



## **CTCORE-Organize Now! Food Justice Guide**

Social change requires a strong community bound together for a cause. Pick up this guide, read it, learn from it, but don't stop there. Get up, get going, and join CTCORE's *movement*.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	4
Purpose of Guide	4
Guiding Principles for a New Just Food System	4
<b>Food Justice Values Statement</b>	5
Building upon Historical Struggle/Education	5
Food is Political	5
Transforming CT Food Systems	5
<b>Organizing Frames</b>	6
<b>Building a Movement Toward a Liberated Food System</b>	7
Reparations – From the Dominant Food System	7
Current Systemic Equality – In Non-Profit Corporate Philanthropy	8
Building New Systems and Institutions – Toward Community-Run Food Systems	9

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## **Introduction**

Transforming the dominant, global food system is an enormous undertaking. We appreciate and support the work of activists who are engaged in dismantling and transforming current systems of oppression. However, CTCORE's focus is on envisioning, building, and maintaining a new, community-based food system, guided by principles of liberation, racial equity, self-determination, and economic justice.. We define **food justice** as, "racial equity and self-determination in the food system(s)". We aim to achieve this by identifying and activating community-based, economic, food justice solutions. Through this guide, we hope to highlight ways organizations are circumventing the dominant food system and encourage those working for a more equitable and just food system to reimagine their roles in food justice, through the framework presented here, and to support this movement toward racial equity, self-determination, and economic justice.

### **Purpose of Guide**

**To build new, community-run food systems** – Guided by community members and activists, this guide is designed to share experiences, visions and strategies to identify and move resources to build new, community-run food systems. This community food system must and will provide economic benefit to the members of the community in which they exist. Our focus are communities of color in urban centers. This guide seeks to provide tools and a standing network to build a resilient food justice movement.

### **Guiding Principles of a Community-Run Food System**

**LIBERATION** – We define liberation not with an end set of characteristics but as an open, flexible, evolving movement determined by the communities who envision it. It is the ongoing creation of just systems and institutions by those who have been marginalized and oppressed by those currently/previiously in place. We envision and strive to build a liberated food system, designed and built by and for communities of color in urban centers.

**SELF-DETERMINATION** – A community-run food system must be a manifestation of the collective vision of that community. The community should be empowered to make decisions about which issues to address and how to address them, including democratic control and cooperative ownership over land, labor, and the outcomes of production.

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE** – A liberated food system is also part of a liberated economic system. Each link in the food chain (from production to consumption/waste) of our food system must include increased economic benefit for communities in which they exist. This includes removing barriers to access resources, economically viable food enterprises, living wages, and fair markets.

## **Food Justice Values Statement**

### **Building upon Historical Struggle/Education**

The dominant food system has been used as a tool for oppression. The US food system was built on an economic agrarian system that would not have existed if it were not for the theft of land from and attempted genocide of the Indigenous people of America, and hundreds of years of forced slave labor of African people. Like other systems of oppression, we recognize that the inequality in the food system is intentional and it is designed to be unequal. Invoking, honoring, and guided by the wisdom, struggle and progress of previous generations, this guide seeks to advance food justice efforts rooted in the people's struggle for liberation. Food has always been political, and past generations knew this well. We can see it in their movements for:

- Resisting land theft and genocide.
- Resisting enslavement and dispossession.
- Passing down culinary, agricultural, land, and health knowledge.
- Creating alternative food systems, like food co-ops to achieve food sovereignty.
- Black Panthers free breakfast for children program.
- Struggle of farm workers for rights and protections.

### **Food is Political**

Some food movements have been largely apolitical - blind to power and oppression in food systems. Rather than a political movement based on justice and equity, these movements have proliferated through consumerism. Rather than transform food systems, consumer-based approaches have empowered folks who are already privileged and placed blame on the poor and otherwise marginalized. This has maintained the status quo at best, and further entrenched inequality under white supremacy at worst. With this understanding, we recognize that the fight for food equity requires **COLLECTIVE ACTION, MOVING RESOURCES, and TRUTH TELLING**. This guide seeks to draw on experiences, narratives, stories, resources, etc. to put the politics back into food as a necessary step towards racial justice and equity.

### **Transforming CT Food Systems**

Because the dominant food system is rooted in systemic and structural oppression and exploitation, it is not, has not, and cannot be just. Rather, we need to imagine new systems that are rooted in and blossom from liberation, self-determination, racial equity and economic justice. Therefore, CTCORE's Food Justice Network defines food justice as racial equity and self-determination in the food systems. We aim to achieve this by "identifying and activating community-based, economic, food justice solutions."

