Food for Thought with Emily Frisan - Episode 1 Transcript

Nourishing the Nation: Unpacking the Demographics of Food Insecurity

Emily Frisan – Welcome back to Food for Thought hosted by yours truly, Emily Frisan. Welcome to the episode, where I'll be exploring food insecurity, its causes, and its effects in the US.

If you're interested in the creation of this podcast and more you can check out my first episode: "The Introduction."

Also, the text of this entire episode is available on my website, which you can find the link to in the caption wherever you're listening.

This episode will feature four segments:

First, I will cover how food insecurity is defined and measured

Second, I will explore some of the causes and correlates of food insecurity, such as income, employment, race/ethnicity, disability, and geography

Third, we will examine some of the consequences and costs of food insecurity, such as health, education, and social outcomes

And finally, I will meet with guest speaker, Dylan Turner, PhD student at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, where we will discuss his research on community land trusts (CLTs), nonprofit organizations that own land and make decisions on how to use that land through democratic processes. But we'll get more into that later.

By the end of this episode, hopefully, you will become more aware of the barriers and groups most vulnerable to food insecurity, and understand solutions and actions that individuals and organizations can take to address food insecurity and its consequences.

Food insecurity is a term that describes the limited or uncertain access to adequate and nutritious food for a healthy and active life, which can be caused by various factors, such as poverty, unemployment, discrimination, lack of education, and natural disasters.

Indicators and experiences of food insecurity include experiences of reduced food quality, variety, or desirability, especially cultural preference, uncertainty or anxiety about food access; insufficient food intake or disrupted eating patterns; and trade-offs between food and other basic needs.

These factors listed can create negative impacts on one's physical and mental health, academic performance, social well-being, and environmental sustainability that affect millions of people around the world, especially in developing countries and marginalized communities.

In 2022, the United States Department of Agriculture, which I'll be referring to as the USDA from here on, reported that 87% of U.S. households were food secure throughout the year, a slight decrease from

almost 90% in 2021. This resulted in almost 13% of households experiencing food insecurity at some point, with 17.3% of all children in the country facing food insecurity.

Specifically, 5.1% of households faced very low food security, with disruptions in normal eating patterns due to insufficient resources.

These statistics highlight a significant issue with food insecurity, particularly the increase in households experiencing very low food security compared to the previous year.

So, how are these measures of food security defined?

The United States measures food insecurity with a survey tool developed by the USDA's Economic Research Service, or the ERS. The survey tool consists of a series of questions that ask about the household's food access, availability, and adequacy in the past 12 months.

Based on the responses to the survey questions, households are classified into four categories of food security: high food security, marginal food security, low food security, and very low food security.

Households with high food security have no problems or anxiety about consistently accessing adequate food, while those with low food security report reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. They may rely on coping strategies like eating less varied diets, participating in federal food assistance programs, or getting food from community food pantries.

Those apart of the "Very low food security" category will frequently face disruptions in normal eating patterns and food intake is reduced because they have insufficient money or other resources for food.

Despite this very crucial survey, there are several challenges and limitations of measuring food insecurity. While the U.S. has a strong foundation for data collection, challenges highlight the need for continuous improvement in data systems to ensure that they accurately reflect the state of food insecurity and inform effective interventions.

For example, disparities in resource allocation for research and data analysis, or the frequency and timing of these surveys may not capture rapidly changing economic conditions or temporary crises. Additionally, while the U.S. is technologically advanced, there are still areas with limited internet access, which can affect the collection of data through online surveys or digital reporting tools which can impact underreporting or overreporting of food insecurity; and cultural and contextual factors that influence food insecurity perceptions and responses.

If you want to learn more about the measurement of food security in the U.S., you can visit the ERS website or read the latest report on household food security in 2022, which I'll have linked on the blog.

So let's talk about some of the causes and correlates of the complex and multifaceted problem of food insecurity.

The availability, accessibility, and affordability of food for different groups and regions are impacted by a range of factors, such as income, employment, race/ethnicity, disability, and geography.

When it comes to income, the risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. A report by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion tells us that in 2020, 28.6 percent of low-income households were food insecure, compared to the national average of 10.5 percent. Simply, those in low-income populations make it more difficult to meet basic household food needs, such as housing, utilities, health care, and transportation.

