

Le Frigo Vert: Electronic Newsletter, March 2007

This once-monthly digest consists of a compendium of Frigo collective news, social justice events, calls to action, healthy recipes, and articles related to Le Frigo Vert's social justice and anti-oppression mandate.

The purpose is to better inform and interact with Frigo Vert members. It is an attempt to better explain changes we make to the organization and to directly link Frigo members with local grassroots struggles.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please email: shelly@lefrigovert.ca

Messages in this Digest:

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates/Events: Fee Levy Referendum Motion Dropped
2. Food Politics: "Decolonization of the Diet: A bell hooks Based Approach to Nutritional Liberation For At Risk Youths"
3. Featured Anti-Oppression Issue: Immigrant rights & international women's rights: Two struggles intertwined
4. Recipes: Spinach-Filled Won Tons; Tofu Hoisin with Broccoli, Red Pepper, and Walnuts; Cold Shredded Cucumber with Green Bean Sprout; Fruit Filled Vegan Spring Rolls
5. Social Justice Calendar: Please Note: there are many many wonderful events starting today!

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates/Events

Update on Motion by Concordia Student Union

Autonomous student groups, including Le Frigo Vert, sprang into action over the past few weeks to fight a proposed motion by the Concordia Student Union that would force these groups to put their fee levy funding up to referendum every three years. At the CSU meeting, which was packed with representatives from these various organizations, the CSU agreed to put off making the motion and any discussions regarding fee levy accountability until next year. Councilor Melanie Roach also brought forward a motion on behalf of the groups to guarantee a written notice is given 10 days in advance before the CSU makes any decisions affecting them. The Council voted unanimously in favor of this motion, meaning for now the issue will have a brief rest.

2. Food Politics

Decolonization of the Diet: A bell hooks Based Approach to Nutritional Liberation for At Risk Youths

By: Amie Breeze Harper [Chapter in Forthcoming Anthology: bell hooks Critical Reader (SUNY Press)]
Introduction: Applying Food and Health to hook's decolonization praxis

“I personally would say that the quickest way to wipe out a group of people is to put them on a soul food diet. One of the tragedies is that the very folks in the black community who are most sophisticated in terms of the political realities in this country are nonetheless advocates of ‘soul food.’ They will lay down a heavy rap on genocide in America with regard to black folks, then walk into a soul food restaurant and help the genocide along” (Witt 2004, 133-134).

-Dick Gregory

Dick Gregory, a civil rights activist, comedian, and nutritional liberationist has spent much of his adult life, advocating that people in America- particularly African Americans- cannot obtain true social justice until we begin to question our traditionally unhealthy dietary practices and food beliefs (Witt 2004). Gregory believes that the high saturated fatty, sucrose laden, junk and Soul Food dietary practice of Black America is at the root of many of our social justice problems (Witt 2004). Gregory’s concerns, voiced decades ago, ring especially true for today’s indigenous, black, and Latino population in the United States of America (Robbins 2006). However, for the purpose of this essay, I will only focus on the implication of food and nutrition for the potential liberation and decolonization of at risk and adjudicated black and Latino males. I am aware that there are many more factors than lack of access to healthy foods, healthcare and nutritional education that have impacted the lives of at risk black and Latino youths in America. However, because America’s concept of wealth and success is monetary and material based, and not rooted in the wealth of a healthy mind, body and soul (hooks 1993; hooks 1991), this essay will focus on how food education and health is an integral component in successfully implementing bell hooks’ concept of decolonization in our lives. Lastly, this essay will be written in the style of bell hooks, in which I, a black female from a working class upbringing, will employ the use of “I”, “we”, and “our” to signify my sense of community and collective consciousness with low-income people of color in America.

In black looks: race and representation, hooks’ context of fighting legacies of colonialism and current white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks 1992) is rooted in Nehrez’s definition of decolonization:

“Decolonization...continues to be an act of confrontation with a hegemonic system of thought...decolonization becomes the contestation of all dominant forms and structures, whether they be linguistic, discursive or ideological. Moreover, decolonization comes to be understood as an act of exorcism for both the colonized and the colonizer. For both parties it must be a process of liberation: from dependency in the case of the colonized, and from imperialist, racist perceptions, representations, and institutions which, unfortunately, remain with us to this very day, in the case of the colonizer.” (Nehrez in hooks 1992, 1)

Hooks’ decolonization praxis is a beautiful symphony of theories and philosophies that are grounded in opposition to systemic supremacist ideologies; ideologies which manifested from colonialism (i.e. slavery) that literally affect the lives of everyone in America and globally (hooks 1992; hooks 1989). Euro-Anglo centric influenced institutionalized racism, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, sexism, systemic whiteness, heterosexism, Christianity as normative, and classism are all part of the systemic supremacist ideologies that hooks’ work has fought to deconstruct and abolish. Inspired by hooks’ groundbreaking and thought-provoking yet easily accessible writings, this essay will focus on how proper food and nutrition and emphasis on health as wealth is an integral part of the decolonization praxis that hooks has set forth in her activist literature, particularly if we are to address preventing our youths of color from entering the Prison Industrial Complex.

Statistically, black folk are far sicker than white Americans. Unfortunately, institutionalized racism and the “slave health deficit”, which are manifestations from inequities caused by Black slavery in America, are key reasons why so many black people struggle daily to get access to proper health information, food and resources to maintain optimal wellness (Randall 2006). Health disparities, between black and white Americans, are the worst legacies of slavery and colonialism. The consequences affect ones entire life course because:

[w]hile full participation in a society requires money, education, contacts, and know-how, it also requires good health. In fact, health is not only significant in itself, but one's health also affects the availability of choices and the decisions regarding those choices throughout one's life... Thus, health is an important ingredient in a person's 'social position and present and future well-being' especially for Blacks...When people are subject to racism and discrimination on a daily basis, their health is necessarily compromised regardless of income. (Randall 2006, 26).

Randall's extensive medical and legal studies research, in her book *Dying While Black*, undeniably shows why food and health must be part of our own fight against the continued colonization of our bodies. Many blacks- particularly males- are focused on liberation through financial stability, often emulating a white patriarchal capitalistic mindset (hooks 1992). This, at first, appears as a logical goal to achieve since poverty among the black population is proportionately higher than Whites. However, decolonization- as a process- fails if we are to only focus on liberating blacks through monetary acquisition by emulating the American Dream, which hooks notes is founded upon colonial or white supremacist patriarchal capitalist ideology (hooks 1992; hooks 1993).

Furthermore, "Bronner et al. reviewed 29 nutrition studies composed exclusively of African-American samples and found that poor dietary patterns persisted across income groups, which suggests that diets were comparable for African Americans across the socioeconomic spectrum" (Bediako et al 2004). Emphasis on money as the sole method in achieving freedom is a flawed Euro-Anglo centric and colonial perspective; a perspective based on Christian Fundamentalism, imperialism, capitalism, individualism and material acquisition, which are at the very false but accepted foundations of being human in America (Leonardo 2004). However, acquisition of monetary wealth and material items is a key focus of the majority of American rap and hip hop artists and professional athletes that young black men listen to and watch today as role models of masculinity. Patricia Hill Collins notes,

"Mass media marketing of thug life to African American youth diverts attention away from social policies that deny Black youth education and jobs...Raps about drugs, crime, prison, prostitution, child abandonment, and early death seem fabricated, but these social problems are also a way of life for far too many Black youth" (Hill Collins 2004, 159).

This potentially deepens the problem of black wellness within health inequities. For example, if a young person believes that wealth means money through 'thug life,' and money means freedom, does this mean health and nutrition will drop to the bottom of their list of priorities? Other than Dead Prez's song, "Be Healthy" from their album *Let's Get Free*, health as a concept of wealth rarely if ever appears as a theme in the rap and hip hop music within popular American culture. In their song, Dead Prez sing: "They say you are what you eat, so I strive to eat healthy. My goal in life is not to be rich or wealthy, 'cause true wealth comes from good health and wise ways. We gotta start taking better care of ourselves" (Dead Prez 2000). In October of 2005, Bogle et. al research team in America published an intriguing paper that critically examined what factors influenced fruit and vegetable consumption by low-income Black American adolescents. Though their study focused on forty-two black boys from the ages of ten to thirteen years old in sports camps in the lower Mississippi Delta region, Bogle et al. concluded that Black youths would be more likely to embrace fruits and vegetables in their diets if they had significant role models who practice this dietary lifestyle (Bogle et al., 2003).

