Social Work, the Food Movement, and Food Justice

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A Food Justice Journey…

The most important word in community garden is not garden.” – Jack Hale
A Food Justice Journey…
We are grateful for the time we have been given together to learn and grow becoming more like the people we were created to be, as we do and prepare to do the restorative work we were created for on Earth as it is in Heaven.
Workshop Outcomes

1. Participants will learn about the complexities behind how the food system is broken and what role the food movement and food justice play in response to it.

2. Participants will learn strategies and techniques for how social workers can engage with the food movement.

3. Participants will engage in dialogue around the role of social workers and the role of the Church in the food movement, and will explore how it is possible to respond to various forms of food injustices by fostering good food citizenship.
YOUR FAVORITE MEAL

HOW MUCH DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT OUR FOOD?

- Begin thinking about our own place in the food system
- Consider where our food comes from
- Consider who grows our food
- Surface stereotypes about farms, farmers and farm workers
“The problem is we are not eating food anymore, we are eating food like products...”

Dr. Alejandro Junger
Hungry For Change Film

watch online at: www.HungryForChange.tv
THEY THINK THERE IS FOOD IN OUR "FOOD"
Food biotechnology companies argue that their technical innovations are essential for meeting the food needs of the world’s burgeoning population, are safe, and produce substantial benefits for consumers as well as farmers.

Feeding the Masses... Genetic Modification...

A MIRACLE!

Whether these claims are true is debatable. Critics of the technology and how it is used argue that the main benefits of GMOs do not accrue to the public, but instead are created for the benefit of biotechnology corporations. As evidence, they note how aggressively the companies defend their patent
“The problem with our role in creation is that we don’t remember it. In our fallen state we have forgotten our place, both within God’s will and love and also in our love and care for creation. We need to be reminded of who we are and what we are about.” – Ragan Sutterfield, Farming as a Spiritual Discipline, p.5

“Food is about the relationships that join us to the earth, fellow creatures, loved ones and guests, and ultimately God. How we eat testifies to whether we value the creatures we live with and depend on.” – Norman Wirzba, Food and Faith, p.4

“...the very idea of fast, cheap, and convenient food suggests eating is not supposed to be the activity whereby people honor God, appreciate creation, or accept responsibility for their membership within it. Is eating simply a mechanical act to be judged primarily in terms of efficiency and price? To ‘grab a bite on the go’ communicates that people do not believe their eating should occasion the sustained attention or reflection that might lead to greater care of our food networks and more regular celebration of the gifts of life.” – Norman Wirzba, Food and Faith, p.127
OUR FOOD SYSTEM IS BROKEN
Movement Branch

1. Food Systems

2. Food Politics and Ethics

3. Food and Health

Subfields

- Food security
- Just and sustainable food
- Planning and community development
- Animal welfare
- Anti-hunger advocates
- Environmentalists
- Environmental justice
- Food policy councils
- Locavores
- Slow Food
- Sustainable agriculture
- Food safety
- Lifestyle
- Nutrition
- Obesity
- Organics

Communities: Control
The Farm Bill, Industrial Food System, Agribusiness
Communities: Control

- Farm Bill – sets up the funding structure for agriculture, food stamps, rural development and agricultural research in the United States
  - Commodity crops – corn, soybeans, wheat, sorghum, barley, oats, rice, cotton
  - Subsidies – loans and government payments for farmers who grow these crops

- “That’s what we’ve been heavily subsidizing, encouraging farmers to grow more of, and that’s what makes fast food so cheap. Meanwhile over in the production section, the head of broccoli costs more than a fast-food hamburger. Why is that? We do very little to encourage farmers to grow what called specialty crops, which is ACTUAL food you can eat.”
  - Michael Pollan, Food, Inc.
CONSUMERS: In that case, should access to healthy food be a right for everyone?
Consumers: Access

- What are food deserts?

- Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group (2008) defines food deserts as large geographic area with no or distant mainstream grocery store.

- Barriers to access – full of fast food restaurants, and often lack grocery stores and playgrounds, places where buying healthy food can be a challenge and where going outside for physical activity can be unsafe.
OBESITY EPIDEMIC:

- More than two out of three U.S. adults are overweight or obese.

- People with lower incomes are more likely to eat cheaper, processed foods, and are also more likely to suffer from obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and other diet-related health problems.

- According to the CDC, states where poverty is highest have the highest rates of obesity—nine of the ten states with the highest rates of obesity are also the poorest states in the nation.

- One in three children born in 2000 will develop diabetes at some point in his or her lifetime. Among African-American and Latino children, that number is one-in-two.

(The Weight of the Nation, 2012)
FRONTLINE’S POOR KIDS

KIDS ARE ALL TOO AWARE
A brief note about these cheap, processed, easy calories, dead, food-like products...

- These food-like products that are inexpensive and easily accessible are highly palatable and have a high hedonic value, which gives us pleasure engaging the full range of senses – especially taste, which “has by far the most direct connection to the body’s reward system” (Kessler, 2009, p.36).