Racial and ethnic disparities also exist related to food insecurity. In 2020, Black non-Hispanic households were over 2 times more likely to be food insecure than the national average, at 21.7 percent versus 10.5 percent. Among Hispanic households, the prevalence of food insecurity was 17.2 percent compared to the national average of 10.5 percent.

Additionally, disabled adults may be at a higher risk for food insecurity due to limited employment opportunities and healthcare-related expenses that reduce the income available to buy food. Their experiences include challenges in accessing food assistance programs, food banks, or food delivery services due to eligibility criteria, physical barriers, or stigma.

Many of these factors are also correlated and have a spatial pattern. For instance, poverty and race intersect such that poor non-white people often live in particular neighborhoods. These structural causes of food insecurity include poverty, inequality, discrimination, and lack of opportunity can impact access to consistent access to nutritious food.

These areas, often with limited economic investment, can become food deserts—places where access to affordable, healthy food options (like fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance. For example, in the nation's capital of Washington D.C, a severe, and growing, lack of full-service grocery stores is one of the contributing factors for food insecurity. D.C. is comprised of 8 wards, and out of the 49 full-service grocery stores in the District, only two are located in Ward 7 and just one is in Ward 8.

To put in perspective, data from the Mayor's office shows Ward 3 has 14 grocery stores with a median household income about $157,000. The median household income in Ward 8 is about $47,000, with only one full-service grocery store. While the neighborhood many not necessarily be financially impoverished, they still lack access to food, therefore facing higher rates of food insecurity.

Inequality leads to further discrimination and exclusion, which can limit the access and participation of certain groups in the food system, which we can see from the uneven spatial locations of grocery access in D.C.

To further explore this topic, I have the opportunity to speak with PhD student at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Dylan Turner, whose academic and personal interests revolve around food systems and its various intersections with social and environmental justice. His current work focuses on the

potential for models of collective land ownership to realize food sovereignty and racial justice. He is a community-engaged and community-driven scholar who develops projects through deep collaboration with people via qualitative research methodologies, as well as Geographic Information System, or GIS, to assist communities in the process of mapping and visualizing their understandings of space and place.

– *Transition* –

Frisan – So how are you doing today?

Dylan Turner – I'm good. How are you?

Frisan – I'm doing well. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I really, really appreciate it.

Frisan – Can you describe the Island neighborhood and what kind of factors contribute to the exclusionary practices?

Turner – Yeah. So the Island neighborhood is- it was given that name by one of the leaders on this research project, Michael Banner, who's one of the chief catalysts in island cultures in the organization.

The name sort of came from this idea of that neighborhood being, in a way isolated from the rest of the city and not sharing in the same level of prosperity as as downtown and other parts of Winston Salem. And so in a way, that kind of an island in a sea of, you know, whatever you want to call it prosperity or just other kinds of development. So there's that aspect of the island name. But then the island also can sort of serve as this vision for a self-sustaining Oasis as you mentioned in the introduction. And so it sort of serves 2 purposes.

But in just a very strict sense, the island has a bounding of Martin Luther King Drive to the West, Highway 311, and Skyland Park to the north, Business 40, or Salem Parkway as it's called to the South, and Brushy Fork Creek to the east. And so that's sort of the geographical region the island cultures focuses on and that's where our study is taking place. And as far as factors that contribute to exclusionary practices, it's really tough to sort of boil it down into, you know, just a handful.

But just to give a couple, like with a lot of cities in the United States, especially cities in the United States South, racism in all its forms kind of compounds over time through different policies and practices to lead to the present state where, you know, maybe there aren't specific policies still in place or things that people are doing that are preventing certain parts of the city from thriving.

But just over time, those things have piled on. And so in Winston Salem in the 1950s with the urban renewal project, Hwy. 52 was proposed to be developed and the plans were to just cut through predominantly black neighborhoods in Winston Salem. And the justification for that in the historical record and public statements from politicians was, you know, these neighborhoods are, quote, UN quote, blighted, you know, unable to take care of themselves, not taking care of the properties and so

really not worth keeping and, you know, worthy of being demolished and displaced in order to to make way for this highway. That's one example.

