

KK: I remember I was in Jaffa a few years ago, a lot of the places that sold chawarma would either advertise themselves as Middle-Eastern or as Lebanese. And it was really mind blowing how these places would bend geographies and histories in order to cater to Israelis without advertising themselves as Palestinians.



Above. Chef Fadi Kattan cooking warak lisan at Fawda Restaurant in Bethlehem.
Below. Fadi buying herbs from Um Nabil at the Bethlehem market.

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"THEY OFFER INTERESTING, DIFFERENT TYPES OF CUISINE, AND NOT FOR THE 'BLACK-SKIN-WHITE-MASKS,' TOTALLY COLONIZED CUISINE THAT PEOPLE WANT US TO DO. AND WITHOUT FALLING ON THE OTHER END, BY BEING PICTURESQUE PALESTINIANS, LIKE WE'D WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COLONIAL EXHIBITIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY"



Left. Mujadara cooked by Chef Fadi Kattan. **Right.** Pea cream with laban jameed and labneh prepared by Fadi.



"CUISINE IS NOT A TOY. IT HAS ITS TRUTHS, AND ITS LIMITS. BUT WHERE WE ARE, IT IS OFTEN SEEN AS AN ELEMENT OF THE CONFLICT AND ONLY AS THAT."

FK: That's sadly the same all over the world. Now it is changing but in the past they would either have to call their cuisine Middle-Eastern or Syrian-Lebanese or co-market with an Israeli chef. Very often when a journalist wants to write about my food they'll tell me: "in Israel they do this and you do that." If you are talking about a restaurant in the southern Pyrenees in France, you would never dare to tell the chef: "oh I am going to compare you to this Spanish chef on the other side of the mountains." Cuisine is not a toy. It has its truths, and its limits. But where we are, it is often seen as an element of the conflict and only as that. We've seen in the last 20 years so many attempts of creating "coexistence cuisine" or cooking schools around the world. I remember being approached by a school in France with a coexistence program. "We have an Israeli Jew, an Israeli Christian and an Israeli Muslim, we have a Palestinian Christian and we are looking for a Muslim woman wearing hijab." It's like we're picking actors for a soap opera, it's a beautiful brand new world and everyone is lovey-dovey! This is not the reality. Of course, I refused to provide them with a name, and they got quite upset. People want stories that make them feel good without having to look at the reasons why things are the way they are.

That is why I keep saying there are two elements in Palestine that are amazing and we should be very careful when we work with them. One is the farmers because they are the ones that are living the shit of the occupation. I am living the shit of occupation much less. I'm nicely in my little kitchen. The other element is those fantastic women that have preserved our cuisine over the years. It's our mother, Karim! It's our grand-mothers, our great-grand-mothers... And now all of a sudden it's "oh you know what we are not going to recognize any of this and we're gonna try and

make a Palestinian cuisine that is acceptable to the world." When I try modernizing Palestinian cuisine, I am not trying to make it acceptable to people. When I think of a dish, I don't ask myself: "Is this gonna please the Europeans or the Americans or the Chinese?" I try to create a dish that is respectful of the flavors, and that has an identity that is very much mine. For instance, I love working with freekeh and I know you hate it. Still in my set menu, I try to force down your throat some freekeh. You know I could make an effort when I know you're coming over for dinner and not cook it but if I happen to have a vegetable that works well with it, well I still cook freekeh, whether you like it or not!

Don't forget, cooking is a magic act, a sacred moment. This is why I am in the kitchen. I was recently speaking to Paris-based Japanese writer, Ryoko Sekiguchi, and we came up with this concept of "cooking of light," "*la cuisine de lumière*" ("*hikari no ryôri*") and she linked it to another concept that she came up with Japanese chef Shûichirô Kobori, namely "cooking of prayer," "*la cuisine de prière*" ("*inori no ryôri*"). Cooking is a sacred moment of intimacy and of creation, which requires respect.

We have such particularities in our kitchen, that we should be putting forward and that we should be protecting from all those coexistence and peace initiatives, which are not really about peace and coexistence. Peace is about justice. When sometimes people ask me: "Would you work with an Israeli chef?" I say: "My conditions if an Israeli chef wants to work with me are that she or he has to accept a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders, accept Jerusalem as the capital of two states, accept the right of return of Palestinians refugees. If there is a resolution that is just to our rights as Palestinians of course I will work with an

Israeli chef." But as long as there is no justice and equality there's no way I could work with an Israeli chef.

