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Tracing Food as a System of Oppression from Contemporary U.S. Food Apartheid Back to the
US-North American Slave Era

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Abstract

In a world where human rights violations occur daily, there is, unfortunately, no shortage of ways in which individuals are tortured. For the Black community, their horrendous experiences of being abused by Western hands began before their initial arrival to the United States in the 17th century - with their hands and ankles in shackles. This research paper argues that the current U.S. food supply ‘weaponizes’¹ food against African Americans for profit; and many of the conditions -and their associated impacts- in which many poor African Americans live, which this paper claims is as food apartheid, have been the by-product of systemic and structural racism. Moreover, this research paper investigates how food has been used as a tool of oppression against enslaved people in the United States to maintain the racial hierarchy. The tracing of food regulation by juxtaposing two time periods in the United States, which have resulted in African Americans being most impacted, depicts the evolution of one system of oppression strategically utilized to benefit one race consistently.

¹ Nina Martyris, “Frederick Douglass On How Slave Owners Used Food As A Weapon Of Control,” NPR, February 10, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/02/10/514385071/frederick-douglass-on-how-slave-owners-used-food-as-a-weapon-of-control>.

Introduction

As with all living creatures, humans need food to survive. Yet, food's meanings, values, and associations go well beyond meeting a basic physiological need. Food could mean national identity and culinary heritage². For some people, food is a means to derive pleasure, and for others, food is an occupational opportunity (i.e., nutritionist, professor, or chef). More sentimentally, food provides the gateway to connecting to a history that was once lost.³

However, the topic of food is quite sensitive as those expanding the subject provide profound examples of food's insidious past, present, and potentially ominous future. Unfortunately, humans live within social constructs, which often dictate who has food, who does not, and who has access to what foods.⁴ Food, particularly healthy food, within the United States, is unnecessarily scarce, especially for marginalized communities.⁵ "Food oppression arises from institutionalized, food-related policies and practices that undermine the physical strength and survival of socially marginalized groups."⁶ This research will examine how food-related practices have deep roots in inequity by analyzing its weaponization⁷ against the African American community by tracing two distinct and different eras of U.S. history, Slavery from 1619 to 1865 and to present-day.

² Chi-Hoon Chi-Hoon Kim, "Let Them Eat Royal Court Cuisine! Heritage Politics of Defining Global Hansik," *Gastronomica* 17, no. 3 (2017): 4. *Gastronomica* 17, no. 3 (2017): 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26362456>.

³ Roger R. Williams, dir., "Our Roots," *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, season 1, episode 1, aired May 26, 2021, on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

⁴ Joan Joan Gussow, "For The Record: Food and Nutrition Education: A Redefinition," *Teachers College Record* 81, no. 4 (May 1, 1980): 411–16. *Teachers College Record* 81, no. 4 (May 1980): 416, <https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=1033>.

⁵ Mumbi E. Kimani et al., "Associations of Race/Ethnicity and Food Insecurity With COVID-19 Infection Rates Across US Counties," *JAMA Network Open* 4, no. 6 (June 8, 2021): e2112852, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.12852>.

⁶ Andrea Freeman, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Milk: Food Oppression and the USDA," *UC Irvine Law Review* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 1254, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5wr1579p#main>

⁷ Martyris, "Frederick Douglass On How Slave Owners Used Food As A Weapon Of Control."

Not A Food Desert, But Rather Food Apartheid

‘Food desert’ is a term commonly used in academic scholarship. Research conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture describes a food desert as a low-income census tract in which at least one-third of the population does not have easy access to a supermarket.⁸ This is further than a one-half mile from the closest supermarket for low-income residents living in an urban setting.⁹ For a rural population, this means individuals with low income living more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket.¹⁰ With this definition, over seventeen percent of the U.S. population lives in a food desert.¹¹ The consequences of a lack of adequate and nutritious food have been well-documented as poor health outcomes, such as obesity.¹² Of the populations living in so-called food deserts, communities of color, specifically poor African American communities, are disproportionately impacted by the lack of nutritious food.¹³

It has been argued by nonprofits¹⁴, a student-led organization¹⁵, and activists¹⁶ that ‘food desert’ is an inadequate description of the food crisis in the United States, as it excludes the social and

⁸ “Documentation,” Economic Research Service U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/documentation/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Louise C Ivers and Kimberly A Cullen, “Food Insecurity: Special Considerations for Women,” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 94, no. 6 (December 1, 2011): 1740S, <https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.111.012617>.; “Access to Food that Support Healthy Eating Patterns,” Healthy People, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Last updated February 6, 2022, <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/access-to-foods-that-support-healthy-eating-patterns#:~:text=Studies%20show%20a%20relationship%20between,patterns%20and%20negative%20health%20outcomes.&text=Lower%20rates%20of%20obesity%20and,service%20restaurants%20and%20grocery%20stores>.

¹³ Kelly Brooks, “Research Shows Food Deserts More Abundant in Minority Neighborhoods,” *The Hub*, 2014, <https://hub.jhu.edu/magazine/2014/spring/racial-food-deserts/>.

¹⁴ Isabel Lu, “Food Apartheid: What Does Food Access Mean In America?” T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies, September 3, 2021, <https://nutritionstudies.org/food-apartheid-what-does-food-access-mean-in-america/>

¹⁵ “‘Food Apartheid’ (Not ‘Desert’),” Campus Environmental Center, Accessed May 20, 2021, <https://utenvironment.org/projects/microfarm/food-justice/glossary/food-apartheid-not-desert/>.

¹⁶ Anna Brones, “Food Apartheid: The Root of the Problem with America’s Groceries,” *The Guardian*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/15/food-apartheid-food-deserts-racism-inequality-america-karen-washington-interview>.

racial inequalities that give rise to the lack of nutritious foods.¹⁷ It also implies that the lack of nutritious food in marginalized communities is a natural phenomenon rather than a result of racist structural processes¹⁸. Karen Washington, an African American Woman, TedTalker, and activist for Black farmers, calls ‘food deserts’ “an outsider term” because it diminishes the potential of the affected community.¹⁹ Washington also says that the term “Food desert doesn’t open up the conversation that we need to have when it comes to race, when it comes to income inequality, when it comes to so much.”²⁰ Therefore, this research will use ‘food apartheid’ to emphasize the right to food and health as a racialized human rights issue.

Objectives

This thesis will develop a deeper understanding of food oppression against African Americans by tracing that system of oppression from the present-day U.S. food apartheid to North American slavery, through three interrelated aims: 1) describe how food apartheid is a by-product of institutional and systemic racism and how it manifests as malnutrition, whether it is under-nutrition (not enough to eat) or over-nutrition (too many empty calories, yet lacking necessary nutrients), 2) understand how food was strategically regulated by Whites to minimally feed and punish enslaved people, to generate capital for the White community and sustain the racial hierarchy in the United States during antebellum Slavery; 3) contrast how food is used as a form of oppression in current food apartheid and during antebellum U.S. Slavery by juxtaposing these

¹⁷ “Food Desert Vs. Food Apartheid.” Forsyth Farmers’ Market, June 26, 2020. <https://forsythfarmersmarket.com/blog/foodapartheid#:~:text=While%20the%20term%20food%20desert,on%20the%20grounds%20of%20race>.

¹⁸ Nina Sevilla. “Food Apartheid: Racialized Access to Healthy Affordable Food.” (blog). *NRDC*. April 2, 2021. <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/nina-sevilla/food-apartheid-racialized-access-healthy-affordable-food>.

¹⁹ Brones, “Food Apartheid.”

²⁰ “Food Desert Vs. Food Apartheid.”

two periods of U.S. history. This thesis will show how food has been weaponized²¹ to generate and maintain racial and health inequity with these three aims. Lastly, these aims strive to break the standard narrative and misconception that malnutrition is a health issue only faced in developing countries²². Therefore, this research adds more nuance to the compounded debate on obesity. This compounded debate on obesity also contributes to the understanding that someone can lack nutrients and while simultaneously having obesity which often referred to as a ‘double nutrition burden.’²³

Research Question and Significance

The primary research question for this thesis is, “How does understanding U.S. Slave-Era food provisions and contemporary food apartheid illustrate how food has been an enduring form of oppression on the bodily experiences of African Americans?”

This research aims to expand on the literature that explains the ways food is currently being used to oppress the African American community by analyzing how food oppression against African Americans has been deeply-rooted in U.S. North American history. By analyzing instances of negative food experiences found in formerly enslaved accounts, this could demonstrate food oppression.

²¹ Martyris, “Frederick Douglass On How Slave Owners Used Food As A Weapon Of Control.”

²² Tracie McMillan, “The New Face of Hunger,” National Geographic Magazine, 2014, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/hunger/>.

²³ “Double burden of malnutrition,” World Health Organization, <https://apps.who.int/nutrition/double-burden-malnutrition/en/index.html>.

This research explores oppressive food tactics used against enslaved Africans and African Americans to re-enforce racial hierarchies. For this reason, this thesis is grounded in human rights. With the literature review explaining how food oppression operates against African Americans currently in the United States, and the findings section synthesizing the various methods through the utilization of food to oppress the enslaved during North American Slavery, this research traces how one system of oppression - food oppression - has persisted over to different epochs of North American history. This thesis, therefore, explores how systemic racism has evolved through food oppression. North American Slavery was the epoch of history selected for this research because this era depicts how oppression has manifested from a time when the rights of African Americans were revoked to the present-day in U.S. history when this marginalized group seemingly has freedom.

My research is relevant and significant to the realm of human rights research because it investigates one human rights issue - racial injustice - and its relationship between two fundamental human rights: The Right to Adequate Food and The Right to The Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health - both are stated in International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.²⁴

²⁴ "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," United Nations Human Rights Office of The High Commissioner, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>.

Current Literature and Theoretical Framework

*"I don't know what most White people feel in this country, but I can only include what they feel from the state of their institution."*²⁵ - James Baldwin.

An Apartheid is a system of oppression used to maintain hierarchical structures in which the white race benefits at the expense of non-whites.²⁶ It establishes racial segregation through discriminatory policies, laws, and economic discrimination.²⁷ The most well-known example of apartheid being enacted is in South Africa, where hundreds of racially-discriminatory laws were passed to separate Black South Africans from Whites.²⁸ Several lives were lost as the police force "opened fire on unarmed protestors, leaving nearly 70 dead and 180 wounded, including children.²⁹; thousands were imprisoned for protesting, and the oppressed had their fundamental rights and liberties -- to vote, to housing, and education — violated³⁰. Therefore, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court considers apartheid a punishable crime.³¹

The review of some of the 20th -21st Century historical policies and practices will justify why the food crisis that disproportionately impacts African Americans should be considered food apartheid (that is, a system of oppression) rather than a food desert (that is, simply a place that lacks healthy food, ignoring systemic issues).

²⁵ Peck, Raoul, dir., *I Am Not Your Negro*. Velvet Film, Velvet Films, Artémis Productions, Close Up Films, 2018, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80144402>.