- Rewarding foods rewire our brain to want more of these highly palatable foods because of two brain chemicals:
  - Dopamine
  - Opioids

- Can result in what Kessler calls “conditioned hypereating” (2009).
Cost of the Obesity Epidemic

- According to the CDC, the annual medical costs of an obese person are $1,400 more than for someone who's not obese.

- Obesity costs the nation an estimated $147 billion per year in medical costs.

- 1 in 4 young Americans do not meet the weight requirement to join the armed Forces.

(The Weight of the Nation, 2012)
“We’re willing to subsidize the food system to create the mystique of cheap food when actually it’s very expensive food.”

–Farmer Joel Salatin

What does he mean by this?
“Closing the Food Gap”

PUBLIC SECTOR:
- Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs (safety net programs)
  - SNAP
  - WIC
  - The National School Lunch Program
    - Child Nutrition Reauthorization, the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

PRIVATE SECTOR:
- Emergency feeding programs – increasingly becoming the first line of defense against hunger (charity model)
  - Soup kitchens
  - Food pantries
  - Food banks
Food Security… or not…

- Rise in reliance upon safety net food programs such as SNAP and WIC since 2008 due to the decline in the national economy (Nestle, 2008).

- Food security is not just a food justice issue, but a racial justice issue:
  - Highest among African American households and Latino households
  - “The least secure segments of the population are households with children headed by single women, especially those black or Hispanic” (Nestle, 2013, p.20).

- Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative
“What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch if he doesn’t earn enough money to buy a hamburger?”
– Martin Luther King, Jr., 1969

“It’s time for us to launch another movement, this time to ensure that all Americans have physical and economic access to all the nutritious food their families need. It’s time for all Americans to have an equal place at the table.” – Joel Berg, A Place at the Table, p. 214

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” – John 6:35
Food Justice and Food Citizenship
Definitions of Food Justice

**Food Justice Book**

- “Food justice seeks to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed and eaten are shared fairly.”

- “Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities inequities.”

**Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**

- “Food justice is the right of communities everywhere to produce, possess, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion or community. Includes:
  - Freedom from exploitation
  - Ensures the rights of workers to fair labor practices
  - Values-based: respect, empathy, pluralism, valuing knowledge
  - Racial Justice; dismantling of racism and white privilege
  - Gender equity
What is Food Citizenship?

“The practice of engaging in food-related behaviors that support, rather than threaten, the development of a democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system” (Wilkins, 2005, p. 269).
“Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Pothukuchi, Joseph, Burton, Fisher, 2002).

- “A Place at the Table” documentary
- WhyHunger’s Food Security Learning Center (FSLC)
Strategies for Social Workers and Faith-Communities to Promote Food Justice in Their Own Community: Addressing Food Disparities and Inequities

“The Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich foods for all peoples...”
– Isaiah 25:6
Shalom
Transforming Community

Direct Services: Programs That Build Skills In Individuals
Case Management, Mentoring
Develops A Community Vision: WITH The Community
TEACH TO FISH
Clean The POND

Church Develops God's Eyes And Heart For The Community
Ongoing Learning: Shared Vision, Ownership, Leadership
Creating Just Policies And Laws
Sense of Community: Resources, Knowledge, Skills
Community Organizing & Celebration: Land & Business Ownership
ACCESS THE POND

Maintain The Watershed
Community Strengthening Programs: Information & Pathways To Ownership

Communities First Association

Created by:
 Faith-Rooted Organizing & Biblical Advocacy

Faith-Rooted Organizing:
- Completely guided and shaped by faith
- Seeing through God’s eyes – “Do we have eyes to see?” – Alexia Salvatierra
- Designed to enable people of faith to contribute our unique gifts to the broader movement for justice

Biblical Advocacy:
- “Not Just WHY We Advocate – HOW we advocate – Advocacy as if God is real and Jesus is risen.” – Alexia Salvatierra
- Calling our representatives to do what God has called them to do
- What is the divine purpose of government? Psalm 72, Romans 13, Exodus 3:1-10
Ingredients for a Local, Sustainable, Just Alternative Food System

- Community gardening and youth gardening
- Farmer’s markets
- Food co-ops
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
- Food banks
- Food policy councils – developing and supporting local and regional food economies (moving from projects to policy for a just, sustainable food system)
- New supermarkets
- Nutrition education programs
- Food processing center for canning, freezing, drying, butchering, and storage
- Solar greenhouses
- Cold frames
- Roof-top production
- New government-funded food and farm initiatives
- Farmland preservation programs
Strategies/Tools: Promoting a local, sustainable, and just alternative food system

- Conduct a Community Food Assessment
  - See former Community Food Security Coalition’s guide to a community food assessment
  - Start where the community is at and ask them what they want to see change around this issue of food insecurity. Do something creative and fun like a potluck inviting people to bring a favorite seasonal dish.

