

Abel Gomez ([00:00](#)):

Great. This is the Center for the Study of Religion and Cities Coronavirus Relief and Restoration Work. This is Abel Gomez and Ariel Mejia interviewing Sha'Von Terrell of the Black Church Food Security Network and today's date is August 20, 2020 and this interview should last about an hour. If you had a question, I want to give you space to ask a question. No? Okay.

Abel Gomez ([00:44](#)):

To start, I'm wondering if you could just tell us a little bit about the organization and the work that you do.

Sha'Von Terrell ([00:50](#)):

I am Sha'Von Terrell. I currently serve as the deputy director with the Black Church Food Security Network. The mission of the Black Church Food Security Network is to create community-based food systems anchored by black churches and partnership with black farmers. We aim to create community-based food systems that are led by those who are directly impacted and affected by food inequity.

Sha'Von Terrell ([01:26](#)):

We have two major programs; Operation Higher Ground and The Soil to Sanctuary Market. The Soil to Sanctuary Market is where we transform church spaces, such as parking lots, such as multi-purpose rooms, such as any unutilized space into a farmers market where we bring in black farmers to come in and sell their produce to the community.

Sha'Von Terrell ([01:57](#)):

Our second program is Operation Higher Ground and that is when we start community gardens on church-owned land. We transformed plots of land into a beautiful community garden where the produce is sold or donated to the community or given away in the church's food pantry.

Abel Gomez ([02:22](#)):

Awesome. I kind of want to follow up with one of the things you mentioned early on, and I think this is really important. You said something to the effect or what I heard you say was that these are initiatives led directly by those that are impacted and I'm wondering if you could say a little bit about why that's important.

Sha'Von Terrell ([02:46](#)):

The reason why we are doing what we are doing, because a lot of communities, especially black communities, are deeply impacted by food insecurity and food apartheid and we are seeking to create a sustainable solution where those are closest to the problem will be those who are the ones who will lead the solution of addressing that problem.

Sha'Von Terrell ([03:16](#)):

Food apartheid is the systemic self-destruction of black determination to control their food system and that looks like so many different things. That looks like predatory marketing. When you go in some black neighborhoods, you see marketing around a 69-cent knee-high to compel people to spend their money on purchasing this knee-high. Also, you see predatory marketing like the commercials that come on your TV. If you live in certain areas, you probably might see more McDonald's and Burger King commercials

more frequently than you would see a Chipotle commercial. Not necessarily saying that Chipotle is healthy, but I'm saying that there are targeted marketing strategies that get people in low-income and black communities to buy unhealthy food or food that is not nutritious.

Sha'Von Terrell ([04:21](#)):

Another example of food apartheid is black land robbery or black land laws. In the 1920s, black farmers owned 16,000,000 acres. Today, it's less than two percent of that. Less than two percent probably is like 2,000,000 acres, 1,500,000 acres, something around that range. That disconnected black folks from trying to grow their own food. That put us in the position to be dependent on organizations, to be dependent on corporations, to be dependent on restaurants, whatever, where we would get our fresh food from. There are so many things that could be attributed to black land laws such as USDA predatory lending habits, bank lending habits, different things like that, is the reason why black farmers' land was taken from them.

Sha'Von Terrell ([05:35](#)):

That put us in the position where we had to be dependent on outside influences to come in and feed us and the Black Church Food Security Network was founded in 2015 in the midst of the Baltimore uprising. In the midst of the Baltimore uprising, a lot of those fast food restaurants, those corner stores, those food retail outlets were shut down in the middle of the uprising. Therefore, there were black communities in 2015 in the middle of this uprising that did not have access to food because those food retail outlets shut down completely.

Sha'Von Terrell ([06:16](#)):

We realized that we didn't want to be in that position because if those retail outlets were to shut down, move, close down, then what would the community have to get food from and that's the reason why we are centered in community and we are centered in addressing our own needs because it would be sustainable, it would be rooted in the culture in the DNA of that specific area. I could just go on and on, but all-in-all, we see the black church as an anchor in the black community. As a community anchor, an anchor that has the resources to really address the needs of that community as well as resources to be leveraged for community empowerment and development.

