GRAVY

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FOOD & SOCIAL JUSTICE

A QUARTERLY FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

Southern Foodways Alliance

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THE MISSION of the Southern Foodways Alliance is to document, study, and celebrate the diverse food cultures of the changing American South.

We set a common table where black and white, rich and poor—all who gather—may consider our history and our future in a spirit of reconciliation.

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COVER PHOTO & PHOTO, THIS PAGE *by Joshua Dudley Greer, from the 26 ° 81° series, photographed in Immokalee, Florida.*

DIRECTOR'S CUT

A BRONZEVILLE LUNCH

WE HAVE BARRIERS TO BREAK DOWN

by John T. Edge

Editor's note: As I thought about how to introduce this social justice–themed issue of Gravy*, I read over John T.'s Director's Cut column, which normally closes the issue. It turns out he beat me to the perfect introduction. Read on.*
—SCA

PAUL FEHRIBACH, THE CHEF AND CO-OWNER of the restaurant Big Jones in Chicago, wrote me a letter after returning home from the SFA Summer Symposium in Jackson, Mississippi. At that event, we marked the fiftieth anniversary of Freedom Summer and took stock of the welcome table promise. Paul wrote that, growing up gay in southern Indiana during the Reagan presidency and the AIDS crisis, "I entered adulthood with a lot of anxiety about fitting in and feeling welcome."

Paul sees parallels, both good and bad, between the Indiana that birthed him and the South he now interprets through dishes like duck with bourbon giblet jus, turnip greens with potato dumplings, and black walnut sorghum pie. Both were farm-driven economies. And both staged celebratory feeds of fried chicken, cured and smoked pork, freshly harvested vegetables, and decadent pies and cakes. "My grandparents worked a farm that was in our family for five generations," Paul told me in a subsequent conversation, laying out his rural bona fides. "And my godfather still slaughters a hog every winter."

Both of the places Paul claims were once incubators of Ku Klux Klan terrorism, too. Klan membership in the early 1920s was stronger per capita in Indiana than anywhere else in the nation. In addition to African American targets, Catholics, Jews, and others who might be foreign-born were the victims of these nativist Kluxers, who believed that immigration from southern and eastern Europe weakened our economy and a burgeoning communist menace threatened our government.

Paul, who is white, recognized early on that he could hide his difference behind skin color. But that sense of common threat has made him keenly aware of the burdens of otherness, first as a boy who came of age in an era when the Klan still burned crosses in rural Indiana and, more recently, as a chef cooking in a city that was transformed in the middle years of the twentieth century by African Americans who got out of the South back when the getting was good.

Today, Big Jones draws expatriate Southerners from across the city, lured by Paul's gumbo z'herbes, reezy-peezy, and hominy-pocked skillet cornbread. As old-guard soul food restaurants like Army and Lou's—founded in 1945 by *Chicago Defender* employee William "Army" Armstrong and his wife, Louvella Armstrong—have closed, Paul has begun to attract more African American customers from South Side neighborhoods like Bronzeville. And he has begun to accept that Big Jones now shares some of the responsibility for Southern cookery and

hospitality in Chicago. That imperative weighs heavy on this thinking man's chef.

Get Paul talking about how hospitality is expressed and received across racial lines, as I did recently, and he is quick to say that he fails too often at bridging those divides. When I told him that I think SFA is way too white and way too wealthy, and that I think we fail in the same ways more often than we succeed, he told me a story about a recent lunch he enjoyed in Chicago, just a couple of weeks after returning home from Jackson.

Paul had spent the morning record shopping and had stopped for lunch at Pearl's Place in Bronzeville. On walking through the door, he had been greeted warmly and was waiting for a table—ogling the album covers, from Etta James to Al Green, framed and mounted on the walls; and mentally assembling his meal of pepper-spiked mustard greens, custardy macaroni and cheese, and a red drink—when a black man appeared in his periphery and reached for his hand.

"I didn't see him until my hand met his," Paul said of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who emerged as a civil rights movement leader in the early 1960s while a student at North Carolina A&T in Greensboro. "He walked up to me and asked my name. And he said, 'Paul, I hope you have a great lunch. I really enjoyed mine.'"

"It happened quickly," Paul told me. "But that moment really stuck with me. Reverend Jackson made me think about how I treat people in my own restaurant." That exchange, Paul said, taught him anew that we all should make it our responsibility to help each other fit in and feel welcome. "We have barriers to break down," he said, reflecting on our time in Jackson. "And the best way to do that is to join together at the table."

Paul knows that's a challenge. So do I. As the SFA carries its work and message forward, I pledge to you—readers of this social justice issue of *Gravy*, members of SFA, and Southerners born, adopted, and aspirational—that we will double down on the ideals that animated the civil rights movement. Let's follow the lead of Paul and other good folk who make meaning at the tables where this generation of the beloved community gathers.

John T. Edge directs the Southern Foodways Alliance.
PHOTO, PAGE 2, *by Jerry Siegel.*

HISTORY

GOLDEN ARCHES & WHITE SPACES

RACE IN EARLY FAST FOOD PLACES

by Angela Jill Cooley

MUCH ATTENTION IS GIVEN *to the role of the lunch counter in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But what about the fast-food chain, which was rising to national prominence at the same time? Angela Jill Cooley addresses this question in an excerpt from her book,* To Live and Dine in Dixie: The Evolution of Urban Food Culture in the Jim Crow South, *forthcoming from the University of Georgia Press.*

WHEN HE LAUNCHED his North Carolina–based fast-food chain, Wilber Hardee already had a great deal of experience in food service. Before World War II, he ran a snack shop behind a gas station in rural North Carolina. The venture offered a way for his family to survive the economic depression without leaving their farm. After the war, Hardee opened a family restaurant called the Silo, serving barbecue, steaks, seafood, hamburgers, and fried chicken.

In the postwar economic boom, Hardee lived comfortably with his wife and four children. He didn't need to invest in a new restaurant concept. But Hardee was intrigued by a drive-in called McDonald's. "Probably everyone in the restaurant business began about the same time to hear stories of the new hamburger chain that served hamburgers instantly for only fifteen cents," he recalled in his memoir. North Carolina's first McDonald's franchise opened in Greensboro. One Sunday, he took the 200-mile drive to witness a long queue of customers, dressed in their Sunday best, who parked their cars, stood in line, and purchased bags of hamburgers at the walk-up window.

As he drove home, Hardee planned his own restaurant. He began with the charbroiled hamburgers he already served at the Silo and chose a site in Greenville with a large parking lot near East Carolina College to take advantage of the automobile traffic. Following the McDonald's model, he constructed a small building with no dining room. Ceramic tiles gave the structure a clean, modern façade. On September 3, 1960, the first Hardee's opened. There were no other fast-food restaurants in the vicinity. Customers traveled as far as fifty miles for the grand opening. Hardee later recalled it as "one of the proudest days of my business career."

Hardee's story reflects the evolution of Southern foodways in the post–World War II period. As the region began to prosper, more Southerners could afford to eat out. Hardee was one of the first Southerners to recognize and capitalize on the fast-food chain. Broad economic and demographic changes, including migration into the Sunbelt, threatened white privilege in Southern eating spaces, carefully constructed during the first part of the century. Yet white supremacy was a component of the business models adopted by white Southern entrepreneurs like Hardee.

Increasingly after World War II, national chain stores and restaurants became standard features of the Southern landscape.

National chains fed Southern appetites and imaginations. Southerners recognized the potential. The region's temperate weather, automobile culture, and suburban migration contributed to an atmosphere in which fast food thrived.

Fast-food chains were spectacles of modernity that linked Southern consumers to national economic and cultural patterns. With national marketing, simple designs, and inexpensive fare, fast food should have represented a threat to white privileged eating spaces. In the early years, fast-food restaurants had no dining rooms to segregate. But these spaces built white privilege into the key features of their concepts.