²⁶ Global News, "Apartheid: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's "apartheism" Laws", filmed April 25, 2019, 6:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJOU9YYMzpw>.

²⁷ Shane A. Norris et al., "South African-Ness Among Adolescents: The Emergence of a Collective Identity Within the Birth to Twenty Cohort Study," *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 28, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431607308674>.

²⁸ Global News, "Apartheid," 1:47-1:52.

²⁹ Ibid, 3:58-4:10

³⁰ Ibid, 3:48, 2:00-2:17.

³¹ "Apartheid," Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/apartheid>.

The Cultivation of the Redlining Act

“I don’t know if the Real Estate Lobby has anything against Black people, but I know the Real Estate Lobby keeps me in the ghetto.”³² - James Baldwin

After the Great Depression, the United States suffered from a housing shortage due to the economic recession.³³ The National Housing Act of 1934 and, consequently, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) were created to mitigate foreclosures and boost homeownership by insuring mortgages, reducing interest rates and down payments.³⁴ These benefits, however, were only granted to a specific racial demographic, and this was achieved through the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). HOLC was a government agency that established ‘residential security maps,’ which deemed neighborhoods as desirable or undesirable through green, blue, and red outlines placed on maps.³⁵ The desired areas were outlined in green or blue and were for majority-white residents, while predominantly black neighborhoods were delineated red, hence the term “redlining.” Granting loans to Black people, which would effectively allow them to live in their desired areas, were reckoned unwise or ‘hazardous’³⁶ to banks, as the HOLC repeatedly based their lining standards on the fallacy that Black people would lower the value of white homes.³⁷ This discouraged lenders to loan money to Black people, leaving them to live in worse urban-housing conditions, while Whites were permitted

³² Peck, Raoul, dir., *I Am Not Your Negro*. Velvet Film, Velvet Films, Artémis Productions, Close Up Films, 2018, <https://www.netflix.com/title/80144402>.

³³ Diane Kuthy, “Redlining and Greenlining: Olivia Robinson Investigates Root Causes of Racial Inequity,” *Art Education* 70, no. 1 (January 2017): 50–57. <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/redlining-greenlining-olivia-robinson/docview/1889708812/se-2?accountid=10226>.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 52.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 52.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 52.

³⁷ Terry Gross, “A ‘Forgotten History’ Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America,” NPR, May 3, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>.

mortgage loans and placed in adequate housing in suburban areas.³⁸ HOLC's redlining map was a prominent racist policy that established hierarchical boundaries between Black people and White people in the early 20th Century.

The Devastating Impact of Highway Construction in The United States

Transportation, particularly the construction of interstates in the 1950s, was another tactic used to instill residential segregation.³⁹ Some highways followed the same terrain of certain redlined districts.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act intentionally built some highways through Black communities, effectively destroying them.⁴¹ However, this was masked as “slum removal,” “urban renewal”, or “slum clearance” a technique to “clear “blighted”” neighborhoods.⁴² Yet, not all Black neighborhoods that faced “slum removal” struggled economically; many had thriving communities.⁴³ In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - a former redlined city - one Black community called Hill District was severely impacted and financially deprived of Pittsburgh's “thriving downtown area” because of Interstate 579.⁴⁴ A once seemingly economically stable Black community, the interstate left thousands of Black families of Hill District displaced; their businesses were “lost”, and nearly half of the community

³⁸ Ibid; Kuthy, 52.

³⁹ Deborah N. Archer, “‘White Men’s Roads Through Black Men’s Homes’: Advancing Racial Equity Through Highway Reconstruction,” *Vanderbilt Law Review* 73, no. 5 (September 2020): 1259-1260, <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vlr/vol73/iss5/1>

⁴⁰ Noel King, “A Brief History Of How Racism Shaped Interstate Highways,” *NPR*, April 7, 2021, sec. History, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/07/984784455/a-brief-history-of-how-racism-shaped-interstate-highways>.

⁴¹ Archer, “‘White Men’s Roads Through Black Men’s Homes’”, 1260.

⁴² Ibid, 1265, 1276.

⁴³ Ibid, 1265.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1266.

now lives in poverty.⁴⁵ The construction of highways caused physical re-location, economic despair, and psychological distress as parts of Black communities were obliterated.⁴⁶

The Ripple Effect of Racist Acts on Food Access

Unfortunately, the federal redlining policy, compounded by the building of the interstates, perpetrated massive ripple effects for decades. Exemplified in the 1960s, businesses like the food industry began to disinvest in Black neighborhoods, fearing that they wouldn't generate revenue.⁴⁷ The criteria that investors, like banks, based their decision-making on were the false stereotypes of race, income, and the neighborhood's reputation – the similarity on supermarket investments is uncanny.⁴⁸ This reluctance to invest in a supermarket in poor neighborhoods, especially poor Black communities is called 'supermarket redlining.'⁴⁹ As a result of 'supermarket-redlining,' fewer supermarkets have been built in low-income, predominantly Black neighborhoods. Due to the locations of these supermarkets, poorer residents make the difficult choice between purchasing unhealthier but cheaper food options or spending money on transportation to arrive at healthier shopping alternatives.⁵⁰ Therefore, income heavily influences

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1266.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 1267.

⁴⁷ Nathaniel Meyersohn, "How the Rise of Supermarkets Left out Black America," CNN, June 16, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/16/business/grocery-stores-access-race-inequality/index.html>.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Eisenhauer, "In Poor Health: Supermarket Redlining and Urban Nutrition," *GeoJournal* 53, no. 2 (2001): 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41147594>.; Ibid, Meyersohn; sense-of-food-access-in-atlanta/

⁴⁹ Eisenhauer, 124; Meyersohn, "How the Rise of Supermarkets Left out Black America,"; From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining: Making Sense of Food Access in Atlanta," *Atlanta Studies*, <https://www.atlantastudies.org/2018/08/14/jerry-shannon-from-food-deserts-to-supermarket-redlining-making-sense-of-food-access-in-atlanta/>

⁵⁰ Eisenhauer, "In Poor Health," 130.

many low-income individuals to choose the former.⁵¹ Thus, there is a lower quality of health outcomes in supermarket redlined areas.⁵²

The influx of Unhealthy Food Alternatives in Poor-Black Neighborhoods

In response to the lack of supermarkets in many poor Black urban neighborhoods, an influx of fast-food chains developed.⁵³ Convenience⁵⁴ and liquor stores⁵⁵ are also prevalent in these areas. These food complexes are saturated with processed, high-carb, and high-sugar foods. While their healthy food selections are severely limited and expensive.⁵⁶ Even with the finite number of healthy foods, those who live in poor areas with access to those foods say, “...you know you can’t trust food in the hood.”⁵⁷ Unfortunately, with the economic inequities that place impoverished Black populations living under food apartheid at a significant disadvantage, it is, therefore, understandable that eating these unhealthy food types is often unavoidable. Their choice to live and eat healthier has either been taken from them, or the decision to eat healthy food alternatives is exceptionally challenging.

⁵¹ Adam Drewnowski and Petra Eichelsdoerfer, “Can Low-Income Americans Afford a Healthy Diet?,” *Nutrition Today* 44, no. 6 (2010): 246, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2847733/>.

⁵² Ibid, 125; Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, *Good Food: Examining The Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago* (Chicago: Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2006), 7, <https://www.marigallagher.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ChicagoFoodDesertReport-Full-1.pdf>

⁵³ VICE News, “Trying to Eat Healthy in a Food Desert,” filmed March 28, 2021, video, 9:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDbENx9c3Fg>.

⁵⁴ IOM (Institute of Medicine) and National Research Council (NRC), *The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts: Workshop Summary* (Washington DC: National Academies Press (US), 2009), 14-15

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208011/>; Shannon, “From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining.”

⁵⁵ IOM (Institute of Medicine) and National Research Council (NRC), 28.

⁵⁶ Angela F. Leone et al., “Store Type and Demographic Influence on the Availability and Price of Healthful Foods, Leon County, Florida, 2008,” *Preventing Chronic Disease* 8, no. 6 (October 15, 2011): 4, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3221579/>.

⁵⁷ TEDx Talks, “The Underlying Racism of America’s Food System: Regina Bernard-Carreno at TEDxManhattan”, filmed March 11 2014, video, 16:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0XG-ETx5fk>.

Strategic Manipulation of Ingredients and its Deleterious Effects

The food supply is unhealthy and disproportionately overabundant in Black neighborhoods. One ultra-processed food type in the food supply, Doritos Locos Tacos, contains strategically added ingredients whose properties make consumers crave more.⁵⁸ These ingredients have been deliberately used so that buyers continue to purchase these unhealthy items.⁵⁹ After over-eating highly processed food products with these similar properties, people can experience hormonal and brain communication changes.⁶⁰ With these types of food being more available and therefore eaten in Black neighborhoods, it's not far-fetched to assume that such harmful side effects heavily impact this demographic.

Targeting the Black community with Junk-Food Media

Despite this well-known relationship between unhealthy foods and poor health, a University of Connecticut study shows that junk-food advertising is disproportionately targeting communities of color in the media.⁶¹ Companies like PepsiCo, Hershey, Dominos increased the advertising spending of their junk food products to Black communities at much higher rates than white communities.⁶² While the study does mention a reason for the increase in junk-food ad consumption,⁶³ the major concern is that companies of their nature are aware of the unhealthy impacts their products have on consumers, but still choose to promote these harmful food types

⁵⁸ Aaron Byrd and Michael Moss, "What's In It | Doritos Locos Tacos," filmed October 1, 2013, New York Times Video, 2:12, <https://www.nytimes.com/video/dining/100000002476509/whats-in-it-doritos-locos-tacos.html>.

⁵⁹ Byrd and Moss, "What's In it | Doritos Locos Tacos" 0:45-1:59.

⁶⁰ BBC, "UK Doctor Switches to 80% ULTRA-Processed Food Diet for 30 Days BBC," filmed May 28, 2021, video, 9:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4PFt4czJw0>.

⁶¹ Jennifer L. Harris, Willie Frazier III, Shiriki Kumanyika and Amelie G. Ramirez, "Increasing Disparities in Unhealthy Food Advertising Targeted to Hispanic and Black Youth," Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity University of Connecticut, January 2019, 1–6, <https://media.ruddcenter.uconn.edu/PDFs/TargetedMarketingReport2019.pdf>

⁶² Ibid, 6.

