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THE BAKE SALE: FUNDRAISING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Fine Arts

Degree

The University of Mississippi

Kelly Spivey

August 2021

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ABSTRACT

Bake sales have recently come to the forefront of our consciousness as a method of fundraising for social justice but the practice's history reaches back to the 18th century. A readily available tool for women, baking was put to work to raise money for voting rights in the early 20th century. Less than fifty years later, bake sales appeared as a key fundraising tool for the civil rights movement. The reappearance of bake sales today stems from several factors, including the presidential election of Donald Trump in 2016, the appearance of COVID-19 in the United States in early 2020, and the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

The audio documentary produced in conjunction with this research gives a voice to the bakers who have participated in these fundraisers, all of whom are in the U.S. South. This thesis will contextualize these 21st century bake sales within the historical counterparts of the women's suffrage and civil rights movements while also looking at the role of social media and digital activism. By placing bake sales in a larger context, it becomes clear that their success lies not in the money accrued, but in the connections that are made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

...[R]adio is like food. You spend hours, days, months gathering the ingredients, cutting, and mixing - making it cook. The minute it hits the air / table, it's gone - transformed by being eaten, by being heard. Hopefully it was good, and the memory of it lingers. Hopefully like a good meal, it gathered people together in some way - opened up the senses, sparked emotion and conversation.

-Davia Nelson

My deepest gratitude to Arley Bell, Jonni Scott, and Sarah O'Brien for sharing their experience with me and leaving me more inspired than when I arrived.

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CHAPTER ONE
“I CAN’T BREATHE”

“I can’t breathe.”

“No justice, no peace.”

These aren’t refrains we typically associate with bake sales, but in the summer of 2020, they reverberated in cities across the country and throughout the world. Multiple factors combined to bring about this moment. The pandemic restricted movement and employment; social media facilitated communication. The murder of Black men and women by the police was caught on shaky cell phone footage and shared with a public that had nowhere else to look. Covid-19 effectively locked people in their homes and inevitably to their phones and televisions. There was nowhere else to look and nothing to distract us when, on May 25, 2020, police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd’s neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds, ending Floyd’s life. In the city known for Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, I watched from my balcony as protesters marched through the streets, made even more sobering *because* a global pandemic could not stop it. A sea of people marched towards the Mississippi River with signs and megaphones, screaming through makeshift masks. I took out my phone and started recording.

Just over one week later on June 4, pastry chefs Willa Pellini and Paola Velez joined with chef Rob Rubba to announce an online bake sale under the banner Bakers Against Racism.¹ The request was for bakers nationwide to donate 150 pieces of a dessert by holding a bake sale benefitting their own local organizations. The response was overwhelming. Less than a week following the announcement, the group had “. . . 2,400 participants, [from] 42 states, over 170 U.S. cities & 15 countries.”² Following the success of Bakers Against Racism, other groups started holding their own bake sales using the same format. These social media driven events benefitted national organizations like Black Lives Matter along with smaller, local organizations. Loosely organized, individual bakers were responsible for making the desserts, coordinating payment and delivery, and donating the money received to the organization of their choice.

The response from cities across the country made me wonder what kind of mobilization was happening in the South. Scrolling through the local chapters of Bakers Against Racism on Instagram, only a couple of metropolitan southern cities. Arley Bell, a baker who I spoke with from Richmond, Virginia was quick to point out that “[t]here’s a good chance there are people that are doing this work that don’t necessarily have that label [Bakers Against Racism] or are under that umbrella.”³ History supports Arley’s observation. Food has a long relationship with activism, but the two movements that have the most similarity with the bake sale fundraisers

¹ Though decentralized, Bakers Against Racism is recognized as a loose collective of bakers around the world. The phrase often refers to the group started by Paola Velez, Willa Pellini, and Rob Rubba. Throughout this paper, the phrase “Bakers Against Racism” will be used more broadly, referencing any person or organization who is baking to benefit social justice organizations. Other groups, like Bakers for Change also embody these grassroots fundraising efforts.

² “BAKERS,” n.p.

³ Bell, (November 2020).

happening today are the Civil Rights movement and the women's suffrage movement. Looking at these movements alongside the historical relationship of food to social justice helps explain why bake sales continue to persevere as fundraisers. Though the success of a bake sale is often measured in dollars, other barometers of success include the ability to mobilize individuals within a community and create emotional and meaningful connections.

Beyond these themes of historical importance was the relationship to social media, digital activism, and performativity. Social media was already well embedded into society before the pandemic, but once cities began locking down, many began using it as a line to the outside world. Bakes sales were advertised in Instagram posts and stories; cakes with messages like "Black Lives Matter" appeared in droves. We were all isolated from one another, and bake sales felt like a community activity. Some sociologists ". . . argue that the merging of politics and consumption has the potential to inspire solidarity and common purpose, empower individuals in the market, offer people an easy and enjoyable way to enact their civic duties, and conform to the norms and realities of a postmodern, rights-oriented society."⁴ Platforms like Instagram facilitate both advertising and education simply by clicking a link. As much accountability as it purports to offer, it also provides a space for virtue signaling and a need for increased transparency.

To explore these themes, I decided to interview three bakers living and working in the U.S. South and weave their stories together in a short audio documentary. The documentary itself is a broad overview of bake sales and their role in funding social justice organizations. The structure of this paper will follow the same line of questions I have had while making this audio documentary. Chapter Two will focus on the relationship of food and activism and ground the

⁴ Atkinson, 192.

contemporary practice of bake sales within the history of the women's suffrage and Civil Rights movements. Chapter Three will focus on the role of social media, digital activism, and performativity. Looking at the role of social media exposes some of the roadblocks that may exist when attempting to democratize fundraising efforts. Chapter Four, "Listening is a Process," will detail the creation of "The Bake Sale," audio documentary, discussing the importance of sound alongside artistic influences. As part of this project, I hosted a bake sale fundraiser in conjunction with my artist talk. My experience organizing this bake sale will be covered in Chapter Five. In the final chapter, I will reflect on my fieldwork and experience producing this piece and discuss the future of this project.

Positionality and Choice

Before I begin, I think it is important to acknowledge a few things up front. For ten years, I was a pastry chef. I have worked in everything from chocolate shops, to bakeries, to award winning fine-dining restaurants. It's all hard - physically and mentally. More important than understanding the difficulty of taking on this type of work, I understood deeply how undervalued it is. Every pastry chef or baker has had to dumb down a recipe so any cook on the line could replicate it. Plenty more have simply had their departments cut entirely. Sometimes it can feel like a part of being a pastry chef or baker is constantly justifying your presence. Paola Velez, one of the founders of Bakers Against Racism, says as much:

Usually, the baker community is not regarded as anything of importance. We're the first program to get cut from a restaurant. Even some executive pastry chefs aren't seen as equals to executive chefs, while we probably have the same — or more — tech skill. So to see this movement come from the least of those is

powerful.⁵

Bakers that have worked in hospitality for any length of time are used to fighting – for their programs, for their ideas, and for more resources. This mindset lends itself to the importance of funding social justice movements, while the organizational skills bakers possess makes these fundraising efforts successful.

