

KUSSKE DESIGN INITIATIVE

2022 KUSSKE LECTURE & DIALOGUE

Transcript

Kusske Lecture & Dialogue

December 2, 2022, McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota

Keynote speaker: Ron Finley

Panelists: Linsey Griffin (KDI Co-Principal, assistant professor of apparel design, and co-director of the Human Dimensioning Laboratory), Carlye Lauff (KDI Co-Principal and assistant professor and graduate program director, product design), and Terresa Moses (assistant professor of graphic design and director of Design Justice)

Note: Contains strong language

CAROL STROHECKER: Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the second annual Kusske Lecture and Dialogue. We are honored that Ron Finley is here with us tonight as are friends of Christopher Arthur Kusske and his longtime partner Allen Kolkowitz. I'm Carol Strohecker, Dean of the College of Design.

Please join me in a land acknowledgement and statement of unity. Let's remember that the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities is located on traditional, ancestral and contemporary lands of the Dakota people. It is important to acknowledge the peoples on whose land we live, learn, and work as we seek to improve and strengthen relations with our tribal nations. We resist the culture of anti-Black racism and we stand with our Hmong, Asian, Asian-American, and Pacific Islander communities. We recognize that words are not enough and remain committed to the work of eradicating injustices against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color. The College of Design firmly supports the work of design justice, ably led by one of tonight's panelists.

We are fortunate and profoundly grateful to [Manitou Fund](#) for the opportunity to develop the Kusske Design Initiative. In collaboration with Allen we have imagined KDI programs such as the one we are all here to enjoy this evening. We have instituted scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships to support diverse students. We are providing support for faculty research and creative scholarship and we are creating resources such as a biomaterials lab, all aiming to advance dialogue across disciplines aiming to promote collaborative designing that is inspired by the natural world and respectful of natural ecosystems.

We are delighted and honored to welcome Ron Finley here tonight. Most widely known as the “Gangsta Gardener,” Ron Finley inadvertently started a “Horti-Cultural” revolution when he transformed the barren parkway in front of his South-Central Los Angeles home into an edible oasis. Ron unexpectedly became one of LA’s most widely known “artists.” Frustrated by his community’s lack of access to fresh organic food, Finley started a revolution when he turned the parkway in front of his home into an edible garden in 2010. Ron’s goal was simple: bring healthy food to an area where there was none, making him see first-hand how gardens build community and change people’s lives. This experience blossomed into a quest to change how we eat and to teach youth that they have the capacity to design the life they want to live, not the one that’s been designed for them. What is especially remarkable about Ron is how effective he is at inspiring people and sparking change.

Ron, thanks so much for being here, welcome.

(Applause)

RON FINLEY: Why are we here? That’s a question. Why are you here? Why? You guys just wanna learn some shit. Nobody really knows what the hell. Why are you here?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Bringing about change.

RON FINLEY: Bringing about change! Yes. That’s what I want to hear. That’s what this is all about. Bringing about change! It’s funny, it leads into my first thing. You should be here cause you give a fuck. You should be here because you are a revolutionary. Repeat after me: I am!

AUDIENCE: I am!

RON FINLEY: A revolutionary!

AUDIENCE: A revolutionary!

RON FINLEY: I am!

AUDIENCE: I am!

RON FINLEY: A revolutionary!

AUDIENCE: A revolutionary!

RON FINLEY: And I'm here to change the world.

AUDIENCE: And I'm here to change the world.

RON FINLEY: Where humanity matters over money.

AUDIENCE: Where humanity matters over money.

RON FINLEY: There you go. That's why we're here. Because we need to legalize nature. We need to legalize nature. We stand in silence. We sit around being hypnotized and neutralized. While nature is being marginalized and commercialized with pesticides. And destroyed by a few greedy-ass men. And generally, they're white guys.

This is the design school. I guess I'm supposed to talk about design. This is a question: what inspires you? What inspired me to do what I do? Obesity. "Dia-obesity"—I made that shit up, it's obesity and diabetes. And cancer inspired the hell out of me. Why are there so many rare forms of cancer? And why haven't they beat it already? I hate asking this because it makes me cry a lot of the time, but I want you guys to see this. Who here had cancer, has cancer, knows somebody that has cancer, knows somebody that recently passed away from cancer? Raise your hand.

(Audience members raise hands)

RON FINLEY: That's a damn shame. I do that and people raise two hands. Why is that? One of the reasons is because our food is killing us. Everything you put on your damn body is killing you. If you read your toothpaste it says "do not swallow this shit." *(Laughs)* Why you got it in my mouth if you tell me I can't swallow it?

I do this thing when I talk, high school, college even; I've done it with junior high where I'll bring snacks. And I'll bring all these snacks, like the worst shit you can imagine. Takis and Doritos and Cokes and all these juices that are supposed to be good for you, and they are nothing but poison and sugar. The orange juice you buy has been sitting in the silo for at least six months, but it can

still say “fresh squeezed” because it was freeze squeezed six months ago. And they’re screaming, “Yeah, I got snacks!” And I say, “Pass them out! But you can’t eat it.” What do they do? They go “uhhh.” I go, “No, I want you to get on your phones and get on your computers, and I want you to tell me what these ingredients are on the back of these labels.” Nobody reads these ingredients on the back of the labels.

Who knows what the barcodes are on every piece of fruit and vegetable that you buy? Who knows what those barcodes are for? Damn shame. Not one person is raising their hand. Wow, one person. How many people are here? That’s ridiculous. What those barcodes are telling you is if this food is going to kill your ass or not. It’s telling you it is commercially grown, which means they can spray whatever the hell they want on it. It’s telling you if it’s GMO, and it’s telling you if it’s organic. You go on your phone and say, “What are these barcodes?” It’s four numbers, five numbers, three numbers. They’re telling you! Use this information. Some of the smartest people on the planet! You don’t know what the damn numbers mean either? Read the numbers, figure it out, because everything you put in your mouth, everything you put on your skin, your make up, deodorant, putting it straight through your lymph nodes—all of this is killing you. And they don’t care. You know? It’s just another way.

These kids, I have them look up what it means on the computer and they read, and they got two microphones coming and they’re like, oh this is associated with you know, acne, irritable bowel syndrome, and this and that. And then it’s always this word that somebody can’t pronounce: “poly-bi-phe-” and I said “Perfect! I’ve been waiting for you. This whole thing has been for you.” It’s real simple. If you can’t read that shit you can’t eat that shit. Nothing in nature has sixteen letters that you can’t pronounce! They look it up and see that this causes cancer, and it’s one thing I really do is... I forgot its name, it’s called castoreum; it’s this gland that’s in a beaver’s butt. It’s in make-up and it’s in ice cream; it’s in everything. And I used to have this picture of this smiling beaver, you know, and I am like: castoreum? What the hell is that? And they read it; it’s this gland in a beaver’s butt! My thing—when I first found this out, I’m like who is the first one to do this? How many beavers died for our ice cream sweetener? It’s stuff like that, that you guys need to know that this food is killing us and it’s killing us on purpose.