⁶³ Ibid, 5.

to communities that are already suffering from the health consequences of such products.⁶⁴ One of the authors of the study wrote in a statement to CNN that these companies "...are inadvertently contributing to poor health in Black communities by heavily promoting products linked to an increased risk of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure."⁶⁵

Obesity Epidemic: How this Health Issue is One Result of Food Apartheid, a Product Systemic and Institutional Racism

Obesity rates have tripled in America since the 1970s⁶⁶, and non-Hispanic Black people are the racial demographic with the highest rates in the country.⁶⁷ The World Health Organization categorizes obesity as a form of malnutrition.⁶⁸ Obesity is clinically defined by body mass index (BMI). BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by height in meters (squared). Obese individuals are those who have a BMI over 30.⁶⁹ What makes a person obese is complex, but in lay terms, obesity is an imbalance of energy by consuming more calories than is used to maintain the body and physical activity. Having this imbalance is harder to avoid when the food environment is filled with many calorie-dense, nutrient-poor food products, and opportunities for physical activity are lacking. Unfortunately, the nutrient-poor foods, such as sweetened beverages, snack foods, and fast foods that are often contributors to obesity, lack the necessary

⁶⁴ CBC News, "The Secrets of Sugar - the fifth estate", filmed October 3, 2014, video, 41:49 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3ksKkCOgTw>.

⁶⁵ Jessica Ravitz, "Black and Hispanic Youth Are Targeted with Junk Food Ads, Research Shows," CNN, January 15, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/15/health/junk-food-ads-black-hispanic-youth/index.html>.

⁶⁶ KHOU 11, "The Cold, Hard Facts about Obesity in America," filmed January 1, 2020, 1:23, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6gS5-02VYM>.

⁶⁷ "Adult Obesity Facts Obesity Is a Common, Serious, and Costly Disease," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 12, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>.

⁶⁸ "Fact Sheets - Malnutrition," World Health Organization, accessed February 9, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition>.

⁶⁹ KHOU 11, "The Cold, Hard Facts about Obesity in America" 0:35.

nutrients, increasing the likelihood that obese individuals may be nutrient deficient.⁷⁰ This medical condition has potential for serious health consequences such as “heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer”⁷¹, as well as obesity hypoventilation syndrome.⁷²

The discourse on the obesity pandemic is complex and complicated as it incorporates several varying opinions. For example, some, specifically fat activists or feminists, argue that the topic of obesity can be problematic because the topic often re-enforces neoliberalism ideologies⁷³ and society tends to use anti-fat rhetoric to combat obesity, which is particularly harmful to women.⁷⁴

Stigma and discrimination against highly overweight people are unfortunately common within North American culture.⁷⁵ These misconceptions include but are not limited to obese people being perceived to be lazy⁷⁶ and that their obesity stems from poor personal behavior⁷⁷, such as repeatedly choosing to eat unhealthily is what contributes to someone’s obesity. Therefore, it is justifiable in the eyes of those who stigmatize obese people to continue discriminating against them to motivate individual responsibility and change obese peoples’ lifestyles.⁷⁸ However, this mentality and these acts are incredibly harmful to the recipients. In fact, obese children are more

⁷⁰ Michael Via, “The Malnutrition of Obesity: Micronutrient Deficiencies That Promote Diabetes,” *ISRN Endocrinology* (March 15, 2012): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/103472>.

⁷¹ “Obesity,” USCF Health, accessed February 9, 2022, <https://www.ucsfhealth.org/Conditions/Obesity>.

⁷² “Obesity Hypoventilation Syndrome,” National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, accessed February 9, 2022, <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/obesity-hypoventilation-syndrome>.

⁷³ Julie Guthman, “Teaching the Politics of Obesity: Insights into Neoliberal Embodiment and Contemporary Biopolitics,” *Antipode* 41, no. 5 (2009): 1110–33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00707.x>.

⁷⁴ Mala L. Matacin and Melissa Simone, “Advocating for Fat Activism in a Therapeutic Context,” *Women & Therapy* 42, no. 1–2 (2019): 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2018.1524071>.; *Ibid*, 1121-1122.

⁷⁵ Rebecca M. Puhl and Chelsea A. Heuer, “Obesity Stigma: Important Considerations for Public Health,” *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 6 (June 2010): 1019–28, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.159491>.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 1019.

⁷⁷ Guthman, *Teaching the Politics of Obesity*, 1124.

⁷⁸ Puhl and Heuer, *Obesity Stigma*, 1019.

likely to be bullied in school than their average-weight counterparts.⁷⁹ According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Black children have the second-highest obesity rate in the country.⁸⁰ In *Our America with Lisa Ling*, a 12-year Black girl, Briana, is nearly 350 pounds, and she and her family cry as they recall the hurtful remarks thrown at her in school. Her classmates call her “fat” and “linebacker,” and Briana then explains that she “can’t take it.”⁸¹

The act of bullying has physical and psychological impacts on its victims, especially those discriminated against because of their weight. Studies show that ‘weight stigmatization’ is a “...significant risk factor for depression, low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction.”⁸²

Using stigma to motivate individual responsibility - a neoliberalism rhetoric⁸³ - for one’s health has also been apparent in the media.⁸⁴ However, individual responsibility for health is not the most helpful strategy when examining health.⁸⁵ It excludes the ‘food environment’, which encompasses the aspects of a location that contribute to and discourage individuals living within this area from consuming of certain food types.⁸⁶ While this essay fully acknowledges the

⁷⁹ M Van Geel, P Vedder and J Tanilon, “Are overweight and obese youths more often bullied by their peers? A meta-analysis on the relation between weight status and bullying,” *International Journal of Obesity* 38, no. 10 (July 8, 2014) 1266, <https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2014.117>.

⁸⁰ “Childhood Obesity Facts” Overweight & Obesity, CDC, November 12, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>.

⁸¹ *Our American with Lisa Ling*. Season 2, Episode 218, “*Generation XXL A 12-Year-Old’s Struggle with Morbid Obesity*,” Directed by Teresa MacInnes, Aired January 29, 2012, on OWN, <https://www.oprah.com/own-our-america-lisa-ling/generation-xxl-a-12-year-olds-struggle-with-morbid-obesity-video>.

⁸² Puhl and Heuer, *Obesity Stigma*, 1023.

⁸³ Guthman, *Teaching the Politics of Obesity*, 1124.

⁸⁴ R. Puhl, J. L. Peterson, and J. Luedicke, “Fighting Obesity or Obese Persons? Public Perceptions of Obesity-Related Health Messages,” *International Journal of Obesity* 37, no. 6 (June 2013): 774, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2012.156>; Fatima Cody Stanford et. al, “Media and Its Influence on Obesity,” *Current Obesity Reports* 7, no. 2, (June 2018): 193, [10.1007/s13679-018-0304-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13679-018-0304-0)

⁸⁵ Puhl and Heuer, *Obesity Stigma*, 1019.; D B Resnik, “Responsibility for health: personal, social and environmental,” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 33, (2007): 444, doi: 10.1136/jme.2006.017574; Kelly D. Brownell, et. al, “Personal Responsibility And Obesity: A Constructive Approach To A Controversial Issue,” *Health Affairs* 29, no. 3, (March 2010): 379, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0739>

⁸⁶ IOM (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (NRC). “Studying Food Deserts Through Different Lenses.” In *Studying Food Deserts Through Different Lenses*. Washington DC: National Academies Press (US), 2009), chap. 3, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208017/>. ; D B Resnik, 444; Ibid, 379.

tremendous work feminists are doing to change social norms surrounding sizeism and understands that the stigma often associated with obesity is another significant issue; this paper will focus on how obesity is indeed a health concern. This health crisis disproportionately impacts the African American community due to obesity resulting from oppression.⁸⁷ Thus, it is critical to understand the oppressive tactics that contribute to why Black people live under food apartheid to better analyze the factors influencing their ‘obesogenic environment’.⁸⁸

The laws that established racial segregation by redlining incentivized the strategic construction of highways and paved the way for prejudicial economic policies like supermarket redlining and targeted junk-food marketing. As a result of these laws and tactics, many low-income Black communities are disproportionately suffering under food apartheid. This research will investigate how far back the roots of food oppression extend by analyzing discriminatory practices and tactics used in antebellum Slavery against Africans and African Americans.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the racist ideologies that built the foundation for food apartheid, this human rights issue must be examined through the theoretical framework, Social Conflict theory. Social conflict, or conflict theory, is a framework positing that there are hierarchies in constant conflict within society for the maintenance or seizure of power for status, and scarce resources.⁸⁹ While this can

⁸⁷ Guthman, *Politics of Obesity*, 1129.

⁸⁸ Matthew Hobbs and Duncan Radley, “Obesogenic Environments and Obesity: A Comment on ‘Are Environmental Area Characteristics at Birth Associated with Overweight and Obesity in School-Aged Children? Findings from the SLOPE (Studying Lifecourse Obesity PrEdictors) Population-Based Cohort in the South of England’.”, *BMC Medicine* 18, no. 1 (March 18, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01538-5>.

⁸⁹ Anthony Oberschall, “Theories of Social Conflict,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 4 (1978): 291-292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2945973>.; BYU-Idaho Academic Support, “Race and Ethnicity According to Conflict Theory and Social Interactionism,” filmed December 10, 2015, video, 1:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGqAF6u7rww>.; “Reading: African Americans,” Sociology, Lumen, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/reading-african-americans/>.

often be achieved through violent means Social Conflict theory does not require violence is not every scenario.⁹⁰ This theory is essential to my research because this theory can analyze which oppressive tactics slaveholders used that involved the withholding of food, making food scarce for the enslaved. This research will investigate strategies of one hierarchy violently subjugating another hierarchy for power, status, and of coveted resources as well as “[neutralizing]” and “[injuring]...” the latter hierarchy.⁹¹ Physical violence was strategy enslavers deployed to establish and maintain their power dynamic⁹² as was “[Increasing a slaves] sense of ‘gratitude.’”⁹³ Further investigation into acts of violence, how the sense of gratitude was created or related to the use of food, and how food was used to maintain hierarchies will be beneficial for this project.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 291.

⁹¹ Ibid, 291 - 292.

⁹² “Reading: African Americans.”

⁹³ Brian R Warnick, “OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS,” *Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society* 39 (2008): 1, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071984.pdf>.

Chapter 2

Methodology

To answer the research question, “How does understanding U.S. Slave-Era food provisions and contemporary food apartheid illustrate how food has been an enduring form of oppression on the bodily experiences of African Americans?”, my methods use two different sources of data. The first is the literature review of present-day data on current U.S. food apartheid and the associated impact upon health outcomes for affected African American communities. The second source of information is how food was used as a form of oppression under American Slavery. These data were obtained through archival reading documents, nonfiction novels, autobiographies, and watching documentaries. Finally, by contrasting these two data sources, I have explained how food weaponization⁹⁴ has been a form of oppression against Black people in two different points of North American history.

Accessing the Information

To do a historical analysis of food pathways in the Black community during Slavery, I collected information on American Slavery, specifically the food supply, the slave diet compared to that of slaveholders, oppressive tactics used by slaveholders on enslaved African Americans that involved food; and on slave labor. This information was assembled through reading anecdotes and autobiographies of formerly enslaved African American people. The Library of Congress has seventeen Volumes of transcriptions of at least hundreds of interviews of former enslaved African Americans. These interviews are specifically about the realities of enslavement and what their lives currently entail post-emancipation. The reasons why I chose this archival work was

⁹⁴ Martyris, “Frederick Douglass On How Slave Owners Used Food As A Weapon Of Control.”

because the source is reliable, and much of the relevant information for my thesis is centralized in one location.

