AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON STRUCTURAL RACISM PRESENT IN THE U.S. FOOD SYSTEM

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Fifth Edition

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CRFS envisions a thriving economy, equity, and sustainability for Michigan, the country, and the planet through food systems rooted in local regions and centered on Good Food: food that is healthy, green, fair, and affordable. Its mission is to engage the people of Michigan, the United States, and the world in applied research, education, and outreach to develop regionally integrated, sustainable food systems. CRFS joins in Michigan State University’s pioneering legacy of applied research, education, and outreach by catalyzing collaboration and fostering innovation among the diverse range of people, processes, and places involved in regional food systems. Working in local, state, national, and global spheres, CRFS’ projects span from farm to fork, including production, processing, distribution, policy, and access.
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to provide current research and outreach on structural racism in the U.S. food system for the food system practitioner, researcher, and educator.

The following is an annotated bibliography on selected resources and publications focused on structural racism in the U.S. food system. Structural racism in the United States has been defined as the “normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic outcomes for people of color.”

Our intention was to look at literature that broadly covered structural racism across the entire food supply chain as well as to examine specific sectors of the chain. We also identified literature that links the social construction of whiteness and its intentional or consequential impact on structural racism within the United States’ local food movement. We intentionally focused on recent peer-reviewed and gray literature materials that are national, regional, and local in scope; we also identified materials that included significant references. Blog posts, news or media articles, and college class syllabi are for the most part not included in this bibliography; however, these writings contribute significantly to the discussion on structural racism in the food system and should be part of a more comprehensive education program on this topic.

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to provide current research and outreach on structural racism in the U.S. food system for the food system practitioner, researcher, and educator. Our intention is to update this resource on a recurring basis and suggest it be used as a companion resource for training or education sessions on structural racism in the food system.

We have made an effort to include the digital object identifier (DOI) of as many of the publications as possible. The DOI is useful to track electronic documents.

This fifth edition contains nearly 50 new citations. It also contains a new section of video entries.

This resource is now available on Zotero, a free, online open-source management tool for collecting, managing, and citing research sources. To access the Zotero library, use the following link: https://www.zotero.org/msu_crfs/items

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3 Gray literature is the general name for scholarly or substantive information produced outside traditional commercial publishing and distribution channels. Common publication types include theses and dissertations; technical reports; working papers; evaluation reports; conference proceedings; publications from NGOs, INGOs, think tanks and policy institutes; patents; and preprints.
Journal Articles, Books, and Gray Literature Resources


Examines Native American food sovereignty through the lens of 1990s Native North American literature. The author uses two creative writings to illustrate why Native Americans advocate for a rights- and culture-based approach to food. Several U.S. federal documents that acknowledge a right to food are outlined here, bringing attention to the forces threatening indigenous food systems.


Highlights the dimensions of class and race within farmers markets and the "green" economy.


Explores the interplay between race and class and the food system; the book’s 15 chapters outline these distinctions along the supply chain from production to consumption.


Examines food justice among Black and Latin American immigrant farmers in Oakland, California, and Seattle, Washington, respectively. In conjunction with food justice, analyzes neoliberalism, an academic philosophy, to understand its impact on food movements.


Identifies and examines two case studies of prevalent, pervasive White privilege in California. Additionally suggests how farmers markets can act as catalysts for anti-racism in the future of food movements.


Develops the concept of food justice and bridges this to activism on sustainable agriculture, food insecurity, and environmental justice.

Explores how agrifood systems, and even alternative agrifood systems, have historically ignored social justice issues. Also discusses the role academics can play in addressing inequalities in the food system.


In this editorial, the author makes explicit the way labor is at the heart of the food system in ethical, political, and economic ways. Specifically, labor conditions have been produced socially through public policy, public funds, and discursive practices of racism, and they inherit the practices of slavery, indentured servitude, and exploitation.


Describes the life of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, farmer Will Allen and his work developing urban farming techniques through his organization, Growing Power, to benefit underserved food desert communities. Growing Power seeks to prove that the food system is the solution to youth empowerment, dismantling racism, creating jobs, and bridging the urban–rural divide.


Describes through interviews the realities of current and past food system experiences from the perspective of Southern women of color.


Examines how Latino residents experience, think about, and address new exclusionary practices in the space of alternative food activism in Boston, Massachusetts.


Provides an in-depth analysis of the U.S. Farm Bill, with a particular focus on how Farm Bill policies are shaped by corporate power and how such policies affect the lives of marginalized communities. This report provides a thorough analysis, a set of comprehensive policy interventions, and a vision for a food sovereignty movement that puts “belonging” at its center.

Discusses how various urban U.S. areas are attempting to increase healthy food access through community development.


Addresses the question of whether all communities have equal access to foods in order to make healthy dietary choices.


