135

Wed, 10/6 4:56PM • 1:14:35

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

food, people, flint, supplemental, grocery stores, system, convenience stores, community, places, leverage, equity, sector, connections, reciprocity, programs, guess, sustainability, questions, chain restaurants, farmers market

**SPEAKERS**

Participant 135, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 19:48

Cool. So um, I guess my first question would be, if you have a sense of what the connection strengths might be out of retail, and I just want to say, like, that if I ever asked a question that you're like, I don't really know or like, I don't think I can speak to that, definitely just let me know and we can skip sections. The food system- the food system is like huge.

**Participant 135** 20:09

Right right.

**Interviewer** 20:09

It's totally fine if you're like, I don't want to waste your time doing, like, giving my guess of what's going on. Um, yeah. So for context, what these relationships mean, is kind of evaluating, like, when people purchase food in Flint, where are they purchasing that food? Are they going more to local restaurants or more to chain restaurants? You know, how much do they buy their food at grocery stores or convenience stores or at the farmers market? What is your sense of like, what these relationships, relationship strengths might be? You know, are some of them strong? Are some of them weak? Are some of the medium? What's your sense?

**Participant 135** 20:54

You mean, among the various different retail places?

**Interviewer** 20:58

Mm-hmm.

**Participant 135** 20:59

Or the relationship between like grocery stores, and the use of retail?

**Interviewer** 21:06

Yeah, between use of retail and-

**Participant 135** 21:09

I would say that, you know, I don't know, I did a- I did a mapping of all the food places in Flint, um, at one point, and we found out all the major thoroughfares are just completely peppered with convenience stores and gas stations. I would add gas stations if they're not included in convenience stores.

**Interviewer** 21:34

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 21:36

But they are a primary source in Flint because there's just never been a lot of grocery stores. And it's, you know, Flint was, uh, sort of designed as a real neighborhood kind of community and those neighborhood grocery stores really kind of closed out. So yeah, convenience stores for sure. Um, you know, I think everybody still goes to the grocery store. You know, everybody goes Meijer's everybody goes to Kroger's, um, Family Dollar. I think our farmer's markets are well respected in Flint, um, I still know they make up very small amount of total consumption. I believe we had like about, what, one point I want to say close to 2 billion in food purchases and I guess around- it, that was for the county but I was just kind of trying to recall how would I- what I understood of it at the time and then what I experienced on the ground was very similar on, local restaurants I think are, yeah, I would say the chains do better than the locals but I think the ones that are still open there's a lot of loyalty in Flint. And I would add another category about just informal stuff. I don't know if that's kind of thing gets tracked, like how like you know, people can go to a butcher and get prepared food on EBT, cause they just prepare them in the back and the dude's got his barbecue or whatever.

**Interviewer** 23:32

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 23:33

I don't know there's a lot of informal food acquisition that happens and I don't think that has anything to do with obviously supplemental sector, just a thought on that one. I do think the chains are around and uh, you know what Flint especially during the, you know, it was starting to build up a little bit more of a local restaurant culture and more support for that over the last you know, decade. But I haven't really got a read on the impact since the pandemic. I know a lot of, I know the sector has been devastated. But we're all dying to go to a restaurant. I'd love to go sit down, have a glass of wine with y'all and just enjoy the springtime weather. Um, but uh, let's see. I guess that's my sense of kind of how it goes. I'd probably say grocery stores and convenience stores would probably carry the day with chain restaurants close behind. I don't know, yeah. Probably could be a lot more though, cause people like their prepared food. You know, convenience really does have its power.

**Interviewer** 25:11

Um, the other connections when they talk about is if you have a sense of, you know, where people are using the various supplemental nutrition programs. And if they're using them in grocery stores, convenience stores, farmer's markets, I'll also add - as it's own- yeah, what is your sense of sort of, maybe, similarities or differences between these three connections?