Sha'Von Terrell ([07:06](#)):

I hope I answered your question. I kind of went all over the place. All-in-all we are seeking to create agency around our food as well as control of our food because market demands decisions will put us in a place of dependence and as long as we're in a place of dependence, someone else will always control what's on our plate. If we want to change our community health of an area, then we will have to put ourselves in the position to define what's on our plate.

Abel Gomez ([07:49](#)):

There's so much there to think about and I think for Ariel and I, we also did some interviews with native-led organizations and already I'm seeing so many different parallels with things that both communities are struggling with. In particular, I'm really intrigued by the ways in which you described how black communities have been made dependent and been made vulnerable through specific kinds of government actions, in particular, policies. So, you talked about things like food apartheid. You talked about the ways in which advertising addresses certain kinds of communities to purchase unhealthy foods. Then you also talked about the ways in which land was stripped. So, then all of these things

create a system in which certain kinds of people have to reach out to outside sources, rather than becoming self-sufficient. Would you say that's an accurate...

Sha'Von Terrell ([09:01](#)):

Yes.

Abel Gomez ([09:02](#)):

Awesome. Ariel, I want to send it over to you if you have any questions.

Ariel Mejia ([09:10](#)):

I just have a few comments. When you said the advertising of healthy food versus fast foods in certain communities, that made me think of a documentary I watched in my anthropology class about in Ohio, they would have a lot of non-healthy places and let communities know grocery stores to buy healthy products, but in the white communities, they would have all these healthy places and whole foods and stuff. That was something that I noticed.

Ariel Mejia ([09:45](#)):

Also, with the food apartheid, I just like that term because I've never heard food apartheid so I thought that was really interesting that was said.

Ariel Mejia ([09:58](#)):

Also, I was wondering if you could say the two major programs again?

Sha'Von Terrell ([10:06](#)):

Yes. Our two major programs at this are Operation Higher Ground and that's where we start community gardens on church-owned land because as you all probably know, in the cities where you are located, you know that there are churches everywhere. No matter what type of neighborhood you go into, there is going to be a church within that neighborhood. Like I mentioned before, with churches being anchors in their community and having the resources and the assets to really anchor their community. As it relates to food security, we also see resources and assets within that church and one asset within that church is land. A lot of churches have land surrounding their church that is underutilized. They only mow it. We see a greater purpose and a larger purpose to the utilization of that land and one of those purposes is to feed your community. You can turn that land into a community garden to grow local produce and fresh and organic produce to distribute to your community and that's a way of community engagement, bringing the community in. Therefore, they can learn agriculture and learn new trades.

Sha'Von Terrell ([11:32](#)):

Our second program is the Soil to Sanctuary Market. Another asset within a church that is underutilized is the dining hall, the multi-purpose room. Usually churches have bible study there, meetings, different things along those lines. We see another use of this space to be a farmers market because a lot of farmers markets are farmers markets. There are a lot of farmers at one market selling their produce. We create niche markets for farmers to come in and sell their produce directly to the community because a lot of black farmers, they aren't the ones that are getting these big contracts from these large retail grocery stores. They're not the ones. Most of the farmers that we work with, they sell their produce at farmers markets or they sell their produce at a farm stand. We want to make sure that we are creating

revenue within our community to support our community anchor such as farmers to make sure we are fed as well as a lot of the farmers that we work with, by default, grow organic food. Although they don't have that organic certification, they grow organic food because they care about how the food is processed, how the food is grown.

Sha'Von Terrell ([13:04](#)):

We create niche markets for them to come in and sell their produce.

Abel Gomez ([13:10](#)):

What I'm hearing is that there's a way in which not only are these programs addressing the needs of black communities to access food, but also creating a way in which farmers can have an outlet to sell their food and also generate income so it seems like there's a whole kind of loop, but then people are not dependent on outside sources that will target them for unhealthy food.

