



AGRICULTURE NEWS

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
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COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY TO HOLD LISTENING SESSION Listening Session Scheduled for May 29, 2008 in Harlem

The New York State Council on Food Policy is holding a listening session in Harlem to gain perspective from community members on several food policy issue areas and to seek opportunities to maximize collaboration among stakeholders.

The listening session is scheduled for Thursday, May 29, 2008 at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building, 163 West 125th Street, New York. The listening session will be held from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. At 4:00 pm, State Senator Jose Serrano will host an hour-long reception for all listening session participants at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building.

The listening session is open to the public and will be an open microphone format. Anyone who wishes to participate will have three minutes to present their opinions and must also provide their comments in written format.

Comments should focus on some aspect of the following key issue areas: how to maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; how to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers; how to support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure; and how to increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods.

Those wishing to participate must RSVP by 5:00 pm May 28, 2008 to Mary Ann Stockman at 518-485-7728 or maryann.stockman@agmkt.state.ny.us.

The Council on Food Policy has held listening sessions in Albany, Syracuse, New York City, Binghamton and Rochester. To review the comments already presented please visit: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/>. The final listening session will be held on May 30, 2008 at the Riverhead Town Hall, Long Island from 11 am to 1 pm.

The New York State Council on Food Policy will make recommendations on developing a State food policy to ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children; and to look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York customers.

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**NYS COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY LISTENING SESSION
HARLEM LISTENING SESSION**

**ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, JR. STATE OFFICE BLDG.
163 WEST 125TH ST., NEW YORK**

**MAY 29, 2008
5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.**

Presenter	Organization
1. James Subudhi	WE ACT
2. Ramon Chávez	Grocery Worker
3. Juan Jimenez	Special Organizer, UFCW Local 1500
4. Dr. Andy Goodman	NYC DOHMH
5. Hugo Coello	Bronx Resident
6. Manuel Amparo	Resident, Weaver Housing Projects
7. Stefania Patinella w/ Frances Garcia / Charline Mitchell / Andrew Smith	Childrens Aid Society w/ Next Generation Catering Company
8. Deborah Quinoñes	Community Board #11
9. Asantewaa Harris	Community Vision Council
10. Michael Paone / Rita Green	West Harlem Action Network Against Poverty (WHANAP)
11. Triada Stampas	Food Bank/Food Change
12. Akua Gyamerah*	NYC Resident
13. Ann Bragg / Anderson Fils-Aire	Community Voices Heard (CVH)
14. JoAnn Session / Bee Richardson	Nutrition Outreach Services
15. Yolanda Gonzalez	We Stay/Nos Quedamos Committee, Inc.
16. Janine Douglas	Community Voices Heard (CVH)
17. Kolu Zigbi	Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation / CSA Member
18. Malcolm Livingston	NYC Resident

*** No written comments submitted**

Hello, my name is Ramon Chavez and I work in a gourmet grocery store in Manhattan called Amish Markets.

I have worked there for 4 years and started at \$5.00/hour. I have always worked in the kitchen doing the cooking along with two other co-workers. Sometimes I worked 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. The days and weeks felt very long, and on top of that, we hardly could take a break or even a lunch. The managers are always pushing us to do the work faster and are not concerned whether we had eaten anything during the course of the day or not, not even a cup of coffee. I am very proud of how hard I work, but it is a tough job and I don't feel like I get treated very well.

Since I don't make much money, and don't have any health insurance or retirement benefits, it is very hard to provide for my family. I cannot even afford to buy food in the store I work in because the food is so expensive and my pay is so low.

In fact, it is very hard to buy food, especially fresh produce, anywhere these days since the prices have gone up and I don't make much more now than what I made 4 years ago. With the price of food so high I really don't have a choice but to work all these hours just so I can buy food somewhere else.

Sometimes, my boss forces me to work overtime, and I get very tired. They do not pay me extra for working overtime and sometimes they don't pay me at all. This is not good for me or the customers who shop in the store because if I'm tired and am not compensated for the overtime, I don't pay as much attention to the way I handle the food.

Also, we don't have much training on how to properly handle and prepare the food for the customers. And sometimes accidents happen because we were not trained; but if you report that you had an accident they might fire you so we don't tell anyone. This doesn't make us feel like we are a part of the community or that the owners in the food industry care about the quality of life for us at work.

My co-workers and I talk about the need for better conditions on the job, but it is hard because the company threatens to fire us when we talk about improving our lives. I think that as a part of addressing the issue of food in New York you should make sure that we workers have the right to organize without fear and that proper training is mandatory.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

Hola Mi nombre es Ramon Chávez

Y trabajo Amish market es una un supermercado gourmet.

Tengo 4 años trabajando para esta compañía

Cuando empecé a trabajar la compañía me empezó a pagar \$5:00 por hora y trabajaba 12 horas al día 6 días a la semana.

Yo trabajo en la cocina cocinando toda la comida que se vende en la tienda junto con otros dos compañeros.

Trabajando así los días y las semanas se sienten muy largos y encima de eso a veces no tenemos tiempo de tomar un descanso o un tiempo para comer y los managers siempre presionándonos para hacer el trabajo mas rápido y no se preocupan de nosotros si es que hemos comido durante el día o no, a veces ni siquiera un café.

Me siento orgulloso del trabajo que hago, pero siento que no que la compañía no me trata bien.

Y como no gano mucho dinero y no tengo un seguro medico o un plan de retiro, se me hace muy difícil ayudar a mi familia. A veces que después de largas horas de trabajo yo quisiera comprar mis cosas en donde yo trabajo pero con lo que yo gano pues no me alcanza para nada.

En realidad, es muy difícil comprar comida, especialmente productos frescos por que los precios han estado subiendo

mucho y mi salario no ha sabido mucho y pues no me queda otra mas que trabajar todas estas horas para poder comprar comida en otros lugares.

A veces mi patrón me hace trabajar over time, y termino muy cansado. Y ellos no me pagan extra por el over time y esto no esta bien para mi y para los clientes por que si estoy muy cansado y además no me pagan por el over time que he trabajado pues la verdad es que yo ya no le pongo mucha atención a lo que hago cuando estoy cocinando.

Por otra parte no nos dan entrenamiento de cómo mantener la comida apropiadamente para ser servida a los clientes y a veces pasan accidentes pero si decimos algo que del accidente tal ves nos despiden por lo tanto mejor no decimos nada.

Esta situación nos hace sentir como que nos somos parte de la comunidad y que a los dueños de este tipo de establecimientos no les importa el tipo de vida que llevamos nosotros los trabajadores en el lugar de trabajo.

Mis compañeros y yo hemos hablado de la necesidad de mejorar las condiciones de trabajo, pero es muy duro por que si la compañía se da cuenta de que hablamos de la situación nos amenazan con despedirnos

Pienso que como parte de la solución con el problema de la comida ustedes se tienen que asegurar de que los trabajadores tengan el derecho a organizarse sin que la compañía nos esté intimidando o amenazando y también implementar un sistema de entrenamiento obligatorio

Muchas gracias por la oportunidad de hablar el día de hoy.

Juan Jimenez

Hello my name is Juan Jimenez and I used to work in a supermarket called Fine Fair. I worked there for one and a half years in the produce department and made \$6.00/hour. I also helped stock groceries and pack meat products.

When I started to work I was scheduled to work 40 hours a week, and after few weeks the managers told me that I had to work more so I ended up working around 60 to 70 hours per week. I didn't get paid for the over time, but I had no choice. I had to work that many hours in order to make some money to buy food and pay bills. Even with the salary I was making I could not buy food at the store I use to work at. I had to go to the discount bodega stores in order to stretch the money to put food on the table for my family.

At one point I asked for a raise and the company started to give me more heavy work to do. Working that many hours at one time was more than I could handle. I just couldn't do the job anymore so I was forced to look for another job.

Now I work for UFCW Local 1500 as a special organizer. I spend my day talking to other grocery workers in the city about what their jobs are like.

I hear all kinds of stories from grocery workers who don't make a living wage and cannot afford to buy food in the stores they work in. In fact, some workers have told me they are not even allowed to buy food in the market they work in.

These workers are not treated the same as they are in other traditional supermarkets that provide good jobs to the workers. These workers do not have fair pay, do not get health insurance benefits, and sometimes do not even get paid for all the hours they work.

The company always makes excuses to the workers as to why they cannot pay them more: rising prices of food, high cost of rent in the city, energy costs and other excuses. But it does not seem fair that some grocery stores choose to treat the workers well despite the rising costs, while other companies that operate in the same neighborhood make nothing but excuses.

These jobs are not good for the workers and these companies are not necessarily good for the communities where they are located. Workers and people who live in the community need access to affordable, healthy food, not excuses.

I think it is very important that you understand and consider how difficult it is to work in the food industry without having a union to make sure certain standards are met. And it is very difficult to do the work, and do it well, when all you worry about it whether or not you can afford to provide food for your family or not.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Hola Mi nombre es

Juan Jiménez

Yo trabajaba en un supermercado en Queens llamado Fine fair

Trabaje en este lugar por 2 años en el departamento de produce y restocking y también ayudando a empacar los productos de la carne.

Me pagaban el salario mínimo que eran como \$6:00 por hora.

