

# Urban agriculture, racial capitalism, and resistance in the settler-colonial city

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## Abstract

Recent scholarship on urban agriculture (UA)—the production of food in cities—argues that UA can both undergird and resist capitalist accumulation, albeit often at different spatio-temporal scales. Scholarship that explicitly examines how UA, capitalist development, and racial difference work through one another, however, is less extensive. In this review, I propose that the lens of racial capitalism can elucidate UA's contradictory motivations and outcomes. As an analytical framework, racial capitalism considers how distinct forms of colonization, settler colonialism, and White supremacy function relationally as part of a unified system of capitalist accumulation built on the exploitation of racialized human and spatial difference. By focusing on UA's contributions to racial Othering, the racialization of space, and dispossession, on the one hand, and on struggles of resistance and self-determination, on the other, this review attempts to shed new light on the dialectical, “both/and” nature of UA, while also addressing recent calls to consider how settler colonial logics persist in the contemporary North American city.

## KEYWORDS

Black geographies, food systems, Indigenous resurgence, racial capitalism, settler colonialism, uneven development, urban agriculture

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Urban agriculture (UA)—loosely defined as the production of food in cities—takes a variety of forms, including home gardens, allotments or community gardens, urban farms, school gardens, and animal husbandry. Over the past several years, geographers and other social scientists have shown that the motivations of urban agriculturalists are diverse, multilayered, and often contradictory (Blecha & Leitner, 2013; Blomley, 2004; Drake, 2014; Kurtz, 2003; McClintock & Simpson, 2018). The outcomes—both measured and perceived—of UA projects are similarly complex. Recent scholarship has complicated UA's place in cities and demonstrated how UA can be simultaneously radical, reformist, or neoliberal, both undergirding and resisting capitalist accumulation, albeit often at different spatio-temporal scales (Corcoran, Kettle, & O'Callaghan, 2017; Eizenberg, 2016; McClintock, 2014). Such attention to the political economy of urban food production is crucial, particularly as UA's contradictions become more and more visible; for example, scholars and practitioners alike have pointed to UA's growing entanglement in processes of gentrification and displacement (Crouch, 2012; Massey, 2017; McClintock, 2018; Quastel, 2009; Safransky, 2014). Equally as important is to understand how race functions in and through urban agricultural landscapes. Critical food scholars have closely scrutinized the Whiteness of “alternative” food practices, including UA, organic food, and farmers markets (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Anguelovski, 2015; Roman-Alcalá, 2016; Slocum, 2007). Scholarship that explicitly examines how UA, capitalist development, and racial difference *work through one another*, however, is less extensive.

My goal with this review, therefore, is to examine UA's multiple—and often contradictory—entanglements in what Lipsitz (2007) describes as the “racialization of space and the spatialization of race.” By focusing on UA's contributions to racial formation and racialized urban space, on the one hand, and to struggles of resistance and self-determination, on the other, I hope to shed new light on the dialectical, “both/and” nature of UA. Furthermore, in response to geography's “blind spot” in understanding how White supremacy is “produced through a taken-for-granted logic of settler colonialism” (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p. 718), I explicitly focus on how UA is entangled in the logics of racial capitalism within the specific context of the settler-colonial city. My focus here is on the United States and Canada, but given the “intimacies” of slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, and capitalism in shaping the modern world (Lowe, 2015), and that “racial capitalism has always produced urban political ecologies” (Heynen, 2016, p. 840) such as UA, readers may find the trends I identify here relevant to the analysis of UA in settler cities elsewhere. I begin by summarizing relevant ideas from scholarship on racial capitalism and settler colonialism before focusing on how UA functions within these broader systems. I attend to how UA articulates with logics of racialization and territorial expropriation, before concluding with a review of UA's role in resisting the discursive and material impacts of settler-colonial racial capitalism.