This is a picture of me back in the 1800s, back when I was a teenager. I wanted to be a master tailor, because I found that the clothes didn’t accommodate our bodies. Clothes accommodate other people’s bodies that wasn’t us. Because our bodies are different. I wanted to be able to throw a jacket in midair and it would just levitate, that’s how tailored it was. That’s what I did. I used to sell to Neiman’s and Nordstrom’s. The clothing line, it was called the DROPDEAD Collexion. Everybody’s like “Wow, this stuff is just drop dead!” Basically, the name was DROPDEAD because that’s what I felt about the industry: all you motherfuckers could drop dead, because of how I got treated in the industry, you know?

And I didn't have what you guys here have at the University, a school like this to go to and learn and experiment with all the latest tools. I didn't have a mentor. A lot of what I did I had to figure it out on my own. That's why the question was "What inspires you?" And nature inspires me. And it should inspire everybody sitting in this audience because we are nature. And nature is us. We separated it like we are bigger than nature. We decompose the same way a leaf does. And that's what I want—I want to train earth warriors.

This is on my head right now too, the acknowledgement that we do with the Native Americans. Ah shit. I go around the world, I'm in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK—and this acknowledgment—we like to acknowledge that we are on Native soil. Okay. You know it's theirs. You know every square inch is theirs. Why don't you just give them back their fucking land? Because, this acknowledgement, and no hate Carol— because I sat there and I've seen the Native Americans do the ceremonies before the museum openings and before the games and everything, and I'm like "how does that make you feel dude?" Cause it makes me nauseous to see you here sitting here doing this, acknowledging—they are acknowledging that it's your land that they have these temples on, and they're not giving it to you. None of it. And that's the part, I don't want "oh, this is the start that they're acknowledging it". No—the start is to give them their shit back. And that's where I come from with that. It needs to be deeper than that, you know? That was on my mind.

This slide here is what we call a parkway in LA. You can, that's how mine looked. And that was the start of my changing it. That's how it looks now. Banana trees, taro, peaches, plums, nectarines, bamboo, sugarcane, literally right on the street. Some people desecrated it. Some people drive by like they're in Disneyland, in the small world, you know real small going real slow. What it has is changed people's consciousness, and I think that's what we have to do if we want to change this world. We need to have our kids fuck standardized education. Nobody's standard. We're all custom. And you teach a child the way they learn—not the way you teach, and you know this, because you know a lot of these kids ain't getting it. We have them pledging allegiance, but not to themselves, not to the soil, not to this planet, not to humanity. We show them that they have no value, at all.

Has anybody went to school and your teacher is like, "you're the most valuable thing on this planet, period." Nothing. They think diamonds give you value. You can't eat no damn diamonds. You got a bag of diamonds and you got a bag of apples and it's a pandemic, it's a snow block, it's a hurricane, you can't get out. What you gonna eat? What has more value? These things always have more value. I think if we start kids off with the fact that they are expensive and beautiful and worthy and precious—if they heard these affirmations every day, we wouldn't have kids killing each other over a pair of tennis shoes— over a cellphone—they wouldn't think a cell phone is worth more value than them.

People say “how do you do it?” That’s how you do it. We should show them that they’re nature and the resources—see, everybody loves money. Money, money, money money. It’s Capitalism, money. They don’t look at things, they don’t look at leaves as a resource. A leaf falls for a reason in a particular season. It’s by design. And that leaf falls around that tree for a reason. Because now it’s turned, it’s protecting, it turns into mulch and it’s protecting that soil. And when it rains the soil doesn’t just go all in, the rain doesn’t go all in, it percolates in. Then after that season the leaf breaks down. The leaf decomposes and it becomes soil, it becomes compost. And then the leaves come back on the trees, the fruit comes back on the trees. It’s a circle. What about if we taught kids, you take these leaves, you go to Mrs. Robinson’s house you charge her \$5 to rake her yard, and you take those leaves and you turn it into compost. Then you sell it back to her ass (*Laughs*). That’s the double up. What about if we train kids like this? We would be creating Earth Warriors. Where we have kids having gang fights over who’s gonna get the leaves, who’s gonna get the worms? What about if we train them in elementary school to have worm farms? Worms have so much sex that they’re gonna have a ton of worms. Okay, worms love to have sex. You’re collecting people’s rubbish from your neighborhood, their food scraps and things and you got them in your worm bins, you’re makin vermiculture, not only that you get three things: you got the worms that having much sex that you have to sell them because they’re over crowded. You can sell the vermiculture, the worm casting, the worm poop basically, which is nutrient rich, one of the best things you can put in your garden. Then you got the worm tea. You have three things that has a serious value. Nobody told me about this. Imagine if you had a eight year old, seven year old learning, that I could make money doing this. How would this planet look, how we could change this planet? And that’s what we need to do, we need to start very early and show these kids how that could happen.

This is a photo of my garden before—it’s a swimming pool, it was a swim school, people came to learn how to swim, had a lot of them around the area. It’s got a 50-foot pool in it. You can see, I plant in every damn thing. If I see a shopping cart on the street, I’m putting some food in it. You get the bit? It’s a shopping cart with real food in it, not the stuff they sell at the supermarket. Wagons, buckets, boots. If it can hold some soil, I’m putting it in and that’s how it looks now. This is literally, where the umbrella is, this is my office everyday. That’s where I do all my work and you can see on the bench, I don’t know if you could read it says “Operate from Happy” and that is what my kids were raised with, was “Operate from Happy” basically if shit don’t make you happy, don’t do it. Cause we don’t know how long we’re here. And why operate—why do things from a place where you’re miserable? Where you’re not happy. And I think these are the things that we must change. Happiness should be a part of success. And it’s not. You know, I’m grinding, I’m hustling, I’m grinding, I’m not sleeping. Why? Why are grinding? To die? You know. And I think that a lot of what we need to change is how we perceive success. And that’s where

design comes in. Into everything. And where did design start? Anybody? Anybody know where did design start? I know. Aren't we at a university?