Designed to help neighbors, resident groups, and organizations in Baltimore, Maryland, and other U.S. cities have a guided conversation through the connection between food and social justice, taking a critical look at one's own food environment.


Traces the roots of Black agricultural history, specifically examining African indigenous understandings of the connections between the natural and the spiritual. This article looks at specific Black farmers and how they are using farming to connect with their spiritual ancestry and agricultural heritage.


Analyzes the dimensions of structural racism that create and sustain areas of limited access to healthy food in low-income communities.


Focuses on the growing number of Black female farmers in agriculture. Also features an ethnography of seven Black women in agriculture near Atlanta, Georgia.

Focuses on Latina women and their contribution to the U.S. food supply chain.


Delves into the intricacies of the federal H-2A guestworker program, which allows foreign workers rightful employment in various farm-related jobs.


Gives an overview of recent food access research, demonstrating why disadvantaged communities commonly lack healthy food retail options and examining outcomes and potential solutions. The report acknowledges the growth of food access research but notes the continued need for work in this area.


Explores the author’s connection with colonialism and food justice and the effects of the author’s ancestors moving to the United States.


Examines issues related to economic viability and paid and unpaid work in three alternative food initiatives in Boston, Massachusetts. Three assessment standards are used in the analysis.


Discusses the various ways that race shapes people’s lives, including racialized outcomes of food production, processing, and consumption.
Bohm, M. (2017). Urban agriculture in and on buildings in North America: The unfulfilled potential to benefit marginalized communities. *Built Environment, 43*(3), 434–363. [dx.doi.org/10.2148/benv.43.3.343](dx.doi.org/10.2148/benv.43.3.343)

Presents findings from a qualitative study of 19 urban agriculture sites that assessed the socioeconomic context of project sites, nonfood benefits generated, the produce-distribution mechanism, financing mechanisms, the nature of agricultural labor, the food produced, and the productivity of the site.


Focuses on the challenges faced by and the resilience of Black, Latino, Native, and Asian farmers in the United States.


Documents the scope and detail of employment abuses and safety-related issues facing U.S. crop-based farmworkers. The inventory catalogs current (as of 2016) federal workplace protections and public data on safety and enforcement of those protections.


Examines the way social movements of community food security, food sovereignty, and food justice are organized in order to fight to fairly distribute food while simultaneously reinscribing whiteness and patriarchal power. The authors argue that in order to correct this pattern, we must relocate our social movement goals and practices within a decolonizing and feminist leadership framework to highlight inclusive and just movements and scholarship.


A curation of five articles documenting evidence of racism in the U.S. restaurant industry.


When an area is designated a food desert, the typical policy response is to build a new supermarket. However, the authors argue that residents who live in food deserts have often developed their own ways to access affordable healthy food and that supermarket interventions could actually disrupt low-cost healthy food options in some cases.

Follows various food justice organizations in their work in low-income neighborhoods of color to develop community-based solutions to drive systemic social change around food. The author explores the possibilities and limitations of this approach in the age of the nonprofit industrial complex.


Research commentary exploring how values-based agrifood supply chains (VBSCs) incorporate fair labor practices—one of the aspirational values of VBSCs—into their business models. Analyzing eight case studies from a USDA “agriculture of the middle” project, the authors suggest that farmworker issues (including low wages, lack of benefits, and dangerous working conditions) are largely ignored in the alternative agriculture movement, as opposed to other issues like food quality and environmentally friendly practices.


The authors argue that it is important for scholars and practitioners to be clear on how food justice differs from other efforts to seek an equitable food system and identify four nodes around which food justice organizing appears to occur: trauma/inequity, exchange, land, and labor. It sets the stage for the second article in the same journal (Slocum & Cadieux, 2015) on the practice of food justice in the United States.


Examines incubator initiatives for new, small-scale farmers, specifically how structural barriers such as land access can impede beginning farmers’ eventual transition to independent proprietorship. The study examines how sociocultural and relational constraints impede land access for former immigrant farmworkers aspiring to practice independent farming in California’s Central Coast region.


Outlines discrimination by the USDA and reviews five major U.S. agricultural discrimination court cases: two involving African American farmers and one each involving Native American farmers, Hispanic farmers, and female farmers.
Carrasquillo, N. (2011). Race and ethnicity from the point of view of farm workers in the food system. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts, 5*(1), 121-131. dx.doi.org/10.2979/racethmulglocon.5.1.121

Provides an analysis of U.S. agriculture and Latino farmworkers and the obstacles the workers confront within the food system. The author draws from his experiences working with CATA (El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas, or the Farmworkers Support Committee).


Explores the politics of food in African American communities and potential obstacles that producers of plant-based vegan “meat” may face when trying to expand into African American markets. The author gives a health-centered rationale as to why African Americans should strongly consider consuming plant-based meat as an alternative to animal flesh, examines three obstacles—access, marketing, and African American food culture—and offers solutions to these obstacles.