## 2 | RACIAL CAPITALISM AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Academics widely understand race as the socially constructed categorization of human bodies and groups based on phenotype. Despite being a biological fiction, racial categories nonetheless have a very real bearing on everyday life precisely because “bodies are visually read, understood, and narrated by means of symbolic meanings and associations” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 13). As such, racial categories vary across space and over time. Drawing on a variety of critical race theorists, geographic scholarship on race has increased in recent years, slowly filling in what many have regarded as a major lacuna in the discipline (Gilmore, 2002; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000; Mahtani, 2014; Pulido, 2002). Seminal contributions reveal how processes of racialization and racial formation are central to the production of space and uneven capitalist development (Gilmore, 2007; Pulido, 2000; Woods, 2000). This work has been foundational to more recent examinations of the interconnections of race, space, and political economy (for recent reviews, see Bonds, 2013; Brahinsky, 2011; Derickson, 2017; Kobayashi, 2014; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010) and has also underpinned a chorus of recent calls for geographers to engage more explicitly with how White supremacy works spatially (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Pulido, 2015) and through nature (Dillon & Sze, 2016; Heynen, 2016).

Building on this momentum, racial capitalism is fast becoming a key analytical lens in critical human geography. In *Black Marxism*, Cedric Robinson (2000) drew on W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, and other early 20th century Black radical thinkers to articulate the centrality of race in the historical development of capitalism. More recently, Gilmore (2002), Melamed (2015), Pulido (2016, 2017), and others have elaborated the framework to “highlight how racial difference is produced and how that relative valuation gets operationalized” (Pulido, 2017, p. 528). Scholars have applied the lens of racial capitalism to a variety of empirical cases, from labor and incarceration to economic development and environmental justice, among others (Camp, 2009; Clark, 2017; De Lara, 2018; Matlon, 2016). The concept takes as a starting point the idea that the capitalist accumulation *requires* human difference and, in the process of exploiting it, reifies socio-spatial differentiation (Lowe, 2015; Melamed, 2015; Pulido, 2017). The relationship between racialization, capital accumulation, and the production of space is thus inherently both dialectical *and* geographical (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p. 8; Neely & Samura, 2011); just as geographic difference drives the seesawing movement of capitalist development (Harvey, 2007; Smith, 2008), capital also depends on “loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value” (Melamed, 2015, p. 76). This differentiation emerges, in part, from the dialectic between the built environment and representations of race, wherein race is spatialized via the historical and contemporary relegation of devalued people to particular spaces through various forms of *de jure* and *de facto* segregation and violence (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Gilmore, 2007; Lipsitz, 2011; Shabazz, 2015; Woods, 2017). In McKittrick’s words (2011, p. 951), “the process of uneven development calcifies the seemingly natural links between blackness, underdevelopment, poverty, and place.”

The exploitation of racial and spatial difference has been foundational to the development of capitalism at urban, regional, national, and global scales (Brahinsky, 2011; Gilmore, 2007; Inwood, 2015; Lowe, 2015; Robinson, 2000; Woods, 2000, 2017). As an analytical framework, racial capitalism brings distinct forms and logics of colonization together into a relational “global history of colonial modernity” (Morgensen, 2011, p. 65), organized around racial hierarchies (da Silva, 2007), and founded on the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples; the trans-Atlantic slave trade; and wave upon wave of indentured immigrant laborers—including both racialized subjects from other colonies *and* White Europeans dispossessed of the means of production, who would ultimately enforce a White supremacist racial hierarchy. While the economic motivation underpinning colonial resource extraction and slavery was distinct from *settler* colonialism’s core logic of territorial acquisition, they functioned together as part of a unified system (Day, 2016; Glenn, 2015; Kelley, 2017; King, 2016; Lowe, 2015; Nelson, 2017; Pulido, 2018; Smith, 2012). In the next section, I focus on two interrelated processes underpinning racial capitalism and settler-colonial urbanization—territorial expropriation and racial subject formation—before examining UA’s entanglement therein.

