



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum



FOOD FOR THE PEOPLE

**Eating & Activism
in Greater
Washington**



Samir Meghelli, Ph.D. (Senior Curator)



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Mission

Together with local communities, the Anacostia Community Museum illuminates and amplifies our collective power.

As our neighborhoods undergo social, economic, and environmental changes that individuals alone cannot address, there is a need for communities to bring together their combined knowledge and strengths. As a museum that convenes people and ideas, ACM documents and preserves communities' memories, struggles, and successes, and offers a platform where diverse voices and cultures can be heard. We believe that bridging disparate parts of our communities can bring collective action to bear on forging a better future together.



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Home of the original “Anacostia Neighborhood Museum” (1967)



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Founding Director, John Kinard



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Community members preparing for the opening of the museum



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Anacostia Historical Society (1967)



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Children at the museum (1970)



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WHAT IS **FOOD JUSTICE?**

We all make decisions about what we eat...

but we don't make those
decisions by ourselves.

DC's Ward 8: 1 full service grocery store for every 85,160 residents

40 MILLION

40

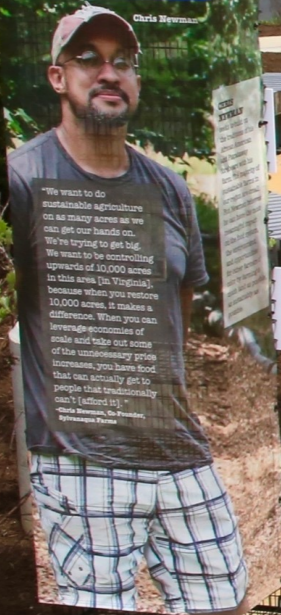




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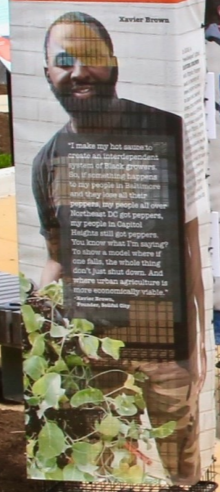


**TRANSFORMING
THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM**



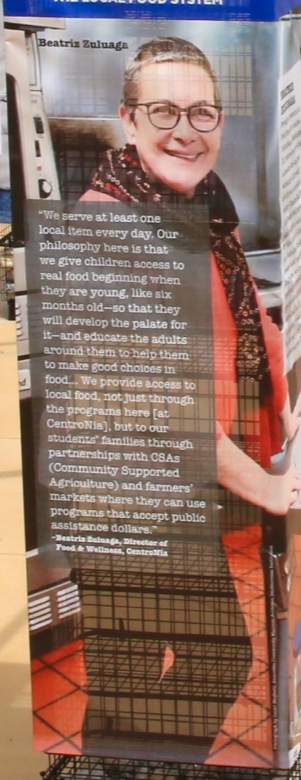
"We want to do sustainable agriculture on as many acres as we can get our hands on. We're trying to get big. We want to be controlling upwards of 10,000 acres in this area [in Virginia], because when you restore 10,000 acres, it makes a difference. When you can leverage economies of scale and take out some of the unnecessary price increases, you have food that can actually get to people that traditionally can't [access it]."
-Chris Newman, Co-Founder, Sustainable Farms

**COMMUNITY=
COLLECTIVE POWER**



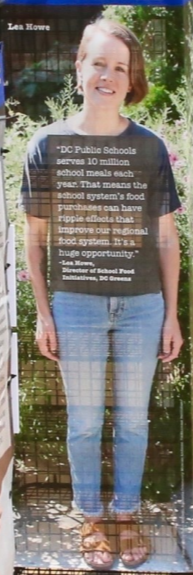
"I make my hot sauce to provide an intergenerational system of Black growers. It's a way for people to get their hands on food that they love and that's prepared by people all over. It's a way for people to get their hands on food that they love and that's prepared by people all over. It's a way for people to get their hands on food that they love and that's prepared by people all over."
-Xavier Brown, Founder, Black Sauce

**TRANSFORMING
THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM**



"We serve at least one local farm every day. Our philosophy here is that we give children access to real food beginning when they are young, like six months old—so that they will develop the palate for it—and educate the adults around them to help them to make good choices in food... We provide access to local food, not just through the programs here [at CentroNis], but to our students' families through partnerships with CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and farmers' markets where they can use programs that accept public assistance dollars."
-Beatriz Zuluaga, Director of Food & Wellness, CentroNis

**TRANSFORMING
THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM**



"DC Public Schools serves 10 million school meals every year. That means the school system's food purchases can have ripple effects that improve our regional food system. It's a huge opportunity."
-Len Howe, Director of School Food Initiatives, DC Schools

**COMMUNITY=
COLLECTIVE POWER**



"Every young person should be able to walk across their neighborhood to a place that feels comfortable and that can be their own. A space they can take care of, where they can be the leaders."
-Lenora Lewis-Owens, Co-Founder of the Garden



DC's Ward 2: 1 full service grocery store for every 8,334 residents



SHARE A MESSAGE
Add a story and message about it to the exhibit. We'll post it on the exhibit wall and on the exhibit wall. We'll post it on the exhibit wall and on the exhibit wall. We'll post it on the exhibit wall and on the exhibit wall.



