

## Food Policy *for* Food Justice: What Is Food Justice?

# 2

May 2014



### What Is Food Justice?

**F**ood Justice is an idea, a set of principles and something we should all strive to practice. More importantly, Food Justice is a movement and, like most social justice movements, it was born out of the lived experience of people experiencing oppression.

In many ways Food Justice grew out of the Environmental Justice movement, where communities of color and poor working class people began to realize that their lack of access to healthy and affordable food was not the result of their own behavior, but of a food system that was motivated by profit.

It is fashionable for people to talk about how people who are living in poverty also live in a “food desert.” What they generally mean is that people don’t live close to a grocery store. Using the term “food desert” is problematic in many ways. First, a desert is a vibrant eco-system and not a barren wasteland, as is often associated with the term. Secondly, identifying neighborhoods as food deserts ignores history and fails to acknowledge that most of these neighborhoods had small grocery stores, farmers markets, fruit & vegetable stands and lots of backyard gardens. However, economic and political decisions driven by the current industrial food system resulted in neighborhoods being both abandoned and undermined, often resulting in food insecurity.

Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that neighborhoods experiencing a lack of access to healthy, affordable food are communities experiencing Food Apartheid. Food Apartheid explains that a small number of people (agribusiness) determines the kind of food system that the masses can access. Like the Apartheid imposed on Black South Africans, Food Apartheid means that few of us have a say in the current food system.

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The movement for Food Justice is changing Food Apartheid. Armed with the notion that everyone has the right to eat healthy, food justice advocates engage in more locally grown food projects, sharing skills

on how to grow, prepare and preserve food, while exposing the current food system's unjust nature .

The Food Justice Movement is an international movement that is ultimately fighting for Food Sovereignty, where everyone has say in the kind of food system (s) they want. Food Sovereignty is Food Democracy, where healthy food is a right for everyone—not just for those who can afford it. Here is a list of Food Justice principles that Our Kitchen Table supports and promotes:

- Food Justice recognizes that the causes of food disparity are the result of multiple systems of oppression. To practice food justice we must do the work through an intersectional lens.
- Food Justice advocates must focus on working with the most marginalized and vulnerable populations: communities of color, communities in poverty, immigrants, children, our elders, women, people who identify as LGBTQ, those with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness.
- Food Justice require us to work towards the elimination of exploitation in our food system, both exploitation of humans and animals.
- Food Justice demands that we grow food in such a way that preserves ecological biodiversity and promotes sustainability in all aspects.
- Provide resources and skill sharing so that people can be collectively more food self-sufficient.



**Eating Healthy Food is a Right!** The current global food system must be resisted and dismantled. For more information on ways to practice Food Justice in your community, contact Our Kitchen Table.



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**616-206-3641**



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