



**FOOD**

**JUSTICE**

**NOW!**

**DEEPENING THE ROOTS OF**  
**JOSHUA SBICCA SOCIAL STRUGGLE**

# A BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

for *FOOD JUSTICE NOW!: Deepening the Roots of Social Struggle*

by Joshua Sbicca

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“By highlighting sites where justice, rather than food, is the primary motivator of social action, Joshua Sbicca’s timely and important book takes the conversation about food justice exactly where it needs to go.”

—**JULIE GUTHMAN**, co-editor of *The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation, and Collective Action*

“Can a food justice dialectics with a ‘radical imagination’ and strategies for change ameliorate economic and ethnoracial inequities? Joshua Sbicca’s searching analysis broadens food politics to new terrains of social movement building and struggle essential given today’s revanchist politics.”

—**JULIAN AGYEMAN**, Tufts University

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua Sbicca is assistant professor of sociology at Colorado State University. Sbicca teaches courses on the sociology of food and agriculture, food justice, social movements, and social problems. More information: [joshuasbicca.com](http://joshuasbicca.com).

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The United States is a nation of foodies and food activists, many of them progressives, and yet their overwhelming concern for what they consume often hinders their engagement with social justice more broadly. *Food Justice Now!* charts a path from food activism to social justice activism that inte-

brates the two. It calls on the food-focused to broaden and deepen their commitment to the struggle against structural inequalities both within and beyond the food system.

In an engrossing, historically grounded, ethnographically rich narrative, Joshua Sbicca argues that food justice is more than just a myopic focus on food, allowing scholars and activists alike to investigate the causes behind inequities and evaluate and implement political strategies to overcome them. Focusing on carceral, labor, and immigration crises, Sbicca tells the stories of three California-based food movement organizations, showing that when activists use food to confront neoliberal capitalism and institutional racism, they can creatively expand how to practice and achieve food justice.

Sbicca sets his central argument in opposition to apolitical and individual solutions, discussing national food movement campaigns and the need for economically and racially just food policies—a matter of vital public concern with deep implications for building collective power across a diversity of interests.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is food justice? Why does Sbicca position the food justice movement within the context of different intersecting social problems? Why might this better capture the diversity of the food justice movement?
2. Discuss the theoretical framing in *Food Justice Now!* What is the practical application of dialectical methods and conjunctural analyses to the study of how people work to solve inequities in the food system? How do these theoretical approaches help to account for how activists use food as a tool for social justice?
3. What was most surprising about the historical legacies that Sbicca connects to the food justice movement? Discuss other historical influences on the food justice movement. Why is it important to acknowledge a people's history of social movements?
4. Pick an example of a food campaign or food movement that is driven by a commitment to social justice. Per the analysis offered in Chapter 1, evaluate whether it is desirable, viable, or achievable.

5. How does Sbicca represent the role that neoliberal capitalism and institutional racism play in driving social inequities in Chapters 2, 3, and 4? Pick one of the social inequities related to mass incarceration, labor exploitation, or immigration and discuss your reaction to the relationship between the problem and activist solutions.
6. Compare and contrast your experience as an eater with the social inequities behind an item of food you have consumed in the last few days. Why is it important to engage politically with these problems and not just in the marketplace?
7. Based on what you learned in *Food Justice Now!* do you believe it is necessary to radicalize food politics? Why or why not?
8. One of the major lessons in *Food Justice Now!* is that eradicating oppression in the food system and advancing food justice requires attention to social movement strategy. Sbicca argues for the importance of building collective power, centering diversity, and practicing solidarity. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these strategic imperatives. Add one or two more strategic imperatives and explain your reasoning.
9. What is the benefit of looking at food politics through the lens of antagonism? How might this expand how the food movement strives for social change?
10. Discuss Sbicca's research methodology (details are in the Introduction and the Appendix). How did his approach influence the findings in the book? What lessons can be learned about this methodology? If you were to design a similar study, how would you do so?
11. Why does Sbicca end the book with imagining what food justice policy might look like in the future? What do you think about the proposed policies? What recommendations do you have for deepening the national conversation and political organizing around food justice policy? What food justice policies would you add? What else do you think needs to happen besides policy to create food systems that are based on food justice?

## TAKE ACTION

Join a national food justice campaign. For example, look up the work of the Heal Food Alliance: <http://healfoodalliance.org/>. Engage with your local food policy council. If you do not have one, start one. Visit the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future for more resources: <http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/>. Begin a food justice campaign. See this list of food justice organizations for inspiration: <https://foodtank.com/news/2016/11/twenty-organizations-fighting-for-food-justice/>.

---

## MORE INFO:

[z.umn.edu/sbicca](http://z.umn.edu/sbicca)