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We currently cultivate
40 MILLION more
acres than would be needed
to feed all Americans.



873,012,000 acres:
The amount of crop
and pastureland
required to feed every
American (based
on 2008 American
consumption patterns)

914,425,000 acres:
Current amount
of active crop and
pastureland in the U.S.

Source: Christian J. Peters, Justin Pharely, Amelia F. Diercksen-Martin, Jennifer L. Wilkins, Timothy B. Griffin, & Gary W. Paul. "Carrying capacity of U.S. agricultural land: Ten diet scenarios." *Estuaries*, 2016.



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TRANSFORMING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Chris Newman

"We want to do sustainable agriculture on as many acres as we can get our hands on. We're trying to get big. We want to be controlling upwards of 10,000 acres in this area [in Virginia], because when you restore 10,000 acres, it makes a difference. When you can leverage economies of scale and take out some of the unnecessary price increases, you have food that can actually get to people that traditionally can't [afford it]."

-Chris Newman, Co-Founder, Sylvanqua Farms

COMMUNITY= COLLECTIVE POWER

Xavier Brown

I make my hot sauce to create an interdependent system of black growers. So, if something happens to my people in Baltimore and they lose all their peppers, my people all over Northeast DC get peppers, my people in Capitol Heights still get peppers. You know what I'm saying? To show a model where if one falls, the whole thing don't just shut down. And here urban agriculture is more economically viable."

-Xavier Brown, DC Green

TRANSFORMING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Lea Howe

"DC Public Schools serves 10 million school meals each year. That means school system's purchases can have ripple effects that improve our regional food system. It's a huge opportunity."

-Lea Howe, Director of School Food Initiatives, DC Green

TRANSFORMING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Beatriz Zuluaga

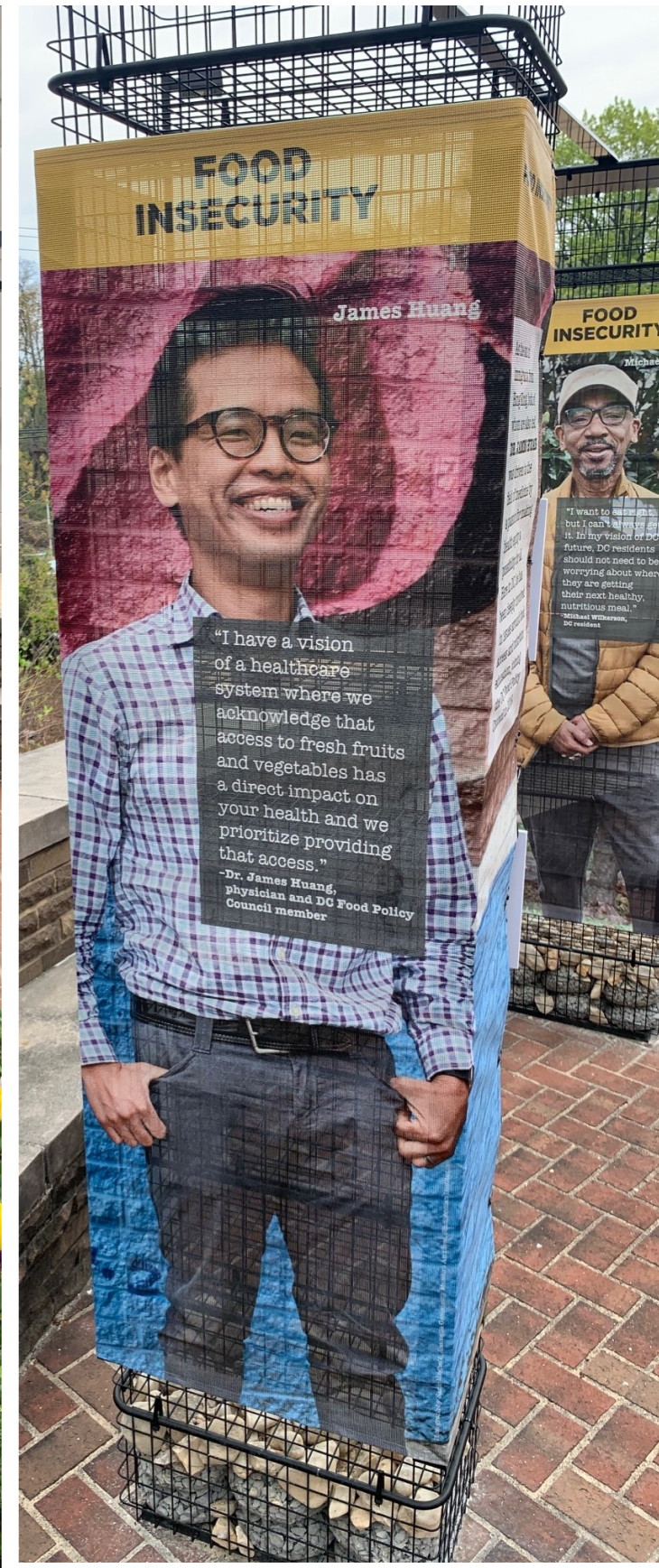
"We serve at least one local item every day. Our philosophy here is that we give children access to real food beginning when they are young, like six months old—so that they will develop the palate for it—and educate the adults around them to help them to make good choices in food... We provide access to local food, not just through the programs here [at CentroNia], but to our students' families through partnerships with CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and farmers' markets where they can use programs that accept public assistance dollars."