Like a lot of cities, there were racial covenants that determined, literally dictated where people could and couldn't live based on race. There had to be a certain percentage of white residents in this area or a certain percentage of black residents in this area. Also, as is common in the South, just segregation in in all kinds of different services. Something that I've learned through this process and I should say as a note, I grew up pretty close to Winston in a small town, about 20 minutes, so I went to Winston a lot to shop and go to the movies. And so I'm pretty familiar with it from a lived experience, but there's so much that I didn't know about, you know, how all this stuff transpired in the history.

And one case in point is the Black Panther Party. One of the first Black Panther Party chapters in the South was in Winston Salem, and one of their like shining achievements while they were in operation was this free ambulance service. Because emergency first responders in the city would either not respond to black and brown, communities, would respond really slowly, Or as some former Panthers talk about in the present, if they got to your home, they would ask you to pay the fee before getting on the ambulance. And so if you didn't have the money to cover the charge, you wouldn't go to the hospital.

And so all of these things kind of over time, you know, discriminatory housing practices, Urban Development, who can and can't get health care and where in the city have sort of compounded and compiled into the present day where, you know, there are still a lot of racial divides in the city along spatial lines. And so you know pockets where predominantly Latino communities live, predominantly African American communities live, predominantly white wealthy communities live.

I mean we we know that these patterns kind of take place all over the country. But at least those couple examples at first, you know to show to Winston Samlem specifically sort of how over time the city has been you know fragmented and and carved out to these different pockets.

Frisan – Yeah, thank you for describing that. That was super detailed. And I think that history is really important because it builds systemically into that town and perpetrates into modern day in terms of access just beyond healthcare like you were mentioning but into food security.

And you, as I mentioned in your introduction, you guys are looking at collective land ownership. Can you describe what that is? Can you describe a collective Land Trust?

Turner – Yeah, yeah, yeah, and forgive me if I get to any of your other questions than answering this. I can come back to like how we got in touch, but when I was talking to the folks at Island Cultures, just introducing myself and seeing if there was a partnership to be had there, you know, letting them know where my interests were and food and justice and geography and seeing if they had any kind of wants or needs when it came to research.

And they were already interested in this community Land Trust model and collective land ownership. And so like, well, you know, we haven't had the time or energy to dedicate to this if you wanted to take that on. And in terms of what it is, the community Land Trust model emerged in the 1960s in rural Georgia during the Civil Rights movement as a way to provide and maintain land ownership among rural black farmers. New Communities Incorporated was the first one. And over time, it's just developed into a model where for the most part people can own land collectively. And I say that with quotes to provide affordable housing.

And so how they work, just in, in practical terms, is a nonprofit, is the Community Land Trust. It will own parcels of land and have like a geographic boundary that's sort of like its service area, almost like a, you know, a city or a ward or something like that. Within that service area, the people who are residents in that area have a vote and a say in how the land that the community Land Trust owns can be utilized and set the terms for how it's used.

A big benefit is oftentimes the Community Land Trust owns the land, but individuals will own the homes that sit on top of the land. So dividing the value between the land and the house makes the house cheaper. And also with it being owned, with the land being owned by the community Land Trust, they can set terms on how much, you know they're going to charge to the next person that buys a home on that land. You know how property taxes are divvied out and so it can dramatically reduce the cost of housing. And having that extra, you know, element of a community-supported board that can vote on how the land is used, it's kind of a funny thing like calling it collect the land ownership.

It is in a way because people have a say, but really it's that one entity that owns the land, you know, people will be able to, you know, express their concerns or voice their desires for how that land is utilized. So while it is used primarily for affordable housing in, you know, its most common iteration, it can also be used for, you know, gardening space or business incubation or retail development. I mean it's been, it is currently being used like that all over the country in different community, Land, Trust. And so that's the idea with the model.

Then in terms of like how it was conceived in East Winston, once again like a lot of places in this country development is sort of creeping in. You know, taking that history that we just talked about, the city now sees E Winston, you know, historically kind of ignored by the city as prime for development because development is sort of moving eastward on the West side of 52. But now it's creeping in.