Provides a set of policy recommendations for President Barack Obama’s administration that will build equity and sustainability for all in the U.S. food system.


Demonstrates how women of color who choose to breastfeed often face structural barriers, including poor medical infrastructure, restrictive workplace policies, and a lack of community acceptance.


Discusses McDonald’s restaurants’ discriminatory policies toward Black franchise owners during the years between the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 and the Los Angeles riots in 1992. The article looks into how the “redlining” of these McDonald’s restaurants during this time period affected the poor and minority areas of Los Angeles.

Clark, J. K., Freedgood, J., Irish, A., Hodgson, K., & Raja, S. (2017). Fail to include, plan to exclude: Reflections on local governments’ readiness for building equitable community food systems. *Built Environment, 43*(3), 315–327. dx.doi.org/10.2148/benv.43.3.315

Examines the importance of addressing systemic challenges in communities, such as historic and cultural divides, racial disparities, and poverty, in order to most effectively build equitable food systems that benefit underserved community members.

Examines policies, plans, and research strategies related to urban agriculture in New York City. The study shows that urban agriculture resource needs remain and that associated race- and class-based disparities continue to be present.


Agroecosystems are different from natural ecological systems in that their goal is increased social value. The social value of any given agroecosystem is determined by the complex interplay of productivity, stability, sustainability, and equitability and the trade-offs among these components. The author includes examples of how these trade-offs played out in the origins of agriculture and continue to be seen in modern agriculture, including the impacts of land ownership, pollution, and food distribution on equitability.


Book about the decline of African American farmers between 1940 and 1974, due in large part to discriminatory practices at the USDA.


This paper discusses the implications of historical and contemporary racism within the field of planning in the United States and notes the opportunity to ameliorate these inequalities in the area of food systems planning. The author explores how the Food System Racial Equity Assessment tool can be used to prioritize racial equity in food systems planning processes.


Describes how to challenge and eliminate corporate power and structural racialization in the U.S. food system and society as a whole. This article also analyzes ways that public and private institutions are structured and how government programs are administered and operated in a way that marginalizes low-income communities and communities of color. The author argues that the Farm Bill is both a reflection and a driver of inequities in the food system today.

Provides a useful literature review on anti-racist food scholarship and analyzes the benefits of linking organic farming work to indigenous food sovereignty.


Commentary on how the alternative agriculture movement needs to address power imbalances, such as race, class, and citizenship, that put farmworkers at a disadvantage. The author suggests ways in which this shift may happen within the alternative agriculture movement and outlines a broad policy framework for change.


An overview of the *Garcia v. Vilsack* case, in which Hispanic farmworkers filed a lawsuit against the USDA for credit transaction and disaster benefit discrimination. The overview discusses the exhaustive measures the farmworkers took to argue their case. It also draws upon and reviews three other cases: one involving African American farmers, one involving Native American farmers, and one involving female farmers.


These case studies focus on the process of working with recent Latino immigrants in farmer trainings. The outside organizers inadvertently strengthened a culture of whiteness because they did not share the same goals as the Latino immigrant participants.


Uses an equity lens to examine the funding behind projects and programs related to food.


Takes a look at workers in U.S. food industry occupations: farmworkers (production), slaughterhouse and other processing facilities workers (processing), warehouse workers (distribution), grocery store workers (retail), and restaurant and food service workers (service).

The author uses the framework of “food oppression” to analyze the ways in which popular culture engages with the deleterious effects of fast food. Media delivering these messages often do not reach communities that are most affected, such as low-income Black and Latino communities. The author argues for an eradication of food oppression to improve health and life expectancy in these communities, suggesting that activists must lobby for drastic changes in law, policy, and education as mounted attacks on food oppression happen through litigation, education, lobbying, and community-based organizations.


Explores the concept of food oppression through the USDA’s role in the milk industry.


An in-depth look at the relationship Black women have with breastfeeding and infant formula. The author examines how history shaped the problem of breastfeeding and infant formula use, beginning with slavery; the evolution of infant feeding practices; the rise of the role of pediatricians and lactation consultants as experts in relation to mothers; the medicalization and whitening of motherhood; and the relationship between overt racism and structural inequality.


Although the rapidly growing food sector in the United States has created jobs, most of those jobs are minimum-wage positions with no opportunity for advancement. By creating “good food jobs,” cities not only increase employment but also improve working conditions for food workers and increase access to healthy and affordable food. The authors use New York City as an example of a city where good food jobs are increasing and recommend strategies for other cities.


This short brief from the coordinator of the Inter-Institutional Network for Food, Agriculture, and Sustainability (INFAS) delineates the way this working group has shifted its engagement with labor in the food system, concluding that it must focus on historical and institutional barriers that constrain food system sustainability.