TWO BROTHERS, RICHARD AND MAURICE MCDONALD, developed the fast-food concept in San Bernardino, California. Initially, they operated a traditional drive-in with carhops serving items like barbecue and hamburgers to a customer base dominated by teenagers. In 1948, to increase their sales volume, the McDonald brothers streamlined operations. They eliminated the carhops, popularizing a new style of drive-in where customers walked up to a service window. They also reduced the menu to hamburgers, cheeseburgers, french fries, milk shakes, and soft drinks.

Over the next decade, as Ray Kroc franchised its operations, McDonald's spread across the country and throughout the Southern states. As population growth shifted from the Northeast to the South and Southwest, Kroc recognized the potential of the Sunbelt for the success of the national chain.

Southern entrepreneurs like Wilber Hardee saw the value of providing a relatively inexpensive meal to an increasingly suburban population no longer concentrated in downtown areas. Hardee's and other Southern fast-food chains explicitly modeled the McDonald's design.

By its nature, fast food had the potential to be a more democratic mode of consumption. The McDonald brothers and Kroc purposefully scaled down the process of eating out. "What we have attempted to do is eliminate those things that people don't eat," Kroc explained in a 1961 *Time* magazine article. "You can't eat a 20% tip, a perfumed finger bowl or a waitress."

That philosophy promised access for all. There was no drive-in, no drive-through, no dining room, no lunch counter, no waiters or waitresses.

Everyone walked up to the window and ordered. Then, customers took their orders to the car or elsewhere to eat. (McDonald's did not implement indoor seating until 1963.) The industry relied on low prices and high volume. On the surface, fast food did not discourage consumption by anyone.

From the beginning, national chains depended on standardization of goods and services to ensure brand loyalty. A customer could expect the same products and quality in Columbus, Georgia, that she received in Springfield, Massachusetts. Creating a national corporate identity for one chain should have made discriminatory policies difficult, unreasonable, and embarrassing. White Southerners should have had to work hard to maintain white supremacy and segregation in these public spaces.

White supremacy and racial segregation nevertheless prevailed, especially in the South, in the earliest years of fast food. At that time, national corporations tended to leave human-resource and customer-service policies to the discretion of the local manager or franchisee and community law or custom. In his 2001 book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser points out that McDonald's now regulates all aspects of its operations, down to the diameter of the pickles on the hamburgers, but allows local managers to handle employee-related issues such as salary, hours, and benefits. According to Schlosser, this lenience allows local wage rates to prevail, virtually eliminates overtime for most hourly workers, and inhibits union influence.

In the 1950s and 1960s the chain used the same laissez-faire approach to customer relations, allowing local law, custom, and manager preference to dictate service to African Americans. Like the earlier five-and-dime lunch counters, the local franchises of modern fast-food chains retained autonomy over service issues. White Southern entrepreneurs who started fast-food chains and purchased national franchises maintained local racial mores.

There is little evidence of how black Southerners negotiated the walk-up service windows that all customers used in the early years of fast-food service. But discriminatory customs dictating that whites be served before black customers may have regulated the racial interactions at McDonald's service counters.

Automobiles and suburban shopping centers encouraged proprietors to build away from downtown areas. In the postwar era, white Southerners tended to move away from the cities into the suburbs. Restaurant location

and residential segregation may have limited black access to these public spaces. Wilber Hardee located his first Hardee's hamburger restaurant near a college that, at the time, admitted only white students.

Segregation and discrimination were practiced at McDonald's locations and at other chains in the South. Three years after activists, merchants, and city officials negotiated to desegregate the downtown lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina, students staged a stand-in demonstration at the local McDonald's, which, despite lacking a dining room, refused to allow equal service. When McDonald's implemented indoor seating, in the midst of civil rights sit-in activism, many Southern franchisees practiced racial segregation even when other local eateries had abolished the practice.

By the summer of 1963, most of the downtown lunch counters in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, had already desegregated. But not McDonald's, which civil rights activists began to target with protests. When the franchisee obtained an injunction requiring the protestors to cease their direct action campaigns, local civil rights activists called for a national boycott of McDonald's.

The laissez-faire policies of those chains aided companies like McDonalds's in constructing national identities that reinforced white supremacy. From the start, Kroc marketed to white, middle-class, Protestant families. And he prohibited pay telephones, jukeboxes, and vending machines to discourage loitering or disruptions that he thought would "downgrade the family image." Corporate portraits illustrating McDonald's idealized operations reveal the significance of the white middle-class family to the company identity during the early franchise era. Later, the chain amplified the family feel of the company by introducing the new slogan, "The Closest Thing to Home." In the South, however, only whites were made to feel welcome in that home.

Angela Jill Cooley is an assistant professor of history at Minnesota State University-Mankato. She was the SFA's first postdoctoral foodways fellow. *Excerpted from* To Live and Dine in Dixie: The Evolution of Urban Food Culture in the Jim Crow South *by Angela Jill Cooley, forthcoming from the University of Georgia Press in May 2015, as part of the Southern Foodways Alliance Studies in Culture, People, and Place series.*

PHOTO, PAGE 5, *courtesy of Hardee's Food Systems, Inc.*

EL SUR

MEXICO & THE SOUTH: BROTHERS FROM ANOTHER MADRE

HOT SAUCE IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF OUR KINSHIP

by Gustavo Arellano

FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, my wife and I have spent the first weekend of August on the 127 Yard Sale, the epic annual flea market running from Gadsden, Alabama, all the way up to Michigan. She loves to shop for Victorian-era gumball machines, cast-iron bells and garden décor, and more bourbon decanters than Jim Beam and Ezra Brooks ever imagined. I go because I've always loved the South, specifically Kentucky. I feel an almost ancestral tug for the place because it reminds me of my roots in the central Mexican state of Zacatecas. The rolling hills, the crafting of liquors—mezcal and bourbon—the affinity for horses and ballads, and the love of the land mirror each other sentiment for sentiment. Zacatecas has sent hundreds of thousands of its natives to the United States over the past century (but not many to the South...yet).

My parents came from the mountains. They were ridiculed as *chúntaros*—the Mexican term for our hillbillies—by the rest of the country for their funny Spanish and their backwards ways. Kentuckians and Zacatecans are brothers from another *madre*, a connection I discovered in high school after hearing a Bill Monroe album and discovering he was essentially a Mexican in whiteface.

But I don't romanticize. I know the hard truth. The South has absorbed the largest increase of Latinos over the past twenty years of any region in the country, and this demographic eruption has thrown a chicharrón in the pork-rind bag of the South's traditional black-white divide that neither side has figured out yet. Back in Southern California, the only time we ever hear about Mexicans in the South on the news is when a city council member or a state politician proposes draconian legislation against undocumented folks. When that happens, my Chicano friends inevitably slur the South as a bunch of *gabachos* trying to revive Juan Crow.

But I know you, South. I remember the kind reception I received in 2008 at the University of South Carolina Upstate: 300 people gathered in Greensboro to hear how Mexicans were going to change the South. (On the ride to the airport, my driver was more upset about gay marriage than Latino anything—ah, progress....) I hear you when I talk on Charlotte radio shows, fielding questions in a call-in format of *¡Ask a Mexican!*, where the callers are rarely rude and almost always honestly earnest. I taste it every year during the 127 Yard Sale, when my wife and I finally get homesick and eat at Mexican restaurants in Danville, Kentucky, and Crossville, Tennessee, and notice that everyone in those restaurants are

white folks. And I feel your acceptance of my kind on the 127, when people are more impressed by the fact that I'm from California than that my wife and I are Mexicans.