-Beatriz Zuluaga, Director of Food & Wellness, CentroNia

SHARE A MESSAGE
Scan a QR code or a number
with your message, and
share it to the world!
Are you a food lover?
Share it to the world!
What do you love to eat?
Share it to the world!
Not a food lover?
Share a story of gratitude
or a place that has helped
you in your life.



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I am so appreciative
of everyone who farms,
harvests, and prepares
our food! They need a
living wage!

Spraggett



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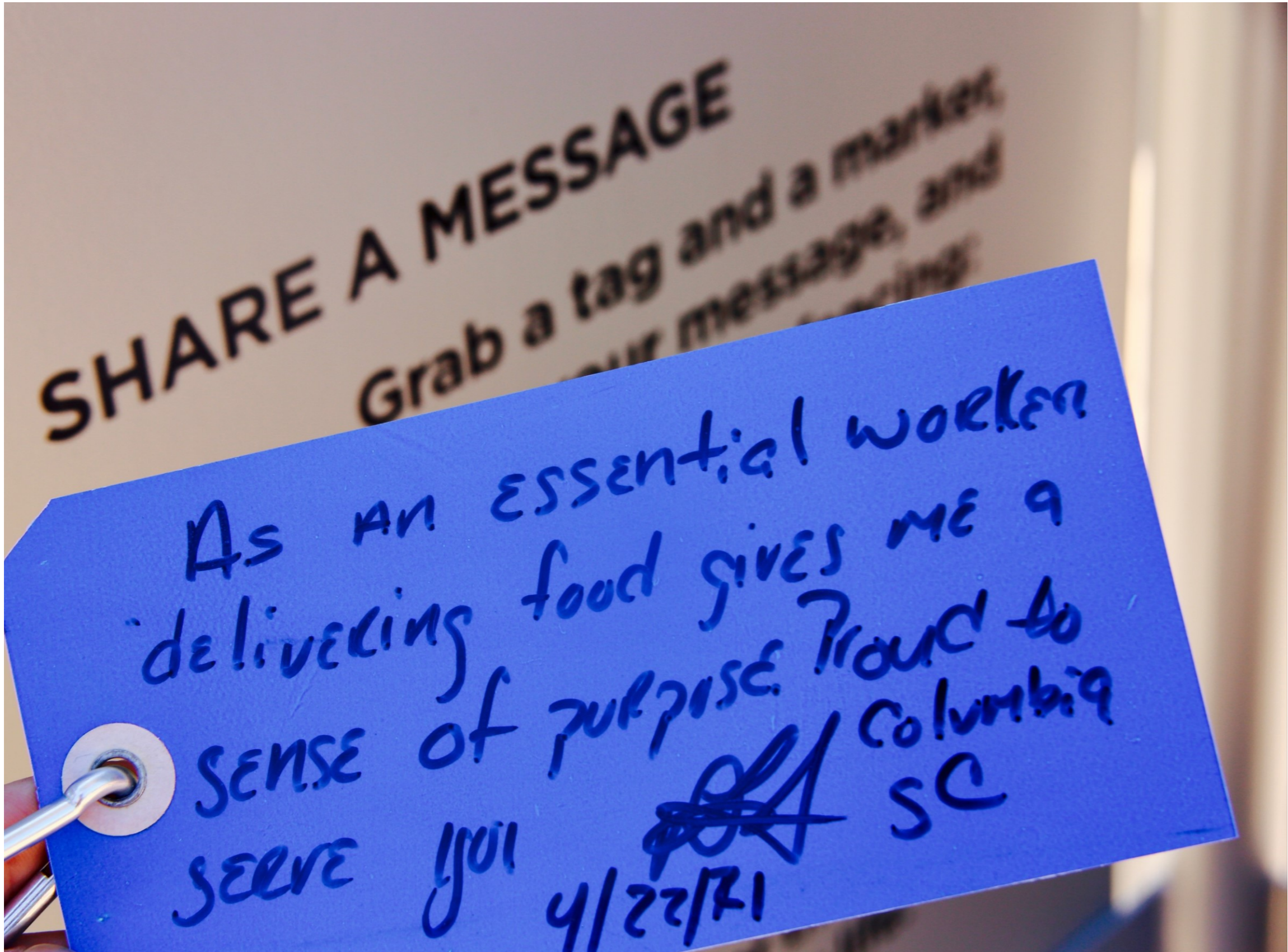
Gracias a todos
las personas que
trabajan en los
negocios de comida
😊



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Workers in food service deserve
a living wage & it is so sad
many of them don't. They are
grossly underpaid & taken
advantage of and this has to
change! It starts w/ awareness
but ends w/ collective action!