And so island cultures, you know, sees the writing on the wall and are exploring this idea of owning land in the way that people can have some say in how it's developed in very concrete terms, not just asking the powerful for some consideration, but saying no, this is actually ours and this is what we want to see done with it. I guess in a nutshell, that's the model and that's a little bit of the hope for what the model can do.

Frisan – I think you described it really great in terms of, to simply put it, people have more control over the land that they live on in the community that they want to do with it. You had mentioned in the

beginning a little bit of how this research project had came about and this is a historically relevant model. Can you describe more about this collaboration?

Turner – So from 2022 to 2023, well, I guess if we're rewinding all the way back like during the pandemic, you know 2020 and on, I really leaned into food advocacy and got involved in a lot of groups that were meeting virtual[ly]. So statewide people from Eastern North Carolina, Western North Carolina and everywhere in between getting on Zoom calls trying to find a way that they could collaborate on a vision for, for food equity in the state.

We did a lot of meetings with senators and representatives at the national level that represented North Carolina, but also some state-level advocacy as well. And so in that experience, I got connected with different people across the state and eventually with Community Food Strategies who's a long-standing organization. They're they're really kind of a unique model. There are others like them across the country, but they're unique in that they are an organization made-up of organizations.

So there are people that are already kind of doing work in food that come together in this community, food strategies collaborative to to find ways to, you know, kind of strengthen the food system from the different points of view that they have. You know, some come from universities and extensions, some come from nonprofits who work with rural communities or who work with farmers or, you know, whichever branch they come from, they can kind of have that collective vision. But because you know they have their own areas of specialization and you know their own priorities on the employment side and also with like working as organization, they don't have the same amount of time to dedicated to relationship building at like a a smaller scale at a local level or regional level.

And so they created these regional network Weaver positions in 2022 to be filled in the Charlotte region, the Research Triangle in different parts of the state So that those people who lived in that area, who already had some relationships in that area could do some work of leaving that network. And so if you're in Charlotte, you may not know what's happening in Rowland County, which is a few, you know, miles north or in Catawba County or in Cabarrus County. And so, you know, finding ways to to leverage those connections that you already have by virtue of being in that place.

I live in Salisbury, which is in Rowland County, so I kind of have that local experience living there. But then I'm also a student at UNC Charlotte, and so I travel between those places a lot. So I spent that year 2022-2023 doing that work of, you know, trying to find ways to partner between the counties and making sure that, you know, if one group needed help, they could get resources from the other group if need be or could learn from that other group if they had, you know, learned through trial and error or had some, you know, really great successes, you know, what did they do well and, you know, what kind of information would they pass along, that kind of thing.

I say all that to say that doing that work and being in that role and being in the Community Food Strategies Network led to my connection with Island Cultures. Because both Michael Banner and Marcus

Hill, who were sort of the first two people I really got in touch with through island Cultures, had been working with Community Food Strategies for a long time.

And so when I went to Community Food Strategies, when I was in the development of my proposal, I was like, hey, I'm, you know, my mind was sort of in this space of trying to understand what role government played in food justice versus the community. Like, who's really putting the bill, for lack of a better term, Like who should really be the most involved in creating solutions and implementing solutions? Because on the one hand, if the government is responsible for creating injustice, in my mind they should be, you know, responsible for for changing things. But on the other hand, there's a lot of mistrust and there's a lot of reasons why someone wouldn't want the government meddling even further and potentially making things worse, but that you don't also want to burn communities.

And so that was sort of the balance in my mind. It's like, you know, trying to explore that question and that was the just vague idea that I had. But I went to community food strategies. The people I've been meeting let them know that and then they are the ones that kind of put me in touch with island cultures. And so that's really the, the initiation of that, you know, process. But then after a, a phone call with Marcus, it was just a series of meetings, you know, OK, it seems like this could work, You know, maybe we could explore this further. And then, unfortunately, where I live in Salisbury, I'm like halfway between Charlotte and Winston.

So it's really, you know, not that big of a deal for me to drive up there. So I drive up there, meet at the library, we talk, we, you know, bounce ideas off of each other and just, you know, slowly over time it would develop that way. I would do some reading. I'd put together some ideas for the project. I'd come up there with like an interview guide or something, and we'd go over it together. Like, “Do these questions make sense?” “Is this sort of heading in the direction that y'all want this project to go,” and that sort of thing?