Every year I return for the 127, I see the South becoming more and more Mexican—not just the shoppers, but also the businesses. Albany, Kentucky, boasts a Latino district. Just outside Mentone, Alabama, I passed a Latino evangelical church and saw Mexican dads haggling with good ol' boys, not about politics, but tool prices. This summer, outside the Eagle Lake Convention Center in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, a taquero sold tacos, burritos, and tortas, offering detailed descriptions of each dish in English.

In Danville, we stop at Guadalajara's, a restaurant that has become so popular that the owners opened a second location just down the street. The first year we went, the only hot sauce on the menu was Tabasco (I had to ask the restaurant owner for the picante stuff; he joyously whipped up a fresh batch of salsa just for me). Two years later, Tapatío was on the tables. Last year, there was El Yucateco, a hot sauce derived from habaneros that even Mexican restaurants in Southern California usually don't stock. Guadalajara's wasn't upping their game in a claim for authenticity: The owner told us he started stocking those salsas because his clientele was asking for it.

I'm not predicting a smooth road for Latinos in the South. There will be battles fought, innocents demonized. But as a cultural historian and longtime reporter on demographics, I also know that the first indication that a dominant group is willing to accept a new ethnic group is by eating their food. First we win over your stomachs, then your hearts, then your minds. Love us, South, just as Mexicans are starting to love you. And together, a *Nuevo Sur* will rise.

Gustavo Arellano is the editor of OC Weekly*, author of the syndicated column* ¡Ask a Mexican!*, and of* Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America. *He spoke at the 2012 Southern Foodways Symposium.*
PAINTING, PAGE 10, Six Tomatillos*, by Jeffrey Whittle.*

CLASSROOM

WHY STUDY FOOD JUSTICE?

LESSONS FROM POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

by Catarina Passidomo

WHEN I TELL PEOPLE THAT I STUDY FOOD, the response is usually one of curious interest. When I go on to explain that I study food justice—that is, the connections between food systems and race, class, gender, and other means of oppression—the look of curiosity changes slightly. Is that confusion? Agreement? Concern? People who experience one or multiple forms of oppression in their own lives generally nod with understanding. But for many of us, the connections between food and social justice are abstract. The interlocking systems that bring food from field or factory to fork, spoon, fingers, or chopsticks are mostly obscured from view. Or they are so familiar that we don't notice them. But if we look closely and critically, we can begin to see through food to broader systems of oppression and dominance. This makes food a powerful tool for thinking and teaching about social justice.

Food has such promise as a lens for critical inquiry because it is ubiquitous and essential in our lives. Our relationships to food—and its production, procurement, preparation, and consumption—are as varied and personal as our most cherished family recipes, or lack of those. Food and its meanings both unite and divide, highlighting shared experience and illuminating disparity and difference. Because food is at once mundane and tremendously complex, it is a powerful and effective entry point for students and advocates of social justice. In the classroom, we can use food to introduce and explore trenchant concerns of race, class, and gender. Out in the world, we can trace food's relationship to these concerns, exploring how it draws people and ideas together, or how it pulls them apart.

IN MY OWN RESEARCH in post-Katrina New Orleans, I work to understand the intent and effect of the rebuilding efforts that mobilized food and food access to promote social justice. I worked with a number of different organizations and community groups in New Orleans, and I found interesting distinctions in how they characterized both the problem of food access and its potential solutions. These efforts emerged within a place and at a time that exposed tensions related to race, belonging, and claims to space and resources—including fresh food.

The destruction following Katrina was most serious, and slowest to rebound, in low-income neighborhoods where the majority of residents were people of color. Because of a severe lack of infrastructure

in these areas, numerous non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, and some businesses stepped in to address a need for fresh-food access. Meanwhile, at the national scale, popular interest in various aspects of the food system has surged in the nine years since Katrina. Particularly among young, well-educated white people, the food movement was and is an intriguing phenomenon. Coupled with a depressed economy and a perceived need for outside assistance in New Orleans, many young people versed in the discourse of a good food revolution were drawn to New Orleans.

MANY OF THOSE WHO CAME TO REBUILD New Orleans arrived with their own ideas about what food justice should look like and how to achieve it. Some had worked in the non-profit sector and had experience writing grants and mobilizing the funds required to initiate projects, often without the principal involvement of neighborhood residents. This approach led to many worthy and successful projects. In some cases, it also alienated longtime residents who had alternative visions for addressing local problems. For example, one organization started out with the mission to increase access to fresh, healthy foods within a particular low-income, predominantly African American neighborhood. They pursued that mission by obtaining funds to create a community garden and market space where neighbors could both grow their own produce and shop for locally sourced items at a discounted rate. While the intentions behind this project were altruistic, the lack of community involvement in the planning generated a sense among neighborhood residents that the space was not theirs. Ultimately, the project became a place for people of means to shop for local and artisanal products, and the official mission shifted to supporting local farmers. This is a valid and important goal, but it doesn't solve the initial problems the organization set out to address.

Alternatively, in the Lower Ninth Ward, a historically African American working-class community devastated by flooding following the levee breaches, residents understood the struggle for food access as a manifestation of institutional racism. For them, the food desert landscape post-Katrina reflected decades of neglect and was inextricably connected to their inability to access quality health care, education, or other basic resources. This understanding led a group of neighborhood residents

to form a coalition to improve food access. They conducted a workshop on undoing racism in the food system, with the goal of analyzing how systemic racial injustices had contributed to their neighborhood's becoming a food desert. The process of determining and realizing an ideal food landscape was directed by residents of the Lower Ninth Ward who felt that they were best suited to fight for what they wanted. Residents mobilized around a specific and pressing goal, situated within a broader struggle for economic and racial justice.

Rather than understanding food access as an isolated problem—which may drive isolated solutions—we can learn from the holistic approach of the Lower Ninth Ward residents. This lesson also serves those of us who use food as a lens in the classroom to consider broader social systems. For example, we can explore how the food system intersects with local and regional politics; with conceptions of nature and land use; with historic and contemporary experiences of agricultural, factory, and other food system labor; with immigration patterns and ethnic identity; with traditional and contemporary gender roles; with popular conceptions of health, wellness and beauty; with economic inequality and racial disparities in food access; with cultural connotations, traditions, and rituals surrounding food...The list is virtually endless. Food is intimately entangled with the systems that shape our society. We can study food to better understand those structures and, where appropriate, we can mobilize food to challenge them.

Catarina Passidomo is an assistant professor of anthropology and Southern Studies who teaches foodways classes at the University of Mississippi.

PHOTO, PAGE 13, *by Kate Medley. The Crescent City Farmers' Market, a great example of a community-driven market, has operated in multiple neighborhoods around the city since 1995. Pictured here is the Saturday Market, located on Camp Street in New Orleans' Warehouse District.*

CONVERSATION

“IT CAME FROM THE BOTTOM UP”

UNDERSTANDING THE FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES

As told to Lora Smith by Ralph Paige

THE FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES was founded in 1967 to address issues of black land loss, land control, and rural wealth creation in the American South. Civil rights movement leaders knew that without economic justice, there could be no true racial justice.

Black land loss—and the attendant loss of wealth, assets, and opportunity for rural African American communities—has been a major but underreported social-justice struggle. In 1910, approximately one million black farmers in the United States made up 14 percent of all American farmers and owned over 15 million acres. By 1969, black farmers controlled only 6 million acres. Today African American farmers represent less than 2 percent of our nation's farmers and cultivate fewer than 3 million acres. The highest concentration of those remaining farms are located in the Southeast. Mississippi boasts the largest concentration of African American farmers of any state.