SHARE A MESSAGE

Grab a tag and a marker
Write your message, and
Share it

As an essential worker
delivering food gives me a
sense of purpose. Proud to
serve you Columbia
SC
4/22/21



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**Eating &
Activism
in Greater
Washington**



With every bite of food we eat, we have an opportunity to help remake an unjust and unequal food system.

FOOD MATTERS

Do you know **where** your food comes from? Who produces, processes, and prepares it, and in what conditions? **Why** is fresh food available in some communities, and not others? And **who**—if anyone—is responsible for ensuring that everyone has access?

Food for the People explores these questions by looking at our region's food system, the inequalities that shape it, and the people working to transform it.



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THE FOOD SYSTEM

All food has a life cycle: from the moment it is produced to the day it ends up on your fork, to its final destination in a landfill or as compost in a community garden. The interconnected system in which this all happens is called the food system.

Follow the life cycle of this common DC food—the chicken wing—to explore the parts of the food system.



From chick to chicken PRODUCTION

Like 98% of all broiler chickens in the U.S., our chicken wing begins as a chick owned by one of the four major U.S. poultry companies.

The company pays a small farmer in the "Broiler Belt"—an area which stretches from Pennsylvania to Florida—to grow the chicken alongside half a million other birds. The chicken is fed a mix of corn and soybeans for four to five weeks.

The 523 million chickens produced each year just in Maryland and Delaware generate enough chicken waste to fill the dome of the U.S. Capitol roughly 50 times. The excess from this waste flows into the streams and rivers that feed into the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary system in the U.S.

When the chicken reaches four pounds, the poultry company returns to the farmer to collect it.

From whole live chicken to packaged wing PROCESSING

Most of the food we eat undergoes some sort of transformation from its basic state into an edible and packaged form. This is called processing. Some chicken meat is powdered and turned into flavor packets. Some is ground and turned into chicken nuggets.

Our chicken will become packaged chicken pieces.

After harvesting the chicken from the farm, the company transports the bird to one of its processing facilities. Workers on an assembly line slaughter and defeather the chicken, cut it into pieces, then package it. Meatpacking is a dangerous job. These employees are three times more likely to sustain a serious injury on the job than the average American worker.

The workers inspect the chicken for disease and deformities several times along the way. One of the wings is not fit for sale, so it is thrown away. Like this wing, up to 40% of food produced in the United States is never eaten.

From processing plant to carry-out restaurant DISTRIBUTION

About 70% of food products in the U.S. are distributed by truck, while the rest predominately travel by train. These vehicles, the highways and tracks they travel on, and the people who drive and operate them all play a critical role in supplying Americans with food.

Distribution ensures food makes it to places where consumers can get it—like food banks, restaurants, and grocery stores. However, access to food is not distributed equitably. While residents of the District's whiter and wealthier neighborhoods have access to multiple grocery stores in their neighborhoods, the residents of the city's predominantly Black neighborhoods must travel farther on average to find fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats.

Our chicken wings are picked up from the processing plant by a truck driver and delivered to a wholesaler. There, an employee of a carry-out restaurant in Southeast DC buys the chicken wings in bulk.

From carry-out restaurant to your mouth

PREPARATION & CONSUMPTION

Next comes the preparation and consumption stage in the food system. Some chicken is prepared by at-home cooks, school cafeteria workers, or soup kitchen volunteers. Our chicken wing is deep fried by a restaurant worker, who places it in a plastic container along with fries and mumbo sauce. A delivery driver receives a notification on their phone, picks up the order, and delivers it to a doorstep.

Finally, a hungry Washingtonian sits down and enjoys the salty, crunchy meal.

From table to garbage DISPOSAL

All that remains of our chicken wings are the bones. The process of retrieving and transforming food waste is called disposal.

DC composts around 330 tons of food waste per year, but meat and bones are not allowed in the city's compost. Instead, a crew of DC Department of Public Works employees load our chicken wing bones into a garbage truck along with the 3,000 tons of food waste that is created in the District each week. The trash ends its journey at a landfill—as does about half of DC's non-recyclable waste—to decompose into landfill gas that is 80 percent methane and 20 percent carbon dioxide (CO₂). In the process, it will contribute to U.S. landfills' alarming annual methane emissions which are equal to the greenhouse gas emissions from more than 21 million passenger vehicles being driven for one year or the CO₂ emissions from nearly 12 million homes' energy use for one year.





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A Taste of Home

Preserving Local Food Cultures

Food justice is not just access to fresh foods, but foods that help sustain cultural traditions and local cultures.