While I have these similarities with the three women I chose to speak to, I am also a white woman interpreting the words of two Black women. When I set out to document the social justice bake sales of 2020, I already had a wide network of pastry friends who were doing similar work. I was also very conscious of the history that “well-meaning white women” have in the world of philanthropy and fundraising. When discussing the historic relationship between women and philanthropy, Christine Stansell points to a penchant for sentimentalism on behalf of 18th and 19th century reformists which did “. . . little to promote understanding across class lines. . . [and] reinforced the categories of worthy / unworthy. . .”⁶ This imbalance is still clear today. When I spoke with Arley in June 2021, she made it clear that “. . . white people working for a nonprofit in an urban setting are like saints. Even though there are plenty of people of color who do that. . . that whole phenomenon has been very frustrating to me for a long time.”⁷ In pursuing this work, I wanted to actually hear what raising money for Black Lives Matter meant to Black women.

I centered my narrative in the South, seeking to understand how the history of civil rights abuses might affect the presence and success of bake sales. More than any other region, women

⁵ Pirnia, n.p.

⁶ Stansell, 72-73.

⁷ Bell, (June 2021).

in the South are associated with cooking and baking more specifically. Placing the gendered ideas surrounding baking in relief with its historical role of funding social justice movements created an interesting story. Two of the three bakers I spoke with had been doing this type of work for several years before Bakers Against Racism was formed, suggesting that the South might be less visible in these efforts but was certainly not less active. Rather than showing an exceptional South, this project adds to the growing body of literature that suggests the South - while a region with its own characteristics - is connected to the rest of the nation and the world.

CHAPTER TWO

“I CAN KEEP BAKING AND I CAN ORGANIZE”

Baking is a skill that has historically belonged to and been associated with women. Intimately tied to this association is the idea that women - white women in particular - were moral guideposts for the community. Baking was a socially acceptable method of fundraising that could travel outside the household sphere in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Primarily associated with benevolent societies and churches, bake sales became a regular component of women-led fundraising efforts. As Sarah O’Brien observed, “I’m not a politician. I’m not going to influence policy necessarily, but what I can do is bake. I can bake and I can keep baking and I can organize and then that can make a real difference. . .”⁸ Baking has a legacy rooted in social change.

The first print reference to a bake sale can be found in a 1902 edition of the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, though it is almost certain that selling baked goods to fundraise pre-dates this first mention.⁹ Documentation of this type of fundraising is sparse for a variety of reasons. As archival studies have evolved, it has become clear that archives are not objective and privilege those with access and power. This results in a lack of primary sources from people of color,

⁸ O’Brien, June 10, 2021.

⁹ “Bake Sales,” n.p.

women, and the LGBTQ+ community - groups that most often participate in social justice movements. While there may be information about a particular movement's members, achievements, and meeting minutes, it can be more difficult to find an accounting of lower-level fundraising efforts, such as bake sales. Close readings of sources are required to find mention of baking at all, much less as a source of fundraising; bake sales exist in the gray area between informal and consumerist economies. The goods sold, their cost, and the distribution of profits are rarely catalogued. Despite this lack of historical documentation, what *is* available in the archive makes it clear that selling food (and particularly baked goods) has been a means of fundraising for social justice for over a century. Wherever the first bake sale occurred, it was likely conducted under the auspices of philanthropy.

The recent wave of bake sales aimed towards fundraising for social justice are an extension of this long tradition. To place the bake sales of 2020 in an historical context, we must look at similar efforts to raise money for social justice. Understanding today's bake sale fundraising in context creates space to consider the newer components of digital activism and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in shaping this practice. First, this chapter will look at the relationship of food to activism, addressing the role bake sales play as an intermediary between consumer activism and philanthropic work. To illustrate this relationship, the women's suffrage movement and the civil rights movement will serve as two examples that show the potential sustainability of bake sales as a fundraising practice.

Food and Activism

Food has appeared in social justice movements since the mid 17th century. As sociologist Joshua Sbicca observes, “[t]here is a long social movement of activism that uses food and hunger

to push for progressive social change.”¹⁰ This brief overview is focused on the movements that closely resemble Bakers Against Racism— movements that used bake sales to fund larger causes. Though a large part of food activism has been aimed at structural and systemic inequalities in the food system itself, bake sales use food as a tool for change rather than the subject of change itself. This practice hinges on “. . .political consumption [which] is directed by motivations expressly linked to collective - rather than solely individual - goals, such as environmental improvement, equality, and social justice.”¹¹ Bake sales rely on the effect individual consumption can make on the larger collective.

Beyond collectivity, bake sales evoke emotion and nostalgia. Philosopher Kate Soper developed the concept of the alternative hedonist as someone for whom the “. . . decision to consume differently is motivated by not only selfish desires. . .but also by the enjoyment to be had in consuming differently.”¹² Rather than the transactional nature of donating money to a social justice organization, bake sales add an element of pleasure. Early in this project, one of the things I grappled with was the practicality of the entire process. It seemed much more straightforward to just donate money rather than spending the money and labor to make something for a bake sale. What I failed to account for was the importance of pleasure and connection during a pandemic. Bake sales represented that feeling of community and normalcy when both were in short supply.

¹⁰ Sbicca, 8.

¹¹ Johnston, 651-652.

¹² Atkinson, 193.

In her work on communication and sustainability, Dr. Lucy Atkinson describes a large part of what makes bake sales successful here:

Consumers engage in hedonistic consumption when they impart subjective meanings to objects and incorporate emotion into their consumer practices. This emotional aspect muddies the simple cost-benefit analysis that rationalizing consumers are assumed to make but also explains why consumers will make decisions that are not always the easiest or most cost-effective. ‘There are contexts in which emotions such as love, hate or jealousy will override consumers economic decision rules based on deductive reasoning.’¹³

If for no other reason than the way they make us feel, bake sales have longevity. Atkinson’s observations clarify why practicality is not always the most important element in fundraising.

The nostalgic element that bake sales provide gives individuals a neutral ground that can

. . . pull a community together and get neighbors who might otherwise pass each other in the street to start talking about all kinds of things, including how they can improve their world, starting with their neighborhoods and spreading out to local government and beyond.¹⁴

Here, bake sales facilitate dialogue, but they can also become a place to perform an aspirational narrative in which participants “. . . ‘can gain proof of the importance of their aspirations, feel as if they have the capacity to contribute to change and claim a new kind of identity for

¹³ Atkinson, 203.

