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PGC Day 10: Greenest

Food Insecurity

One social injustice I'm passionate about is food insecurity. It impacts a large portion of people in my community. Burlington is a small city, but kids who go to school don't bring a lunch because their parents can't afford it. And that's just one example. There are students at my college that are in the same boat. Along with hundreds of others in the community. Not to mention the thousands it affects in New England, the millions across the United States and the billions across the world.

This matters because of the mass amounts of people it affects. People are starving and suffering. It's in almost every community across the world. It's not completely separate or divided from any community. Being food secure is one of the most basic human rights and needs. To achieve any form of security, safety, or happiness, you must be fed. With food insecurity, that is being denied. Because of our food and agricultural system, we waste so much food. This also drives the price of high quality food up because there is less of it, creating more demand and allowing fewer people to be able to eat organic as easily as they'd like. But even on a simpler level, limiting food waste can create millions more meals for those who are unable to afford it and support healthy agriculture even more. This matters because everything is connected. With one injustice there is another.

This matters to me because food is life. Literally. I was privileged to grow up with home cooked meals, fresh veggies, and bringing my own lunch to school. Over the years I realized how many people were not in similar situations and who struggled every day. We had a program in high school called 72 hours, bringing awareness to the amount of hours a food insecure student could go without eating a meal- from lunch on Friday to breakfast on Monday.

I did a project on responsible consumption and production for a class last year and learned about the gross amount of waste that occurs throughout the food system and the amount of people that could feed. In each part of the food system there is copious amounts of waste.

I want to be better as an individual and be better in the community. There is the Chittenden County Food Shelf that contributes food to people who are unable to buy healthy produce for themselves and their families. There are also companies like the Good Food Truck. For every meal someone buys, they donate a meal to someone who is food insecure. In addition, farmers will donate produce that doesn't get sold to support systems like this to make sure food gets where it needs to go.

Not every way to support needs to be as direct as volunteering in a soup kitchen or at the Chittenden County Food Shelf, although I know those would both be great ways to get involved, I can apply my more focused skill set. In a class last year we made a marketing plan to spread awareness of the Good Food Truck. They are doing a great thing, but not many people knew about it. If the word isn't out, then how can people contribute to their communities? I'd want to do outreach in a way that allows companies to have more exposure. This would be through pictures, videos, and marketing campaigns.

Food is a fundamental human right, yet food insecurity is everywhere.

Non-Livable Wages

In the United States, workers are required by law to be paid a certain amount of money. The minimum wage has a national low, at \$7.25, but the actual value varies state to state. Many people who work full time in minimum wage jobs are unable to afford housing and food, not to mention if they are single parents or have kids.

This matters because one of the basic human rights is to be able to have time/be allowed to relax. Not to mention basic quality of life is affected. This is directly related to food insecurity as well. Particularly with being able to feel their kids, not to mention themselves. All injustices are connected. It also matters because it's harder to get a higher level job now if you don't have a degree and college is wildly expensive. People find themselves in jobs that pay minimum wages and are barely able to afford where they live.

I grew up in one of the states that used the national minimum (\$7.25) and when I was just starting to work in high school, I thought that was a lot of money. After moving to Vermont I discovered the minimum wage was \$10. This was incredible to me! Plus the fact they were working on making it \$15 an hour over the next few years to offset inflation and consider the fact that people could not make a living on just \$10. I was just a high school student looking for a little cash to spend on the side while I was living in my parent's house. This was when I was in high school and I wasn't responsible for paying for anything "real" besides the occasional dinner out with friends. For this \$7.25 was fine, but for anyone not in high school (or anyone who was in a situation where they didn't have parents supporting them) this is not enough.

One thing I can do to engage in addressing this issue is contacting Representatives from my home state who have a bigger influence in voting and change-making. They make it their job to learn about legislation and instill change. This can be a good stepping stone to raising the minimum wage.

This affects people in all communities. Burlington, my home town, other states that have a minimum wage of \$7.25. Particularly in other countries as well, developing countries, places who don't have access to high paying jobs, or jobs at all. Additionally (to tie it in to another

project I did for another part of today) places who have poor working conditions often combine with not getting paid enough like garment factories in other countries.

As my friend Sarah kept saying for her social injustice posters on campus "All injustices are connected."