KK: What you are also saying regarding this coexistence cuisine, is how the power imbalance is present anyway. We can see this in cuisine, in cultural fields, and beyond. All the projects that have been undertaken under the guise of coexistence, of making an Israeli and a Palestinian cooperate: beyond the immediate political problem, it's always been made abundantly clear that the Israeli is the one who retains the voice in the end. The Palestinian is usually forgotten and the Israeli is the one who gains fame, gains money, and so on, from this.

FK: Not necessarily. I do think we've seen cases the other way around where Palestinians have either co-organized or used events which had Israeli participation to promote themselves and their cookbooks and their initiatives and restaurants. It's not necessarily that the Israeli comes out as the only voice, but what happens very often is the Israeli comes out as the good voice: "I'm being kind to the Palestinian savage." There's one thing that keeps perplexing me when people try defending this Israeli position. Putting aside colonization and the state, and the politics of the state, if you were an individual who's given a cultivated land free of charge — whether it's olive trees, or oranges or whatever is grown locally here — you are given the keys to a nice building and told you could make a good restaurant here. It wouldn't require as much effort as anybody else doing a restaurant anywhere else in the world. So when your cost of investment is zero, it's not fair. And then that chef, that cook or writer who's an Israeli will be saying things such as: "I like the Palestinians." Of course you do, you are using their lands and the homes they used to live in to create funky trendy restaurants in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, or in the middle of a destroyed Palestinian village.

The best example is a place like Ein Karem, where the whole village has been turned into a series of restaurants held by Israeli chefs. And very sadly a lot of the tourists or expats living in Israel go there and they're like "the house is fantastic, they are doing great food." Yes of course they didn't have to build the house, they didn't have to buy the house. They just picked it up and gave it a nice renovation and used it as a base for the restaurant. Where do we stop this whole story and what are the voices we need today?

KK: That's a very important question. To circle back to something you said earlier: Palestine is trendy only when it is made palatable, when it is made in an inoffensive version of Palestine that is extremely sexy, as long as it doesn't pose any worrying questions. When you talk about the image of Palestine of the the Palestinian farmer as a way of elaborating a sort of story telling, what you are pointing to is the exploitative nature of what we call "collaboration" in culture. A word that tends to erase labor, the cost of labor and social class. You said it is different when you are a farmer and need water to grow your crops or when you are a city dweller whose relationship with water is different.

FK: I am a trendy chef who is lucky to be where I am and where I exercise my trade. I do realize totally, and people have to be grateful for this. I do realize the privilege I am in compared to the farmer who is not getting water because the settlers have turned off the tap.

KK: Yes, and beyond only realizing the privilege, I feel that you and certain other people are also thinking of ways of acknowledging this labor, of actually creating an equal relationship with the providers, with the workers, not just using "collaboration" as a buzzword, as part of a storytelling ploy. If you could talk about this a bit. Also I'd like for you to talk to us about your relationship to herbs — you have a herb provider — especially about the relationship between the occupation and indigenous herbs in Palestine.

FK: The two things you asked me to talk about are interlinked. Um Nabil is a great farmer and reseller of herbs. When you say we try and deal with our supplies and providers on an equal level, it comes from two things for me. One is there is a commercial reality whether we accept it or not. We are selling something, we price it and we buy it. My policy is to never negotiate prices. How can I allow myself ethically to tell a farmer who's been up since 4am while I was sleeping: "your labor is not worth what you are saying, it's less." So I don't negotiate prices. If something happens to be totally out of price, I will just not buy it because it doesn't fit in my selling cost of the menu that day.

The other thing is: I take people around the market to meet the farmers. One of the things that horrifies me is when I see tourism guides doing this same thing: they walk by the farmers and they stop at a distance with their group and

"OF COURSE YOU ["LIKE THE PALESTINIANS"], YOU ARE USING THEIR LANDS AND THE HOMES THEY USED TO LIVE IN TO CREATE FUNKY TRENDY RESTAURANTS IN JERUSALEM, HAIFA, JAFFA, OR IN THE MIDDLE OF A DESTROYED PALESTINIAN VILLAGE."

“WE HAVE A LOT OF NATIVE HERBS THAT USED TO BE FORAGED. ISRAEL HAS THIS POLICY OF PSEUDO-PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT BY PREVENTING SOME OF THE HERBS TO BE FORAGED EITHER IN THE WEST BANK [...] OR ACROSS THE COUNTRY.”

point at the farmer with their index. And, in a language the farmer does not understand, they talk about him, instead of listening to him and hearing the true story from him. We are not in a zoo.