¹⁴ Gardner, 101.

themselves.”¹⁵ By purchasing something from a bake sale, we have the opportunity to perform our values and even change who we imagine ourselves to be.

Suffrage and Civil Rights

The intimate relationship food has had with philanthropy is clear when looking at the women’s suffrage movement and the civil rights movement. An organized movement for women’s suffrage began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 and as with any other movement lobbying for a change in policy, fundraising was necessary to achieve their goals. Though women raised money in a variety of ways, selling food was a common method of fundraising. Women took a skill that did not intrinsically have economic value and converted it into funds which could then be used to support a variety of causes.¹⁶ Fundraising could take on many forms but most often relied on the “natural” skills women possessed to “. . .turn their ‘specialty into money’ by baking, pickling, and sewing.”¹⁷ Beyond publishing cookbooks, suffragists organized bake sales. “Newspapers described suffrage bake sales and food carts, laden with cakes and gingerbread ‘daintily iced and decorated,’ as evidence of ‘what good housewives they are.’ When breads, doughnuts, pies, and cakes sold out within an hour, the *Oneonta Star* reported, ‘the suffragists can cook.’”¹⁸ Another paper, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported: “Scores of North Side suffragist housewives are spending today baking cakes, pies,

¹⁵ Atkinson, 198.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu discusses this concept of cultural capital in detail in “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction,” (1977) and “The Forms of Capital” (1985). Skills that are learned as a result of habitus may be utilized in certain fields to achieve economic gains.

¹⁷ Derleth, 462.

¹⁸ Derleth, 465.

bread, cookies and other delicacies for [the] suffragist cake sale. . .”¹⁹ The ability to bake became an entry point for suffrage fundraising, something in which most women were able to participate.

Developing alongside the movement for women’s suffrage, was the long movement for civil rights. Before she was elected as the eighth president of the National Association of Colored Women, Mary McLeod Bethune focused her efforts on education and equality. “In 1904, Bethune founded a school in Daytona, Florida, for African American girls; she and her students baked pies to gain the financial resources for the school. . .” The school Bethune founded would eventually go on to become Bethune-Cookman College in 1931.²⁰ Bethune used baking to leverage skills that could directly benefit the education of the Black population.

Like Bethune, Georgia Gilmore leveraged her cooking ability. Gilmore’s name has become synonymous with fundraising for social justice with The Club from Nowhere. A cook at the National Lunch Company, Gilmore was fired for supporting the Montgomery Bus Boycott. She then used her skills to sustain the boycott by joining with other women and cooking for the movement. As Marcie Cohen Ferris observes, “[t]he working class [B]lack women ‘from nowhere’ raised funds to support the carpools by selling homemade pies and cakes at local beauty parlors, laundromats, and gas stations.”²¹ The “. . . pie and cake money bought station wagons used in the boycott carpools”²² and sustained the boycott long enough for it to become a

¹⁹ “Women are Busy Baking English Suffrage Rocks,” 16.

²⁰ “Mary McLeod Bethune,” n.p.

²¹ Ferris, 250.

²² Ferris, 250.

successful move in the fight for equality. Selling baked goods as a method of fundraising also created a space in which “[p]rogressive white Montgomery could support the cause, too, sidestepping the rebuke of conservative friends and neighbors by purchasing cakes and pies instead of making outright donations.”²³

Understanding the role of food in activism helps give bake sales a place in the history of social movements. Rather than focusing on the food system as a point of change, bake sales use food as a tool that can help facilitate dialogue. Historically, using bake sales as a method of fundraising has been a way for women to be involved in social movements when few other doors were open to them. Part of what makes them effective is the relationship bake sales have to emotion and nostalgia. Sarah felt that familiarity was part of what made them something people wanted to participate in: “. . .it’s just a format that people understand. Bake sales have a spot in our national conversation, or psyche, where we know what that is.”²⁴ Cassidy McLean, a home baker in Atlanta I interviewed early in the project summed it up here: “It’s one thing to just Venmo a solidarity fund \$15, but it’s more fun when you get something out of it. Like when you get a batch of cookies.”²⁵ Giving money directly to an organization is certainly easier but bake sales play on our desire for connection.

²³ Edge, 17.

²⁴ O’Brien, n.p.

²⁵ McLean, n.p.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

As 2020 wore on Covid-19 showed no signs of relenting, making social distancing and quarantine regular parts of daily life. Social media became the rallying point for bakers around the world to organize virtual bake sales. Sites like Instagram made social action possible under difficult odds by expanding networks and facilitating fundraising efforts. Despite the overwhelmingly positive impact, using social media as a fundraising tool has its own problems. While values can be translated, actions can also be interpreted as superficial, making transparency and accountability priorities. Sarah O'Brien sums it up:

Being vocal about that [causes they support] and being transparent helps keep us accountable to our ideals. I'm not a great lover of Instagram but...it has given us an audience to be accountable to. I'm not interested in virtue signaling, but I am interested in saying 'we're doing this thing. Do you want to help?'.²⁶

Because of the integral role social media has played in these bake sales, it is important to understand how digital activism functions in relation to fundraising. This chapter will give a brief overview of digital activism and specifically address how social media plays a part in the democratization of fundraising, transparency, and accountability.

²⁶ O'Brien, (June 2021)

Digital Activism and the Democratization of Fundraising

While there is debate among scholars about the proper terminology, digital activism typically describes “. . .all instances of social and political campaigning practice that use digital network infrastructure,”²⁷ which includes everything from the internet to social media. Most nonprofit organizations have been utilizing social media, abandoning “. . .the radical techniques of early activism in favor of the more businesslike methods of marketing and media relations. . .”²⁸ In the 21st century, these methods include sites like Instagram, which enable bakers to build social action into their business model. As Dr. Anastasia Kavada notes,

[o]ffering a flexible and decentralized communication infrastructure, the Internet seems to have a special affinity with the looser forms of organizing that characterize social movements. Facilitating rapid and cheap communication across geographical boundaries, the Internet can aid in transforming dissatisfaction to mass collective action quickly and efficiently.²⁹

This decentralized infrastructure was essential during the pandemic. One of the most influential groups to appear following George Floyd’s murder in May 2020 was Bakers Against Racism (BAR). BAR created an internet presence through their website and on Instagram. BAR’s three founders - pastry chef Paola Velez, pastry chef Willa Pelini and chef Rob Rubba - run the sites, acting as a facilitator rather than being a central hub that organizes bake sales, collects and distributes funds. They provide open access to their graphics for anyone who wants

²⁷ Joyce, ix.

²⁸ Sem, 202.