Over the last forty-seven years, the Federation has helped minority farmers hold onto family land, develop markets, and foster community-owned businesses in some of the South's poorest counties. It has also successfully fought and won settlements for black farmers who faced discrimination from government loan agencies and has helped win policy changes in support of minority farmers.

Today the Federation of Southern Cooperatives continues to support existing and new African American farmers—especially small-scale and organic producers—through cooperative development, access to credit, land stewardship programs, and the creation of local food economies in low-income communities. There are signs of hope and progress springing from their work. In 2012, census data showed a total of 33,000 black farmers across the country, an increase of 9 percent over the past five years. More people are returning to the land to farm. The Federation remains the largest African American cooperative development group in the United States, serving many of those farm families.

Ralph Paige, the executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, joined the organization in 1969 as a field officer. Paige has dedicated his life and career to helping black farmers fight discrimination and attain economic independence. During his time as director, the Federation has received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award, a United Nations award, and the first Fannie Mae Excellence in Low Income Housing Development Award.

The words of Ralph Paige follow.

HISTORY

WE GOT STARTED OUT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. Farmers, landowners, and rural people were having a hard time. They were struggling with economic development, with saving land, and with basic needs like access to housing and markets that the white farmers had. At that time, the black farmers didn't have anything. So after the Voting Rights Act was passed, some of us were trying to figure out a way that farmers and rural people could survive and stay on the land. We looked at a lot of different models and started thinking about cooperatives.

Our director at that time, Charles Prejean, led the work. We looked at groups across the South that were farming or producing food together. In Louisiana it was Acadian Delight, a baking cooperative. In Mississippi it was the Grand Marie Sweet Potato Cooperative. Everyone got together and said, "We need to federate these groups into some kind of larger organization." Sure enough, we were formed from twelve different groups in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Those early groups were trying to start credit unions, doing farm cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, and worker-owned cooperatives. They formed what became known as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

It came from the bottom up. It has always been a grassroots, bottom-up organization. It took civil rights leaders from across the country to help get it going, but it came from community.

Since inception, we have worked in 100 of the poorest counties in the South. In southwest Georgia, the Black Belt, the Delta. That's where we chose to work: in the communities that had the greatest needs.

COOPERATIVES & CREDIT

FARMERS HAD TO BORROW MONEY from a loan company or a predatory lending outfit because poor folk, and especially African Americans, could not go into a local bank or their Farm Service Agency office and borrow money. They didn't have access to credit—there were many barriers.

This whole concept of cooperatives gave them a means to start their own financial institutions by starting credit unions throughout the South. Those credit unions made it possible for them to pool their funds and make loans to their neighbors. They could get access to loans without putting up their land.

Now, were these run with a big storefront? No, most of them were volunteer. Many of them met in churches and barbershops. It wasn't a matter of if they had a million dollars in deposits or a hundred thousand dollars or fifty thousand dollars. This was the strength of it: *It was their money.* It was their decision to make loans to their neighbors and operate it. The success here is people owning it. The purpose of it, beyond lending money, is people can make decisions for themselves, they can save, they become better citizens. There are many entrenched values there.

CURRENT WORK

WE NOW HAVE OUR RURAL training center in the Black Belt in Epes, Alabama. We work with about 1300 acres of land to host trainings on sustainable agriculture. We also provide training for everything from cooperative development to management and leadership to helping people develop feasibility studies. African Americans lost close to 15 million acres of land in the last century. One of the things we saw is that a lot of that land that was accumulated was lost because people didn't have basic documents like wills. The land would become heirs' property and families would lose it. A lot of land is still tied up in heirs' property, so we've developed land retention programs to help families save their land.

CHALLENGES

IMMEDIATELY THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS THE ECONOMY. Unemployment has really hurt our membership. As people begin to suffer because of the economy, as people get poorer, we have more people call on us for services. When things get bad, a normal organization would say, "Cut back." But my question is: Why would you exist as an

organization to provide these services if you cut back when things get bad? When things get bad, people need you more. Through each crisis, the Federation has been there to fight the battle. We don't have the luxury to say anything is over as long as folks are poor.

VISION & REWARDS

IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL, we will restore the 15 million acres of land or more that was owned by African Americans. We will have more democratically controlled and run communities. I would like to see more young people return to farm. I'm seeing that already: young folk coming back to farm, or people coming back to claim the land that their parents had. I'm seeing a lot of women coming back to make viable businesses out of their family's farm operation.

We are committed to being here. I'm trying to transition the organization to younger folk now. We want to have the longevity to last another forty years. To young people who are interested in sustainable agriculture and cooperatives, I say, "Do it. You'll never regret it." The satisfaction you get from this work, you can never top it. You can become a leader. You can create economic development for your community. The reward from the work is in the people you'll love. You won't get rich doing it, but you'll gain wealth in another way.

Lora Smith is a program officer at the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation. Visit southernfoodways.org for a video clip of Ralph Paige at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives rural training center in Epes, Alabama, produced by the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation.

PHOTOS, PAGE 17 & 21, *by Jerry Siegel.*

PHOTO, PAGE 18, *by Brett Marshall.*

ORAL HISTORY

THE OLD FOUNDRY

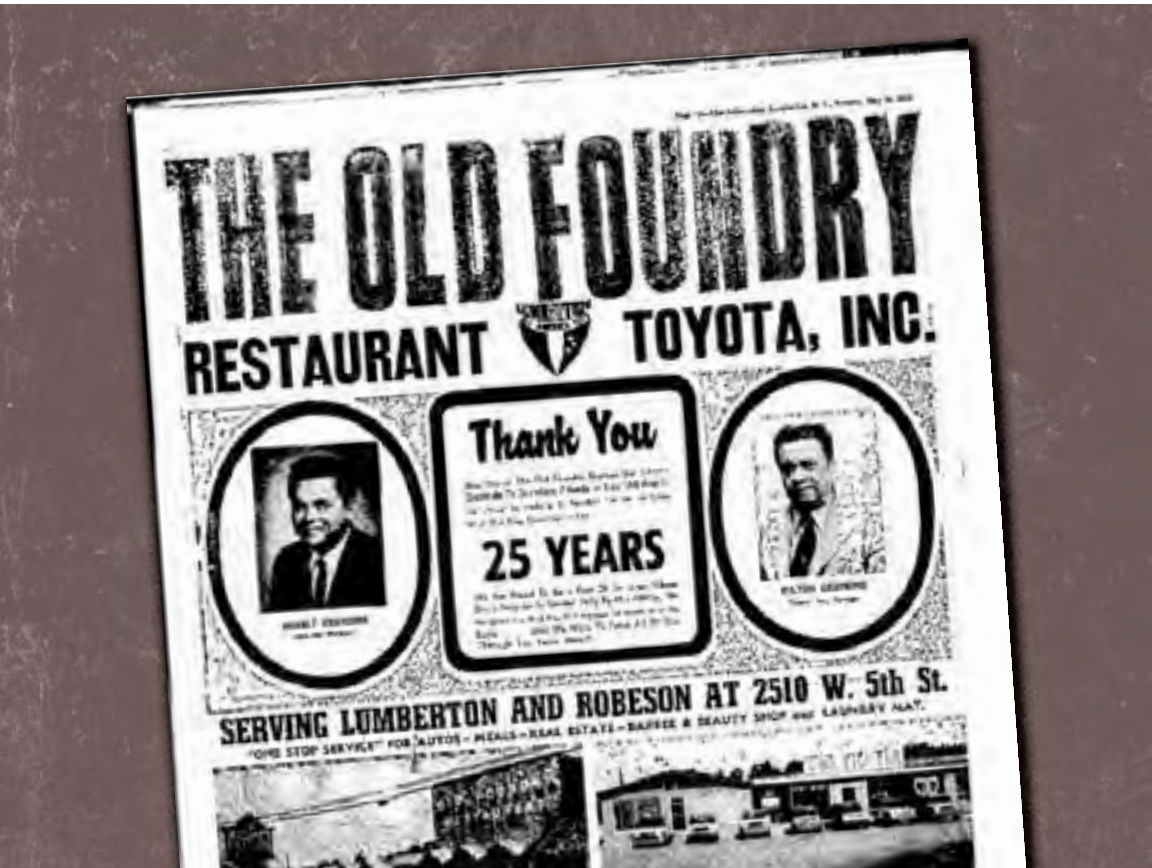
REMEMBERING A ROBESON COUNTY LANDMARK

as told to Sara Wood by Heaverd Dobbs Oxendine Jr.