Sha'Von Terrell ([13:37](#)):

Right.

Abel Gomez ([13:40](#)):

I'm curious if or to what extent ideas, philosophies, teachings about the black church impact how the organization thinks about things or organizes.

Sha'Von Terrell ([13:56](#)):

Yes. Definitely. We are students of history. We are students of our ancestors and those who came before us. We acknowledge that we stand on their shoulders. We are here because of them. In the spirit of Ubuntu, I am because of who we are. We stand on the shoulders of Albert Cleage. We stand on the shoulders of Mother and Father Divine. We stand on the shoulders of Vernon Johns, Fannie Lou Hamer. Because in a way of how we look at history or we look at history through the lens of them creating the strategy and them creating the outline for the same issues that we are facing today.

Sha'Von Terrell ([14:49](#)):

We don't seek to reinvent the wheel. The wheel was already created by our ancestors. What we are seeking to do is continue that legacy and continue the work that they strived to do during their lifetime. For example, Fannie Lou Hamer. Fannie Lou Hamer started a coop called Freedom Farm Coop in Sunflower County, Mississippi and what she did at this coop, it was magnificent. If you all ever have time, Google this. It was a little community, a little city in Sunflower County. The main thing that she did was she started a pig bank. The pig bank was so cool to me because at her pig bank, she would give away pigs to community members and members of this coop. It was in the agreement that when that pig reproduced, you would have to donate those piglets back to the pig bank to continue to strengthen and grow the pig bank so other families can be served through this initiative.

Sha'Von Terrell ([16:12](#)):

We, in the spirit of that, in the midst of COVID-19, we started the seed bank. We said, we have seeds. When COVID first hit in March and April, there was a back order of seeds from different seed companies. We realized that when the grocery store shelves were empty, we didn't want to be dependent again. Just like anything else, the grocery store shelves were empty and we were like, we still

have to eat. We encouraged our community to start growing their own food. We started a seed bank to distribute and to mail seeds across the country to people who want to start growing their own food on their balcony, in their kitchen, in their backyard, or whatever open space they have available and towards the end of this season, in November, we will start getting seeds back to continue to use seeds to populate our seed bank so next growing season in February, before growing season we can go ahead and mail them out again and then get them right back so we can continue to support gardening efforts across the country.

Sha'Von Terrell ([17:33](#)):

We also stand on the shoulders of Mother and Father Divine, like I mentioned before. Mother and Father Divine, they were a part of the Peace Mission Movement in New York. Their ministry was active during the great depression. It's kind of similar now because we're kind of experiencing a looming economic crisis. We're like, is it here? Is it here? Is it coming? What is it? They were in the middle of an economic crisis and what this church did was they purchased land in upstate New York and they would use this land to grow food. They would transport the food back from upstate New York and to New York City and then they would have these large feasts, these large gatherings where they would bring in their community to just come in and eat fresh food that's grown local. We stand on their shoulders because we're seeking to do the same thing by working with farmers to transport food to inner-city black communities to make sure that they are able to have food on their table.

Sha'Von Terrell ([18:52](#)):

We also stand on the shoulders of Vernon Johns. Vernon Johns was the predecessor of Martin Luther King at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Vernon Johns, what he would do, he would farm on Sunday. Get up on Sunday morning, preach. Directly after service, he would go to the front yard of the church to sell his produce to the community. That's where the idea of the Soil to Sanctuary Market came from.

Sha'Von Terrell ([19:26](#)):

Our programs are a continuation of the blueprint that was laid by our ancestors. We continue to study. We continue to be in communication with our ancestors because the blueprint is already laid to address the problems that we're experiencing today. We want to make sure that we have a clear vision and a clear strategy and a clear way forward to continue their work.

Abel Gomez ([19:54](#)):

There's just so much richness in what you were saying. I feel like I could just listen to you for hours talking about this. Not just the ways that these individual figures were innovative, but how they, in a way, provide us with theory. They're theorists that provide us a model for how we go forward and how we address these systemic issues.