**Participant 135** 25:46

Well, I think that the grocery stores is probably where most of the SNAP is getting redeemed in Flint, you know, last I heard it was around 250 million a year. Just- just on sheer volume, um, and then, I'm not sure how many you know, it's not all the convenience stores that take EBT they always advertise it out front, but I'm sure that those ones do pretty well. And they act as little grocery stores, it's just so sad the nutrition they offer. Um, I think, you know, relative to communities, you know, on a per person basis, Flint probably has a pretty high usage of the supplemental sector at our farmers markets, because we were, you know, brothers and sisters with our Detroit compatriots in, in implementing double up real early on and really putting a lot of emphasis and creating access pathways to our market and and making a market a place where people of color felt welcome. Where people didn't know about it and who felt, you know, like, this was my home, too. And, um, I think we did that well, so I think there is a lot of, you know, we've done well, but I don't know how it would compare in terms of scale, like if you were measuring the total amount used or something. I don't think WIC factors into markets, or does it? I don't know, I don't think you can redeem- some, some stalls at farmer's markets take EBT. But you can't double up WIC. Right? So, um, convenience stores, grocery stores. And so somehow in here, the emergency, oh, I see it over there. Okay, um. What else would I say about those relationships? Um, I'm not sure if there's been partnerships with convenience stores in the supplemental sector. I know there have been with grocery stores, we expanded that double up eligibility to grocery stores specifically in Flint, and that made a huge dent. I mean, it was- you know, yeah, remember, our crisis really started in about 1992. But, um, you know, water crisis was a huge nutrition crisis as well. And so we were deep in it. And, you know, it's also notable that there's our children's clinic that prescribes, makes nutrition like Dr. Attisha's clinic is above our market. So it's been highly integrated that way, those- you know, it's the sewing of the community network together that makes these things work.

**Interviewer** 28:59

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 29:01

Ability of the supplement. So yeah, I don't know in terms of those relationships, I guess that's what I got for you.

**Interviewer** 29:09

No, that's, that's fantastic. And I'm trying to add- so the next thing I'm going to do is go back to the presentation, and I want to be conscious of your time, um. So we have sort of seven food system values. Um, and these concepts and definitions came out of focus groups, with Flint, many members and residents of sort of what they want from the food system, um, things that they think would- what is the food system that serves them well look like? So some of those things will be like education, community empowerment and economic development and like respectable values. Also, concept of quality of life is respected. And this is sort of that people want to be able to have the freedom and choice and like move through the food system with their like comfort and safety respected. Partnerships is really something that I already had mapped that like having sort of the actors and groups be connected and build trust and collaboration and communication, um, sort of nutritious foods, they want those- have better options for nutritious foods, they want food to be affordable. So not just the price of food, but also sort of like considering income, and then availability that they, you know, have those choices and the food that they want, the amount that they want, the quality that they want available to them. Are there off of this list, maybe two or three values that you think are particularly important to the Flint food system, or things that you can really speak to that you would be interested in adding to your map?

**Participant 135** 31:02

— Well, I'll say, you know, um, I don't understand what quality of life is respected means.

**Interviewer** 31:29

Yeah, I can do a longer definition. And so this is, yeah, so it's that, it's kind of wrapping up a couple different things that we were hearing, and it's mostly that people, you know, wouldn't go to certain, like, retail places, or they wouldn't go to certain like, free food giveaways, because they didn't feel like, they didn't feel like it had a lot of dignity, they didn't feel comfortable or safe, they didn't feel like their were choices. And also that something that they wanted was, you know, sort of common, good and like a high quality of life. Sort of like, like, I know, those are sort of like, not very measurable things, but it's sort of like, this is what I would, you know, want from the food system is like, I'm going to promote the common good and like, quality of life for everybody, um, that's more of a- feeling value.

**Participant 135** 32:30

No, no, I get it. Well, values are feelings in a lot of ways so I understand that I have- it's just taking a moment, I wrote a lot of values for the Flint food system work. And I'm like, so this is where the values are, you know, kind of, like, oh, this is interesting to see a list that I didn't write. And, you know, I guess with the education piece, I would say there needs to I would just add a cultural, a cultural reference to that. And not, like I want to add to the Flint food systems values in some way, as a guy out in Mount Morris or something but, um, but part of that education is forming a culture that celebrates food and the lives that we all, like, we- we celebrate each other, and, and, you know, suffer together over our food, you know, like, that needs to be a positive culture and set of behaviors. So I don't know, that's kind of always what I tried to push for. And I think that education is a big piece of that. I feel like there is a sustainability and justice factor that I don't feel reflected in here. I know community empowerment is a big piece of it. And that was a big, core piece for us when we did the work, um, there's also a sense of justice about good citizenship. And it's not about protecting yourself. It's also like, did you know that when you buy, you know, tomatoes from some chain restaurants on your sandwiches, those were picked by slaves? How do you feel, you know, does- is, there's got to be a sense of that, empowerment not at somebody else's expense, right? And that's what we're doing in our food system and it's not necessarily people on the ground's fight, um, but the awareness, you know, maybe that's an education thing. But you know, I kind of come from a legacy of, you know, my grandfather was migrant laborer in California, a picker, um, who migrated then across the country to Detroit and then Flint. And I really watched with horror over the last year, what happened to our food system workers who were migrants. And a lot of, you know, a lot of my family's in Central Mexico, and a lot of my cousins and their friends migrate every year to pick crops and I feel like that's a, an injustice, that doesn't get represented enough. And another one is reciprocity or sustainability. Just the sense of that, we're contributing to something that is not wasteful. Because if we really do waste 50% of our fruits and vegetables in our current food system, and we're not feeding everyone-