THE LUMBEE INDIANS OF NORTH CAROLINA are the largest Native American tribe east of the Mississippi. In the southeastern part of the state, more than 50,000 Lumbee Indians call Robeson County home. Family and community are the center of Lumbee culture.

Throughout the twentieth century, tri-racial segregation plagued Robeson County, which today is some 40 percent Lumbee. Relationships between whites, African Americans, and Lumbee Indians are deep and complicated. Interracial relationships were common but hidden. Lumbee Indians and African Americans were not granted the same freedoms as whites. This caused strained divisions between the former two races. Some Lumbee Indians distanced themselves from African Americans in an attempt to make social strides in the white communities.

The Old Foundry Restaurant opened in Lumberton, the county seat of Robeson, in 1945. Hilton Oxendine moved his garage from the neighboring town of Fairmont and started the first Lumbee-owned car dealership in the county. He took care of the cars, and his brother, Hubert, managed the restaurant. The restaurant was known for pressure-fried chicken, steaks, and for the welcoming dining room where Lumbees could



enjoy a meal without being asked to leave. A large banquet room adjacent to the Old Foundry became the grounds for political change in the 1960s, as the Lumbees fought against inequalities in the education system.

Heaverd Dobbs Oxendine Jr., known as "Dobbs," is the nephew of Hilton and Hubert, who have both passed. Today he operates several businesses, including a car dealership next to the former Old Foundry Restaurant. Dobbs remembers the Old Foundry as a place where Lumbee Indians, who were segregated from whites and African Americans, could feel comfortable, a place where they could sit down at a table and enjoy a steak dinner with their family. African Americans were not initially welcomed into the restaurant the same way as Lumbee Indians and whites were, as Dobbs explains in this interview. As the civil rights movement progressed, members of the Lumbee Tribe joined together with African Americans to take their future in their own hands.

I WAS BORN IN FAIRMONT, NORTH CAROLINA. My father left when I was at a very early age, and as a young man I thought I was head of the house. My mama was a schoolteacher. I helped her by washing the clothes and cleaning up the house, because that would be less work for her to do. I went to work early. I was seven years old. My uncle, Hilton Oxendine, had a garage and a service station in the city limits of Fairmont. He was a successful businessman. I'd say if I was amounting to anything, I got it from him. When I got out of school, I'd walk to work at his business. I also got a job during tobacco season with this guy that made pictures of individuals, and we would set up on the streets there and when people would come by, we would make their picture. In the wintertime I had what I called a tin wagon, and I'd go around picking up copper, steel, iron, and stuff off the railroad tracks. Wherever I could find it, I'd gather it up and then I'd go sell it.

My uncle decided to move from Fairmont to Lumberton in 1945. I think he thought it was a better opportunity for his business, because he picked the location which was known as 301 (where Interstate 95 runs through Lumberton today), and that's where all the tourists from north and south would come right by his place. He had it tough, being an Indian coming up and having a business like he had, but he made it work. In business you got to have money. You got to be able to borrow money to help you with your business, and the banks were owned by the

white folks. They controlled the money, and when they controlled the money they kind of control your business. He wanted to buy a Cadillac. He had the money to buy it, but he went across town to buy it and they wouldn't sell him one—even though he had the cash money. They didn't think an Indian ought to be driving a Cadillac.

HE CALLED IT OLD FOUNDRY RESTAURANT. It was an iron foundry that was torn down. He also had the automobile business. He sold some new vehicles, but he had a body shop, a garage, wrecker service, salvage yard—he was a real sharp businessman. As I was growing up, I spent the summer working here with my uncle in different capacities.

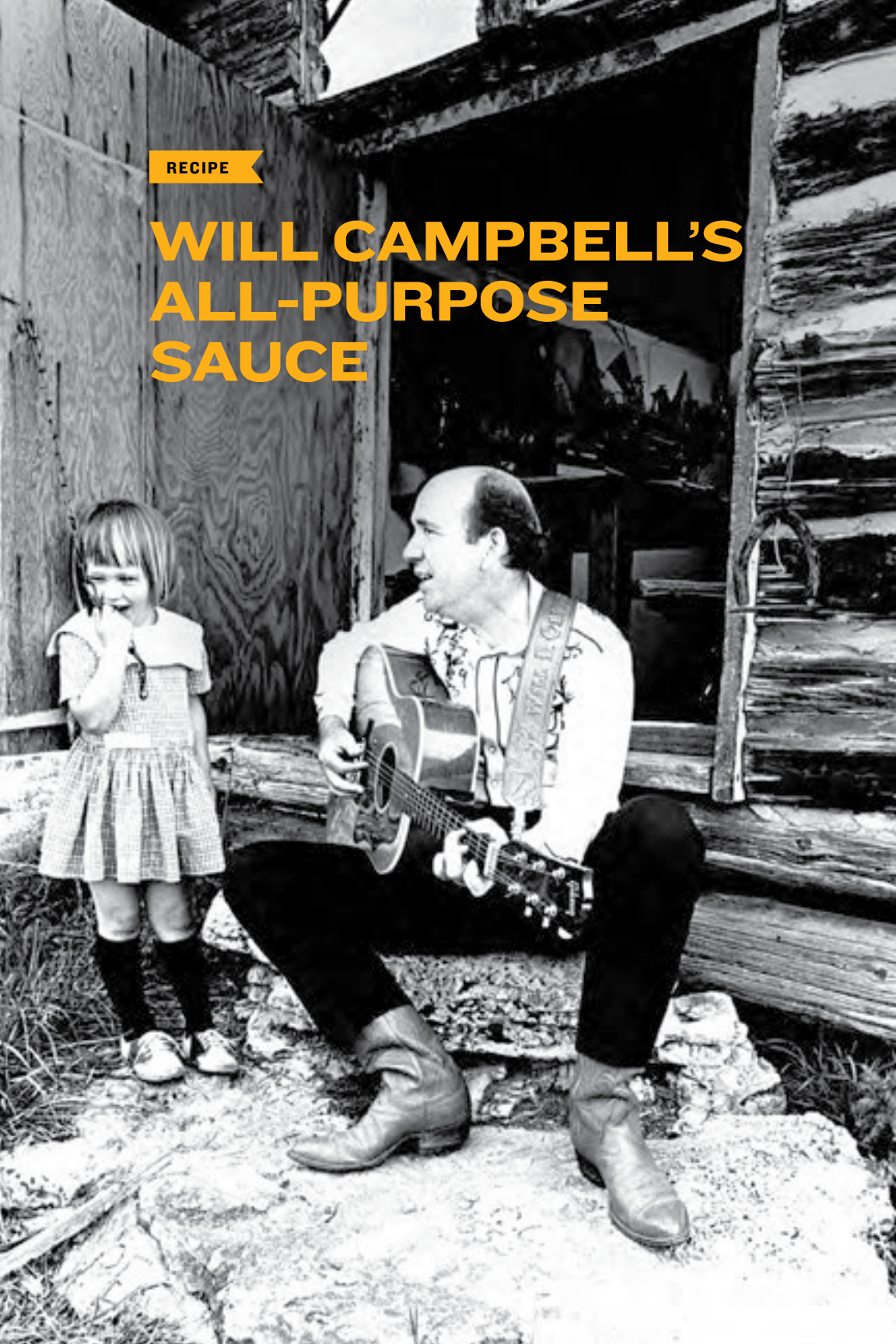
The Indians couldn't go to a theater or a drugstore or other restaurants and sit down and feel comfortable, or it was against the law for them to do it, anyway. They were denied going to a drugstore for ice cream and Coke—couldn't sit down on the stool there and eat it. You could order it, but you had to get out. A lot of folks now wouldn't hardly believe that, I imagine. The Old Foundry welcomed Indians. This was the center where the Indians could go and have a good time. On Sundays you'd see them with their families. They'd come in and sit down and have meals. They'd have functions. During the governor's race or the senate race they'd meet here at the Old Foundry to discuss politics. This was kind of the headquarters of politicking.