²⁹ Kavada, 101.

to use them and offer a donation tracker that aggregates the amount raised during any given “activation.” The activations themselves are loosely organized bake sales that often direct bakers toward the cause they wish to support. The most recent activation directed bakers “. . .to stand against Asian Hate in conjunction to Black lives.”³⁰ They encourage bakers to use their hashtag, #bakersagainstracism, which has over 19,000 posts at the time of publication. Having the undivided attention of a large population - one that was under lockdown due to a global pandemic - social media became the way people stayed connected. As Dr. Kavada points out,

[t]he capacity for information to spread within existing social networks is crucial for mobilization because people are more prone to read messages from those that they know and trust. They are also more likely to participate in a protest when they know that their friends will also attend.³¹

This is particularly true amid a global pandemic when so much of our communication has been digital.

Though social media has made fundraising more accessible in terms of advertising and finding support in the community, it also has drawbacks. The digital network mimics “. . .the model of media ownership in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. . .[where] the online environments with the highest traffic are owned by a handful of corporations.”³² Because social media functions on followers, those who have the most reach more people. Combining bake

³⁰ Bakers Against Racism, “In Adversity We Bloom,” n.p.

³¹ Kavada, 108.

³² Scholz, 22.

sales with social media helps reshape the power imbalance by levelling the playing field. As Marshall McLuhan observed:

In an electric information environment, minority groups can no longer be contained - ignored. Too many people know too much about each other. Our new environment compels commitment and participation. We have become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other.³³

The downside of using social media for fundraising lies in the digital divide, which “. . .strongly influences digital activism because it tends to limit participation to the economic elite.”³⁴ The involvement of wealthy contributors benefits the movement financially while also raising serious questions about the role of class in this supposedly democratized framework. During the suffrage movement, there was a similar concern “. . .that in trying to appeal to society women, the movement had begun to keep out anyone designated as disreputable. . .”³⁵ It’s too early in the contemporary use of bake sales to see whether or not social media will create similar concerns, but it is certain that the digital divide parallels class divisions.

Values, Virtue Signaling and Transparency

Social media became an important tool for bakers during the pandemic. Not only did it allow them to advertise their bake sales, but it also gave them a captive audience. When speaking with me about the effect the pandemic had on the population’s awareness of social justice issues, Jonni Scott had this to say:

³³ McLuhan, 24.

³⁴ Brodock, 73 - 74.

³⁵ Johnson, 59.

A lot of people were either out of work or working from home, so I feel like they had a lot more time to focus their energy on that [social justice causes]. And also just be more versed in the news and what's going on. I know this year I've been more aware of the news in the country, in the world, than I've been any other year of my life. So I just think that kind of having the world on pause like that and then having all these people of color murdered by the police or murdered on a run in their neighborhood, and the world was just watching. Because we were all just watching and waiting anyways. And then I think a lot of people who might not have been aware, or might not have been aware of the severity of the problem, or just didn't - didn't used to have time to speak up on things. I think that now, that gave them the opportunity to listen and then speak on what they were observing.³⁶

Because gathering in public was not possible, individuals sought ways to create community and work together during a time when isolation fostered feelings of powerlessness.

Having the platform of social media to place values front and center has been a blessing and a curse. Virtue signaling - the performance of one's values rather than their embodiment - aligns with what Trebor Scholz calls "... 'click activism' or 'slacktivism,' a kind of liberal catharsis during lunch break that gives participants the impression that they have done something about the issues when, in fact, their online action had no offline effect at all."³⁷ I struggled with my role in this type of activism during the pandemic. Like other people, I shared information

³⁶ Scott, n.p.

³⁷ Scholz, 27.

about social justice issues on social media but did not hold a bake sale or donate to organizations myself. I didn't march when the protests broke out. I fell squarely into "slacktivism." This type of "click activism" is ". . . a world of total involvement in which everybody is so profoundly involved with everybody else and in which nobody can really imagine what private guilt can be anymore."³⁸ The public performance of guilt as activism makes it difficult to discern which efforts are based in reality and which are aspirational.

Transparency and Accountability

As Sarah mentioned above, Instagram kept her accountable to her followers. Posting fundraisers on Little Tart's account held her to a promise not only to raise money but to donate it to a specific organization. But while Sarah viewed Instagram as a tool for accountability, other bakers questioned the transparency of the groups like Bakers Against Racism. When I spoke with Cassidy McLean about her experience hosting her own bake sale, she had this to say:

With the Bakers Against Racism stuff, I'm not totally sure where the money goes. Or people donating to Black Lives Matter - that's a foundation that isn't as grassroots. I prefer to donate to more local stuff 'cause I think that's where actual change comes from.³⁹

For this baker, local organizations afforded her financial transparency that might not be as easy to come by in a larger, national organization. This leeriness towards larger organizations was echoed by all the bakers. Jonni sums up their feelings here:

³⁸ McLuhan, 62.

³⁹ McLean, n.p.

. . .it took me so long to decide who I wanted to donate to specifically. . . I do think that it is really important to do your research. And I always think that local is better. . .you can actually see your dollars at work there. I looked at all these different organizations. And I was like, I don't even know like, which ones are good. Which ones are corrupt? Which ones are gonna help?⁴⁰

Recently, Bakers Against Racism has posted a reminder that “. . .BAR does not and has never accept[ed] direct donations of any kind.”⁴¹ For their part, Sarah, Arley, and Jonni all donated to local organizations and were able to see the results of their fundraising in their own communities.

The pandemic forced us to rethink how we connect with others. Social media became important insofar as its ability to spread information about social justice causes and fundraising events. Digital activism made it easy to democratize the fundraising process by providing tools to anyone who might want to host a bake sale to raise money for social justice organizations. Despite the reach and possibility social media provided, it also existed within a digital divide that prevented some members of society from participating in a practice which was held almost entirely online. The lack of in-person accountability led to instances of virtue signaling and a need for more transparency, which many bakers met by focusing their efforts on local organizations.

⁴⁰ Scott, n.p.

⁴¹ Bakers Against Racism, “BAKERS! (Gentle PSA),” n.p.

CHAPTER FOUR

LISTENING IS A PROCESS

My first experience conducting oral histories was in 2018, when I was taking a fieldwork class. I learned to log and transcribe the interviews I conducted but more importantly, I got my first taste of how difficult listening can be. I had to completely empty my mind of my own thoughts and anxieties so I could really hear what was being said, and then, at a moment's notice, I had to turn it all back on so I could ask follow up questions. I had to be both empathetic and pointed. It is active listening and the best part about it is realizing that every single person has a story. Oral history embodies curiosity. This chapter looks at the process of telling stories through sound, including production notes and the influence of podcasts.

Aside from listening to people, I was listening to podcasts during my three-hour round-trip commute to the University. I was enthralled with the storytelling and felt like I had company on those long drives. Audio was my constant companion. Even when I was younger, I was one of those kids that made sure my pants pockets were big enough to hold my portable cd player long before we grew accustomed to slipping our phones in our back pocket and putting in a set of earbuds. Two of the podcasts that joined me during that time were *In the Dark* and *The Kitchen Sisters Presents*.