In 1948, it was not only the Palestinian villages that were uprooted. It was also the Palestinian cities. Jaffa was not a village. Haifa was not a village. Cuisines traditionally came with an array of class because the affordability of produce was linked to how much money you had. It doesn't make it less Palestinian. There's nothing that makes *rishtaya* (a dish of lentils and pasta) more Palestinian than a roasted lamb with sumac. They are all Palestinian.

As for herbs, you have *khobeiza*, *za'atar*, *loof*, *huweirneh*, *silek*, *'ilek*, and I can go on naming them. We have a lot of native herbs that used to be foraged. Israel has this policy of pseudo-protecting the environment by preventing some of the herbs to be foraged either in the West Bank — when, interestingly enough, they are still allowed to be foraged in areas still under Israeli control for Israeli foragers — or across the country. *Akub* is one of them; it is a thorn called *gundelia* in Latin, *chardon* in France where it's often used.

It's a wonderful little thorn which for me is very symbolic and I love using it. It is a lot of work to take out all the thorns in it and it has a very delicate taste. But then just to show you how diverse our herbs are, recently one of my friends, Palestinian musician Wisam Joubran, called me up from Paris and said: “It's mokra season!” He was very excited. “What is mokra?” I asked. “You know this herb we use with labneh.” I had never heard of mokra because it is not native to the Bethlehem region, but to Nazareth, where he comes from. When I started to call people in Nazareth, asking what all the hype was about, somebody was kind enough to organize transport and a batch of mokra was taken from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I was stunned by this herb because it was very close to another herb we use, *huweirneh*, which is from the mustard family.

When I see freaking Israeli za'atar, for instance. I'm like “Come on guys, za'atar is Palestinian.” I keep saying this, and I hope people have no problem understanding it: I don't mind seeing an Israeli chef in London, in Paris, in New York, in Tel Aviv using Palestinian products. But please accept that you have to recognize their origins just like you do with everything else. When you use a truffle from Alba, you say it is from Alba, when you use pepper from Espelette, you say it is “piment d'Espelette”; when you use salt from Guérande you say it is from Guérande. Why — I mean we know why, there is an attempt to erase

Palestinianhood — but why when it comes to Palestinian product don't we say that it's Palestinian? Why do Israeli chefs that write in newspapers across the world offer recipes with freekeh, and the world applauds them, and they never once mention that freekeh is Palestinian?

KK: That's actually a good question. I love how za'atar has become a superfood just like kale. It is always hilarious how whenever it becomes Israeli, all of the sudden it's very trendy. One last question, could you give us a couple of names of Palestinian chefs and more generally chefs or people who wrote cookbooks, that recommend, that you you read and discover?

FK: You are nasty! You are nasty when you know me. My answer is going to surprise you. Start by listening to Sabah Al-Yasmine, *Ramblings of a Chef*, my podcast. I have chatted with chefs from all over the world, including quite a few great Palestinian ones. Before you read Palestinian books, follow Mohamed Hadid. He is an architect, real-estate magnate and social media personality and he's been cooking, quite a lot, in fact. I cooked with him and I just love his attachment to his mother's cuisine. I think that's transmission, in such a fabulous way. I just think having somebody like him, not only cook his mother's *maqlubeh* but teach it to his children is wonderful. And I love what he is doing on Instagram because it's not making Palestine acceptable, because he doesn't mince his words. He is very clear how he was a three year old kid when they were thrown out of their home in 1948.

Now about cookbooks. There is one cookbook that I really use and love. It is the first Palestinian cookbook ever, written by Christiane Dabdoub-Nasser. She is an important personality in the world of culture, and she wrote her book of what she cooks at home. What I like about it is that it is neither something miserabilist nor does it reduce Palestinian cuisine to a monolithic reality. It is a cookbook, full stop. And it does what it has to do. It showcases of course the communalities between Palestinian and Levantine cuisines — you know Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian — but then, she offers a lot of very Palestinian recipes. That's a cookbook I like a lot.

I'm a co-curator of a cookbook forthcoming in 2020, called *Craving Palestine*. We've asked around a hundred Palestinians to contribute a story and a recipe. I am not recommending this book because I co-curated it, but because it is a charitable, not-for-profit book — I should not say “charitable,” I hate this word! The funds will go to ANERA, I am not making money by promoting it, but it's because there are recipes like people like you Karim, there are recipes from people like Mohamed Hadid, there are recipes by chefs like Moeen Abuzaid from



The Broken English, or May Khader from *Almond and Fig*, but also by actresses and actors, by visual artists, by musicians, by Palestinians from Chile, from the United States, from the Caribbean, from all over the world. There are recipes by Haneen Magadlah from Baqa Al-Gharbiyeh who is a dear friend and by Omar Sartawi from Amman.