The Old Foundry had curb service and it was known for its broasted chicken and having real good steaks. We had a buffet here, and we had local cooks who was used to cooking country food, and the folks just loved country food. We employed a lot of folks, young ladies who was going to school. There weren't any jobs in this county. You share-farmed. And during this time Robeson County was known as the moonshine capital of this United States. They made more liquor here in Robeson County than anywhere else. So either you was a farmer, or you made liquor and you sold liquor—that was the economic development we had here.

And we welcomed the white folks: The mayor of Lumberton, the people who ran this city, they would come out here and have dinner and they felt at home coming here. They intermingled with the Indians. During breakfast and lunchtime you wouldn't never know it was just an Indian place. They'd come out here and they enjoyed the food. But the blacks, they didn't come in like the Indians or the white folks. They was served in the back and they got their food, and they would take it with them. That stayed like that up to the early 1960s, I believe. That wasn't right; we were practicing what was practiced against us. If it could have been changed, then I would have loved for it to, because I believe everybody is created equal and they should have the same privilege as anybody else. I don't believe in first or second or third classes of people. I believe everybody should have their own ideas, their own beliefs, and their own work habits, religion.

They closed the Old Foundry and then it was put up for sale. And with the history of the Old Foundry for our people, and especially with me growing up here, I purchased it. And one day I'd like to see it be a historical site. It means a lot to me, because I grew up here. To me it was the center of Indian folks at one time. If anybody wanted entertainment, they'd come here—good food, everything. They didn't feel comfortable going other places because of segregation. Now you can go anywhere you'd like.

PHOTOS BY *Sara Wood.*
ADVERTISEMENT, PAGE 24, *courtesy of* The Robesonian.



RECIPE

WILL CAMPBELL'S ALL-PURPOSE SAUCE

REVEREND WILL D. CAMPBELL WAS A LONGTIME DEFENDER OF CIVIL RIGHTS. A native of Amite County, Mississippi, he was the author of, among other works, *Brother to a Dragonfly*. He served briefly as chaplain of the University of Mississippi, before leaving amid death threats over his integrationist views. Late in his life, as the University owned up to its tragic past, Campbell returned often to challenge, cajole, and inspire a new generation of students.

This recipe first appeared in *Lovin' Spoonfuls: An Egerton Sampler of Good Things to Eat*, published in 1980 by John and Ann Egerton as a Christmas present for their friends. Many of the recipes are written in a narrative style, full of stories of family and friends, shot through with Egerton's sense of humor.

Will Campbell and John Egerton, longtime friends, kindred spirits, and champions of social justice, both passed away in 2013.

PHOTO BY *Al Clayton*, courtesy of the Clayton family. Will Campbell serenades Hope Clayton, late 1960s.

WILL CAMPBELL'S ALL-PURPOSE SAUCE

WILL CAMPBELL HAS RECEIVED some public notice as a preacher, writer, guitar picker, farmer, friend, and counselor to troubled souls; he is less well-known as a cook, but he and his wife Brenda are two of the finest. Most of Will's kitchen creations are made from memory, and he is not inclined to reveal their secret makings. But in a weak moment, he once divulged the recipe for his super-sauce, a condiment for all seasons (and for almost all meats, vegetables, etc.). It even makes a good dip. Here, friends, is Campbell's Sauce:

Mix by hand 1 cup of mayonnaise, 1 Tbsp. of lemon juice, one clove of garlic (minced fine); season to taste with celery salt, onion salt, black pepper, and horseradish. Now pass the beans, please.

PHOTO ESSAY

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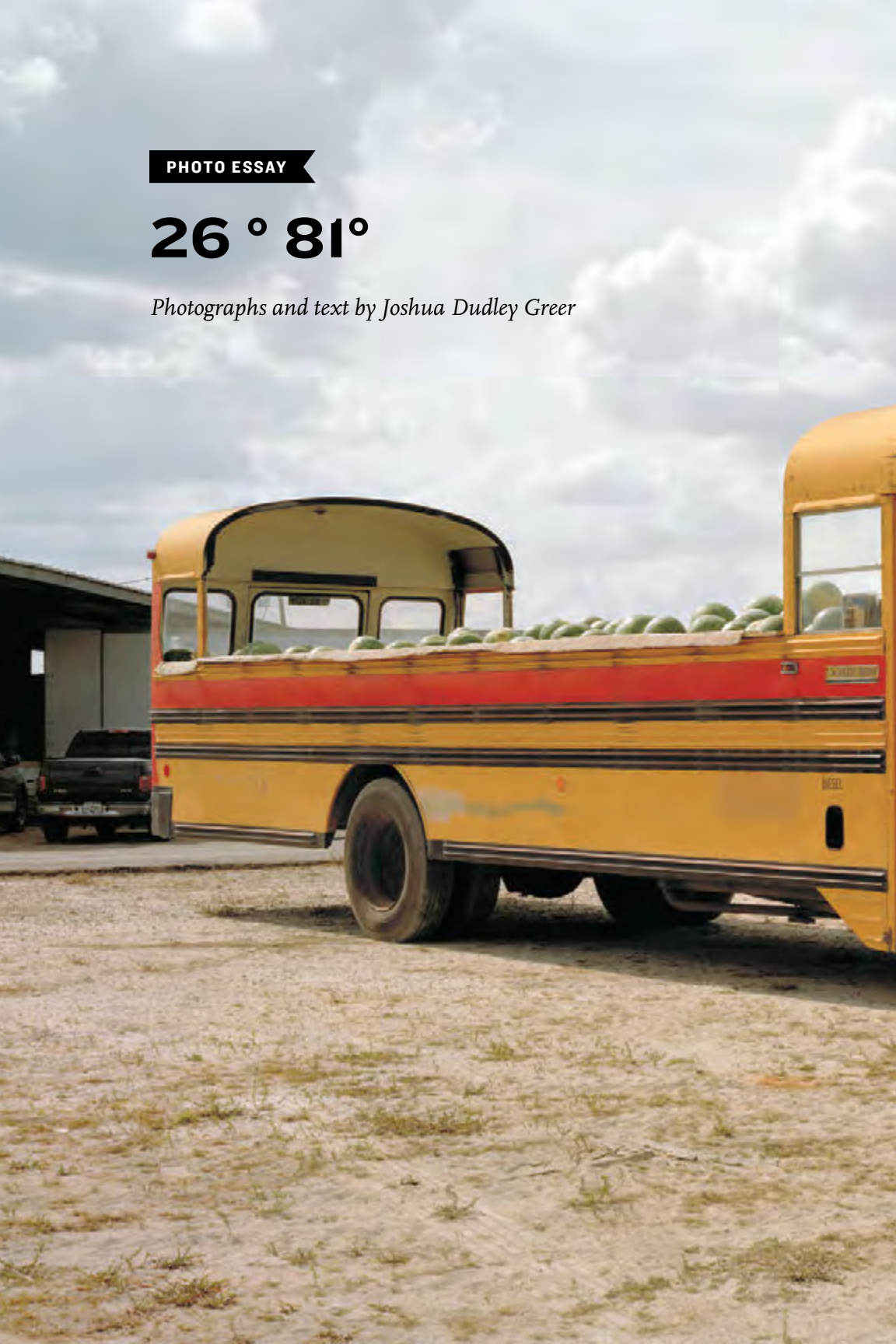
Photographs and text by Joshua Dudley Greer

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IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA, IS A PLACE OF POLARITIES. Located near some of the wealthiest areas in south Florida, this tiny agricultural town has a median household income of just $23,000. Much of the town feels passed over and derelict, while the neighboring casino overflows with eager gamblers and bused-in tourists. Very few residents have college degrees, and only about 35 percent will ever graduate high school. Football is seen as a way out for some: Four players from Immokalee High School have made their way to the NFL in recent years. But for most people, Immokalee is about the fields.