I had already listened to all the seasons of *In the Dark*, an investigative series hosted and narrated by Madeleine Baran, and produced by American Public Media and Samara Freemark.

As I started working on this documentary, I found myself revisiting the series. They structured their stories in a way that maintained my interest. Each episode was roughly 45 minutes and there were around 10 episodes in a season. Although this was investigative journalism, they didn't just present the facts. They put themselves on the same level as the people they spoke with. Their vulnerability stood out every time they included a door that was shut or a refusal to be interviewed. They let me listen in as they did the grunt work - the things behind the scenes that we take for granted. I felt involved and invested in both the story and the process. Their series helped me think of including the audio I had from Zoom not as a disadvantage but as a way to place the listener in time. At this point, most of us have had Zoom meetings and know what they feel and sound like. They were mainstays of the pandemic. Though I didn't have a lot of choice in the matter, their podcast helped me understand the visceral feeling of distance or closeness that audio can reflect. Instead of flinching at the pops and crackles and grain of the voice, we understand it for what it is - a tool of necessity. Initially, I fought this forgiveness - I wanted everything to sound rich and full. Part of the production of the documentary was allowing the process to be a part of the final piece. That sound - the remoteness of it - invoked the pandemic and reminded me of the feeling of connection mixed with isolation. That feeling is one of the reasons these bake sales were able to thrive.

On the other side of the spectrum were *The Kitchen Sisters*, Davia Nelson and Nikki Silva. Their curiosity was audible, and they gave so much space not just to their own interviews but to the archive as well. I got a sense of responsibility to tell the stories of the people they spoke to, an understanding of the importance of letting someone's voice stand on its own. When their voices filled my car, I heard the past and present and how they can relate to one another

through audio alone. Though I chose not to include archival audio in my final piece, the interplay between past and present was still important to me.

I chose sound because, as Marshall McLuhan observes,

We hear sounds from everywhere, without ever having to focus. Sounds come from ‘above,’ from ‘below,’ from in ‘front’ of us, from ‘behind’ us, from our ‘right,’ from our ‘left.’ We can’t shut out sound automatically. We simply are not equipped with earlids. Where a visual space is an organized continuum of a uniformed connected kind, the ear world is a world of simultaneous relationships.⁴²

The “simultaneous relationships” McLuhan described felt familiar, like baking itself. As a pastry chef, I was never just doing one thing at a time - it wasn’t practical. Something might be in the oven baking while something else was on the range simmering, while I was placing orders for the next day and weighing out flour. Sound captured the way it felt to be pulled in different directions yet maintain a steady path forward. It could be both linear and unfixed.

Storytelling

All I really had starting this project was a desire to document. I didn’t know what kind of story I wanted to tell or have the slightest idea what the story was at all. Even now, there are so many different stories I’m unsatisfied having to narrow it down to one. My big question in the beginning was “why now?” It felt like people started baking to raise money for social justice suddenly. I was trying to find the exact thing that finally pushed people to not just speak out but

⁴² McLuhan, 112.

do something. In my limited experience, what I have found is the question you go into the field with often isn't the right one (or the only one). People have always been *doing*, we were just more attuned to it because we had nowhere else to put our attention. My question became less temporal and more substantive. I wanted to know what it meant to bake for a cause and why these bakers were doing it. I also had to find a way to give some context to what these bakers were doing so it might be taken more seriously as part of a long tradition rather than just a flash in the pan.

The process of putting the story together was lengthy. I listened to and logged all of my interviews, then I listened to them again. I pulled out quotes that felt important and printed them out. Cutting out all the quotes, I organized them into thematic piles, which were designated with a post-it note. Every post-it note went on my wall and I taped the related quotes underneath them.

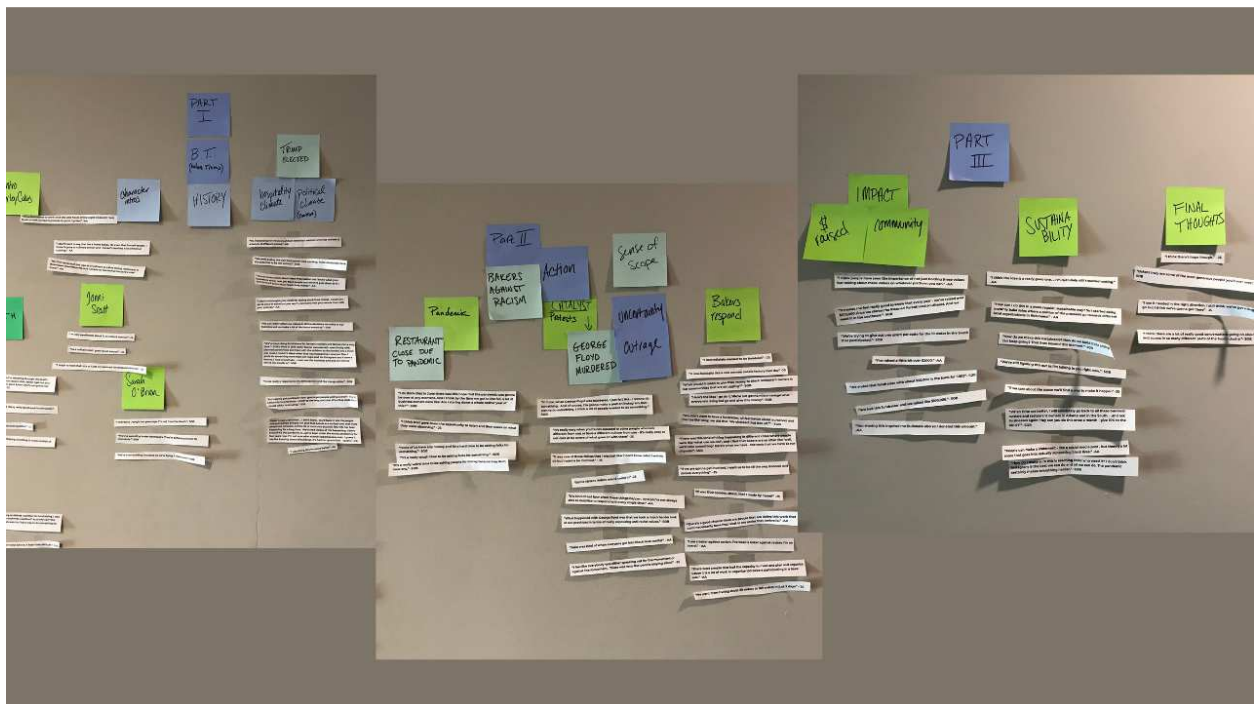


Figure 1. Storyboard Wall

As I sorted through the themes, the story was clearly larger than I anticipated. The topic was big, and I felt like each section deserved extensive research and the voices of many more people. I thought I might be able to shape the series with the voices not just of the bakers themselves, but of the people who purchased items and representatives from the social justice organizations that benefited from the bake sales. The pandemic made fieldwork difficult, if not impossible in some cases. For that reason, I decided to focus on three bakers and speak with them on multiple occasions. By talking to a smaller number of bakers more often, I hoped to be able to see their lines of thought evolve as they worked their way through the pandemic and through their own relationships with their communities in a fraught moment. Baking cookies for a cause was not a one-time occurrence for these women, but something that they attempted to build into their business practices.