Farms in the outskirts of Jericho, Palestine. / Both photos by Jimmy Granger (2019).

I think the book reflects our diversity. It is very important for us to tackle the subject of the diaspora. I know we don't have a lot of time left to go into that, but it also allows us to understand where colonialism fits in all of this. Recently I was told by one of the Palestinian food figures: “You don't know how difficult it is where we are, we are fighting everyday.” I wanted to answer: “Look. Come and live behind the wall and you will see how difficult it is.” Then I realized it's two different types of difficulties. None of them makes us more Palestinian, none of them makes us less Palestinian. When we talk about food, there are two types of food. There's the food that is inscribed in its terroir and that is Palestinian food cooked in Palestine. And then there is the cuisine of the diaspora that is relevant to a lot of diasporas across the world.

Let's not fall into this easiness of wanting to stick a label on things. Cuisine is a rich, diverse world. It is an important element to preserve an identity, but also to modernize and actualize it; no identity is set in stone and cuisine allows us both to stay true to ourselves and to constantly change. ■

Chef Fadi Kattan founded Fawda Restaurant in Bethlehem in 2016. Since then, he has created a cuisine that honors Palestine's best produce with a modern twist, effectively becoming a voice of modern Palestinian cuisine. Influenced by his family, both firmly rooted in Bethlehem and with a rich, longstanding history of travel throughout countries including France, Sudan, Japan, and India, Fadi's cuisine and savoir-faire combine global influences with a desire for perfection and a passion for the local terroir.

Karim Kattan is a writer who lives between Bethlehem and Paris, where he is completing a PhD in comparative literature. He is one of the co-founders of el-Atlat, an international residency for artists and writers in Jericho. His first book, *Préliminaires pour un verger futur*, was published in 2017.

THE SHAPE OF A MANGO SEED: MEMORIES, FOOD, AND HISTORY

ZURI CAMILLE DE SOUZA

From the Konkani Coast of India to the working class neighborhood of Noailles in Marseille, Chef Zuri Camille de Souza generously shares with us some personal experiences and reflections on how food embodies “cultural symbols, markers of heritage, and intimate personal memory.”

Leaving the south of India to the U.S. for college, and then shifting to Marseille, I find myself seeing my culinary history, and perhaps myself, from the outside, discovering a fertile, granulous sediment of my past that has slowly settled with distance and time, a flavorful blend of thoughts, instances and feelings. I see my memories served to me in ways that I do not expect, through smells that I didn't realize meant so much to me — like the salty, fatty fragrance of a grilled sausage that reminds me of Sunday mornings at the family table, or the pungent aroma of fenugreek that I associate with metal lunchboxes and tamarind chutney. I found myself touched with joy by the scalding, oil-soaked vadda on the metal plate that I shared with a friend in Gare du Nord last winter, its spongy white crumb and crunchy, golden crust just fermented enough to remind of Eat Out in Malleshwaram, the udupi restaurant my family often went to for breakfast on the weekend.

I often think of my late paternal grandmother Dora Alicia de Souza, whose potato chops will never again grace my table and whose three tall clear plastic jars of besan chips, neureos and crunchy, spicy namkeen will not accompany the sweet milky tea that we drink after our afternoon naps in the hot sun as three sunburned cousins and our grandmother around a big wooden table, listening to the calls of hornbills and other jungle birds, bleary-eyed. I yearn for the soft white rice that my maternal grandmother Prabhavati Samarth serves for lunch, in a steel bowl that shrinks as my grandparents' appetites grow smaller each year.

It is through travelling that I truly feel the immense pleasure food can bring forth; the soft and gentle beauty of meals shared with others, discovering new flavors, ingredients and ways of hosting and being hosted. However, distance also carries with it nostalgia — the souvenirs of a summer holiday 10 years ago come back as I am eating a plate of chicken curry and rice in a small Indian restaurant, aptly named Mumbai to Marseille, on a fresh winter day. As I revel in the delightful coming together of spices that are roasted, ground and blended with grated coconut, their aromatic notes blooming in the mouth with every bite, the hints of cardamom and star anise warming the thick curry already heavy with green chilly, garlic and

ginger, I am taken me back the Konkani coast. I think of the heavy stone mortar and pestle on the kitchen steps of my grandmother's house in Goa, where she would grind fire-red masalas in the cool, early morning as my brother and I collected manila tamarind pods scattered around the courtyard. I remember a day at work when my colleague Vrushali shared her lunchbox with me and I realized that she came from the region as me because the way she cooked the tiny black *kabuli* chickpeas was just like my grandmother in Pune.