Food can connect us to our families, our communities, and our heritage. Access to such foods is vital. Chesapeake blue crabs, half-smokes, Salvadoran pupusas, mumbo sauce, Ethiopian injera, and Vietnamese pho are just a few examples of what help make the Washington, DC, region feel like "home" for so many communities.

But rapid population growth and rising rents and property taxes have been transforming the food culture of the DC area. While bringing new investment to the region, this "gentrification" has also presented challenges for small restaurants and grocers who sell foods that are important to local culture. They face being pushed out of their longtime neighborhoods or closing altogether.



From City Storefronts to Suburban Supermarkets



Food in the former Chocolate



"The COVID-19 Effect"

CALIFORNIA CITRUS

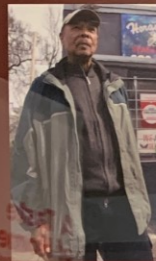


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Food in the former Chocolate City

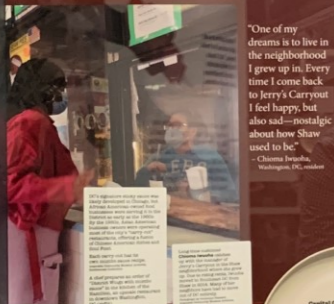
“Gentrification is cultural genocide.”

– Richard “Dickie” Shannon, longtime owner of Horace & Dickie’s



Washington, DC, was long proudly known as “Chocolate City” in recognition of its majority African American population. Today, that reputation is in decline. Since the early 2000s, DC has faced some of the most rapid gentrification of any city in the nation, with more than 50,000 African Americans pushed out of the city due to rising rents and property taxes. This has forever changed the food landscape in the city as well, with many longtime food businesses struggling to survive.

Horace & Dickie’s



“One of my dreams is to live in the neighborhood I grew up in. Every time I come back to Jerry’s Carryout I feel happy, but also sad—nostalgic about how Shaw used to be.”
— Chamea Jenkins, Washington, DC resident



Capital City Mumbo Sauce
Created by DC native Arlene Davis, Mumbo Sauce is a unique blend of flavors that has become a staple in the DC area. It is a spicy, tangy sauce that is perfect for dipping and drizzling. It is a true reflection of the diverse flavors of the city.

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From City Storefronts to Suburban Supermarkets



El Gavilan
When El Gavilan opened in 1978 in Adams Morgan it was one of the earliest grocers to cater specifically to DC’s growing Latino community, as well as to African and Caribbean communities. After migrating from El Salvador in the early 1980s, the Alvarez family purchased El Gavilan. In 1988, the Alvarez family purchased El Gavilan. In 1988, the Alvarez family purchased El Gavilan. In 1988, the Alvarez family purchased El Gavilan.

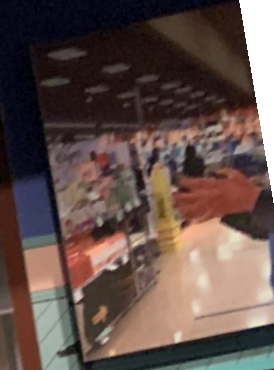
From Chinatown to Chinatown
Due to gentrification and Chinese gentrification pressures, most Chinese grocers in DC’s Chinatown closed their doors by the early 2000s, leaving the mostly elderly Chinese American neighborhood without a source of fresh, Asian groceries. Anandia Pan’s Mobile Market stepped up to address the need and began supplying items like bok choy, watermelon, and napa cabbage, while some local organizations have helped out by converting storefronts for residents to better Asian supermarkets in Northern Virginia.

Hollywood East Cafe
Jacet Yu grew up in Washington, DC’s Chinatown where her parents settled Chinese when they emigrated from China in 1948, when they emigrated from China in 1948, when they emigrated from China in 1948, when they emigrated from China in 1948.



May this produce bring back memories to her childhood, 1980s, when she worked at the cafe.

HOLLYWOOD EAST Cafe





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Food as a Human Right?

The government, local communities, and nonprofits have all worked to improve food access in America. But the question of who is ultimately responsible for ensuring no one goes hungry is still hotly debated.



The federal government created our most widely-known food programs—like food stamps, school lunch, and “government cheese”—seemingly to help those in need, but often to the benefit of farmers and large food industries. Along the way, poor mothers and schoolchildren, civil rights activists, people experiencing homelessness, and people with chronic illness have had to fight to make America’s food policies work for them. They also developed alternative strategies for feeding for their communities and argued that food should be a human right.

1930s-1950s
Most of the federal food policies that we know today—such as food stamps, school lunch, and “government cheese”—were created in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Government food policies were developed during the Great Depression, in the face of drought and rising unemployment. The federal government stepped in to help poor farming and ranching families.

1960s-1970s
Urban poverty, and urban food centers, grew in the 1960s and 1970s. The civil rights and urban renewal movements sought to address the needs of urban and inner-city populations. The federal government stepped in to help poor farming and ranching families.