The Bakers

As I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, the pandemic made conducting interviews in the field difficult. I began conducting preliminary research for this project in October 2020. I had a set list of criteria I looked for when researching which bakers I would include in the project. The first was obvious – the baker must have participated in a bake sale benefitting a social justice cause. The second criteria was narrowing the field to women who were professional bakers. My definition of “professional” is someone who earns their primary source of income by baking. I also wanted to speak with bakers of color, who are often underacknowledged in the hospitality industry.

I chose a gendered lens for this project for several reasons. Historically, women have a relationship with philanthropy, one that is supported by cultural beliefs about womanhood, such

as innate morality. A 2011 study on gender difference in charitable giving found “. . .that women are more likely to give and give more than men. . .”⁴³ These findings coupled with the social construction of femininity that aligns baking and sweetness with women made it more important to center women’s voices. By allowing these women to speak for themselves, I hoped to shine a light on the amount of work women – and particularly women of color – do for social justice.

Using Bakers Against Racism’s Instagram page as a source, I reached out to several bakers based in the South. Some bakers responded positively, some left me in limbo, and others didn’t respond at all. Arley Bell is based in Richmond, Virginia and has worked both as a pastry chef in restaurants and as a business owner and pastry chef of her own business, ArleyCakes. Her Instagram page indicated that she had been involved in social justice work for years, including being one of the first people to start writing messages like “Black Lives Matter,” on cakes. Jonni Scott, who I also found through Bakers Against Racism, is a pastry chef in the Washington D.C. area. When the pandemic began in early 2020, she was employed at a fine dining restaurant but like many others had to find another position as restaurants began closing. When I spoke with her in November 2020, she was about to begin a new position as a corporate pastry chef. The last baker I chose was Sarah O’Brien, owner of Little Tart Bakeshop in Atlanta, Georgia. Sarah, along with several other pastry chefs, helped found Southern Restaurants for Racial Justice in 2020. As someone that formed a grassroots organization amidst complete uncertainty, her perspective is vital to understanding what motivates people to act.

⁴³ Mesch, 353.

Technical Notes

Scheduling interviews wasn't an issue; figuring out how to record them was. The first interview I conducted was with Cassidy McLean, who isn't featured in this version of the documentary but gave me important insight into what it was like to organize a bake sale on your own. I had her borrow a phone and record herself with its VoiceMemo app, sending me the audio file after the interview had ended. I recorded my end of the call using the TapeACall app. Later, I combined the audio in Audition so I could log it accurately.

I wasn't able to use this method for every interview, but I did repeat it with Arley in the last interview I had with her in June 2021. Though it sounded better than the audio I was able to record through Zoom, there was still an echo from the room. With all the interviews, I did my best to direct the bakers to the quietest space they could find but that wasn't always a possibility, as with Sarah's first interview. She was at Little Tart, in her office with the kitchen directly behind her. Her connection wasn't stable, and it was impossible to tune out the sounds of bakers working in the background. Occasionally, she had to stop to ask people to be quiet - it was not an ideal situation. Once I was vaccinated and pandemic restrictions had lifted enough for safe travel, I was able to go to Atlanta and record her in person. The environment was similar - we were sitting in the dining area. Bakers and baristas were moving about and there was a refrigerator humming in the background. Having these two interviews under two completely different circumstances ended up being another gift that showed how the response to the pandemic was developing. As Damon Krukowski reminds us in *Ways of Hearing*, “. . .the digital era has not

just altered our tools for working with sound—or image, or moving images. It is changing our relationship to time itself.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Krukowski, 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BAKE SALE

As I was working through this project, it became clear that organizing my own bake sale would be a way for me to get closer to the experience of the bakers in my piece. I asked all the bakers questions about the process of their own bake sales, which gave me some idea of how much work was involved but doing the bake sale myself enabled me to get a better sense of the more intangible aspects of this kind of fundraising. Two out of the three bakers (Sarah and Jonni) had access to a restaurant kitchen. Though Arley runs her business from home, she does have a branded presence as a baker on social media, which helps in terms of audience reach. My experience felt closer to that of individuals who aren't in the hospitality industry and have decided to host a bake sale. These people are reaching out within their own networks and probably baking less than someone with the space and resources the bakers I spoke with have.

Nuts and Bolts

The first step for my bake sale was deciding where the money should be donated. I researched a variety of organizations that worked within the South. I wanted to find an organization that worked regionally. I planned to have the pick-up for the bake sale in Oxford, Mississippi, but I live in Memphis, Tennessee. It didn't make sense to ask people in Oxford to purchase something that would benefit an organization in Memphis and vice versa. My first

instinct was to donate to Southern Restaurants for Racial Justice, but it wasn't a decision that was easy to make. I did have concerns that because it was an organization Sarah was involved in, I would appear to be supporting *her* specifically over Arley and Jonni. I still don't like that aspect of the choice I made but it wasn't the only factor in my decision making. I wanted the organization I chose to be something that made sense for me personally and for the audio documentary. SRRJ ended up filling all those requirements.

The next step was the best step - deciding what to make. Fortunately, I have enough experience as a baker to know what types of desserts are time consuming and expensive. I knew whatever I chose would have to be something I could easily make in large batches with a limited amount of time. It would also have to be something that did not consume a lot of space and was based on relatively simple ingredients, which would be more inexpensive. Finally, it would need to be something that didn't require temperature control, since pick-up would be at the Oxford Community Farmer's Market in the thick heat of July. So, I decided to make cookies. And it would have been wonderful if that was the end of the decision. I also had to think about what might be most attractive for people who wanted to purchase these boxes of cookies. A dozen is an easy choice - it's such a standard amount for bakery items that people are familiar with it. And there's something that just feels better about spending \$30 / dozen rather than \$2.50 / cookie. I decided to do four flavors for variety and made sure the ones I chose were relatively simple. The key was to try to appeal to as many people as possible. That's also why there are no cookies with nuts (and sadly no peanut butter cookies) in the box.