I

Two years later, I am driving down a snaking road through Sawantwadi with Jimmy. It is December, warm and fresh as only the Konkani — the lush hilly region of the western ghats between Maharashtra and Goa — can be. The emerald green elongated leaves of mango trees glisten in the late morning sun, their glossy surfaces exuding the pungent, astringent smell of raw sap, the very same sap that one can sometimes taste when eating wild mangoes the size of a child's fist. As we pass by orchards replete with fruit trees and skinny, white trunked areca nut palms, I realize that I have spent far too many summers away from India and that I have missed the joy of what many people fondly refer to as “mango season” — a time when mango ice creams and milkshakes are sold on street corner juice shops and vendors set up stalls with rows and rows of neatly arranged yellow pyramids by the highways, each advertising the cheapest and sweetest harvest of the season. As the years have passed and our effects on the earth's climate intensified in violent ways, mango season has changed, arriving later or earlier, affecting the prices and celebration associated with the special fruit. My mother tells me that we now get Alphonso mangoes from Malawi. *Aapus*, the one everyone loves, golden-yellow and as sweet as sugar with a tiny seed. Although inedible, the seed is important and decides which mango one might prefer. Those that come from the North, elongated and slightly viscous, I usually save for the very end, when nothing else is available as the season approaches its rainy end. My favourite mango, *Payri*, has a fibrous seed that always leaves little strands trapped between my teeth, but the



“I HAVE MISSED THE JOY OF WHAT MANY PEOPLE FONDLY REFER TO AS “MANGO SEASON” — A TIME WHEN MANGO ICE CREAMS AND MILKSHAKES ARE SOLD ON STREET CORNER JUICE SHOPS AND VENDORS SET UP STALLS WITH ROWS AND ROWS OF NEATLY ARRANGED YELLOW PYRAMIDS BY THE HIGHWAYS, EACH ADVERTISING THE CHEAPEST AND SWEETEST HARVEST OF THE SEASON.”

tangy fruitiness makes up for it and I prefer the acidity to the sugary flatness of a ripe *Aapus*. Does a mango tree from Malawi also bloom after the summer rains, the special mango showers that decide the size, success and price of each dozen fruit, neatly packed in wooden crates on beds of pink crepe paper and straw? The soft, salty breeze and rich mineral-heavy soils of the Konkani draw out the complex, luscious notes of each tree during the hot summer months, pushing the flavors out to develop a layered bouquet that hovers between exuberant and ripened to sappy and almost-fermented much like the tannic, heavy wines in the dry hot south of France. As I look up at the mango trees drawing patterns in the sky above us, I wonder: will an Alphonso mango from Malawi speak the same tastes to my tongue or will it communicate in an entirely new language?

II

We are sitting in a circle, warm in our jackets with empty plates in hand, ready to eat, around a white formica table lit by the sharp winter sun that illuminates rue d'Aubagne at 11:30 in the morning with a blinding glow for 20 minutes. I was cooking at the time in a restaurant in Noailles, a working class (*populaire*) market embedded deep into the heart of Marseille.

The restaurant is problematic and people often have mixed reactions when I tell them where I work — Noailles as a neighborhood, similarly to Marseille as a city, is becoming increasingly renowned for its diverse, lively, perhaps even slightly edgy atmosphere, but this is a perspective from the outside, from those that can choose to enjoy its chaos or

Top left. Icecream (Bombay, Maharashtra) / Photo by Jimmy Granger (2017). Top right Sola (Mapusa Market, Goa). Bottom left. Shankarpali (Kelshi, Maharashtra). Bottom right. Tambdi Bhaji and flowers (Mapusa Market, Goa). / Photos by Zuri Camille de Souza (2019).

Examples of Zuri's cooking in Marseille. / Both photos by Zuri Camille de Souza (2019).



distance themselves conveniently. The market is at the center of a working-class neighborhood, with West African, Comorian, and Maghrebian communities as well as small groups of Armenians, Turks, and South East Asians. Entering “Noailles Marseille” into my search-bar out of curiosity, I am suggested “Noailles Marseille dangerous” and “Noailles Marseilles crime.” It mirrors the comments people made when I said I was shifting here two years ago — “it can be very dangerous, be careful, is there any culture there?” This was before Les Goudes was featured in *Le Monde* magazine thanks to a new bar with beautiful interiors that just opened along its rocky coastline — although Massilia Sound System already professed their love for the tiny beach in 2010.