- Launch a community garden meeting in community
  - See the American Community Garden Association’s guidelines for launching a community garden
  - [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)
  - If applicable, partner with local university’s master gardeners extension for planning out community garden.
Strategies/Tools: Promoting a local, sustainable, and just alternative food system

- Create a CSA, if already have a community garden(s) or partner with an already existing CSA to bring fresh, seasonal produce to consumers (agency or church can serve as a host site for a local CSA)

- Connect with local farmers’ market manager to make sure they are authorized to accept SNAP benefits
  - Shout out!: Kankakee Farmers’ Market is one of IL’s farmers markets that accepts SNAP benefits... yay! – located in central location: Downtown K3, accessible by public transportation

- Help eligible individuals & families get signed up for SNAP and use those benefits to garden vegetables and plants with their benefits – see SNAP Gardens @...
  - www.SNAPgardens.org

- Partner with local gov’t to start educational urban gardens in food deserts for people to learn how to grow their own food

- Partner with neighborhood community development organizations to start a neighborhood Food Co-op
Strategies/Tools:
Promoting a local, sustainable, and just alternative food system

Academic Settings:
- National Farm to School Network
- The Edible School Yard Project
  - [http://edibleschoolyard.org/](http://edibleschoolyard.org/)
- College Campuses
  - The Real Food Challenge
    - [http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/)
Objectives
1. Better understanding of the food system on our campus
2. Connect to one another!
3. Understand unique student power
4. Understand what RFC is and how we can support you!

WHAT IS REAL FOOD??!!??
- A food system that is eco-friendly, community-based, fair, and humane
- Food that truly nourishes:
  - Producers
  - Consumers
  - Communities
  - Earth

How can we make change?
- The Campus Commitment
  - 20% real food by 2020 = $1 billion
- Real Food Calculator
- Food System's Working Groups

The Big Squeeze
- Input: price, labor, and capital
- Output: cost

Why Real Food?
- Ecosystem - humane - ethical - nutritious - local economies - healthy

Why RFC?
- Students have power to change our future - impact the system

Why institutional change?
- Demoingazing
- Historically, students movements make REAL CHANGE

Talk to us!!
www.realfoodchallenge.org
POS: realfoodchallenge.org
molly@realfoodchallenge.org

Flourish bit.ly/realfoodretreats4
Feb 6-9 in Evanston!!
POLICY EFFECTS PRACTICE
PRACTICE EFFECTS POLICY
Form a Food Policy Advisory Council in your community – help local, regional, or state governments address food system challenges and others

- Example: Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council
- www.growingpower.org/food_policy.htm


Baylor University’s Texas Hunger Initiative does something similar called Food Planning Associations

- www.baylor.edu/texashunger

“Innovation and change do not occur spontaneously in major centers of political power without the incendiary spark of the populists’ voice. Democracy works best when it’s closest to the people.” -Mark Winne, Closing the Food Gap
Strategies/Tools: Promoting a local, sustainable, and just alternative food system

- Discover how your elected representative voted to keep food healthy, safe, and affordable at http://www.foodpolicyaction.org/

- Enact innovative solutions to self-sufficiency with New York City Coalition Against Hunger's handbook Ending Hunger through Citizen Service (from Joel Berg, “Beyond the Charity Myth,” A Place at the Table Participant Guide)
  - www.hungervolunteer.org

- Utilize Bread for the World’s 2013 Offering of Letters campaign kit for advocacy purposes
“Every minute that you entertain yourself without paying some corporation to entertain you, you’re acting radically. If you grown even one plateful of your own food rather than buy it from food corporations, you’re acting radically. If you shop at a farmers’ market, you’re acting radically.” –Wendell Berry

Closing Discussion
Envisioning a Food Secure Community

1. What does a food secure community/neighborhood look like? – “HEAVEN ON EARTH”

2. What does a food secure community/neighborhood NOT look like? – “HELL ON EARTH”

3. What is you ideal vision of a food secure community/neighborhood?
I CHARGE YOU...

“Contrary to stereotype, we’re most effective when we realize that there is no perfect time to get involved in social causes, no ideal circumstances for voicing our convictions. What each of us faces instead is a lifelong series of imperfect moments in which we must decide what we stand for” (Loeb, 2010, p.54).

“I see a generation... rising up to take their place... with selfless faith...”
“They will live again in freedom in the GARDEN of the Lord. They will walk behind the plowshare. They will put away the sword. The chains will be broken and all men shall have their reward.

WILL YOU JOIN IN OUR CRUSADE? WHO WILL BE STRONG AND STAND WITH ME? SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE BARACADE IS THERE A WORLD YOU LONG TO SEE? DO YOU HEAR THE PEOPLE SING? SAY DO YOU HEAR THE DISTANT DRUM? IT IS A FUTURE THAT MAY BRING WHEN TOMORROW COMES.”

Les Miserables, The Musical
There's a right bit more than hope.

Aslan... is on the move.
References


References


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