

INSIGHT 04

POWER AND GATEKEEPING TACTICS THAT IMPEDE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR NEED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND ADDRESSED.

This leading insight most aligned with our codes of racial equity, white supremacy, and power. As expected, these concepts varied across the identity conversations.

Participants within the white group had the most contributions to this insight. They discussed having to grapple with race through self-reflection. Some white people strongly acknowledged the importance of collaborating with BIPOC communities to create changes in the food system.

However, the response to this acknowledgement was not consistent. Some white participants wanted to have BIPOC voices lead the change, with white people in the background to support and provide space. Other participants expressed apprehension with addressing power dynamics. They suggested white people and BIPOC people working together to innovate for the future.

There were many areas of discussion around power and gatekeeping within the BIPOC and Latino groups. Structural racism, unequal access to funding, culturally appropriate food, and the desire to maintain self sufficiency were issues that came up the most. The Latino group discussed gaining voice and power through representation, such as community educators and policy advocates.

It is important to note that some participants in the Latino identity conversations were white people working alongside and/or serving Latino communities. To create contrast between the groups, we made two separate breakout rooms. One for people who specifically represented the Latino community and one for individuals who worked with or served the Latino community.

“Black people look out at the woods and we see our people hanging, White people look out and see possibilities for making money and connecting with the land.”

- BIPOC

The BIPOC conversations discussed how historical oppression has caused **pain** and trauma within the Black community towards agriculture. These participants noted that the current agricultural system is built upon white supremacy. Land ownership creates a wealth gap between white and Black people. Black farmers now rent land from white people that was previously Black-owned.

Although the discussions of power and gatekeeping were predominantly within the white, BIPOC, and Latino conversations, this topic was brought up in the rural communities' conversations as well. One participant expressed their association between the term “rural” and structural racism due to the limited opportunities available to those who live in rural communities.

Calls to Action:

- Leaders across the food system should build power analysis into their work as a decision making tool. The power analysis tool helps create a common language and understanding amongst your community so you can work together effectively.
- Understanding power dynamics helps you make strategic decisions about which actions to take. Taking a step back and thinking strategically about collective power is one way we can begin to make necessary changes.
- People of color need to have space in roles of leadership and influence within their communities and at the local, state, and federal government levels. To create this room for opportunity, white people must step down from some seats of power.
- Shifting power isn't a binary system. One can both shift power without being powerless, just as someone can gain power while still experiencing oppression.
- Emotional fortitude (see insight 1) is necessary to reconcile feelings within white identity conversations about white folks stepping away from the table versus white folks working alongside folks of color.

“If we’re going to vision how to do this differently, a group of privileged White people can’t do the visioning. That’s the real value of caucusing...maybe. Build multi-racial coalitions that build trust and be truthful about shifting power and resources to move into a system that we want. We have to grapple with race, and in order to do that we have to caucus.”

- WHITE