Provides an inside perspective on how certain cultural practices within American food justice movements perpetuate oppression in the very organizations that are fighting to end such oppression. The author suggests a shift in focus to include more activist involvement in cultural work.


Presents the multi-institutional racial inequalities in the food system and looks at access, production, distribution, and labor and affordability issues in the food system.


A review of 115 sources since 1971 outlining research on Black farms and land loss.


Describes the ways that the agricultural system we have today is steeped in the legacy of plantation culture and settler colonialism. The authors posit that with direct activism, higher education faculty can support the food justice movement through scholarly work that integrates the study of agriculture, land, and labor through race, class, and gender perspectives.


Opens up the dialogue behind food justice, taking a closer look at the history of food justice and current attempts to change the system.


Examines the condition of Black farmers in the southern United States, focusing on their challenges and successes in the face of structural inequalities as well as grassroots organizations aimed at the sustainable livelihood of Black farmers.

Argues how projects aiming at bringing “good food” to others often reflect the “White desires” of the creators of the projects rather than the communities served.


This study surveyed managers of farmers markets and community-supported agricultural enterprises and found a general discomfort and an “if they only knew” approach to the lack of involvement of people of color in the local food movement.


Critiques the current state of the alternative food movement, focusing on the cultural politics of alternative food and analyzing the coding of the alternative food movement that has led to racial inequities. The author also calls for more inclusivity than is found in current attempts to transform the food system.


Challenges the food justice concept that cites obesity and diabetes in communities of color as evidence of injustice. Given that most obesity rankings are based on White bodies, and noting the distinction between racialism and racism, this article explores ways to think about biological difference along the lines of race without reducing it to genetics.


Focuses on the economic benefits associated with healthy food retail, particularly in low-income communities. This report looks at several types of healthy food retail strategies, including urban agriculture, community gardens, healthy corner stores, and federal nutrition assistance programs.


Examines the growth of urban agriculture in the United States. The authors demonstrate how urban farming has a plethora of benefits for communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, including improved access to healthy food, economic growth, and community development.

Identifies and addresses the faults found in alternative food movements as well as social injustice in the labor sector of large food corporations.


Examines federal court cases that address marketplace racial discrimination and accompanying legal issues and relevant legislation.


Looks at the situation of Latino dairy farmworkers in Wisconsin to describe how recent escalations in immigration enforcement and changes in migration practices affected the ability of the state to continue to serve two of its key “productive” functions within agriculture.

Harrison, J. L., & Lloyd, S. E. (2013). New jobs, new workers, and new inequalities: Explaining employers’ roles in occupational segregation by nativity and race. *Social Problems, 60*(3), 281-301. [dx.doi.org/10.1525/sp.2013.60.3.281](dx.doi.org/10.1525/sp.2013.60.3.281)

Through a case study of labor relations on Wisconsin dairy farms, the authors explore why employers engage in occupational segregation along lines of race, gender, and nativity. They ask how these workplaces have become segregated, what employers’ roles in this process have been, and why, in particular, employers have engaged in practices that contribute to workplace inequalities.


Explains how urban agriculture and the passage of AB 551, a California State Assembly bill that provided an innovative policy tool to incentivize the use of undeveloped urban land for agriculture and to advance food justice, may wind up simply serving the interests of propertied classes, who are usually White.


Examines ethnic segregation in the U.S. food system traced back to its roots as an output-maximizing system, calling for a systematic approach to policy making to better incorporate research and communities.

Argues that lack of healthy food access is one factor contributing to the high number of diabetes cases in communities of color.

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Discusses the efforts taken by five U.S. cities to ensure healthy food access within urban communities that have minority and low-income populations.

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A look into the role food system workers, farmers, and farmworkers play in the United States’ Northeastern food system.

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Discusses the causes and effects of Black rural land loss perpetrated by the USDA. Leaders and activism efforts are documented to understand how Black farmers regained their land and prosperity.

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Recounts the progression from slavery to land ownership for Black Americans, showing how systemic variables undermined Black Americans’ land and farm ownership rights along the way.

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A commentary on the marginalization of migrant workers in the Okanagan Valley agriculture industry. It covers the history of racism in this particular agricultural industry and problems faced by migrant workers in the industry today. The authors recommend possible ways to ease the challenges faced by migrant workers in the Okanagan Valley.

Examines the experience of Mexican migrant agricultural laborers, particularly the effects of anti-immigrant sentiment and racism on health and health outcomes. The author’s “embodied methodology” provides an intimate approach to migrant laborers’ experiences with border politics.


Looks at the history of corporate food regimes and their impact on vulnerable populations.


Summarizes the concept of food justice and explains its role in influencing food systems change.


Highlights the present connection between the greater capitalist structure and the food system and how this connection has encouraged the racial and social class discrimination present in the food system today. The critique of neoliberal capitalism in the food system shows how public spaces have been changed to private ones.