Sha'Von Terrell ([20:22](#)):

Yes. It's really exciting to see. Someone with a Master's degree, how you say that they're theorists, I like to say they are very practical. One of the problems that I have with academia is that there are people that are doing research on communities and collect all this data, come up with these findings, offer recommendations, but then the information is not being trickled back to the community. There is a divide there. I would like to say that they are practical in their approach because what they did was put their pulse on the community. They collected that data called [inaudible 00:21:08]. They found out their

findings. They're like, let me start pig bank because that's what my community needs right now. Let me start a coop because that's what we need and then go back and implement it and then go through the phases of ideating, prototyping it, to make sure that it works for that specific area.

Sha'Von Terrell ([21:31](#)):

That's what I was so excited about. Just being grounded in nature and having your finger to the pulse of the community to actually see and hear and experience the culture, the heartbeat, as well as the gaps in the community. Then finding a solution collectively to address those.

Ariel Mejia ([22:07](#)):

Yeah. A lot of what you're saying I just agree with. Wow. I just noticed you were saying you're standing on your ancestors shoulders. I was just thinking about the other organizations we interviewed, how they would have this, like you said, blueprint that's laid out by your ancestors. They would say the exact same thing. I've noticed similarities between what you're saying and the native organizations we interviewed previously.

Sha'Von Terrell ([22:45](#)):

That's so good to hear. I honestly think... I deeply feel like that is the way forward because one thing that really irks my soul personally is to see each generation start over. I'm like, you all, we don't have to. I promise, we don't. We have to just believe that those who came before us created something. It probably isn't tailoring to contemporary times and what we're experiencing now, but I'm sure they had some ideas about the future and that we've just got to find that and then we can work to buff it off to make it relevant to today. I love that.

Sha'Von Terrell ([23:36](#)):

Growing up, one of my favorite quotes was, if you don't know your history, you are doomed to repeat it and that's just so relevant.

Ariel Mejia ([23:48](#)):

I think it's really relevant now, especially with the protesting and the whole police brutality, it's just like history repeating itself in a way. I think that's really important to study your history and stuff.

Abel Gomez ([24:08](#)):

Just to share a really short story with you, Sha'Von. One of the first people we interviewed from a tribe called the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band which is in the Santa Cruz/San Juan Bautista area. One of the people on the organization board mentioned a story about how in the 1920s, one of her ancestors was interviewed by this linguist and that this elder had the foresight that at some point the stories are going to be needed to be preserved. This white guy, John Peabody Harrington, recorded like thousands and thousands and thousands of notes on her language and then more than 70 plus years later, after she was gone those documents are what these tribal members are using to bring back their songs, their stories, their environmental knowledge, their plant knowledge, and just thinking about all of these ancestors that thought ahead about what their descendants would need.

Sha'Von Terrell ([25:14](#)):

First of all, I love that story because when I was studying African-American studies, one of my pushback for the theoretical underpinnings of the program, was how history is defined. In a certain time period, I think it was antiquity, history was defined by what was written down. If you didn't have anything written down, therefore you had no history, you had no culture. I'm like, no. It is relative to that culture because, like the example you gave me, at first stories were passed down from person to person and that's how those stories were kept in that generation until someone said you need to record this. I think that's the complexity of different cultures in society is knowing the person to talk to within that community to get that information. I think that goes back into the conversation of really studying the culture and really studying the history of that area because just because something isn't in a book, doesn't necessarily mean it didn't happen or don't necessarily mean that they didn't think about it because someone did and there's a story to support that within someone's brain.

Ariel Mejia ([27:01](#)):

Yeah. In my African studies classes, we talk a lot about this, about how a lot of colonizers would come to African and be like, where's your history books? Show me your history. Their way of history is oral history. Instead, they would just rewrite their history for them. It was just really interesting that you brought up that point about history.

Sha'Von Terrell ([27:30](#)):

[inaudible 00:27:30] food, especially with culturally appropriate food. So many food charity organizations come in and say, I got this food box. In this food box we have broccoli. We have Swiss chard. We have arugula. We have some other type of greens that you all don't eat, but here because you all are food insecurity. I want to give this box to you. Without having those conversations around culture, like what food is culturally appropriate at this time for you and how can we work in partnership to make sure that you have what you need.