**Interviewer** 36:14

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 36:16

-that is a disaster.

**Interviewer** 36:24

Yeah, I come from, uh, uh, I mean, a sustainable systems background. But, you know, a lot of academia in sustainability is very environmental sustainability focused. And it was something that when I joined the project, like the project, was very surprised. Almost never came up in focus groups is that it really was, you know, as much as people are like, oh, do you care about environmental sustainability? They'll be like, yeah, I guess, but it's- we're talking about like, okay, but what's the priority for you right now in the food system?

**Participant 135** 36:57

Yeah

**Interviewer** 36:58

It's not, but it's also like, it's also a necessity of like sustainable food systems is addressing these things.

**Participant 135** 37:06

But that- that is a gap that needs to be crossed because the enviros have never made that crossover successfully. I think that work that's happening in Detroit is pretty sweet though, the environmental justice work there. And it is tied to poverty. And you know, nobody faults people making survival decisions. Um, but, you know, where we're trying to get is- is a place that recognizes the costs, cost of these things, and there are people costs and there are, you know, environmental costs, and we're responsible, we can't cast that aside.

**Interviewer** 37:42

Um, so we've added I can take or change these as much as you'd like. Um, sort of these concepts of reciprocity and sustainability, justice and education. What are some connections? Sort of how would you build either from what we've already talked about, the pieces that are already on the map currently connect them to these concepts or connect other aspects of the Flint food system? Sort of what goes to it what impacts it and then also what comes out of it? I know that's- I can also ask more directed questions, we can like start on one.

**Participant 135** 38:26

Yeah, okay. So for justice, I would kind of, I would almost kind of call that like equity and justice or something but the first thing that comes to mind is there is a direct connection to the need to integrate and infuse that into the supplemental food sector. Um, but by the same token, you know, you know that grocery stores in poor communities have crappier produce and, you know, but equity- a sense of equity that we can't ignore, we have to start putting it front and center, um, and, and, and make it as complicated as possible to understand all the different kinds of inequities that people face. I don't know we're trying to have a statewide conversation on equity and it becomes very expansive, at a community level it's easier because there's some common interest. Um, I would definitely say- Okay, I see what you're doing there.

**Interviewer** 39:47

Yeah. I'm trying to draw a good way to connect it. But like it would be an opportunity to do this that wouldn't- but it's not necessarily happening right now.

**Participant 135** 40:00

It's hard with those ones that are like lenses, you know, how do you put a lens over this? You know? But yeah, I see it there in the policymaking, you know, like, that's where my mind goes that inequity and justice, but I think that our sense of it, you know, just on, you know, as, as somebody who's just kind of come up as a Latino in, you know, a largely black and white community Flint was, you know, pretty well balanced between black and white when I was growing up, but I was always the kid with the funny name, you know, in all my schools. Uh, but yeah, I think that there's a part of that we need to, like expand our vision of, of what that equity looks like and make sure that we're including people right. I am reminded of the criminal justice accomplishments recently in Michigan around, um, the SNAP for, you know, the ex, uh, ex felons with two drug offenses or whatever. That's a little tip of the iceberg and, and getting to a point of having it be proactive, these supplementals. It's not like, oh, hey, go to the website, if you got access, and no way to get on and fill out this form and then wait for your thing, and then read all this fine print, and then try to understand what you're getting and how and then- It should be here, we're the state texting you, you are eligible for this because you don't make enough money and we're concerned about your well being and you're getting enough nutrition, here's your credits, go use them. Oh, you just get out of jail, we automatically signed you back up, even though we automatically took you off, like- Uh, that- There's trust that needs to be extended to- to our common humans. Let's see. On education I think that it's just, uh, I guess I'm kind of drawn to both certain nutrition education that's offered through the supplementals. Um, and- and, you know, I don't know, to make sure that that money is getting spent well. Cause that's also dependent on the people, you know, it's like if you have these we- we've occasionally just see these like, bomb-ass nutrition educators, who're just tearing it up and teaching great things and being creative and getting paid nothing.