The first in a series of articles about how racism and our food system have co-evolved, how present-day racism operates within the food system, and what we can do to dismantle racism and build a fair, just, and sustainable food system that works for everyone. The authors describe how racism manifests in the food system and how capitalism and caste systems are present in food justice work.


Evaluates the effectiveness of defining communities’ needs and creating solutions based on exclusive definitions. The Fresh Stop Market model is also discussed as an example of a possible solution to food access and equity issues.

A study conducted as a collaborative effort with a Native American community in northern California to assess barriers to healthy and culturally appropriate food access. Using a framework called the Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments (THRIVE), the community in the study determined racial injustice as a major barrier and worked to propose policy changes to improve food access.


Examines racial, social, and environmental injustices for rural citizens in eastern North Carolina and near the Fukushima Daiichi site in Japan.


Specifically looks at the concept of worker equity in the food and agriculture industry. This report uses the top 100 U.S. companies in food and agriculture as a way to analyze worker oversight and disclosure, equity policies and practices, compensation, health and safety, supply chain worker treatment, and access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.


Discusses the disproportionate access to fast food rather than fresh food options in Black neighborhoods.


Identifying and using an analysis of power and oppression structures, this commentary focuses on why studies of inclusion in food systems perpetuate both privilege and disadvantage.


Examines food deserts in Nashville, Tennessee, and their possible health effects on poor and minority communities. The article focuses on five different stores, the racial population surrounding the different stores, and the obesity rates among the various populations.

Explores ways that community-engaged teaching and research partnerships can generate meaningful change for food worker justice. The authors note community-campus collaborations as unique opportunities to build alliances that strengthen food justice work and offer five recommendations for effective collaboration.


Presents proof of the discriminatory purpose behind the exclusion of farmworkers from the maximum hours and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The author examines the full role of discrimination in excluding agricultural labor from the New Deal and present knowledge of the roles played by, and the relationship between, agriculture and racial discrimination. Black workers, Hispanic workers, and members of other “discrete and insular” racial groups make up a majority of farmworkers affected by the overtime exclusion, positing that the continued disparate impact of the agricultural exclusion is fact.


Summarizes “good food” and “good jobs,” two movements that function parallel to one another, although the lack of both good food and good jobs negatively impacts communities of color. The report suggests that food and labor groups actually have fundamental shared interests and should work together.


Uses data and personal worker accounts to highlight and illustrate racial and gender bias in five sections of the U.S. food system: farming, food processing, food distribution, food retail, and restaurants.


Reflective essay looking at the Good Food Purchasing Policy developed by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council in 2012 and how public procurement can create a more just and equitable food system.


Examines how access to and acceptance of good quality food is shaped and changed through the process of gentrification.

Examines how beginning farmer apprenticeship programs may reinforce inequitable structural conditions by creating barriers to entry for historically underrepresented groups of people or individuals from low socioeconomic status groups. The authors recommend several approaches for more equitable apprenticeship models.


Brings together academic literature centered on food and addresses racial and class inequalities as well as the concept of neoliberalism in the food system.


Outlines a study done with focus groups of Latino residents in San José, California to hear directly the barriers they face in purchasing healthy fresh foods, not solely limited to access issues. Participants stated that high prices determined in which stores they would shop and which types of products they would or would not buy.


Identifies and addresses the whiteness that is socio-spatially created in farmers markets in California’s Central Valley region.


Examines inequalities in the food system and particularly notes the impacts these inequalities have on urban African American communities.


Confronts the issue of defining good food and the discrepancies associated with that definition. Examines racial assumptions in food systems education, providing an alternative educational framework as a proposed solution.

The author uses an equity lens to explore the spatial relationship between urban agriculture projects and food-insecure neighborhoods as well as how urban agriculture fits within the urban built environment.


Demonstrates the important role agriculture plays in the Midwestern economy and argues that the United States’ current immigration policies fail to serve the needs of the agriculture sector, including year-round immigrant labor in crop and livestock production as well as agricultural processing, handling, and manufacturing.


Examines racial and income composition and healthy food availability. The authors explore the extent to which physical and social isolation affects healthy food availability for groups marginalized by race and class, using Topeka, Kansas, as a site location for study. They find that low-income Black neighborhoods have the lowest levels of healthy food availability.


An exploration of unjust treatment of Asian immigrants in agriculture over the span of more than a century, starting with working-class Chinese in the late 1800s, expanding on Japanese farmers in the early 1900s, and ending with the struggles of the Hmong people from 1975 to 2009. The section on Hmong workers focuses on the burdensome implementation of workers’ compensation laws.


This article explores the ways that farmworkers, many of whom come from a culture deeply rooted in food and agricultural practices, cope with food insecurity by utilizing their agricultural and nutritional knowledge, which challenges racialized assumptions that people of color do not know what “good food” is.