Sha'Von Terrell ([28:10](#)):

I just like the colonizer mentality as it relates to food access because people want to come into communities, low-income, black communities and save the day. What we don't need is anyone to say today what we need is access to those resources to really change the material conditions of our community. That's what the mission of the Black Church Food Security Network. That's what we're seeking to do because we firmly believe that we have everything that we need in order to change the material conditions of our community. We can say, no colonizing, no food charity folks. Instead, let us work together. Let us put all of our resources and assets in a pot. Let us have these deep conversations to create those sustainable institutions and infrastructure around food security.

Sha'Von Terrell ([29:13](#)):

That's why much of our work is rooted within the black church. The black church was founded towards the end of slavery. The first church as the AME church and what churches used to do before they were named churches, they were called hush harbors. Churches acted as hush harbors to serve as safe spaces, safe houses for enslaved Africans in their pursuit to freedom. Churches have always been as an anchor and a resource and a place of safety within the black community to really provide whatever that need was at the time.

Sha'Von Terrell ([30:09](#)):

I graduated from two HBCUs and both of the HBCUs that I graduated from, Tuskegee University and Morgan State University. Both have roots within a black church. Tuskegee University was founded in 1881. Booker T. Washington came down from Hampton, Virginia and he didn't have anywhere to teach the kids or to teach the students. They just had a plot of land. What he did was partner with the local church, Bethel AME, to hold his first classes within that church. And while the students who weren't in class were building the bricks, making the bricks to build the buildings on campus. Morgan State University was actually founded at a church in Westport, Baltimore.

Sha'Von Terrell ([31:03](#)):

We look at churches as being organized resources, organized assets, and organized people that can support and organize the black community.

Abel Gomez ([31:19](#)):

It seems like if I'm understanding you correctly, the work that you're doing is also then radically re-conceptualizing, rethinking what relief, restoration work is and is not seeking to reproduce a model where outsiders are saying, here I'm going to give you all these things, and have no relationship or any conversation, but instead thinking within our communities, what are the resources that we have and we know most what we need to address. Let us pool our resources together and re-envision a way in which we can serve our own people.

Sha'Von Terrell ([32:01](#)):

Yes. And I just love your summaries. They're so beautiful and you've actually got me thinking about this graphic that I always show in my presentation. The graphic is a graphic that illustrates... It's two illustrations. It shows three little boys all standing on even playing fields trying to reach an apple. Under that illustration is the text equality. Then, there's another graphic which shows the shortest boy, a boy that's a little bit taller, and then the tallest. Then, what they have under them is boxes. The shortest boy had the tallest box. Now, because of that box, he is able to reach his food. The boy at middle height, he had the box that's a little bit shorter than the shortest boy so now he's able to reach the apples. The tallest boy, he doesn't have a box because he is able to reach the apple. Under that illustration is the text equity.

Sha'Von Terrell ([33:10](#)):

What food sovereignty seeks to do, the theoretical underpinning of the Black Church Food Security Network is food sovereignty and what food sovereignty seeks to do is ask questions to those boys, do you all even eat apples? Like, who put this apple tree here? Did the community ask for this apple tree? Also, do you all want grapes? Is grapes a part of your culture? So, this community is actually located in Maryland, so the culture here isn't really conducive to growing apple trees. Can we grow pawpaw trees? Food sovereignty is creating those food-related initiatives that is rooted within the culture of that community and allowing the community to define its own food initiative and food system.

Ariel Mejia ([34:27](#)):

I like that story.

Sha'Von Terrell ([34:30](#)):

Yes. I can see. Can I send you all the graphic so you can add it as a...



Abel Gomez ([34:34](#)):

Oh, yeah. That'd be awesome.

Sha'Von Terrell ([34:36](#)):

Okay.

