

EDITORIAL AND INTRODUCTION

Special issue:
Food as a Tool for Social Change

Food as a Tool for Social Change: Introduction to the special section

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Submitted August 18, 2021 / Published online September 16, 2021

Citation: Mott, K., Krajewski, M., Schoen, C., Goldberg, H., & Cecio, W. (2021). Food as a Tool for Social Change: Introduction to the special section. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 10(4), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2021.104.013>

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In this special section of the summer issue, we honor the work and legacy of the late **Dr. Evan Weissman**, who contributed tirelessly to the community of food scholars as an editor and reviewer for several journals, including JAFSCD; as a professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at Syracuse University; and as a collaborator with countless community organizations. As is illustrated in the tributes, commentaries, and peer-reviewed papers that follow, Evan imparted a strong belief that revolutionary food systems change is possible. The inspiration for this special issue’s theme came from a recurring question that Evan asked his students and himself: “How can we use food as a tool for social change?”

We open with a few words from us, Evan’s former **Syracuse University Food Studies graduate students**, to remember the many roles—as advisor, professor, and comrade—he played in our lives.

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Charting Evan's graduate school journey, his Ph.D. advisor in the Department of Geography and the Environment at Syracuse University, **Tod Rutherford**, remembers him most for his community-engaged scholarship and activism. He was a true "organic intellectual." Syracuse University colleague and dear friend **Zeke Leonard** emphasizes Evan's keen ability to see the potential in anyone, in anything—in even the inconspicuous or mundane. Colleague **Daniel Block** from Chicago State University reflects on the rarity of scholars like Evan, whose deep commitment to Syracuse led him to return to work in his hometown. Practitioner **Jessi Lyons** of Brady Farm echoes Block's sentiments, highlighting the way Evan, an atypical academic, understood his own positionality and resisted the extractive tendencies of academia in all facets of his career. In fact, one of his first major achievements was the co-development of **Syracuse Grows**, a nonprofit organization that supports food justice efforts throughout the city. Colleague and member of Evan's dissertation committee **Matt Potteiger** describes the experience of working with him on FoodPlanCNY, a comprehensive food system plan for Syracuse and Onondaga County. From the findings of FoodPlanCNY emerged the **Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance** (SOFSA), and many of its members express their deep appreciation for Evan's invaluable contributions in their tribute. Evan's colleagues in the **Syracuse University Department of Nutrition and Food Studies** conclude our tribute section, reflecting on Evan's key role in building the SU Food Studies program and his unwavering dedication to scholarship, teaching, mentoring, and activism.

The tributes are followed by five insightful commentaries that draw attention to some of the concrete ways that food can be used as a tool for social change.

In *How Partnerships Shaped the Dane CARES Farm-to-Food Bank Program*, **Jessica Guffey Calkins** and **Claire Mance**, both practitioners at the University of Madison-Wisconsin Extension of Dane County, discuss the unique local food purchasing program the Dane County Food Bank began in response to food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings point to the important linkages between local agriculture and food banks in addressing food insecurity.

Next, **Chelsea Klinke** and **Gertrude Korkor Samar**, graduate students of anthropology at the University of Calgary, present *From Seed to Social Agency*. They draw on personal experiences farming in Calgary to ask how community-based experiential engagement in postsecondary food pedagogy can enhance student learning, bridge academic-public divides, and foster transformative social change.

We are then introduced to the work of **Cara Maria Santino**, a graduate of the masters program in Food Studies at Syracuse University, in the commentary *Recipes for Resistance: Practical Applications of Restorative Food Justice in New Haven, Connecticut*. Santino uses restorative justice and food justice frameworks to develop an initiative that focuses on the availability of healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food for people returning from incarceration.

Next, we hear from **Karen Emmerman**, a professor of philosophy at the University of Washington, with **lauren Ornelas**, founder and president of the Food Empowerment Project. In *Setting the Table, Not Running It: An Inclusive Approach to Access to Healthy Foods*, Emmerman and Ornelas discuss Food Empowerment Project's people-centered approach, implemented to address issues of food access in California's Vallejo community.

The commentaries conclude with the work of **Maegan Krajewski**, a graduate student in social studies at the University of Regina and a former student of Evan in the graduate department of Food Studies at Syracuse University. In *Reflections on the North Central Community Gardens Branch Out Project*, Krajewski provides insight into the process of community garden expansion and contributes to an understanding of the possibilities, challenges, and impacts of community gardens in general and community garden expansion in particular as a counter-neoliberal food sovereignty practice.

In this special issue, we also present a number of original empirical and theoretical peer-reviewed papers on a wide array of topics that address the intersection of food studies and social justice.

First, **J. Robin Moon, Craig Willingham, Shqipe Gjevukaj, and Nicholas Freudenberg** use syndemic theory to evaluate the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and its intersection with the more long-standing issues of food insecurity and diet-related diseases in the Bronx, New York. In *COVID-19, Food Insecurity, and Diet-Related Diseases: Can Syndemic Theory Inform Effective Response? A Case Study*, Moon and colleagues find that identifying commonalities between different health problems can strengthen both collaborative grassroots and government-driven responses.

Next, **Christina M. Kasprzak, Julia J. Schoonover, Deanna Gallicchio, Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, Leah N. Vermont, Alice Ammerman, Samina Raja, Laurene Tumiel-Berhalter, and Lucia A. Leone** further existing research on the operational practices of mobile produce markets in their paper, *Using Common Practices to Establish a Framework for Mobile Produce Markets in the United States*. Through semistructured interviews with established mobile produce markets, Kasprzak and colleagues find overlapping characteristics that could be used to develop a set of standardized practices.

We are then introduced to the work of **Kathleen Tims, Mark Haggerty, John Jemison, Melissa Ladenheim, Sarah Mullis, and Elizabeth Damon** in their paper, *Gardening for Change: Community Giving Gardens and Senior Food Insecurity*. Tims and colleagues find that a network of community gardens in Orono, Maine, functioned to support food access efforts for rural seniors and to destigmatize alternative forms of food access.

The peer-reviewed papers conclude with the work of **Chika Kondo**, a graduate student in the graduate department of agriculture at Kyoto University. In *Re-energizing Japan's Teikei Movement: Understanding Intergenerational Transitions of Diverse Economies*, Kondo uses a diverse economies approach to analyze generational shifts in leadership in Japan's *teikei* movement. Kondo examines how the community supported agriculture movement has overcome several political and economic barriers throughout its history.

This special issue would not have been possible without the support of Syracuse University's Falk College Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, the Department of Geography and the Environment housed within the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, and the kind and generous Rosenberg family. We are endlessly thankful for the mentoring and support we received from two of Evan's colleagues, Rick Welsh and Jonnell Robinson. To managing editor Amy and editor in chief Duncan, we thank you for your patience and trust throughout this endeavor. 

With gratitude,

The "Food as a Tool for Social Change" guest editorial team:

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