What I do and the way I grow it, is basically using earth's systems. Biomimicry: where you mimic what mother nature does. I don't throw no leaves away. I put them back where they supposed to be, cause to me it's a currency. We made anybody know what hugel piles are? We build hugel piles and the thing with hugel piles—if it came from the earth, you can put it in the earth. And you build these piles. And the reforest the desert, like barren desert and they reforest them with hugel piles. And what they do they took trees and just piled them up. Imagine you have this much land. And you stack—I put coffee bags, t-shirts, jeans, all kinds of leaves, and you stack this stuff up this high now and this is the surface you have to plant in, rather than this, and you've tripled your surface. And imagine you build a hugel pile this high and what's happening—the stuff—the organic matter that's in there, you wet it, and it's breaking down. And then on top of the hugel pile you cover it with soil and you do your planting on the whole thing. Now it's the plants are taking the moisture from the plants that are breaking down, when that breaks down it creates the most beautiful luscious soil that you've seen in your life. You've gotta think about it. That's what nature does. What happens when a tree falls in nature? It becomes a habitat. Everything that falls in the forest goes back into the forest. Even Bambi, unfortunately. It's imperative that we see the resources around us, and that we adapt with them. I just had a trip to Spain, and you know my mind was blown by Gaudi, the artist, it made me seem like I haven't done anything in my life to see the structure. I felt that small to see what he's done, and everything that he's done is based in nature, you know the Fibonacci sequence and it's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen in your life and I can't even tell you how it just inspired me to no end. And I think these are the kind of things that we need to do. And you see that the shapes of nature are in everything. And that's what, that's what I see in life. And I think enough of us do not look, we don't see, we're too busy running and hustling and grinding. And we need to stop and study nature.

This whole seashell, these whole patterns that nature has put in front of us, that's what they do. The beauty of this; who has stopped and literally enjoyed something like this leaf? To me, that's one of the most beautiful pieces of art right there on the back of the leaf that you could possibly imagine. I started to do what I do because I wanted to change the rotation of the planet. I had no idea what I do would turn out to be what it has and I would be here talking to all of you beautiful people just because I planted some shit on the street in South Central Los Angeles—yeah right. Oh yeah, you're gonna go to Rome and talk at a university because you've planted some corn. It makes no sense. You can't get no simpler than what I've done. What I do should not be special at all.

(To audience) What's the single most important thing to your life?

It's the single most important thing to your life! Why do you have to think about it? Anybody? If you know this cause I've done it—nobody knows.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Money.

RON FINLEY: Money? Yeah. Just like a white guy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My kids.

RON FINLEY: Your kids? Hell no!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sustainability.

RON FINLEY: No. What does that mean? You know what sustainability means? That you're sustaining something. Fuck that. Why would you wanna sustain the current status quo? Sustain means it don't change. And you know I did this—I'll get back to the single most important thing to your life—but you took me here. I did this conference, this summit series. A bunch of rich white techie guys and they're ya know, and they say—say what you said again?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sustainability.

RON FINLEY: Sustainability. I said okay I know you guys sustainability, sustainability that the word, we're gonna sustainability, we have a sustainability department now. I said okay, I'm gonna make you guys understand this. You got a bank account. It's cool. You've got a sustainable bank account. You know nothing is going to happen to it, it's sustaining itself. Then you've got this thing called the regenerative bank account. It regenerates! Just like this planet does every 24 hours. It's not sustaining, and it renerates. What bank account would you want if you've got your money in it? And I knew that they would understand that. Do you want your money to just stay there and remain the same or do you want your money to grow?

Single most important thing to your life? It's what I ask, and I usually ask it three times, What is the single most important thing to your life, because one time, somebody's gonna hear me.

(To audience) It's air!

And I know some of you are like, no you can't tell me, that's not the single most important thing to my life, let me put you in a choke hold and see if your kids or your cats will help you. And some of you people, the person that said water! Hell no. You can go without water for days. Try going

without water. I'll wait. And then there's this thing in water, what is it called? H₂O, what the hell do you think the O stands for? The fact that nobody said air is the single most important thing to my life, and I always have a "you can't tell me that the single most important thing to my life is not my daughter!" and I'm like, you're right, you're absolutely right, you're right— it's not the single most important thing to your life, it's the single most important thing to everything on this damn planet. It's oxygen. And oxygen don't set trip. Anybody know what 'set trip' means? Oxygen don't care who your baby daddy is, oxygen don't care what your religion, what your pronoun is. Air don't care. Air is the same air in Czechoslovakia is the same air here, is the same air in Compton, is the same air in Rome, Men build bridges. Men build the walls. Not nature. The fact that we don't, that we haven't been pleading our allegiance to air, somethings wrong with that. You should get up every morning and thank whoever you pray to for air. But we don't! Because we take it for granted. Anybody ever need air but didn't have it, for like three seconds? That'd change your mind. We need to see the things around us that has true value. That give us true value. And not the things, like, I got money but I don't have no air. See how that works for you. I don't think it's gonna work out that good.

I plant in almost anything. Like, this is a sink. Porcelain sink, cast iron. They're never gonna go nowhere. I can only use them and beautify. Cause it's gonna be in the landfill for the end of time just like plastic. And speaking of plastic, you know, all you women, that are still you know child bearing age, all of you guys are, if you're pregnant you're passing BPA's on to your unborn fetus. You're passing plastic on to your unborn fetus. In France they did a study, we are not decomposing like we used to, because of plastics. See what they're serving the water in. And, we can fix that. We can change that. Matter of fact we have to. This is what I'm saying, everything that we're doing is slowly killing us. And who benefits from it? Who benefits from our demise? Why? Have you asked why so many have cancer? Have you asked why so many people are sick? The food you're eating, why is it even allowed to be sprayed with poisons In the city?—you go to other countries, the same company that produces the stuff here and produces it in another country that'll have three ingredients in another country and here they'll have 16 ingredients. Why is that? Why is this allowed? Why are they allowed to kill us? Why are we fighting for our lives? And that's why we have to take our lives into our own hands and start growing some of our own food. You don't have to grow it but imagine if we did it collectively.

Imagine if we taught our kids to grow food. It's a life skill. It's not some belittling, you know, thing that poor people do. Growing food to me is one of the sexiest things you could do. And we need to encourage this every—there should be a school in every garden. Yeah, did I need to run that back? Not a garden in every school. There should be a school in every garden. The kids should not be sitting around in these classrooms, in a line, uniform, can't get up for hours, they should be in a garden. Learning about nature, learning about themselves, learning about biomimicry, learning about insects. Because now the insects they're getting bigger—the ones

that are going extinct are getting bigger. They used to be tiny. Now they're getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And what's that going to lead to? Us. We're gonna go extinct. You saw how many people raised hands with the cancer problem. We need to fix this and we can do this with our dollars. And we can do this by design. Because this system has been designed against us.