“THE GROWING SELECTION OF REFINED RESTAURANTS AND EXCLUSIVE BOUTIQUES MAKING THEIR WAY INTO THIS QUARTER COMES AT A TIME WHEN TWO UNDER-MAINTAINED BUILDINGS COLLAPSED ON THE 5 OF NOVEMBER, 2018, KILLING EIGHT PEOPLE”

The growing selection of refined restaurants and exclusive boutiques making their way into this quarter comes at a time when two under-maintained buildings collapsed on the 5 of November, 2018, killing eight people, a reminder of the hundreds of individuals living in financially precarious situations in what is considered one of Europe's poorest cities, as well as the neglectful attitude of the local municipality. The following loss of housing, livelihoods and lives lead to protests against the then-mayor Gaudin, who chose to invest more into tourism and capital-generation infrastructure than into the futures of those that make up the majority of this city.

I walk past the *dent creuse* — the strange, fenced-off, white-washed gap where the two buildings once stood every day on my way to work. There are green beer bottles thrown in sometimes and it reeks of urine on the weekend. The restaurant is down the street from the demolitions.

I shouldn't say it reminds me of Bombay but it does: the noise of Uber Eats scooters driving through its winding roads; the colorful patina of crushed vegetables and take-away wrappers coating the tarmac alongside the white and red checked papers from the butcher-shops, the remains of someone's purple braids thrown onto a pile of old shoes; the smells of spices, grilling meat, pizza, and the loud calls and smiles of Maghrebi-Marseillais young men in tracksuits and badly-straightened hair selling *marlborough marlborough marlborough*. All the cliches that unassumingly exoticize are the same that bring me back home.

Someone starts filling our plates, bestowing them with a spoonful of rice and the soft, subtly perfumed olan that I cooked; a malayali coconut and vegetable curry that my mother often made with appams. Tendrils of steam draw long, reaching spirals off the eggshell white curry, and the perfumed warmth of the pepper is inviting as I start to mix the soft rice — basmati — into it. Everyone is hungry. We always eat together before the service begins — dishwasher, three cooks and three waiters. Passers-by call out *bon appetit!* and walk by, someone asks us for cigarettes, and others just look at the food with an unconcealed desire in their eyes.

As we eat, the chef says “*c'est trop bon mais je sais pas comment travailler le riz, ça fait trop 'staff meal' pour moi*” (“it's super good but I don't know how to work rice; it's too 'staff meal' for me”). I continue eating my “staff meal,” uncomfortable. Coming from the South, where rice is served in towering heaps on large steel plates and eaten until the stomach swells with joy, I am not sure about how to respond to this casual degrading of rice and find myself once again torn between the expectations people have of my culinary heritage and the ideas and flavors that I am proud to share: the curry I have just made; the seasoning and cooking of the rice; even the way they are eaten together.

When I left Pune for Bar Harbor, Maine, a tiny island on the northeastern coast of the U.S., I could not find a rice that cooked the way I wanted it to. It was either too soft on top and raw on the bottom, or heavy and starchy. I couldn't find the *ambe-more*, the delicate tiny grains that smell like mango-blossoms or the tight, firm *jeera samba* rice whose taste reminds me of the starched tablecloths and air-conditioning of the hotels where we would eat it alongside creamy navratna kormas. I definitely could not find the red goan rice that I grew up eating, the color of bricks, boiled in burnt

terracotta pots and often served as a kanji. My Kurdish friend in Istanbul cooks his rice in a big boiling pot of water, leaving it open and bubbling like pasta; in French called *cuisson créole*. An Algerian neighbor uses a heavy casserole, spreading the rice grains thin with a little water, letting it cook in the steam; in French called *cuisson pilaf*. At home, we always used a pressure-cooker, except if my father was making a biryani or pulao, layering caramelized onions and spices with meat, vegetables and rice.

Our staff meal is almost over, and everyone is breaking little pieces of bread from a loaf on the table — a round, semolina-covered *matlou* that we buy from the bakery down the street — to wipe clean the small stains of curry left on the amber-yellow, scalloped-edge duralex plates. We don't call it *matlou* when we serve it to the clients, instead we offer them a *pain de campagne*. I am not sure if it is easier to pronounce or avoids further explaining or sounds more romantic but I sometimes feel like often the recipes are welcome but the people are not.



The more I cook and work with different cuisines — from Egyptian to French mediterranean to south Indian — I find a growing need to deepen our sensitivity to the ingredients we use; to realize not just which farm or ocean our produce comes from, but also the cultures and histories that are woven deeply and tightly into them; the complex knots of colonization and trade, ecology, class and caste. The color, vibrance and chaos associated with the Global South is acceptable — even welcomed — on the tongue in calculated doses, the ingredients extracted from their local environments and transposed into a setting where, once again, the majority of them are exoticized and valued not for their terroir or quality of taste, but for the simple fact that they came from away and that this then lends a monetary value to the menu being served. There is a fine line between paying homage, being inspired and blind appropriation.

