

JUSTICE Jubilee

JUSTICE & SERVICE
FAITH FORMATION
ANTI-RACISM & EQUITY

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“Food Insecurity and Social Justice” by Chris Lloyd & Resource Genevieve Cassani, SSND

Over the years, I have often thought to myself, “it sure is expensive to eat healthy!” More and more, nutritious food expenses far outweigh a quick snack or junk food. It is far cheaper to buy a McDonald’s hamburger than a salad or bowl of fresh fruit. Yet, even as I complain about the rising cost of groceries, I am reminded that I am blessed to be able to provide food for my family. I’ve never had to rely on government assistance or reduced school lunches to feed my family.



Many people in our city are not so fortunate. I have no less than nine grocery stores within 2 miles from my home. I can walk to most of them. Yet, as I travel through the poorer areas of our city, grocery stores are scarce. How are people supposed to feed their family if they have to travel out of their neighborhood even to find food at all?

- **St. Louis City – 15.9% of individuals and 30.9% of children are food insecure**
- **St. Louis County – 11.5% of individuals and 17.4% of children are food insecure**

WHAT IS MEANT BY FOOD INSECURITY?

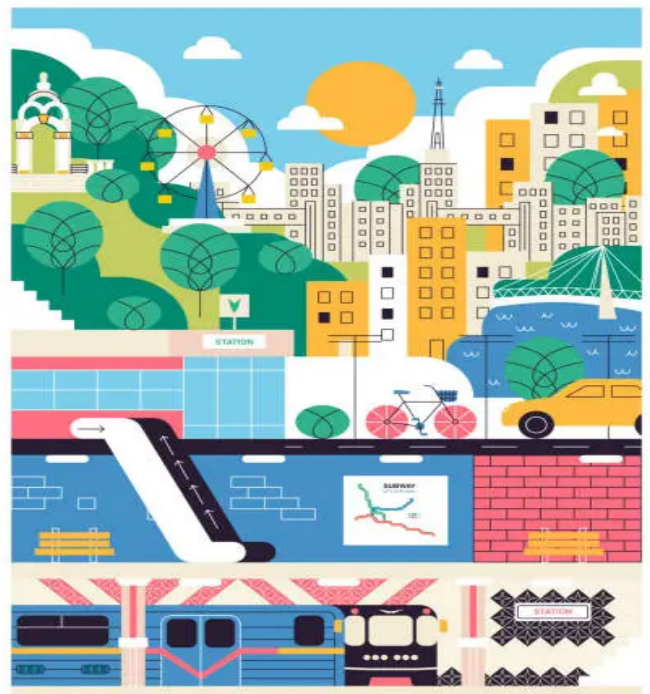
Food insecurity is an official term from the USDA. It’s when people don’t have enough to eat and don’t know where their next meal will come from. It’s a big problem in the United States, where 47 million people, including 14 million children, experience food insecurity annually.

You can’t remove food insecurity from conversations about social justice. When people lack access to food, they face challenges living with dignity and opportunity.

Food insecurity isn’t about hunger, it’s about equity and access. Many of our neighbors struggling with hunger face systemic challenges like:

- *Low wages and rising costs*
- *Healthcare disparities*
- *Transportation barriers*
- *Unequal opportunities*

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of her or himself and her or



Evidence shows that healthy food access is more effective when it also addresses barriers to food access such as transportation, social context, and nutrition education. Everyone should have access to safe, healthy, and affordable food that promotes their well-being and helps prevent diet related disease.

On the other hand, over time, a lack of access to healthy food creates a low-quality dietary pattern which can have negative health outcomes. Influencing nutritious food choices is more complex than simply providing nutritious foods.

ACCESS TO FOOD IS CONSIDERED A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, article 25, 1948), provides a reference point for human rights legislation:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of her or himself and her or his family, including food.

In order to learn more, I reached out to a good friend who works with Operation Food Search and she had this to say about causes of food insecurity.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

FOOD INSECURITY is caused by **AN INTERPLAY OF FACTORS** related to where we are born, live, learn, work, and play that can affect our quality of life and health outcomes over time. The conditions of an individual's neighborhood and built environment, such as distribution and quality of grocery stores, contribute to a food environment. Access to an

abundance of healthy, nutritious and delicious food helps promote physical and mental health, prevent disease, and inspire community connections.

More and more people are relying on food pantries to sustain them. All our neighborhoods need quality grocery stores with nutritionally appropriate food choices and adequate transportation to get there at the bare minimum.

As I reflect on this month's theme, food insecurities, I see that donating to food pantries is very important and the work of charity must continue. And there is justice work that must accompany charity to make true change happen.

Questions for conversation

WHEN are we going to create change?

How can we help move from food donations to sustainable food security?

RESOURCES FOR YOU

<https://earth.org/why-food-security-is-a-question-of-environmental-and-social-justice/>

Operation Food Search is a local, independent rescue food bank and has moved beyond the work of a traditional food bank, with the additional focus areas on child nutrition, community nutrition, and "food is medicine" programs that work upstream on the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity.

[Lucky Zip codes | Amy Hunter | TEDxGatewayArch](#)

Amy Hunter, Director of Racial Justice for YWCA Metro St. Louis, explores how zip codes can shape our lives, highlighting economic realities, unexamined mindsets, social disparities, and the Black experience.