

Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming

Kate Cardona, Equity and Outreach Coordinator

Ithaca, NY January 2018

Developing Your Farm and Food Business Course Food Justice and Equity Sessions

Learning Goals:

- Participants understand what is meant by “food justice” and are able to give examples of the array of justice issues that exist within the food system
- Participants begin to develop a historical understanding of food justice issues that continue to play out today
- Participants begin to understand how racism and other forms of oppression have played key roles in the creation of our current unjust food system
- Participants explore the meanings of structural racism, classism and sexism and begin to articulate how they show up in the realms of food and farming
- Participants explore their own commitments to justice and equity, are provided with examples of successful business models that incorporate these principles, and learn concrete tools for how to do this themselves
- Participants leave feeling inspired by legacies of social movements and socially conscious entrepreneurs, and with a sense of excitement about their own potential contributions to this work as well as strategies for collective action

Session One:

Definitions, History and Systems of Oppression

- **Honor the land [Ithaca example below]**
 - Acknowledge that we are on land that rightfully belongs to the Cayuga people, one of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the original indigenous inhabitants of this land.
 - Within Groundswell a big part of our work around food justice is honoring history and truth telling, and that we can't right wrongs until we acknowledge the harm that's been done.
 - So we honor this land and the Cayuga people, who are not just a relic of the past but are still here today, and commit to learning more about what it means to be in right relationship both with the land and with Haudenosaunee people
 - Ask everyone to hold this piece as we're talking about what food justice means today.

Resource for honoring native land: <https://usdac.us/nativeland/>

- **What is a food system?**
 - Define a food system-- have participants name the different components while the facilitator draws a simple picture
 - Production → processing → distribution → access/purchasing → consumption → waste → production
 - What are some current food justice issues that you know about or have witnessed/experienced? Group brainstorm on chart paper that **lines up with the different areas of the food system** (i.e. farmworker rights in production, affordability in access, etc.)
 - Write them all up on chart paper in a graph. It may look something like this (this is a starting point, there are many more examples):

Production	Processing	Distribution	Access/ Purchasing	Consumption	Waste
Farmworker exploitation	CAFOs, abuse of animals	Environmental impact of transporting food around the world and country (fossil fuel use), impact on climate change	Food deserts, lack of affordable healthy food	Restaurant worker rights	Environmental racism: location of landfills etc.
Price of quality land, lack of land access for low income people and People of Color	Food worker rights, dangerous working conditions in processing plants, low pay etc.		SNAP benefits being cut, not all farmers markets etc. are SNAP accessible	Diet related diseases	Lack of composting education

- **Turn to the person next to you: Why does this food injustice exist? What are some contributing factors? Get participants to come up with:**
 - Racism
 - Classism
 - Sexism
 - Corporate Greed

Q: Where are examples of these things in the injustice issues we outlined?

- **What is Food Justice?**
 - Powerpoint slide presentation with definitions and food injustice statistics (see attached)
 - Share why this matters to us at Groundswell, why we are including this segment of the business course, and how justice and equity play a part in our organizational mission and goals. What are some concrete examples of how we're incorporating our values into our non-profit?
- **History of Agriculture and Discussion**
 - **Human Timeline of relevant historical examples of oppression in the food system**
 - See attached timeline
 - These dates are printed out and put in a mixed up pile. Students each take one and order themselves chronologically.
 - When they're in order, they each read their paper out loud.
- **Discussion Questions**
 - What came up for you when creating the timeline?
 - What are the main themes?
 - Do you see any of your own family's history portrayed in the events?
 - How is this similar or different from how you have thought about the history of agriculture in the U.S.?

- **Exploring Systemic Oppression**

- Have these definitions up on chart paper or on a powerpoint slide and ask participants to read them out loud
- Take questions/clarifications about the definitions

Structural Racism: The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage Whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric.

Classism: Classism is differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It's the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

Sexism: Sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination. Given the historical and continued imbalance of power, where men as a class are privileged over women as a class, an important part of the term is that sexism is prejudice plus power.