As health inequities continue to drastically and negatively affect the emotional, physical and mental health of communities of color- particularly "at risk" youths of color- decolonization of the diet can no longer be ignored as an integral piece in understanding how to achieve bodily freedom from legacies of colonialism.

Freedom is dependent on health. Therefore, keeping Blacks from adequate healthcare and truthful nutritional advice is for an obvious purpose- a sick and diseased population is easily controlled. More importantly, a sick and diseased people will always have difficulty realizing true freedom, justice and equality because securing

good health is the first frontier that must be conquered. What unhealthy people can learn, vote, work, or care for their families? (Muhammad, VIII)

Like critical race and legal studies theorist Vernellia Rand, Kevin Muhammad questions the efficacy of monetary reparations to blacks for Trans Atlantic African slavery. Similarly to Rand, Muhammad feels that the repercussions of the slave diet need to be the focus of American government efforts. Slavery and the slave diet have contributed much misery to the state of black people in America. Authors such as William Dufty and Sidney Mintz (*Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*) both theorize that the African slave trade started because of Europe's addiction to refined sugar (Dufty: 1976; Mintz 1985.) It is incredibly mind boggling that an unhealthy food addiction to sucrose (as well as other addictive substances such as caffeine) was the driving force behind colonialism, slavery, and imperialism. However, I argue that slavery manifested itself in multifaceted ways: the first and obvious is the enslavement of Africans and other indigenous populations. However, "addiction" is another form of slavery. As Derrick Jensen notes, "To be addicted is to be a slave. To be a slave is to be addicted" (Jensen 153). So, what happens if a significant number of the black, Latino and Native American population emulate the perceptions of success and prosperity of the colonizer while eating with a colonized palate? Dr. Devon A Mihesuah, a nutrition activist and proponent for decolonizing the Native American diet notes, "one symptom of accepting colonization is adhering to the typical American diet, even while it is killing us. Conversely, one way to decolonize is to change our eating habits" (Mihesuah 2003, 827-828).

Those who were originally enslaved to harvest sugar cane (Africans and indigenous Americans) are now enslaved and colonized in a different way: as consumers of sucrose and sucrose products. This enslaved palate, along with addictions to other nutritionally dead foods such as bleached white flour, foods fried in partially hydrogenated oils, and trans fats, has helped to foster an astronomical rise in health disparities (obesity, heart disease, diabetes) among African American, Latino and indigenous communities that far outshine the health statistics of White America (Robbins: 2006). Looking back in history, the root of colonial power was maintained and strengthened through forced labor performed by the enslaved. Though this form of chattel slavery in the First World is now illegal, forced labor does continue through a neo-colonialist slave institution called the Prison Industrial Complex, which I will argue later in this essay, is linked to our colonized and enslaved palates. In particular, whether it is chattel slavery from eighteenth century America, or the current Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), hooks's decolonization praxis is linked to abolishment of such a slave economy. Therefore it is imperative that foundations of decolonization be an act of resistance towards a dominant white supremacist capitalist patriarchal based culture (hooks 1992) in which addiction to material goods and unhealthy foods makes forced labor (PIC) and disenfranchisement of racially and socio-economic minorities normal.

In *black looks: race and representation*, bell hooks asks, "What might black men do for themselves and for black people if they were not socialized by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy? Collectively we can break the life-threatening choke-hold patriarchal masculinity imposed on black men and create life sustaining visions of a reconstructed black masculinity that can provide black men ways to save their lives and the lives of their brothers and sisters in struggle." (hooks 1992, 112-113). My mind fantasizes around what could adolescents of color's food and health practices look like if a majority of popular rap and hip hop music, movies targeted towards black and Latino male youth, and other forms of popular entertainment espoused themes similar to that in "Be Healthy"? What if the model of black masculinity, in black youth oriented entertainment, revolved around holistic health, mindful eating, and compassionate consumption as wealth as opposed to wealth as "bling bling", addictions to expensive alcohol, scantily clad dressed females and possessing ten "pimped out rides"? What if they were not enslaved to all of this? In 2001, Dr. Antonia Demas gave radio show, *Animal Voices*, a wonderful peek into the world of possibilities- from a nutritional and food liberation point of view that counteracts the colonized palate.

On June 20, 2006, *Animal Voices*, a Toronto based radio show, conducted an interview with Dr. Antonia Demas.

The show was called “Helping Troubled Teens with Veganism: The Link Between Food and Behaviour.” Dr. Demas, head of the Food Studies Institute in New York worked with nineteen teenage boys (Black and Latino) at the Bay Point Residential School for boys in Miami, Florida. Bay Point is a school in which adjudicated boys are sent by the court system for rehabilitation. Dr. Demas’ interview was intriguing and thought-provoking. She integrated an action plan of liberating “at risk” youths by focusing on nutrition, gardening, culinary and health education. Demas explained to Animal Voices radio show co-host, Lauren Corman, that she asked nineteen boys to voluntarily practice a whole foods plant-based vegan diet for three weeks. A vegan diet is an eating practice in which no animals products are consumed. During these three weeks, the young men experienced positive life changing results. “All of these students reported improvements in: grade point averages, athletic performance, aggressive behavior, acne, strength, and overall well being. Most of the students also reported weight loss” (Bay Point Study on Animal Voices 2006).

In *Breaking Bread*, hooks notes that “the portrait of black masculinity that emerges in [scholarly] work perpetually constructs black men as ‘failures’ who are psychologically ‘fucked up,’ dangerous, violent, sex maniacs.” (hooks 1992, 89). During Dr. Demas’ interview, she revealed to the interviewer that her colleagues, upon learning that she would be working with adjudicated Latino and black male youths, asked her if she (an older white woman) would be fearful of working with these boys; boys, they thought, that could potentially attack her with the culinary knives they would be using while she taught them how to prepare healthful meals. Dr. Demas’ field work shows outstanding results that completely contradict this stereotype of Black [and Latino boys] in America as “naturally aggressive and deviant” and helps to abolish the mindset of her colleagues that believed in the deviant nature of low-income male youths of color who would cut their white female colleague. Most importantly, Demas’ dietary resolution for the boys’ “behavioral problems” ties into bell hooks’ theories of decolonization, offering the boys a way to live a life that lowers their risk of entering the Prison Industrial Complex: a legacy of old colonial perceptions of taming savages for the sole purpose of free labor for an addicted society (de Valle 2006 ; Mintz 1989; Dufty 1976).

During Demas’ interview, Lauren Corman noted that Demas was experiencing difficulty finding funding for the work she was doing. The question Lauren asked is the driving force behind this essay:

“About getting funding: Do you think it’s potentially almost the success of the [Bay Point nutrition education] program- in the way that the systems want to keep the meat and dairy industry and want to keep the people filtering through the prison industrial complex? You know like in a systemic oppression kind of way? In a way, they almost want to keep people down so they can keep the big machine running? Do you think that’s factor in you not getting the funding that you need?” (Animal Voices 2006)

Demas’ approach of addressing junk food as an addiction that makes people act “junky”, parallels bell hooks’ concern about junk food in the Black community and its connections to addiction and addictive/destructive behavior:

We deal with White supremacist assault by buying something to compensate for feelings of wounded pride and self-esteem... We also don’t talk enough about food addiction alone or as a prelude to drug and alcohol addiction. Yet, many of us are growing up daily in homes where food is another way in which we comfort ourselves. Think about the proliferation of junk food in Black communities. You can go to any Black community and see Black folks of all ages gobbling up junk food morning, noon, and night. I would like to suggest that the feeling those kids are getting when they’re stuffing Big Macs, Pepsi, and barbecue potato chips down their throats is similar to the ecstatic, blissful moment of the narcotics addict. (hooks 1993)

Using the Antonia Demas Animal Voices interview, Carol Simontacchi’s research on brain nutrition, brief analysis of the PIC, and the sociopolitical context of food, power and health, I will explore the questions: a) what are the implications of nutritional education as a decolonizing action for “at risk” youths of color?; b) why

is dietary awareness and access to whole foods, a crucial “next step” to bell hooks’ already groundbreaking work within theories of decolonization and liberation politics?; and c) how is the Prison Industrial Complex benefiting from junk foods in the diets of low-income communities of color?

Because our collective failing health and lack of access to and knowledge about whole foods diets is a byproduct of colonialism and slavery (Rand 2006), and because health is our greatest wealth, the decolonization of the diet and our current [mis]understanding of “healthy well-being” must be of the utmost priority among ourselves, people dedicated to social justice for people of color and low-income peoples, and anyone looking to understand how deeply connected our food and health systems are to our social justice system and creating effective decolonization strategies.

