



On behalf of Virginia Foodshed Capital, I want to express my unequivocal opposition to the racist oppression and violence that is deeply rooted in our nation's history and continues to this day, at this very moment. Black Lives Matter, without an iota of doubt. Thanks to cell phone cameras, we are seeing with greater frequency the kinds of crimes that have been committed for hundreds of years in this country. What we witnessed recently in the brutal and senseless murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd is the manifestation of a disease of injustice against Black people and all people of color, as well as poor people and all others on the margins who do not conform to the insistence of white privilege.

Police brutality is just one symptom of this debilitating disease. As with any symptom, it will not cure itself, reminded as we were by another recent and mind-boggling incident this past weekend, right here in Virginia, in Fairfax County. While it was the white cop who struck a Black man in the head with a taser gun who must be held accountable, it is the larger cultural and economic systems in our country, lionized to their apex in the second wealthiest county in the country - Fairfax - that continually assault the dignity of human life in all its shapes and colors. George and Ahmaud, and every Black victim of police brutality and hate crimes before them, were murdered because of the systemic structures that endow white people with an unfettered authority and privilege based on the perpetuation of lies. Institutions must be held accountable as much as the individual perpetrators.

Systemic change is unequivocally needed in our country. Action must take place now! But action will not be effective unless and until every individual is willing to contemplate deeply: to look within themselves, and transform their mind and worldview. Howard Thurman said: "You can't stand in the midst of the world and struggle for fundamental change unless you are standing in your own space and looking for change within."

For all of us this means putting on a new mind and throwing out the old. This new mind must be one that sees things with the eyes of the heart. It must be one that sees things in wholes, in which everything is connected and moving toward a center that is everywhere and surrounded by a circumference that is nowhere. It is a mind that says I am not you, but I am not other than you. Only through the lens of oneness, through the eyes of the heart, can we completely

eradicate the iniquities of hatred, exclusion, exceptionalism, patriarchy, violence, colonialism, and domination, as well as the pernicious and overtly racist slide toward environmental devastation.

Virginia Foodshed Capital has only been around for a short few years. Pointing to any of the work we've done to this point as a vindication of our commitment to racial justice in the food system would be sheer hubris in the face of all the work that still needs to be accomplished. Please be assured that we have been taking steps in this direction since the beginning and will continue to solidify our commitment to supporting the financial needs of Black farmers in the state, and throughout the region. Perhaps nowhere is discrimination against people of color more salient, and the privilege of whiteness more leveraged, than in the financial system. We are committed to changing that. The very first point listed on the Vision & Values section of our website is Equity and Fairness: We believe everyone who wants to farm should have equal opportunity to capital, including people of color, women, immigrants, LGBTQIA, and beginning farmers. Of course, these are just words on a website, words on page; we have so much more to learn and understand in order to bring those words to life.

In an outstanding article published a few weeks ago entitled, "[We don't farm because it's trendy; we farm as resistance, for healing and sovereignty,](#)" author Ashley Gripper articulates the importance of farming to Black culture. However, due to the many obstacles thrown in their path, including adjudicated discrimination by the US Department of Agriculture over the course of decades, the population of Black farmers has dropped precipitously over the last century from more than 5 million in 1920 to about 45,000 today.

That is a trend that must be reversed. Our fledgling nonprofit wants to play a role in that reversal. As a recently certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) dedicated to providing financing to underserved populations, we support Black land ownership and [Reparations](#). And we stand together with so many other outstanding organizations fighting for justice and equity in the food system. Please takes some time to get familiar with these organizations and donate to them if you can. The [Heal Food Alliance website provides a comprehensive list.](#)

To this list, I would add [Cultivate Charlottesville](#), [Black Church Food Security Network](#), [The Happily Natural Day](#), [Agrarian Trust](#), and [Chesapeake Foodshed Network](#), all doing excellent work in our region.

Please also do what you can to support Black owned farms in our region. [The Maryland Farmers Markets Facebook page](#) recently posted a list (June 5th), which includes [Vanguard Ranch](#), to whom we gave our first loan ever in January 2019. To this list we would add two more Black owned farms and a Black owned agribusiness that we have recently supported with 0% loans: [Goldman Farm](#), [Muhammad Family Farm](#) and [GoGreenFarms](#).

Thank you for your time and attention, and may all be well.

In solidarity,

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