**Interviewer** 42:51

Yeah, yeah.

**Participant 135** 42:53

Maybe, maybe there needs to be more money for I guess this isn't really the place to be asking for more money for educators. That's what I do most of my days, these days.

**Interviewer** 43:03

No, it's great.

**Participant 135** 43:08

We need a comprehensive system change. I guess that's just- it just strikes me as a pillar, which is why I lifted it up, it's just a pillar of all of this stuff, like how do you- you know, how do you get the healthiest food and if you're using the supplemental food system, you know, that's a quality issue, really. How do we get better food and like, quick, you know, nutritious foods into the supplemental? You know, max that out. And it was crazy during the pandemic, did you know like, there was like, literally no chicken in the country.

**Interviewer** 43:58

I, uh, am-

**Participant 135** 44:00

We had chicken rations.

**Interviewer** 44:02

Yeah, I bet.

**Participant 135** 44:03

Beef was gone and pork was gone, or for a minute there. Like I was getting these reports from HHS, you know, like they're making these major food purchases.

**Interviewer** 44:12

Yeah, I was, uh, grabbing takeout from someplace during the early, early pandemic, and I saw that they had like, their items with beef had like daily market prices, and that would change how much they were. They were like pricing those items. I'm like, wow, I'm happy I'm a vegetarian.

**Participant 135** 44:32

You know, another thought is to think about the other institutions that distribute the supplemental foods sector, like your pantries like those are centers of communities, of small communities and you know, like churches and dropoff sites and and honestly schools in Flint, like, that is an acquisition place. And maybe not so much that it is happening currently, but it still makes a lot of sense as much as I hear about the need for wraparound supports in schools for children and families. Like we've been talking about that for a decade, and it's like, well, why is it just not like, oh, the kid gets signed up for all the stuff? And he can help his parents out, or she can help his parents out, right? Um, but it feels like those are places where people gather, those are places where people trust the people who they are seeing in those places. So maybe that's also, you know, sinking money into the programs in those places is a way to kind of uplift that quality of life factor. What if it was a three star restaurant that you went to for the, your congregate meal, through the Community Action Agency. You know, that's what they did in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, this brilliant chef was like, I'm starting the people's restaurant, and they, you know, you pay, you pay what you want, and serve the best food and all the people come in for good food, who pay a lot, who have money, and everybody else gets to sit arm and arm with their common man. Well, I don't know, it just seems like that's part of the culture building too, um, take the places that are already known and trusted in. And that's a pretty common concept, I guess, like an anchor institution concept, um, uh, we touched on reciprocity and sustainability. We're all committing the crime, if we don't build a system that takes into account the back end of everything, you know what I mean? The back end of every cow, the back end of us, the back end of the plant cycle, and the water cycle and the air cycle, and the pollution we're put- you know, like, we're, yeah, that's, that's my thing. It's just those sources you have in blue, green or whatever those that's where all that waste is. All the food that people are not getting is also there. So that's kind of crazy. Um, so that really, and the reciprocity in terms of I said, reciprocity first because I was speaking about how hard it is to know that the conditions of migrants in the country who- or like just- that their work is just so hard.

**Interviewer** 48:17

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 48:18

Um, and, and to know that, how that happens and how they get paid for it. And, and the lack of respect that happens there, even though it's not happening in our, in Flint. Like, I know so many people in Flint and I know that if people really knew that and felt it, it would, it would hurt them, you know what I mean? And if they knew that that tomato had touched the hands of someone who's being held against their will and forced to harvest tomatoes for that, I mean if you don't really, you might choose to go to Burger King instead and that's a step, you know? Oh, I don't know. But it's a- it's- it's maybe also part of that education. There's a- yeah, I see you got a line there. That's a big one, um, that it's just us, you know, being self aware, who we are and how we fit in, so- [inaudible].