Decolonization, Health and Nutrition

A just society is one in which, at a minimum, a person can take advantage of the “normal” range of lifetime opportunities. Individuals must be healthy to avail themselves of the normal range of opportunities. A just society would assure access to a basic level of services and provide those services in a culturally sensitive and nondiscriminatory manner. A just health care system for Blacks must ensure complete access to quality health care and eliminate institutional racism. A just health care system focuses on eliminating the inequities in health care between Blacks and Whites (Randall 2006, 21).

-Vernellia Randall

Having access to the best nutritional resources in the United States of America has been a challenge for African Americans since slavery. The current health inequities experienced by American Blacks, coined as the “Slave Health Deficit” (Randall 2006), encompass all aspects of health, including resources around food access, knowledge, and nutrition. Furthermore, health is not just physical. Health is a harmony of the spirit, body and mind. If we are unable to eat properly in order to feed our bodies, minds and spirits what they need, then our entire health suffers. Nutrition is health. Improper nutrition not only causes physical diseases, it can also cause mental disorders such as panic attacks, nervous irritability, and depression (Simontacchi 2000). If we are to embrace decolonization as a way to strip away the legacies of colonialism on our bodies, then we must scrutinize our palates as well; an aspect of our lives that was not left untouched by colonialism.

Most Americans, regardless of racial and ethnic identity, engage in dietary practices that have been shaped by colonialism, imperialism, and industrialism. For example, the American diet consists of extremely high amounts of sugar consumption (Dufty 1976 ; Mintz 1985 ; Simontacchi 2000). Sucrose (refined sugar), has its roots in colonialism, imperialism and African slavery. Excessive sugar intake, a habit that a majority of Americans have, has proven to cause autoimmune diseases, rapid rise of adrenaline, hyperactivity, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, crankiness in children, hemorrhoids, damage to the pancreas and depression. Most importantly, sugar is addictive. When the sweetness of sugar cane was discovered by the Europeans, hundreds of years ago, their addiction to this sweet drug led to the enslavement of Africans and other indigenous cultures who were forced to harvest sugar cane (Mintz 1985); a food that was ultimately harvested to create the nutritionally dead substance called sucrose (Dufty 1976). Hundreds of years later, those who were enslaved to harvest sugar cane are now enslaved as addicts like their colonizers. We see the results of these addictions today, among the general population of America such as significant rise in sugar diabetes, ADHD, depression, and obesity. Most specifically, these symptoms of excessive sugar consumption and other junk food addictions are especially high among the descendants of the colonized and enslaved: African Americans, Latino and Native Americans (Robbins 2006). However, for the sake of this essay, I will continue to focus specifically on the implications of nutrition for [primarily] African American and Latino at-risk male youths and their process of decolonization.

Our colonization began with European addictions to a particular type of food which ultimately was grown to

yield an unhealthy destructive substance to be consumed by sucrose addicted human beings. It only makes sense that the root of our decolonization start where it all began: the taking away of indigenous land and enslavement of our bodies to satiate the material and food substance addictions of European imperialists. Since that time, the individual, societal and global health of the world has been greatly compromised for these addictions (Joseph 1992; Jensen 2006). Health is defined as

“a ‘lifestyle in which an individual attempts to maintain balance and to remain free from physical incapacity while maximizing social capacity.’ That definition recognizes that an individual’s lifestyle affects health and social class influences that lifestyle. It recognizes that Blacks, as a group, [if]surrounded by racism, can never hope to have complete mental well-being.” (Randall 2006, 25).

If health is connected to dietary lifestyle, lifestyle is linked to social class, and social class and American society is inextricably linked to roots in colonialism, slavery and imperialism, then the question of health and food should be at the center of decolonization. How was our health status before we were enslaved and/or colonized? Did we suffer from nutritionally induced physical and mental diseases? Did we have an ‘American Dream’ type philosophy for success? Did our food choices enable us to live life as healthy as possible? Though there are many factors that determine how a youth may become “at risk” at not having the healthiest life possible to reach his or her potential, how has the Slave Health Deficit and colonial palate helped to contribute to the state of “at risk” adjudicated Black and Latino youths?

“Low-income and minority children watch more television than white, non-poor children and are potentially exposed to more commercials advertising high-calorie, low nutrient food during an average hour of TV programming...neighborhoods where low-income and minority children live typically have more fast-food restaurants and fewer vendors of healthful foods than do wealthier or predominantly white neighborhoods (Grier et al 2006, 187).”

In addition, it has already been proven that the increase in childhood diabetes, ADHD and other behavioral and mood ailments among America children is linked to many environmental factors, including the increase of junk and processed foods in their diets (Simontacchi 2000). If balanced nutrition is a central component in maintaining harmonious physical and mental health (behavior and mood) what happens to “at risk” youths of color who have had a lifetime of unequal access to proper food and nutrition? Who are targeted by junk food companies more than white children? Granted, Simonatacchi’s work focuses on case studies at economically privileged high schools in which the students are predominantly white, but not all adolescents who have unhealthy dietary habits in America will share the same consequences. Specifically, for low-income black youths, “cultural factors, such as the influence of the historical effects of slavery on establishing dietary patterns, or socioeconomic factors, such as the food resource constraints associated with food insecurity and their sequitirs, may impact on fruit and vegetable choices in [the low-income black adolescent group] that are not likely to occur in other groups” (Bogle et. al 2003, 247). It is within this context that we must understand why America’s addiction to unhealthy food (as well as non-food addictions) choices means different things to different socio-economic and ethnic groups; particularly those who are descendants of the colonized and struggle through the legacies of slavery and are disproportionately incarcerated in the Prison Industrial Complex at rates higher than Whites (Hattery et al. 2006).

The Bay Point study, Food, Behavior, and Resisting the Prison Industrial Complex.

At what stage of racial integration and our participation in the prevailing economy did we, in fact, begin to look upon goods as the solace for psychic pain? Partially, any analysis of the place of addiction in Black life has to begin not with substances like alcohol and drugs but really with consumer goods.

For so long, Black folks have felt that our longing for goods is a justifiable longing because the desire for

material well-being is the crux of the American dream... However, the danger of this logic resides in the overvaluation of goods which leads to forms of consumption similar to addiction (hooks 1991).

-Bell hooks

When Antonia Demas first arrived at the Bay Point Residential School for boys, she learned that the school controlled the students' food and that they had no access to food outside of the facility. Demas was asked by the school to bring to their curriculum a culinary program with a nutrition focus. She was also asked to help restructure the school's menu. Working with the cook and the students, Demas formed a culinary club. She found that the students were extremely interested, cooperative and curious about nutrition education and cooking. However, though the students themselves were in need of nutritional intervention, so were Bay Point staff. During her interview, Demas describes the staff's health status:

"Most of the staff had diet related diseases... They had serious heart disease and diabetes was very apparent. Obesity. They weren't feeling that well themselves, so they were quite curious to learn about how food affects their physical health and how specific nutrients affect different parts of their body... the students were very receptive and had never considered that food might have something to do with their anger." (Animal Voices 2006).

Demas' observations are not surprising, as the staff and the students' dietary practices are a microcosm of America and an extension of the colonial palate; a colonial ideal of civilization, which stems from sustenance from the artificial(soda, sucrose, bleached flour) and detachment from the natural(water, fresh fruits, whole grains) (Jensen 2006). Movies such as Super Size Me and Fast Food Nation have shown how Americans are addicts and over-consumers of nutritionally dead and empty high calorie junk foods laden with sucrose, partially hydrogenated oils and bleached flour. Such an addiction to toxic foods creates illness within the human body, physical as well as mental (Simontacchi 2000). As of the year 2000, Carol Simontacchi wrote that there has been little research done on how these foods are impacting mental and emotional health of the brain. Simontacchi notes, "I read about brain nutrition and made drastic changes in my diet because I was convinced that it was impossible to be contented and emotionally stable while poisoning my brain with the Standard America Diet (SAD)" (Simontacchi 2000, 3).

Dr. Demas notes that she received such a positive response from the work she initially did at Bay Point, she decided to conduct a pilot study in which volunteer students from the culinary club would go on a plant based whole foods vegan diet for three weeks. Understanding how brain nutrition affects behavior, she was curious to see if their mental and physical status would change on this particular diet. With support from the administration and nineteen willing Bay Point students, she engaged in her study in 2001. For three weeks, the nineteen boys drank eight glasses of water per day, prepared and ate only whole foods vegan meals, and kept a journal to record how they were feeling.