This picture is, I have a [MasterClass](#) if anybody wants to know, and I plant in a drawer and the master class really pumped this drawer, this drawer thing up. Now I have people tell me this is the only thing out of all the work I've done, I'm going to be known for the dresser drawer. And there was this guy, I was at this Mobile Mobility conversations, and this guys like, "I thought you look familiar" and I said "yeah?" And he said "You owe me a dresser drawer" I said "Come on," and he said, "No man I'm telling you my wife saw this master, this master class and she watching and I come home one day and my underwear are all over the bed and they're not folded and he said, my drawer, my underwear drawers not there, and I'm like where's my underwear drawer? And she planted stuff in my underwear drawer! You owe me an Ikea dresser drawer dude!" And we were dying laughing. And he said that really happened, she was that excited. You shouldn't be planting in an Ikea dresser drawer—it should be an old hard wood drawer, you know, that's the part we left out in the class.

But even like this—we're all magic. All of us, everybody on this planet. Especially women. You guys have babies! You wanna talk about alien stuff? That's some alien shit! And then you go back to normal like nothing was wrong with you like you weren't carrying around 60 pounds a minute ago—I'm like, we're magic! We're aliens. We're spinning around on a ball in outer space. Oh, let's go find aliens? Look in the mirror! We're aliens. We're magic. We heal. We give birth.

I want to teach. I want to teach people what I thought and what I hoped somebody would have—I raised my sons and I try to teach people what I wish somebody would've told me when I was a child. What about if somebody would've told you that a seed, one seed has as a Millenia in it. How that would change your thinking? That one seed, every tree came from one seed. I'm in Sweden, and they're like "oh, that fruit tree, that apple tree is 250 years old". I'm like, "what? And it's still giving fruit and it started from one seed!" We gotta think of that one seed that gives you this tree that gives you all this fruit, and all that fruit has seeds in it and all that fruit from that other tree has seeds in it. That's the lesson: we should be teaching about abundance. And we're not. We take it, and we just go to the store and we see all the food on the shelf and they're sprayed wet and shit and they're shiny and they're stacked and they're playing very white music and it looks all sexy and shit and we buy it. And do you think, when you pick that apple do you see the line that's attached to it and where that came from? Do you ever ever think of how that food got to the store? We don't. And we should. We should think about the masterful people that grow our food. These to me are the heroes. The people that are bent over backwards growing our food for us, and how do we treat them? The single most, one of the most important things to

our life, is what we put in our body. We need to train ourselves to appreciate that. We don't give food the respect that it needs. And we have to change that.

We have to bring food and cultivation of food to a way higher level than we have it, because we just expect it to be there. And I think one of the things during the pandemic, one of my classes was gigantic, it was because people realized, oh shit, they're running out of food in the store and I need the skill set. And that's what is. Growing food is a life skill set and if you do it together. If you grow together, you grow together. And that's what we need to do. The same blood that's going through, your blood, is the same blood that's going through her body. And we don't see it like that. And that's what I'm doing with the [Ron Finley Project](#). These are the lessons that I want to show, these are the lessons that I want to teach.

Like this, this is a thing that we do, it's called [Da FUNction](#), it's a festival where we show, we had the kid's planting sunflowers and strawberries in a canoe, it's old, you can find things and be real creative, this thing is all about again, design and being creative and using the things around you. A truck bed. This is a system you can see in the back, that's a headboard and it says that [Ron Finley Project](#) that I found on the street, old nasty brown. They had those neighborhoods they have the sign of something something estates, if you start looking at them it looks like an old ass headboard. That's what I did. We built—it does! We built the chairs out of, those are pallets, we built those Adirondacks out of pallets. There's a cart with food growing in it. Bottom line is, it's all about us giving a fuck. About this planet, and about each other. I don't want to come to a talk and see that many people raising their hands because they have somebody dying of something that should be curable and they're calling it rare and a lot of it is because of what we're putting in our body and on our body. We have to change that. I'm Ron Finley, the "Gangsta Gardener," and I want everybody to go out and plant some shit.

(Applause)

CAROL STROHECKER: Alright everybody, how will you make a change? Plant some shit make a change. I'd like to welcome to the stage now three faculty members from the College of Design to join Ron in discussion. [Carlye Lauff](#) will moderate the dialogue, she's a KDI co-principal and assistant professor of product design. Carlye is a design researcher who specializes in design methodology, with an emphasis on prototyping and front end research. She studies how designers engage in the product design process to better develop educational tools and methods to support them.

[Terresa Moses](#), director of Design Justice and assistant professor of graphic design. Terresa is an organizer dedicated to the liberation of Black and Brown people through art and design. Her

scholarship focuses on the intersection of Black womanhood and natural hair, curricula focused on anti-racist design approaches and abolitionist Black liberatory design education.

And [Linsey Griffin](#), a KDI co-principle, assistant professor of apparel design and co-director of the human dimensioning laboratory. Linsey specializes in the development of wearable health and safety products. Her design research promotes systems based interdisciplinary design for the purpose of protecting and clothing humans with a special emphasis on those who are disadvantaged and underserved. Thank you everyone.

LINSEY GRIFFIN AND TERRESA MOSES: Thank you.

CARLYE LAUFF: I'd like to start off with this connection between environmental and social justice. I think there's a lot of strong ties to that. And one thing that the audience might not know, is that recently in October, Ron led a march, a walk, in DC, a three mile walk to kind of grow awareness and attention to food deserts, and the average distance that people have to walk or go, in a food desert in order to get fresh healthy food. It was very inspiring when I learned more about this, and I was curious Ron if you would be able to tell us a little bit more about what motivated you to do that and how it all started.

RON FINLEY: It started out as a line from my [TED](#) talk: It was planting your own food's like growing your own money. This brilliant company BBDO, it's like a big giant marketing company, and they came and said we have an idea and they came up with some stuff I'm like, I don't like that, it took us two years and they came up with some brilliant brilliant ideas to spread the message. This was a side project that they were doing, and they came out with this money, I thought I had a picture of it here, I guess not, and I have this money, with my—if you go to my Instagram @RonFinleyHQ you can see it—first of all let me say this—most of the cards with the seed paper it says plant this and wildflowers—none of that shit works. Anybody been successful with that paper? This is one of the biggest scams around the world—is this stuff. And we made money and we put the seeds on top of the money with water soluble adhesive, and now we thought, okay wanna get the message out to the food desserts and people love money, seeds—money—seeds, we went from Anacostia Park in Washington, DC to the Constitution Garden which is the Lincoln Monument, and right across the street is the Federal Reserve. Right across from the Federal Reserve in the park we planted this money, like that's where they print their money, and this is where we gonna print and grow out receive and our money in the soil, and this is how we're gonna get our residuals and our back, it just happened because there's no need in the country of much privilege that we need to even have a food desert, and that's, that's where, that's where it started and now we have kits we're gonna be mailing out, with different bills in it and we're trying to get different companies to come in with hand tools we can send out packages to people just to get them to growing food.