1980s-1990s
During the 1980s, the federal government made major cuts to food stamps and other anti-poverty programs. The 1980s-1990s were a time of economic change, with rising unemployment and many of the nation’s most vulnerable populations were being left behind.

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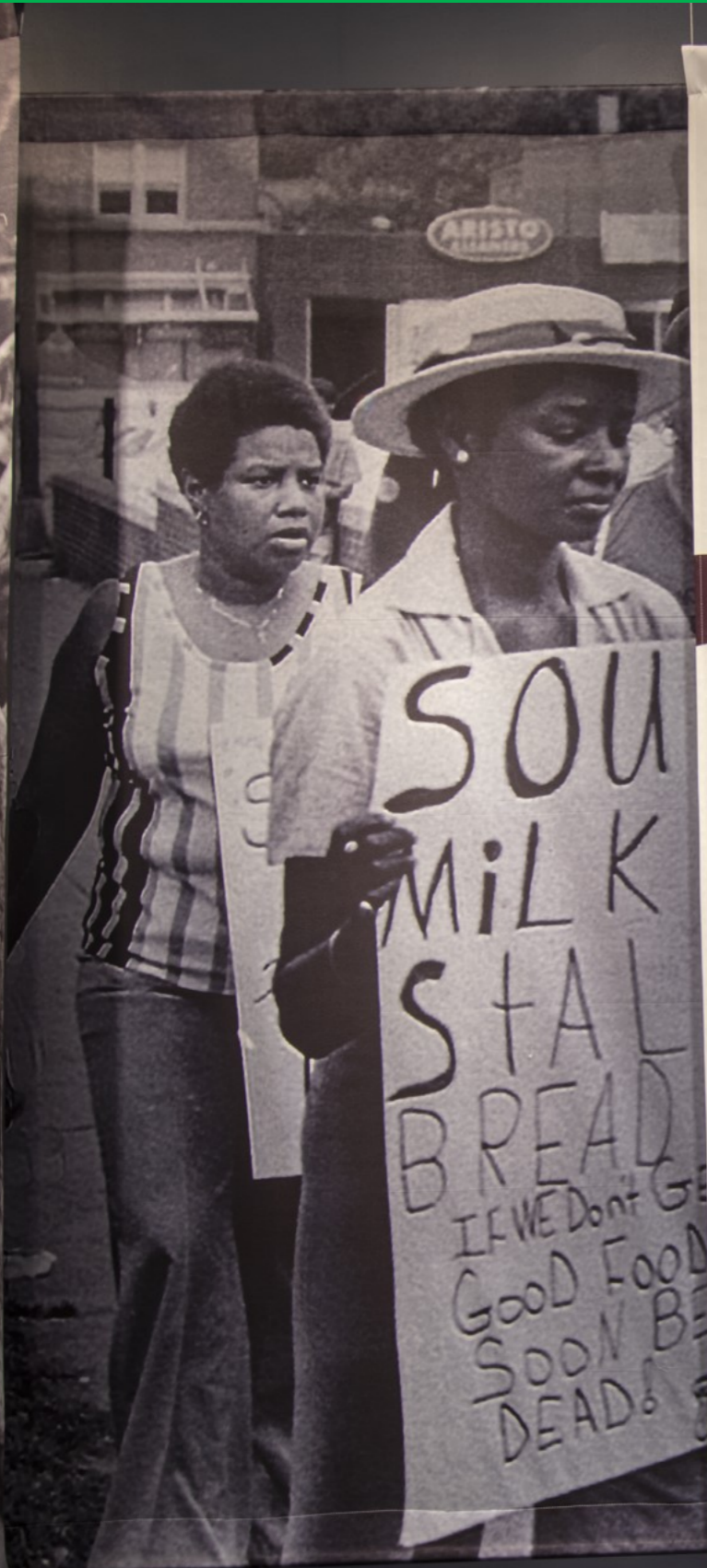


Public Markets and Mom-and-Pops to Supermarkets and Farmers' Markets

Supermarkets
revolutionized
food shopping,
but not without
consequences.



In the second half of the twentieth century, American farming, American diets, and American grocery shopping changed dramatically. The rise of the supermarket brought unparalleled convenience and affordability to consumers. But it also worsened racial disparities in food access and placed a greater distance between people and their food sources than ever before. In the decades since supermarkets appeared, Washingtonians have sought more power over their food—and how they get it—through protest, policy, entrepreneurship, and even returning to the food markets of an earlier era.



OTHER KING
STORE
REET. S.E.
MENT
VICE GRAY
SUMER ADVISOR
MR. GRAMAM



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Change is on the way—three new grocery stores, including one large supermarket, are scheduled to open in Wards 7 and 8 in the coming year or two. Community advocates and the DC Food Policy Council also continue to push for city investment in alternative and community-owned solutions such as small grocers, co-ops, and non-profit stores. In 2021, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser announced the creation of the Nourish DC Fund. The fund will provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to local food businesses in low-food access neighborhoods, with a preference for businesses owned by residents of those neighborhoods.

