

FOOD JUSTICE

Matthew N. O. Sadiku¹, Tolulope J. Ashaolu², and Sarhan M. Musa¹

¹Roy G. Perry College of Engineering

Prairie View A&M University

Prairie View, TX 77446

²Interdisciplinary Graduate School of Nutraceutical and

Functional Food

Prince of Songkla University

Hat-Yai 90112 Songkhla, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Food justice focuses on social justice within the food system, which is currently characterized by the monopoly market power and globalized meat production. Its objective is to change the food system at its root and counter oppression and insecurity caused by the system. It strives to eliminate and challenge social inequities within the food system and promotes equitable distribution of resources. The paper provides a brief introduction to food justice.

Key Words: Food Justice, Just Food, Human Rights, Food Justice Movements.

1. INTRODUCTION

Food is essential to living. It is not merely a biological necessity but a great source of pleasure. It is a social and cultural expression of individuals. Although it appears that there is an endless supply of food in US, a significant number of people find themselves lacking access to healthy food, because buying fresh produce is beyond the reach of many. Today's corporate food system is characterized by the corporate monopolization of agriculture and globalized meat production. To combat the steady increase in global hunger has prompted government, industry and civil society to pursue a wide array of initiatives, including food security, food justice, and food sovereignty [1].

Food justice addresses the world's current most pressing issues of food insecurity and food scarcity found in both rural and urban areas. For example, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control" [2].

The concept of food justice emerges out of diverse social justice concerns to address racial and cultural inequalities within the food system. It is related to food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty is the radical movement that promotes the right of nations and individuals to choose what type of food to eat, where it comes from, and how it is grown.

It is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems. While the concept of food sovereignty is a global concept, the concept

of food justice is a local concept within the US. Food justice addresses the growing disconnect between food and culture that has led to our food system.

2. FOOD MOVEMENTS

Food justice is grounded in grassroots movements and focuses on distributional inequalities related to food access. The food movements increase awareness and action around food and farm issues. The core of the food justice movement is equity in both the decision making process and the distribution of resources. This can be achieved through government policies.

The food justice movement claims that the food system was influenced and shaped by racism. Food justice affects each region in different ways causing the food justice movement to take different forms. One of the goals of food movement is greater fairness and long-term economic viability. Another goal is to shorten the distance between food developers and consumers through direct marketing by farmers.

3. BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Food justice consists of communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. It deals with access for inner city and low-income people to healthy, clean, nutritious food and respect for racially and economically diverse populations. It challenges institutional racism in local food systems. Like social justice, food justice recognizes human rights, equal opportunity, and fair treatment.

Although many benefits are noted, scholars also contend that food justice often serves to bolster neoliberal structures. Despite the best efforts of food justice activists, many of their projects do not seem to be reaching their intended audiences [3]. Family-scale farmers as well as farm workers in this country are in desperate need of fair trade.

4. CONCLUSION

Food justice refers to a wide range of efforts that address injustices within the U.S. highly industrialized food system. It seeks to understand how inequalities of race, class and gender are contested within food systems. It has been regarded as an amalgamation of a social concern, an economic matter, and a political problem [4]. Like social justice, food justice addresses the need to contest racial, economic, and other disparities. For additional information on food justice, one should consult books in [5-8] and other books available on Amazon.com.

REFERENCES

- [1] "Food justice movement," *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_Justice_Movement
- [2] E. Holt-Giménez, "Food Security, Food Justice, or Food Sovereignty?" *Food First*, vol. 16, no. 4, Winter 2010.
- [3] Anonymous, "Food justice activism in West Oakland, California," *Poverty & Race*, vol. 17, no.1, January/February 2008.
- [4] C. R Hayes¹ and E. T Carbone, " Food justice: What is it? Where has it been? Where is it going? " *Journal of Nutritional Disorders & Therapy*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2015.
- [5] R. Gottlieb and A. Joshi, *Food Justice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- [6] I. Werkheiser and Z. Piso, *Food Justice in US and Global Contexts: Bringing Theory and Practice Together*. Springer, 2017.
- [7] A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman (eds), *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.
- [8] A. R. Hatch, *Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

AUTHORS

Matthew N.O. Sadiku is a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. His areas of research interests include computational electromagnetics and computer networks. He is a fellow of IEEE.

Tolulope J. Ashaolu is a doctoral student at Prince of Songkla University. He is the author of several papers and a book. His research interests include functional foods and food microbiology.

Sarhan M. Musa is a professor in the Department of Engineering Technology at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He has been the director of Prairie View Networking Academy, Texas, since 2004. He is an LTD Sprint and Boeing Welliver Fellow.