### 3 | RACIALIZATION, ERASURE, AND DISPOSSESSION

Capitalist exploitation of human difference requires first and foremost the formation and ordering of racial subjects, that is, the classification of groups of people according to phenotypic and/or geographic characteristics, thus rendering them more or less valuable, determining whether they should be enslaved, exterminated, exploited, or assimilated (Goldberg, 2009; HoSang, LaBennett, & Pulido, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2014; Robinson, 2000). This process was (and continues to be) highly geographic. Europeans mapped Africa and the Americas both as “unlivable” or “uninhabitable” and as *Terra nullius*, or “lands of no one.” This rendered the inhabitants of these lands as non-humans (or primitives living as part of nature) in order to justify their subjugation and the theft of their land (McKittrick, 2006, p. 129). A racialized, hierarchical relation to land thus defines settler-colonial spaces. In addition to “the Indigenous inhabitant whose claim to land must be extinguished” (Paperson, 2014, p. 116), such geographic erasure paradoxically rendered Black bodies as “placeless” while they were also literally chained in place (McKittrick, 2011, p. 948), contributing to their “fungibility” as laboring commodities foundational to the accumulation of capital and the production of space (King, 2016). Racialized “exogenous others” (Veracini, 2015, p. 4)—for example, Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders—were kept landless through various immigration policies and therefore easily substitutable as laborers

(Day, 2016; Glenn, 2015; Lowe, 2015; Pulido, 2018). At the same time, “whites needed to constantly (re)create their own identities and superiority against the bodies of racialized Others,” for these distinctions determined who had “access to land, citizenship, and nations” (Razack, 2002, p. 49).

Scholars of settler-colonial cities explain how the replacement or “supersession” (Edmonds, 2010a) of Indigenous people by European settlers required both territorial expropriation and sociocultural erasure (Blomley, 2003; Kelley, 2017). This involved coercion and force to physically remove Indigenous people from urban spaces and move them onto rural reserves, but also depended on discursive efforts that rendered Indigenous people as part of the natural environment, as primitives anathema to the modernity of urbanization, and as “ghosts” or spectral vestiges of a wilderness cleared for the expansion of European civilization (Blomley, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Edmonds, 2010b; Razack, 2002; Stanger-Ross, 2008; Tomiak, 2017; Wood, 2006). In so doing, settlers could also position themselves as the indigenous inhabitants of the *Terra nullius* they had claimed and “improved” (Hugill, 2017; Wolfe, 2001).

But as Audra Simpson (2014, pp. 7–8) reminds us, settler colonialism “fails at what it is supposed to do: eliminate Indigenous people; take all their land; absorb them into a white, property-owning body politic.” Settler-colonial power asymmetries and modes of domination persist precisely because supersession is never complete. A growing body of scholarship on the “settler-colonial present” (Veracini, 2015) explicitly articulates how race, capital, and settler logics of dispossession and displacement function in cities today. A pioneer imaginary—from a romanticized celebration of past settlement to descriptions of the boundaries of racialized space as “frontiers” and the White people who cross these lines as “pioneers”—plays a central role in keeping settler logics alive (Baloy, 2016; Barraclough, 2017; Blomley, 2003; Safransky, 2014). Dispossession in the present also relies on the tried-and-true logic of rendering Indigenous land and Black spaces as “uninhabitable” (McKittrick, 2006, p. 130) in order to justify both their expropriation—as wastelands requiring remediation (Coulthard, 2014, p. 175; Dillon, 2014; Paperson, 2014) or spatially circumscribed “sacrifice zones” (Bullard, 1993) of neglect—and the spatial regulation of their inhabitants in order to protect the accumulation of capital and reinforce White supremacy (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2011; Pulido, 2000, 2017). In the next section, I describe how such logics have worked through UA.

## 4 | CULTIVATING RACIALIZED SPACE

In the fledgling European mercantilist outposts that evolved into North American settler colonies, food production was not only “a necessary element of colonists’ basic survival” but also “a draw for future settlers, and a central part of provincial authorities and allied merchants’ visions for many colonies’ roles in the Atlantic economy” (Vitiello & Brinkley, 2014, p. 93). Agricultural settlements swelled to become “regional landscapes of farming hamlets, market towns, and port cities, all with residential garden plots and commons for pasturing animals” (Vitiello & Brinkley, 2014). New crops, growing techniques, and the imposition of cadastral grids and land titles transformed the landscape, mimicking British and European socio-natures (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018), while incorporating many Indigenous crops better suited to local growing conditions (McWilliams, 2004). Martin (2011, p. 117) describes settler gardening as the “literalization of settlement” through the setting of physical and metaphorical roots, where the sharing and exchange of seeds, plants, and horticultural knowledge contributed to community coherence among settlers, and even enabled class mobility and prestige, particularly for women.