Demas was the first person to ever launch a pilot study of this nature, involving whole foods plant based diets to address adjudicated youths emotional, mental and physical ailments. At the start of her pilot study, she observed that the food at the institution was typical S.A.D., consisting of:

"fried foods, heavy on the meat, white bread, very few fresh fruits and vegetables. A lot of dairy, a lot of sugary drinks. It was the typical institutional food. What happens in a setting like that is food is a major distraction. People who are basically incarcerated- which these kids were- even though it is a school and not a prison— food is a major distraction. What happens is food becomes something to look forward to and people tend to overeat. They were consuming a lot of these heavy calories and doing it out of boredom. Without a nutrition background, it may be hard to understand why that food may not make you feel good" (Animal Voices 2006).

This institutional dietary subsistence is based on the artificial (a.k.a. colonialism) and not the life giving substance of nature (the non-colonized). Though I do not want to blame fast food and institutional food as the sole reason for how the boys at Bay Point ended up as “adjudicated youths”, the effects of brain nutrition on emotional well-being cannot be overlooked. These foods are “altering the ability of our brains to think. They are altering both the structure and function of our physical brains, leaving us less able to cope with stress and more susceptible to forms of mental illness...When the brain malfunctions, sending bizarre messages to our mouths or limbs, we never wonder if the toxic thought is the product of a toxic lunch” (Simontacchi 2006, 15 and 35). Though Simontacchi is a brain nutritionist, Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist Monk whose philosophies are employed by bell hooks has similar thoughts on the connections that food has to how we feel:

Our anger, our frustration, our despair, have much to do with our body and the food we eat. We must work out a strategy of eating, of consuming to protect ourselves from anger and violence. Eating is an aspect of civilization. The way we grow our food, the kind of food we eat, and the way we eat it has much to do with civilization because the choices we make can bring about peace and relieve suffering (Hanh 2001, 15).

After the release of *Super Size Me* and *Fast Food Nation*, many more people in America are in fact aware of the consequences of junk food consumption on their physical health, moods and behavior. Yes, all people in America who engage in unhealthy eating habits must analyze their food practices and become aware of how it can bring about peace, social justice and alleviate individual and global suffering. However junk food addiction among middle and upper class white suburban teens have consequences that are far less life threatening than that of low-income black and Latino boys who collectively practice junk food consumption and are already “at risk” in achieving a healthier life, compared to whites. These consequences go far beyond that of dreaded teenage acne breakouts associated with junk food diets. For at risk youths of color, such as Black adolescents, Dr. Afrika theorizes that junk foods maintain the Prison Industrial Complex.

“Blacks nutritionally deficient, consuming chemicalized junk foods, and legal and illegal drugs are at a higher risk for crimes and prison. Court is where the negative behaviors caused by mal-nourishment from junk food goes on trial. The food industry is found innocent while the Black consumer of junk is found guilty and sent to jail. The food Industry’s nutritional crime is turned into a misdemeanor or felony crime” (Afrika 2000, 362).

Dr. Afrika’s theories are profound. Though Dr. Demas notes, during her interview, that people simply do not or cannot make the connection that junk food, hormone injected meats, and other chemicals have to their moods and behavior; that this food connection is very real. The nineteen students who initially enrolled into the three week study were, at first, unable to see these connections as well. Dr. Demas recalled:

“They were very skeptical at first because they thought this wasn’t going to have any impact on them. They thought that they couldn’t live without eating meat all the time and that they would become weak if they didn’t have meat. However, they all kept journals so they were evaluating how they felt on a regular basis and they were making that connection. You’re right: a lot of them started out with great skepticism but by the end, they were feeling so much better that they really had their minds opened to the fact that when you eat a diet that mainly doesn’t have any whole foods in it and is nutrient depleted it’s going to affect your energy level. It’s going to affect your thinking ability and I could tell them that over and over again. It’s like putting up a poster up in a cafeteria: They’re not really going to understand it unless they experience it[intentionally emphasized]. So, the most effective thing I could do was to give them an opportunity to give them first hand experience with the changes that they were feeling in the way they thought and felt” (Animal Voices 2006).

Though it is understandable that not every youth exposed to whole foods veganism will enjoy and notice the health benefits of the diet, it is commendable that Demas’ teaching style was effective in educating the young men in a way that does not replicate colonialism and other forms of systemic oppression. She makes it clear that she understands the backgrounds of the youths she was working with; that it was crucial not to be judgmental or

forceful in educating them about their health and food choices. The success of the program indicates that under the right circumstance, with a compassionate and loving teacher, and with support from an institution, children can appreciate and embrace a dietary philosophy that opposes traditional junk food behavior. In addition, these children- particularly those who are “at risk” at entering the Prison Industrial Complex- will be able to make the mind/body/mood connection that food plays in their freedom and behavioral problems. Below are two journal entries from two of the boys engaged in the three week study that had begun the path to nutritional liberation:

As I started progressing in this diet I learned a lot. The first thing was how to cook, what not to do, what not to eat. I learned that certain foods like cow, chicken and all these other foods carry lots of fat, hormones, chemicals that they feed them. I learned how to make delicious shakes. As I would come every day I would learn more, I would observe things and me. I was eating things that I never thought of even eating while I was on this diet. I realized many changes education wise. My grades have sky-rocketed big, I have felt way better towards myself. I would wake up with a natural high every morning. I would think positive, always have a positive mind frame. I would no longer have a craving towards meat, chicken. I just wanted to eat vegetarian food, especially I fell in love with fruits. I would love to make fruit cake with organic crust. I feel that this diet has an effect on my life. It also has shown me my talent. I never knew I can cook so good. So I am not going to go back in society and do what I did to come to Bay Point, no. I am going to use my talent and take it to another level. (Food Studies Institute 2001)

-Warren K

How did I like it? Well you know I had a fun time with the diet. It had me thinking faster and wider. It was like I was just born. At first I didn't want to do it but I had to and it turned out good. I was like man, I'm not going to give up my meat for this stupid junk, and I find out this was like something I never experienced before. It was amazing. And at the same time I was like thinking back and when I was eating meats I was falling asleep and getting F's, and as soon as my body got use to the veggie diet, I was fully energized and not [only] had time to do all my work but did all my work plus more... [On the vegan diet] I was a happier person, but on the meat I was always mean and lazy. So it helped me turn my life around and stop eating meats. That is the experience I had with the diet... if you get to know this program, you will love it, go ahead try it and see what's your outcome. And it also showed me how to cook all type of good veggie foods. (Food Studies Institute 2001)

-Rodney M

One could think that these young men's journal entries falsely speak of the positive nature of the vegan diet in order to give the researcher and rehabilitation facility, “what they want to hear.” However, the increase in grades, decrease in behavioral and mood problems, and blood tests of the boys after their engagement in the project parallel their journal entries and shows that the boys are most likely sincere in how they feel. Dr. Demas spoke more about her pilot study and recollected when the boys invited her to a dinner that they prepared themselves.

“One night they invited me for dinner...We were having a discussion about food issues and one of the young men said, ‘You know, now that we can cook all this good food that tastes good and looks beautiful, don't you think girls will like it if we offered to make them a meal’ and I said ‘Yes, I think that's a great thing to be able to offer a girl a nice meal. You can tell her how this food is going to make her feel because you know now that it does make you feel better.’ I think that that is somewhat profound because here's a population that is known in the literature for [inaudible] of date rape. And here instead they are thinking, ‘How can I take care of a girl by feeding her something really healthful and tell her about how it's healthful?’ I think it's a profound change in thinking, I really do. I think that's giving back to other people because you're feeling good for the first time. It's something that needs to be addressed at a much more serious level” (Animal Voices 2006).

The boys' perceptions of food and health as something to share with a potential female partner shows the potential of creating a lifestyle in which material acquisition and unhealthy consumption patterns are not rooted in stereotypical [Black] American model of masculinity; a model that has been built from colonialism, slavery, and institutional racism (Hill Collins 2004). Instead of attracting a female partner (this of course applies to young men attracted to females, as not all boys are heterosexual oriented) through material wealth and over consumption of gold, diamonds, cars, high end fashionable clothing, and expensive alcohol associated with the American Dream, Demas' pilot study engendered a mindset in the young men that potentially roots masculinity in resistance against its current foundation: a resistance toward the concept of masculinity that is a byproduct of white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy. Instead of buying material goods and junk foods to feel better about ourselves and to ease the pain of racism, systemic whiteness and classism, Demas' model offers a route to feeling better that answers bell hooks' concern of white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy that has been instilled as normal in the United States of America (hooks 1992) since colonialism.