The Library of Congress Volumes I chose to read were of interviewees' residing in either the Northern and Southern regions of the United States. This project's non-archival sources of interest are non-fiction novels, namely, *High on the Hog* by Jessica B. Harris and *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* by Ira Berlin. *High on the Hog* is an essential read for this project because it examines the creative ways in which African Americans ate during Slavery to survive. The second non-fiction novel, *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* is a synthesis and analysis of the Library of Congress Slave Narratives. This body of work was chosen because it allowed me to read anecdotes from formerly enslaved individuals interviewed in different Volumes I didn't read, thereby gaining more evidence for my research.

Two autobiographies of a formerly enslaved individual that essential to my work are Part 1 of Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom. Part I. Life as a Slave. Part II. Life as a Freeman* as well as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. By analyzing these data collections, I will look for indications of intentional food insecurity and consequent under-nutrition as an oppressive tactic exercised upon the enslaved population in the antebellum United States.

Limitations

Sample Size

The entire seventeen volumes of the Library of Congress are thousands of pages long. Due to the limited time frame to research, this study will only choose shorter Volumes and read smaller sections of large Volumes archives. This can be a limitation because my research will not include the opinions and stories of all formerly enslaved people interviewed. Not having the relevant information from all of the narratives might not capture the full extent of everyone's lived experiences with food during slavery. Please note that the sample size would have been limited if I had read all the volumes. The Library of Congress interviewers could only interview a small percentage of formerly enslaved individuals. For the Library of Congress to interview all of the entire formerly enslaved population would not have been feasible for several reasons. Two of the main reasons were the considerable duration of slavery and the death of most of the slave population when the interviews occurred. For those reasons, the sample size limits my research project.

Transcriptions: Lost in Translation

Another limitation to my research project is that these massive volumes are, in fact, transcriptions of nearly one-hundred-year-old recordings. When reading transcripts of a recording, the tones of the interviewees are lost. The tone of one's voice is important to hear because it captures inflections in their words. Their delivery of particular words reflects their emotions regarding the topic. Not being able to listen to their tone of voice creates the possibility that the reader is thus missing the intentional cues the interviewee wants their audience to be aware of.

The second issue with reading these detailed transcriptions was that many didn't include the interviewer's inquiries. Therefore, in such cases, when the interviewee did not repeat the question, hence the query wasn't transcribed; the reader simply reads the answer without any prelude. This leaves the reader potentially misunderstanding the purpose of the content of that particular segment in the interview. As the researcher, this misinterpretation can be used unintentionally inappropriately as evidence in my findings.

Another barrier with the Library of Congress written interviews was one of language, which was four-fold. Considering that these interviews were conducted in the 1930s, particular English words were used that are currently no longer deemed appropriate due to their meanings and connotations. As someone reading these interviews in the 21st Century, those words could elicit specific responses and create bias. Two other reasons language was a bit of a hindrance were the thick font of the text and the removal/crossing out of the interviewee's words. Because I was unable to read those parts, I certainly could have lost the significance of the interviewee's message. The fourth and final reason why language was a limitation for this research reflects our incredibly exclusive institutions. Due to the vast majority of enslaved people not being granted permission to read, write, and receive a formal education, their pronunciation of transcribed words was difficult to follow. To be clear, the blame isn't on the former enslaved, but rather the institutions that failed to provide this population of people with the same level of academic opportunity as others. Due to the previously-mentioned language barriers, some parts of the interviews may have been lost in translation.

Personal Bias

It is essential to acknowledge how my positionality may impact how I interpret my research as a researcher. Given that I am half African American, I bring a particular view on race, racism, and Slavery, and my perception on those topics can place me at either a disadvantage or at an advantage when it comes to compiling analyzing my research. It is essential for such a sensitive topic to appropriately balance dissociating my positionality from my research and using my personal experiences and knowledge to decipher the relevant texts.

Chapter 3

The Research Findings

Please note that this research revolves around a highly sensitive topic; the examples below contain gruesome, vulgar descriptions and depictions of lived and inhumane experiences. These will elicit visceral responses.

The Food Experience during the Months-Long Journey to the Unknown for Enslaved Africans

For this research, the journey of utilizing food as a form of punishment against African Americans to establish a hierarchy within society should begin with the painful three century-long voyages, otherwise known as the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

This voyage begins on the shores of several African countries located in the western part of the continent. Millions of chained and shackled people were ripped from their families to be sold and exploited for their labor and knowledge. However, the latter hasn't been fully acknowledged and recognized by academia.⁹⁵ Aboard these ships, not only were the enslaved bound by chains but they were also given poor and limited rations of food. These rations, however, were not indiscriminately given; instead, they were meticulously calculated by Western nations.

“The economics of slavery were such that slavers needed to feed slaves a diet on which they would survive. Much ink flowed during the period of enslavement on how to feed the slaves inexpensively with foods that they would eat.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Judith A. Carney, “African Rice in the Columbian Exchange,” *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 3 (2001): 396, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3647168>.

⁹⁶ Jessica B. Harris, *High On The Hog A Culinary Journey From Africa To America*, 1st ed. (Bloomsbury USA, 2011), 30, Kindle.

These nations understood that in order to keep hundreds of Africans alive - who were chained and kept below the deck⁹⁷ - food was required because their working bodies would soon produce a massive profit. However, these careful food calculations were not created with a fair and humane open-mind. Depending on which nation sailed the ship, the food consisted of horse beans, yams, corn, rice, and slabber.⁹⁸ Slabber was a sauce that was drizzled over one of the foodstuffs previously mentioned. For some, “chunks of old Irish beef and rotten fish stewed to rags...”⁹⁹, or “...a mixture of palm oil, flour, water, and chili.”¹⁰⁰ was considered slabber. Despite there being different variations of this unsavory item, its ingredients remain as detestable as its taste, purpose, and name.

Not only was the quality of the food distasteful and offensive, but the quantity was also slim and only provided to the enslaved twice a day.¹⁰¹ The recommended number of meals a human should eat daily is still debated amongst the scientific community; however, the discussion around caloric intake is relatively sound in the nutrition field - which recommends an average of 2,000cal a day for adults.¹⁰² Nutritional understanding of the caloric content of food was minimal during the time of Slavery, and the findings of this research did not state how many calories enslaved Africans consumed; however, considering the limited meals and rations given to them, it can be inferred that their calorie requirements were not met during this long voyage.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 28-29

⁹⁸ Ibid, 31-32.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 32.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 32.

¹⁰² “How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label,” FDA U.S Food & Drug Administration, March 11, 2020, <https://www.fda.gov/food/new-nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label>.

In addition to slabber, enslaved people were given either horse beans, rice, corn, yams, or a combination of some of these food items.¹⁰³ In some cases, the sustenance was given at lower rations than initially provided as a form of punishment.¹⁰⁴ The repetitive, bland, restricted amount and limited variety of foods indicate that they were not offering this food for palatability, but rather as a means of survival to endure the cruelty inflicted upon them during and following the end of the voyage.

When they sailed closer to land, the crew gave the enslaved people larger portions of food and adequately bathed, groomed, and clothed them.¹⁰⁵ Their efforts were made to portray an illusion to purchasers that these Africans were of decent health.¹⁰⁶ The crew members' actions support the claim that these chained, beaten, and traumatized individuals were also poorly nourished.

The Diabolical Repercussions of Refusing to Eat

Due to the abhorrent nature of the food and the food provisions, it is unequivocally understandable why some enslaved people did not eat while aboard the ships. Since their dignity and well-being had been forcibly stripped from them for the benefit of Western nations, the refusal of food was one of the limited yet influential tools of empowerment.¹⁰⁷ However, their courageous acts were met with more horrific and vile treatment by the crew members because they understood that the wealth of the locations they were sailing to was dependent on the survival of enslaved people.

¹⁰³ Harris, *High on The Hog*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 35-36.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* 35.

One observer aboard the ship reported that

“...coals of fire, glowing hot, [were] put on a shovel, and placed so near their lips, as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats, of forcing them to swallow the coals, if they any longer persisted in refusing to eat...A certain captain...poured melted lead on such of the Negroes as obstinately refused their food.”¹⁰⁸

Whipping - a common and vicious practice during slavery - was used to coerce enslaved people to eat, as well.¹⁰⁹ Different methods, such as the *speculum oris*, were also used. This tool was a “three-pronged screw device” used to force-feed those who resisted sustenance.¹¹⁰ Its scissor-like shape would allow for the prongs to have easy access into a closed mouth and would then forcibly pry it open.¹¹¹ The food would then be funneled into the unwilling, gaping mouths of the enslaved Africans.¹¹² Crew members found other inhumane means to pressure enslaved people to comply with their rules. One story reported that the consequence of an enslaved mother who defied orders to eat was that she witnessed her child being thrown overboard.¹¹³

These examples illustrated a pattern that will be further outlined in this thesis. This pattern depicts how food had been strategically, routinely, and paradoxically used to subjugate Africans. Positions of power were reinstated through provisioning and disturbing meager foods to enslaved people and through the accepted authority to determine when/how to punish enslaved people if they resisted eating. Those who cruelly deemed it necessary for Africans to eat such low-quality food also established a hierarchy in which Westerners subdued and debased enslaved people.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 35.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 35.

¹¹¹ “Instruments of Slavery,” OnView: Digital Collections & Exhibits, Center for the History of Medicine at Countway Library, accessed February 9, 2022, <https://collections.countway.harvard.edu/onview/exhibits/show/this-abominable-traffic/instruments-of-slavery>.

¹¹² Harris, *High on The Hog*, 35.

¹¹³ Ibid, 35.

The power imbalance between both groups meant that the agency of choice was significantly weighed to one side. Those in power removed the option to eat preferred foods. They dictated why the enslaved were required to eat, when, and how to eat, and had the authority to unleash unspeakable punishments on the enslaved people who wished not to eat. These individuals were tortured and oppressed in various ways, including but not limited to being stolen, chained, tortured, and severely underfed. The examples presented merely to provide a glimpse of the painful realities that occurred to millions of Africans on the estimated 27, 233 transatlantic trips.¹¹⁴

After Port Dock Food Oppression Against the Enslaved Continued in The United States

Limited Rations and Limited Opportunity for Personal Food Cultivation

Food provided to enslaved people was called rations. The distribution of rations differed depending on the location and the slaveholder family. However, based on the findings, a pattern remained similar irrespective of the two previously mentioned variables. The examples below demonstrate the common practice that rations were meant to be provided weekly, and the food provisions were relatively minimal.

“De rations for a week wuz 3 lbs of meat a week, 1 peck ob meal, potatoes an' syrup.”¹¹⁵

“Uncle Charlie said Mr. Harris was a pretty rough master, and somewhat close. All rations were weighed out and limited.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 27.

