



how can we educate our communities to take action to make a just food system a right in the bay area?



June 11, 2010

participatory action research project  
created with the support of youth in focus



# WELCOME TO THE TEAM



Fresh Flava is a collaborative of young people that are high school and college age. We came together from a variety of social and food justice organizations in the Bay Area, such as Oakland Food Connection, Urban Sprouts, City Slickers, People's Grocery and Graze the Roof.

**aja minor-25**



Aja currently lives in San Leandro, eats strawberries and mac and cheese as often as possible and if she could go anywhere in the world it would be Amsterdam.

**felipe ramirez-18**



Felipes' favorite foods are apples and Mexican food, he lives in East Oakland, attends Oakland Unity High school and his ideal place to visit is Mexico.

**peter ruam-15**



Peter idolizes Peter Pan, would someday like to visit Disneyland, and currently lives in North Beach Chinatown in San Francisco. Peter attends Galileo and is apart of Urban Sprouts he most enjoys eating chocolate covered strawberries and hot pockets.

**jacobi perkins-21**



Jacobi is a representative from Peoples grocery, he lives in West Oakland, his favorite foods are mangoes and lasagna, and Paris is his dream place to visit.

**alex uribe-16**



Alex attends Oakland Unity High School, is apart of Oakland Food Connection(OFC), and currently lives in East Oakland. His favorite food is Watermelon and Mexican food and his favorite place to visit is Mexico.

**michelle golson-15**



Michelle would like to someday visit Paris, she lives in the Tenderloin district in San Francisco and attends George Washington High School. Michelle's favorite foods are mangoes and smothered potatoes.

dannae washington-20



Dannae works for Peoples Grocery and lives in East Oakland, her favorite foods are mangoes and Indian food and if she could travel to anywhere in the world it would be Europe.

chinasa porter-15



Chinasa attends Beacon day school, she represents city slicker farms and lives in Uptown in Oakland. If she could visit anywhere in the world it would be Thailand. Her favorite foods are strawberries and tacos.

melissa li-15



Melissa is a part of Glides' gardening program, she lives in the Tenderloin District, she attends Galileo High School, her ideal place to visit is China and her favorite foods are pomegranate and sushi.

nathifa wright-21



Nathifa would like to someday visit Japan, her favorite foods are cherries and chicken, and she is apart of City Slicker Farms.



## **W H A T W E W A N T E D T O R E S E A R C H I N**

We are conducting research on food access in the Bay Area and how to make our food system just. Through research conducted by our organizations and us, we have developed a passion want to change the way people eat! We have created a movie about food access, health and cooking and want to share it with youth, Food Justice organizations, the Government and our communities.

## **I F Y O U W A N T T O C O M M U N I T Y F O O D J U S T I C E O R G A N I Z A T I O N S**

We are all associated with difference food justice organization throughout the Bay. The purpose of the research project was to get youth from different organizations working together. An external organization (Youth In Focus) alerted each of our organizations about an opportunity for youth, and chose two youth from each organization. We applied, we interviewed and got in! We researched topics and ideas and learned about each other and our organizations.

## **I F Y O U W A N T T O C O M M U N I T Y F O O D J U S T I C E O R G A N I Z A T I O N S**

Our first meeting was in October. In our meetings we discussed and research the issues each of us was working in, urban gardens, food access, agribusiness and other topics. From this research we came to two realizations. 1) We realized there was a shortage of grocery stores in low-income areas in the Bay. 2) We realized there is an over abundance of liquor stores in low-income areas in the Bay along with dietary related diseases and problems like obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc. 3) In our preliminary research we realized that organizations and resources exist that are trying or already changing this situation. These organizations are trying to make healthy fresh organic food accessible in low-income areas. And we need to get the word out. People need to know what we know.

## **O U R C O M M U N I T Y F O O D J U S T I C E O R G A N I Z A T I O N S**

We decided that our research would be based on trying to find a way to educate the community about food justice. More specifically wanted:

- ➔ More people organizing to take action
- ➔ Fast food demand to decrease
- ➔ Community Garden demand to increase
- ➔ To get media attention

COMMUNITY JUSTICE MOVEMENT: COMMUNITY JUSTICE... ..