5

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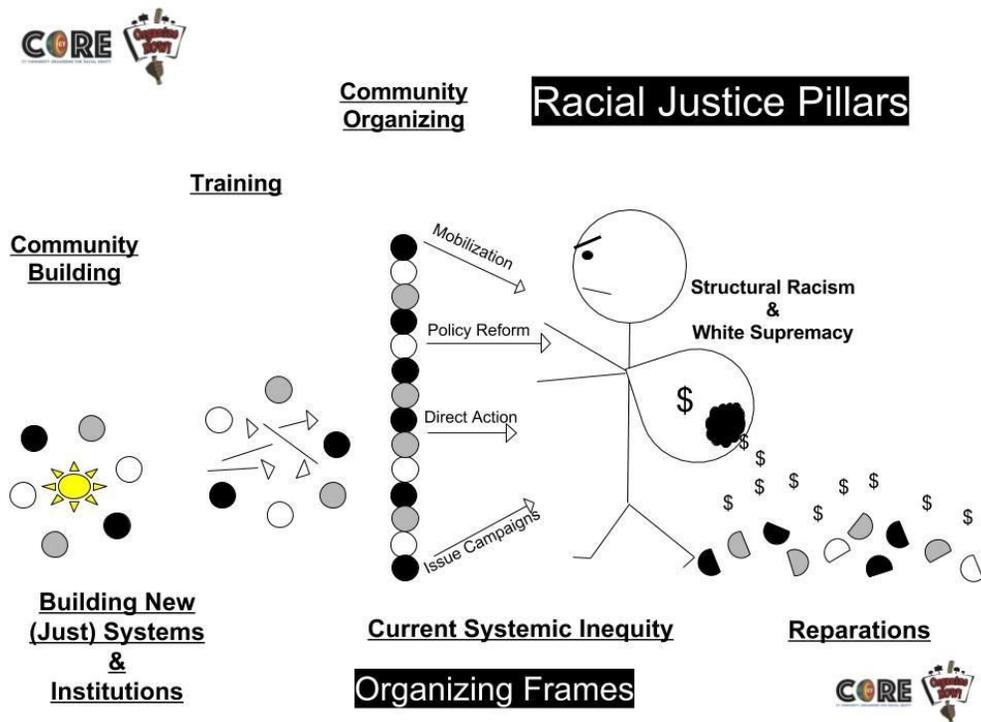
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## Organizing Frames

**Reparations** – We recognize that identifying measures to heal from the harms of structural racism is an essential component of racial justice work. We also recognize that reparations are necessary for addressing past, present, and all harm that may occur before this work is complete.

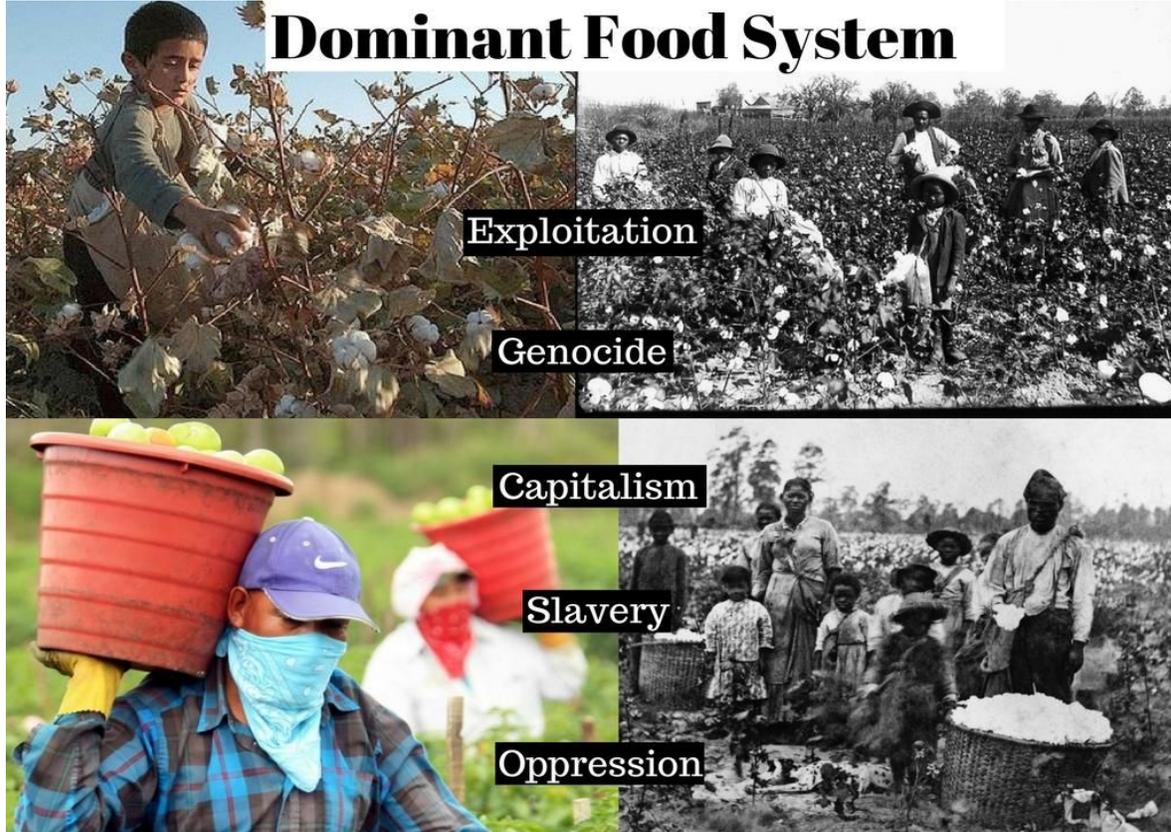
**Current Systemic Inequity** – We recognize that all of our systems are rooted in oppression, inequity and injustice. They are designed to harm Black people, other people of color and other marginalized communities. Harm reduction is often confused with liberation work. Our work dealing with current systemic inequity is about mitigating and ceasing that harm. Systems and institutions which are rooted in the oppression of our people, do not have the capacity to support our liberation.