Farmers' markets and urban agriculture have seen a renaissance in the District and across the country over the past decade. Over 40 new farmers' markets opened in DC between 2006 and 2016. For customers looking to buy locally grown food and connect with the people who grow it, farmers' markets can represent a return to the personal touch of the pre-industrial food system.

H Street Farmers' Market is just one of many markets that have opened in the District's rapidly changing neighborhoods in recent years (2018).
Photograph by Gregory Thomas
Courtesy of DC Streets

The site where Lidl plans to open a new supermarket in Southeast Washington. The store will be eligible for local tax exemptions, and city officials helped identify a site that the corporation's CEO will be the first to visit to





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The People Behind the Plate (From Farm to Table)

Our food is made possible by millions of essential food workers.



Getting food from a farm to a dinner table requires the labor of many workers. But the people who do this work, and their struggles for fair wages and safe working conditions, are often invisible to the average eater. From enslaved people who grew crops that fueled the region's early economy, to the oyster shuckers who process one of the region's most iconic foods, to servers at your favorite restaurant, food workers have always been essential to the local food system. You can find these workers fighting for justice in farms, factories, and eateries—across the country and in our own backyard.



Tomato Race





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“Negroes take tips, of course—
One expects that of them—
But to give money to a white
man was embarrassing to me.”
—John Speed, journalist, 1902

Pullman Railroad had used
Pullman Palace cars to transport
workers to the site of the
newly constructed Pullman
Palace Hotel in Chicago. The
workers were housed in
overcrowded and unsanitary
quarters. Pullman refused to
improve the conditions until
the workers organized a
successful strike in 1894.

THE PULLMAN COMPANY 1931

The practice of tipping crews
popular in the United States after the
Civil War, when railroad companies
employed thousands of African American
freight handlers, was the first step toward
institutional racism. Tipping crews
received tips from white passengers and
other workers, but were not allowed to
accept tips from other workers. This
practice reinforced the racial hierarchy
of the time.

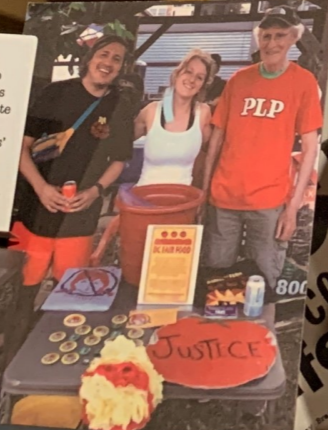
Today, many White Americans enjoy
the idea of tipping. But the
practice was developed by white
businessmen to ensure that
African American workers were
paid less than white workers.
The practice of tipping crews
was a form of racial discrimination.

Activists in the Washington region continue
to organize in solidarity with the people who
grow our food. The Alliance for Fair Food is a
nationwide organization that stands in solidarity
with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW),
a group of Florida-based tomato pickers. Through
CIW's Fair Food Program, some large food
corporations have agreed to only buy tomatoes
from farms that maintain a certain standard of
workers' rights and pay what the workers
deem a decent, fair wage.



**Protest signs by DC
Fair Food, 2019** Members of
DC Fair Food have organized
and participated in boycotts of
major food retailers who
have yet to agree to the Fair
Food Program's demands
for basic protections for
farmworkers. Their demands
include the right to work
free from verbal or physical
abuse, an end to wage theft,
and a zero tolerance policy
for sexual violence and
forced labor.
Gift of DC Fair Food, Anacostia Community Museum,
Smithsonian Institution

DC Fair Food community
organizers used this bucket to
explain the working conditions
of tomato pickers and to educate
local communities about the
Coalition of Immokalee Workers'
campaign for fair wages and
workers' rights.
Gift of DC Fair Food, Anacostia Community Museum,
Smithsonian Institution



Saturday, October 3
12-2 p.m.
LOCATION: GIANT
Wisconsin Ave. & New
Call 202-778-7200

labor became the
work by the 1960s—
the source of a large
fruits and vegetables
to low wages,
and even violence
Philippines, Chicago
and organizers
union (UFW)
and achievements
California
and

1972-1973
organizers led beyond the
with the strikers for publicly
boycotts against supermarkets
that carried lettuce and grapes
picked by non-union workers
and other California

BOYCOTT
LETTUCE
GRAPES
SATURDAY
OCTOBER 3
12-2 P.M.
LOCATION: GIANT
WISCONSIN AVE. & NEW
CALL 202-778-7200



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Table

Food service and domestic workers in the DC region are at the forefront of national debates about what protections, pay, and benefits should be guaranteed for all. Many of the issues they have advocated around— from the tipped minimum wage to the limited rights of those employed in private households—can be traced back to the days of slavery. Through labor strikes and protests, these workers have demanded dignity and equality before their bosses, and the law, ever since. What should food justice look like for the people who serve our food?