Dr. Demas also taught the boys where food comes from: not a convenient or grocery store but from the soil; from the Earth. She took them to a local community garden and had them literally extract vegetables from the ground to understand where their whole foods come from. It was a powerful awakening experience for these boys to literally take an orange from off of an orange tree. She noted that living in Florida, one would think the boys had had the chance to pluck an orange from a tree. However, because of their backgrounds, most had never had the opportunity to reflect on how and where their food is grown. Living in an industrial society, a majority of people in America have been disconnected from where their food comes and the importance of maintaining a healthy ecology and connection to nature for optimal health. There was a time in America when a majority of Blacks lived in the agrarian south had access to working the land and knowing where their foods come from (hooks 1993). However, the great Black migration to the northern industrial cities drastically changed the body and nature relationships that many agrarian Southern Blacks were used to. hooks notes that:

the motivation for black folks to leave the south and move north was both material and psychological. Black folks wanted to be free of the overt racial harassment that was a constant in southern life and they wanted access to material goods-- to a level of material well-being that was not available in the agrarian south where white folks limited access to the spheres of economic power. Of course, they found that life in the north had its own perverse hardships...that it was much harder for black people to become landowners. Without the space to grow food, to commune with nature, or to mediate the starkness of poverty with the splendor of nature, black people experienced profound depression. Working in conditions where the body was regarded solely as a tool (as in slavery), a profound estrangement occurred between mind and body. The way the body was represented became more important than the body itself. It did not matter if the body was well, only that it appeared well. (hooks 1993, 179).

Though hooks is referring to black people who migrated to Northern cities, I suspect that this applies to Latino and black folks who migrated to cities such as Miami, where the Bay Point School for boys is located, to seek material wealth and economic mobility. It is understandable that those in poverty want to rise above this status to provide themselves and their families a life void of poverty induced suffering. However, mentioned earlier in this essay, research has found that despite a rise in income among people of color health disparities continue to exist. Hence, the rise of material wealth among people of color, still living in a civilization based on European colonial ideology, does not imply that there will be a rise in the wealth of health. "The master's tools will not dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984). Our emulation of the American Dream or [neo]colonial standard of success cannot bring about holistic health for our communities.

Dr. Dumas' radio show hosts noted that it is quite surprising that after Dr. Dumas' amazing results from 2001 that she has been unable to obtain funding to engage in this project at a national level. She told the interviewers that she had been trying to get funding for several years. She thought that the boys' journal entries, along with the medical results of their blood work, before and after the three week diet, would prove to potential funding

sources that her pilot study was a healthier and more logical way to address the behavioral problems of “at risk” youths. Dr. Demas comments that there was simply no literature on what she has done, made potential funders wary of the validity of the project. She stated that her pilot study is incredibly encouraging and it cost “practically nothing” to do: “The meals that my students prepared cost a lot less than a typical meal. So, they saved a lot of money eating this way” (Animal Voices 2006). It is after this that radio show host, Lauren Corman, asked the question:

“Do you think it’s potentially almost the success of the program- in the way that the systems want to keep the meat and dairy industry and want to keep the people filtering through the prison industrial complex? You know like in a systemic oppression kind of way? In a way they almost want to keep people down so they can keep the big machine running? Do you think that’s factor in you not getting the funding that you need?” (Animal Voices 2006).

To those who are unaware of the roots of the Prison Industrial Complex, the negative effects of the S.A.D., and consequences of systemic oppression (i.e., racism, classism, etc.) on people of color who are descendants of the colonized and enslaved, Lauren’s question may appear random if not “conspiracy theory” driven. Interestingly, Dr. Demas’ reply indicates that she herself doesn’t think that the Prison Industrial Complex influences the dietary options of communities of colors. However, because racial/ethnic identity heavily impacts how researchers conduct and analyze their field research (Twine et al. 2000), Dr. Demas, as a white woman who has never experienced life as a black, Latino, or indigenous person from a low-income background, may not immediately see or believe the implications of Lauren’s question. However, if we remember earlier in this essay that Mintz and Dufty theorize that European supported African and indigenous colonialism/slavery manifested from an addicted society’s (Europe) need for more labor and land to harvest addictive foodstuffs, Lauren’s question begins to make logical sense.

American society is a continuum of colonialism and imperialism driven by the collective addiction of material acquisition. These materials are first stolen (Jensen 2006) then extrapolated from the land as a natural holistic resource then drastically altered into a controlled, artificial and addictive product perpetuating a ‘life-killing’ imperial ideology we call civilization. Empire dictates that they

“enslave those whose labor is necessary for this theft [of natural resources from the land]...they force the remaining humans to live under the laws and moral code of the occupiers. They inculcate future generations to forget their non-occupied past and to aspire to join the ranks of their occupiers, to actually join the degradation of [their bodies] and of the landbase that was once theirs” (Jensen 2006, 185).

The Prison Industrial Complex is a continuum of plantation slavery and colonialism and is embedded in the success of American Empire. The PIC offers cheap labor for desirable resources. Hence, the answer to Lauren’s question begins to take shape. The boys at Bay Point were sent to that facility by the courts because of ‘criminal behavior.’ Luckily for these nineteen young men in Demas’ pilot study, they had the chance to avoid being sent directly to jail (Prison Industrial Complex). Instead, they learned about nutritional ways to avoid this high tech institution of plantation slavery; a “site of racialized coerced labour” (do Valle 2006, 133).

Most likely, Dr. Demas’ project has had challenges finding enough funding to “go national” because the Prison Industrial Complex is too profitable. How profitable is it to the PIC if “at risk youth” (grist for the PIC mill) engage in the decolonization of their palates? The PIC relies on low-income communities of color having more access to sucrose and Trans fat laden junk foods and hormone injected flesh foods than emotionally and mentally balanced life giving fresh plant based foods. These [un]foods propensity for causing aggressive and ‘criminal’ behavior among people of color from low-income communities feeds the PIC and satiates a society in need of cheap labor because of society’s addiction to the artificial materials of civilization (Hattery et al. 2006; de Valle 2005; Jensen 2006).

People on high sugar diets are feeding an addiction, and obtaining very little nourishment, which continues to cause them to hunger for something sugar cannot give. And since digestive systems are full of putrefying flesh and lots of sugar, they turn to other drugs. Then they get locked up and are taught to become criminals while in jail, to be turned back on society where we are all occupied with fears of crime and violence on our streets. Wow- all over a bit of sugar.” (Joseph 1992, 98)

The First World- particularly the United States of America- is addicted to not only sugar, but to caffeine, hormone injected flesh foods, etc. Furthermore, they are addicted to consumption of materials goods that often yield no nutritional or healthy mind and physical building purposes, other than to satiate their addictions. Similar to several hundred years ago when Europe needed cheap labor to satiate their addictions to sugar, people in America continue this legacy of addiction by engaging in unhealthy buying habits that not only include junk foods, but non-food items. Americans have monetarily cheap access to their addictive habits because of cheap and often forced labor by people in America and globally. Even though slavery was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, it made an exception for people convicted of a crime (de Valle 2006). The PIC is one of these sites of cheap and forced labor that benefits from this amendment. Mari Spira, an anti-prison activist with Justice Now, states that, “many companies have benefited from what I would see as quasi-slave labour, where workers have no right to organize and make wages more similar to those in ‘Third World’ export processing zones.

Prisons themselves are increasingly being contracted out to private corporations” (de Valle 2006, 134). The driving force behind the PIC is the same as the driving force behind colonialism and slavery: profit and addiction. Mari Spira’s colleague, Alice de Valle, argues that the ‘enemy’ to be ‘criminalized’ and pushed into the PIC are “mothers on welfare, youths of colour, black men and immigrants. On a global scale, the US wages war against and engages in behind-the-scenes organizing of coups in ‘enemy’ countries, taking control of their resources through neo-liberal practices and international financial institutions...[The PIC gives] protection of resources from the very people they were taken from” (de Valle 2006, 134). The current story of the PIC sounds strikingly familiar to the goals of European colonialism and slavery, hundreds of years ago. However, now the addicts to cheap goods and addictive foods are comprised of people in American from all racial and socio-economic backgrounds. However, if someone is a low-income black or Latino person in America, their addiction to junk foods such as McDonald’s meals or coffee may potentially influence their behavior that could be constructed as ‘criminal’ and greatly increase their chances of providing cheap labor for those very addictions as inmates in prison. As a society, America’s addiction to unhealthy consumption (food and non-food) is also an addiction to incarceration (Hattery et al 2006), globally and nationally.