CARLYE LAUFF: Yeah, it's really inspiring, I'd encourage people to look to the march in October that happened. Here more locally I'd love to invite Terresa to talk a little bit more about the organizing you've been able to do here in the Twin Cities, and specifically maybe some non-conventional ways that you've been able to inspire people and create kind of movement here more locally.

TERRESA MOSES: Yeah, sure, thank you Ron for this, this talk, and I'd be remiss to not acknowledge the connection between environmental and social justice, right? As an organizer here in Minneapolis and abolitionist, if you're not an abolitionist, become one. I use design, my own skill, a lot of the typography that you see out at protests, that would be something that I created but that didn't happen unless I was in community. The humanity part that you were talking about with your presentation—that's the part that's missing, when we are talking about organizing is the relationship building. When you're talking about the value—what do we really value—that really should be the thing, when we're talking about really collectively coming together, what does liberation look like? We have to first start with valuing ourselves and our connection to other human beings.

CARLYE LAUFF: Yeah, I think the values are something that's really important both values as a designer and values as a consumer, which brings up an interesting topic: what do we value? How do those values translate into the things that we create, or how do those translate into the things that we purchase?

RON FINLEY: How do they start?

CARLYE LAUFF: How do they start?

RON FINLEY: Is the question. How do we develop these values?

CARLYE LAUFF: Do you have an answer?

RON FINLEY: It's by design! Of course, I do, it's through school. If you have this, you have value. I talked about it, if you don't—no one's telling us that we have a value. No one's telling a child that they have a value. That they are expensive and brilliant and wondrous and magic. No one's telling them that they want these things that the marketers are putting out there that shows that if you have this then you have value. You can't buy value. Just like you can't buy integrity. It's simple, and that's real it's right in front of our face, it's simple.

LINSEY GRIFFIN: I think just to piggyback on that one of the things that as an educator, thinking about education, in design, I think that as a designer we have to become incredibly aware of what we value and how the products and environments and things that we create embodies that value. Really thinking about how we promote quality of value that thinks about end of life, that thinks about air, that thinks about impact, is a really really important part of what we do as educators and what we have to do as designers.

RON FINLEY: But shouldn't we all be educators, aren't we all educators?

LINSEY GRIFFIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. Education. We are all educators.

RON FINLEY: Yeah, aren't we all artists?

LINSEY GRIFFIN: We're all designers.

RON FINLEY: And this whole food justice—there's no damn food justice. It's food injustice! And we should start saying that. If it was food justice, what the hell, we wouldn't have to do nothing, everything would be cool. It's food *injustice*. It's social *injustice*. Ya know? That's what we need to change. And when people do these talks and when they do these forums, that should be on the thing—food *injustice*, not food justice forum. It's the food *injustice* forum. Let's fix it, then we can say it's food justice. And then we wouldn't even really have to talk about it if we lived in a just society, because it would be normal.

CARLYE LAUFF: Something that you brought up Ron, in your talk, was where does the food even come from that we go and purchase at the store right? Those kinds of invisible layers, not to the everyday eye, which I think is really interesting to think about, all of the— what goes into the product and also what happens to a product after it's been used. You saw some great visuals of using sink, that was about to go to a landfill, right, being repurposed, being used in a new way, and this idea of a full circle or circular economy is some work related to what Linsey's doing looking at, things in circular economy, I was wondering if you wanted to comment at all, of like, looking at a product or products and life cycle of those for your research.

LINSEY GRIFFIN: I think that, one of the things that I kind of got into academia for was because I was looking at all of these products and was like why are these products failing so many people? Failing all around us. One of the ways that I got to the heart of these product failures was to look at the system. We have to understand that system and understand the value within that system in order to redesign not only the product, but the system itself. Circular economy is something that— I work in apparel, I work in fashion, and the fashion system is, well...I'll let you say it, Ron! (*Laughs*)

RON FINLEY: *(Laughs)* Say it! I want you to say it. Say it. Verbalize it, let them hear it!

LINSEY GRIFFIN: It's fucked up but don't tell my son that I ever said that word! There's so much work that we have to do to redesign the system of how we consume products so that it's not wasteful. And those systems are incredibly complex and we have to design for that complexity now in order to make sure that we're not creating more harmful impact, not only environmentally, but also socially, thinking about the donut economy so that we're making sure that everybody can live justly and, and reduce those injustices that we see all around us.

RON FINLEY: And we can. I think collectively if we started doing things, more things collectively we can change a lot and we would see that we're safer, we would see that we're healthier, and we would see that we're wealthier, because they have us, valuing wealth as only money. Nobody ever tells you the fact that you're wealthy if you have this health and you don't have to do these, you don't have to go to work seven days a week, you don't have to, the way we measure wealth is pretty screwed up actually, because the only thing it has to do with 'stuff' that you have, it doesn't have anything to do with your health or what's inside of you, or your integrity.

CARLYE LAUFF: Yeah, the values again, coming back again to the things that you value and how that plays a big role in what you do. I'd like to come back to, a little bit, thinking about the systems in play, and a lot of times I feel like these systems can be invisible, right? Or the things, that you just, everyday life that you're interacting with and you don't think twice about them, right? You don't think twice about the barcode on the, on the fruit like you said, or anything that you're purchasing. I'd like to invite Terresa to maybe talk a little bit more about the course that you've created Racism Untaught, if I got that right, yeah—[Racism Untaught](#) which is all about kind of revealing these racialized designs in the world around us that, that a lot us might not even recognize.

TERRESA MOSES: Yeah, Racism Untaught is a curriculum that I created with Lisa Mercer, she's at University of Illinois, essentially what it does is, you're able to walk through the design research process with really intentional interventions, design interventions, to help us think about how even our own positionality and agency plays a role in those design outcomes. After the class and during the class we do folks will absolutely say, "I didn't realize that thing, I didn't understand how this worked." One of the things we always talk about is that everyone is a designer and we all have some sort of power and agency to make decisions that are going to impact other people. The College of Design, we are graduating students that are going to have an impact on what we are consuming, how we are living and the way that we walk and move about the world and if we do not teach them about positionality, if we don't constantly unlearn and understand our own positionality, we're going to continue to perpetuate these harmful systems.

What Racism Untaught is able to do, is to really look at the creation that we have and what agentic action that's going to play, but also how does that sit in our policies and our practices? How does that sit in our broader culture? And then can we think about design in an iterative way, and I think about, Ron, when you're talking about changing the DNA. I think we can easily talk about how design is an iterative process, but we have to constantly be iterative. We have to constantly be changing and shifting just like language, we have to constantly be moving we can and progress forward as a collective.

CARLYE LAUFF: Yeah, that idea that as a designer you are designing things but you are also, yourself you're changing you're learning things as you go through the world and you can change your own DNA, right? There's hopefully ways to do that. I don't know, Ron, if you have any thoughts on how we can change our DNA, how we can keep progressing forward?

