

Good Food Now! Just Food's Summit on Food, Farms, and Community Health

Session 2: Overcoming Health Disparities and Planting Seeds of Social Change

Presenters: *For A Better Bronx*: Molly Culver, Trevor Nicholas, Tachael Leiner, Sance'l Williams

Topic: What are health disparities and why do they exist? How do factors like race and class impact these disparities? How can we help create equal access to healthy foods?

*Large group of 30-40, needed to change venues to accommodate, lost discussion time

Attendees asked to divide into 4 groups to brainstorm and make the following lists:

1. What does a community that doesn't have access to healthy food look like?

- Liquor stores
- Poor Food Choices: Bodegas, fast food, vending machines and food pantries
- Nutritional deficiencies, overweight
- Drug/food addictions
- Lack of green spaces
- Low-income Housing
- Under-funded public schools
- People of color
- Overly medicated or lack of healthcare
- Depression, stress
- High Cholesterol
- Churches, Jails and Funeral Homes
- Hair/Nail Salons
- WIC/Welfare

2. How to sustain a healthy community:

- Education – intergenerational
- Community Activities – forums, potlucks
- Holistic Healthcare
- Revitalizing Community Spaces
- Cultural sensitive approaches
- Healthy food – CSA, Farmer's Markets
- Grassroots organizing
- Policy advocate for community
- Childcare

- Local news source
 - Green jobs
3. Components of society that promote unhealthy community:
- Lack of transportation
 - Race, Class
 - Segregation of communities
 - Lack of education
 - Poverty, stress – long work hours
 - Culture and tradition – comfort foods, quick fixes
 - Limited resources – increased prices
 - Capitalism – no ethics
 - Alienated from process – food, political
 - Harmful corporate practices – devalue health, problematic subsidies
4. What does a community with access to healthy food look like?
- Lower rates of obesity and disease
 - Grocery stores, health food stores, farmer's markets, locally grown produce
 - Wealthy
 - White
 - Educated
 - Green Spaces
 - Cleaner

Groups brought back together for larger discussion of topics:

- South Bronx has highest rates of obesity, infant mortality, asthma
- Access to Opportunity
 - deal with disparities with consideration for forces of oppression: racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, sexism
- Political Viewpoint
 - People don't feel their voices can be heard
 - Attendance at today's forum predominantly white
 - Need to actively engage underserved communities and welcome them into the discussion
- Environment – effects health, well being of community
 - Includes Physical, Psychological and Spiritual environments
- Benefits of Community Gardens
 - Pride in self-sufficiency
 - Nourishment
 - Soft Skills – conversing with community
 - Meditation, peacefulness, relaxing
 - Learning about cycle of life

- Learning how food is produced
- Connections between food and health
 - Not everyone is a conscientious consumer
 - Majority of people don't understand connection
 - Brooklyn boy was more susceptible to Staph infection b/c of weakened immune system due to unhealthy diet, poor healthcare
- WIC, Food Stamps
 - Now offering vouchers for fruits and vegetables at farmer's market
 - Available for eggs, cheese, milk, juice, cereal, peanut butter, dried beans
 - Soon will offer whole grain bread
 - Some argue foods offered are problematic to black and Latino communities b/c of certain allergies to dairy
 - Requires cultural sensitivity to know what is most helpful and useful to a specific community

Approaches taken by For A Better Bronx to better inform underserved communities about diet and health

- Food Assessment
 - Compare food access in different communities
 - What are the barriers to healthy food
- Food Label Reading Workshop
 - Comparing organic to processed foods
 - What effect does food have on health
- Establish CSAs and Farmers Markets
- Invite farmers to talk to talk to community
- Develop Multi-media collaborations to educate community