

THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
Issues, and Ideas

ALL ABOUT FOOD

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Dinner Night with Dad

Amanda Shumaker Bower

One day, my dad asked, "How would you feel about having a night out, just the two of us?"

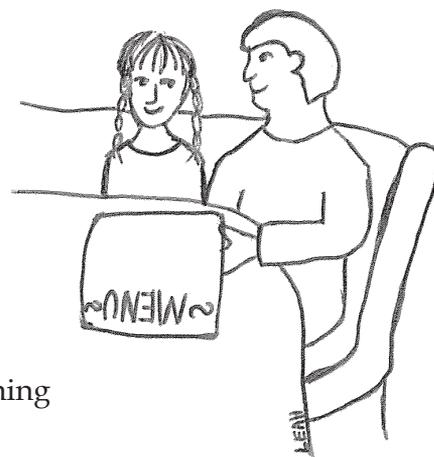
That was a day I will never forget. I remember I got so excited! I rubbed it in my brother's face all week; I was the special one. This would be the first time my dad and I had ever done anything together alone.

So, it was a date. He wouldn't tell me where he was taking me. All I knew was we were going to dinner. "It is a surprise," he said. I can remember the anticipation I felt when we crossed the river towards downtown. We never went downtown! When we pulled up to the restaurant, the smell was amazing. I ordered steak, shrimp, and a soda. We never got to order anything this good when we went out with the whole family. The food was the best I had ever had.

That night is the best memory I have about food. I felt so special when my dad wanted to do something just with me. To this day, I take my kids out one at a time, so they can have that same feeling I had when I was a kid. I have taken all my kids to the same place my dad took me. The food is delicious, but what matters even more is who you eat it with.

Amanda Shumaker Bower is a 35-year-old, happily married mother of three. She is a student at North Kansas City Schools Adult Basic Education in Kansas City, MO. She plans on furthering her career in the medical field after completing her high school equivalency.

READ ANOTHER STORY about a father and child: "His Garden" by Tommy DeBairos. Available on our website.



The Change Agent is the bi-annual publication of The New England Literacy Resource Center. Each issue of the paper helps teachers incorporate social justice content into their curriculum. The paper is designed for intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED, and adult diploma classes. Each issue focuses on a different topic that is relevant to learners' lives.

In New England, *The Change Agent* is available free of charge in limited quantities through NELRC's affiliated state literacy resource centers. Visit <www.nelrc.org> to find your state literacy center and to learn how to receive your free copies.

Submissions. Our next issue is on prisons. See the "Call for Articles" on the back cover. We welcome submissions from teachers and students as well as activists and thinkers from outside the field. For submission guidelines visit <changeagent.nelrc.org> or contact us at 617-482-9485 or changeagent@worlded.org.

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From the Editor

This issue generated some of the most poignant and descriptive writing we have ever received. Food brings up powerful memories, is often at the center of how we connect with ourselves and others, and raises many interesting questions about our society and our economy. Teachers—you will find many wonderful models of good writing here, as well as everyday math problems, opportunities to link science and technology to this highly relevant topic, and invitations to think critically about important issues. I am always curious to hear how students respond to the materials. Please be in touch! — *Cynthia Peters, editor*

Article Leveling and a FREE WEBINAR

If you are a teacher, be on the lookout in September for a free webinar on how to use this issue of *The Change Agent* in the classroom. To aid in your teaching, visit our website and find a Table of Contents that lists the reading level of each of the articles, many issue "extras," and a grid showing which articles help you address various College and Career Readiness standards.

Some Articles are Available in Audio

Researchers say that listening to articles read out loud while you follow along with the text is a great strategy for improving reading comprehension. To access our online materials—including all back issues and audio—please subscribe by visiting <changeagent.nelrc.org>.