Gardens also served important political economic functions. African Americans enslaved by smallholders and plantation owners alike tended small subsistence gardens or “provision grounds”; both the labor invested in maintaining these plots and the produce grown from them ultimately subsidized slave-based commodity production (Barr, 1996, p. 18; Berlin, 2016; McKittrick, 2013; Rusert, 2009). In the sharecropping economy that evolved from the plantation system (Woods, 2000), kitchen gardens played a similar role in subsidizing social reproduction (Phillips, 1999, pp. 24–25), as tenant farmers “were expected to support themselves from homegrown vegetables and meat or wild game” (Gottlieb, 1996, p. 19). Cultivation also spread with British and American military, mercantile, and missionary expansion westward and northward. Extensive gardens—both settler and Indigenous—in and around these outposts

produced subsistence crops for garrisons, traders, priests and their flocks, as well as commodity crops for exchange (Albright, 1933; Nichols, 1970; Waisberg & Holzkamm, 1993).

In addition to provisioning growing settlements with familiar European vegetables, gardens played an important role in delimiting race and space. Mercantilists trading in the Northwest in the early 19th century, for example, used gardens “to mark off crucial symbolic boundaries” between “civilized” Europeans and native populations (Vibert, 2011, p. 133). Settlers also staked these boundaries via violence (both discursive and physical) to the Indigenous agriculture found in most permanent or semi-permanent settlements. Colonialists sometimes did not recognize food production for what it was, either mistaking it as part of a lush wilderness landscape or simply discounting it as “primitive.” By ignoring Indigenous cultivation practices—and the property rights that went with them—settlers undergirded European claims to land they deemed to be *terra nullius* (Deur, Turner, Dick, Sewid-Smith, & Recalma-Clutesi, 2013; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018), the “expansive unenclosed, green landscape” a utopian space upon which a “pastoral ideal” could be mapped, often in the form of the plantation (Rusert, 2009, p. 19). Physical destruction of Indigenous gardens often accompanied such discursive violence, simultaneously creating space for settler agriculture, while eliminating Indigenous means of subsistence and territorial claims (Deur et al., 2013) and naturalizing slave gardens as an element of a utopian pastoral landscape (Rusert, 2009).

Failure to recognize native cultivation also led to a widespread narrative of “the starving Indian,” which justified further “civilizing” efforts through agriculture (Richter, 1999). Gardening was routinely promoted as a means of “civilizing” Indigenous populations well into the 20th century (Albright, 1933; Schaefer, 2016), both on reservations and at residential schools in the United States and Canada, where young Indigenous children were forced to abandon their native languages and traditions and learn White settler ways (Child, 1998; Miller, 1996; Stout, 2012). Gardens, in these cases, contributed to the work of cultural erasure and forced assimilation of Indigenous populations into the White population.

Gardening also played an important role in citizen- and worker-subject formation among immigrant laborers and their children in the early 20th century (Bassett, 1981; Kohlstedt, 2008; Lawson, 2005). School gardens and immigrant garden projects taught participants to be efficient workers, applying Taylorist principles to the cultivation of symmetrical rows of crops. In the United States, they also instilled immigrants with American liberal democratic ideals of citizenship and a Jeffersonian agrarian settler imaginary (Bassett, 1981). Garden programs for Blacks, on the other hand, were often framed differently than those for Whites, focusing more on sanitation and modernization than on citizenship (Domosh, 2015; Glave, 2003). The outcomes of such “civilizing” efforts in the garden thus reinforced hierarchical racial distinctions. Fostering the White settler imaginary was vital to the consolidation of European ethnics as “White” (Omi & Winant, 2014; Roediger, 2007). At the same time, Whites widely viewed Indigenous gardens as “fumbling attempts to adopt some of the trappings of modernity” (Berglund, 2006, p. 139) and as “the inferior, savage foil to [those of] superior, civilized whites” (p. 145). Similarly, White observers frequently disparaged African American gardens as unkempt and jungle-like (Barr, 1996, p. 222; Glave, 2003).