During the harvest season, the population of Immokalee swells to more than double its permanent size thanks to an influx of migrant workers who come to pick watermelons, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, and—of course—oranges. These workers have come from places like


SANTOS
CORNER

Mexico, Haiti, and Guatemala, but they will not stay long. Despite the fact that Florida's agricultural industry produces nearly $104 billion in revenue each year, a stable income eludes the men and women working the fields and manning the packing facilities. So these new Americans must go from state to state, traveling with the harvest in the hopes of creating a better life. For them, Immokalee is just one place like many others: It is not the destination, it is a point on the way to something else.

Joshua Dudley Greer, a graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art and the University of Georgia, teaches photography at East Tennessee State University.
EDITOR'S NOTE: *For a look at the important work that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers does on behalf of farmworkers, watch the film* Food Chains*, out this fall.*

PROTEST

I WOULD PREFER NOT TO

THE BOYCOTT IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

By Michael Oates Palmer

THE BUMPER STICKER—OR MAYBE IT WAS A POSTER—hung on the refrigerator, pinned by magnets. I was four, an age when you take words at their most literal. I was also a new reader: cereal boxes, the labels on jars, and slogans.

The phone rang. My mother took the call. On the other end was my nursery school: My mother needed to come get me.

What happened?

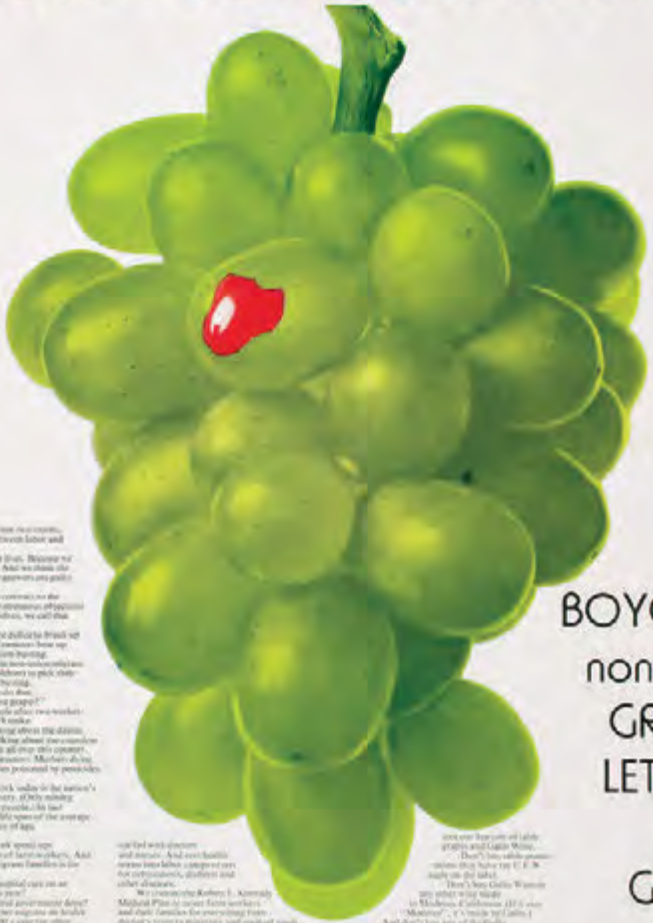
I made another child cry.

How?

My classmate opened his lunchbox. I told him there was blood on those grapes.

CESAR CHAVEZ, co-founder of the United Farm Workers, did not invent the boycott. The organized withdrawal of consumer support has been a means of protest in this country from even before it was a country: Patrick Henry, upset by Stamp Act tax levies, advocated a boycott on British goods in 1765. But when Chavez and Dolores Huerta used the mass action to help force the hand of table grape growers in California—landing the United Farm Workers their first labor contract in 1970—they brought the national boycott into the modern era. Since then, Americans have frequently staged boycotts to protest how companies handle their products or treat their employees. It's no coincidence that food companies are especially susceptible to boycotts: If

"THERE'S BLOOD ON THOSE GRAPES"



BOYCOTT
non-UFW
GRAPES
LETTUCE
and
GALLO
WINE

UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA—AFL-CIO

food is our most regular and consistent purchase, whether at the market or restaurant, then the withdrawal of that purchase can make the greatest impact. (In 1977, activists called a boycott against Nestlé for aggressively marketing baby formula in developing nations. My education in conglomerates began near the grocer's freezer, as my mother explained why we couldn't buy Stouffer's French Bread Pizza, with the word Nestlé hidden in tiny print on the side of the box.)

Today, boycotts are just as likely to target companies for what their owners say in interviews or do with their wealth as they are to target wages or working conditions. In the 1980s, the National Organization of Women called for a boycott of Domino's Pizza, because then-owner and founder Tom Monaghan was giving large sums of money to anti-abortion organizations. ("Buy a pizza in a box, put a woman in a box," went one slogan.)

And there's a flip side. A boycott today can be answered with a buy-in, where consumers with opposing opinions double down their dollars on products others have boycotted. The restaurant chain Chick-fil-A benefited from this counter-boycott strategy in a 2012 dustup over gay rights and gay marriage. And when it was all over, both sides claimed victory.

IN 1946, S. TRUETT CATHY OPENED The Dwarf Grill in the Atlanta suburb of Hapeville. From almost its very beginning, the company that would become Chick-fil-A was synonymous with its founder's Southern Baptist beliefs, heralded in the company's mission statement: "to glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us." All who love Chick-fil-A's chicken sandwiches and waffle fries know that those cravings can't be sated on a Sunday, when the chain's locations are closed. And the family-supported WinShape Foundation funded anti-gay rights groups like the Family Research Council.

In 2012, those practices became part of a national debate when Don Cathy, Chick-fil-A's president and the son of S. Truett, responded to the advance of gay marriage by declaring, "We are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at Him and say, 'We know better than you as to what constitutes a marriage.'" He followed this with tweets criticizing the Supreme Court dismissal of the Defense of Marriage Act.

Reaction from the left was swift. Several mayors threatened to block Chick-fil-A from opening restaurants in their cities. "Chick-fil-A values are not Chicago values," said Rahm Emanuel, Chicago's newly elected mayor. "There is no place for discrimination on Boston's Freedom Trail and no place for your company alongside it," wrote Boston mayor Thomas Menino in a letter to Don Cathy. The Jim Henson Company, which had licensed its Pajanimals characters to Chick-fil-A kids' meals, ceased its relationship with the restaurant. Petitions were circulated, boycotts were called.