Can we speak of vegetarian ayurvedic food in India without bringing up the complex and violent instrumentalization of beef in casteist, islamophobic hindu fascist movements? Is this why I explain carefully that I grew up eating *everything*; that my parents, coming from two different religious backgrounds, also bring with them two different cuisines — one fish curry cooked in a red tomato sauce, one in ground

“THE COLOR, VIBRANCE AND CHAOS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH IS ACCEPTABLE [...] ON THE TONGUE IN CALCULATED DOSES, THE INGREDIENTS EXTRACTED FROM THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSPOSED INTO A SETTING WHERE, ONCE AGAIN, THE MAJORITY OF THEM ARE EXOTICIZED AND VALUED NOT FOR THEIR TERROIR OR QUALITY OF TASTE, BUT FOR THE SIMPLE FACT THAT THEY CAME FROM AWAY AND THAT THIS THEN LENDS A MONETARY VALUE TO THE MENU BEING SERVED.”



Left. Wild Mangoes (Ratnagiri, Maharashtra).

Right. Poha (Juhu Koliwada, Bombay, Maharashtra). / Both photos by Zuri Camille de Souza (2019).



“THERE IS A STORY BEHIND EACH HERB AND GRAIN AND RECIPE THAT WE USE IN OUR KITCHENS; OUR SPICES ARE SOAKED IN HISTORIES OF OCCUPATION AND VEGETABLES HEAVY WITH NARRATIVES OF LABOR, TOIL AND ECOLOGICAL PRECARIETY.”

yellow coconut paste; one that eats oily, rich mackerels everyday, one that prefers the delicate, flakey pomfret; one that eats beef with great delight at tea time and the other that, in theory, should worship the sacred cow. Perhaps, as I mix za'atar into the labneh that we hung for 24 hours for the creamy dip that is on the next week's menu, we might find a moment to reflect on the myriad varieties that exist across the Levantine region. As we taste the aromatic herbs mix into the soft yoghurt, might we learn how the best blends are made by rolling the harvested wild oregano leaves in olive oil between dry palms with sumac in place of mleh leymoon and that maybe, if we are lucky enough to be using Palestinian za'atar, to realize that the person harvesting it might have taken several winding paths to forage in the early hours of the morning to avoid the Israeli soldiers patrolling the desert foothills, making further inaccessible a land already occupied.

There is a story behind each herb and grain and recipe that we use in our kitchens; our spices are soaked in histories of occupation and vegetables heavy with narratives of labor, toil and ecological precarity. As chefs and cooks, bakers and wine-makers, as individuals whose purpose is to nourish and provide pleasure in the form of flavors, textures and unexpected pairings, our responsibilities are also to inform, question and learn about what comes into our kitchens and on our cutting-boards.

Intentionally placing political context next to terroir, flavor next to social structure and recipe next to narrative might

allow us to better understand the symbolism and contexts of the material we work with. By bringing the landscape and its nuances out through taste and texture, giving them the relevance they deserve on our plates and through acknowledging the specificities of ingredients and their contexts as cultural symbols, markers of heritage, and intimate personal memory, we bring together ethnobotany and intersectionality in the kitchen and on the table. ■

Zuri is a cook and graphic designer. She eats to understand and she cooks to think. Working with landscapes, the ocean and migration, she writes, collects plants and gathers stories. With a sharp interest in politics and botany, her work focuses on the way human beings, individually and collectively, interact with their environment through acts of healing, ingesting and nourishing. She searches for the perceptual, sensual and emotional foundations that shape these interactions and looks for design processes that restore and challenge our relationship to the natural world. In 2017, along with Jimmy Granger, she co-founded A-1 publishers, a floating publishing house and worked on Lesvos on a collaborative landscaping project and independent publishing workshops with displaced communities on the island from 2018-2019. She is also a passionate sailor and currently based in Marseille, France, where she runs a caterer that aims to decolonize South Indian culinary identities through thought-out, plant-based meals rich in flavor and history.



ZURI'S RECIPE /// Aji's prawn curry

Marinate three good handfuls of prawns (the small ones, more like shrimps) in a tablespoon each of turmeric, coriander and cumin powder, a tablespoon of garlic and garlic (ground into a paste), a teaspoon of pepper.

Don't add salt!

Rub the marinade into the prawns with your fingers, making sure they're all well covered and seasoned.

Leave aside for 15 minutes.

