The food justice movement draws on the movements for local food and community food security, but places more emphasis on principles of social and environmental justice. Food justice activists frame access to food as a basic human right, and more than any other movement working to create sustainable agrifood systems, mobilize at the grassroots level to dismantle the classist and racist structural inequalities that are manifest in the consumption, production, and distribution of food. Like most food-related social movements, the food justice movement is increasingly garnering the attention of scholar-activists.

Approaching the movement from a planning perspective, Gerda Wekerle argues, "food justice movements, as place-based movements engaged in local organizing and community development, represent an engaged citizenship that should be of interest to urban planners focused on various forms of citizen planning" (Wekerle, 2004, p. 378). Wekerle describes how the food justice movement grew out of an effort to reframe the food security movement into an "explicit critique of the global food system and a theoretical framing of local initiatives as both the practice of democracy and as means of de-linking from the corporate food system (Wekerle, 2004, p. 379)." She claims that food justice, in its simultaneous at­

tention to local place and transnational networks, changes the terrain of relationships between community members, civil society institutions, and the state. At the same time it also creates new opportunities to form alliances and coalitions across geographical boundaries.

Patricia Allen complicates the understanding of food justice as a movement entirely “from below.” In observing how food justice activists continue to promote alternatives like farmers markets, CSAs, and community gardens; she asserts that “the incorporation of concrete social justice goals and outcomes in these activities, however, is often tenuous.” She continues,

In the development of on-the-ground alternatives, effecting food justice is regularly constrained in actual practice regardless of the intentions of the actors. This is because of the need to work within the constraints of the current political economic system along with a push towards neoliberal forms of governance. One result is that the alternatives being developed are much more accessible to relatively more privileged people, despite intentions to the contrary.

(Allen, 2008, p. 159)

Allen’s argument signals two things: first, a co-optation of the term “food justice,” and second, the need for those most affected by food injustices to be at the forefront of the food justice movement.

People’s Grocery is one of the most visible actors in the US food justice movement. Their work delivering local, chemical-free produce to communities of color and working-class inner-city residents through their mobile market in Oakland, California, is exemplary of the goals and objectives of food justice. Citing People’s Grocery, the website for the 2010 Cultivating Food Justice Conference defines food justice as

Food justice asserts that no one should live without enough food because of economic constraints or social inequalities. Food justice reframes the lack of healthy food sources in poor communities as a human rights issue. Food justice also draws off of historical grassroots movements and organizing traditions such as those developed by the civil rights movement and the environmental justice movement. The food justice movement is a different approach to a community’s needs that seeks to truly advance self reliance and social justice by placing communities in leadership of their own solutions and providing them with the tools to address the disparities within our food systems and within society at large.

Another highly visible organization, Just Food, based in New York City, defines food justice as communities exercising their right to grow, sell and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers and animals. People practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities and a healthy environment.

These two definitions illustrate the emphasis on community self-reliance (particularly for the working class and communities of color), social justice, and fundamental human rights—all underdeveloped priorities in the movements for local food and community food security.

For Latino/as living in the United States, food injustices persist across and within the complex practices of producing and consuming food. Every year, more than 12 percent of households experience food insecurity at some point, according to the annual assessment of food security conducted by the USDA. However, for “Hispanic” households in the United States, the prevalence of food insecurity is nearly triple that of non-Hispanic whites. Although People’s Grocery and Just Food work with and on behalf of Latino/a communities, serving the needs of Latino/as is
not their sole focus. Two community-based organizations in particular have been recognized for focusing on the needs of Latino/a communities.

Community to Community Development (C2C) or De Comunidad a Comunidad, based in Bellingham, Washington, defines itself as a “women-led, place based, grassroots organization working for a just society and healthy communities.” With the goal of bringing together the movements for social, economic, and environmental justice, and empowering women, C2C coordinates the Food Justice Alliance, which addresses issues of domestic fair trade and cooperative development, and Mujeres para un Pueblo Sano (Women for a Healthy Community), that coordinates healthy kitchens and youth programs.

Up until 2006, the South Central Farmers Feeding Families (hereafter South Central Farmers) managed a 13-acre site in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles that was tended by more than 350 families, the majority of them Latino/a. In 2006, this site was bulldozed after a hotly contested struggle between the farmers, the city government, and a land developer by the name of Ralph Horowitz. Since the destruction of the farm and the displacement of hundreds of families, the South Central Farmers have continued to work on food justice issues, while continually struggling to regain control of the original farm in South Central. After losing their land in Los Angeles, they moved to an eighty-acre site in Bakersfield, California, and run a community-supported agriculture project that addresses the needs of low-income residents of Los Angeles.

See also Environmental Justice; Food Sovereignty; and Sustainable Development.

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FOOD PROCESSING WORKERS. In the 1980s, what Martha Crowley and Daniel T. Lichter call Latino boomtowns began appearing on the High Plains and in the Midwest. They spread to the Southeast in the 1990s, as immigrants from Latin America increasingly settled outside the traditional gateway cities in the Southwest and California. Latino/as migrated to rural communities in the Midwest, Southeast, and Pacific Northwest to work in food processing, which created rural manufacturing jobs based on adding value to agricultural products. For example, poultry processing became the second fastest growing factory job in the United States and the biggest industry in the South in the 1980s and 1990s, while beef processing became Nebraska’s largest manufacturing employer, accounting for half the state’s manufacturing jobs.

Food processing encompasses the food, beverage, and tobacco industries and employs about one in every eight manufacturing workers. Meat processing is its largest segment, accounting for one-third of all workers in this sector. Although jobs in food processing include supervisory and skilled positions, 90 percent of employees at most plants are hourly workers who hold unskilled or semiskilled jobs on production lines.

Since the 1980s, food-processing industries have increasingly relied on immigrant workers, as they abandoned cities, with their union workforces, and moved to rural communities, often in right-to-work states. This relocation has been part of the restructuring of the US economy. The oligopolies of multinational corporations that control food processing have redeployed capital to the cheapest production sites and cut their labor costs by creating low-wage, deskilled jobs, filled largely by women, minorities, and immigrants. The majority of these immigrant workers have come from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, and as William Kandel and Emilio A. Parrado have noted, a substantial number have been unauthorized.

Meat processing was at the forefront of this transformation. By the 1980s, meatpacking had been transformed from a unionized, urban industry, paying well above the average manufacturing wage, to a nonunion, rural industry, paying far below it. In the process white middle-class meat cutters were replaced with immigrant and refugee line workers from developing countries.

Modern food factories are characterized by dangerous working conditions, low wages, and high employee turnover. Line work in modern food processing plants does not require a high school education, preexisting job skills, or command of the English language. For many years, companies recruited in areas of high unemployment and border cities by advertising on radio stations reaching into Mexico. With the blessing of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), IBP (formerly Iowa Beef Processors, now Tyson) established a labor office in Mexico City in the 1990s. Such recruiting practices, combined with bonuses paid to employees who recruited other workers, resulted in sharp increases in the Latino share of the workforce. From 1980 to 2000, non-Hispanic whites dropped from 74 percent of the meat processing labor force to under 50 percent, while Hispanics increased from under 10 percent to 30 percent, of which, as Kandel and

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