The financials, of course, are a large part of the bake sales themselves. Bakeries and restaurants can purchase ingredients at a much larger volume and therefore a lower price than home bakers; those same bakeries and restaurants also have more overhead. Once I reached this

stage, I needed to estimate my ingredient cost and figure out how much to charge for the box. As a pastry chef, I always wanted to use the best ingredients. I know that sounds cliché, but quality ingredients make quality food. Eggs that come directly from a farmer who raises his chickens free range *do* affect the quality of a dessert. The flavor of milk purchased from a local dairy is much more distinct than what you will find in the grocery store. But these ingredients are expensive relative to what is produced by industrial agriculture. As much as I believe in buying local, it wasn't practical to do that and be able to successfully raise funds for a social justice organization. It was the fundraising version of robbing Peter to pay Paul. I originally wanted to charge \$25 / dozen but decided to raise the price to \$30. After all, the point of the bake sale wasn't to make money for myself, it was to raise money for social justice, and I felt I could justify a higher price by contextualizing it in that way.

The last decision I had to make was how to handle payment and the subsequent donation. I didn't want to handle the money by having it going through my personal bank account. There was a lot I really did not understand about where I fell as far as being an intermediary between an organization and the public. I am by no stretch of the imagination an accountant. I turned to my interview with Arley to begin to think about how I might organize the financial portion of the bake sale. She had given an example of one fundraiser where she had people donate directly to the organization she was promoting and send her a screenshot of the donation. She would then arrange pick-up for the bake sale item. Doing this kept her out of the financial portion of the transaction while enabling her to raise money for an organization she supported. This, however, felt too complicated. I decided to accept payment via Venmo and Paypal so I had a record of every transaction. I did make extra boxes that I planned to sell the day of pick-up, some of which were paid for in cash, which highlighted one drawback to the bake sale. No matter how well

social media helps advertise an event like this, there will always be people who aren't comfortable paying through an app. These people most likely would not have contributed to the fundraiser by purchasing a box in advance, since it was unlikely they spent a significant amount of time on social media. Presented with the option in person, a few did participate.

The obvious time commitment in this process is the actual production of the cookies, but there are a lot of unseen tasks that go into making a successful bake sale. Doing something like this is essentially running a business. You must have a network to advertise to, preferably one where the members have similar political alignment and disposable income, thus ensuring a market for your product. You must design your own graphics to advertise the sale or have a group like Bakers Against Racism providing graphics. Arley, for example, mentioned some baking she did to benefit a foster organization in Virginia:

They gave me some information, some statistics, but I kind of had to come up with the graphics for it and figure out how to share it on social media . . .that was you know, not just making the cookies that I posted to talk about it, but sort of condensing the information and making it shareable.⁴⁵

Arley articulated something that is essential to understanding these bake sales. The baker is not just taking on the responsibility of raising money for an organization they aren't employed by; they also take on the responsibility of representing the organization by sharing their mission and directing potential donors to more information. All the bake sales I had seen during the pandemic were based on a pre-sale model. This model is important because it keeps bakers from making more than they can sell. In restaurants and bakeries, we use pars based on data collected from

⁴⁵ Bell, June 2021.

sales over a period of time to establish how much of a dessert to make. This wasn't an option for a one-time event, which is why the pre-sale model has been used so prolifically.

I needed to block out two full days to make the cookie dough, bake the cookies, and package the cookies for pick-up. It took roughly twelve hours over those two days to make about 175 cookies. I was able to do this bake sale under ideal circumstances; my ingredients and packaging needs were covered. I had money available to me for artist talk expenses, which was provided through the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Using those funds to cover my materials, I then donated my labor, meaning that I was able to donate the total profit of \$420. Had I needed to pay myself or pay for my ingredients, I would have only been able to donate \$83.13. The table below illustrates the difference between the bake sale I ran and one that might be run by someone on their own.

Labor	\$225 (15 hours)	Donated
Ingredients	\$111.87	Donated
Total Cost	336.87	N/A
Total Profit from Sales	\$420	\$420
Net Profit	\$83.13	\$420

Figure 2. Bake Sale Profit Breakdown

In the nonprofit world, money always matters, so I don't want to discount the amount of money raised. What I did discover was that the process of having a bake sale felt more about power. I felt more empowered because I was *acting*. I was also able to direct attention to an organization, which could potentially spark interest in that organization for someone else. The

cookies did exactly what cookies do; they gave a sense of commonality, a neutral meeting place for us to have these discussions.

The Community Market

I organized the pick-up of pre-ordered cookies to be the day of my Artist Talk at the Oxford Community Farmer's Market. I was able to have a booth where I could orchestrate the pick-ups and sell the extra boxes I made. There were several reasons for choosing the Community Market. Personally, I have had a long relationship with farmer's markets. When I used to own my own business, I had a booth at the Forsyth Farmer's Market in Savannah, Georgia. Later, when I was working as a pastry chef, I used the market in Savannah to source ingredients. When I lived in New Orleans, I worked at the Crescent City Farmer's Market, doing just about any job that was needed. Farmer's markets have represented a space where individuals can come together to have a larger impact on the collective. This is the case at the Oxford Community Market.

I maintained my presence at the market from open to close on the day of my artist talk. My table had a stack of cookies, a stack of 'zines I made related to the audio documentary, and a sign with the price of the boxes (\$30) and where the money would be donated (SRRJ). I sold out of all the extra cookies I brought. Some of the people I spoke with were interested in the project, some were more interested in the cookies, and some weren't interested in either. The most common reason I heard for not buying cookies was the cost. Even though the money was going towards a good cause, there was still a mental hurdle to paying that much for cookies. It appeared that many people were unfamiliar with SRRJ, which gave me the opportunity to tell them about the organization's mission. It did feel a little like proselytizing for an organization I

wasn't a part of, but it also served the purpose of highlighting a need. I don't know how effective these conversations were, especially when considering the typical demographic for the market, which appeared to be largely white and economically secure.

The talk itself was delivered towards the end of the market at 5:30pm. I set up in a corner of the market; the audience was primarily made up of friends and colleagues. Though it was difficult to ascertain the response of the market vendors and shoppers (my back was toward the market), none came over to hear the talk. The lack of interest from market goers wasn't necessarily surprising to me. It was a hot July Tuesday in Mississippi, and the market was nearing its end. Some of the regular market vendors weren't present, owing to the recent Fourth of July holiday. In terms of fundraising, using the market as a venue was successful by any measure – I sold all the cookies I baked and raised a significant amount of money for SRRJ. By other measure of success – educating community members and facilitating emotional connections, my presence at the market wasn't necessary. The Oxford Community Farmer's market is already a place where those things happen.

