Report back from Cultural Appropriation with focus on Spirituality workshop:

• 3 pillars of white supremacy; cultural appropriation continues one of the three pillars; religions come to the West when their places of origin or conquered; loss has led us to a desire for healing; what questions do we need to ask? Strategy vs. solution (dismantling of all systems of oppression)

• Cultural appropriation – message from indigenous that Anglos have taken everything from us, and now you appropriate our culture and ignore our existence

• Many traditions were destroyed in Europe and lead to our unconscious desire to reclaim relationship to land

Themes:

• Cycles of displacement:
  o How do we envision justice if the answer is that we need to ‘go home.’ We don’t know our complete origin stories—so many cycles of displacement
  o How can we be in solidarity with oppressed groups if we are unwilling to do what they ask of us?
  o Complicate the narrative that all settlers are privileged, more about how to subvert and transform where we are
  o We do movement building a disservice by focusing on individual rather than system—the result of vilifying one gentrifier is that they either don’t care or they feel disempowered
  o Solidarity is not just asking the person who is more oppressed to tell us what they want us to do, but to do the work of creating solutions together
  o Gentrification: organize against the douche bag not thehipster gentrifier
  o Letting the new resident off the hook places place elsewhere so that there is a safe distance so we don’t have to feel culpable
  o One example: Hawaiian sovereignty movement ask that people not come to the island/support the tourist industry, but the industry is thriving nonetheless
  o Shifting levels: with privilege we can shift from personal to social levels or vice versa to redirect
  o What would be the impact of a petition in which people committed to not living in a gentrifying neighborhood?
  o Abstention vs. intervention: moving away won’t deconstruct capitalism, but living in a neighborhood that’s the site of contention and plugging in can make a difference → starting a petition is moving the abstention framework into an intervention
  o Get everyone to stop paying rent at the same time → RENTERS’ STRIKE!
  o “Flip the House” intervention → low budget video mocking his course? Action at the course this weekend?
o Trees and displacement: Oakland’s Urban Releaf, Detroit city selling land to developer to plant Christmas trees, Palestinian olive trees and pine and oak trees
o Appropriation when natural elements are extracted and moved
o Trees and roots are symbolic of the roots we set and can be uprooted
o Redwoods were cut down in the east bay and led to the destruction of wood and waterways for native land and peoples
o Ai Wei Wei’s installation at Alcatraz—Hopi were some of the first imprisoned at Alcatraz
o Manipulated landscapes seem to us to be as they always were—histories are erased—much as the people who traditionally inhabited and are still here are made invisible
o The Autobiography of Delphina Cuero – native woman who describes the way the landscape had changed in her lifetime
o How do we make visible that which has been made invisible in the mainstream?
  - Pie Ranch signed MOU (memorandum of understanding) with native tribe in region regarding how to use the land; opening part of the farm as a Re-Learning Garden where native people can come at any time to re-learn native food ways and farming
    - Most food justice organizations have no analysis around colonization and use of land
o What about buying land to give back?
o Usufruct—unused property is open for others to use within a community
o Colonizers narratives often get placed over food movements (ie. “they just don’t know how to take care of the land, we can teach them how to grow food, etc”)
o Native peoples being kept off the land to practice their cultural food ways, given processed foods, in the guise of protecting forests and rivers
o Loss of sovereignty of native bodies—DNA tests take away land rights, burial of remains
o Is it useful to question whether we’re here or not? Everyone came from somewhere else. Power and conquest existed here long before settlers arrived from Europe. The issue is that people are being killed and disappeared. How do we create a world in which people of self-determination over their relationship with the land without displacing other’s right to self-determination?
o Are we past the world’s ability to sustain the people that are already here in this way?
o Indigeneity as identity and political construct
o Pie Ranch coalition is good example of real work together rather than use of general Earth based spiritual references, which are inspired by our need to connect to home (1000 year old relationship to place)

Thanksgiving:
• We want to separate the ritual from the historical meaning
• The good parts: gratitude, changing of seasons
• Comfort food for trauma (many appropriations function this way) can re-traumatize those who have been oppressed and those in power
• Late November is not a harvest time, it is more likely a celebration of massacre of Indigenous (see WNC blog, “The Fourth Thursday in Thanksgiving”)
• People in power can punish/ostracize those people who try to question the dominant narrative
• Ask questions of our family around the present day
• The California Gold Rush was the zombie apocalypse (The Walking Dead TV show—Carl, the son, is the native son growing up during the apocalypse)
• Thanksgiving has also been a safe space for people raised in religious homes
• Some of us choose to abstain, but harm reduction is good too
• Maybe next year, plan something really meaningful to celebrate the Equinox instead of Thanksgiving
• Going to Sunrise Ceremony on Alcatraz good way to celebrate ongoing resistance