



Michigan Citizen 35th Anniversary

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The power of food

Posted by: [The Michigan Citizen](#) Posted date: [April 11, 2013](#) In: [Fresh Ideas](#) | comment : 0



Marilyn Barber

By Marilyn Barber
[Special to the Michigan Citizen](#)

Why do people of color have limited access to food to feed their families? With the recent resurgence of urban agriculture, Detroiters have the opportunity to grow food in their backyards, the lots next to them or even participate in community gardens.

There is fresh produce available at Eastern Market, Northwest Farmer's Market, Seed Wayne, just to name a few. But how much produce is really getting to the people who need it? What can the homeless do with raw green beans? Even though we have markets throughout the city, is it really

accessible to the persons not driving or biking?

We need to realize the power that food has in our lives. This power is interlaced with institutionalized racism. Even as more people reconnect to their food, access to good food is dominated by transplants (young, predominately white people moving into Detroit to take advantage of opportunities they feel they deserve because residents are not taking advantage of them). But what does a transplant know about Black Bottom, the '60s uprising, the historical Second Baptist Church? What lived experiences have they had in the city that pairs to those who've struggled with poor services and disinvestment? This is the history of Detroit, where families worked together, lived together and ate together. This is community, this is power. But somehow this power is being separated by corporate land grabs, emergency managers and tax incentives for moving from the suburbs to the city.

This means the corporate takeover that controls our schools, and also controls our water system, a very vital aspect of food security. These issues connect to and affect our community food security and are all intricately linked to race, class and power.

How does this affect our children?

Just how much fresh produce is getting to the people who are plagued with TV commercials, billboards and cute little radio jingles about Happy Meals? The future of our city rests on the backs of our children. If they don't know they have the right to good food, according to the Good Food Charter, how can they enforce it?

Over one third of our children are overweight or obese. This makes them at risk for diabetes, heart disease and even cancer. If this is a result of the meals they eat, what's so happy about that?

What is a food system?

A food system is the process of bringing your food from the farm to your table. If we don't know it exists, how do we know it doesn't work? It includes production, harvesting, processing, transporting and marketing. It also includes the community having input on these decisions.

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We should facilitate discussion around these issues. We are in dire need and there is urgency to take steps toward change. There is no one pill that is the answer, but we can start by engaging in healthy dialogue on the injustices systems that are operating in our city. There is a training that will soon take place that will greatly enhance our awareness and help us heal as a city. This opportunity is offered by Uprooting Racism, Planting Justice. It is facilitated by The People's Institute. This is their third training in the Detroit area. Monthly gatherings, caucuses and issue groups have continued the discussion throughout the city and applied the learning to undoing racism.

In the current state of Detroit, and the nation, we urge those who are committed to racial equity to join us May 3 from 6-8:30 p.m., May 4 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and May 5 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at MSU Center, 3408 Woodward, Detroit.

Limited scholarships are available, however, we want to increase participation of people most impacted, therefore, first priority will be given to those who are food insecure, then those who live or work in Detroit, or have participated in the monthly Uprooting Racism Gathering.

Uprooting Racism is supported by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information, e-mail training@uprootingracism.org.

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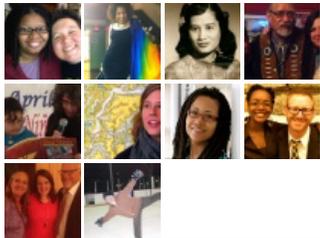
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