"Through the legacy of slavery, domestic workers in the Washington region are often treated as second-class citizens. They are not recognized as the most important work. The domestic workers are still not recognized as the backbone, men, and women. Through organizing, we are fighting for better working conditions."

"I fight for our work to be respected and for us to be treated with dignity. I want everyone to see our work as a real job. Although you don't always see everything you want, I think that with each step we learn something and get closer to what we long for."

"A nation that once enslaved Black people and declared them legal three-fifths of a person now pays more of their descendants less than a third of the minimum wage in which everyone else is entitled."

"I was sitting on this and I cried and started up my box. I found myself on my knees and out of a job. That's when I decided to get involved. I found out I wasn't just me—most DC restaurant workers had never had a paid sick day in their life."

"I fought in Korea but I can't eat here."

NO MORE \$2.13

EXIT

I ♥ CHICKEN
I ♥ JUSTICE

Various informational cards and photos are displayed on the wall, including one that says "VOTE NO" and another that says "I FIGHT IN KOREA BUT I CAN'T EAT HERE".



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Ingredients for Food Justice

The current, troubling state of our food system demands that we reimagine and remake it together. The land that produces our food is a resource worth nurturing. The workers who make our food possible—from farm to table—are worthy of living wages and safe working conditions. Our region's rich food traditions—and the farmers and local food businesses that sustain them—are deserving of celebration and support. Access to affordable, healthy food need not be a luxury. The challenges are many and have been long in the making. Only through the collective power of community might we truly work toward a more just and sustainable food system.



Designing Food Justice

We all have the power to change our food systems.
This is a space for new ideas and unleashing the creativity that lives in all of us.

Get in touch with what you care about.
Ask big questions.
Share behind your truths.
Ask open your mind to all the possibilities for change and innovation.

STEP 3
Clarify
What are you really trying to achieve?

STEP 4
Collaborate
Bring your ideas to life.

NOW
Keep your idea or post on the bulletin board to share.



Designing Food Justice

We all have the power to change our food system.

This is a space for new ideas and unlocking the creativity that lives in all of us.

Get in touch with what you care about.

Ask big questions.

Leave behind your doubts.

And open your mind to all the possibilities for change and innovation.

STEP 1
Select a value you or your community care about.

Why values?
Values provide the underlying motivation for almost every decision and action we make. Saying them out loud helps us to give our ideas a "why" and may help like-minded people join the cause.

STEP 2
Choose a question to tackle.

Why use the word "might"? The "might" indicates a space for speculation. Different from "how can we" or "how could we," which point to statements about practicality, "how might we" maintains a vast space of possibility.

STEP 3
Identify tactics.

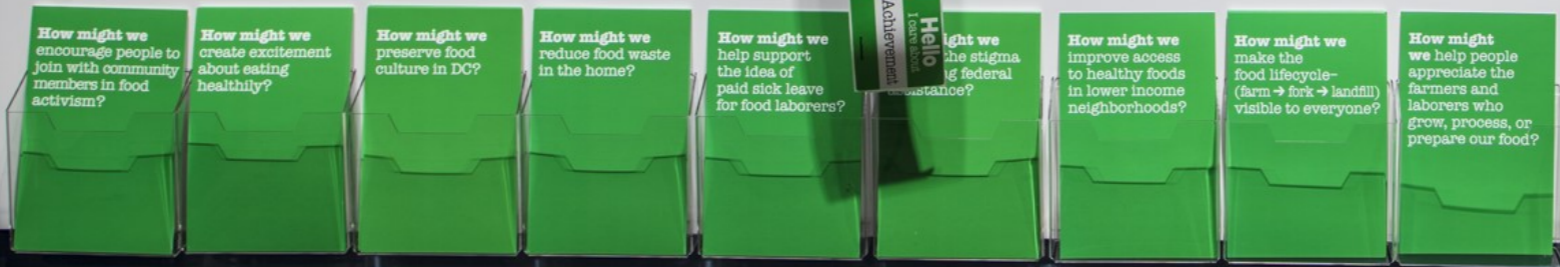
[Choose 2. Mark them on the back of your question card]

Why two tactics?
Combining two seemingly unrelated strategies can bring new ideas to the surface.

STEP 4
Sketch out or describe your idea.

Think about how community members might participate.

NOW
keep your idea or post on the bulletin strip to share.



How might we encourage people to join with community members in food activism?

How might we create excitement about eating healthily?

How might we preserve food culture in DC?

How might we reduce food waste in the home?

How might we help support the idea of paid sick leave for food laborers?

How might we reduce the stigma of federal assistance?

How might we improve access to healthy foods in lower income neighborhoods?

How might we make the food lifecycle- (farm → fork → landfill) visible to everyone?

How might we help people appreciate the farmers and laborers who grow, process, or prepare our food?



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum





Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum





Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum



OPEN: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00am-4:00pm

For groups of more than 6 and up to 12 people, reserve a time slot by contacting Jenelle Cooper: CooperJR@si.edu

Free (virtual) public programs every month:
<http://anacostia.si.edu>