The collaboration really came from that regional network, Weaver Community Food Strategies, you know, Orbit being involved in that work, both of us having that mutual experience and mutual connections. And then from there, it's just been a matter of, you know, staying in touch, phone calls, in person meetings and that kind of thing.

Frisan – Awesome. Thanks for explaining that. In terms of funding, I know this is a pretty early project in terms of development, but I saw that your team is a fellow of the Spatial Justice Studio. So I was wondering if you could explain a little bit about that and then also define spatial justice or any similar terms such as uneven development.

Turner – Yeah, so we applied. I'm always fuzzy on the dates, but we applied earlier this past year, 2023, and we're fortunate to receive the fellowship. I believe they announced it to us in October of last year, last fall. The Spatial Justice Studio is an organization that is supported by both Winston Salem State University and the UNC School of the Arts. Both universities are in Winston Salem and the whole

purpose for the for the studio is to support this kind of work support people in better understanding spatial injustice in Winston Salem and also you know ways to address that and create spatial justice in Winston Salem.

So it it has a very local focus of Winston and really the fellowship is only open to faculty at either those universities or people in the community. And so that's kind of how I was able to be a part of that is because we, you know, worked on the project as a team. Michael and Marcus are both locals and so as a group we applied and got the funding together.

Spatial justice is, to put it succinctly, I think, just to finding a way to resolve inequalities that exist across space. And I know that's kind of using the word in the definition. But, you know, just in bare terms like this side of the city's doing worse than that side of the city or this neighborhood doesn't have any issues with foul odors, but this one does. “You know why? And what can be done to resolve that?”

You know, we don't want, you know, one group to think, oh, you know, once in Salem is the best place to live ever. “Public services are fantastic. My neighborhood is so clean. This, that and the other.” And then another group saying I've had the exact opposite experience, like “I can't ever get a bus to come through my bus stop. It seems like they're always 20 minutes late. There's all kinds of really loud and unsettling noises outside my house because I live close to a, you know, fill-in-the-blank industrial facility.”

I mean, so seeing these differences between places and understanding like how they emerged, is there a nefarious reason why they emerged, or even if it was just ignorance? I mean, why does one group, why is one group strapped with the burden of dealing with these problems and another group isn't? And how can we help the group that is, you know, get out of that situation, whatever that means.

You know, if that means, you know, changing the way resources are distributed throughout the city or changing the way that people can make change for themselves, making it a little bit easier or removing some of those barriers. And so the solution is always like the hardest part. I feel like it's really easy to figure out what the problem is and maybe how it got there, but. So that's a goal with this project is we, we know a little bit about how the island in East Winston has come to be what it is today and how the government how business, you know how infrastructure has led to that reality. But figuring out what the future looks like and how it would be, how a spatially just future would look in East Winston for the island is kind of still in the process of being developed.

Frisan – And so for those listening, I was actually introduced to Dylan Turner through the Race, Ethnicity and Place conference where I saw you give a presentation on this project. So I was just wondering if you could explain to some of the listeners what skills and techniques you're using to actually conduct this research to make it equitable?

Turner – And just, yeah, that's a great question. I think first things first as far as making it equitable and just is really starting with the process. So I mentioned already a little bit like the collaboration and it's always tricky for me. I'm constantly navigating this in my own mind because this is for the community. It's also for my dissertation for my doctorate and you know I think about these things, the dissertation as

being like an individual demonstration of the skills you learn in your program right? But at the same time, not wanting it to be, you know all about me and for this project to be really impactful and to do what it's supposed to do, it has to have that like interaction.

So I've always been like trying to find a way to to still do the thing that I need to do to satisfy my my degree, but really making it more a participatory process. And so it starts with that, you know, having that open dialogue and transparency throughout the research design process. So not just like showing up to a community's doorstep with a, you know, research proposal in hand or a project in hand, but rather like coming back and forth, like going back and forth on early drafts, early research guides. And then from there, you know, getting into how the process will be carried out.