Scholarship on contemporary UA projects reveals similar logics of Othering and civilizing at play in North American cities. Critical food scholars have written extensively on the ways in which alternative food initiatives ultimately support neoliberal capitalism (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008c; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Weissman, 2015), arguing, for example, that organized UA efforts can contribute to neoliberal subject formation by shifting responsibility to the individual and away from collective mobilization against the corporate agri-food system (McClintock, 2014; Pudup, 2008). But the formation of the ideal neoliberal “foodie” also mobilizes a highly normative set of imaginaries and claims, many of which undergird racial-capitalist and settler logics of Othering. Many UA efforts draw on an agrarian romanticization of “going back to the land” and “getting your hands dirty,” while remaining blind to racialized and gendered histories of agricultural exploitation (Carlisle, 2014; Guthman, 2008a, 2008b; Rotz, 2017) and eliding questions of whose land they are actually “going back to.” These studies have also revealed how UA can reinforce hegemonic racial hierarchies, where well-meaning UA advocates intent on “bringing good food to others” (Guthman, 2008a) can re-inscribe paternalistic power asymmetries and colonial patterns of oppression of people of color (Lyson, 2014; Ramírez, 2015; Reynolds & Cohen, 2016; Rosan & Pearsall, 2017). Discourses of purity,

mobilized in opposition to corporate, processed food, can also denigrate Indigenous and non-White foodways (Alkon et al., 2013; DeLind, 2010; Minkoff-Zern, 2014).

Furthermore, the Whiteness of alternative food initiatives—and their capacity for racial Othering—is spatialized through what Saldanha (2007, p. 50) refers to as “viscosity,” or the tendency of “white bodies to stick and exclude others.” Several scholars have described how such viscosity has rendered alternative food spaces as White spaces (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Slocum, 2007), where community gardens, for example, become exclusionary, despite their presumed ability to bring a diversity of people together (Bosco & Joassart-Marcelli, 2017; Drake, 2014). As White people begin to dominate agricultural spaces in older communities of color, the actual practice of UA can result in territorial appropriation. Even well-intentioned activists working under a banner of “food justice” or “reclaiming the commons” can unintentionally contribute to dispossession and displacement of people of color (McClintock, 2018; Stehlin & Tarr, 2017).

Indeed, UA efforts by White people are often perceived as colonial by those they intend to “help.” Meenar and Hoover (2016, p. 10) quote an African American gardener who describes the urban farming efforts in a low-income area of Philadelphia as “a white, top down activity.” Similarly, Owens and Antiporda (2017, p. 165) describe how garden project failed in its efforts to fulfill a promise to construct “a garden on every corner” in historically Black West Oakland precisely because it “replicated the colonial ‘ideology’ of ‘improvement’ and risked appearing obtuse to the reality of displacement in the context of extreme gentrification.” Discussing a White-led garden project in Seattle, Ramírez (2015) notes a similar blindness to power asymmetries, as do Rosan and Pearsall (2017) in their study of UA in Philadelphia, exemplifying the “disavowal of the processes of dispossession” (Snelgrove, Dharmoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 5) fundamental to the racial formation of White settlers (Rotz, 2017). But even while many White urban farmers are actually sensitive to uneven power dynamics, their efforts often overshadow the existing UA efforts of non-White community residents. This has material impacts, as municipalities and funders alike tend to privilege large-scale, photogenic UA, thereby disproportionately shifting land, equipment, and grant funding away from organizations of color to these new urban farmers (Horst, McClintock, & Hoey, 2017; Reynolds & Cohen, 2016).