Cuando empecé a trabajar me dieron un horario de 40 horas a la semana pero después de unas cuantas semanas los managers me dijeron que tenia que trabajar mas horas y termine trabajando alrededor de 60 a 70 horas a la semana y no me pagaban el over time, pero pues no tenia otra alternativa tenia que trabajar todas estas horas para poder hacer un poco de dinero para poder pagar renta y comprar de comer, y aun con el salario que yo ganaba no me alcanzaba para compras mis cosas en la tienda donde yo trabajaba yo tenia que ir después del trabajo a comprar en una tienda de descuentos o la bodega que se encuentra no muy lejos de donde yo trabajaba para que me alcanzara para mas.

Las largas horas de trabajo y lo poco que ganaba me hicieron pedir un aumento de salario. Pero al parecer a los managers no les gusto esto y pues empezaron a ponerme presión para hacer trabajos más pesados y a un punto, yo ya no pude mas que renunciar e ir a buscar otro trabajo, sabía qué tal vez seria la misma situación pero ya no pude seguir con esa situación.

Ahora trabajo para la UFCW Local 1500 como un organizador especial.

Durante el DIA me la pasó hablando con más trabajadores de supermercados gourmet, acerca de las condiciones de trabajo.

He escuchado muchas historias de otros trabajadores que no les alcanza lo que ganan y que ni siquiera pueden comprar sus groceries en donde ellos trabajan una por que no les alcanza el dinero y por otra parte hay lugares en donde ni siquiera los dejan comprar en donde trabajan.

A estos trabajadores no los tratan igual como en los supermercados tradicionales que proveen buenos trabajos a los empleados, estos trabajadores no les pagan lo justo, no tienen beneficios médicos y en ocasiones ni siquiera les pagan por todas las horas trabajadas.

Las compañías siempre encuentran una excusa por la cual ya no pueden pagar más como por ejemplo:

El aumento del precio de los comestibles, el aumento de precio de la renta en la ciudad, el aumento del precio de la electricidad y otras excusas.

No se me hace justo que algunos supermercados si tratan bien a sus empleados aun con estos precios subiendo, mientras que otras compañías que operan en nuestros vecindarios no hacen nada más que dar excusas.

Estos trabajos no son buenos para los trabajadores y estas compañías no son necesariamente buenas para las comunidades en donde están operando. Trabajadores y gente que vive en la comunidad necesitan acceso a comida más económica y a comida saludable no más excusas.

Pienso que es muy importante que ustedes entiendan y consideren lo difícil que es trabajar en la industria de comestibles sin tener una unión para asegurarse de que ciertos estándares existan, y es muy difícil hacer el trabajo y hacerlo bien cuando uno se preocupa mucho acerca de que si así como están las cosas uno puede seguir poniendo comida en la mesa o no.

Muchas gracias por la oportunidad de hablar el día de hoy.

Testimony of Dr. Andrew Goodman, Director of the East & Central Harlem District Public Health Office, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, before the New York State Council on Food Policy, May 29, 2008.

Good evening, members of the Council. I am Dr Andy Goodman, Associate Commissioner of Health at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and director of the East & Central Harlem District Public Health Office. This office was recently established, along with similar offices in the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn, to address the growing health disparities in several New York City neighborhoods. First let me thank you for scheduling this session here in Harlem, a community, as you know, of many positive assets but with many needs as well..

In my remarks this evening I want to focus on the challenges we have here in Harlem and similar communities. To put the situation in blunt terms, residents of East and Central Harlem are currently facing a serious obesity epidemic.

- 60% of adults and nearly 45% of elementary school children are either overweight or obese,
- Diabetes rates are over 70% higher than the Manhattan average.
- And a recent federal government study warned that about *one-half of all African-American and Latino children born in 2000* will develop diabetes if current obesity rates continue.

There is a growing body of literature that points to the association between access to healthy foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products, and reduced rates of obesity and related health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

One year ago our office released a study entitled *Eating Well in Harlem: How Available is Healthy Food?* This study surveyed every establishment selling food &

beverages in East and Central Harlem as well as a sample of establishments in the Upper East Side, a much more affluent neighborhood.

Key findings from this report included:

- (1) Bodegas are more abundant and supermarkets far less common in East & Central Harlem than the Upper East Side.
- (2) Bodegas carrying healthy foods are less likely to be located in East and Central Harlem than on the Upper East Side.
- (3) About one in six restaurants in East and Central Harlem are fast-food establishments compared to only one in 25 of the restaurants surveyed in the Upper East Side sample.
- (4) Finally, in a recent analysis of access to healthy foods, we found that less than 1% of our Upper East Side sample lives in areas where it is difficult to access healthy foods compared to 44% of Central Harlem residents and 38% of East Harlem residents.

I should point out that many bodegas are working with the Department to stock 1% milk, and we welcome their efforts to increase the availability of healthier choices. And there are many dedicated organizations and individuals working tirelessly in the community to provide healthier options. The number of Farmers Markets is increasing each year and the new Green Cart legislation will provide much needed venues for additional sources of fruits and vegetables.

Yet we know that given the growing obesity crisis, there needs to be a more comprehensive approach to addressing the lack of healthy food in Harlem. Such an overall plan would require a more thorough discussion than time allows this evening. However, we know that a major component of a broader strategy must entail serious efforts to increase the number of supermarkets in the community. The sad irony is that as the obesity problem grows more severe in our community, we are witnessing more and

more supermarkets closing. We applaud the City Planning Department's recent in-depth study of the scarcity of supermarkets in many areas of the city and the work of the Mayor's Food Policy Task Force. We urge speedy implementation of the recommendations that would bring more supermarkets into Harlem and other underserved neighborhoods.

In conclusion I want to mention that our office coordinates the work of the Harlem Food & Fitness Consortium, an alliance of over sixty organizations working in East and Central Harlem to improve access to healthy food and opportunities to be active. Our members would welcome the opportunity for follow-up discussions with the New York State Council on Food Policy as we move forward to undertake concrete actions to address the lack of access to healthy food in Harlem. Thank you.

My name is Hugo Coello, and I have been a resident of the Bronx for more than 20 years. Over the years I have seen many changes taking place in my community, but I never thought that these changes were going to affect the way we obtain quality food from our bodegas and supermarkets. I am here in behalf of my community to address some of many concerns we are currently experiencing when we try to buy nutritional food for our families. Our main concerns are the availability of certain foods, rising food prices, and the poor food quality we obtain for our money. The price for rice, vegetable oil, milk, fresh fruits and vegetables have almost double to the point that low -income families can only buy the cheap generic brand, buy small quantities, or simply cannot afford to purchase nutritional food for their families. In my neighborhood there is only one supermarket where we only find overpriced and low quality meat, dairy products, fruit and vegetables. People from my community are forced to buy from this place to avoid traveling 10 to 20 blocks, or even go to Washington Heights to shop for better groceries. In our five bodegas you can easily find all kind of junk food, soda, beer, and counters fully stocked with candy which are conveniently placed at our kid's eye level to lure them into buying this junk. Some bodegas in my community pack fruits and some others tainted vegetables in clear plastic bags, and offer them to customers at a reduced price. And the sad part is that some of us still buy these bags to try to rescue and eat whatever portion is still edible out these fruits or vegetables. In other words, having access to fresh fruits and vegetable, and low fat milk are rare commodities in my neighborhood.

As a result I am asking the New York State Food Policy Council to take a closer look at how food access affects my life, the lives of residents and businesses in my community and I am asking that they identify ways to eliminate those impacts on the community.

I am suggesting that the Food Policy Council do the following to reduce the impact on the community:

1. Increase the number of permits for green carts street vendors, increase the numbers of farmer's markets by finding new sites where these farmers can make their fresh produce easily accessible to people throughout the Bronx.

2. Create economic development opportunities for food retailers.

3. Create economic incentives for bodega, and supermarket owners who stock healthy food: reduced fat milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grain foods. The same incentives can be applied to bodega owners who advertise healthy foods in storefront ads, and promote healthy food by stocking their front counters with fresh fruits instead of junk food.

Perhaps more funding is needed to improve the number of supermarkets servicing the number of the residents of these underserved communities.

I want to thank you all for your time and cooperation on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Hugo Coello.

Personal Testimony on Food in New York City

Good Afternoon Council. Thank you for holding this listening session today. My Name is Manavel Amparo. I have been a resident of Weaver Housing Projects at 10 Paladino Ave near the East River since 1991. I came to the United States from the Dominican Republic 41 years ago when I was 14 years old. I've worked many jobs, including working in supermarkets in the city.

I have been a customer of Fine Fair Super Market on 1st Avenue between 120th and 119th streets for many years and I am concerned about their unfair food prices, racist comments, false advertising, and quality of food.

The concerns I have affect my life because I am diabetic, disabled and I believe people should be treated fairly and with respect. I have found that at my supermarket, foods for diabetics are often more expensive than other foods. Even my doctor has recommended that I eat foods to lower my cholesterol. But how can I have the diet I need for a healthy life with the prices today? I have also spoken with workers who told me they've quit because they don't get paid well, and employees of the Fine Fair call customers names.

For more than 10 years I've been trying get my voice heard about these issues and no one has listened to me. I have talked with New York City Health Department, the Office of Consumer Affairs, The Borough President, and many other government offices.

