

Food Justice Talking Points

What is food justice?

Food justice is equitability in all parts of the food system, simply put, every person involved in the system whether growing food, processing food, or eating food is given a fair deal for their work or purchase both financially and according to their health.

"Food justice is everyone having enough to eat; healthy food for our children; food that doesn't contain harmful things that we don't know about; freedom to grow our own food; ability to buy food directly from farmers; fair wages for those who grow, cook and work with food." —Urban & Environmental Policy Institute

What is the food system?

The food system is every part of the process used to place food on our tables from the seeds used to grow our food to the laborers in the field to the trucks used to ship that food to a local grocery store or retailer for sale, etc. This system includes the following: growing, harvesting, processing (transforming or changing the food in some way), transporting, marketing, consuming and disposing of food and food packages¹.

Why is food justice important?

Food justice and food equity issues affect many of our family, friends, and neighbors and you. Farmers, ranchers, and fisherman/woman need a fair wage for their food in order to provide for their families and those they employ. The ability for workers to receive livable wages and work in a healthy environment in turn affect their ability to provide for their families.

Food travels an average 1300 miles before landing on your plate often using lots of fossil fuels to grow it, process it, and distribute it. Did you know food grown in San Diego is often shipped to other counties to be processed and prepared for market and then sent back to San Diego for purchase in local stores, if sent back to San Diego at all?

Policies and practices employed by governments and businesses can make unhealthy foods more affordable and prevalent than healthy foods, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, or can increase access to healthy foods grown in a manner that is good for the environment, worker, and eater. Did you know that fast food restaurants are more prevalent in low-income communities than high-income communities? The number of grocery stores and fresh produce venues are linked to a communities rate of obesity, which puts individuals at risk for type 2 diabetes. The prevalence and availability of healthy or unhealthy foods impacts our daily health and individuals risk for diseases like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Food Justice in City Heights & Possible Discussion Points

- Individuals in City Heights are at-risk for a number of preventable diet-related health conditions, much more so than many other communities in San Diego. Why do you think that is?
- Is it hard to buy healthy food on a budget in City Heights?
- What types of food are hard for you to find in City Heights?
- How can you or how would you like to eat just food on a budget?
- Do you think purchasing local food is important, why? Do you think food justice is important, why?

What can you do? & Possible Discussion Points

- **Vote with your dollar.** The money you spend on food tells farmers, retailers, and government what you think is important—local food, organics, etc.
- **Learn more about the issue.** Take the opportunity to learn more about food justice. Talk to your neighbors about issues they may face—cost and availability of healthy food, places to grow produce, etc.
- **Talk to your elected officials.** Politicians represent you and need to know your thoughts on issues. Contact your representatives to let them know that a just food system is important. Encourage them to adopt community garden and local food friendly policies. (Advocates are currently working in SD to encourage the city to adopt a community garden permit so people can more easily start public gardens.)
- **Be an advocate.** There are a number of food justice issues in your community. Pick an issue that you want to see change and work with others to make that change happen. For example, encourage schools to serve more fresh fruits and vegetables in compliance with their school wellness policy. Talk to neighbors about the importance of buying local.
- **Join the Food Justice Momentum Team.** The Mid-City CAN Food Justice Momentum Team is beginning efforts to plan for a 10 year initiative to improve the health, education, and safety of City Heights residents. We can't do this work without you. Participate in our Food Justice Momentum Team and help shape the health of your community and advocate for policies and practices that make it easier for you to purchase healthy, affordable, and just foods.

¹ <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/department/faculty/eames/foodsys/primer.html>