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ANTIPODE

**Joshua Sbicca**, *Food Justice Now! Deepening the Roots of Social Struggle*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5179-0400-5 (cloth); ISBN: 978-1-5179-0401-2 (paper)

A vibrant and flourishing food movement in the United States has enlivened a call for food justice and equity among progressives. The politics of this growing movement for food justice have, until recently, centered mostly around equity issues of food access, health, and affordability, favoring market-based, individual solutions that put food at the forefront of discourse. Joshua Sbicca's *Food Justice Now! Deepening the Roots of Social Struggle* calls for a radical new food politics led by social justice, which focuses its attention broadly on the roots of structural inequalities in the food system and beyond. Sbicca's analysis is grounded in the theory and praxis of James and Grace Lee Boggs's dialectical humanism. As such, his approach to food justice examines the varied and intertwined economic, political, and social conditions from which it emerges and works to transform. Through a series of vivid historical and ethnographic studies, Sbicca illuminates how the food movement's politicization of food and its centering of underlying structural inequities can function not just as a means of resistance to, but a transformation out of, both neoliberal capitalism and institutional racism.

One of the strengths of this book is that Sbicca takes great care in mapping out the legacy of food politics through historical social movements. This analysis is significant in that it illuminates not only the structural roots of inequality in the food system, but also places these structural inequalities in the context of social movements often not considered as part of the food movement narrative. First, Sbicca describes post-Civil War agrarian populist movements as an example of a cross-racial, class solidarity, mass mobilization that used food to challenge economic inequities. He then describes the beginning of the organic farming movement and its roots as a prefigurative anti-capitalist practice. He also examines the farmworker and food labor movements as a response to racial and economic injustice. Finally, he explores the US Black

Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s as a prefigurative and confrontational movement that used food as a part of a strategy of social reproduction addressing capitalism and institutional racism. These examples lay the groundwork for a discussion of the future of food politics. Sbicca offers insight for academics and activists in how to expand and diffuse the concept of food justice across social movements in the future.

Building on the theoretical and historical foundation established in the introductory chapters, the book's focus shifts to an ethnographic study of three California-based food movement organizations that use food as a means to confront structural inequalities, through distinct lenses and perspectives. Chapter 2 focuses on the Oakland organization Planting Justice, whose work primarily addresses the issue of mass incarceration. Sbicca introduces readers to Planting Justice's "restorative food justice" work, in which they train and hire formerly incarcerated individuals, typically people of color, to build and design edible landscape permaculture gardens. The organization designs edible landscapes using a fee-for-service model which provides living wages and sustains their non-profit, which builds free and subsidized gardens for low-income individuals. In addition to this re-entry garden work, Planting Justice uses canvassing as a tool to build political campaigns and power. By highlighting this work, Sbicca illustrates how food can be leveraged as a mechanism for addressing the racialized problem of mass incarceration, and racial inequities more broadly.

Chapter 3 discusses food justice economics and its intersections with race and citizenship. Sbicca outlines the organizing work of San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project, a food justice group running a farm and education center that reimagines capitalist models of food production, and Los Angeles-based United Food and Commercial Workers Local 770, a labor union fighting food-chain worker exploitation. His comparison of these two organizations highlights the power of social position in informing strategy, and the importance of building intersectional alliances across social movements. Additionally, Sbicca uses the comparison of these organizations to acknowledge the importance of addressing the causes behind inequities

and of using both prefiguration and confrontational tactics to fully transition food system economics out of neoliberal capitalism. Comparing all three of these food justice organizations, in Chapter 4 Sbicca also explores the role of immigration and citizenship in the context of the food movement. This serves as an important piece in Sbicca's argument that lateral organizing across social boundaries is an imperative for achieving food justice, by highlighting both how its absence can weaken an organization and how its presence creates a stronger and more dynamic movement.

The main strength of Sbicca's book is his ability to not only identify root problems that prevent the broader food movement from effecting real and long-lasting change, but also identify real, practical solutions through which scholarly analysis can be applied. The book offers more than a critique of food movement actors; it also suggests a dynamic path forward. His study of historical movements and contemporary grassroots food justice organizations addresses their strengths and weaknesses without diminishing the value of their work. He argues that acknowledging weaknesses can inform a more effective and powerful food politics. Notably, he uses the organic movement as an example of a movement with anti-capitalist roots that initially engaged in radical prefiguritive practices yet fell short in its aims, as the movement was both coopted by neoliberal market forces and failed to address underlying structural inequalities. Sbicca's evaluation does not dismiss the organic movement for these pitfalls but, rather, considers how they can be used to build a stronger, more informed, dynamic, and diversified movement.

It is worth noting that although Sbicca does argue for an intersectional food politics, the book may have benefited from a greater focus on gender, a particularly salient point of intersection with the food movement. It is also perhaps worth noting that while the book's heavy use of theory is enriching, it may not always be accessible to some non-academic and activist readers.

Sbicca rounds out the book with a synthesis of these histories and ethnographies and a call for a more revolutionary and radical food politics. Here, Sbicca distills his argument down to a need to build collective power, diversify strategies, and forge broad solidarity across social boundaries. He asserts that there is no room for the post-political, color-blind rhetoric of neoliberalism in a radical food movement committed to equity. The book concludes with a vision of the future of food justice amid the current trend of revanchist politics.

In sum, *Food Justice Now!* is a compelling take on food justice past, present, and future and an important contribution to the ongoing activist-scholar dialogue on the topic. Though perhaps somewhat theoretically dense for some audiences, the book is, overall, a useful tool for students, academics, and activists alike. Sbicca offers thoughtful insight into how the food movement can move food justice beyond merely food and, through the frame of dialectical humanism, implores the movement to use food as a means to address social and structural inequities and build collective power.

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