Introduces the empowerment model as an effective effort to fight food injustice within non-racial-minority communities and communities of color.

Discusses the Fresh Stop project taking place in Louisville, Kentucky. The project is designed to increase the number of healthy food options in urban communities where access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited.


Discusses the school-to-prison pipeline as a possible effect of poor food access and examines hip hop to understand its past, present, and potential uses for activism in urban areas.


A study of the Karuk Tribe of California and the hardships of their food environment. Specifically, the study examines how the Karuk people have been affected by institutional racism, racial formation, racial projects, environmental injustice, food insecurity, genocide, relocation, and forced assimilation.


The findings set forth in this report are intended to give communities and policy makers insight into food access issues in Santa Clara County, California. The findings are a starting point because they suggest that people’s health and the environment can be negatively affected not only by eating too many animal products but also by eating foods tainted with agricultural chemicals, which additionally have a serious impact on the workers who pick our food.


Looks at the current state of access to healthy foods in Vallejo, California, the largest city in Solano County. The authors examine the availability of food in stores in Vallejo to understand the types of establishments that are in business and to determine the types of food available for purchasing.


Examines how food access among people of color has been affected by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Increasing healthy food options through activism is also discussed.

Traces the history of the Black Panther Party’s (BPP) platform, which focuses on food justice and free food for all. The BPP’s Breakfast for Children Program paved the way for other food programs in the United States and served as a form of liberation, which current food justice organizations can learn from.


A description of the Black Farmers and Urban Gardeners Conference held in Detroit, Michigan, in 2014. The various topics of the conference engage Africanness and the food justice frame and politics in the food justice movement.


Examines gender and racial barriers linked to diversity requirements of land-grant institutions in the United States.


Contains a timeline that re-examines the evolution of the local food movement in the United States in the context of the four elements of good food: healthy, fair, affordable, and “green.” The report narrative and timeline frames multiracial and multicultural contributions to “good food.”


A commentary that offers three perspectives from a land-grant university (campus staff, field extension staff, and graduate student), outlining structural racism in the local food movement, identifying the potential promise of the Michigan Good Food Charter to address racial equity issues in the food system, and suggesting tools that land-grant university food system researchers and educators can use to begin to understand structural racism.

Explores the “exceptional one percent” of people in the United States who are both farmworkers and business owners. Within this small subset, Hispanics make up a disproportionately small percentage, even though nearly 80% of U.S. farmworkers are Hispanic. The article uses two case studies as examples of how Hispanic farmworkers can gain more entrepreneurial opportunities.


Serves as a toolkit and resource guide for developing equitable food hubs in communities.


Argues that veganism inherently excludes people of color because of racist ideology and practices. Communities of color lack access to the same healthy food resources as White communities.


Analyzes two case studies of community food organizations in Seattle, Washington, to identify the ways in which inclusion initiatives fail to address power asymmetries within communities and community organizations. It includes a review of Black geographies literature and highlights ways for food activists to revamp their efforts to truly encourage racial inclusion in the food system.


Describes a yearlong study of individuals selected by the Northern Michigan University Center for Native American Studies as research subjects for the Decolonizing Diet Project, an exploratory study of the relationships between humans and indigenous foods of the Great Lakes region. Data from this study provides insight into biological, cultural, and legal/political dimensions of these complex relationships. The author draws on regularly scheduled health checks, online journaling, video interviews, and photos to paint a picture of this collective indigenous eating experience.

Identifies the ways in which low wages in the food service industry disproportionately affect people of color and women. The report highlights the role of the National Restaurant Association and Darden, the world’s largest full-service restaurant corporation, and how an increase in the minimum wage and tipped sub-minimum wage would help increase race and gender equity in the food service industry.


Focuses on the distinctions between alleviating symptoms of injustice in urban agriculture (disparate food access or environmental amenities) and disrupting structures that underlie them. Despite their positive impacts, urban agriculture systems may reinforce inequities that practitioners and supporters aim to address. This article reports on a two-year study in New York City on the race- and class-based disparities among urban agriculture practitioners citywide. It concludes with recommendations for urban agriculture scholars and supporters to advance social justice at structural levels.


Outlines the interplay between good food, good jobs, and race throughout the entire food value chain, including production, processing, distribution, retail, and waste.


Maps state-level labor standards (minimum wage, overtime, rest periods, and meal periods) for farmworkers in the United States. Whereas federal labor laws protect most workers, farmworkers are largely excluded from such protections despite the demanding and dangerous nature of the work. The authors discuss the practice of agricultural exceptionalism, which puts farmworkers at a distinct disadvantage because of their race, ethnicity, and/or citizenship status.


A brief introduction to the Decolonize Your Diet project and its role in a much larger movement to reclaim traditional foodways as a form of resistance to ongoing colonization. The author explores how meals are political acts and how cooking can intervene in systems of White supremacy and capitalism.