When I have talked with the owner of Fine Fair supermarkets he recommended that I shop at one of his stores that is farther away from where I live. But if I did that I would have spend money that I don't have to take a taxi to get there and back. When I've talked city officials they've said they can't do anything about rising food costs and they've recommended I organize people in my community about my concerns. However, I suspect that while people are aware of these issues, they are afraid of complaining and don't want to be involved.

Therefore I am here today to ask The New York State Food Policy Council to ask the governor to look into the business practices of the Fine Fair supermarkets on 1st avenue between 119th and 120th streets in East Harlem. I

want the Council to recommend to the Governor that he require Fine to stop abusing people with unfair prices, unfair wages, and with racist comments. I believe people are supposed to be treated well and be provided with the foods they need to live a healthy life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Manauel Amparo

Stefania Patinella
Charline Mitchell
Francis Garcia
Andrew Smith



**Testimony before the New York State Council on Food Policy
May 29th, 2008**

Good afternoon. My name is Stefania Patinella, and I am Manager of Food and Nutrition programs for The Children's Aid Society. On behalf of our CEO, C. Warren Moses, and our Board of Trustees, I want to thank the New York State Council on Food Policy for holding these important listening sessions in Harlem. I am joined today by Andrew Smith, Francis Garcia, and Neila Joseph, teen chefs from our Next Generation Catering Company in the South Bronx, who prepared and served the hors d'oeuvres for the reception today under the direction of Anastasia Wilkerson, our Head Chef. We hope you enjoyed the food, which they prepared - using approximately 85% local ingredients from the New York City Greenmarket, thanks to generous donations from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Council on the Environment of New York City and many of our wonderful, local farmers.

The Children's Aid Society provides services to over 150,000 children and families in New York City each year, particularly in Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and Staten Island through community centers, camps, community schools; medical and mental health clinics; foster care, adoption and preventive services; early childhood programs; housing for homeless families; juvenile justice programs; teen pregnancy prevention; legal advocacy and more.

For 155 years, safeguarding the health and wellness of disadvantaged children has been central to our mission. Several years ago, in response to a growing crisis of childhood obesity, we took a serious look at our own food programs and policy. We weren't entirely happy with what we found—children were bringing too much junk food into our after-school programs; our menus, like those of most organizations that feed thousands of children each day, relied on more processed foods than we would have preferred; and our nutrition education program needed a boost. Today, after intensive efforts, we have a robust Food and Nutrition Initiative called Go!Healthy that we are proud of. Our multi-faceted approach includes:

- Policy: We have implemented a new, agency-wide Food and Beverage Policy as well as a Fitness Policy.
- Food Service Program: We have launched an ambitious and agency-wide New Menus project in the 15 Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) in our early childhood, after-school and teen programs. New recipes are made from whole foods, and are plant-based, cooked from scratch, and draw from the many vibrant cultures at our centers. To implement our New Menus, we have

developed a training program for staff at all levels, from cooks to teachers and administrators.

- **Cooking and Nutrition Education:** Our hands-on cooking programs teach children, teens and parents how healthy eating can be delicious, accessible and fun. Our programs include:
 - Go!Healthy, our hands-on healthy cooking and gardening program for after-school and teen programs
 - Go!Kids, our holistic obesity prevention initiative for early childhood programs; and
 - Adult Cooking and Nutrition programs
- **Entrepreneurship:** Our Next Generation Catering Company in the South Bronx is teen-run and features healthy, made from scratch foods.
- **Advocacy and Access:** We support efforts to increase access to high-quality, healthy and affordable foods in low-income neighborhoods, including supermarkets, greenmarkets, green carts and others. We even have our own Youthmarket program—a student-run greenmarket—in partnership with Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC) at two of our Community Schools in East Harlem and the South Bronx.

I am here today to encourage the Council to support efforts in three areas: first, to improve the nutritional quality of New York's CACFP meal services for children; second, to create opportunities for young people and adults, especially those in low-income neighborhoods, to become involved in hands-on healthy cooking programs; and third, to strengthen a distribution system that connects New York State farmers with New York City's food markets. This distribution network should aim not only to give all New York City residents equal access to fresh, local foods, but should also link our foodservice programs such as School Food and CACFP, to those same foods.

Food Service

With the rising obesity epidemic, there is a lot of focus on improving School Food, which we think is of utmost importance and we support the New York City Department of Education's efforts and progress in this area. There is less focus on the food service in our city's early childhood programs, after school programs and teen programs, many of which are reimbursed by CACFP. These programs feed thousands of children each day in New York City. In the case of early childhood programs, many children eat three-quarters of their daily meals in the CACFP food service program. And with elementary school children and teens, the hot meals they get in their after-school programs often constitute dinner. Surely, a foodservice program this important deserves as much attention as School Food.

At The Children's Aid Society, we are very thankful to have the support of CACFP because it enables us to feed children who often come from homes struggling with food insecurity. However, as we began looking into our own CACFP program, as well as others across the city, we noticed that many menus, including our own, were not as healthful as they ought to be. Many rely heavily on frozen and processed foods such as pancakes, muffins, cookies, chicken nuggets, packaged pizza, and fish sticks. The ingredients in these prepared foods often include partially-hydrogenated fats, high fructose corn syrup and dozens of other sweeteners, preservatives, colors, sodium, and artificial flavors. CACFP guidelines are clear on the quantity of food served—how many ounces of protein, produce, grains and milk each child needs to get—but they do not regulate quality as well as they should. For instance, Oreo cookies count as a “grain”, reheated tater tots as a “vegetable,” and the fruits served are often those canned in syrup—even in summer and fall when trees across our state are laden with peaches and apples.

Furthermore, CACFP's focus on quantity as opposed to quality often creates unintentional difficulties for those programs, like ours, that make great efforts to cook from scratch. For instance, I learned when I started my work on menus that many CACFP programs are told that “soups are discouraged.” This is because, as with the example of a homemade chicken and vegetable soup with noodles, the three components are mixed together in one pot, and when the soup is ladled out, each child is not certain to get exactly one and a half ounces of chicken, one half cup of vegetables, and half of a serving of noodles. While we fully understand and support the need to regulate the minimum amount of food children are served, we believe that the quality of food is as important as the quantity. CACFP should encourage—not discourage—programs like ours to make creative meals from scratch such as soups, lasagnas, bean salads, and other mixed-component meals that children enjoy.

We urge the Council to look into creating incentives for CACFP programs to serve foods that are cooked from scratch with healthful ingredients, and to create a support system to encourage programs to purchase these ingredients from local producers. Real cooking with real foods increases the cost of meals—both because of labor and the greater cost of fresh foods—which many programs can not afford. We therefore further urge the Council to explore increasing the amount of CACFP reimbursement so that programs serving the poorest children in our city can afford to feed them the most nutritious foods. In our own New Menus project, we have worked with nutritionists and chefs to create innovative, delicious recipes from whole foods that meet CACFP requirements. We've had great success—our cooks are thrilled to be cooking with fresh ingredients and children love the new recipes. We would be happy to share the details of our training program and recipes with the Council and with others.

Cooking and Nutrition Education

Two years ago, we launched Go!Healthy, a hands-on food education program that empowers young people to develop a knowledge of and love for cooking with whole and healthful foods. The program quickly generated excitement among young people across

our sites, and today we run dozens of cooking programs for youth throughout the year and in the summer. We also have a parent cooking series, an early childhood cooking program, and two very special initiatives: our Youthmarket program and our Next Generation Catering Company, which is staffed and run by the teens you see here today.

We are thrilled to meet this demand from youth for cooking and nutrition programs. However, when it comes to healthy eating, education and access must work in tandem. While we address in our programs the *why* of healthy eating, and the *how to* of healthy cooking, we often hit a wall with the *where*. At some point in every cooking program, discussion among participants gives rise to anger and frustration over their lack of access to healthy foods. Teens feel an especially keen sense of injustice: they ask why their communities have been overlooked and whether their health is not as important as the health of their “downtown” equivalents. Here’s a letter written by one of our Harlem teen participants, Charline Mitchell, 18 years old:

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Charline Mitchell and I started attending Culinary Arts class at The Children’s Aid Society Hope Leadership Academy when I was 15 years old. At Culinary class we made a variety of different tasty dishes that were just as much healthy. One of my favorite desserts we made was with fruit and homemade granola. I have been classified as obese according to the popularly accepted Body Mass Index model. Participating in the culinary program gave me an incentive to take charge of my weight and try to lead a healthier life. Having fruits and vegetables readily available to me makes it easier for me to commit to a healthy lifestyle. While “junk” food is readily accessible to virtually anyone in my neighborhood, it is not the same for fruits and vegetables. Please give those who are trying to commit to a healthy lifestyle a fighting chance. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Charline Mitchell

Francis Garcia, teen chef of the Next Generation Catering Company, has this to say:

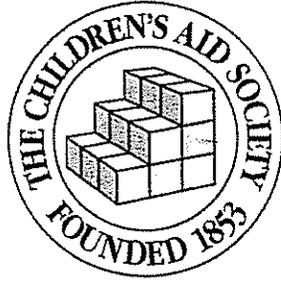
“I’m trying to watch my weight, but that’s really hard to do because every time you turn the corner, there’s Chinese Food or McDonalds or bodegas that don’t have healthy foods. And the fast food places—they’re smart and strategic. They know people don’t have any money, so they make a dollar menu. Having farmer’s markets in the Bronx is a cool idea, but if prices are too high, people will just shop at the bodegas and get the things that are less healthy—even if they don’t want to! And the supermarkets are not much better—they only have the basics. They don’t have the healthy food I look for—like I can’t find tofu in the Fine Fair.”