¹¹⁵ Illa B. Prine and Federal Writers' Project., “Aunt' Annie Stanton, A Slave,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1936), 354, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Mary A. Poole, “Charlie Aarons, Ex-Slave, Says He Loved Young Marster John,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1937, 1, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

“Following the general routine of slaves, the Grandy family was given a shanty; food and clothing was also issued to them, and had to last until the master decided to give out another supply. Usually, he issued them their allowance of food weekly. Often the supply was insufficient for their needs.”¹¹⁷

"Our food consisted of bread, hominy, black strap molasses and a red herring a day. Sometimes, by special permission from our master or overseer, we would go hunting and catch a coon or possum and a pot pie would be a real treat.”¹¹⁸

Based on these findings and others similar to these examples, the enslaved did not control relatively simple yet crucial activities. For instance, their agency was limited when they were denied to determine when the food was provided, how much would be given, and what type of food they would eat. The enslavers made those decisions, which was another method to demonstrate who had power and who did not. By ruling food provisioning, it decreased the enslaved people’s agency while it simultaneously increased their dependency on the slaveholders for survival. This toxic dynamic allowed for the enslaver to reinforce their dominance and superiority by chipping away at small opportunities of freedom for the enslaved. This continued to re-establish strict boundaries between both groups and illustrated enormous disparities between the two. Whites infiltrated supremacy in every facet of an enslaved person’s life, and these findings show that the former did so through the insidious use of food.

Food has always been essential for human survival, and while the enslaved harvested food and created dishes, it was Whites slaveholders who had the ingredients at their disposal and had the authority to distribute them any way they deemed appropriate. Whites massively and

¹¹⁷ David Hoggard, “History of Ex-Slave and Civil War Veteran,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry - Wilson*, vol. 17, 17 vols., 1937, 21, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/170/170.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ Federal Writers’ Project., ed., “Dennis Simms, Ex-Slave,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks - Williams*, vol. 8, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 62, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/170/170.pdf>.

disproportionately benefited from this control because they dictated just how much they believed they deserved to eat while deciding that enslaved people weren't as privileged.

Analyzing the interviewees' information, it is undoubtedly clear that the rations were extremely low, both in quality and quantity. For example, the formerly enslaved seldomly recalled eating lunch, making it safe to assume that eating during formal lunch hours was not expected.

This is concerning for several reasons: the amount of nutritious food provided to the enslaved was too low for adults to function properly, let alone for humans who provided hours of strenuous and forced labor. To provide context, one interviewee explained that the enslaved were woken before dawn, at three or four in the morning, given a small breakfast like bits of flavorless cornbread¹¹⁹, and worked all day until dinner, which consisted of cornbread with greens, peas, and at times beans¹²⁰, and some the formerly enslaved explained that after their dinner they then worked again, well into the night.¹²¹

It is ambiguous how much food was provided to the enslaved children as rations. However, Frederick Douglass's explanation of his troubling upbringing recalls his harrowing realities as an enslaved child.

Our corn-meal mush, when sufficiently cooled, was placed in a large wooden tray, or trough, like those used in making maple sugar here in the north. This tray was set down, either on the floor of the kitchen, or out of doors on the ground; and the children were called, like so many pigs; and like so many pigs they would come, and literally devour the mush--some with oyster shells, some with pieces of shingles, and none with spoons.

¹¹⁹ Margaret Fowler, "Dem Days Wuz Hell," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Janet Kytte and Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 131–32, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 131-132

¹²¹ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F Miller, eds., *Remembering Slavery African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* (New York City: The New Press, 1996), 75 quoted in *American Slave*, Kindle.; Mary A. Poole, "Charlie Aarons, Ex-Slave, Says He Loved Young Marster John," 2.

He that eat fastest got most, and he that was strongest got the best place; and few left the trough really satisfied.¹²²

Another formerly enslaved individual recalls a similar situation she endured as a child. ““Lor, yes I guess we had 'nough, but, 'tearn't much, c'ase I 'members when we wuz li'l chillun we had a big wooden tray dat dey put de food in and we all set 'round dat an' et like li'l pigs.”¹²³

When comparing these bland, low quantity, monotonous, and limited food provisions to the amount of work enslaved exerted daily, it is evident that they weren't provided with nearly enough nutrition. This disproportionate ratio between food intake and energy expended is stark when the findings show that it was compulsory for an enslaved who worked in fields to pick several pounds of cotton, in some cases 500 pounds per person.¹²⁴ Those who wouldn't meet the expectations would be severely whipped.¹²⁵ As one formerly enslaved person explained, children were not exempt from reaching the required amount or from receiving punishment either.¹²⁶ The enslaved were working in the cotton fields and rice plantations as well. Rice was the building block for South Carolina's economy, and to maintain that wealth, high numbers of trees and swampland were removed for the establishment of rice plantations.¹²⁷ To fully conceptualize how much land was changed and the amount of labor that was required of enslaved people to generate massive profit from rice cultivation, a historian and author named Michael W. Twitty

¹²² Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1. – Life as a Slave. Part 11 – Life as a Freeman.* (New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 132-133, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html#p55>.

¹²³ Ila B. Prine and Federal Writers' Project., *'Aunt' Annie Stanton, A Slave*, 354, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 5 quoted in Library of Congress.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77, quoted in *Weevils in the Wheat*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 77, quoted in *Weevils in the Wheat*

¹²⁷ Roger R. Williams, dir. “The Rice Kingdom” *High On the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, season 1, episode 2, aired May 26, 2021, on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

stated, “More land was moved to create the landscape of rice plantations than was moved in the making of the pyramids in Egypt...The scars of the plantations can be seen from space.”¹²⁸ This amount of work enslaved people needed to complete daily is incomprehensible, and their situation was even further exacerbated with how limited their food supply was.

The enslaved were aware of the system they were trapped in, as Frederick Douglass described how the slave trade operated by saying the enslaved were “...food for the cottonfield and the deadly sugar-mill.”¹²⁹ While the food was kept from them, the bodies of the enslaved were ironically producing an abundance of food, which provided the profits for White slaveholders. Thus, the unfathomable forced labor of the enslaved was crucial for the country’s wealth.

To ensure the maximum work was produced, some enslaved were only given fifteen minutes to eat their dinner before returning to work that night.¹³⁰ If they ate longer than the overseer (someone in charge of the enslaved when the slaveholder wasn’t present) believed to be fifteen minutes, they would be punished by being tied and beaten.¹³¹ Then ground brick powder mixed with lard would also be poured over them and then “[rolled them] in a sheet.”¹³² The overseer believed that they ‘lost time’ working in the field because they continued to eat.¹³³

“No’m, I nebbah knowed whut it wah t’ rest. I jes wok all de time f’om mawnin’ till late at night.”¹³⁴...“Nebbah git much rest, had t’ git at foah de nex mawnin’ at’ sta’t agin Didn’t get much t’ eat, nuthah, jes a lil’ cawn bread an’ ‘lasses.

¹²⁸ Roger R. Williams, dir. “The Rice Kingdom” *High On the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, season 1, episode 2, aired May 26, 2021, on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

¹²⁹ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1. – Life as a Slave. Part 11 – Life as a Freeman*. (New York and Auburn Miller: Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 447, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html#p55>.

¹³⁰ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, “Remembering Slavery,” 75 quoted in *American Slave*.

¹³¹ *Ibid*,” 75 quoted in *American Slave*.

¹³² *Ibid*, 75 quoted in *American Slave*

¹³³ *Ibid*,” 75 quoted in *American Slave*.

¹³⁴*Ibid*,” 73 quoted in *American Slave*.

Lawdy, honey, yo' caint know whut a time I had. All cold n'hungry. No'm, I aint tellin no lies. It de gospel truf."¹³⁵

"All we knowed was work, and hard work. We was learned to say, "Yes Sir!" and scrape down and bow, and to do just exactly what we was told to do, make no difference if we wanted to or not. Old Marster and Old Mistress would say, "Do this! And we don it. And they say, 'Come here!' and if we didnt come to them, they come to us. And they brought the bunch of switches with them. They didnt half feed us either. They fed the animals better. They gives the mules, ruffage and such, to chaw on all night. But they didnt give us nothing to chaw on. Learned us to steal, that's what they done. Why we would take anything we could lay our hands on, we was hungry. Then they'd whip us for lying when we say dont know nothing about it. But it was easier to stand, when the stomach was full."¹³⁶

While the previously mentioned examples provided glimpses of the horrible realities regarding food oppression, some had positive food experiences. Even some of the same interviewees who discussed their limited food rations also explained that they were able to eat other foods, particularly those grown in gardens. It is not clear if all of the enslaved were granted this by their enslavers; however, the opportunity to plant one's food as an enslaved person was undoubtedly a privilege. Those who could were permitted by their enslaver to use their slaveholders' land to grow and/or raise various items such as chickens¹³⁷ and vegetables.¹³⁸

"Marse Ben was good to his slaves an' he 'lowed dem to have a little plot of groun' nex' to de cabins whar dey could raise dere own little crop."¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Ibid," 75 quoted in American Slave.

¹³⁶ Della Yoe Foreman and Federal Writer's Project, eds., "Robert Falls," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 15, Tennessee, Batson-Young*, vol. 15, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1941), 12, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/150/150.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Federal Writer's Project, ed., "Rev. Silas Jackson, Ex-Slave," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks - Williams*, vol. 8, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1937, 30, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/080/080.pdf>.

¹³⁸ Federal Writer's Project, ed., "James V. Deane, Ex-Slave," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8 Maryland, Brooks - Williams*, vol. 8, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1937, 6, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/080/080.pdf>.

¹³⁹ Mary A. Poole and John Morgan Smith, "Sho' I Believes in Spirits, Says Charles," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 174, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

"Ole Massa had a big garden an' we useta git de vega'bles we et f'um his garden. De folks was plenty good to us. Sometimes de mens would hunt 'possums an' rabbits an' wild turkeys, We sho' loved dem 'possums smothered in 'taters."¹⁴⁰

"...plenty vittels to eat: greens, cawn bread, meat an'all kinds of sweets. Some time de men folks would ketch a 'possum or rabbit. Marster had a big vegetable garden an' we was 'lowed to hejp our— selves f'um dis here garden."¹⁴¹

It is certainly rewarding to grow one's own produce as it increases self-sufficiency. However, there were specific stipulations regarding their food cultivation for those who could grow their own food. For example, the enslaved needed permission to harvest their food; the food was raised on their owner's land since enslaved people weren't given their own property. Their food cultivation activities were secondary to the work their enslaver demanded them to produce.¹⁴² While those allowed to grow their crops gained a small amount of freedom, this freedom was still managed since their food experiences were regulated.

For the enslaved people who were not given that opportunity, many were left hungry and completely depleted of energy from hard days' work. However, even after arduous days working, they would go hunting at night for possums and raccoons and/or steal food to satiate their hunger.¹⁴³ For some, they were required to ask permission to hunt for their food.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Preston Kline Opelika, "Emma Tells How To Make Them 'Teethe Easy.," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 236, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Pigie T. Hix and John Morgan Smith, "Aunt Hannah Has A Hundred Descendants," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Youngs*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1937, 238, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁴² Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, "Remembering Slavery," 71.