And so from from just the methodology and the techniques and skills we're using semi structured interviews. There are 9 questions in the interview guide with residents of the neighborhood that ask about, you know, real briefly in the beginning demographics.

But then what their ideal food system would be to kind of get into these questions about who should be responsible for, you know, realizing justice in the neighborhood? Who should be responsible for ensuring the food supply, ensuring food access? You know, how involved would you want to be? Would you really want to be, you know, hands in the dirt gardening or do you want to just kind of, you know, maybe buy food from a from a local vendor or is that even more than you really care about, You know what I mean?

So, like getting a sense for what people would want out of their food system and then really getting into the the meat of the Land Trust and collected land ownership. Like who even is the community? What is the community? What's the, you know, character of the community? Who's a part of it? Who's not? If someone's new to the area, could they become a part of the community? What would that look like?

And then you know whether or not land ownership is something that's important to them at all because some people may need really don't care, you know, maybe just would want to have the freedom to to kind of come and go as they please and would they want to be involved in this collective decision making process Because at the end of the day, democracy is hard and you know, you're dealing with a lot of different personalities and ideas about how things should go. And so is that something that would be a burden to them or is that something that they would really want to know that they're working with a a larger team to to realize that. So that's sort of what the interview guide covers.

We also are doing a participatory mapping process where we provide people with the paper map of East Winston, you know, sky down view and have different color markers for different questions and ask them questions about, you know, important areas in the community, places where they like to see more food being grown, places that they think are underused.

And after we, you know, get enough responses, we'll start to layer those, digitize them, layer them in the GIS, and start to see where there are the hotspots, you know, where there's some commonality, some

agreement, maybe one or two people said that this area was important, But you know, still kind of looking into that like why so few, if it appears to be, you know, a really significant area for this one, is very clearly important.

But still, why are there differences based on how long someone's been living there, whether they're a homeowner or renter, and that kind of thing? And so understanding first people's ideas about the community and then kind of drilling into like the actual, you know, the geographic extent of the community and the really important places. And not just assuming that at the outset because you know, island cultures and some of the leaders within that group, they have their ideas. But really going into the community, people that they know, maybe people that they don't know and seeing if those ideas jive or if there's some, you know, disconnect. And then participant observation too. And in the truest sense of that term, both participating and observing. And so, you know, attending a lot of meetings and taking note of how the meetings went. Also my reflections and my observations of, you know, my own experience there and also Michael's.

And I'm sorry if I'm kind of like delving into other questions, but you know, with the, the research being designed together, it's also being implemented together. And so Michael, you know, one of the leaders of island cultures is on the IRB protocol with me. And so we do all the interviews together. We sit down after each interview, we talk about it. You know, what was some of the takeaways? Was that different than what we expected? And so the participant observation, you know, I take a lot of the notes, we really kind of talk, but we're both kind of doing the same thing in different ways. And ideally, at the end of this whole process, we'll be able to kind of collaborate on that and sort of bring those two sets of observations together to, you know, develop a bigger picture of of how that research went and what our experience is worth doing it. So I'll leave it there for now. That's sort of how the techniques used in the process.

Frisan – Yeah, that's awesome. And you did kind of answer another question, but I think you lumping those together works perfectly fine. So I only have a few more questions left. The first one is, what are the next steps for your project? What direction are you expecting to go and what are you hoping to get out of it personally? And what are you hoping to get out of it for your community potentially?

Turner – Good question. So the next steps, well we're still we're still in the early phases so it's kind of completing everything so finishing all the interviews we hope to get 30 at least excuse me. And also I should say it I, I keep forgetting to mention it, but there's also a national component to the the study.

And so the hope is that after I I finished designing that process because I had to go back to the drawing board, we'll be able to interview leaders of community Land Trust elsewhere in the in the country to get their insights and feedback. And so that's also a next step is trying to finish that interview guide and start that process as well to get those perspectives. And then from there ideally we'll be done with you know, quote UN quote data collection by August.

But you know throughout that period from now until then and even beyond, you know having regular check insurance with the people who are already like in that leadership circle with island cultures and sort of their broader collective because there are you know, other organizations that are sort of in their network and also with the community, you know, a lot of sharing back whether that's a report of some kind or you know different presentation styles, posters or whatever ends up being you know, sharing that information back out. And one thing too that I didn't mention about the the process and sort of how everything will go, but you know, the data, all of the information, the interviews, the maps and all that stuff will be stewarded by island cultures in the long term.