How can we educate our communities to take action to make a just food system a right in the Bay Area???

WHAT IS A JUST FOOD SYSTEM?...

We define a just food system as a food system where the food is local, fresh, affordable, organic, where those involved in the production and distribution are not exploited.



From talking with people involved in the food justice movement, we learned that a truly just food system is:

- ✓ **Owned by the people**
- ✓ **Understood by the people: the people are educated about their food, where it comes from, who makes it and how to cook it**
- ✓ **Accessible, affordable and healthy for everyone**
- ✓ **Shared**
- ✓ **As culturally relevant as possible**
- ✓ **Locally grown without pesticides**



*"Food Justice can't be decided far away by foundations, its something that is going to look a little different in each community because it needs to be driven by the people who are living right there" - Gavin Raders, Co-Founder, Planting Justice*

*"I define it through action so food not just for us but everybody ensuring that we all have access to it in a number of ways and we all take on roles of protectors of food as a resource and ways of keeping our communities together" - Jason Harvey, founding Director, Oakland Food Connection*

*"Equal access to benefits of healthy food. Protection from the harm of destructive food systems like mono cropping and pesticides and things that are unhealthy to people. Equal access to benefits and equal protection from harm." - Emily Kirsch, Lead Organizer, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Convener of the Oakland Climate Action Coalition*

*"Its assuring that all people regardless of background, socio-economic status, however much money you make, where you live...not only have access to the freshest food, preventive medicine, but that we also have a say in which role we want to play in the food system, whether we want to grow the food, where we wanna buy it, who we want to support. Own it, control it, make the decisions...." - Gerardo Marin, Co-Manager, Farm Fresh Choice*

*"Food justice is about us having access to knowledge and decision making power in our food system...recognizing that food is a part of the commons, that growing our food is dependent on having land, and having access to land. Having water that we can all use, and air that we can all breath. And we do not have equal access to those factors. Getting to a place where we all have access, honor our existence."- Navina Khanna, Food Justice Activist*

*"In addition to access, one of the critical aspects is that the farmerworkers, the people who are producing and distributing it are treated with dignity and respect every step of the way, that means fair wages, that means protection from the harms traditionally associated with production and distributions..The food justice angle has to include how we treat animals."- Aaron Lehmer, Network Development Director, Bay Localize*

## **SUMMARY**

From our research we have come to the conclusion that education is important for achieving a just food system, and that a just food system is possible. All people in the Bay Area, but especially low-income people of color living in urban areas, want to know about which foods are healthy, good for the earth, affordable, where to access them and how to change the way they eat. Food Justice activists, Food Justice organizations, Government and Fresh Flava can do a lot to educate our communities to help create a just food system.

We identified that most people (64% of the people surveyed) do want to change how they eat, but do not know how to cook or what resources are available for accessing affordable food. In response to this finding, we created a pilot cooking show. We have also found that people like to learn by hands on, practical experience. Cooking classes are a great option for getting people to eat better because we found that people learn best through practical active experiences.

Community events and activities that target all the senses are a great way to get the community educated. Block parties, for example, can have musical performances, workshops, artist booths, cooking demonstrations as well as reading material. They present an opportunity to address all learning styles. In order to see food justice in the Bay Area, all methods of outreach must be used, media, print, peer-to-peer conversations, and workshops should be used. Once people are educated about the crisis, people need to be able to access to the resources needed to change their habits. There are currently programs, and resources that are available, but based on our research we have found that people are not aware of the available resources.

Government, Food Justice organizations, activist and Fresh Flava should collaborate to find ways to educate people about the resources and make them more accessible to the people that need it most. Educating the people about the food crisis in our community, then about the available resources are the first steps to seeing a healthier, more just food system in the Bay Area.

## COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION

We, first identified what we saw in our community in the way of unhealthy food and food injustice. Again we noticed an absence of grocery stores and plenty of liquor stores. We then identified what our ideal community would look like. That community had more grocery stores, more community gardens, and cheaper food. We then identified what was needed to make our ideal visions happen. Each of us thought about the process and came up with our own topics to research. We decided that our research would be on how to change the way the community ate and what the community knew about the food they eat.

We decided we would talk to young people, food justice organizations, policymakers, and low-income people because we see significant change happening with these communities. We decided to survey 300 people young, old, rich and poor about how they liked to learn, their definition of a just food system, and their ideas about health. We decided to conduct interviews with food justice organizations and policymakers to get detailed information about why the community is not aware of the resources available, what resources are available, and what needs to be done to educate The Bay.

We had four focus groups with other organizations to get ideas on what people thought. We also made a survey that had all our questions that we wanted to ask people, and that really helped us in the process. We use the focus groups to get a lot of information from just a few food justice activists who have been in the movement for a long time.



We surveyed 327 people of the Bay Area, with focus on low-income people of color and youth, who don't have access to healthy food. Out of the 327 surveys, 143 said yes or skipped the question about receiving Government Assistance. We want

this population of people to be informed about healthy food, we wanted to learn from them so we could better help them. We then had to input all the data from the surveys into SurveyMonkey, and we transcribed all the videos from the focus group.

## **some of the people who came to our focus groups:**

- Leo O'Farrell Food Stamp Program Director, San Francisco Human Services Agency
- Liz Lerma, Acting Superintendent, Bureau of Urban Forestry, San Francisco
- Julie Cummins, Director of Education, The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)
- Audrey Roderick, Community Programs Manager, Urban Sprouts
- Wendy Huang Landerholm, Garden Educator, Urban Sprouts
- Maya Director, Graze the Roof
- DeAngelaDeAngela Cooks, FYCC Teen Lead Teacher, Glide Family Youth and Childcare Center
- Nikki Henderson, Executive Director, Peoples Grocery
- Shilpa Jain, the Education and Outreach Coordinator for Other Worlds
- Hank Herrera, President, The Center for Popular Research, Education and Policy and organizer for Rooted in Community
- Emily Kirsch, Lead Organizer, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Convener of the Oakland Climate Action Coalition
- Navina Khanna, Food Justice Activist
- Aaron Lehmer, Network Development Director, Bay Localize
- Gerardo Marin, Co-Manager, Farm Fresh Choice
- Nakia Dillard, Farm Fresh Choice
- David Roach, Founding Director, Mo' Better Foods
- Vigi Molfino, Cooking Instructor, People's Grocery
- Jason Harvey, Founding Director, Oakland Food Connection
- Gavin Raders, Co-founder Planting Justice
- Haleh Zandi, Co-founder Planting Justice
- OYES - Oakland Youth Evaluaters Society
- Grind for the Green



***"Pre World War 2, a large percentage of American families grew their own vegetables, raised their own chickens and small livestock. There was a corporate boom, where food became completely industrialized, where huge companies were convinced that was better and their former self sufficiency was an inconvenience, or worse, a signal of being lower class." Anonymous Survey Taker***

## DATA ANALYSIS



During a hellish, six hour long Saturday we determined that the information we were looking for, needed to offer a practical, applicable solution that as a group we could execute. We then divided into groups and highlighted what we thought was important and sorted them into different findings. We then looked for evidence to support them. On another day we examined our research findings and did a brain storm on what we wanted to suggest to people, how to create a just food system, and those became our recommendations.

## LIMITATIONS

We had a few limitations:

- We should have asked how often people shop where they shop.
- We didn't have enough money to provide transportation and food for everyone.
- Every week was another adventure, and another challenge, meeting at a different site.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We have learned many a lesson working with each other in the several months. Some lessons were profound, while other were, practical. Here are a few:

- How to take BART
- Important to balance group and individual work
- There is more that happens offstage than onstage in filming
- To love my team members
- To stay committed
- How to do research
- Meet more in San Francisco
- Do more with more effort and better attendance
- Start the film earlier