Andrew Smith, also a teen chef of the Next Generation Catering Company, went shopping at the Union Square Greenmarket this week to purchase ingredients for this event. He speaks to his experience and the difference between foods at the farmer's market and those at his corner store in the Bronx:

“At the farmer's market, I tried all kinds of fruits and vegetables I've never tried before. I tried beets and pickled asparagus, whipped honey and a real juicy strawberry. I've never tasted a strawberry that tasted like that! I learned from my friends at the farmer's market where the foods came from and how they're made and the importance of growing your own vegetables instead of getting them from other countries. The foods were all natural and free from preservatives. Like the jelly—it has only really simple ingredients. But when you get jelly at the supermarket, it has these 24-letter preservatives you've never heard of. It's like another language, and the ingredients are like a train. My friends at the farmer's market should be in every borough and every neighborhood.”

In closing, we urge the Council to do all it can to connect residents in low-income communities with fresh and local foods that are also affordable. A strong infrastructure and distribution network that links New York State's farms to New York City's markets, and especially to low-income neighborhoods, is sorely needed. It would give residents access to good foods in their communities, help to create more nutritious and vibrant foodservice programs for thousands of children, and allow the dynamic young people before you today to pursue their quest for healthy, delicious eating.

We thank you for this opportunity to speak today.



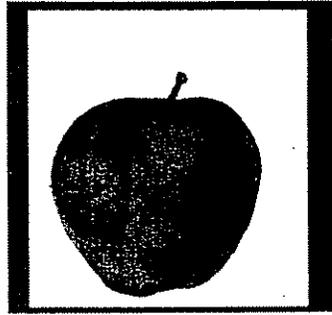
Next Generation Catering Company

founded at the Next Generation Center in the Bronx

The Children's Aid Society's Next Generation Center (NGC) is a one-stop center designed to meet the needs of young people transitioning to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

The mission of NGC is to provide support, guidance, training and opportunities to young people, ages 14 to 24, in the Bronx—with a special focus on youth in foster care and those who have aged out of foster care.

We offer youth leadership and life skills training, technology instruction, job readiness & job development services, educational guidance & tutoring, legal advocacy, housing assistance, creative and visual arts programs, cooking & nutrition instruction, and opportunities for entrepreneurship through our Next Generation Catering Company.



Hors d'oeuvres were made possible by very generous donations from the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), and our wonderful local farmers including:

Bakers Bounty
Berkshire Berries
Bread Alone
Cherry Lane Farms
Hawthorne Valley Farm
Lynnhaven Nubians
Madura Farms
Phillips Farms
Rick's Picks
Ronnybrook Farm
S&SO Farm
Tamarack Hollow Farm
Valley Shepherd Creamery

MENU

Local Artisanal Cheeses with Apples, Bread, Jam, and Pickles

local ingredients: cheese, apples, bread, jam, pickles

Mushroom, Spinach & Cheddar Quesadilla with Fresh Herb Salsa

local ingredients: mushrooms, spinach, cheese, fresh herbs

Asparagus and Parmesan Crostini

local ingredients: asparagus, cream, bread

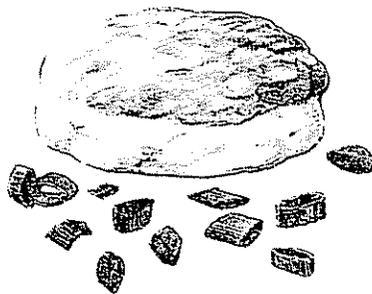
Buttermilk-Chive Biscuits with BBQ Pulled Pork and Okra Pickles

local ingredients: pork, chives, pickles, butter

Strawberry Tartlets with Whipped Cream

local ingredients: strawberries, cream

*menu created from 85% local foods from NYC greenmarket



Deborah Quinines – Vice Chair Community Board #11 and Chair of Health and Human Services Committee

Talking points provided to the Food Policy Council

Thank you for coming to Harlem and the continued sense of urgency.
Since our last meeting one of the closed supermarkets has been demolished and construction has begun for development.
Families are shopping in 99-cent stores where the quality of food is a concern.
Community Boards are committed to working to implement the policy recommendations and can serve as community and advocacy partners.
Promote a pilot to partnership with upstate grower with local senior centers and a dept in a hospital
Include cultural diversity in messaging and foods linked to the Caribbean
Increase farmers markets uptown
Sign Exchange pilot to target the exchange of Tobacco or Alcohol advertisements for healthy messages

Public Testimony

I am Asantewaa Gail Harris and I reside at the Queen Mother Moore International House located at 477 W142nd Street in Harlem. I am here in support of several NYC communities of color where farm fresh produce is too often unavailable. In the words of my beloved ancestor Fannie Lou Hamer, "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired". Since access to healthy food is glaringly absent from the goals of PlaNYC, and there is no FOOD COMMITTEE at the NYC Council level, it will take some bold steps to remedy diseases like diabetes, obesity and other food related health conditions.

As grass roots Solution Builders, the members of Community Vision Council boldly took steps in addressing some of the health disparities plaguing communities of color. It is our neighbors, friends, family members and sometimes ourselves that are reflected in public health statistics, data and research studies. CVC's mission is: *Saving lives – by building bridges, creating 'safety nets' and finding solutions for ourselves, our families and our communities.*

We are outraged that this city lacks a food policy to address the glaring issues of hunger, health and nutrition. Yet public dollars are being used to support business enterprises. Unlike "bodegas", those corner stores that earn revenues from cigarettes, beer and lottery sales, CVC & other independent farmers markets sell farm fresh produce to our neighbors. We do so without adequate resources or financial support. This year is our fourth season but CVC cannot again volunteer to manage two farmers market sites while bodegas and green carts get publicly financed.

New York State Food Policy must address the inequity in funding, technical assistance and resources to communities of color through out this state. There must be inclusion, diversity and transparency in important policies and decisions relating to food.

**Asantewaa Gail Harris (a pro-active Grandmother of 7)
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718/670-3360 or ahgatnet@hotmail.com**

Asantewaa Gail Harris, Delegate
Harlem Women International
Community Vision Council

United Nations, New York City
Commission on Sustainable Development 16
May 5-16, 2008

*As a Delegate of Harlem Women International, I was fortunate to attend the **United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**. Countries from all over the globe were in New York City to discuss the following thematic issues: Agriculture, Rural development, Land, Drought, Desertification, and Africa. I am currently residing in Harlem NY and since 2005, I have managed the CVC Farmers Market in Bushwick, Brooklyn – a poor community known as one of New York City’s “food deserts” – where there is limited access to healthy food. Our food system work functions at the grass roots level; our local market was launched and supported by Black farm families and continues to advocate for more farm fresh produce for underserved communities in NYC. **CSD** is responsible for reviewing progress, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Agenda 21, and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted in Rio de Janeiro at the 1992 Earth Summit. As a solution builder and local organizer working in one of New York City’s community of color, I wanted to know exactly where we fit in.*

My CSD participation includes the following activities:

- Monday May 5th, 2008 – Registration and Opening Sessions
- Tuesday May 6th, 2008 – Conf. Rm 4 Thematic Discussion – Agriculture PM Reception
- Thursday May 8th, 2008 – Conf. Rm 6 Thematic Discussion – Partnerships
- Friday May 9th, 2008 - am Biofuels, Food Security and Rural Development, pm The City and Farm Linkages Showcase Reception at Baha’i Center (*This is where I met with several colleagues doing food systems work in some of NYC’s communities of color. I had to call two early registrants who never got the address to the reception.*)
- Saturday May 10th, 2008 – all day Bus Tour to the Hudson Valley Farm Showcase
- Sunday May 11, 2008 – all day Showcase Learning Center event at Columbia University /Teacher’s College (We were locked in once again!)
- Monday May 12, 2008 – am (Off site to submit a statement at the Congressional Forum on Law Enforcement Accountability at US Customs House) pm Partnership Fair
- Wednesday May 14th, 2008 am Partnership Fair; inter-linkages among thematic discussions on climate change
- Thursday May 15th, 2008 pm Business model for farmers marketing, supply and Credit Cooperatives

Observations:

1. CSD meets annually at the UN for about two or three weeks and will again be held in NYC next year.
2. While broad public participation is a stated prerequisite to achieve sustainable development, there are several barriers to access and participation for people from NYC's communities of color.
3. Nine key **Major Groups** are recognized as representatives of civil society and they are: Women, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Local Authorities, Scientific and Technological communities, Indigenous People Workers and Trade Unions and Farmers. You will find statements from Agenda 21 on each of the **Major Groups** below:
 - Women
 - Children and Youth
 - Indigenous People
 - NGOs
 - Local Authorities
 - Workers and Trade Unions
 - Business and Industry
 - Scientific and Technological Communities
 - Farmers
4. During my attendance at CSD, I saw several representatives of both the public and private sectors who work within the NYC food system and not one of them had provided any advance information about this important event. PlaNYC is a 30 year municipal plan that does not even mention food once.
5. Many governmental reports carried a common outcry of the "global food crisis" and the need for interventions and solutions. Recommendations, policies, case studies and best practices were presented by governments and civil society representatives.
6. The absence of Black American farmers was obvious and alarming.
www.digitaljournalist.org/issues0603/ficara-video.html
Many of the reports on issues of agriculture, land and farmers were solely presented from the African viewpoint. I met farmers for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. However, US farmers of African descent were glaringly absent, voiceless and unrecognized at the UN sessions. Their unique issues of loss land and livelihoods were not addressed. There must be a formal way to have these important stakeholders present and engaged in next year's Commission on Sustainable Development 17.
7. The City and Farm Linkages Showcase was a weekend of activities outside of the UN with a welcome reception at the Baha'i Center, a city farm tour of Brooklyn urban growers, a Hudson Valley farm tour, a tour of Union Square's Greenmarket. On Sunday (Mother's Day), we participated in an all day Showcase Learning Event at Teacher's College at Columbia University. As a discussion leader for the recent "Food for Thought" Film

Festival (www.foodfilmfest.com), I had gotten notice of this program. Participation required on-line registration using a form that had no contact name or phone number. The email confirmation for this weekend of multi-site activities did not arrive until two days before the opening May 9th event. This was difficult and very confusing.