So after the study's done, you know, my access to it ends and they'll have that data and you know, going forward, if they want my help, you know, synthesizing it or or talking about it, I'll be there. But they'll have that, you know, pool of information. And so that's sort of a next step that I see you know down the horizon is that transition period and then you know them using that information to to continue to advocate on behalf of their community and have a little point of leverage with the city.

That's something that's been really important to them is you know they have this research project going on and then some others. So having all of this information ready to go for the time when you know somebody comes in saying that they want to do something in the neighborhood or the city wants to do something in the neighborhood or you know, do you have an idea of what people in the neighborhood would want? That information is already there, it's already collected and it's collected by people that residents already trust.

And so seeing that as like a very distant next step, you know to be able to leverage that and I forgot to even mention like the real key to all this is like hopefully this will provide them with and I should say if this part of it makes it into the final edits, Michael is always checking me on my use of the word hope. I'd say hope a lot like hopefully we'll do this. So he's like we don't say hope, you know, we don't say hope, it's going to happen. So I just had that mental note.

But eventually, the results from this will inform whatever you know Land Trust or collected land ownership model they develop the community Land Trust is sort of what we're focusing in on specifically. There are some others but that's really like the primary one. But however, it looks you know legally or as a formal entity the the end goal for this research is that this information will help them to best design you know, that thing so that it is in line with community interest. It is you know transparent and democratic and can actually be utilized by people in a way that would be meaningful and would provide some real concrete ownership and say over how that Land's developed. And so you know not just the the results and the academic stuff and the publications but really like that thing. Whatever ends up being is a is a huge next step.

Then as far as what I hope to get out of it for myself and that that's a good one. I mean, already I am, you know, like almost like on-the-job training, Like I'm learning more and more about what research can look like because I didn't really come to Graduate School to be a researcher I never really wanted to be teaching was sort of what I was for lack of like being too romantic, like called to do, like that's what I

really wanted. And so the research has just been like, well, I have to do it. If I'm gonna do it, I want it to be meaningful. I don't want it to just be, I don't even know like a run-of-the-mill study or something like that. Not to minimize anybody's work, but just finding a a way for me to be motivated enough to do it throughout my program. I wanted it to be something that was really participatory and and action oriented.

And so, you know, with that being the case, I'm already learning so much about how to do research in a positive. And just way not to say that this is like a perfect example, but I'm like kind of learning as I go. Michael and I were like learning together. Like, “how is this partnership going to work? Who's going to ask the questions in the interview? How are we going to, you know, all this stuff?” We're figuring it out. I'm also learning a lot about you know how to you know how to ask questions in a way that you get the information that will be really useful to know to advocate for a community. So I have never really, despite trying to be involved in advocacy circles, I think just by by nature a little bit. I'm not the most like vocal person and like going out and doing all these things. So I've always been seeking a way to to fit into that space because it's like I want to see the world improve.

I want to see, you know, people live in a way that they want to live. And so just by being around, you know, this group and seeing how they move and seeing the things that they do, I'm learning from them in that way. But then also in doing this work, learning how to, you know, leverage your position in an institution, researcher or whatever to, you know, kind of help further some of those goals and really let the, you know, community be in the driver's seat as opposed to, you know, forwarding your own agenda. So that's a lot of personal growth for me.

And then I hope in turn, you know, wherever I end up in the long term, I'll be able to, if this goes, you know, all according to plan, like be able to replicate this model. And like, you know, if there's ever an issue that needs resolution and it's not something that's immediate but something that would like take some time, I can speak from that experience like, OK, I know, you know, if we start now and we kind of like get some of this information together, we can, you know, be a bit more prepared, you know, to answer questions and also to to have an idea of what a good solution would look like.

Because I think, you know, when the when the funding cycles come around and it's like you got a grant that's due in two months and you've got to implement some kind of impactful community project is you can't really spend those two months figuring out what would be impactful. You kind of want to already know what that is ahead of time. And then, you know, you'll be better prepared to, you know, go for the money or whatever it ends up being and pursue that goal. So yeah, I hadn't really thought about that question too, too, too much, but I think that that's what I would hope.