Indeed, it is in such gentrifying neighborhoods that UA seems most visibly entangled in racial-capitalist/settler-colonial logics of Othering and dispossession. Clamoring to take advantage of the growing “rent gap” between actual and potential property values in disinvested neighborhoods of color, developers, landlords, and gentrifiers alike invoke a frontier imaginary that appeals to “pioneers” and “urban homesteaders” in search of cheap housing (N. Smith, 1996). Harkening back to the westward settlement of the United States by Whites granted “free” land under a series of Homestead Acts, such discourse reframes devalued inner-city neighborhoods as uncharted “*urbs nullius*” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 176), rendering “the present innercity population as a natural element of their physical surroundings” (Smith, 1996, p. xvi), while “evading Indigenous sovereignty and the modern presence of actual urban Native peoples” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 28; see also Jackson, 2009). In some cases, commercial developers and market gardeners, trumpeting promises of enhanced food security or sustainability, purchase or lease vast tracts of vacant land at fire sale prices in these neighborhoods, acquisitions that locals see as “land grabs” that do little more than enrich the owner at the community’s expense (Paddeu, 2017; Safransky, 2017).

Several authors have described this phenomenon in Detroit and other post-industrial cities where vacant land is abundant. But similar processes are visible everywhere, arising where land values are lower and—given the racialized nature of uneven development—where populations of color tend to be concentrated (Lederman, 2017; Pothukuchi, 2017; Rosan & Pearsall, 2017). Urban agriculture is caught up in racial-capitalist and settler logics of urban development precisely because it distinguishes “new development, rising home values, and a whiter residential population” from a neighborhood’s “racially marginalized past” (Dillon, 2014, p. 1211), or as Pettygrove and Ghose (2018, p. 601) put it, UA works “to racialize revitalization as whiteness, in that it is a process meant to improve neighborhoods understood to be black.” Even if longtime residents tend gardens, the viscosity and visibility of White gardeners—growing food UA in their yards, community garden plots, or vacant lots—serves as a signal to future gentrifiers and investors that the neighborhood is on the road to being livable and green (McClintock, 2018). Urban agriculture, like

other green amenities, is thus performative and often most widespread in some of the trendiest neighborhoods (Lebowitz & Trudeau, 2017; Lowell & Law, 2017; McClintock, Mahmoudi, Simpson, & Santos, 2016; Naylor, 2012; Quastel, 2009).

As demonstrated above, UA has been entangled in processes of racial Othering and dispossession central to the racial-capitalist development of settler cities. But as noted in the introduction, UA can work in contradictory ways. In the next section, I draw on insights from Black geographies and Indigenous studies to illustrate how UA's emancipatory functions arise dialectically in response to the logics and material outcomes of settler colonialism and racial capitalism.

## 5 | SOWING RESISTANCE AND RESURGENCE

Many scholars have raised that alarm that a narrow focus on political economic structures, particularly those grounded in Marxian critiques of neoliberal capitalism, can foreclose alternative, anti-capitalist pathways (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Springer, 2014). Scholars of Black geographies have further warned of the scholarly erasure of Black epistemologies, ontologies, and material practices. Even when well-intentioned, a narrow focus on racial violence can reinforce racist differentiation by essentializing the Black experience as tantamount to death and dying, thereby reinforcing the role that "scenes of subjection" (Hartman, 1997) have historically played in normalizing violence against Black bodies and Othering Black spaces (Gilmore, 2002; Mbembe, 2003; McKittrick, 2013; Woods, 2002). Instead, these authors argue for a dialectical approach to understanding Black space that also includes the social movements that emerge in opposition to racial capitalism's assault on Black life. McKittrick (2011, p. 955), for example, asserts that Black geographies "hold in them useful anti-colonial practices and narratives" and "are not just about limitations, captivities, and erasures; they are also about everyday contestations, philosophical demands, and the possibilities the production of space can engender for subaltern subjects" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 121). Mirroring Robinson's dialectical understanding of the emergence of the Black radical tradition as a movement to reconstitute social bonds torn apart by racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015, p. 80; Robinson, 2000), Woods identifies a "Blues model of sustainable development" that arises in dialectical opposition to slavery and Jim Crow oppression (Woods, 2000, 2017).

Similarly, critics have warned that studies of settler colonialism risk perpetuating the dominance of a singular colonial narrative that can silence Indigenous theorizing, thus reinforcing settler-colonial logics of erasure (Hugill, 2017). Rather than focusing solely on settler structures of oppression, Indigenous scholars have stressed the importance of examining everyday practices and other assertions of the multiple sovereignties that work in opposition to settler logics (Corntassel, 2012; Daigle, 2017; Simpson, 2014). To this end, the theory and praxis of *Indigenous resurgence* entails "recommitments and reorientations" to Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and practices (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 611). Action at the scale of the individual and household may scale up over time into social or political movements challenging the authority and territorial claims of the settler-colonial state (Daigle, 2017).