**Interviewer** 49:23

Do you want me to also connect this sort of education piece to equity and justice?

**Participant 135** 49:26

Yeah, that's a- that's a road to haul right? A lot of the Institute- that's really happening in a way, at a scale that I've never seen before this, you know, like the state is trying to train 46,000 employees in DEI and [inaudible] so they're gonna do a checklist and they're gonna be now fully inclusive, or whatever. So we have a ways to go on that. But the fact that we're having the conversation is amazing. I think that there's a health factor embedded in equity and justice too. Um, that is, uh, you know, it's- it's a huge piece of the puzzle that this food system is more and more we are understanding its impact on our health. And you know, it plays right into our social determinants of health, a conversation that I think we're having more and more and accepting more and more as a way of understanding what's going on with our communities. So I think that help run with, yea, connected to equity and justice. And I guess I add- maybe, um, food citizenship is where I connect reciprocity and equity and justice.

**Interviewer** 49:28

Yeah, you wanna speak a little bit more about sort of that concept? — Would this be a connection to equity and justice or from equity and justice?

**Participant 135** 51:30

I was actually going to connect it between reciprocity and equity and justice.

**Interviewer** 51:36

Oh, sorry. My bad. Um, but yeah. So would that be connections to it to connect it or between it. So it goes out? Or-

**Participant 135** 51:52

I would say it goes from reciprocity. Yeah, I guess they both go to it. Or food citizenship is your way to handle the- I don't know. Yeah, that's- I think they both go to it. I just feel like that's a, that's a concept that may not really resonate, you know, on the ground, but it's a way to think about, um, how we talk about and understand our relationship with all this stuff. It's like, man, there's no way you're not- you have to at least have a sense of this is completely global, what's going on like that, right down to the packaging and everything else. And I think we've done a lot in Southeast Michigan to raise that awareness. And it can build as a sense, and, but it's a way of thinking about that environmental piece, and then that social justice piece coming together under our food systems lens.

**Interviewer** 53:11

Um, I have a quick question, Renee. I can't remember do you have a four o'clock?

**Interviewer 2** 53:18

I, uh, I already sent a message so I'm good for now.

**Interviewer** 53:23

Okay, I was gonna ask if you could jump in. We have a session with [Name], that should be starting relatively soon. Would you mind jumping in and starting some of these beginning conversations out with him and I'll join you, um as soon as I can?

**Interviewer 2** 53:37

Right, I can have them. I can't necessarily jump in and put them on the map.

**Interviewer** 53:42

No that's fine. Just just starting off. Sitting by himself in the Zoom Room.

**Participant 135** 53:47

Yeah, we won't leave you hanging.

**Interviewer 2** 53:49

Sure. Yeah, I can- I can- I can bounce off and go ahead and let him know where we're going.

**Interviewer** 53:54

Thank you. That would be fantastic.

**Interviewer 2** 53:55

Okay. Sure. All right. Talk to you sometime in the future Participant 135, it was so good to just reconnect. This is really, really, really good.

**Participant 135** 54:05

Likewise, likewise, I appreciate it. I hope this is helpful. I'm just kinda throwing darts at the dartboard.

**Interviewer 2** 54:12

It's extremely helpful. All is good. All right, I'm gonna bounce off, and uh, and get [Name] started. Okay.

**Participant 135** 54:19

Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 54:19

All right. Take care.

**Interviewer** 54:21

Yeah, I didn't want to rush you. But I also want to make sure that our next participant is not just sitting there.

**Participant 135** 54:28

Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** 54:30

Cool. Then we have, I guess, like, the next thing is that if I'm going to sort of open it up, if there's, you know, any other connections or any other concepts that you would want to bring into this map, we are going to talk about COVID a bit after this. So don't bring that in that one yet. But other things that you think are really important or impactful for the Flint food system?