¹⁴³ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1. – Life as a Slave. Part 11 – Life as a Freeman*. (New York and Auburn Miller: Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 188, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html#p55>; Federal Writer's Project, ed., "James V. Deane."

¹⁴⁴ Federal Writer's Project, *Dennis Simms, Ex-slave*, 62, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/080/080.pdf>.

How the Use of Food was Psychologically and Physically Utilized to Punish the Oppressed

The sheer number of mentions of punishment in the examples provided indicates just how common abuse was instigated and utilized as a violent means to scare, torture, and belittle enslaved people and uphold inaccurate and unjustifiable racial hierarchies. It is clear that enslaved people did not have control over their circumstances. However, in the several cases that they did try to exercise agency, they were without fail met with unbelievably cruel maltreatment. Several punishments involved starvation and food to psychologically and/or physically abuse enslaved people.

Based on the limited and low-quality food rations enslaved people were provisioned and how often they were forced to labor, their hunger was understandably high. Therefore, stealing food to subsidize their nourishment was common. In one of Frederick Douglass's autobiographies, he mentioned that "[The enslaved] were compelled either to beg, or to steal, and [they] did both."¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, if they were caught stealing food, the repercussions were deplorable. One formerly enslaved person explained that one woman stole a chicken because she was starving. The slaveholder learned of this "...and caught her, while she had it on boiling. [The slaveholder] was so mad, he told her to get a spoon and eat every bite before she stopped. It was scalding hot but he made her do it. She died right away, her insides burned."¹⁴⁶

This severe incident is not only physically damaging but also psychologically. It is unclear whether there were other enslaved people nearby witnessing this tragedy, but regardless of others were present, the message remained clear: irrespective if you are incredibly hungry, if you steal

¹⁴⁵ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1. – Life as a Slave. Part 11 – Life as a Freeman*. (New York and Auburn Miller: Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 188, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html#p55>.

¹⁴⁶ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, "Remembering Slavery," 14 quoted in *American Slave*.

from those who are deemed superior, then you'll face severe intentional consequences that will endanger your life. These punishments were given apathetically, and because they occurred so frequently and arbitrarily, it is arguable that they were, too, delivered with satisfaction.

Another example demonstrates how psychological these power dynamics were. Douglass explains how those who were painfully hungry were handled when they decided to beg or steal when their hunger became unbearable.

A slave, for instance, likes molasses; he steals some; to cure him of the taste for it, his master, in many cases, will go away to town, and buy a large quantity of the poorest quality, and set it before his slave, and, with whip in hand, compel him to eat it, until the poor fellow is made to sicken at the very thought of molasses. The same course is often adopted to cure slaves of the disagreeable and inconvenient practice of asking for more food, when their allowance has failed them.¹⁴⁷

Deliberately pressuring someone to overeat a substance produces psychological turmoil for the one overeating. In Brian R. Warwick's short essay on Frederick Douglass' autobiography, he explains this psychological phenomenon by calling it "... a crude attempt at classical conditioning, that is, as the pairing of a stimulus (perceived freedom) with a response (physical sickness)...".¹⁴⁸ The enslaved who acted upon their natural impulses (perceived freedom), which inherently went against the slavery system because they were not granted freedom or rights, would face the consequences (physical sickness) that would manipulate them into believing that the freedom (more food) they desired was flawed. In the case of a starving enslaved person who begged the slaveholder for more food, the latter would provide the former with an exorbitant amount of low-quality food, thereby cheekily giving what the enslaved requested; force them to eat; and watch them suffer from over-indulgence. This form of conditioning established the

¹⁴⁷ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1*, 256.

¹⁴⁸ Warnick, "OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS", 26.

belief that the slaveholders' control over the enslaved was sufficient because enslaved people weren't coherent enough to make decisions, especially ones that opposed decisions created by those considered superior. Once again, food had been used as an extreme tactic to oppress an already immensely disadvantaged group.

Physical

Other methods of food oppression include the physical use of food. The examples listed below show how slaveholders, slaveholders' family members, and overseers tortured the enslaved with food items for more absurd, indefensible reasons.

“I hearn mammy say dat one day dey whupped po Leah twell she fall out like she was daid. Den dey rubbed salt an’ pepper on de blisters to make 'em burn real good.”¹⁴⁹

“...Mr. Woodson Tucker, was mean' as anybody. He'd whup you nigh 'bout to deaf, and had a whuppin' log what he strip 'em back naked and lay 'era on de log. He whup 'em wid a wide strop, wider'n my han', den he pop'de blisters what he raise and 'nint 'em wid red pepper, salt, and vinegar.”¹⁵⁰

'Twuz a long and a wide stiff leather strop w'at he had whut hung back uv his do' , and hit had big roun' holes in hit, and he'd git him a pot of warm salty water and set hit down by his side. Den he had 'em cetch de nigger and put his feet in de long block, and somebody helt dey han's, and he strip 'em stark naked, and he stretch 'em 'cross a log, and he dip de long stiff leather strop wid de roun' holes in hit in de briny salt water, and den look out 'case he comin' down on dat po' nigger's nekkid bottom. De holes in de strop dey sucks flesh up th'oo 'em, and de nigger's a hollerin' en ev'ybody so skeered dey right ashy, en dey can't nobody say a mumblin' word 'case dey so skeered.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Levi D. Shelby Jr. and Federal Writer's Project, "Today's Folks Don't Know Nothin'," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1936), 158, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰ Ruby Pickens Tartt, "Chillun In Ev'y Grabeyard," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1 Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1936, 74, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ Ruby Pickens Tartt, "Heaps of Dem Yaller Gals Got Sont Norf," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1937, 222, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

These excerpts were derived from three separate formerly enslaved people. They explained how spices, such as salt, pepper, an acid like vinegar, and warm water were rubbed into freshly wounded individuals after being whipped and beaten. The abuse had already been agonizing, but it was deliberately worsened with excruciating, stinging pain caused by food ingredients. These interviewees did not explain whether these spices and liquids were immediately washed off for pain relief.

The final example also encapsulates the extremities Whites took with food oppression to solidify their dominance over the enslaved. The expert explains how an enslaved child, no older than ten years old, faced horrifying consequences which left her face permanently disfigured after being caught stealing a piece of candy.¹⁵²

I seed dat candy layin' dere, an' I was hungry...had jes' little pieces of scrapbook each mornin' throwed at me from de kitchen. I seed dat peppermint stick layin' dere, an' I ain't dared go near it 'cause I knew ole Missus jus' waitin' for me to take it. Den one mornin' I so hungry dat I cain't resist. I went straight in dere an' grab dat stick of candy an' stuffed in my mouf an' chew it down quick so ole Missus never fin' me with it. Nex' mornin' ole Missus say: "Henrietta, you take dat piece o' candy out my room?" "No mam, ain't seed no candy." "Chile, you lyin' to me. You took dat candy." "Deed, missus I tel de trug. Ain't seed no candy." "You lyin' an' I'm gonna whup you. Come here." "Please, Missus, please don't whup me. I ain't seed no candy. I ain't took it." Well, she got her rawhide down from de nail by de fire place, an' she grabbed me by de arm an' she try to turn me 'cross her knees whilst she set in de ricker so's she could hol' me...De ole Missus lif' me up by de legs, an' she she stuck my haid under de bottom of her roc,er, an' she rock forward so's to hol' my haid an' whup me so mo'. I guss dey must of whupped me near a hour wid dat rocker leg a-pressin' down on my haid...Seem like dat rocker pressin' on my young bones had crushed 'em all into soft pulp. De nex' day I couldn' open my mouf and' I feel it an dey warn't no bone in de lef' side at all. An' my mouf kep' a-slippin' over to de right side an' I couldn't chaw nothin' - only drink milk...Don't even 'member what it is to chaw. Been eatin' liquid, stews, an' soup ever since dat day, an' dat was eighty-six years ago. Here, put yo' han' on my face - right here on dis lef' cheek- dat's what slave days was like....¹⁵³

¹⁵² Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 19.

¹⁵³ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 19-20 quoted in Weevils in the Wheat.

Not only was Henrietta's face permanently impaired but also her chance to enjoy the simple pleasures of eating certain food types was significantly hindered. All of the examples mentioned in this section have thus far shown how the literal use of food has psychologically and/or physically negatively impacted enslaved people. The following illustrations depict how withholding food was another tactic slaveholders practiced to subjugate the oppressed further.

Iffen you wan't whupped, you was put in de 'nigger box' an' fed cornbread what was made wldouten salt an' wid plain water. De box was jes' big 'nough for you to stan' up in, but hit had air holes in hit to keep you from suffocatin' Dere was plenty turnin' -- 'roun' room in hit to 'low you to change your position ever' oncet in a while. Iffen you had done a bigger 'nough thang you was kep' in de nigger box for months at de time, an' when you got out you was nothln' but skin an' bones an' scurely able to walk.¹⁵⁴

There were other instances when starvation became one of the only methods to torture an enslaved person if forms of punishment did not suffice. Below is a portion of an interview that describes how this tactic operated:

[Interviewer]: "Well how would they punish him then?"

[Interviewee]: "Give him an ear of corn. Jus' like you'd give me a ear of corn an' that would be for my dinner or my breakfas'...Night come, they'd give him a ear of corn, and tha's the way the fed him, you, punish him wouldn' give him nothing to eat...Got so they wouln' give him none. Wouln' give him nothing, but let him drink water."¹⁵⁵

From the provided list of examples above, it can be deduced that food had been used to oppress through several methods, which could be categorized in the following: 1) physical, i.e., using actual food, such as spices, grease, hot water to punish with, 2) psychological requiring enslaved people to overeat and 3) in the literal sense, i.e., providing inadequate food, forcing someone to

¹⁵⁴ Shelby Jr. and Federal Writer's Project, *Today's Folks Don't Know Nothin'.*, 159-160.

¹⁵⁵ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 18 quoted in Library of Congress.

eat before they can consume an adequate amount, and extreme starvation. As Henrietta's concluding remark stated: "...dat's what slave days was like."¹⁵⁶

The Realities of Slaveholders Were Vastly Different Than Those of The Enslaved, Especially Regarding Their Food Experiences

Based on the findings, it appears that some of the formerly enslaved were enslaved by wealthy White families. Their wealth allowed the slaveholders the luxury to eat splendid meals, which were, prepared by the enslaved. The examples below depict how lavishly many slaveholders lived, which sharply contrasts the tragic reality they purposefully created for those they deemed unworthy and disposable.

Mr Davidson and his family were considered people of high social standing in Annapolis and the people in the county. Mr. Davidson entertained on a large scale, especially many of the officers of the Naval Academy at Annapolis and his friends from Baltimore. Mrs. Davidson's dishes were considered the finest, and to receive an invitation from the Davidsons meant that you would enjoy Maryland's finest terrapin and chicken besides the best wine and champagne on the market. All of the cooking was supervised by mother...Mr. Davidson was very good to his slaves, treating them with every consideration that he could, with the exception of freeing them but Mrs. Davidson was hard on all the slaves, whenever she had the opportunity, driving them at full speed when working, giving different food of a coarser grade and not much of it. She was the daughter of one of the Revells of the county, a family whose reputation was known all over Maryland for their brutality with their slaves.¹⁵⁷

The enslaved labored for families that worked in high positions of power. In the United States, the most prestigious position of power is to be the country's President. Thomas Jefferson was a former President who enslaved several hundreds of people during his lifetime.¹⁵⁸ As President,

¹⁵⁶ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 20 quoted in *Weevils in the Wheat*.