“Prisoners are engaged in everything from making electronic cash registers for McDonalds to sewing lingerie for Victoria’s Secret, to taking airline reservations for TWA to packing Starbucks coffee...the Prison Industrial Complex and its attendant ‘prison industries’ mimics the slave mode of production. That in the end, wealthy whites (primarily men) are profiting by not paying a living wage to African American inmates (also primarily men)” (Hattery et al 2006).

The system is an exact replica of what initially caused the enslavement, colonization and exploitation of land resources of African and other indigenous people, hundreds of years ago.

Dr. Demas’ pilot study is an act of decolonization because the boys are taught how to heal their bodies and minds from the violence and aggression of colonialism that they were consuming in their foods and soft drinks; foods that literally affected their mental and emotional states and made them more susceptible to behavioral patterns constructed as ‘criminal’ by the court systems of America. The boys were given a model of freedom that wasn’t based on the American Dream of material wealth as the key to liberation; it was based on reclaiming a mental and physical state of health that was taken away at the advent of European colonialism, when African and indigenous lives and land were stolen for addictions to sugar and other European consumer goods.

Nutritional liberation and education must be part of decolonization because our addictions to nutrient dead foods (and addictions to using our money for everything but nutrition) is causing us physical diseases and mental and emotional diseases that weaken our minds and cause us to act in disharmonic behavior that are translated as ‘criminal’ by the court systems. Before implementing her vegan whole foods program, Dr. Demas’ initial scrutiny of the Bay Point Residential School menu revealed that the foods and soft drinks given to the boys for sustenance were the very same foods that helped to cause negative physical and behavioral problems. Bay Point is supposed to be a school that rehabilitates boys who engaged in ‘criminal behavior.’ However, if our rehabilitation and other social justice organizations that service “at risk youths” are literally feeding our youths and themselves, foods that cause physical diseases, depression, ADHD, aggressive behavior, low mental acuity, how can we truly engage in successful decolonization and resistance to neo-colonialism when our own addictions our killing our bodies, spirits, our land base and people outside of America? As long as we continue to be misguided in our food practices, spend our money on items that feed our addictions to the American Dream of materialism, we cannot achieve freedom from colonialism for our own bodies. bell hooks writes, “so if we want to talk about dealing with addiction in Black communities we are going to have to talk about consumption on all levels, the construction of desire, and the problems of unmediated, unfulfilled desire” (hooks 1991, 98). Simultaneously, America’s addictions are hurting the rest of the world. Michael Joseph writes,

“Yes, we’re taking the rest of the world, through our violent and greedy eating habits. We are and have been literally stealing food from third-world countries for many years. Multinational corporations own large plantations in countries with dictators propped up by our CIA, so America can get enough coffee, sugar,...Often, these foods are coming from countries where hunger and malnutrition are rampant, like Haiti, the Philippines, El Salvador...to name but a few. What’s doubly tragic about our food imports system, is that most foods we take from these countries are nutritionally very empty, and in may cases, very addictive” (Joseph 1992, 94-95)

This is a complex problem with no overnight solution. However, Dr. Antonia Demas’ Food is Elementary program, used with the nineteen Bay Point youths, clearly shows what could happen if we teach “at risk” children the wealth of health through hands on experience and not simply teach them about nutritional liberation from a manual. The experience of feeling good, having a lot of energy, a calm mind, better mental acuity, and harmonious spirit through healthy eating, gardening, and culinary classes is a state of being that most people, when they achieve it, fall in love with. It can open their eyes to the possibility that life does not have to be about acquiring material wealth or feeding addictions. Most of the young men at Bay Point admitted in their journals that they did not want to return their old diets because their new diet made them feel mentally and physically better. These young men were able to achieve this within several weeks of being on a low cost whole foods vegan diet and drinking eight glasses of water per day; something that the Prison Industrial Complex cannot do, in three weeks, three years, or three decades because the PIC, contrary to popular belief, is not based on rehabilitation but on making profit and appealing to First World consumer addictions (Hattery et al, 2006).

If we are to employ bell hooks’ concepts of decolonization to resist white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy and fight against the claws of the PIC that benefit from the ‘criminalization’ of low-income communities/and of color, then we must come to terms with the fact that the foods we have grown accustomed to- that have even helped to create our concept of our ethnic identity (i.e., “blackness” as Soul Food)-- may actually be causing our children to behave in disharmony that heighten their chances of being constructed as ‘criminal’ by the court system. If we continue to feed our children from the colonizer’s nutritionally vapid and “crazy making” foodstuffs (Simontacchi 2000), we will continue to feed the machine of neo-colonialism and remain enslaved to a system that thrives off of our addictions and mental, physical and emotional illnesses.

Access to fresh fruits and vegetables, proper nutritional information, and community gardens is currently very difficult in most low-income communities of colors (Diamant et. al, 2005; Robbins 2006 ; USA Today

2003). Decolonization through nutritional liberation may prove challenging for many communities whose food choices are limited to Jack in the Box, White Castle, convenient stores, or grocers that do not sell fresh produce. In addition, television food advertisements towards people of color convey unhealthier items than Whites (Henderson et al 2005) that potentially make unlearning current concepts of food and nutrition, difficult. However, communities of color must challenge the norm. We must no longer accept the lack of healthy food resources, community gardens, and nutritional information in our neighborhoods. People of color have organized at the grassroots level to bring necessary social justice changes to our communities that many found inconceivable. American chattel slavery and Jim Crow, at one time, were perceived by many as impossible institutions to abolish. However, our ancestors and their allies achieved this. It is now our turn to mobilize, get involved with community activism, boycott “death food” industry, and bring life giving foods to our communities. We must start at why we were colonized and actively fight against the enslavement of our people; people who have been enslaved as harvesters to now consumers of products and mentality of our colonizer.

Like hooks proposes in *Sisters of the Yam*, we cannot start healing our children, our families and our communities until we place the type of emphasis on our bodily health and health of the ecology that our ancestors did, before colonization and slavery. As long as we continue to accept the disease inducing palate forced upon us during colonialism and the addictive material consumption patterns of the colonizer as normal, we will remain enslaved and colonized at the nutritional and cellular level.

I have experienced personally over the past few years how a purity of diet and thought are interrelated. And when Americans become truly concerned with the purity of the food that enters their own personal systems, when they learn to eat properly, we can expect to see profound changes effected in the social and political system of this nation. The two systems are inseparable...”(Witt 2004, 133-134)

-Dick Gregory

3. Featured Anti-Oppression Article

Immigrant rights & international women’s rights: Two struggles intertwined

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Published Feb 24, 2007

Two historic struggles intertwine this year in the month of March: for immigrant rights and for international women’s rights.

March 8 is International Women’s Day (IWD). It began as a day to bring working-class and poor women and women of oppressed nationalities into the class struggle. And it provided a day for women to affirm their liberation as well as that of their male loved ones, co-workers and community members.

The seeds for a formal celebration of IWD began in 1907 at an International Conference of Socialist Women. It was organized by German socialist Clara Zetkin. Participants included Russian Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai. The call for an international women’s day came from Zetkin in 1910 at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen, and European socialists began to celebrate IWD in 1911. (www.marxists.org)

In 1917, on International Women’s Day, thousands of women needle-trade workers walked off their jobs in Petrograd, joined by working-class men, swelling the crowd to tens of thousands and providing the spark that ignited the Russian Revolution. (www.cwluherstory.com)

In the U.S., an early militant strike by immigrant women in the New York City garment industries on March 8, 1857 may have inspired communist women to later choose the date for the official IWD.

‘Bread and roses’

On that date in 1857, soldiers fired on women textile workers as they demonstrated for a shorter work week in New York City.

On March 8, 1908, tens of thousands of needle-trade women workers poured through the streets of New York “to protest child labor, sweatshop working conditions and demand votes for women.” (www.holtlaborlibrary.org)

These women workers came from many countries. In the 1911 Lowell, Mass., “Bread and Roses” strike, the women workers had come from 24 different nations and spoke more than 40 languages. (www.oah.org)

Seventy-five percent of all women factory workers in 1920 were recent or first-generation immigrants. (“American Women in the Progressive Era”: 1993)

The dangers they faced were extreme.

In 1911 when a fire started in the Triangle Shirtwaist sweatshop in Manhattan, 146 young women workers perished inside. Most were between the ages of 13 and 25. Most were recent emigrants to the U.S.