CHAPTER SIX
LAND HARD, ROLL LEFT

My interest in bake sales started in 2016, when Donald Trump was elected President. Shortly after his election, bake sales benefiting reproductive rights organizations started happening; cakes with phrases like “Abortion is Healthcare,” written in frosted script began appearing on my Instagram feed. I became interested in the idea of using baking as a political tool but set it aside while I worked on other things. The idea for this audio documentary came into focus in June 2020. In response to the murder of George Floyd, Bakers Against Racism held their first call to action asking bakers “. . .to donate 150pcs of a dessert to sell, and then donate the majority of the proceeds to a charity that supports black lives.”⁴⁶ The response was overwhelming, and collectively bakers across the globe raised over two million dollars. The scale of what was happening surprised me and I needed to know more.

Pandemic and Protest in Real Time

From the beginning this project has been intimately connected with the Covid-19 pandemic. When the protests over George Floyd’s murder broke out, the country was at a standstill. Most of us self-quarantined but others had to work to keep the infrastructure running.

⁴⁶ Bakers Against Racism.

The pandemic coupled with a social movement created an experience few of us were prepared to understand, myself included. I didn't have time to process my thoughts when things were happening so quickly. The only thing I was sure of was that I needed to document all of it - the bake sales combined with the pandemic combined with the protests.

I knew I wanted to talk to bakers in the South who were doing this kind of work, but extensive travel wasn't practical. For all its shortcomings, Zoom did allow me to be more selective about the bakers I decided to contact. Of course, conducting interviews remotely came with its own set of issues, which I've discussed previously. The pandemic was an obstacle to documentation not just on a technical level but on an emotional one. Face to face interviews were out of the question; I wasn't even able to have a cursory meeting with the bakers in the documentary. Over Zoom I could see the room my narrators were in but had no real connection with it - I didn't know how it smelled or if the chairs were comfortable. I couldn't make a personal connection, which is probably why they sometimes expressed trepidation about what this project was supposed to do. It affected my interview style; I told stories about myself and commiserated with them over common frustrations in baking and business, all to give them some sense that I understood at least one part of their lives. The lack of in-person connection made it more difficult to read physical cues, which are important when talking about difficult subjects. Despite my misgivings, Arley, Jonni, and Sarah were all forthcoming and I felt we had some honest moments.

Is It Sustainable?

If anything has become clear over the past year, it is the importance of sustainability. So much of restaurant work is built on the unsustainable model of long hours, low pay, and few

benefits. One of my biggest concerns after seeing bake sales spike during the pandemic was whether they would (or could) continue once things returned to normal. I asked all the bakers in the project whether or not they thought raising money with bake sales was sustainable. They all agreed that this method of fundraising was a work in progress, but as Jonni said, “. . .if we care about the cause, we’ll find a way to make it happen.”⁴⁷ The consensus was cautious optimism. Sarah, who has built philanthropy into her business model, made it clear that she understood the value of thinking past this historical moment, saying “[w]e can really reflect our values in all the decisions we make in our business and we make a lot of decisions everyday.”⁴⁸ Arley is continuing the work she has been doing since she started ArleyCakes, raising funds for local organizations and Jonni has since participated in other bake sales, including one of many focused on raising funds to benefit AAPI organizations.

The question that propelled me into this project was whether these bake sales were happening in the South and what that practice might look like. I did find that while they may not be under the Bakers Against Racism banner, the work was still present. Even though social justice fundraising has and does happen in the South, like other regions of the country, there was a palpable wariness when I asked Jonni if she felt there was a reason this type of work wasn’t as apparent in the South. Jonni grew up in a military family that moved around the South and while she had diversity on the bases where she lived, she observed that outside of the base,

a lot of those people, they haven't moved. . .away from where they grew

⁴⁷ Scott, n.p.

⁴⁸ O'Brien, n.p.

up or moved on. And it's really easy - when you're not exposed to other people who look different from you, or have a different culture from you - it's really easy to not care, or be aware of what goes on with them. . . This might be bad to say, but, when I'm traveling through the South, I choose not to wear my Bakers Against Racism shirt when I get out at a little gas station in Georgia, because. . . I don't know who's gonna not like that and decide to do something bad to me. . . I'm already dark. I'm already wearing a mask.⁴⁹

Jonni's observations show a very real concern for safety when doing social justice work. For as long as this work has been happening in the South, there have been people who oppose it, sometimes violently. This is another reason why bake sales work so well - they are something we recognize as familiar and safe. We can participate in them without being overtly political, much like the progressive citizens of 1950s Montgomery purchasing a cake from The Club From Nowhere.

Moving Forward

The project itself has a long life ahead. It is impossible to really understand how these bake sales work without speaking to people who have interacted with them in other ways. I chose to focus this piece on women who identified as bakers or pastry chefs by profession. These aren't the only people holding bake sales. I plan to conduct more interviews with home bakers, consumers, and members of local social justice organizations. Hearing how bake sales work for individuals who may have other jobs and must fit this type of work into their schedule can lend

⁴⁹ Scott, n.p.

to our understanding of what might make this type of work sustainable (or unsustainable). Asking consumers why they participate in bake sales can expand on questions of transparency and the performance of activism. The impact these bake sales have on the organizations that receive these funds should be explored as well. What I have assembled here is just one small facet of a much larger story. Social justice organizations need money to create change and bake sales are one way to achieve that goal. The sustained commitment to create that change, however, comes from human connection.

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2006

TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of Mississippi / Graduate Assistant

August 2019 - May 2021

Oxford, Mississippi

University of Mississippi / Graduate Assistant

January 2019 - May 2019

Oxford, Mississippi

AWARDS AND CONFERENCES

Awards

- **William Winter Scholar** / Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration / 2019
- **Summer Research Grant** / University of Mississippi Graduate School / 2019
- **FAB Conference Scholarship** / Charleston, SC / 2019
- **Graduate School Travel Grant** / University of Mississippi and The Center for the Study of Southern Culture / 2019
- **3MT Competition Semi-Finalist** / University of Mississippi / 2019
- **Summer Research Grant** / University of Mississippi Graduate School / 2021

Conferences

- **“Girls in the Kitchen.”** Voices: City, Culture, and Community Graduate Symposium (CCC). Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. 2019.
- **“Just Add Eggs: Cake Mix, Gender, Race, and Class.”** Southeastern Women’s Studies Association (SEWSA). University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS. 2019.
- **“‘Raised in Their Mother’s Kitchens’: Knowledge and Baking in the Progressive Era South.”** Southern Studies Conference. Auburn University, Montgomery, AL. 2020.

PROJECTS

- ***Southern Baking.*** Southern Foodways Alliance. 2020 - 2021. Contributing Oral Historian
- ***Summer Avenue Project (Working Title).*** Southern Foodways Alliance and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Mississippi. Ongoing. Producer.
- ***Mississippi Creates: Tyler Keith.*** The Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council. 2021. Producer and director.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Southeastern Women's Studies Association

Association for the Study of Food and Society

CITI Research Certification