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## Youth movement shows readiness to lead at Detroit Food 2013

Posted by: [The Michigan Citizen](#) Posted date: [April 19, 2013](#) In: [Fresh Ideas](#) | comment : 0

By Cheryl A. Simon

On April 4-6, the Detroit Food Policy Council hosted its third annual food summit at Focus: HOPE. The theme of Detroit Food 2013 was "What's on Your Plate?" More than 200 people participated in the event, including at least two dozen youth. There were panel discussions, interactive workshops, video clips, a youth educational track and of course, good food. Also evident was youth leadership.



Our keynote speaker was Nikki Henderson, Executive Director, The People's Grocery in Oakland, California. Nikki shared her personal story with the summit participants with a focus on how People's Grocery and their Growing Justice Institute supports Oakland residents with designing and implementing

community-driven solutions to food insecurity. Over two years, with technical assistance and training from People's Grocery, a group of Fellows launched income-generating projects that build the local food system. Projects range from catering companies to cooking classes.

Nikki began her work in social justice through the foster care system in Southern California, having been raised with seven older foster brothers. Through mentoring, tutoring, and directing Foster Youth Empowerment Workshops, she developed her passion for youth leadership development among communities of color. She later shifted into sustainability, developing course curriculum for the University of California system and advocating across the state for environmental justice and political ecology. In 2009, Nikki co-founded Live Real, a national collaborative of food movement organizations committed to strengthening and expanding the youth food movement in the United States. She spoke of the strong link between food justice, environmental justice and social justice.

Two sessions were specifically designed for youth participants. Detroit Food Policy Council Vice-Chair Dr. Suezette Olaker led the first session which showed the trailer for the documentary "Super Size Me" which chronicles the effects of a fast food diet on one man's health. Students learned how companies

Myra with Karl Gernel

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design labels on processed food to entice consumers to buy them and how reading nutrition labels can reveal what is really in the package.

The afternoon workshop was led by Alison Heeres and her team from the University of Michigan's Project Healthy Schools. Their session, entitled King Corn, showed how an otherwise healthy food has been processed into many unhealthy products and how government subsidies keep processed food costs low compared to healthier, less processed food. Students worked in groups to deconstruct various fast food items and were able to see how high fructose corn syrup, GMO corn and other processed corn products are prevalent in our food system.

DFPC member Roxanne Moore presented the 2011-2012 Annual Food Report. This year's report focused on two topics: School Food and Urban Agriculture.

In the School Food Chapter, we cover how Detroit Public Schools is changing what our children eat at breakfast and lunch. As part of a national pilot program, every student is eligible for breakfast and lunch each school day. Betti Wiggins, director of Nutrition Services at DPS, led the changes from fried and processed food to fresh fruits and vegetables.

In the Urban Agriculture Chapter, we talk about Detroit's agricultural roots and how we as a community are taking control of our food system by growing our own food, developing opportunities for new businesses, and creating stronger neighborhoods.

Copies of the Annual Food Report are available by contacting the Detroit Food Policy Council or online at [www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net](http://www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net)

In addition to the written report, the DFPC produced a media piece that would give voice to Detroiters who are living and working within the food system.

Using skills developed in part through Detroit Future Media, DFPC member Myra Lee and food justice activist Kadiri Sennefer collaborated on the video, "Pathways 2 Food Justice", and presented it to the public for the first time at the Summit.

As the trailer for the video explains, "Pathways 2 Food Justice" is a candid look into Detroit's Food System from the voices of community members, academics and urban growers addressing the issues that challenge Food Security of so-called people of color and low economic communities in Detroit. "Pathways" leads right to the heart of the issues and calls us to action. This is an empowering video that leaves its audience accountable for its own health and justice. A must see for Detroiters and food justice advocates everywhere. A link to the video can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaJV-2p8kdg&feature=youtu.be>

*Cheryl A. Simon is a Detroit resident and Coordinator of the Detroit Food Policy Council. For more information about the DFPC, please see our website [www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net](http://www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net) and follow us on Facebook.*

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**The Michigan Citizen**

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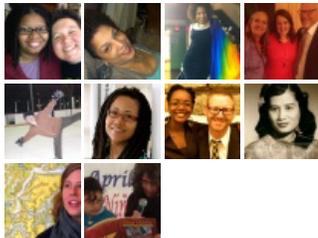
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