- **Homework:**

- How has structural racism shaped the food system? What were some examples of this from the timeline? From your own life? Same for classism and sexism.
- Have you/are you interested in incorporating social justice and equity into the mission of your business? If so, do you have any ideas of how this might be done?
- Are there any examples of farm or food businesses that you're aware of that address food justice issues in their work?

Session Two: Business Examples

- **Choose four or five farm and food businesses that center social justice and equity in their work. Can be local or national. Some of the ones Groundswell Center has used are:**

- Soul Fire Farm (Grafton, NY)
- D-Town Farm (Detroit, MI)
- Healthy Food For All (Ithaca, NY)
- Rock Steady Farm and Flowers (Millerton, NY)
- Mud Creek Farm (Rochester, NY)
- Rocky Acres Community Farm (Enfield, NY)

- **Create a simple info sheet about each business and how they center justice and equity in their model. What are their concrete strategies?**

- Some examples: sliding scale payment, sharing land or resources, hosting community events, donating food, educational opportunities geared toward people underserved in the food system, partnerships with social justice organizations, cooperative models, commitment to farmworker rights, food justice certification through the Agricultural Justice Project, etc.

- **Students as Teachers Activity**

- Break students up into 4 or 5 groups
- Each group gets a handout with information about their example on it
- Once in groups:
 - Read your Biz Example
 - Discuss:
 - What part of social justice or equity is this model addressing?
 - What about it feels challenging to you? What feels exciting?
 - Decide on someone(s) to report back to the large group about your example, and other person to report back about the discussion questions
- **Report Backs**
 - Hearing the examples from every group and answers to questions
 - Ask the group: What is one thing you heard that you feel inspired by, or that you could imagine incorporating into your own business model?

Session Three: Marketing

- **Business Examples**
- Create powerpoint of the marketing materials of the business examples you looked at in week 3
- In small groups: Are there any similarities between their materials? What are some of the strategies they seem to be using? Who are they appealing to?
- Share out
- **Marketing Your Business**
Small group discussions and then sharing out:
 - Who are you marketing to?
 - What is the message(s) you want your marketing and branding to send?
 - What are some potential benefits to incorporating food justice themes into the marketing of your business?
 - Are there any companies that you love and support because of the values they express and exhibit? Which ones?

Session Four: Wrap Up, Next Steps and Equity Brainstorm

- **Go over the content from the past weeks [2 minutes]:**
- Explored the connection of food and justice and what we mean when we say food justice
- Explored the history of race and racism in agriculture
- Discussion about what came up for us, main themes, and the way this history has shaped the food injustice we witness and experience today
- Explored definitions of systemic oppression (racism, classism and sexism) and asked to look at how those systems shape our food system
- Looked at Examples of business that incorporate practices that strive for equity
- Discussed the connection between marketing and social justice
- Now we tie it all together: equity and your business
- **Gather insight from the business examples we looked at in weeks two and three**
- What social justice issues do they address that we outlined in week 1?
- Review: What concrete tools did they use to do so? (i.e. living wages, inclusive marketing strategy, low income CSA based on asking those who can do so to pay more, programming for marginalized people, sharing resources etc.)

- **Writing Activity**
- How has the information we've explored together around justice and the food system and that conversations we've had about it landed with you? What has it brought up?
- What was the most striking example you heard about how farm and food businesses are incorporating justice and equity into their work?
- What thoughts do you have about how you may be able to incorporate social justice into your business model? Write down two potential ways. What are the biggest questions you have?

D. Large Group Share Out and Discussion

- Instructor creates group brainstorm on chart paper with everyone's ideas
- Another chart paper with everyone's questions
- Facilitated group discussion: have the students respond to each other's ideas and questions

E. Share Resources and Tools

- Hand out relevant resources on the topics of just and equitable farming/food businesses and action steps. Ask students to choose one to look at, and to choose one action step they'd like to take leaving the course.
- Share in groups of 3 or 4
- Then share out in the whole group

- **Thanks and Closing -**