Through these lenses, understanding UA as a form of resistance and self-determination under racial capitalism/settler colonialism first demands attention to "banal acts of daily subsistence" as these "reflect and reproduce capitalist social relations, express their contradictions, and contain the seeds of their overcoming" (Figuroa, 2015, p. 502). Urban food production has historically served as a means of subsistence for low-income, racialized, and marginalized populations, supplementing diets and providing agriculturalists with supplemental income from sales of garden surplus. Often arriving in cities and towns from rural areas, people with limited incomes grew food to lower grocery costs and earn a little money on the side (McClintock, 2010; Nicolaides, 2001); indeed, in many cities, agriculture and truck farming was often one of the few activities open to racialized immigrants (Gibb & Wittman, 2013; Lim, 2015; Wong, 2004, pp. 211–220). For African Americans who moved from the U.S. South to urban centers in the North and West during the two Great Migrations, growing staple vegetables such as okra, collards, and sweet potatoes and raising small livestock was a means of saving money, supplementing incomes, and having fresh produce in the summer

and canned surplus for the winter (Wiese, 2005, p. 78). Later waves of immigration to U.S. cities similarly saw newcomers growing food at home and in community gardens (Airriess & Clawson, 1994; Baker, 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014; Martinez, 2010; Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004). For many immigrants, urban gardening provides “biographical continuity” (Li, Hodgetts, & Ho, 2010, p. 786) between their old lives in their country of origin and their lives in a new culture and space (Irazábal & Punja, 2009; Mares & Peña, 2010). Gardens also provided sustenance for many Indigenous people forcefully relocated to large cities in the 1950s and 1960s (Pollak, 2016, p. 94). Food production has thus served as a buffer against economic upheaval inherent to the socio-spatial logic of uneven capitalist development (McClintock, 2010; Sbicca, 2014; Tornaghi, 2014), providing a modicum of food security, supplementing diets with fresh produce, and providing benefits to mental and physical health (Gray, Guzman, Glowa, & Drevno, 2014; Hale et al., 2011; Kortright & Wakefield, 2011).

But beyond providing benefits to individual households, growing food can strengthen communities in a variety of ways that counter both settler colonialism's requirement of Indigenous erasure (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018) and racial capitalism's need to rework existing social relations into new socio-spatial arrangements supportive of capitalist accumulation (on this necessity, see Melamed, 2015). Many scholars therefore point to the important educational role that gardens can play both in (re)connecting people to Indigenous and non-European foodways and forging bonds of interdependence, between members of the community and between gardeners and the non-human world (Bang, 2016; Cidro, Adekunle, Peters, & Martens, 2015; Mihesuah, 2004; Thomas, 2017). Gardens also create “strong, yet different, connections to the land while living in a non-Aboriginal environment” (Wilson & Peters, 2005, p. 404). This reconnection to land and Indigenous food are necessary steps in “decolonizing the diet” (Brown, 2016, p. 119; LaDuke et al., 2010, p. 22) and central tenets of an Indigenous resurgence that requires “regain[ing] the self-sufficient capacity to provide our own food, clothing, shelter and medicines” and the recognition that “land is life” (Alfred & Cornstassel, 2005, p. 613). As Coulthard (2014, p. 172) explains, reconnecting to land-based practices in this way resists capitalist logics, fostering a “radical sustainability” that also breaks individual and community dependence on the capitalist markets. Moreover, such efforts assert self-determination grounded in multiple, nested sovereignties that contest capitalist logics and the boundaries of settler-state institutions (Daigle, 2017; Simpson, 2014; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). Tuck and Yang (2012) caution, however, that decolonization is not simply a question of reconnecting to the land, but also of regaining control of it.