8. A female CSD Youth Caucus Delegate representing Brooklyn Rescue Mission mentioned that as the only local youth from NYC, she felt isolated and overwhelmed. Recruiting and training at least four NYC youth (2 females, 2 males) as a team would be a much fairer way for youth to participate.
9. **CSD Priorities for Action** must take into account the lack of inclusion, diversity and transparency of this important forum for those who have been shut out. There must be greater access and participation particularly for people working in and with NYC's communities of color on food access, environmental justice, resource development, capacity building and other cross cutting issues such as poverty eradication. There must be authentic representation in partnerships for sustainable development to advance broader public participation. Effective partnerships in NYC must provide broader awareness and educational sessions to prepare & train NGO delegates for participation in all future CSD events. Showcases and off site events while significant side events, are not the sole venues for local community stakeholders.
10. According to the CSD brochure "*Sustainable Development Needs You*".

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Harlem Women International www.newfuturefoundation.org

a contributor to the CERD Shadow report "**RACE Realities in New York City**"

<http://www.urbanjustice.org/pdf/publications/racerealities.pdf>

CVC Farm Families & Allies:

Afrikan Zion Organic Roots Farm, Vermont

Trinity Farm, Clintondale NY

A Bunch of Women & He, Inc. Arizona

Mo Better Food, California

Brooklyn Rescue Mission, Brooklyn NY

Just Food, NYC

Nani Ola Productions, NYC

INTACT CDC, Mt. Vernon NY

PS 76 Garden, Harlem NY

Hope Stephens Garden, Harlem, NY

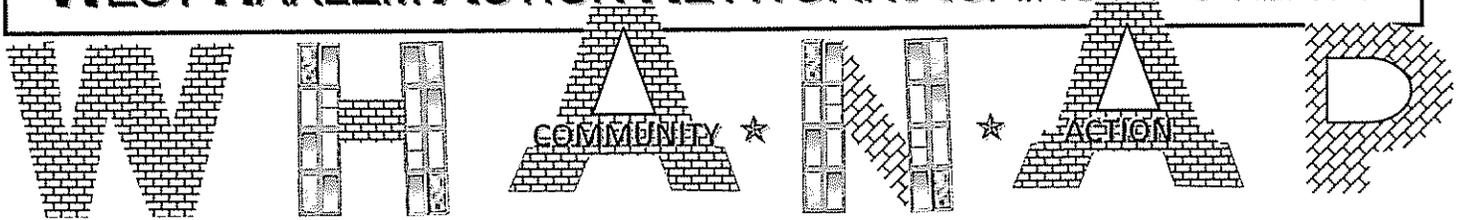
SLAM/City College of New York, Harlem, NY

Harlem Women International, Harlem, NY

4 Doors to Health Institute, Boca Raton, Florida

United Recycling, LLC, Brooklyn NY

WEST HARLEM ACTION NETWORK AGAINST POVERTY



West Harlem Action Network Against Poverty
 NYS Council on Food Policy Listening Session Testimony
 Thursday, May 29, 2008

Good evening,

We would like to thank you all for joining us in the fight against hunger. My name is Michael Paone, coordinator of the West Harlem Action Network Against Poverty (WHANAP), a grassroots alliance of emergency food programs (EFPs) in the Morningside Heights / West Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan.

We will refrain from restating facts and figures, as many of our friends at the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, Just Food, City Harvest, the Food Bank for NYC, World Hunger Year, and the Hunger Action Network of NYS have already given you detailed analyses, and we are not a research based group. We are here to tell you what is happening on the ground in our feeding programs, which is too often ignored or left out of the conversation, and to offer suggestions to address food insecurity from the bottom up.

Greater Visibility and Community Involvement: We Need a Popular Food Movement

- 1) ***The governor should highlight and continually report on his and this Council's work on increasing food security.***
 In an accessible and concise way, perhaps a televised press event, make known the existence and ongoing mission of the Council and how people can get involved.
- 2) ***Publicize the Food Policy Council members and their contact information (at least e-mail).*** There are many community based organizations that have real, grounded experience with problems of food insecurity. Please make advocacy easier for them. Also, work to improve traffic to and clearly report the actions of the Council on the Ag and Markets website.
- 3) ***Open the 311 information service as a channel of communication for food issues.*** Everyday people should be able to easily and meaningfully express their concerns about food related issues. This would serve as an outlet and medium by which elected officials could understand the dramatic need and piece together the real food related concerns of everyday people. Currently, people are only told where to feed themselves for a few days, rather than how to feed the solution for good.
- 4) ***Greater marketing and advertising for food related programs and issues.*** We would suggest a public education campaign, called Food For Thought, which could display things like: hard facts about nutrition related diseases, explanation of Community Supported Agriculture, local statistics about hunger and food insecurity, Food Stamps information, etc., and how people can take action on these.

The moral here is: people should no longer be frustrated, intimidated, or under-informed in expressing their inability to feed themselves or their families. This is a dreadfully serious concern, and average citizens need to know what they can do; currently I would say, they largely do not know. Low-income New Yorkers need a lot more than food, they also need a voice. A truly representative movement will include not just advocates and food professionals. All New Yorkers high to low income need to know how they can be part of the solution.

Rethinking Emergency Food / Improving Food Assistance Programs

The recent increased demands on emergency feeding programs due to economic downturn, rising food prices, and supermarket closures brings to light the absurdity of the state of emergency food. Now more than ever, we are realizing the error of relying heavily on the charitable sector to provide one of the most fundamental human needs. Here are some ways to share this burden:

Increase accountability and efficiency of emergency food funders and partners.

If we are to move forward, EFPs require responsive and able partners. For instance, our network has communicated with the municipal Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) on key improvements including: 1) Greater funding transparency and communication, 2) Clarifying alternative food vendors and purchasing, 3) Increasing nutritional value of food, and, 4) Creating an advisory board of informed EFP providers. The Council should assess and hold such programs to the highest standards.

Make it easy and imperative for EFPs to connect people to comprehensive benefits.

We encourage the public sector to aggressively partner with these EFPs. After all, our kitchens and pantries are where people go when they don't have food. The City should be scrambling to come to us, not the other way around; this is a huge missed opportunity. If the state is serious about fully maximizing participation in nutrition assistance programs such as Food Stamps, aggressive outreach efforts in EFPs is where to start.

Although there are various pilot programs to connect people to nutrition assistance, such as the Paperless Office System (POS), these are too few in number and often unknown to most EFPs. Such programs should be dramatically expanded, publicized, and offered to all feeding programs.

However, the Food Stamps office and application process are still a barrier to many people. We often hear complaints of the lack of professionalism of HRA workers, application process blunders, and the stigma associated with being fingerprinted. The Council must work to invigorate and streamline the Food Stamps process, and eliminate treating the poor like criminals through a wasteful fingerprinting system.

Organize and communicate with Emergency Food Programs.

With over 1,200 EFPs in the city, competition for funding and territorialism are not uncommon. The Council must take steps to key EFPs into a collective, collaborative, mutually supportive agenda, which is to end hunger. Emergency food coordinators and staff are usually good hearted volunteers. They need resources and support if benefits outreach is to be successful. This way they will have time to participate in an EFAP advisory board. I know for a fact the reason why more EFPs aren't testifying tonight is a lack of time, most of which is spent running their programs.

Poverty and the Food System: Addressing the Food Gap

We must emphasize the need to consider economic disparities when talking about mending the food system. We urge policy makers to address the big picture which must include economic justice and community development. There are larger structural concerns here at work, and we cannot simply place the onus on either the feeding programs or the individuals themselves to ensure the economic self-sufficiency of entire communities and we cannot just throw food at the problem. This is the fundamental error of how government deals with feeding low-income New Yorkers today.

When people are without food, there are typically three activities in which to engage:

- a) **Feed them** (satisfy biological need)
- b) **Provide counsel, casework, and benefits outreach** (address personal and psychological barriers to resources)
- c) **Strengthen local communities** (uproot structural constraints such as: creating jobs and living wages, supporting local economies and small businesses, increasing affordable housing and healthcare, strengthening local food systems, etc.)