**Participant 135** 54:56

Well, one thing I would say there was a general reflection that I noticed in what I saw, on the values and all the stuff, like, I don't see the producer represented anymore. Yeah, um- I really feel bad about that, because that was what my whole era in the movement was all about. And we were trying to grow our own food, ultimately, you know, like the dream that we would just add every vacant lot in Flint and turn it into a giant farm, it failed, you know, like, that's true, it totally failed. Um, not entirely for our- our own failings, but you know, policy and other people also want land. Um, I think that maybe that's also my ensuring that reciprocity, like and that's just like, man, you know, know your farmer, know your food. And that's important to people, like people who get that get that, I guess, but, um, so I definitely say that, um. — I think that you've got it, I mean, I have sustainability, but maybe trailing off somewhere needs to be environment, climate change. Um, you know, I think it's, I am always amazed at how much I hear people citing, talking about the overconsumption of meat and its contribution, that's becoming very sort of, like well accepted part of the discourse, and I think that's great. Um, those are those link- like, we're just basically building that, you know, neural network of the collective to understand these connections. Well you're helping do that Carissa. Definitely that on sustainability, uh. Use versus ability, on the use of the emergency food sector, I would just like to add something that says, remember that it's emergency.

**Interviewer** 57:30

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 57:31

We're not supposed to rely on them to feed a huge portion of our communities. It's supposed to be for emergency. Everyone's like, oh, the food [inaudible] -just keep feeding everybody, you know. And I feel like that's, you know, putting it- like using your last line of defense all the time? Or do we want them to- or they need to evolve. They need to do better than what they're doing and I think that's what they're trying to do, because they've really had no choice. They're one of the few people or not few, but they're one of those sectors that wasn't health that had no choice through the pandemic, they quadrupled their output. Just, like holy cow, um.

**Interviewer** 58:28

Yeah, it's been sort of a tension that we've been hearing a lot in these interviews is that there is a place and a time for the emergency sector, that they are doing a service that is needed is like supporting, like food access for food insecure people. But the like, overwhelming presence and availability of free food ultimately hinders, like the success and sustainability of like a local retail system. Uh, you just can't sell food when someone can get something for free.

**Participant 135** 59:02

Right. Well, yeah. And also, you know, yeah, it's pretty shitty food. Most of the time that they're getting in those pantries.

**Interviewer** 59:11

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 59:14

Yeah, a really good chunk of your grocery stores are not super healthy for you, right?

**Interviewer** 59:24

Well, maybe I'll save this file real fast. And the next thing to talk about is, you know, one of the goals of this project is not only to build sort of this common system, understanding but sort of, sort of collect and evaluate different potential leverage points, different things that could be changed or added to the Flint food system that will lead to sort of positive outcomes. I know this is sort of a broad, open ended question, but is there anything in terms of leverage points that you think about big or small sort of if you ran the world, what would you change about the Flint food system?

**Participant 135** 1:00:04

First thing I would do is fire all the chefs. Yeah, and then just like bring some, I don't know, uh, leverage points- I think- I think there's a lot of leverage in the supplemental sector to keep people engaged on the retail side, um, federal and state policies are- have been pretty- pretty lame in that space on- so there's definitely places for that, um, you know, I don't know what to do about convenience stores they're just carrying shit food but um, other places of leverage are certainly I mean, I guess it depends what you're trying to lift. But you know, I think the- the points there are leverage points in grocery stores because they do have, uh, an actual realizable economic advantage to having people come in for other benefits, you know, they're coming to the store, this is the store they're gonna come to to buy their stuff. And, and the farmers markets are- can be leveraged for both public education and health and nutrition education and all those kinds of things. Chain restaurants could start doing a better job, and I [inaudible] there are some signs every now and then, you know, I get fries from Wendy's now. Because all they do is just cut a potato and fry it. I'm like that's cool, it's just a potato, you know, um. I didn't know that McDonald's, like, does it into mash and add sugar and all this stuff, and then forms them into fries, and then they fry him, isn't that crazy? So I think there's a lot of leverage to be had with sort of local entrepreneurs and local restaurants, you know, you can do some stuff there. Uh, where are the leverage points? And then I think the nonprofit sector has a lot to add, in terms of like the ability to, they're the ones who are constantly dealing with everybody. Um, I certainly think the philanthropic, you know the funders that top left corner there, that's where the leverage is, where the money goes is where the leverage is. So just follow that trail downhill, and wherever it lands, that's where your leverage is. But you know, sort of, you know, that's where the equity, like if we want to privilege equity and move that to the center of our work. And really focusing on changing the color of our organizations that get, are getting funding and, on- that's gonna change the outcomes in these systems. That's going to create leverage.

**Interviewer** 1:03:42

Yeah.

**Participant 135** 1:03:44

Because there's just, you know, not enough people getting supported and just getting served by white-led organizations who are all got salary jobs.