**Building New Systems and Institutions** – We recognize that the systems and institutions capable of affirming and embracing our humanity and liberation must be envisioned and built by us. We are identifying and putting in place the conditions to make the construction of just systems and institutions possible.



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## Building a Movement Toward a Liberated Food System



### **Reparations - From the Dominant Food System**

We demand reparations from the harm inflicted through the creation and maintenance of food system, which has been built on exploitation, attempted genocide, and enslavement of people of color in the Americas. The dominant food system is a direct descendent and represents an unbroken chain of events going back to the enslavement of African people who were forced to labor on stolen land. The system is currently propped up by the exploitation of migrant workers who do not have full rights and who are legally discriminated against, exploited, and oppressed on the land. The capital that has been extracted from land and labor supports a system of white privilege and racial hierarchy in the food system [and other systems].

“...Forces [of structural racism cause communities of color to be systematically shut out from affordable nutritious food through food apartheid and create the] high mortality rates that result from preventable diseases and insufficient healthcare...We assert that reparations are necessary compensation for the physical and psychological exploitation that Black people and other people of color have faced, as well as compensation for being shut out of opportunities for prosperity that are predicated on that exploitation”  
(CTCORE Racial Justice Platform 2017).

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### Current Systemic Inequity – In Non-Profit Corporate Philanthropy

Non-profits occupy a special role in the movement toward food justice. They, hold resources that, if properly mobilized, can address inequity on a systemic level, but they are also susceptible to reifying racial inequality and hierarchy. We recognize that many nonprofits have good intentions for fixing societal issues resulting from systemic racism and oppression. For example, giving out food can help to meet an immediate need that is caused by systemic disparities - outcomes of systems designed to be inequitable. While meeting the needs of all of our neighbors is a goal of our work and a characteristic of a liberated community, programs that are threaded with white privilege and saviorism perpetuate racist ideas and uphold racial hierarchy. Programs that do not address or are unaware of systemic and structural oppression give cover to those systems at best or actively keep them in place or worse. Organizations in CTCORE’s Food Justice Network learn and share the importance of developing practices of ANTI-RACISM, MOVING RESOURCES, SHIFTING POWER, and CHANGING SYSTEMS.

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### **Building New Systems and Institutions – Toward Community-Run Food Systems**

The dominant system was designed to harm people of color and every other marginalized community. “Systems and institutions which are rooted in the oppression of our people, do not have the capacity to support our liberation...We recognize that the systems and institutions capable of affirming and embracing our humanity and liberation must be envisioned and built by us. We are identifying and putting in place the conditions to make the construction of just systems and institutions possible.” Our Community-run food system is still being imagined. It will be collectively owned, designed, and operated by our community. It will be rooted in liberation, economic justice, racial equity, and self-determination. Our upcoming, online resource tool will be designed to aid in building that new system. Our network of food justice leaders will commit to sharing experiences and moving resources to aid in building a community-run food system.

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