Abel Gomez ([34:38](#)):

You talked a little bit about this a while ago. You mentioned starting a seed bank, kind of in the wake of the Coronavirus and I'm wondering if there are any other specific ways that the organization has shifted to address some of the specific issues with the virus.

Sha'Von Terrell ([35:02](#)):

That's a great question. In addition to us starting a seed bank we are doing two more things. We are in the middle of the Faith, Food, and Freedom Summer. We are calling all churches to connect back to agriculture by doing three things: to promote gardening, patronize black farmers, and practice emergency food storage. We are calling churches to promote gardening because, like I mentioned before, a lot of churches have the land to grow the food to sell their food or give their food away to the local community.

Sha'Von Terrell ([35:46](#)):

We are calling them to patronize black farmers so we can keep our black farms in business as well as we can support local means to procure in their securing food during this time. Our last one is to practice emergency food storage because as we see in a lot of parts in America that it looks like the second wave of COVID is gearing up now, sooner rather than later, before we expected because we expected the fall. It seems like there are increases now and to the rate at which people are being affected by COVID.

Sha'Von Terrell ([36:28](#)):

So, emergency food preparedness is we are calling people to start canning to start preserving their food while we still have the opportunity to grow fresh food because in the winter time in Maryland, we won't be able to grow our food if the grocery store shelves get empty again. We won't be able to grow our food if the dollar store shelves are empty again. We've got to make sure that we are in the position of looking forward and preparing for the winter time while we still have the produce ready now we are encouraging people to start preserving their food by making, for example, turning cucumbers into pickles, turning tomatoes into tomato soup, turning peaches and other fruits into jams and jellies.

Sha'Von Terrell ([37:21](#)):

We had a DIY series, a do-it-yourself series, where we taught our community, and it's on YouTube, the Black Church Food Security Network, where we taught our communities how to start seeds inside, how to start a community garden, how to regrow commonly purchased items from the grocery store at home such as potatoes, onions, celery, different types of herbs. How to regrow all of those items at home. At the end of the month we're going to launch a food preservation class where we will teach people how to preserve food at home with the tools that are in your kitchen right now. We aren't people to go and buy these extra canning sets and all of these extra things. We are working with what we have because what we have is enough.

Abel Gomez ([38:21](#)):

So, there's a way in which, not only is this organization working to bring people food and make it accessible, support black farmers, but then there's also this educational component as well.

Sha'Von Terrell ([38:35](#)):

Yes, and that's so important because, again, listen to our ancestors and studying our history. That is what we did as a culture. I have memories of grandma every summer when the peaches became ready on the peach tree, she would go out there and pick those peaches and go in the house and then start canning. I remember going to her house and just having cans and cans or jars and jars of peach preserves. So, we are getting back to what our grandparents used to do and what our great-great-grandparents used to do.

Sha'Von Terrell ([39:19](#)):

COVID is allowing us to do some introspective work where we are focused on what we know, what we were taught, and focus on what's ingrained in our DNA. I think culture and society and grind culture and capitalism has pushed us away from our roots. This moment is really causing us and encouraging us to connect back with what is true to us, what feels good with us as well as reaching back out to our grandparents again. Asking them about their childhood. Asking them what did they do back in the day when you had a cold. Getting back to those remedies now and growing it and continuing their legacy through food preservation and gardening.

Sha'Von Terrell ([40:32](#)):

I forgot to mention. Our third we're doing right is the BCSA and that's Black Church Supported Agriculture. We are starting a CSA where we are securing produce from farmers in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland and we are selling that produce to churches who have food distribution programs now. A lot of churches have started food pantries and other food distribution programs to make sure that they are feeding their community. In the spirit of equity and agency and sovereignty, we want to make sure that black farmers have a market where we are continuing the cycle of self-sufficiency with securing and distributing our food to black communities.

Ariel Mejia ([41:39](#)):

Right now I'm just thinking about the whole ancestor thing, like getting back to the roots and whatnot that our ancestors used to do.