Frisan – Yeah, that's great. And that's also a great transition to this question because possibly some individuals listening might recognize these problems in their own communities. And So what are some ways that individuals can bring awareness in their own circles, areas, governments, etcetera?

Turner – Yeah. And I and I, I do remember seeing that question. I was still stuck on that one. I think I'm trying to get like the most succinct way to put it. And I- I also want to say all this with the asterisks like I just mentioned. I don't lump myself in the group of advocates, not because I don't see that I've done that kind of work. You know what I mean? Like to me, I have like a high bar for what that would look like. And I don't feel like I've met that. And so I don't want to speak as someone from experience who's like, Oh yeah, I know if you do XY and Z, you'll, you know, change what happened because I've been there and I've done that and I haven't.

I don't feel that I have. But you know with the expectations that I have with this project and then some of the work that I've done with them, but also like prior to with with some of these other organizations, I feel like at the end of the day it's all it all kind of boils down to like that coalition and collaboration and persistence. I am a little type A and like I really like to to keep my schedule on my To Do List and kind of plug away at all these things that you know I can control. But so many of these problems, whatever they are are much, much, much bigger than an individual. They're much bigger than communities, and so in order to address them, you need that broader coalition and collaboration.

And you can't. You don't wanna, you don't wanna disregard what your strengths are and what you bring to the table. But you also don't wanna let your ego be in the driver's seat and, you know, think that you have all of the answers and not be patient enough with people and push forward on something that you think would be best because you're ever, you've got a PhD or you've been working in a certain industry for 10 years. That deep collaboration is like, so key. And that persistence, that's something that I've learned so much from these folks.

Island Cultures, because this has been, you know, Island Cultures is an organization started in 2020. But Michael's work goes back even further than that. Marcus's work, Annika's work, Jory's work, they all go back further than that. And it's just that persistence over time. Like, there have been so many things that they've tried that have worked. They've tried and didn't work, and they're still here.

And when you talk to them, they're still, there can be some, you know, despair or a little bit of, you know, disappointment with maybe the city or somebody, but there's still a lot of hope and there's still a lot of, like, energy driving their work. And so to me that's been like a huge influence is like working together and not giving up it sounds like. So like I don't know like just do it, but I mean it's very, you know you you just got to chip away at things And so that is my. So as far as, like, how that would bring awareness to a problem, I think that when you are, you know, much larger than yourself, of course, that speaks volumes.

It's not just you showing up to the City Council or county commissioner's meeting. It's it's a whole team. And even if it was like [a] resource that you've done, that still is a larger number than just you. That's bringing all of those voices and perspectives to the table and making sure that it's just like, you know, not something that that slips off your radar, But you know, TBD, I hope it, you know, we'll see how it all plays out for me. But I think that that's what I'm learning more and more each day is just those those 3 qualities or two qualities, I guess, collaboration and persistence.

Frisan – Awesome. Thanks for explaining all of this. It was super informative. And goes beyond, just like food inequity, it really is a systemic problem. So if people are interested in learning more about your projects or your research, where can people get in contact with you or find out more about your work?

Turner – Oh man, so I'm on LinkedIn. That's like the only social media I use. You can read AI can send you the links too. You can read a snippet of the project's description on the Spatial Justice Studio website under our project. There isn't information about the project on Island Culture's website yet, but definitely share Island Culture's website to, you know, read a little bit about what they are and what they do and that's it. Right now, there's not really a lot of public facing materials on this work so far.

Frisan – Well, thank you so much. I'll have all of that linked in the episode description so anyone who is listening and learning more, connecting with you can definitely reach out if they're interested.

Turner – Yeah, Yeah. And e-mail. Send me an e-mail.

Frisan – Yeah, definitely e-mail. I'll be sure to leave that too.

Turner – I appreciate it.

– *Transition* –

Frisan – Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to this episode exploring the causes and demographics of those affected by food insecurity.

Check out the full episode's works cited and more on my website. Be sure to keep up with my updates on LinkedIn or Twitter for the latest episode updates.