# OUR RICH DATA

## Finding 1:

# People in the Bay Area lack healthy food due to money, location, and racism

## Supporting Data:

→ 34.4% of the people of color surveyed said that the food they eat is "sometimes healthy" versus 61.8% of the white people surveyed who said that the food they eat is "healthy most of the time." One survey participant said, *"Many reasons people don't have equal access to healthy food is because of racism", and "People don't have equal access to healthy food because of socio-economic, prejudicial, and historical reasons etc."*

→ Many survey participants talked about money: *"Some people might not have enough money to buy healthy food." "Things are just so expensive I always have to watch out what I'm buying." "I couldn't imagine how to support a family with healthy food if I was low-income." "I believe that those on government assistance tend to receive food that is less fresh and filled with preservatives, too much sugar and fat." "Buying organic, healthy produces are usually very pricey, unless you have your own garden, not many people are rich enough to care about eating healthy."*

→ 63% of people surveyed eat fast food because it's cheap.

→ 45% of the people surveyed said that location is either "sometimes, often, or always a problem," which affects their ability to get food. Survey participants said, *"I live in a food desert," "the problem is relying on 1500 miles distance to supply us with food, from farm to plate which is typically what's going on." "Many grocery store chains don't set up shops in low-income areas, leaving those neighborhoods without food options beyond the fast food chains and corner store snacks that are available in their neighborhoods"* -Anonymous survey takers



## Finding 2:

**In order to move forward to create a just food system in the Bay Area the people that live here need to be informed about which foods are healthy, good for the earth, and affordable, and where to access them.**

## Supporting Data:

- 64.9% of the people surveyed said that education can create change towards having better food in our communities. *Survey participants said, "Not every people have a knowledge in eating healthy, I learn to eat healthy food from my raw foodiest/vegan/vegetarian friends, but not many people have friends who care for what they're eating."*
- 55% of the survey participants either know a "little bit or nothing" about where their food comes from.
- When asked what you need to know to make food justice a reality, 68.8% of people surveyed wanted to know what food was healthy, 58.6% wanted to know what food is good for the earth, and 41.7% wanted to know where community gardens are. Survey participants replied, *"How to get myself to want to make the changes, and friends to help", "Why school food is bad," and "How to make real changes"*.



### Finding 3:

**Most people in the Bay Area are not aware of the resources available to obtain healthy foods.**

#### Supporting Data:

- 41.7% of 19-25 year olds and 39.3% of 13-18 year olds do not know about organizations creating community gardens.
- Over half of the people surveyed do not know about cooking class available.
- 43% of people surveyed don't know about available healthy food information.
- 53% of the survey participants did not know about available gardening classes.

***"In San Francisco half of the people who are eligible for food stamps are not applying"*** -

Leo O'Farrell Food Stamp Program Director, San Francisco Human Services Agency



***"People don't use their resources because they don't know about them...they don't even know what the resources are"*** -

Liz Lerma, Acting Superintendent, Bureau of Urban Forestry, San Francisco Department of Public Works.

#### Finding 4:

**Most residents of the Bay Area who are low-income would eat healthier if they knew how to cook fresh foods.**

#### Supporting Data:

- 63.9% said they need to know how to cook healthy food to make food justice a reality.
- 54% said learning about food choices through cooking classes appeals to them.
- When asked why they think people go to fast-food restaurants, 32.5% of the survey participants said that they have no home cooked meals available and responded: *"No cooking skills", "People probably don't know how to cook", "Lack of culinary knowledge."*
- When asked how would you educate the community to take action to make food justice a right? Audre, the Community Programs manager at Urban Sprouts said *"Talk about how you cook, how do you use whole ingredients."*
- When asked what you need to know to make food justice a reality, a survey participant replied, *"How to make food healthy, but fast and to taste good".*
- *"City Slickers is doing really amazing things, bringing fresh as-local-as-you-get food to the neighborhood, but its also hard to help people eat better when, for example, they don't know how to cook veggies..."* - anonymous survey participant



