1. For class, we read Vandana Shiva's Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply.  According to Shiva, who stole the harvest and how did they do it?  Furthermore, what are the short and long term effects for the people of India (and others around the world)?

Many times, those who had the power to do so stole the harvest. In the Bengal famine of 1943 it was the landlords. Today, it is commonly the corporations. For example, corporations have consolidated the seed market and placed patents on certain genomes that had been bred by generations of farmers to produce more food. The result of corporations selling previously communally owned seeds and pesticides to go along with such seeds is farmer debt. When the crops inevitably fail or pests take over, some farmers would commit suicide using the same pesticides that got them into debt in the first place. In the long term, the neoliberalization of the food market has ruined the livelyhood of local farmers throughout the world. Shiva writes “As a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the proportion of Mexico’s food supply that is imported has increased from 20 percent in 1992 to 43 percent in 1996. After 18 months of NAFTA, 2.2. million Mexicans have lost their jobs, and 40 million have fallen into extreme poverty.”

2. Throughout her career Vandana Shiva has highlighted the relationship between women and the environment. Does that show through in this book?  How are women affected by the changes Shiva documents in Stolen Harvest?

Shiva highlights that around 70% of the world’s people earn a living by making food, most of which are women. The first major event referenced in the book – the Bengal famine of 1943 – was protested by mostly women demanding food rights. Any attacks on farmers are attacks on women and Shiva makes this clear. When the livelyhoods of farmers are ruined by farm consolidation and “intellectual property rights”, it is predominantly the women who are directly affected.

3. Thinking back over the entire course, what were your three favorite readings?  Why?  What was your least favorite reading?  Why?

Stolen Harvest is left at the top of my list. For me it is approachable, and there is plenty of information. Many academic papers can often be abstracted using theory and vocabulary, but I found Shiva’s book nice to read and very valuable. My second favortie would be Nakano and Glenn: Unequal Freedom. This source goes over the fact that gender and race are linked to each other in an inextricable way. It was one of those ideas that I have never considered but made perfect sense when I read it, so the source was very shocking to me. My next favorite reading was Holleman: De-naturalizing Ecological Disaster. This source broke many misconceptions I had about the dust bowl. Many ideas I have had about ties between capitalism and the environment synergized with this article. It gave me a new perspective on a very historical event. My least favorite source was probably El-Amin: Chocolate Cities. I liked all the sources but I remember struggling to read through this one, it was very long and I didn’t find the writing appealing. I didn’t really connect with the reading unfortunately.

4. Over the last couple of weeks, we've looked at case studies in South America, India, Africa, and the United States for inspiring community development solutions? Imagine you are the community development official for your hometown. Choose one of the solutions that we observed that you believe would improve your place. Briefly describe the solution and how would you go about implementing it.

In the documentary about Curitiba, the city implemented a public transportation system in a three road design. Bowling Green is a city that prioritizes cars over people, bicyclists and busses by design. This suburban centric design is detrimental to the well-being of this cities inhabitants, especially in comparison to the design strategies implemented in Curitiba. This is for a variety of reasons: firstly, suburbs are incredibly atomizing. They are too far out to go anywhere by walking, often times the only way to meet up with people is by car. This can be a major expense in the long run. Just living 10 minutes out massively increases the time one spends driving, decreasing the overall health of the population and sense of community. I propose we increase our dependence on public transportation by seeing where people need to go. For exmaple, if a large portion of trips on cars are 1 person commuters, strategically placed bus stops in suburban locations could greatly reduce our reliance on cars as a medium of getting to work. The turnaround time for Curitiba was ridiculously fast, and although Bowling Green is nowhere close to implementing such a system, we could do much better.

5. This course was an introduction to the fields of Community, Environment, and Development from a sociological standpoint.  From your perspective, what are the relationships among community, environment and development? Provide one example of something you learned in this class that altered or enriched your understanding of these concepts and/or the relationships among them.

I think each of these categories are dependant on each other in their own ways. No community could exist without a healthy, safe environment. Natural disasters and things like wildfires can relocate people often times landing refugees in completely new places, their previous community destroyed. Our environment is cared for more if we have a sense of community. Community could not exist without proper development the promotes community. To protect our environment, we must also develop our cities with the environment in mind. In this class, I learned historical examples of times when the environement was not considered when developing a city. Love canal is a perfect example. There was a lack of care when the toxic waste was placed, and a lack of thought when the developers placed people on top of the dump.

6. What's the difference between the Gross Domestic Product and the Genuine Progress Indicator?  Which is a better measure of growth? (10 pt Bonus)

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is strictly a business measure. In breif it is a measure of the total value of the goods and services made in a given year. Sometimes however, material goods do not correlate with a better life. As mentioned in class, the GDP increases every time a divorce happens. To extend this analogy, hyperindividualism increases the GDP: if we are less connected (emotionally and physically) with our peers, we are more likely to buy things just for ourselves rather than borrow someone elses, thus more goods bought and red line goes up. For this reason GDP is not a good indicator of progress. The Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) is a much more complicated measure which considers well-being of a nation. Unlike GDP, it decreases with wealth inequality, pollution, crime, car accidents and unemployment. It increases with more volunteer work, more leisure time and better highways and streets. To quote Robert F. Kennedy in a 1968 speech at the University of Kansas: “Gross national product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them… Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play… It measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.” When I think of how I want my country to grow, I would much rather the GPI to grow over the GDP.