Women leaders in immigration struggle

Today, undocumented immigrant women, and men, face extremely dangerous work, brutally long hours, exploitatively low wages and lack of child care and health benefits.

Undocumented women workers also face threats of rape and sexual or domestic violence, especially if they could face deportation if they reported the abuse.

Like the immigrant women workers in New York City who resisted in such famous actions as the “Uprising of 20,000” in 1910, women today are providing leadership in the developing immigrant rights struggle that sprang to life last year in the U.S.

These women bring traditions of resistance and struggle from their home countries, infusing the class struggle here with new vitality and experience, tactics and strategy.

Last March 28, another “uprising of 20,000” took place when that same number of students walked out of classes in at least 70 high schools in Southern California to protest anti-immigrant laws proposed in the U.S. Senate.

One of them was Rosalina García, a 15-year-old high school student from Santa Ana, Calif., who faced police with guns, tasers and masks. The cops, she noted, were being particularly hostile towards the women. But, she said, “I’m never going to give up.” (www.uprisingradio.org)

The outpouring of millions of immigrant and undocumented workers called forth by the organizing of the March 25 Coalition took to the streets across the U.S. for months, with women providing key leadership.

Last May, Evelina Molina helped bring 40,000 people into the streets of Santa Rosa in northern California, using her skills as a radio broadcaster and producer at KBBF Spanish-language public radio, and her knowledge

of the history of farm worker organizing.

And last November in North Carolina, two Latina workers led more than 1,000 Latin@ and African American co-workers in a walkout from the world's biggest hog-processing plant. They were protesting the crackdown on documented and undocumented workers by the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement Agency (ICE)—actions meant to intimidate workers from organizing. (www.fistyouth.blogspot.com)

Elvira Arellano, 31-year-old founder of La Familia Unida Latina, continues her more than 6-month struggle against deportation from her place of sanctuary in a Chicago church. Mother of a U.S.-born son, she has brought forward the special oppression and resistance of women immigrant workers, saying, “I fight so the undocumented people will be respected.”

‘A woman’s place is in the struggle!’

Teresa Cervas, Southern California coordinator for the progressive Filipino organization BAYAN-USA, notes, “Filipinos are the number one export of our country, forced to leave our homeland and move to other countries for work and economic stability.” The Philippines sends more nurses to the U.S. than any other country. Of the several thousand a year, the overwhelming majority are female.

Affiliated with BAYAN, the group “Babae” (Woman) organizes for “the rights and welfare of multi-generational Filipino women in the United States.” Their chant is: “We are people! We are not illegal! A woman’s place is in the struggle!”

In the U.S. South, organizers are making the connection between the rights of immigrants to stay and the right of Katrina survivors—who are primarily African-American—to return to their homes. (Mississippi Immigrant Rights Association)

Both those born in the Gulf Coast region and those who have immigrated there refer to the U.N. principles on internal displacement to indict the U.S. for denial of basics like food, water and shelter during and after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They are naming themselves as Internally Displaced Person (IDP’s). (www.peopleshurricane.org)

There are estimates that up to 80 percent of Katrina survivors were women of color. (Chicago Tribune, Sept. 14, 2006)

Central to the struggle against the government-made catastrophes of the hurricanes are the African-American women of the Gulf Coast, like Dyan French Cole, also known as Mama D, a long-time community leader.

Out of her home in the Seventh Ward, she and the “Soul Patrol” provide free food to her neighbors, help clean up their houses, fight to keep housing from being demolished and fight for the right of human beings to have a home from which they will not be torn away by the forces of money and power. (www.aas.duke.edu/katrina)

4. Recipes: Spinach-Filled Won Tons; Tofu Hoisin with Broccoli, Red Pepper, and Walnuts; Cold Shredded Cucumber with Green Bean Sprout; Fruit Filled Vegan Spring Rolls

Spinach-Filled Won Tons

10 ounces fresh spinach

1 tablespoon peanut oil

1 garlic cloves -- minced

1/4 cup onion -- minced

10 water chestnuts, minced -- rinsed drained

1 pound won-ton wrappers (about 60)

salt & pepper -- to taste

Wash the spinach thoroughly and trim any tough stems.

Drain, then dry with paper towels or a salad spinner.

Coarsely chop and set aside.

Place a wok over medium-high heat.

When it begins to smoke, add the peanut oil, then the garlic and onion.

Stir-fry 30 seconds.

Add the spinach and water chestnuts and stir fry until the spinach is dry, about 3 minutes.

Transfer the vegetables to a bowl and season with salt and pepper.

When the filling has cooled slightly, form the won tons.

Dip your fingers in warm water and moisten the entire surface of a wrapper.

Place 1 teaspoon of filling in the center of the wrapper and fold it in half.

Press the edges to seal.

Bring the ends together and moisten with water; press to seal.

Cover and set aside the finished won tons while shaping the remainder.

Cook the won tons following the directions in the recipe - either in boiling water or soup stock until they are just tender, or deep-fry them in 3 to 4 cups of peanut oil until golden brown, about 3 minutes on each side.

NOTE: Makes 60 won tons, may be frozen after being shaped.

Tofu Hoisin with Broccoli, Red Pepper, and Walnuts

1/3 cup hoisin sauce

2 Tbsp rice wine or dry sherry

1 Tbsp sesame oil

1 Tbsp tamari soy sauce

2 Tbsp vegetable oil

1 lb extra-firm tofu, sliced, patted very dry, then cut into 2 x 1/2-inch logs

6 garlic cloves, minced

1/8 tsp crushed red pepper flakes

1 red bell pepper, cut into 3x1/2-inch strips

1 bunch broccoli, cut into small florets, stalks peeled and sliced (about 5 cups)

1/2 cup walnut halves

1/3 cup water

(1) Combine the first four ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.

(2) Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet over high heat until it is hot but not smoking. Make sure the tofu is patted very dry to prevent sticking. Add the tofu and stir-fry until lightly golden all over. Remove to a platter and reduce the heat to medium-high.

(3) If there is no oil left in the pan, add a teaspoon or so. Add the garlic and crushed pepper flakes and cook 1 minute. Stir in the red bell pepper, broccoli, and wanuts and toss to coat with the garlic. Pour in the water, toss, and then cover the pan. Cook 5 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender yet still crunchy.

(4) Stir in the tofu, then pour on the sauce mixture. Stir-fry 1 minute, or until the sauce coats everything and is thickened. Serve on rice.

Serves 3 to 4.

To organize yourself cook 1 1/2 cups rice before you begin stir-frying and keep it warm on the back burner; the stir-frying will take only a few minutes.

Cold Shredded Cucumber with Green Bean Sprout

240 g green bean sprout

160 g cucumber

2 tbsp shredded carrot

Seasonings:

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1/2 tsp sugar

1 tbsp sesame oil

Peel cucumber and slice in half. Remove seeds. Rinse and wipe dry. Shred. Marinate with 1/2 tsp fine salt until tender. Squeeze away excessive water.

Rinse green bean sprouts and then blanch in water with pinch of salt and oil. Take out and drain.

In bowl blend green bean sprouts, shredded cucumber, carrot and seasonings. Stir. Pour on plate and serve.

Fruit Filled Vegetarian and Vegan Spring Roll Recipe

12-15 spring roll wrappers (available at most Asian grocers)

1 cup strawberries, sliced

1 banana, sliced

2 kiwi fruits, diced

1/2 cup canteloupe, diced

1 honey tangerine or satsuma orange, segmented

1/4 cup fresh mint leaves (optional)

1/3 cup lemon flavored soy or dairy yogurt

2 tablespoons maple syrup

juice of one lime

Make sure all your fruit is sliced into half-inch cubes or smaller, and toss together in a large bowl.

In a separate small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, lime juice and maple syrup until smooth.

Set aside 1/4 cup of this sauce to use as a dip for your finished spring rolls, and gently mix the remaining sauce with the fruit, stirring to coat evenly.

Submerge 2-3 spring roll wrappers at a time in hot water until pliable (about 15 seconds), then remove and lay on flat surface. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of your filling horizontally on your wrapper, just below the middle and add 2-3 mint leaves on top of filling if desired.

Fold the bottom of the wrapper up over the filling and gently press down. Fold in both of the sides of the wrapper and gently press to seal. Continue rolling the spring roll up towards the top of the wrapper. If your wrapper won't seal closed, sprinkle the top with a bit of water or make a roux of one part water and one part cornstarch to use as a sealant.

Dip in extra yogurt sauce, and enjoy!