Describes how the food justice movement critiques structural oppression responsible for injustices throughout the agrifood system. The article provides a detailed case study of the People’s Grocery, a food justice organization in West Oakland, California, to show how anti-oppression ideology provides the foundation upon which food justice activists mobilize.


Commentary that provides a personal account of research on food systems that stresses the importance of solidarity and sweat equity in the fight for food justice. Reviews the importance of cooperation of researchers and communities to answer questions of social equity and structural inequalities that are ever changing.


Investigates food justice and restorative justice activists in Oakland, California, who are intervening at the point of reentry from the incarceration system. The author shows how the incarcerated geographies of former prisoners—that is, perspectives and experiences that are a result of the prison pipeline—motivate the formation of a restorative food justice.


Examines how two food groups, Planting Justice and East New York Farms, are working to promote food justice. The organizations are the focus of various practices and efforts used to tackle racial neoliberalism.


Examines the home food inventories of Oaxacan Mexican American and African American families of low socioeconomic status living in an urban area in New Jersey and compared to a sample of White households. The food supplies of the White households had significantly more calcium, vitamin A, and sugar and less total fat than the other two samples.


Speaks about the unacknowledged White privilege behind community food organizations where whiteness needs to be critically analyzed, particularly when working on projects that impact communities of color.

The author uses feminist and materialist theories to look behind progressive or liberal whiteness around the United States’ local and organic food movement and implications for communities of color.


Describes how, among practitioners and scholars, there has been an enthusiastic surge in the use of the term *food justice* but a vagueness on the particulars. The authors argue that vagueness manifests in overly general statements about ending oppression or morphs into outright conflation of the dominant food movement’s work with food justice. In focusing on trauma and inequity in the food system, the authors urge scholars and practitioners to be clear and accountable in their food justice practice.


Discusses a pesticide exposure event near Lake Apopka, Florida, and its social and health effects on the African American farmworkers living near the site.


Examines the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant franchise’s 2015 advertising campaign to identify and understand how the campaign perpetuates the American Dream mythology while contributing to the hunger-obesity paradox that exists in many low-income urban communities with a prevalence of fast food restaurants.


Discusses the background and impacts of the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, where in April 2014 the emergency manager and other state government officials made the decision to switch the source of the city of Flint’s water supply to the Flint River in an effort to cut costs. The author argues that strategic technocracy and racism were the central causes of this tragedy.

Explores the ways in which transforming the food system will transform the health of youth. Using lessons from the Civil Rights era, the author suggests how today's food justice movement can organize with a focus on a new, youth-led, multiracial coalition, which could unleash the voice and energy of those with the most to gain from transforming the food system—young people.


A commentary that examines place-based interventions as a means to attain equity in the food system, calling first for an equitable and inclusive environment and second for a historical understanding on which to base this transformation.


Describes the discriminatory actions of the EPA in choosing not to prioritize cleanup of hazardous waste sites on Native American lands, thereby affecting the local food supply of the affected tribes. The author reviews the history of the federal–Indian trust relationship and describes the responsibilities of the government in protecting Native people and their lands.


The Delmarva Peninsula is a Mid-Atlantic region on the eastern U.S. coast made up of 14 counties across Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Interviews conducted for this report show that access to affordable capital, infrastructure, and labor were the greatest needs of Black farmers working in the Delmarva Peninsula region.


Examines possible reasons for the disbandment of two farm cooperatives created for Hmong refugees and provides a general overview of the Hmong resettlement experience in Minnesota in the 1980s.

Through qualitative analysis, this research explores the race–class tensions around food and gardening in a low-income urban neighborhood in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.


Healthy and nutritious foods are often unavailable in low-income communities, meaning that residents suffer diet-related health problems. This report offers case studies of two cities—Detroit, Michigan, and Oakland, California—facing a lack of healthy food access and demonstrates ways both cities are working to improve their food systems.


This commentary calls for a combined objective and perceived view of food access to gain a more complete and accurate result from policies. The term access is broken into five categories to achieve this goal: acceptability, accessibility, accommodation, affordability, and availability.


Highlights the need for more culturally sensitive interventions about food in the Hispanic community to eliminate food access barriers related to linguistic and cultural disconnects.


Explores local food movements and practices in the South Carolina Lowcountry and discusses the increased benefits to White consumers compared to consumers of color.


Examines the contests over agricultural land in the South Carolina Lowcountry after the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War in the United States. The author argues that Black control over land and their labor threatened the region’s racial hierarchy.

The authors describe how climate change affects culturally important fungi, plant, and animal species, in turn affecting tribal sovereignty, culture, and economy. To understand potential adaptive strategies to climate change, the article also explores traditional ecological knowledge and historical tribal adaptive approaches in resource management and contemporary examples of research and tribal practices.