## Finding 5:

**People learn best about the foods they eat through art, visual and hands on projects, and experiences.**

### Supporting Data:

- 65.6% of the people surveyed said they learn by doing hands on projects while only 24% said they learn from lectures.
- When asked how they want to learn about food choices, 54% of the survey participants said they want to learn through cooking classes, 21.8% through music, 18.8% through performances, and 29.9% through gardening classes.
- When asked what other ways people like to learn, participants responded, *"People telling their life stories, music (song lyrics), "multimedia projects", "art helps people"* and multiple people mentioned experience, experimenting and conversations.
- We asked food justice activists and educators in our focus group about how they would educate the community about healthy food, this is what they said:

*"Who are folks listening to? Because if this person is reaching everyone you want to talk to, maybe you should... ask them to talk about carrots" - Nikki Henderson, the Executive Director of People's Grocery*

*"Bringing more comedy and joy touches people... the stupidest thing you have ever seen will get 5 million hits. As for teaching, most people get turned off...lets bring in the arts, lets bring in performance, lets bring theatre, circus, music, lets use them... a party is a big plus to getting people.- "Shilpa Jain, the Education and Outreach Coordinator for Other Worlds*

*"I think that the best way [to learn] is to get there first hand. I'd love to organize tours of the cheetos factory. It's important to know what's going into our bodies, ideally going there is a good way to learn, and then you can pass on the information." - Julie Cummins, Director of Education, The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)*

*"I would do a lot of planning, like a fair, I would call it a food in, eat in. Going back to the 60's 70's where they would have a love in. At that food-in I'd have a march. Get all people to get out in streets and talk about food justice. The parade would end at location with tables from different organizations and different people involved with food. The march would attract publicity (media). People that go would get education about food justice movements. It could also be party, celebrating what you are doing. You could have Connection between people and food and animals, let people know where their food comes from." - Liz Lerma, Acting Superintendent, Bureau of Urban forestry, San Francisco*

## Finding 6:

**In order to solve major issues surrounding the foods we eat including access, affordability, and lack of education in the bay area, communities need to work together to create the change they want to see and take back control our food systems.**

## Supporting Data:

- When asked what types of actions can create change towards having better food in our communities, 47.4% of the people surveyed said backyard gardens and 49.3% said community gardens.
- Survey participants further responded by saying, *"Cooperative economic models, neighborhood owned stores, local distribution center, connection to local growers, and access to vacant lots to grow food", "Perhaps if the community came together to create co-ops", "grow your own sell your own", "Perhaps if the community came together to create co-op groceries, community food gardens, or organized to persuade grocery stores to open branches", "Sustainable gardens and better management of uneaten food and distribution", "These liquor stores can and should be replaced with fresh food markets right on our city blocks and corners."*
- The food justice activists had a lot to say about coming together:

*"We have a right as consumers as residents, to pull our resources together and take a building and turn it into a grocery store...if you identify the resources that are in your community, they are there, sometimes its just a matter of knocking on those doors"*  
David Roach, Founding Director, Mo' Better Foods

*"Look at who you have common interest with...start building relationships with people who want to build that"* Jason Harvey,  
Founding Director Oakland Food Connection

*"It really is about all of us who are eaters of food... to take it upon ourselves to make it different"* Navina Khanna, food justice activist

*"Food is what ties us to the land and to each other... just three or four generations ago people had control over what they ate, who they got it from... Work on your block, start where you are"* Gavin Raders, Co-founder, Planting Justice

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings we recommend that Food Organizations:

- Distribute flyers - containing information about where, when, how to access farmers markets, grub boxes, csa's and cooking classes, and nutrition classes. They should be distributed at schools, farmers markets, hospitals, any community event.
- Create regular collaborative community events, movies, art, free cooking classes, newsletters presenting information about food access and our food system.
- Regularly give out recipes flyers educating the community about healthy simple cheap meals.
- Have regular cooking demonstrations at the community event. They should advertise these demonstrations on the flyers and recipe flyers.
- Invest more in peer-to-peer demonstrations and education. The movement can move forward if there is concentrated interest in the development of peer-to-peer education programs, recruiting, educating and training of youth. The purpose would be to share the benefits of living and eating in a just food system.
- Create groups whose specific goals are advocacy and lobbying. Their focus would be food companies, agro-business, CSA's, farmers, farmers markets. Their goal would be to establish a local, sustainable food system in the United States.
- Find a way to collaborate with liquor stores to provide fresh produce in the stores. Those organizations that grow their own food should look into working with what the community already has, and work to distribute their food to stores that already exist.