5. Social Justice Calendar

Monday March 5th, 4-6:30pm

“Palestine Trilogy” - three short documentary films on the occupation by b.h. yael

Palestine Trilogy consists of three videos that focus on activist initiatives, addressing the politics of Palestine and Israel through varying approaches. Homemade goodies and drinks will be served.

@ 101 New Chancellor Day Hall, 3644 Peel, Faculty of Law building

For more info, please contact:

lisafrances.greenspoon@mail.mcgill.ca

Tuesday March 6th, 8-10pm

Film: "Night Stop". Sponsored by McGill Global Aids Coalition

Shot mostly at night in central Mozambique, the Corridor of Death, a long- distance trucking route, where more than 30% of the population are HIV+, the film charts a series of interwoven stories about the lives of women who wait for the arrival of truck drivers at an overnight trucking station.

@ the McGill Cultural Studies Screening room, 3475 Peel Street

Wednesday, March 7th, 9:30pm

Comedy Off the Main: Philippine Women Centre Benefit show

A night of laughter featuring local stand-up comics: DeAnne Smith, Peter Radomski, George Braithwaite, Paul Baluyot and other renowned comedians, in celebration of International Women's Day.

@ Oliveira Restaurant, 213 Rachel St. E. Tickets \$10

Thursday March 8th, 10am

The Centre des femmes d'ici et d'ailleurs invites you to our March 8th International Women's Day women only events. We are proposing a symbolic action in the morning to protest women's poverty here and everywhere. After the action we invite you for a snack followed by a workshop (in French) "Women and War", about the living conditions of women in Palestine. This day is being co-organized with L'ASSÉ AND L'AFESH-UQAM.

@ CFIA, 7737 St-Denis.

Thursday, March 8th, 6:30pm

WOMEN AND WAR AGAINST IMPERIALISM FORUM

This forum will have a panel presentation including speakers from TADAMON! and the International League of People's Study Women's Commission.

@ 4180 de Courtrai, Suite 308 (Metro Plamondon, Barclay exit)

Contact for more information: Joanne, (514) 678-3901.

Thursday March 8th, 6-9pm

"Environmental Justice? The Environment and the People"

@ QPIRG Concordia, 1500 de Maisonneuve, suite 204

A workshop on understanding environmental justice, the impact that racism has on environmental devastation, and the people most vulnerable to it. Workshop presented by Lili Dao and Niliema Karkhanis

Thursday March 8th, 6.30-8.30pm

Film: “500 Dunam on the Moon”. Sponsored by the International Solidarity Movement

A critical look at the art of dispossession and the creativity of the dispossessed, the film tells the story of Ayn Hawd, a Palestinian village that was captured and depopulated by Israeli forces in 1948. In 1953 Marcel Janco, a Romanian painter and a founder of the Dada movement, helped transform the village into

a Jewish artists’ colony, and renamed it Ein Hod. This documentary tells the story of the village’s original inhabitants, who, after expulsion, settled only 1.5 kilometers away in the outlying hills.

@ the McGill Cultural Studies Screening room, 3475 Peel Street.

Friday March 9th, 7pm

QPIRG-Concordia and the 2110 Centre present.. Dionne Brand: WRITING AND RESISTANCE

@ 3480 University Street, Room 304 (McConnell Engineering Building - McGill University)

Dionne Brand, one of Canada’s most celebrated writers, will be in attendance for her presentation “Writing and Resistance”. For the event, Brand will be reading from a selection of her award-winning

books of poetry, novels and essays and discussing her experiences using writing as a form of resistance

against oppression, and as a tool for social and political empowerment. Childcare and ASL interpretation are available upon request (48hr advance request required), by contacting QPIRG Concordia:

info@qipirgconcordia.org Phone: 514-848-7585

Friday March 9th, 1:30-4pm

IWD Celebration: A Symposium on women, war, violence, atrocities, [genocide] & peace dedicated to the memory of Lillian S. Robinson, academic, activist, researcher, teacher, Principal of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

@ MU-101, Simone de Beauvoir Institute, 2170 Bishop.

Moderator: Prof. Chantal Maille (Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia). Presenters: Dr. Rokhsana Bahramitash (McGill University, Centre for Developing Area studies), “Behind the Burqua: Afghan Women as Passive Victims or Partners in Post-War Reconstruction”; Dr. Dolores Chew (Simone de Beauvoir Institute Research Associate, History, Concordia University and Marianapolis) “Applying Gender, Understanding Genocide Gujarat (India) 2002”; Tess Tesselona (8th March Committee of Women of Diverse Origins) “Reclaiming the roots of feminist resistance: Remembering the past and looking to the future”

Friday, March 9th, 4-6pm

Fighting Back Against Poverty: A Filipino Women's Perspective

@ Project Genesis, 4735 Cote-ste-Catherine (entrance on Victoria ave.) metro Cote-ste-Catherine

Jasmin is the educational coordinator of Pinay, a Filipino women's organization based in Montreal.

She will be talking about various anti-poverty and workers' rights campaigns in the Cote-des-Neiges

community of Montreal, and efforts within the Filipino community to fight back against racism and legislated poverty. Snacks and drinks will be served. Free childcare available please reserve in advance

at 514-738-2036 x.406 or aaron@genese.qc.ca

Saturday March 10th, 9am - 6pm

Women of Diverse Origins: Reclaiming the Roots of Feminist Resistance

@ University of Montréal, 3200 Jean Brillant, 2nd floor (Metro Côte-des-Neiges)

On 10th March, Coni Ledesma of the Philippines, Hazel Hill of Six Nations, Shahrzad Mojab who works on gender and NGOs, Magali X Djehuty-Thot, Haitian Montrealer activist and Martin Dufresne of Montréal Men Against Sexism, along with many others, will address these issues and make the connections between Kathmandu, Kandahar, Caledonia, Haiti, Latin America and Montreal. Local organizations will present information and displays. Suggested contribution: \$5 (no-one turned away). Childcare available. Lunch provided. Additional info: Tess Tesalona - tess4a@yahoo.com

Saturday March 10th, 9pm

Solberg Six Sound System! A BENEFIT FOR THE SOLBERG SIX

@ 6545 Durocher, #402 (corner of Beaubien), Metro Parc ou Place des Arts + #80 bus

With: DJ Leila P DJ Kandis DJ Diasporaface DJ Mistint

Entry PayWhatYouCan, cheap drinks, free food

This is a fundraiser to help cover the legal fees of six migrant justice organizers from montreal and ottawa

who were criminally charged with disrupting a speech by former immigration minister Monte Solberg in Ottawa in May, 2006.

Thursday March 15th, 5pm

STOP THE REPRESSION NOW! 11th INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

@ Metro Snowdon

On March 15th, take to the streets to demand: 1) A stop to police killings and impunity, 2) A stop to the War on

the Poor, 3) A Stop to Racial Profiling and Colonialism, and 4) Stop the Criminalization of Dissent and free all Political Prisoners. For more info contact: cobp@hotmail.com

Saturday March 17th, 12 noon

Join the "Block the Empire! Anti-Imperialist Contingent"

Part of a worldwide day of action against the occupation of Iraq.

BUSH OUT OF BAGHDAD! CANADA OUT OF KANDAHAR!

@ Norman Bethune Park, Guy and de Maisonneuve, metro Guy-Concordia

Tuesday, March 20th, 6-8pm

Seasonal Citizens? Migrant Workers, Québec Farms and Unionization

@ Samuel Bronfman Building, 1590 Dr. Penfield (corner Cote-des-Neiges)

Bilingual panel: The Massive volume of seasonal agricultural workers has made it impossible to ignore questions surrounding status, treatment and unionization for these workers. Translation, Child care available. Refreshments will be served. Featuring: René Mantha, Fernando Borja, Sarita Ahooja, and Patricia Perez. Moderated by: Dr. Eric Shragge. Sponsored by: School of Community and Public Affairs.

Saturday May 5th, 12 noon

Immigrant rights are worker's rights: Status for All!

PROTEST, PARADE & COMMUNITY FESTIVAL: Part of a pan-Canadian Day of Action

@ Jean Talon & Châteaubriand, metro Jean-Talon

Solidarity Across Borders -- a Montreal-based network engaged in the struggle for justice and dignity of immigrants and refugees -- will be part of another National STATUS FOR ALL Day of Action this coming Saturday, May 5, 2007. We will be marching along Jean-Talon Boulevard, both east and west, as

part of a community parade. Our demonstration will end with a festival and picnic in the heart of Parc Extension. We march for the regularization of all migrants -- meaning STATUS FOR ALL -- and against deportations, detentions and security certificates.