Food for Dignity & Democracy

Christine M. Porter
Assistant Professor, Wyoming Excellence Chair in Community & Public Health
Principal Investigator and Project Director, Food Dignity
Division of Kinesiology & Health, University of Wyoming

Gayle M. Woodsum
President and CEO, Action Resources International
Founder and Community Organizer, Feeding Laramie Valley
Community Liaison, Food Dignity

Consumer Issues Conference
October 9th, 2014
Laramie, Wyoming
The Truth about Food Stories

“Do the stories we tell reflect the world as it truly is, or did we simply start off with the wrong story?”  -King 2003: 26

“Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.”  -ibid: 164
Framing: stories we tell ourselves about our food
Framing Food Systems: the story

This is farming
Framing Food Systems: the story

This is a farmer
This is how to feed the world
We must keep food cheap so poor people can afford it
Other sides of the story

This is a feedlot
Other sides of that story

This is growing

the feed for it
Other sides of that story

These are sharecroppers
Other sides of that story

In many ways, so are these
Other sides of that story

These are migrant farmworkers.
Other sides of that story

Peasant farmers feed the world.
(producing 62% of our food)
Study: Ogallala Aquifer being drained by U.S. farmers

Aug. 28, 2013 at 7:21 PM | 0 comments

Is There A Way To Stop Floridan Aquifer Depletion?
By Kathryn Allaben on November 6th, 2013

Merced County is sinking; researchers blame over-pumping of groundwater

BY J.N. SBRANTI
jnsbranti@modbee.com November 21, 2013 Updated 8 hours ago
Other sides of that story

With Dry Taps and Toilets, California Drought Turns Desperate

By JENNIFER MEDINA  OCT. 2, 2014

The New York Times
Other sides of that story
"WARNING: This hamburger may be hazardous to your health. Why the American food system is bad for our bodies, our economy and our environment - and what some visionaries are trying to do about it."

The Real Cost of Cheap Food

August 2009
… with a happier ending?

“Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.”
– Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*, p164
The Food Dignity project: mapping, measuring, and telling alternative stories
Food Dignity Partners

5 community initiatives
- East New York Farms! (ENYF!), United Community Centers, Brooklyn, NY
- Whole Community Project (WCP), Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County, NY
- Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV), Action Resources International, Albany County, WY
- Blue Mountain Associates (BMA), Wind River Indian Reservation, WY
- Dig Deep Farms & Produce (DDF), Deputy Sherriff's Activities League, Alameda County, CA

4 higher education partners:
- Cornell University
- University of Wyoming
- Ithaca College
- University of California, Davis
## US food system issue frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obesity</th>
<th>Hunger</th>
<th>Food Security to Sovereignty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>Safety net</td>
<td>Democracy, local control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Experts”</strong></td>
<td>Academics, professionals</td>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>BMI, behavior change</td>
<td>USDA survey measure</td>
<td>Equity, dignity, democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause</strong></td>
<td>Lifestyle choices</td>
<td>Ignored</td>
<td>Systems (econ, political, food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics</strong></td>
<td>Right to liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Radical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Morals of our food dignity stories?

A priori:
1. We need living wages that can buy good food at its real cost.
2. Industrial food produces enough to feed us all now, but is starving our grandchildren. We must develop alternatives.
3. Food, like air and water, is not (just) another commodity.
4. In a democracy, people have a right to a strong say in their food system.
5. Dignity is an inherent right. Yet, food insecurity, as well as many anti-hunger programs, erode dignity.
alternative stories

Blue Mountain

Wind River

...to Brooklyn

Photo credits: BMA, me
alternative stories

Photo credits: ENYF!, me

East New York Farms! Brooklyn
the story told about Wyoming

there’s only one kind of food you can grow in Albany County
every rumor is based on some truth

56-day growing season in Laramie

poor soils

semi-arid climate
every truth can have a different story

Breaking ground at LaBonte Park Community Gardens
fresh food access requires vision, hard work, and multiple knowledge sources
achieving sustainable food dignity means telling a new story
equity in democratic leadership is only achieved through intentionality
the new story about food in Wyoming ...

is beautiful
Thank you!

Food Dignity is supported by Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant no. 2011-68004-30074 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (www.fooddignity.org)

christine.porter@uwyo.edu
gayle@feedinglararamievalley.org