RON FINLEY: Just like you change your pants, you change your drawers. It's you planting that seed in you that you're gonna, you don't have to be doing what you're doing. A lot of what we do has been designed for us, not by us. Because where they started. They put these seeds in our heads and we think this is how life is. It's as simple as to say: I'm valuable. Or that I don't have—that doesn't not make me invaluable. It's a lot, it's the simplest thing because all you have to do is say it. And believe it. It's hard, and I know it's hard for a lot of people. I'm dyslexic as hell, and I didn't get it in school. I couldn't read the way, I was one of the kids that I said, "fuck your standardized education. I'm custom." That became my superpower. Because I had to figure it out sideways. I had to figure it out upside down. And I figured—that don't work for me. We have to embrace these kids with so-called on the spectrums and all of this—that's their superpowers—cause they don't think like—and I'm glad that I didn't get it. I'm proud, because I wouldn't be standing up here talking to you guys if I got it. If I understood it, I would be one of those people (*gestures punching a timecard*) thinking that this is life. I get those people like, "what do you, we don't really understand what you do for a living?" I'm like, "I breathe for living! What do you do for a living?" No, I don't do this shit for a living, I said I breathe, and I know, I get what they're, I make people change what they are saying, because to me words matter. I basically get to do whatever the fuck I want to do, kind of, and it's arrogant to say I guess, but we all should, we all should get there, where we do what we wanna do. And that's what, and I think there would be much more joy and much more happiness if we did truly, because, who is a student here? Raise your hand. Why'd you come here? Why'd you go to college?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I guess to learn.

RON FINLEY: You guess, what do you mean you guess? Did your parents make you? "You're going to college!" How many people are here because their parents forced them to be here? You guys are lying or what? (*Laughs*). No, it's that. You're gonna go to college! Why? I don't want to go

to college. It's the track that society has put on us, that you're supposed to do this. "You don't have a baby and you're 30? Oh my god!" All of this kind of bullshit that's been put on us, we get nauseous and nervous and think that we're not making it or we're not bright or somethings wrong with us because we haven't done the norms that they set out for us, but I'm telling you—be weird! Be different. Don't stand in that line at all. And that's the way you change, is you change. And the first thing you have to do is plant the seed in your head and that's going to grow.

CARLYE LAUFF: We all are individuals, right? We all have our own special talents, and to create change you need people with different perspectives. You need people with different experiences to come together. That's one thing about KDI that I've really enjoyed—we're bringing together different disciplines, we're having conversations across boundaries to be able to make change happen. I don't know if anyone wants to comment on if there's been any time working across boundaries, working across disciplines where you feel like that's been a strength, right, the individuality of everybody's expertise is that together makes a greater, a greater outcome.

RON FINLEY: Mine is culture. Like you said, if we work together culturally. I think the meshing and the blending, even in something as simple as a garden, where it has somebody from India might have this purple thing that you've never seen or heard of—oh, we put that in this and it this, it enhances this! Oh, well we have these collard greens! That cultural change to me is the meshing that we need, and that communication. To me what I get out of gardens, first of all to me they equal freedom. Freedom from an unjust system, freedom from a system that's killing us on purpose. And, I think if we do it collectively and we do it with, with other religions, other nationalities that brings us together. And that's what I've seen. And definitely different age groups.

CARLYE LAUFF: Yeah. Linsey I know that working with some of the research and projects that you do, talking about working in different systems, there's different expertise levels in different systems too, right? If you have any comment.

LINSEY GRIFFIN: Yeah, I can speak from personal experience, also just from a research perspective, if we're able to work across those boundaries, we're able to solve bigger problems, we're able to address problems at different scales, not just for an individual's need, but more at a society and communities need. We're learning to work across boundaries and being open to working across boundaries is just such a critical life skill that I think can only make us better.

TERRESA MOSES: Sorry, I'm really thinking about everything you all are saying is beautiful, right? I want to be able to just be able to say something and that is the thing that I can walk away with in this world I'm gonna walk in that truth but in my mind, I'm seeing the reality of oppression of racism the reality of misogyny and the patriarchy, and I'm thinking about hope

right now, right? Hearing what you've gone here in California, that to me, that's hope, right? But the reality—

RON FINLEY: That's not hope though, babe. I got this line that's, excuse me, fuck hope. What can you do with hope, but hope? You can't take it to the bank. I got this bag of hope, what do I get for it? People need opportunity and that's what I'm giving them. And this is not LA. My shit around the world. Period. It's gone from Africa to New Zealand. I'm not giving people hope, I'm showing people a way of life, and that's changing them, and now they're taking the opportunity. I'm not a hope seller. Keep hope alive? No—put a stake through its heart—give people opportunity. I understand what you're saying, but it ain't a hope thing.

TERRESA MOSES: I don't think you're selling hope, bud. *(Laughs)* Please don't think I'm saying that. I'm just, in my head right now, thinking about how do we take this and actually do it? You know what I'm saying? As an abolitionist, how do we stop police from killing us? You know? I'm thinking about that reality.

RON FINLEY: How do we stop us from killing us?

TERRESA MOSES: Yes. That too.

RON FINLEY: How do we stop the food from killing us? All of that, it's real. We plant that seed, and that's what I've done and that's we doing and that's what we can do. We can't let that be a roadblock, because people are like, "wow it must be hard!" I say, "hell yeah it's hard, I've got this tan! It's hard as hell." It's gonna be hard for me. Does pain feel pain? Does love feel love? I'm love, I'm love. Does pain feel pain? We have that right under our fascia. Right under our skin. That pain in that DNA and all that sister shit is there, but is it stopping you? A bear sleeps in the woods, alright. That's what bears do. You think it's hard for a bear to be a bear? They scratch their ass on a tree and they sharpen their nails on a rock and they get some salmon and they keep it pushing. That's what happens to us. Is that pain there? Yeah it's there. Are you gonna let that pain stop you? Are you gonna wake up every morning and kick ass? And that's what some of us have to do—without the drugs, without the alcohol, without the violence. And that, and that to me, because I'm not special. That's what I chose to do. And everybody, and now people, I'm seeing people, now they're choosing to do it. It's that simple. We don't have to live in this line that's been designed, that you're supposed to do this because you live here, or you're supposed to. No, it's a lot of that's on us. And when you say no, we need to stop killing us, first. Black Live Matter doesn't matter to Black people.

TERRESA MOSES: At the same time, I'm going to have to say it first, both things can be true. You know what I'm saying? I'm just going to put that out there. I'd like to think that I'm kicking ass, Ron. I'd like to think that.

LINSEY GRIFFIN: You are!