Sha'Von Terrell ([41:55](#)):

I can definitely recommend a book because I am doing a lot of deep study around this too and this book is called, "Working The Roots," if you all are interested in it. There are so many different remedies in here, stories about how different salves, tinctures, teas were made from different herbs that you can just find outside right now. This is a really good book to read.

Ariel Mejia ([42:34](#)):

Have you tried to make any of those teas?

Sha'Von Terrell ([42:38](#)):

Yes. Can I show you all?

Abel Gomez ([42:42](#)):

Yes. Of course.

Sha'Von Terrell ([42:42](#)):

Let me show you what I did. We have a garden at the church that I'm a member of, Pleasant Hope Baptist Church, and that is actually the founding church of the Black Church Food Security Network. Reverend Dr. Heber Brown is the pastor of Pleasant Hope Baptist Church and he is the executive director of the Black Church Food Security Network. At our garden at this church, we grew holy basil and holy basil is called holy basil because it's good for everything, you all. This thing is like a super herb. It's good for headaches. It's an immune booster. Hold on, I've got to look because you all put me on the spot. I'm studying my herbs now so I don't know everything on the fly.

Sha'Von Terrell ([43:47](#)):

It's good for anxiety, mood disorders, stress, sleep issues, poor memory, mental clarity, diabetes. It protects from toxic effects of heavy metals. This thing is so cool. I can share this document if you're also interested in herbs.

Abel Gomez ([44:12](#)):

Yeah. Definitely.

Sha'Von Terrell ([44:12](#)):

Yes. I'm making a tincture. I actually have to shake it up every day. It's mixed with glycerin. It's mixed with glycerin and it's supposed to sit in this jar for six weeks and then after six weeks I will be able make a tincture and then it will act as a supplement where I can take it every day. This weekend, I actually made some elderberry syrup. We have elderberries at our church now, but these elderberries weren't from this church because the elderberries from the church aren't ready. Elderberries, like this is a natural cough syrup and you can take this as a supplement too and it tastes really good because there's ginger mixed with this and cinnamon and licorice.

Sha'Von Terrell ([44:56](#)):

What I've been trying to get to know more is herbalism and different herbalism recipes because one of the realizations that I just had is just like, wow, the earth produces everything that we need and that's so beautiful. That is so beautiful to me. I want to do more exploring in herbalism and medicinal herbs.

Abel Gomez ([45:27](#)):

Super fascinating. I, earlier this summer, did a seven-week online class on curanderismo which is Mexican/Mexican-American herbal healing. One of my big takeaways was the practice of doing banos or baths and they said these are all the different ways you can do it, but in particular for people who have dealt with trauma, you can create these baths to give to your loved ones. You're not using any chemicals. It's all natural and then teacher was like, and look at what's growing in your neighborhood. Look at what's growing in your backyard. Get to know those plants and you can make these baths. These are just growing around you.

Sha'Von Terrell ([46:19](#)):

Yes. I'm interested also in foraging because foraging will equip you with the skills to identify plants that surround you because a lot of the stuff we need grows wild. I just learned about this plantain plant. If you ever into poison ivy, you'll be able to rub the plant and then the oils that come from it you'll be able to put on your poison ivy because it helps with irritations. It's really cool to me. So, if you have any notes from that class, I would love to see them.

Abel Gomez ([46:56](#)):

Yeah. Totally. I'm even thinking right now one of the plants that I'm really interested in is yarrow for whatever reason. From what I understand, one of the things you can do with yarrow that grows very plentiful in the area of San Francisco that I live in, is that if you have some kind of infection, what you do is you just pick some of the flower, you chew it up, and you put it on that part of the body that has the infection and the way that it works is it draws out those infections.

Sha'Von Terrell ([47:29](#)):

That's so cool. Wait, yarrow is the common name for a marshmallow plant.

Abel Gomez ([47:38](#)):

No. This is a different... I'll send you... see if I can. Here we go. Well, it's Wikipedia, which is not always the most reliable. This is the one I'm talking about.

Sha'Von Terrell ([48:04](#)):

Oh. I saw this somewhere. I'm going to order it.