¹⁵⁷ Federal Writer's Project, ed., "Caroline Hammond," in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8, Maryland Brooks - Williams*, vol. 8, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 19–20, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/080/080.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ Roger R. Williams, dir., "Our Founding Chefs," *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, season 1, episode 3, aired May 26, 2021, on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

one would expect to live an extravagant lifestyle, and for Jefferson, this was what he mirrored. According to a historian, Niya Bates, Jefferson aimed to exemplify what he believed an American means through various aspects of his luxury way of living, particularly through his food.¹⁵⁹ On his plantation, mouthwatering and brag-worthy dishes prepared by the enslaved were part of Virginian and French cuisine¹⁶⁰. However, there was a significant disparity between how Jefferson demanded to live compared to what he consciously created for the enslaved. Jefferson provided meager rations to the enslaved population¹⁶¹, while he and others who visited the plantations consistently consumed exquisite meals.

Other White slaveholding families also reflected behavioral patterns to the enslaved community similar to Jefferson's. For instance, purchasing enslaved people, intentionally mistreating them while simultaneously desiring and demanding a bountiful lifestyle for themselves and not the enslaved.

A great many times have we, poor creatures, been severely pinched with hunger, when meat and bread have been moulding under the lock, while the key was in the pocket of our mistress. This had been so when she knew we were nearly half starved; and yet, that mistress, with saintly air, would kneel with her husband, and pray each morning that a merciful God would bless them in basket and in store, and save them, at last, in his kingdom.¹⁶²

“De rich white folks nebbah did no wok; dey had da'kies t' do it foah dem.”¹⁶³

“People had a terrible time you kno. White folks had it all.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Roger R. Williams, dir., “Our Founding Chefs,” *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,” *Boston: Anti-Slavery Office*, 1849, 52, <https://www.loc.gov/item/82225385/>.

¹⁶³ Ira Berlin, Marc Faverau, Steven F. Miller, *Remembering Slavery*, 75 quoted in *American Slave*.

¹⁶⁴ Samuel S. Taylor, “Campbell Armstrong,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 1, Abbott - Bryd*, ed. Federal Writer's Project, vol. 2, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1936), 68, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/021/021.pdf>.

On Rare Occasions, The Enslaved Indulged in Food Behaviors Which Were Typically Only Enjoyed by The Oppressor

As the evidence has thus far illustrated, the enslaved have had an intentionally extremely low quality of living which was significantly impacted by food oppression. This next section of the findings elucidates how food oppression wasn't universal across both groups of people: the enslaved and the enslaver. During this particular time in history, food was not scarce, primarily due to Slavery food production and its profit. However, despite the plethora of food available, it was irrelevant to the enslaved as they were unable to reap the benefits of their hard labor or enjoy the food they were forced to prepare for the slaveholders. However, there were instances when the enslaved were permitted to enjoy a more typical dining experience experienced by Whites. Major Christian holidays, such as Christmas, were the occasions when the enslaved were allowed to drink alcohol and consume meals more similar to that of their White counterparts.¹⁶⁵ These instances were not granted to the enslaved out of goodwill. Instead, the reasons for their inclusion in such activities were far more calculated and cynical.

Due to the hostile conditions the enslaved were under, many asked for a modicum of freedom to alleviate the callous nature of enslavement brings.¹⁶⁶ During the holidays, the slaveholders would deceptively grant the enslaved wish for freedom by providing alcohol which was associated with

¹⁶⁵Preston Klein, "Plantation Punishment," in *Slaver Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons- Young*, ed. Jack Kytle and Federal Writer's Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, n.d., 107, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁶⁶ Warnick, "OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS," 25.

the notion of liberty.¹⁶⁷ The slaveholders would then “...actively [encourage the enslaved] to get drunk.”¹⁶⁸ Therefore,

... when the holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a deep breath, and marched to the field, — feeling, upon the whole, rather glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was from, back to the arms of slavery... The mode here adopted to disgust the slave with freedom, by allowing him to see only the abuse of it, is carried out in other things.¹⁶⁹

Thus, the psychological trick the slaveholders created was to support the enslaved over-indulging with something associated with freedom, to ensure that the enslaved would then connect freedom with the harsh side effects of alcohol. This resulted in them believing that if these consequences were what freedom entailed, then they would rather stay with their enslaver.

Along with giving excessive alcohol during holidays to the enslaved, they were also given more food. This indicates that the slaveholders yet again had the authority to determine under what conditions and circumstances the enslaved could enjoy certain pleasures of life.

Contradicting Realities: “We Had Plenty to Eat”

Demonstrably, the findings of this thesis have reported several accounts of those with debasing moral character using food as a tool of oppression against Africans and African Americans.

Their deplorable actions have resulted in physical and mental anguish and fatalities. In preparation for this thesis, I understood there would be descriptions of heinous crimes committed against African Americans. However, there were undoubtedly unexpected recounts from several of the formerly enslaved who shared similar experiences and unsettling sentiments, which were

¹⁶⁷Warnick, “OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS,” 25.

¹⁶⁸ Warnick, “OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS,” 25.

¹⁶⁹ Warnick, “OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS,” 25-26 quoted Frederick Douglass.

admittedly not in line with my initial thinking or understanding. For that reason, these results must be addressed. Below are excerpts from the Library of Congress interviews that highlighted an inconspicuous method of food oppression.

“We had plenty to eat. We had beef in spring and summer. Mutton and kid on special occasions. We had hog in the fall and winter. We had geese, ducks, and chickens. We had them when we needed them. We had a field garden. He raised corn, wheat, oats, rye, and tobacco... We didn't eat ham and chicken. I never seen biscuit—only sometimes”¹⁷⁰

“We always had plenty to eat, such as it was. We had coarse food but there was plenty of it.”¹⁷¹

“Emma laughingly said the slaves on other plantations always said the Curry slaves were "free niggers," as they could always get permits, and had plenty to eat and milk to drink”.¹⁷²

“Was Marse Moseley good to us? Lor’, honey, how you talk, Co'se he was! He was de bes’ white man in de lan’. Us had eve'y thing dat we could hope to eat: turkey, chicken, beef, lamb, poke, vegetables, fruits, aigs, butter, milk... we jus’ had eve’y thing, white folks, eve’ything”. Dem was de good ole days.¹⁷³

These examples, along with other similar inescapable recounts, are certainly not intended to subvert the gravity of Slavery and its insurmountable consequences. Instead, by including this information, the integrity of this piece is not undermined. This anecdotal evidence can also be

¹⁷⁰ Irene Robertson, “Charles Anderson, Helena Arkansas,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 1, Abbot- Byrd*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 2, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1936), 47, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/021/021.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ Federal Writer’s Project, ed., “Philip Johnson - An Ex-Slave,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks - Williams*, vol. 8, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, n.d.), 42, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/080/080.pdf>.

¹⁷² Mary A. Poole and Federal Writer’s Project, “Story of Emma Chapman, Ex-Slave,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1937), 63–64, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁷³ Francois Ludgere Diard and John Morgan Smith, “Aunt Clara Davis Is Homesick For Old Scenes,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons- Young*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1937), 109, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

examined under the theoretical framework, Social Conflict Theory, which states that within society, there are hierarchies in constant conflict with one another for the maintenance or seizure of power for status and scarce resources and can be through violent means.¹⁷⁴

Despite the theoretical framework not requiring the conflict to always turn to violence, this paper argues that the examples above still reflect a violent reality. While it is not violent to provide the enslaved with adequate food, the reason for this better nourishment was. For the enslaved were expected to produce more labor from the increase of food energy which would ensure more profit for the enslaver. As one former enslaved individual explained, “Mist' McCullough always give his folks plenty of sumpin' t' eat an' then he say, 'It's lookin' for plenty uv work.' 'Niggahs fat an' greasy can't do nothin' but work.”¹⁷⁵ Their bodies were understood as non-humans, like objects or tools to be continuously used by those who deemed themselves, humans. Their increase in food rations was not done to equalize the imbalanced power dynamic between the enslaved and the enslaver, but rather as a psychologically and physically violent method to support the one-sided power dynamic.

Another justification why supplying more food to the enslaved reflects the idea of Social Conflict theory is, if possible, more repulsive as the aforementioned reason. Many formerly enslaved individuals who had recalled that they ate sufficiently during Slavery reminisced certain elements of enslavement. Below are snippets of interviewees providing their explanations.

¹⁷⁴ Oberschall, “Theories of Social Conflict,” 291, 293.; BYU-Idaho Academic Support, “Race and Ethnicity According to Conflict Theory and Social Interactionism.”; “Reading: African Americans,” Sociology, Lumen, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/reading-african-americans/>.

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Fowler, “They Called Us McCullough’s Free Niggers,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1937), 91, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

“[The formerly enslaved woman] has very pleasant memories of slave days, and "wishes to God dat she wuz as comforbly (comfortably) fixed now as she wuz den. Her ante-bellum owner she pictures as a very humane, Christian gentleman a man that took great interest in the material and spiritual welfare of his slaves.”¹⁷⁶

“When asked about slave days, he gets a far-away expression in his eyes; an expression of tranquil joy. "People," he says, "has the wrong Idea of slave days. We was treated good. My massa never laid a hand on me durin' the whole time I was wid him. He scolded me once for not bringin him a drink when I was supposed to, but he never whup me." ...The food consisted of turnip greens, meat, peas, crackling bread and syrup, and plenty of it. "Not since those days," he states, "have I had such good food.”¹⁷⁷

“Us had a time in dem days. I ‘members dat us had a pen to ketch wild turkeys in. An’ us koted a few of dem, too.”... “Did you enjoy the old slavery days, Uncle?” "Yes, chile, dey was good days. Some of de white peoples was bad to de niggers, but my Ol’ Master warn't dat kind.... "Uncle, I want to talk with you about the old times." "Lordy me, chile," he beamed, his eyes twinkling, "you done foun’ de raght nigger”¹⁷⁸

“My old master Jim Ad Benford. He was good to us. I’m goin’ to tell you we was better off then than now. Yes ma’am, they treated us right. We didn’t have to worry bout payin’ the doctor and had plenty to eat...Old mistress would say, ‘Come here, you little niggers’ and she’d springle sugar on the meat block and we’d just lick sugar.”¹⁷⁹

“I stayed wid mah Missis fer a long time after I got freedom en I cried lak a fool w’en I had ter leave dem. Mah Missis seize “You ez jes as free as I ez,” but I allus had good clothes en good food en I didn’ know how I’d git dem after I lef’ her....Ef mah Missis wuz livin’ I wouldn’ go hongry”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ J.R Jones, “Fannie Gibson/ Ex-Slave,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons- Young*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1937), 145, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁷⁷ J Morgan Smith, “Ex-Slave Leader Recalls Old Days,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons- Young*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1936, 312–13, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁷⁸ Jack Kytile and Federal Writer’s Project, “Wants My Friends To Go Wid Me,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons - Young*, vol. 1, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1936, 127–28, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/010/010.pdf>.