TERRESA MOSES: I just can't stop myself from thinking about the reality. How do we actually not just encourage folks and show folks, here's the way—how do we burn down these systems, burn down these walls so that we can actually get done what we need to get done.

RON FINLEY: You don't burn them down. You let them exist. You do shit in stealth mode. You don't let nobody know.

TERRESA MOSES: I'm not stealth.

RON FINLEY: You don't let nobody know what you're doing.

TERRESA MOSES: If anybody know me, I'm not stealth!

RON FINLEY: You think I went out and told people what I was doing? I tell people—this is a war! For our souls. And I'm not telling you what I'm doing. You think I wanted people to know who I was? That's why I used the, oh yeah he's the "Gangsta Gardener"—what's his name? I don't know. I didn't want nobody. In a war do you say "hey guys, we've got some tanks and some missiles and grenades and we're going to hit you at twelve o'clock. And after we're gonna bring Subway sandwiches." Do you tell your enemy what you're doing? No, you don't, you just do it.

TERRESA MOSES: Okay. Same analogy, right?

RON FINLEY: Okay.

TERRESA MOSES: We actually have to work with the enemy. I'm here—in this institution in academia, that is the enemy. Standardized tests and all that. That is the enemy. Yes, I understand what you're saying, but it's hard for your plan not to leak and then be disrupted by abortion bans—you know what I'm saying? You get what I'm saying?

RON FINLEY: I hear you. I hear you, but you don't want me to started on academia.

TERRESA MOSES: Start on it. I'm with you.

RON FINLEY: I met some brilliant people who, they didn't do shit. Academia to me, they study people like me and then they do a paper on it. You didn't *do* it! Why the fuck are you doing the paper? It's like "oh, we did all of this research!" Have you ever put anything in the ground, have you ever made anything? "Well, no, but I wrote a book cause I studied people that have done it!" Shut up and sit down somewhere. That's how I feel about it.

TERRESA MOSES: I absolutely agree.

CARLYE LAUFF: With that, I feel like we should open it up, we want to give some time for the audience to be able to ask questions.

TERRESA MOSES: We don't want to open it up yet. *(Laughs)*

CARLYE LAUFF: We want to be able to hear, Alanna has a microphone, that we'll be walking around and can come to you to get your questions, if you just wanna raise your hand, flag her down, it could be for Ron, or anyone of the panelists, or everyone. We've got some questions in the back and one up front. We'll try to make Alanna run as many miles as possible in this short amount of time.

TERRESA MOSES: She told me she stretched earlier, she's ready.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Alright, how's it going. I guess I wanted to address the point about the systems of oppression that exist now, right, and how do we tear those down so that the new stuff can be built and I think it's about the things we create have longevity, right? If you look at those systems that oppress us, I don't think they're really built to last. I got into food sovereignty stuff because of George Floyd's death and the immediate effect on South Minneapolis, right, and it wasn't the Feds that were feeding people, it was us that were feeding people, it was community gardens that were coming together. And I look at the realities of climate change and political corruption and civil unrest. Things are going to change, we can build things now that exist as those things change and as those other systems fall, which is not to say that we don't need to fight, but my point is that sometimes you don't have to start something on fire if it's already burning right? Let's build something that's made of stone that can't burn down.

RON FINLEY: That was a statement that wasn't a question!

(Applause)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm sorry to be following that. I was just wondering how much resistance, if any, you got from neighbors, the city, anybody when you started growing things?

RON FINLEY: What? Resistance? How do you spell that? Hell yeah I got resistance, I got an arrest warrant (*Laughs*), they issued an arrest warrant for me for doing what's on this picture right here. With that, I fought them, I told them "bring it!" because it happened twice. And I wasn't bringing my guard down the second time, and what happened was, I started this petition and got the LA Times, and I started writing stuff and basically, I got the law changed in LA where you can plant in one of the biggest cities in the world you can plant food on the parkway.
(*Applause*)

Thank you. Before that, you couldn't do it. And my thing was—you want to arrest me for beautifying my city, my land, my city? If there's a mattress there, a dresser, a toilet, I didn't get a warrant for that—for the weeds or nothing—once you see beauty all of a sudden it's against the law and you want to arrest me?he question you asked me earlier—we have in our, if we we want to change something we have this thing called social media that can be used for the good and that's how you use it, and that's what was used, because basically I embarrassed one of the biggest cities in the world in the press. I got press from the Financial Times in London to New York to LA, Wall Street Journal, and because everybody picked this up, I guess it was timing. And that's what we have and that's how we can change things. And the city backed down and we literally got the ordinance changed. And that's how you could do it.

TERRESA MOSES: I think it's much more than beautifying. Right? You are taking power back, you know what I'm saying. That's why they was coming for you.

RON FINLEY: That's what I'm saying, it should be done in stealth mode. I don't want them to know who I am. I don't want them to know who I am with doing stuff like that, because imagine if a quarter of us start growing our own food—how much money that we're taking out of the system, how much revenue, from all the systems of oppression. All of us are oppressed, you might not think that because you're going home to your fancy ass house—all of us still are oppressed by the corporations and that—you can see that by how many hands were raised when I asked about sickness, cancer. Shouldn't be like that. Doesn't have to be like that. It's a numbers game. That's why I say gardens equal freedom. Yes—gardens are dangerous. This is my weapon of mass creation. This is what I do. And it's working.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

North Minneapolis is going green
Give us a call
And learn what we mean
Where once lie urban blight
Now sits lucious garden sites
Gardens without borders

Classrooms without walls
Architects of our own destinies
Access to food
Justice for all
And now like sweet potato vines
Our missions and goals all intertwine

Goodday sir, Ron, good to meet you sir, you're a legend and I'm a big fan of yours because you understand the simplicity of life. The project I work with is called Project Sweetie Pie the story of a community that came together, worked together for the common good of the youth and families of its community, for it takes a village to raise a child. We're sitting here at a 48 acre development on the Upper Harbor Terminal that they want to turn into an amphitheater, and we opposed the concept. We wanted to create an environmental impact center. How does your work envelop and intertwine with global warming and climate change and how do you see that as a tool for transforming to change?

RON FINLEY: How does it deal with climate change? Because a lot of the strategies that I'm doing to grow my food in a place that you can't grow—we don't have no water because of climate change and that's why we developed systems. That's why you appreciate leaves and mulch and hugel beds and rain capture. And if all of us started doing this there would be no shortage. That's how it's—that's how mine is aligning with that. And what I'm doing, and I'll tell people, I'll help you but I ain't the help. Don't get that—don't get it twisted. I'm not sitting here growing your stuff and doing your garden for you. I'm giving you the opportunity for you to grow your own garden, I'm giving you the opportunity for you to be free because if somebody's doing it for you, you're still a slave. That's what I'm about. I'm not a legend and I'm not the answer to everyone—I'm not trying to be the answer. I don't wanna be Ron Finley, right? I didn't want to be this— it's just go! I'm like no! I fought this! I fought being on this stage because it's dangerous. People don't see that but it is. Any time you change the systems. Bring it—that's what I'm doing. That's how—the intersection is life. The intersection, like I tell you, what's the single most important thing in your life? Air. It's all connected, all of this. Everything is connected, that's how I'm working. You can't have this without that.