Abel Gomez ([48:10](#)):

Okay.

Sha'Von Terrell ([48:11](#)):

I'm going to try it because this is so cool to me.

Abel Gomez ([48:13](#)):

And I think that there are a number of different species, but I think that the white yarrow is the one that is the native yarrow of this territory.

Sha'Von Terrell ([48:28](#)):

That's so cool. And you can make tea out of it. Well, that's what Google said. I'm going to have to do my research. Of course, everything is on Google now. Yeah. That's so cool. Let me save it.

Sha'Von Terrell ([48:46](#)):

I just dropped a couple of links to making tinctures.

Abel Gomez ([48:52](#)):

Thank you.

Sha'Von Terrell ([48:53](#)):

Making oils. They're super easy too. I haven't tried to make an oil yet, but it seems pretty easy. And then just the different benefits of herbs.

Abel Gomez ([49:07](#)):

Now I'm going to toss it over to you, Ariel, if you have a question.

Ariel Mejia ([49:13](#)):

I just have a comment. I think all this stuff's cool, all this herbalism. I never thought much of it, but now I'm like wow, I want to try this stuff out. It seems really cool. Have you made anything else besides that yet?

Sha'Von Terrell ([49:32](#)):

The garden manager at Pleasant Hope is actually an herbalist so we actually made some tinctures. He walked me through the process of making tinctures. So, I made tinctures with him with holy basil and lemon balm. I also made sea moss gel for the first time. There are so many benefits of sea moss gel. Hold on, let me get the link. I just bought this because everybody said it was good for you. I was like let me just try it. Some of the benefits of sea moss gel is that it helps with congestion and it has antiviral agents in it. I made just a regular one. You can Google sea moss. It's really easy to make because the only thing I had to do is put it in a blender with like a cup and a half of water. It has no taste, so it's tasteless. I made two different jars of it.

Sha'Von Terrell ([50:47](#)):

For the second jar, I put mango in it. I'm going to let people sample it so I can get some raw feedback to see how they like it. This moment is really causing me to be more deliberate about what I consume because food is medicine. Food has healing properties in it. Everything that you eat has some type of healing property or if it's processed, it doesn't though. It's really causing me to be more deliberate. It's cool.

Abel Gomez ([51:25](#)):

I feel like I could easily talk with you for hours and hours about all this stuff. It's so fascinating.

Abel Gomez ([51:31](#)):

Just shifting gears just a little bit, could you talk about the ways that the virus has affected the organization and the members?

Sha'Von Terrell ([51:43](#)):

One of our goals for the Faith, Food, and Freedom summer campaign is to also recruit 100 churches to join our network. We are a membership organization. Before COVID we probably had 20 member churches from different parts of the US, from Ohio to Maryland to Virginia to North Carolina. Due to COVID our organization has grown dramatically. We have churches now in Georgia, Florida, New York, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, and a couple other places that I'm forgetting about. Indiana, Michigan.

Sha'Von Terrell ([52:35](#)):

We are growing because a lot of churches now, this moment has really cleaned the glasses that people are wearing. At first everybody was wearing these glasses that had been a little dusty. COVID-19 is

This transcript was exported on Apr 20, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

making reality plain for a lot of people and showing people that communities or people in general are vulnerable as a result of COVID-19. A lot of people want to put themselves in the position of being of service to their community. A lot of churches now are really thinking about what the role of the church is during this time. How can the church be of service? How can we do the mission that God has called us to do? How can we steward the resources that God has blessed us with.

Sha'Von Terrell ([53:33](#)):

A lot of churches are asking those questions and it's leading them to think more through the social justice lens of if there is another crisis, and there will be another crisis with climate change... I always say that there will be another crisis, because climate change disproportionately affects low-income and black communities, when there is another crisis, another flood, another tornado, then how can we be prepared to address those needs as they come because other crises will emerge and other crises will happen.

Abel Gomez ([54:23](#)):

I want to respect your time. I think that we have gone on an hour so I'm going to stop it there for today. We'll stop it here.