**Interviewer** 1:03:52

[COVID SECTION BEGINS]

Yeah. Great. Well, absolutely. All right, mostly last thing is I'm going to add COVID-19 of a concept into the map. And if you want to talk a bit about sort of the impact you've noticed of COVID-19 one thing that you mentioned is that it's been harder for for local restaurants to survive other other sort of impacts

**Participant 135** 1:04:26

The chain restaurants are killing it.

**Interviewer** 1:04:28

Yeah. Easy takeout

**Participant 135** 1:04:32

Right. I've done it. I have done it. And I just feel like I want to hold my head below the car so no one sees me in the drive thru man. It's horrible. Um, uh, I think the farmers markets have been devastated. Yeah, for sure. Um convenience stores are probably doing great. I know mine is- by me. And the grocery stores I think have-have adapted pretty well. I don't know like the- it's kind of that's-that's a fairly broad continuum there from, you know, a medium sized grocery store and one of our bigger ones, maybe. But it feels like they kind of kept up. You know, everybody got hit hard originally when there was a run on goods. But um, I feel like my grocery stores around here have really been good, you know. Good and well managed and all that stuff. And, you know, you see a lot of failures of social distancing and masking and stuff. But I imagine- I haven't really seen measurements of the overall impact on that kind of thing. But I'd be really interested to know who's surviving and who's not. Definitely it has caused an incredible surge in the supplemental sector, which is I think, where the biggest impact was that I'm aware of, that I have- You know, because I was in the weekly briefings with the HHS director and you know, food income and support group. And just hearing "Okay, this what we're doing on that, and we're purchasing this." And it felt like- the advocates for for progressive safety net services, like supplemental food, had been arguing for decades, for the policies that we got in the last year. Maximum eligibility, maximum payout, minimum application restrictions, we'll get it to you somehow. You have a transportation challenge, let us bring it to your door. All of a sudden, it was like oh, now everybody's got a problem. So we're really gonna go out of our way to help some people right. And what it gave us was a template for the safety net we need. And we're kind of following it. You know, like that's what we're getting out of Biden, we're getting more of the same. The real challenge down the road will be can we cement those policies for good, which you've seen governor Whitman try to do that, on like the extension of unemployment, that kind of thing. But I'm-I'm really excited about that. I think it's huge. I think it's a big potential for FAP, Food Assistance Program. It'll be huge for SNAP I think double ups gonna keep growing. And we're going to- that supplemental is going to need to be thought about as more than just food. It's got to be the other stuff too. Because if there is one place where we can get everybody who's not able to be gotten by email or calling or whatever, these are the places. And we want to stand these pillars of our food system up. So I think there's a lot of room for opportunity for change in both funding and policy, to be more aggressive, to be more equitable, to- yeah to make progress there. And as a result, you know, those are major funding streams of the emergency food system. So you know, how do we maybe shrink the emergency food system and build up something that's an intermediate step. Let's give ourselves some cushion or I don't know what. But I don't know, that makes me think of that. I think COVID-19 has helped us put our equity and justice conversation front and center. I think COVID-19- Yeah, I mean, we have a lot of catching up to do in education. But I'm not talking about food system now. Okay. Um, yeah. I mean, it had some- I mean, that's a- that's a multi day conversation how did COVID-? I mean, these-these programs it's just been crazy what we saw happen. And-and the equity- the one- the other one, that really, it's the migrant laborers and how they didn't have access to the supplemental sector. That's the problem. I mean, maybe just put migrants in there and be like, question mark. I guess I am being recorded but only you guys are gonna hear it anyways.

**Interviewer** 1:09:51

it's it's really just to make sure like, sometimes if, like, knock on what if somehow we lose this file. have like the map, then we have the recordings, we can go back and like construct it. It's more so to like make sure that we don't lose data. Yeah.

[END OF COVID SECTION]

Um, so go ahead and save this file and stop sharing. Last thing I kind of want to ask is, you know, it talks a lot about different sectors and different values and COVID-19. But is there anything else sort of important about this conversation around food in Flint that we haven't talked about today that you want to make sure that we're carrying forward in this research?

**Participant 135** 1:10:44

No, no, not really, I'm just really glad that, you know, work that I was part of very early, when in it's formation is still going, um that it still has steam and new energy and new blood. And I think that's just amazing. And I'm just so proud of everybody who's come along and carried the work to new places, it's just great dude, just makes me so happy.

[OUTRO]