Whilst this is marinating, in a casserole, roast (on a low fire) one onion minced fine with one dried red chilly (whole), 5 cloves, five cardamom and five curry leaves.

Add in five finely chopped tomatoes that have been blanched to have their skin removed.

Add in salt, sugar and tamarind paste according to your taste, I like it to be very sour-sweet and a good amount of salt.

Cook until thick, and if you want the curry even thicker, add in some more tomatoes that have been blended.

Once simmering, add in the prawns and cook just until they turn opaque and curl.

Garnish with fresh coriander.

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funambulist: fu-nam-bu-list (fyoo-nám-byə-list)
 noun. One who performs on a tightrope or a slack rope. (The Free Dictionary)

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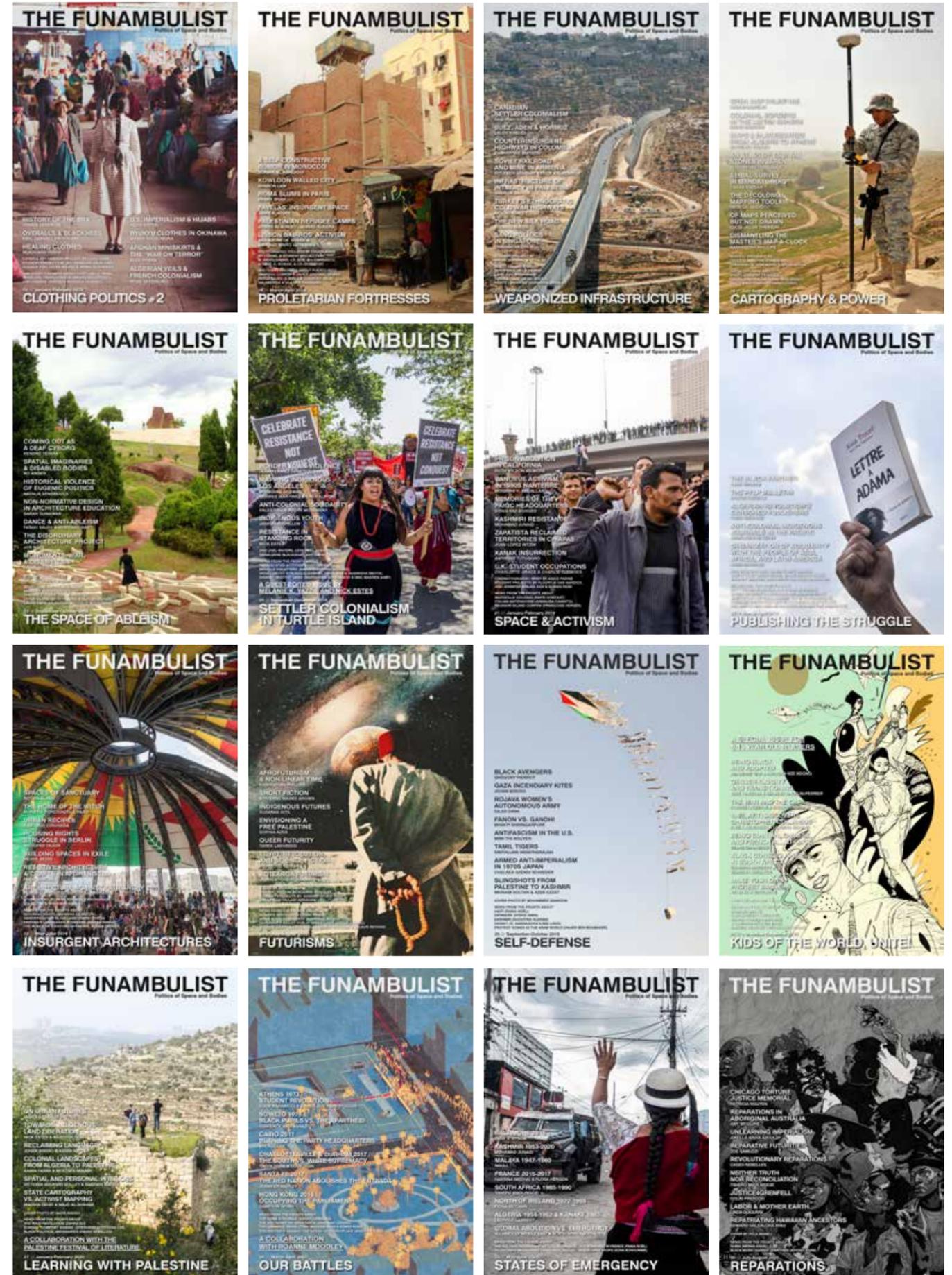
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