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Examines multiple food justice organizations in Louisville, Kentucky. The article focuses on the organizations’ efforts to address issues related to race and food access within their local food systems.


Explores reasons for the limited success of food movements in engaging with migrant farmworkers. The authors also discuss actionable ideas for improving farmworker health and equity in the areas of health and safety, farmworker recruitment and mobility, community building and social integration, and immigration policy.


The author shares the story of a woman in Detroit who started and maintains a community garden that is transforming her neighborhood. Many residents of Detroit have restricted access to fresh, healthy, affordable food, but the garden produces a harvest that is grown by and shared among community members. Given the state of affairs in Detroit, such as a reduction in city services and a declining population, the community garden is also a sign of strength, resilience, and self-reliance.


Explores the complex agricultural history of Black farmers. The author maintains that although agriculture has certainly oppressed African Americans for centuries, farming has also historically been a method of resistance for Black farmers, providing opportunities to rebuild and provide food for their families and, in so doing, gain their freedom. The author shares stories and insights from some historic and contemporary “freedom farmers.”

Analyzes the alternative food movement and its ties to the neoliberalist regime, arguing that the movement as it stands today benefits the dominant group, White middle- to upper-class citizens who are educated, and vastly excludes underserved populations. Through a course led by students at the University of Vermont, the authors examined the potential for the creation of an inclusive food movement.


Discusses how the Noyes Foundation is responding to racial and economic injustices inherent in the modern, industrial food system. The Foundation believes it is critical for historically marginalized people to be leaders in building a more sustainable food system and provides funding for related programs.


Food systems education has grown in the United States, but many such programs do not explicitly focus on the structural inequities that shape food systems and the experiences of food workers. The authors propose “critical food literacy” as a means for confronting these inequities and creating a more just food system.

Ron Finley, a native of South Central Los Angeles, discusses the importance of paying it forward to decrease the number of food deserts in his community. Finley started planting a “food forest” along the curb in front of his home. Not too long after, members of the community started complaining about this food forest, and Finley was issued a citation. This citation led to a public outcry for environmental justice, and the city council president raised a motion to amend the Residential Parkway Landscaping Guidelines and terminate fining for vegetable gardens. Finley’s garden project has expanded to about 20 gardens throughout the city, and it not only provides neighborhood residents with access to fresh fruits and vegetables but also engages community members to participate in growing food to feed themselves and their neighbors.


Shows the realities of how local and national political processes affect people who are attempting to provide food for their families. The documentary is about a threat by the City of Los Angeles to shut down a beloved 14-acre community garden and the impassioned, organized response from residents who rely on the garden for nourishment and for connecting with others in their community.


Chronicles the life of Cesar Chavez, American labor leader and civil rights activist, showing the triumphant journey Chavez took to unionize farmworkers’ wages and revolutionize the injustice of migrant workers in the United States.


Illustrates a story of intentional disenfranchisement of farm workers. Over 50 years ago, journalist Edward R. Murrow shared Harvest of Shame, which captured cruelty to farmworkers and their harsh living conditions. Throughout the updated documentary, farmworkers in North Carolina share stories that correlate to Murrow’s documentary.

Stephen Ritz, a teacher in the South Bronx, is striving to change the lives of his students by helping make food a solution and not a problem. Ritz is the founder of Green Bronx Machine, which teaches at-risk high school youth to grow lush gardens for food in what he describes as the most migratory community in America: the South Bronx. Ritz aims to teach students these skills not only to benefit their health but also to improve their performance in school and to give them an opportunity to earn an income. He and his students helped design the first “edible wall” in New York City. They received local and national attention for “Growing for Food Justice.”


This short film looks at the food system present in Arizona and other U.S. borderlands. Here, a diverse group of people come together and mitigate challenges the food system presents via food banks and community and home gardening.

TEDx Talks. (2014, March 11). The underlying racism of America’s food system: Regina Bernard-Carreno at TEDxManhattan [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0XG-ETxSfk

Regina Bernard-Carreno talks about the lack of healthy food options in her urban New York neighborhood and her “hunt” for good food options and initiatives in surrounding neighborhoods. She shares her experiences of this “hunt” as well as lessons learned for creating an inclusive food movement, which must start by including voices from the ground up.


Malik Yankini talks about the many ways racism causes inequity in the food system by creating structural barriers for people of color. Yankini gives examples from his hometown of Detroit, Michigan. He also includes suggestions for creating a more equitable food system, such as changing institutional policies and practices that uphold racism and supporting people of color in leadership roles.


Captures the positive and negative externalities happening throughout the city of Los Angeles, California. Throughout this city replete with food deserts and inundated with fast food restaurants, a diverse group of urban leaders is growing food sustainably. The documentary highlights the efforts of three city residents who are striving to make urban farming a success for themselves and their communities.