Emergency Food Programs are really good at the first, less capable at the second, and nearly absent from the third. In fact, emergency food as an enterprise is antithetical to community development. Here are some reasons why:

The Problems – Emergency food is bad for local economies and food systems.

- 1) It creates a *shadow food system*: Creates an outlet or an excuse to overproduce and over-process commodity foods and supports the production of foods of low nutritional quality.
- 2) It *normalizes poor nutrition*: People are unwillingly socialized to accept eating damaging foods.
- 3) It *hampers community food economies*: Only provides a limited resource, which is imported into communities, rather than encouraging them to create their own stable means of exchange.

Solution to 1) – Address the commodity buying process.

We are not asking you to take on the entire conventional food industry, but simply that you provide both positive and negative reinforcement in providing healthy food to low-income people. Work with food industry donators and vendors to ensure they are giving nutritional food, rather than unloading their unmarketable surplus macaroni and cheese. Discourage the donation and purchasing of such foods through programs such as TEFAP, HPNAP, and EFAP. You must be willing to stop this at the source, for one of the realities and challenges of emergency food is that if you put the food into the system, it will be consumed. Food recipients do not have the choice of the free market or the consumer power to avoid overly-processed, low-nutrient foods and EFP coordinators cannot be expected to deny people their next meal no matter how poor the food. In short, we do not appreciate America's food waste filtering down through the emergency food stream.

Solution to 2) – Increase nutritional quality across the board.

We need help in making sure access to fresh, healthy food doesn't become a privilege of the well-off, or, even stranger, the privilege of the miniscule amount of low-income people who participate in subsidized CSAs and the like. Increasingly we are seeing working families and aging baby boomers on fixed income who have unique nutritional needs. We cannot keep giving away canned food high in sodium and sugar to people with diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart conditions. This is malicious at worst and insulting at best. We should stop treating nutrition as a luxury, and work strongly against this classist distribution of healthy food.

Solution to 3) – Support local food economies and create bridges for low-income people.

There are numerous methods such as CSAs, farmers markets, urban agriculture, food coops, and supermarkets to increase healthy food consumption. We have to work to make these projects and these food ways the norm, rather than the exception. But we must also increase low-income access to these. For example, WHANAP sponsors the West Harlem CSA which is subsidized and accepts food stamps. We also find food coops to be an effective solution to simultaneously address many of these problems, as they are affordable, healthy, keep money in the community, and support local farmers. The creation of co-operative markets should be assisted and incentivized by the public sector. There is one starting up in Harlem right now; please do what you can to help them.

Closing: A New Direction

In your discussions with the governor, please be mindful of the shameful state of the emergency food system. Please also think critically about what it means as a country and society to institutionalize emergency food. By doing this we normalize hunger as something inevitable, and we make acceptable the unwise priorities of government spending. There is no longer such a thing as “emergency” food. The emergency food system is subsidizing the failure of our government to instate good food policy practices in our city, state and nation. Our good faith response was intended to be a temporary aid, to help our neighbors in need. Our good will is being taken advantage by the commodity purchasing system and by politicians who can say they are doing something about hunger in our communities by writing a check for more food, when in fact this demand has only grown larger. We envision a city without 1, 200 soup kitchens and food pantries, and a city in which people are able to purchase their own food through a healthy and economically just food system. We look forward to working with you to realize this new direction of growth.

Sincerely,

Michael Paone
WHANAP Coordinator

Rita Green
Central Harlem Alcohol Crisis Center

Web: www.whanap.org

Phone: 212.316.7585

CC: WHANAP Steering Committee

Katy Saintil, Community Impact / Ford Hall, Chair

Rita Green, Central Harlem Alcohol Crisis Center, Vice Chair

Janet Dorman, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Secretary

Michael Ennes, Broadway Community Inc., Treasurer

Jane W. Robinson, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Member at large



Comments prepared by

Triada Stampas

for the

**New York State Food Policy Council
Harlem Listening Session**

May 29, 2008

on behalf of

Food Bank For New York City / FoodChange

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon. I am Triada Stampas, Director of Government Relations and Public Education with the Food Bank For New York City/FoodChange. The Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present comments to the NYS Food Policy Council regarding the need to maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs, increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods.

Food Bank For New York City, in conjunction with its subsidiary organization, FoodChange, works to end hunger and increase access to affordable, nutritious food for low-income New Yorkers through a multi-pronged approach that includes emergency food, income support and education and awareness. As the major supplier of food to 1.3 million New Yorkers, the Food Bank procures and distributes food to approximately 1,000 emergency and community food programs throughout New York City. The organization provides food safety, networking and capacity-building workshops; manages nutrition education programs for schools, after-school and emergency food programs; operates food stamp outreach and education programs; operates senior programs, a soup kitchen and food pantry; coordinates the largest Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program in the country; and, conducts research and develops policy to inform community and government efforts to end hunger.

First, I would like to thank the Council for your leadership, and for the opportunity you have given us to offer our thoughts and to inform the State's agenda in the areas of hunger, nutrition and food policy. So as not to be repetitive of our previous testimony, my brief remarks today will

focus on the community we're currently in, Harlem, which presents, on a somewhat smaller scale, an illustration of our approach to addressing food poverty.

EMERGENCY FOOD

The cost of food at home in the New York metropolitan area increased by almost 10 percent from 2004 to 2007.² In that time, the number of people turning to emergency food programs (EFPs) increased by 24 percent – from approximately 1 million in 2004, to 1.3 million in 2007. Families already squeezed by increases in rent, transportation and utility charges, are facing an ever harder struggle to put food on the table.

On the days when the food pantry at our Community Kitchen and Pantry opens at 10am, lines often starting forming outside before 7am. To accommodate the demand, we added an additional day of service to our food pantry, which is now open 5 days per week. We now serve between 100 and 150 people daily – approximately 3,000 families every month. Our soup kitchen serves dinner to between 500 and 600 people every evening. As is common at EFPs, demand at both our soup kitchen and food pantry climbs toward the end of the month as people use up their allotment of food stamps. When the emergency food network citywide and in this community cannot accommodate the need, they often refer people to other EFPs – but shifting demand to other providers is not a sustainable solution when we are experiencing the most severe food shortage the Food Bank has ever seen.

Providing emergency food is important and necessary, but we are seeing government support for it flat-funded or cut at the state and local level. Even the increases to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in the recently passed Farm Bill will not make up for the loss of bonus commodities or the effects of food inflation.

In order to reverse this trend and equip emergency food organizations to meet existing need, multi-year funding increases indexed to inflation for all of the government-funded emergency food programs – the State's Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) included – are required. In addition, strategies are needed to address the loss of private food donations in the emergency food system. Changing trends in the food industry that have resulted in a downturn in donations from the food industry have compounded the emergency food shortage. One of the ways to address this issue is to create linkages between local state farmers and the emergency food system that would facilitate an increase in the supply of local, nutritious food to soup kitchens and food pantries.

INCOME SUPPORT

While emergency food addresses the immediate needs of food-poor households, income support in the form of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) offers a more long-term solution to food poverty.

In this economic environment, renewed commitment to increasing the participation of eligible New Yorkers in the federal Food Stamp Program (FSP) needs to be a priority. FSP aids city (and state) residents of low-income neighborhoods by supporting their incomes (with federal funds) and making it easier for them to maintain and/or improve their nutritional intake. In

² The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food at home in the New York metro area increased from 190.7 in 2004 to 208.4 in 2007.

⁴ Combination of research: Fiscal Policy Institute. (2006). *Food Stamps: Increasing Access Would Boost the New York Economy*; Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *Food Stamp Access in Urban America*; Children's Defense Fund-NY. (2006). *Hunger in the Midst of Plenty*.

addition, FSP increases economic activity in those neighborhoods through purchases in local grocery stores.

Research demonstrates that approximately half a million eligible New York City residents are currently not receiving food stamps,⁴ with many instead turning to emergency food programs (EFPs) and other social service organizations for their food needs. Only 46 percent of New York City residents who use EFPs are enrolled in the Food Stamp Program (FSP), indicating that close to 650,000 individuals who rely on soup kitchens and food pantries, the vast majority of whom are income eligible, are not receiving food stamps.⁵

But, even as economic predictions and media reports underline the need, local public support for community-based food stamp outreach is weak. For example, this past year, FoodChange's citywide food stamp outreach program, *Food Force* (a nationally recognized model which operated in high-need areas citywide, including Harlem), was de-funded. Operating for more than a decade, this program has been the backbone of food stamp outreach for New York City, providing prescreening services in multiple languages and helping to connect the hardest-to-reach populations to the food stamp program. In FY 2007 alone, *Food Force* prescreened almost 12,000 households for FSP at sites throughout New York City, 74 percent (8,828 households representing approximately 20,600 individuals) of which were income- and resource-eligible for food stamps. Eligible households prescreened by *Food Force* qualify for an average benefit amount of approximately \$198.00 per month (approximately \$2,400 per year).