CARLYE LAUFF: Do we have any other questions? Oh, I see one in the front row.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi again, I just wanted to ask, it's taken a long time to get in contact with youth and youth programs and i was just talking with somebody from our local park board about a week ago and he was talking about important it is to get buy in from the youth, and I'm wondering what kinds of strategies you have found, I love the example about the Doritos and

trying to get kids there activity involved. What kind of strategies to get the kids involved in getting their hands in the soil and everything have you found to work and get them excited about that?

RON FINLEY: Why y'all looking at me? It depends on the age. The one thing that always works is sexual attraction. Boys and girls. If the boys see the girls in the garden, guess where they're going to be? They're going to be in the garden. The birds and the bees, it's simple, it's life. It's the oldest story in the world. The way I do it is to show them that there's revenue, that there's resources in that garden. I talked about it already. You show them you ain't gotta be on the corner dude, slinging, you can sling these carrots, you can sling this compost. They're selling this compost—there's this place selling a little teeny bag of compost for fifteen dollars. It's not even a pound, it's ounces. When they realize that this came from what we consider nothing, and people are like, well I started from nothing, I had nothing, nobody started from nothing. Nobody. None of us started from nothing, and that's a misnomer. How we show them is how we can make money, resourcing from things that are around them and that's how you get them in there. And then if it's boys you get girls in there if it's girls you get boys in there. Real simple.

CARLYE LAUFF: We have another question behind you Alanna.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My first question is when you were doing your presentation—we can make money off of the worms who have sex, we can make money off of the compost, and then what was the third thing?

RON FINLEY: The worm tea. Worm tea is made from um, when the worms eat the vegetables and the food and things, the excretion, it's got a liquid in it too, and you catch that at the bottom of the worm bin and you can mix it ten to one to make worm tea, that's another viable thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Worm tea. Thank you, sir.

RON FINLEY: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And I have another question for you. We've got a number of food activists in the room today. I think you all should stand so he sees who's in the room.

RON FINLEY: Woop, woop, woop, woop!

(Applause)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Food and growth activists in the room.

(Applause)

The University of Minnesota has invested in North Minneapolis and we've got a little bit of land, and I'm curious if you would be willing to work with some of these food activists at a place like [UROC](#) in North Minneapolis to grow your project? Now, we have some beasts out here, we've got some folks that do it—I'm not saying you're coming in and doing it for us, maybe you can help us work together even more, collaboratively. Sometimes, we get in the way—universities and communities—who gets the credit for what and that gets in our way. If you have some advice for that, if you're willing to come to North Minneapolis I've got a space for you.

RON FINLEY: Basically, you want me to leave Cali? You want me to leave Los Angeles, California and come to this? I just left Miami for this! That's not enough for you guys? (*Laughs*) No—we can definitely talk, that's what it's about for me is collaboration. We can talk about that. Yeah, we need to do that.

CARLYE LAUFF: We probably have time for one more question. If we have another question out there. Oh now the hands are raised.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. Thank you again for coming this evening. I've been growing a garden probably for thirteen, fourteen seasons? Ten seasons here, since I've been living here, and I've noticed there's been a lot of change in terms of the seeds I can grow, the water that we get, the seasons and how they've changed. I know this year has been one of the hardest gardening seasons that I've had, I'm kind of curious as to how, and a lot of this is due to climate change and the fact that we've had, I think we're in three years of a drought now, I'm kind of curious, do you experience—as somebody who is growing food for yourself and your community, do you experience climate grief?

RON FINLEY: For myself, I don't grow for my community. They just happen to get it when it's on the street but I ain't growing it for them.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay, I grow for myself and my community

RON FINLEY: I don't want that job.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm wondering if you experience climate grief as you're watching the things as you grow and plant, now there's droughts and the Sun is more intense or your winters are longer. And if you do experience climate grief, how are you managing it? Because I'm not managing it well, frankly.

RON FINLEY: The garden is a lab and we are scientists. Do you think scientists know what the hell they're doing? If they did, why would they need a lab? If scientists knew what they were—oh

shit that didn't work—why do they need a lab? You treat your garden like it's a lab. Because it is! You know people like, "I stopped because the stuff didn't grow." Did you stop when the first time you had sex and it was horrible? Did you not have it again? I mean, no. It's a science experiment and that's how I treat my garden. Okay that didn't work over here in this area, I'm going to put it over here and try it over here, maybe it just ain't going to work. Climate is a big thing because we don't have no water. We don't have no rain. Period. We have to get really really really creative and it's, and it's constant. Last season there was things because of the weather that just, you guys know when something says it bolted? You're sitting there waiting for your broccoli or your cauliflower and all of a sudden it goes to flower: bam! It missed a whole stage of you getting and harvesting your broccoli and it went to seed and that's happening a lot and yeah it is, it's different but we are going to have to find a way to adapt just like people before us have found they had to find a way to adapt to this either. We adapt. And that's what we have to do and I think right now we are in one of those cycles of life, where everything's worse. The storms are worse, the temperatures are higher and all of this is real and this is happening. We have some of the highest temperatures on record, some of the worst storms ever in history—kind of things that are happening to us right now, we are gonna have to use our spaces just like science labs.

CARLYE LAUFF: I wanna thank Ron, and thank our panelists—

RON FINLEY: Oh, thank you guys!

CARLYE LAUFF:—for being up here today having a very enlightening talk, lots of things to think about, hopefully planting seeds for change, getting our minds thinking about how we can make a more positive world around us here, here in the Twin Cities.

RON FINLEY: In the world.

CARLYE LAUFF: And the world. You gotta start where you are.

(Applause)

CAROL STROHECKER: Thank you everyone for being here with us tonight, Ron thanks much for coming out in the cold and telling us some age-old stories and leaving us a lot to think about. This question of how to change a system that's problematic and how to change it from within is something to, to dance around for a while, I think. And the question of how you can be within without letting it engulf you, how do you not come to embody that thing that you're trying to change? That's a delicate dance. This message of keeping ourselves healthy, prioritize ourselves, eat well, plant some shit, make some change

RON FINLEY: You made me think—if a dandelion is in a field of hydrangeas, does it turn into hydrangea? Hell no. I’m a dandelion. I like this. That’s how we should be.

CAROL STROHECKER: Alright all you dandelions, have a good evening, thank you for being here!