***"Its is time for more civil disobedience. Shut down grocery stores! Shut down the Mon Santo Corporation! That's when change happens. When it actually prevents people from going to work."*** -Director of a food justice organization speaking anonymously

## We recommend that Schools:

- Re-instate home economics, teaching youth the basics of cooking including how to cook organic, whole foods.
- Create gardens.
- Incorporate food growth, food production and it's local, sustainable distribution into elementary curriculums.
- Collaborate with Food Justice Organizations to access information about how to create gardens, healthy, organic food, and just food systems. They should collaborate in the development of peer-to-peer education, training and workshops. They should collaborate on how to incorporate food justice into the curriculum.



We recommend that the local and federal government:

→ Broadcast commercials and ad campaigns containing information about where, when, how to access farmers markets, grub boxes, CSA's and cooking classes, nutrition classes and healthy, local organic food. These campaigns should target youth, low-income areas, people of color, schools, farmers markets, hospitals, community events (including concerts and festivals).

→ Distribute flyers - containing information about where, when, how to access farmers markets, grub boxes, CSA's, cooking classes and nutrition classes. They should be distributed at schools, farmers markets, hospitals, and community events.

→ Work with Food Justice Organizations and help advertise:

- a. Regular collaborative community events, movies, art, free cooking classes, newsletters presenting information about food access and our food system.
- b. Recipes flyers educating the community about healthy simple cheap meals.
- c. Cooking demonstrations at community events. They should advertise these demonstrations on the flyers and recipe flyers.



→ Change laws to support the development of urban agriculture, such as community and roof-top gardens. As well as change law to discourage the development of liquor stores, and encourage the development of more grocery stores.

→ Expand programs like WIC and food stamps to be used at farmers markets, grub boxes, CSA's, community gardens. Advertise these program expansions at community events.

*" If we just honored the constitution, then we wouldn't need to have a fight"*  
Fredrick Douglas - as retold by David Roach

**RECOMMENDATIONS: FOOD JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS**

1. Food Justice Organizations, schools and activists start to lobby government to educate them about the issue, to create legislation that will allow, support, subsidize more rooftop, urban, community and school gardens. They should also lobby to expand programs like WIC and food stamps to healthier markets like, farmer's markets and CSA's.
2. Food Justice Organization should also start to research how to distribute (or if the program already exists, expand) their food distribution to low-income areas, and liquor stores.
3. Food Justice organizations should start to incorporate their peer-to-peer education programs into schools.

**RECOMMENDATIONS: COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CENTERS**

Based on our findings, our group has committed to working with Food Justice Organizations and activists to educate youth and the community about healthy food, our food system, and cooking. We have already conducted a number of workshops with other youth organizations educating people about healthy food and food choices. We plan to conduct workshops with cooking demonstrations, defining food justice, identifying resources, discussing major issues in food access, and gardening skills with schools, community and youth centers, parks and playgrounds.

We will work to make this educational process as fun as possible. We plan to collaborate with organizations like Grind 4 The Green, CYMC, People's Grocery, BYA, Farm Fresh Choice, OBUGS, Other Worlds, OYES, GLIDE, Urban Sprouts, Oakland Food Connection, Can Fit, Green Youth Media Center, YMCA, EBCC, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, to create block parties, food festivals, and park parties to educate the community about healthy food. We would incorporate all the community event recommendations listed above.

Trying to stay fun, we will use the media to educate the community. We will use social networking media like Facebook to advertise events and keep people informed. We will reach out to radio shows, blogs and other websites to advertise events and educate the community about what we find. We have already created a cooking movie to be put on YouTube, with plans to distribute it into a number of film festivals.



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