Similar to the lack of emergency food to meet growing need at EFPs, the community is also lacking sufficient resources to meet existing and new need for food stamp outreach. In light of the imminent changes to the food stamp program brought on by the recent passage of the Farm Bill, it is imperative that this trend be reversed. Some New Yorkers will find themselves newly eligible, and other current and potential food stamp recipients will need to be provided new information about the program. Increased public funding to strengthen community-based food stamp outreach, as well as community-based pre-screening and facilitated enrollment, is a key measure needed to achieve the goal of increasing participation of eligible households in the FSP.

Like food stamps, the EITC, a refundable personal income tax credit, supplements the income of low-wage households and brings significant funding into the local economy. Depending on income and household size, a qualifying New York City taxpayer could receive a combined federal, state and city earned income credit of up to \$6,367 in the 2007 tax year. For a household with less than \$40,000 in income, this is no small amount. This year, the tax preparers at our Food and Finance Center here in Harlem, one of 11 sites where we offer free tax assistance for EITC-eligible individuals, returned over \$17.5 million in tax refunds to low-wage New York City workers.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Just as providing sustainable income support is a long-term means of addressing food poverty, so is educating individuals to make good choices about food a key component of our strategy. To that end, we provide both in-classroom and community-based nutrition education citywide for children, youth and adults via the CookShop Program (operated by FoodChange with Food Stamp Nutrition Education funding administered by USDA), providing people with knowledge to inform better food choices. Our CookShop Classroom Program reaches approximately 2,000 students in 91 classrooms in Harlem schools and after-school sites. Our CookShop for Adults program offers monthly nutrition education workshops to adults in 18 sites in Harlem.

⁵ Food Bank For New York City/City Harvest. (2006). *Hunger in America 2006: The New York City and State Report*. Food Bank For New York City/Food Change comments to NYS Food Policy Council, 5.29.08

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of our work at Food Bank For New York City/FoodChange is to ensure that all New York City residents have local, permanent access to affordable, nutritious food. This includes the long-term goal of ensuring that all city households have sufficient resources to purchase their own food and that the current dearth of food retail outlets in low-income communities – an issue we know to be of particular concern in East and Central Harlem – be addressed.

But we continue to confront a crisis that holds the potential to unravel much of this work. The problems in Harlem are the same as the problems citywide, and the same problems you would find had this listening session been in any other community in New York City – from Far Rockaway, Queens, the South Shore of Staten Island, East New York in Brooklyn or Co-Op City in the Bronx. The resources to connect families and individuals with emergency food services and food stamps are being cut at the time of greatest need, and the impacts are being felt throughout the city. It is time to be realistic about the impossibility of doing more with less.

Thank you for taking time today to hear about food policy concerns in New York City and for your ongoing work to prioritize access to affordable, nutritious food in low-income communities.

Testimony by: Ann Bragg, Member of Community Voices heard
Given to the The New York State Council on Food Policy
Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Building
May 29, 2008

My name is Ann Bragg. I am a life-long resident of Harlem. I have raised 5 kids and have 3 grandchildren.

I am a leader at Community Voices Heard. CVH founded in 1994, is an organization made up of low-income New Yorkers fighting to impact and monitor policies that affect our lives. We are based in East Harlem, and are building state-wide power. Along with chapters in New York City, we have opened chapters in Yonkers and Newburgh. We currently have 35,000 members statewide, and over 10,000 in Harlem alone.

Food policy is affecting Harlem; food policy is affecting our members. The gentrification that has occurred in our community is drastically having an impact on the low-income families in our neighborhood.

Pathmark came to Harlem some years ago. Initially, there was a reasonable selection of affordable foods and a good coupon program. Now, the prices have risen, and the affordable selection has diminished, and the coupons program doesn't help provide for the essentials.

The smaller chain supermarkets have gone through many ownership changes over the years. These changes affect relationships that have built over time. In addition, the cultural selection of food has changed, along with management and personnel. These changes affect the community.

Both supermarkets offer healthy choices. They do not market them. When you walk the aisles of the stores, the food with the most sugar and the most sodium, are the ones that are capped off the front of the aisles.

Harlem is the home of many fast-food establishments. The choices are not so healthy. And when the healthy choices are pushed, they are very expensive. With the high costs of rent, fuel, what choices do you think when presented with something in abundance for less money, like fries and soda, and with something less for more money?

Harlem is home to a lot of people. In our community there is a lot of disease that food has a lot of impact on. Obesity and diabetes is rampant in our community. It has been scientifically proven that the easy access to low-cost, high fat, sugar and sodium foods is a major cause of these maladies. Step outside and look at the number of young people in wheelchairs who have circulation problems.

Here are some suggestions that I think could help the food policy in Harlem:

- Farmer's Markets should be opened up at major thoroughfares in Harlem, as well as being opened up at times to allow working families to utilize them.
- More food education needs to occur. I suggest it starts in Junior High School and continue throughout high school. With the various appliances to quickly prepare food, our young people can learn how to prepare food in the healthiest way.
- Cooking classes can be held at health clinics, supermarkets and grocery stores, and some of Harlem's fine restaurants. For example, imagine Sylvia's holding a cooking class demonstrating how to prepare some of their most requested entrees in the healthiest way?
- Our young mothers need to be taught this vital technique. I suggest providing incentives for young people as soon as they are notified of the good news. I also suggest expanding the programs to Head Start and Pre-K.

Food is a most basic necessity. It is important that we address this problem in a pro-active way that will provide the best life for our community, today, and in the future.

Thank you for your time.

Nutritional Outreach Services

Speakers: JoAnn Session and Beatrice Richardson

Nutritional Outreach Services better known as "N.O.S." was formed from the passion of both former Leon Session Sr. aka DJ Nice who became a diabetic in 1992 and lost his battle in March 2001 and yours truly JoAnn Session, a US veteran who now cares for both parents who are both diabetic. Struggling with the need to eat a balance meal while restricting the foods we've grown to love, the idea of having a cooking class for diabetics came about. From there we met Liz Vukovic Gartlan from City Harvest who graciously accepted the task of putting this idea to play. She challenged us to gather up the personnel to fill up a classroom. We did. We met each week first in the Classic Center of Melrose Housing and then in the late Mr Luis's home who was also a diabetic veteran. There we were planning, organizing and defining the groups purpose of what we wanted to achieve. We came up with the name "Nutritional Outreach Services".

Our next steps were reaching out to others by joining other people interested in a better way of eating and the purchasing of better quality foods. We started doing school workshops on diabetics and their nutritional needs teaching about reading labels, cholesterol, calories counting and proper eating habits. We did surveys and interviews with an array of store owners by which we partnered with the store owner of C-town on 156th street and Melrose Ave. who was willing to let us put labels on the shelves showing the foods in his store that were heart friendly and good for the diabetics diet.

We looked for various workshops to further our education on good quality foods and came across the Gardeners coalition were from my interest in growing my own foods I met Bridget and Aresh of the Moore Community Garden I then joined the Melrose Community Garden on 158th street between Courtlandt and Melrose Avenues and encouraged the other members of the group to join as well. There we're learning more about organic foods. How to grow our own foods and what makes them organic.

My mother joins us there from time to time where she put her input into it and helps us see what struggles she and other diabetics have in funding and purchasing the foods to eat. She expresses how bad she feels when they tell her she can't eat the various natural foods like grapes, bread, pastas, oranges for example. "What can I eat?" "I can't afford the better quality foods or the foods I'm suppose to eat so, what can I do?" This is a problem that many elderly and low income individuals face. However, she gets by by getting involved with the Bronx Food Coop now located in the building of Nos Que damos on Melrose Avenue between 156th and 157th streets in the Bronx.

She and some of the members have joined an exercise group called "LIVE", which stands for Lifestyles, Inspiration, Victorious Energy. They joined Live as an "exercise and weight management group". In addition some members joined a choir called "Voices Across The City", singing an array of songs throughout the Bronx. These programs aid in the nurturing of self help and positive lifestyle changes.

Now we are working with Kathy Schwarz and Justine Dang, both from City Harvest, in the South Bronx, Melrose areas were our goal is to continue with the course of learning, educating, and reaching out to others with nutritional innervations throughout the community. Although we at NOS, pride ourselves in our efforts, in working hard to help our community members eat healthier, we can't do this alone. The continued need for nutritionally dense foods, nutrition education, more outreach and services, and funding for these activities is a large pie to fill. We look to all of you to help us meet our goal.

I leave you with this:

- 1) How much do you know about the foods you eat?
- 2) How much are you willing to sacrifice to gain a healthier life style?

3) How many people you know can benefit from the education of obtaining the knowledge about low cost, better quality, and/or home grown products. The needs to be better educated in cooking healthy foods, buying healthy foods, knowing what is considered healthy foods and where to buy healthy foods. takes time and an combined effort of individuals or organization. Being that we are telling people to eat healthier they should have a food source and the funds so that they can access healthy foods.

We Stay / Nos Quedamos Committee, Inc.



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A Coalition of Homeowners, Tenants, Property Owners, Institutions, and Business Persons Who are Resolved to Remain a Part of the Melrose Community and Become Equal Partners With the City of New York in Our Community's Redevelopment.

May 29, 2008

The New York State Council on Food Policy

To Whom It May Concern:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, thank you for holding this important listening session and the opportunity to give testimony on behalf of our organization, Nos Quedamos, and our community on healthier food products, being able to purchase home grown products and the importance of bring them locally for our residents and community at large.