¹⁷⁹ Bernice Bowden, “Bob Benford,” in *Slave Narrtive Project, Vol. 2. Arkansas, Part 2, Cannon-Evans*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 2, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington, 1936), 146, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/021/021.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Federal Writer’s Project, “Cecelia Chappel,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 15, Tennessee, Batson - Young*, vol. 15, 17 vols., *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 1941, 6,8, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/150/150.pdf>.

These reports are striking for several reasons, as those who were enslaved believed that their enslavers were kind ‘masters,’ especially compared to other enslavers who gave pitiful rations to the enslaved community, among other things.¹⁸¹ However, this situation is an oxymoron, as no one, irrespective of their disposition, should own another human. Due to the oppressive nature of the enslavement system, it is understandable how the enslaved were more inclined to appreciate the enslavers who displayed a modicum of humane treatment, such as providing more nourishment to the severely oppressed. As the examples above denote, those given higher quantities of food expressed gratitude to the enslaver who granted them this privilege. Many of the formerly enslaved associated parts of the Slave Era with positive notes due to the food accessibility Whites allowed the enslaved to acquire. The notion that some individuals who were categorized under a group of people deemed unworthy, non-human, and disposable for centuries would connect with that oppressive system and those who actively maintained it is quite mind-boggling.

However, their opinions on aspects of the Slave Era are not of any fault of their own, but rather a result of another tactic used to oppress them psychologically through the use of food. Brian R. Warnick, the author of *Oppression, Freedom and The Education of Frederick Douglass*, explains that,

“The slaveholders worked to make their slaves grateful. Contained in the concept of gratitude is a dependency. We tend to be grateful to those whom we depend on. We thank those who have done us a service, and by so doing, acknowledge their role in sustaining us. The slaveholders used this link between gratitude and dependence to solidify their own position.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ David Hoggard, “Interview of Mrs. Marriah Hines,” in *Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry-Wilson*, ed. Federal Writer’s Project, vol. 17, 17 vols. (Washington, 1937), 28–29, <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/170/170.pdf>.

¹⁸² Warnick, “OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND THE EDUCATION OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS,” 29.

Warnick did not analyze how this tactic was used with food oppression. Still, the examples provided above display how slaveholders conditioned the enslaved to believe they were doing them a good deed by providing them with sufficient food.¹⁸³ This conditioning seems to have an impact on the enslaved peoples' perceptions of the cruel system of enslavement.

To briefly conclude, there were several formerly enslaved individuals who were relieved to be emancipated from the unforgiving bonds of Slavery, as the findings explain, the vile forms of food oppression that manipulated and subjugated the lives of the enslaved, making their terrifying conditions that much more unbearable. One interviewee stated that "If I had my life to live over." he declares, "I would die fighting rather than have to be a slave again. I want no man's yoke on my shoulders no more."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid, 29

¹⁸⁴ Della Yoe Foreman and Federal Writer's Project, eds., "Robert Falls," 12.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

My thesis presents two contrasting eras of U.S. North American history. The literature review outlines how food oppression currently functions in the United States. The latter part of the thesis explores how this topical issue, food oppression, manifested during a time in U.S. history in which African American's faced ultimate discrimination.

While both of these eras in U.S. history are vastly different in various aspects, one common denominator has remained throughout these two time periods: food oppression. It has been used against the Black community as a means to create capital since U.S slavery in North America.

As the literature review explains, in the current U.S. food supply, some companies use specific strategies allow for a higher guarantee for developing capital, such as manipulating ingredients with properties so the consumer can crave the product more,¹⁸⁵ and deliberately spending more money on junk food advertisements to target the Black community.¹⁸⁶ Food oppression in modern U.S. history is not established solely through the operation of food supply companies. It is also cultivated through the conditions of food apartheid which allows for food oppression and poor food supply management and distribution to subsist in Black neighborhoods.¹⁸⁷ The thesis summarized some of these conditions of food apartheid in which food oppression thrive such as,

¹⁸⁵ Byrd and Moss, "What's In it | Doritos Locos Tacos" 0:45-1:59.

¹⁸⁶ Jennifer L. Harris, Willie Frazier III, Shiriki Kumanyika and Amelie G. Ramirez, "Increasing Disparities in Unhealthy Food Advertising Targeted to Hispanic and Black Youth," 5-6.

¹⁸⁷"Food Desert Vs. Food Apartheid."; Brones, "Food Apartheid."; Isabel Lu, "Food Apartheid: What Does Food Access Mean In America?"; 'Food Apartheid' (Not 'Desert'),"; Nina Sevilla. "Food Apartheid: Racialized Access to Healthy Affordable Food.".

the Redlining Act,¹⁸⁸ the enactment to destroy Black neighborhoods for highway construction,¹⁸⁹ the loss of supermarkets in minority communities,¹⁹⁰ and the influx of fast-food restaurants in poor Black neighborhoods.¹⁹¹ These dangerous circumstances can contribute to the well-documented health outcome of food apartheid, obesity.¹⁹²

This essay does not study if malnutrition was apparent during Slavery. Instead, this study gathered that under-nutrition was a recurring result of food oppression. This violent tactic subjugated Black people while it simultaneously forced Black bodies to cultivate food production to generate massive profit for the White community. The findings showed, that for this community, they had the privilege to choose how prosperous their lives would be by relying on controlling the lives of the enslaved through discriminating methods, like food oppression. Food oppression was a compounded strategy that those in power used through supplying inadequate rations of food,¹⁹³ intentionally providing low-quality food,¹⁹⁴ having the authority to dictate whether enslaved people were permitted to grow their food,¹⁹⁵ demanding enslaved people to prepare exquisite dinners to be enjoyed only by Whites,¹⁹⁶ with the rare exception of a

¹⁸⁸ Gross, "A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America.;" Kuthy, "Redlining and Greenlining: Olivia Robinson Investigates Root Causes of Racial Inequity."

¹⁸⁹ Archer, "'White Men's Roads Through Black Men's Homes,'" 1259-1330.; King, "A Brief History Of How Racism Shaped Interstate Highways."

¹⁹⁰ Meyersohn, "How the Rise of Supermarkets Left out Black America.;" Eisenhauer, "In Poor Health," 125-133.; Shannon, "From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining."

¹⁹¹ VICE News, "Trying to Eat Healthy in a Food Desert," 2:42-2:49

¹⁹² Louise C Ivers and Kimberly A Cullen, "Food Insecurity," 1.; "Access to Food that Support Healthy Eating Patterns.;" "Access to Food that Support Healthy Eating Patterns."

¹⁹³ Harris, *High on The Hog*, 31-36. ; Illa B. Prine and Federal Writers' Project., "'Aunt' Annie Stanton, A Slave.;" Mary A. Poole, "Charlie Aarons, Ex-Slave, Says He Loved Young Marster John.;" David Hoggard, "History of Ex-Slave and Civil War Veteran.;" Federal Writers' Project., ed., "Dennis Simms, Ex-Slave."

¹⁹⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage And My Freedom. Part 1*, 256.

¹⁹⁵ Mary A. Poole and John Morgan Smith, "Sho' I Believes in Spirits, Says Charles.;" Preston Kline Opelika, "Emma Tells How To Make Them 'Teethe Easy.,""; Pigie T. Hix and John Morgan Smith, "Aunt Hannah Has A Hundred Descendants.;" Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, "Remembering Slavery," 71.

¹⁹⁶ Roger R. Williams, dir., "Our Founding Chefs," *High on the Hog*, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81034518>.

few cases¹⁹⁷; and punishing enslaved people with starvation and/or by inflicting more pain by placing spices onto fresh wounds.¹⁹⁸ Punishment was extremely hard for those unable to meet the labor quota that guaranteed mass food production, and thus profit.¹⁹⁹ As the term denotes, the enslaved had their rights to fully live healthily and adequately forcibly and deliberately revoked for the economic advancement of the White community. The notion that those in power have the authority to provide certain groups with access to healthier foods, while denying others to the privilege through ‘supermarket redlining’²⁰⁰ limits those living under food apartheid to exercise the right to live healthily. Despite an abundance of healthy and non-healthy food in the U.S, in contrast to the much more limited food supply during Slavery, the results remain the same: it is more challenging for minority communities, especially African Americans, to access healthier food due to external forces which are typically manufactured and maintained by those who hold positions of power.²⁰¹ Historically, the vast majority of such positions in the United States have been held by wealthy Whites. For the Black community facing food oppression, the opportunity to eat and live healthy is significantly reduced. In contrast, those who live in more affluent areas have much fewer barriers; again, this is typically a different racial demographic.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Preston Klein, “Plantation Punishment,”

¹⁹⁸ Levi D. Shelby Jr. and Federal Writer’s Project, “Today’s Folks Don’t Know Nothin’.”; Ruby Pickens Tartt, “Chillun In Ev’y Grabeyard.”; Ruby Pickens Tartt, “Heaps of Dem Yaller Gals Got Sont Norf.”

¹⁹⁹ Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, “Remembering Slavery,” 75 quoted in American Slave. ; Margaret Fowler, “They Called Us McCullough’s Free Niggers,”; Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, Steven F. Miller, “Remembering Slavery,” 5 quoted in Library of Congress.

²⁰⁰ Meyersohn, “How the Rise of Supermarkets Left out Black America.”; Eisenhower, “In Poor Health,”125-133.; Shannon, “From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining.”

²⁰¹ CBC News, “The Secrets of Sugar - the fifth estate,”14:03-33:38. ;Brooks, “Research Shows Food Deserts More Abundant in Minority Neighborhoods.”

²⁰² **The Guardian**, “The food deserts of Memphis: inside America’s hunger capital I Divided Cities,” filmed November 20, 2019, video, 13:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6ZpkhPciaU&t=603s>.”

This paper does not claim that Whites do not suffer from the U.S. food supply and aren't living in food apartheid. However, there are more food apartheid locations in predominately Black neighborhoods than in predominately White areas²⁰³ – which is not coincidental.²⁰⁴

Despite the United States abolishing Slavery in the late 1880s, there are patterns, at times perhaps less obvious practices like food oppression – which this thesis explains -, that have continued to disproportionately and negatively impact a group that has been repeatedly traumatized.

Future studies should investigate what specific health outcomes, i.e., malnutrition during Slavery, occurred because of the brutal nature of enslavement.

²⁰³ Brooks, “Research Shows Food Deserts More Abundant in Minority Neighborhoods.”

²⁰⁴ The Guardian, “The food deserts of Memphis.” 6:43-10:11.

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