In response, former Arkansas governor and presidential candidate Mike Huckabee called for a Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day in August, wherein consumers would show their support. (Sales spiked almost 30 percent that day.) Sarah Palin posted a photograph to Facebook in which she and her husband posed at a location near Houston, offering a big thumbs-up while holding bags full of chicken sandwiches. Ann Coulter and Rick Santorum voiced their support on talking-head television shows and Twitter.

The strangest boycott moment of 2012 came when supporters of the buy-in suggested a boycott of Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney, who ducked the Chick-fil-A controversy by saying that "those are not things that are part of my campaign." That didn't fly with the right wing of the Republican Party. Pat Buchanan didn't understand why "Mitt Romney doesn't just get his Secret Service detail and take his press corps down to a Chick-fil-A and show solidarity with these people." Catholic League President Bill Donohue, one of the most strident voices against gay marriage, declared, "Social conservatives have to make up their mind whether they should just simply stay at home, or go out there and vote for Romney."

Chick-fil-A sales soared 12 percent that year, to $4.6 billion. By March of 2014, however, tax filings revealed that Chick-fil-A's charitable arms had cut off funding to almost all of the organizations they had been criticized for supporting. The company released this statement: "The Chick-fil-A culture and service tradition in our restaurants is to treat every person with honor, dignity, and respect—regardless of their belief, race, creed, sexual orientation, or gender."

Did the boycott succeed or fail? The answer depends on who tells the story.

A BOYCOTT IS A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE MEANS of social protest. It's non-violent. It's non-present. Action comes through absence. Rather than throw a garbage can through the pizza-parlor window in protest, boycotters take the money off the seller's counter. If civil disobedience demands showing up—or sitting in—the boycott has always required less risk for its participants. While an individual may choose to reject a company's goods or services, only through an organized effort that connects consumers with a common cause can a boycott force change, beyond the clearing of one's conscience.

Just as technology enabled the globalization of commerce—revolutionizing shopping, manufacturing, and shipping—so has it paved the way for a new breed of boycott. Protesters can organize across larger territory. Witness the viral video and the mass e-mail list, unthinkable a

generation ago, now essential tactics of grassroots organizing. Boycotts were once about depressing demand, hitting companies in their ledgers; now boycotts are just as often about sullying reputation, which can also strike at a company's bottom line. (Privately owned Chick-fil-A, without shareholders to scare, may have been more immune to these pressures.)

As the Chick-fil-A controversy demonstrated, a consumer boycott in a globalized age does not even require consumers withholding consumption. Americans now lend support to causes without consuming in the first place. With one click of a mouse, one share or like of a post, we can trumpet our beliefs without changing our consumer behavior. Back in 2012, I watched on Facebook as friends from states where the chains of choice were Carl's Jr. or Roy Rogers rallied their followers to boycott Chick-fil-A. They lived nowhere near a Chick-fil-A. They had never given the company a dime. It didn't matter. My friends were part of an Internet-fueled court of public opinion, and their belief was that they could still pressure Chick-fil-A devotees in Memphis or Montgomery out of that next drive-through chicken biscuit. (In Los Angeles, where I live, Chick-fil-A had only just planted its flag, opening a Hollywood location shortly before the controversy.)

Watching Californians call for boycotts against a Southern company four years after Golden State voters had passed Proposition 8, outlawing gay marriage, I thought of how the North viewed the South during the Civil Rights Movement—and how Dr. King faced great resistance once he took the cause to the slums of Chicago. It's easier to support an action if you can shirk culpability for the circumstances that necessitate it.

THE BOYCOTT TODAY IS A PROTEST that does not require presence, attendance at a rally or march, or personal risk. In some cases, it does not require any change in consumer behavior. At a time when technology has cut down on the distances of our everyday lives, it also allows information to be spread to inform, organize, execute. And if the boycott as a tool of protest is now more disembodied, more detached than ever, doesn't that match and mimic the decentralized, global companies that it targets?

A decade before I shamed my preschool classmate over the grapes in his lunchbox, Senator Robert Kennedy met and marched with Cesar Chavez in California. The meeting was one of the moments said to

transform Kennedy into a prominent fighter for social justice. It also helped raise Chavez's national profile, and that of farm workers and their struggles.

In a globalized era, the ultimate gauge of a popular movement might be that it no longer requires a celebrity like Kennedy to shine a spotlight on a cause. In a Cape Town speech in 1966, the same year he met Chavez, Senator Kennedy spoke of how a "tiny ripple of hope" could build into a current, "which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

What if in 2014, that current might take the form of a hundred thousand likes or ten thousand re-tweets? It's easy to be cynical about a mass action that puts its participants at far less risk than the march on Selma or the strike on Delano. But should we measure protest by what the participants risk and sacrifice or by the results the protest achieves? If the modern boycott is an effective method to make change in our globalized age, the ends might justify the means.

For every Chick-fil-A controversy that suggests a stalemate, you can find successes: The actions organized by Florida's Coalition of Immokalee Workers have achieved gains for farm workers by pressuring companies at the top of the tomato supply chain. Could it be possible that, in an age when technology has democratized the ability to spread the word, you can marshal opposition and do enough damage to a company's reputation that it changes its ways?

Maybe. Or, as Dolores Huerta might put it: "*Si, se puede.*"

Michael Oates Palmer is a writer whose television credits include The West Wing, Army Wives, *and* Crossbones. *He previously wrote for* Gravy *about the friendship and correspondence of Eudora Welty and William Maxwell.*

IMAGE, PAGE 36, *courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California. Unknown maker,* There's Blood on Those Grapes, *circa 1974. Offset lithograph, 22.5 x 17.5 in. Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, All of Us or None of Us Archive. Gift of the Rossman family.*

PAINTING, PAGE 39, *by Emily Wallace.*

VERSE

INSCRIPTION FOR AIR

by Jake Adam York

John Earl Reese, shot while dancing in a café in Mayflower, Texas, October 22, 1955

Not for the wound, not for the bullet,
  power's pale cowardice, but
for you, for the three full syllables
  of your name we hold whole
as a newborn by the feet, and so
  for the cry, the first note, the key
of every word to follow, the timbre,
  the tone, the voice that could sing
Nat King Cole's "If I May," and slow
  dance the flip side, the blossoms
fallen like a verdict to the jury's lips,
  not to the blood or the broken
glass or the spiders silking juke-box
  wires in a junkman's shed,
but the fingers' heat still on the dime
  when it slides to the switch,
the lamp on the platter, the groove
  that tells the needle what to say,
and the pine boards of the café floor
  once moved by the locusts' moan
now warm as a guitar's wood, revived
  with all the prayers of song, Amens
that flame when a blues turns bright,
  not for what was lost, but what
was lived, what is written here,
  in the night, in vinyl, in the air,

for the bead of sweat at the hair's deckle,
   the evening star in the trees,
soda-pop sugar wild on your tongue and
   for the tongue telling Saturday night
something of Sunday morning, fluent
   as a mockingbird, and for the hand
that opens as if in praise, as if in prayer,
   asking for another to fill it there,
for the smile and for the smile of skin
   behind the ear where love might lip its name,
for you, if we may, pull back the arm
   and start this music once again.

Jake Adam York (1972–2012) was a poet from Glencoe, Alabama, whose work often focused on the civil rights movement in the American South. "Inscription for Air" was originally published in Abide, *copyright 2014 by the Estate of Jake Adam York. Reproduced by permission of Southern Illinois University Press. The SFA thanks Sarah Skeen, Joe York, and Southern Illinois University Press.*
PHOTO BY *Mike Garofalo.*

ABOUT GRAVY

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DOCUMENT

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THE MISSION of the Southern Foodways Alliance is to document, study, and celebrate the diverse food cultures of the changing American South.

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SFA BITES

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GRAVY

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ISSUE #53

FOOD & SOCIAL JUSTICE

A QUARTERLY FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

Southern Foodways Alliance