Nos Quedamos has always been a proponent of healthy, organic, locally grown products. This will promote an infrastructure of economic growth, healthier products and environmentally friendly atmosphere in all aspects of the environment. Due to the raise in cost of fuel, pesticides and global warming; bring products outside New York State instated of locally grown products will hurt not only the economy but will hinder the ability to purchase products at a more efficient price, thus driving the cost on the consumer to a place where their option will become scarce, inadequate and not being able to supply young children with the appropriate nutrients needed for their growth.

Supermarkets, grocery stores, big box stores (Costco, BJ's, etc.) have the ability to purchase product grown in New York State and have elected not to, due to lower prices of international competition like Mexico and Chile. Even purchasing products within our nation has a big cost in deliverable goods and as the products travel form one state to another pesticides are used to contain any types of insects or unwanted vermin that may have been enclosed. Electing to purchase products outside our state has consequences on the cost of processing the goods, transporting the products in turn has a detrimental affected on the environment where pollutants from diesel trucks permeate the air we breath. Especially in communities of color, such as, The South Bronx, where we have become the viaduct of truck traffic.

Nos Quedamos has work in the community for over fifteen years. Nos Quedamos has been in the forefront of different studies where it has shown the affects of diesel truck in our environment. The South Bronx is 17½ % higher than the national rate of Asthma and growing 33% per year especially childhood asthma. Adding to this, community of color are also low-income communities making an average income of less than eighteen thousand dollars a year, which puts a tremendous strain, stress and tension on families trying to buy produces that are health for their families in our economic state.

What are the steps needed to assist our families in The South Bronx to be able to alleviate the condition where we live in? First, the consumers should be able to buy products that are grown locally. This will reduce truck traffic throughout the State of New York. This will also bring down the cost of fuel needed to transport goods and will improve the quality of life through the reduction of fossil fuel. Second, the needed for pesticides reduces greatly. This will be better for the environment, healthier and economically passing the saving onto the consumer. Third, creating consumer and owner awareness to the cost factor of being products from outside New York State and buying products locally. The fact is, sometimes is cheaper to buy process food than having fresh, organic, healthier and homegrown foods. There has to be a process to assist families especially if their income does not permit this luxury in the view of the community. Access to healthier foods must be readily accessible, priced right and through the different types of program such as WIC, Food stamp and Medicaid to name a few can allocate a portion for fresh products and to be able to keep with raising cost.

The savings proposed in bring down the use of pesticides and reducing fossil fuel will help in the saving of the product, therefore the saving can be past on to the consumer. To many people within our community face diabetes, asthma, heart diseases, cancer and others ailments to ignore the fact that fresh health foods are desperately needed in communities of color. Where disparities are an everyday occurrence. To choose between paying the rent, electric bill, telephone bill or medicine most of the time out weigh a healthier product.

Thank you for this time,

Yolanda Gonzalez,
Executive Director.
Nos Quedamos

Testimony by: Janine Douglas, Member of Community Voices Heard
Given to the The New York State Council on Food Policy
Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Building
May 29, 2008

My name is Janine Douglas. I am a member and leader of Community Voices Heard. This is my testimony.

I currently reside in East Harlem where there is a streamline of bodegas lined up on almost every block. Supermarkets aren't scarce at all but there is a difference from Key Food and Gristedes although they both sell the same thing - FOOD. While diversity is a universal issue so is healthcare, education, the need for employment and economics. The policies set forth for low - income communities have been proven to be unsuccessful while communities whose household budget average \$65,000 or more never have to suffer loss or hunger or even have to struggle with the decision of what will be provided on the dinner table. While the economy is suffering so are the households who lack the capacity to provide decent meals for their children. Such basic need should be an obstacle. Bodegas are more costly due to their own financial responsibility - RENT!

At times most families can not afford a decent meal let alone provide the adequate sources of nutrition. As a person who has stood on the campaigns of education and training, I believe that we as a people must also learn and be reminded that in order to remain in existence we must educate ourselves for ourselves. As much talking and advocating that is done the formalities of living still exist. After the cross table debates and decisions are made and we retreat to private quarters stomachs still growl. It's the sound of an 8 year old who is still hungry because a parent has to rationalize meals so that groceries stretch till the next check. We as a community must open our eyes and see that the gentrification in Harlem isn't coming it's already here! Unfortunately, we as consumers who have lived in this city for years have forgotten that at some point in order to keep what you have you must fight for what you want and in order to have quality you must show quality.

Low - income communities must be educated in food budgeting and healthy eating as well as in other areas, only for the sake of self - preservation and not to keep up with The Jones!

Thank you for effort on this very important subject. I look forward to the group's recommendations.

Testimony for the New York State Food Policy Council
May 29th, 2008

My name is Kolu Zigbi and I am a resident of Central Harlem and a mother of two. I also happen to work in the area of sustainable agriculture and food systems as a program officer for the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation.

As a community resident, I am happy to be enrolled in the Central Harlem CSA, through which my family receives shares in an upstate farmer's harvest throughout the growing season. I believe that increased public support for this model would allow more families, at every income level, to enjoy the benefit of seasonal fresh produce. While I feel privileged to have access to a CSA, I am disheartened by the obesity and disability that characterizes my community and by the prevalence of junk foods available in the bodegas that dot every block. I once counted thirteen varieties and flavors of pork rinds prominently displayed in a single corner store. I am not recounting this to fault the small business owners who stock these snack foods.

I recognize that there are many different factors that reinforce our culture of consuming foods of little or negative nutritional value. I urge the FCP to create a work agenda that looks at the range of contributing factors, identify ways to address them and encourage a variety of public and private actors to partner for change. As you well know, the factors include: federal policies such that incentivize the production of corn for high fructose corn syrup (now almost ubiquitous in processed foods) and animal feed; City policies, such as the economic incentives reported today in AM New York, which provide fast food restaurants large tax breaks to locate in communities already suffering an epidemic of nutrition-related illnesses; and even the force of tradition, which keeps our schools from offering alternatives to milk and dairy to lactose intolerant or allergic children.

The food and health crisis we face must be addressed on both the demand and the supply ends. As a society, we need to foster increased demand for healthy foods. We need to counter-balance the advertising children are subjected to on television that gets them whining for sugar-laden cereals insidiously packed with toys and "fruit" snacks that are actually candy. As a City, we need to increase access to healthy foods by ensuring that the food supplement for public assistance is high enough to support the purchase of unprocessed and fresh foods. We need our state economic development corporations to support the types of investments that create a more localized healthy food economy and entrepreneurial food sector jobs. For example, investment in community-based commercial kitchens would allow neighborhood caterers to market to new hotels and Columbia's expansion into West Harlem.

Poor food and bad nutrition are the default we receive when we fail to plan for an alternative. I urge the New York State Food Policy Council to support the creation of neighborhood-based committees to examine the ideas raised in this forum and partner with the Council on their implementation.

Hopefully what I say here today will somehow resonate in you the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables as they relate to our health and the health of our planet.

I think we would all agree that health related issues due to obesity are on the rise. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recently projected that by 2015 forty one percent of the U.S. population will be obese. This is staggering; but what's even more shocking is that statistics are shifting towards lower income families; with African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans being the greatest indicators.

Historically, obesity has always been a disease of affluence but now that is reversing. These particular groups are consuming more and more processed foods which emphasize "cost and convenience" over "health and nutrition". Because these foods are so calorie dense versus nutrient dense it is very easy to exceed energy requirements becoming increasingly heavier; and in fact undernourished i.e. they are eating calories but receiving little to no nutrition gradually depleting their health.

Most people think nothing of where food comes from, how it is produced, or how it sustains us. Our health and the health of this planet are entwined, they cannot be separated. In terms of sustenance all animals depend on the earth for their food source; and rely in some way on plants to convert sunlight into a useable source of energy. In addition, many people have not considered the air we breathe is less than 22% oxygen and that the majority is nitrogen (78%) existing in a form unusable by most living organisms; let alone humans. It is the plant that utilizes nitrogen to synthesize amino acids thus creating the building blocks of all life leaving the way for the building of proteins and eventually our tissues and structures. Every animal on this planet eats plants or is eating an animal that eats the plants. Not even a carnivorous animal hunts another carnivore as its natural prey.

We cannot thrive without plants, so it behooves us to get as much plant based foods in our diets as possible for without plants the cycle of life would cease to exist.

And lastly, I would like us all to consider our role in our health and the health of the planet. I believe we all feel that we have a right to good health, but I think it's so much more.

We have a responsibility to be healthy, just as a parent to a child; we are the stewards of this planet.

The air and the water are becoming increasingly toxic, thus so is the food supply. If that wasn't enough, food manufacturing giants have been introducing genetic organisms into the environment possibly jeopardizing life as we know it. The temperatures on earth are also increasing, due to humankind's necessity for unsustainable energy; threatening to disrupt major ecosystems.

In fact, we all are a part of a major ecosystem called earth, and despite the myriad of organisms we are responsible for maintaining its delicate balance.

We will not destroy the earth, but it is possible to make it inhabitable to the point we can no longer live on it. If we should decimate the earth and its ability to sustain us, we will in effect destroy ourselves.

Until we begin to respect the complexity of our relationship with the earth and the interdependence of that correlation we will always fall short of optimum health.

Your friend in abundant health,

Malcolm Livingston www.myspace.com/rawinthehood