Urban food production has similarly contributed to Black self-determination. Indeed, foodways have long played an important role in emancipatory politics in African American communities—from the agricultural and culinary knowledge of enslaved people (Carney, 2009; Wisecup, 2015) to the anti-hunger work of the Black Panther Party (Heynen, 2009b)—and have been a site of negotiation between divergent Black political ideologies (McCutcheon, 2015), from which theories of praxis emerge that link analysis of racial capitalist structures and relations to the “deeply human side” of everyday survival (Heynen, 2009a, p. 197). Black gardening is thus “a way to stake a claim to permanency, education, economic citizenship, and community leadership, rather than only as a vehicle for food security” (Tuck, Smith, Guess, Benjamin, & Jones, 2014, p. 55). Examining urban gardens in a majority African American area of Washington, DC, Reese (2018, p. 421) explains how gardeners draw on “memories and myths” of a hyper-local Black economy that arose in response to redlining and segregation. These affective stories served as “both a critique of the breakdown of Black community life and as inspiration for reclaiming a past of cooperative living that was seemingly lost.” Indeed, gifting, sharing, and trading garden produce between Black gardeners has traditionally “reinforced community bonds and preserved tangible links” (Wiese, 2005, p. 85) not only to an African American agrarian heritage in the South but also to Black liberation struggles and the Blues development tradition, more broadly (Figueroa, 2015; Heynen, 2009b; McCutcheon, 2013; Ramirez, 2015; Rickford, 2017; White, 2011b). Echoing other studies of UA in Detroit (Pothukuchi, 2015; White, 2011b, 2011a), Safransky (2017, p. 1093) describes how for some Black farmers, UA is “a strategy of resistance, an act of self-determination, a challenge to systemic violence” that contributes to wider efforts “to undo colonial spatial orders and structures of white supremacy,” an observation that appears to be true of Black UA efforts across the country: New York (Reynolds & Cohen, 2016; Sbicca & Myers, 2017); Chicago (Block, Chávez, Allen, & Ramirez, 2012; Shabazz, 2015, pp. 115–118); Los Angeles (Bonacich



& Alimahomed-Wilson, 2011; Broad, 2016); the Bay Area (Bradley & Galt, 2014; Sbicca, 2016); and many other American cities (Passidomo, 2016; Ramírez, 2015; Rodriguez, 2017).

## 6 | CONCLUSION

As the literature cited in this article illustrates, UA can serve as both a tool of racial Othering and dispossession and a tool of resistance to these same processes and their outcomes. Urban agriculture is not *inherently* one way or another—it is simply an everyday practice. *How it is mobilized and by whom*, however, can make all the difference in whether it serves to bolster racial capitalism or to undermine it. Viewing UA through a relational framework of racial capitalism and settler colonialism can help clarify some of its contradictory outcomes. Future theoretical and empirical work in this vein might address any number of scales, from ethnographies focused on the micro-geographies of everyday UA practices, to macro-scale relational comparative work.

A few additional recommendations for future work are worth mentioning. First, regardless of the scale or scope of analysis, scholars should work hard to identify which specific processes are at play in a given case, to clarify precisely how racial Othering and settler logics of erasure and dispossession mediate particular political economic processes (see, for example, Coulthard, 2014; Day, 2016; King, 2016; Pasternak & Dafnos, 2017). Second, future work should place gender more centrally, given the gendered dynamics of UA and social reproduction, more broadly. Third, while some have called for more attention to UA practiced by people of color (to offset the disproportionate attention paid to the urban farming of young, White hipsters; see Reynolds & Cohen, 2016, for example), scholars should take care to avoid essentializing the UA practices of Indigenous people and people of color. Fostering and protecting spaces for people to tell their own stories is one important way to uphold the diversity of epistemologies and narratives. Finally, future work might even call into question using UA as a framework of analysis in and of itself. Given that hunting, fishing, and gathering of foods are all central to Indigenous food sovereignty and resurgence (Daigle, 2017; Poe, LeCompte, McLain, & Hurley, 2014; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018), we might ask whether a narrow, Eurocentric focus on cultivation, as opposed to a more broadly defined food system, works to erase non-White epistemologies and practices. In sum, given the extent to which discursive Othering and erasure undergird racial capitalism, how we frame UA and other food spaces—and, indeed, what we choose to focus our research on—clearly matters.

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