Meet the Editorial Board

Clockwise from left: Winslow Holman, WAITT House teacher, Roxbury, MA; Susan Hall Mygatt, tutor; Jelissa Classe and Joyce Thompson, both students at Project Hope in Roxbury, MA; Cynthia Peters, editor, *The Change Agent*; Araceli Mendez, associate, World Education; Andy Nash, NELRC director; Nancy Walts, Read to Succeed teacher, Hartford, CT; Jake Coakley, WAITT House student, Roxbury, MA; Ruben Holguin, North Shore Community College student and VALUE member; Amber Michele, "Elevated Living," Boston, MA; Martha Grey, Project Hope teacher, Roxbury, MA. Not pictured: Mai Tram, Project Hope teacher, Roxbury, MA; Adrienne Fontenot, director of Adult Education Academics, Louisiana's Community and Technical Colleges; Alex Risley-Schroeder, ABE consultant, Northampton, MA.

Making Ends Meet

Casandra Wilson

BEFORE YOU READ: Think about the idiom, “making ends meet.” What does it mean? Try using it in a sentence or two. What is a dish that you cook when you are trying to make ends meet?

My mother had seven children, and she worked very hard to feed and educate us without any of our fathers by her side. Many times, we went to school with our shoes torn and without lunch. In Jamaica, they don’t give free lunch at school like

they do here, so my mother used to get up early and make us cornmeal porridge to fill our stomachs. She hoped that would

She did not buy expensive foods, just foods to fill our stomachs.

hold us for the whole day. When we came home from school, our dinner would be waiting for us.

To earn money, my mother washed people’s clothes. She scrubbed the clothes with her hands and a scrub brush and then hung the clothes in the sun to dry. The next day, she went back to iron and fold them. After all that hard labor using up her strength, she went to do the grocery shopping. But she never could buy enough. She did not buy expensive foods, just foods to fill our stomachs.

We used to be well satisfied, because we all knew what our mom was going through.

What about You?

The writers on this page and p. 1 write about a meal they will never forget. Write about a meal that *you* will never forget.

Read another story about making ends meet: “Pinching Pennies, Eating Well: A Journey” by Lena Burgio. Available on our website: <changeagent.nelrc.org>.



One Sunday she wanted to cook rice, peas, and fried chicken for our dinner, but she didn’t have any cooking oil to fry the chicken. She seasoned the chicken hoping some friends or family members would pass by and give her the money she needed to buy the cooking oil. She was there waiting and waiting with no luck.

Finally, she came up with an idea to start boiling the chicken. You could smell the aroma coming from the well-seasoned chicken. After she cooked the chicken, she added carrot, thyme, sweet pepper, and tomatoes. Then she decided to throw the rice in the pot with the chicken and let it all cook together in one pot. And that was our Sunday dinner. Even though that’s not what my mother had planned to cook for our dinner, it turned out to be very tasty and we all enjoyed our Sunday dinner.

That is a dinner I will never forget. Even now that I am an adult, I cook that same dinner for my kids and called it my mom’s signature dish. I will cherish that memory for the rest of my life. I love you, Mom.

Casandra Wilson is a student at the Brooklyn Adult Learning Center in NY. She was born in Jamaica, the second child out of 7 children. She is the mother of 3 children.



Even though that’s not what my mother had planned to cook for our dinner, it turned out to be very tasty and we all enjoyed our Sunday dinner.

Tasty Memories

Sheryl Pérez de Ruiz

When I think of good food, a big wave of taste, color, and happiness washes over me. When we were young, my brother and I would come home after school and find the house surrounded by all this rich smell. It was almost like we could see it, like a rainbow in the sky.

Every dish my family made was so special. I especially loved my mother's *guisado de pollo*

It was almost like we could see it, like a rainbow in the sky.

or *moro con coco*. I shouldn't forget to mention my dad's exquisite omelets on Saturday mornings, my mom's mouthwatering

mangu, and the colorful *pollo en salsa de coco*. These are the most lovely and happiest memories that I have of food and home.

My mother always served dinner on plates that were especially for us! Our children's plates were designed with vibrant and bright colors – the blue was like the ocean when the sunlight is on it, and the green was like a tree in spring time. Each plate was divided into three sections for our amazing entrée and the sides; each food brought delight to our senses. It was so exciting. Like caterpillars changing into beautiful butterflies, the food transformed from a morsel on my plate to an explosion of senses in my mouth. The butterfly's beauty



quickly disappears, and so do all the wonderful sensations that come from a mouthful of food.

Our drinks were also special. I remember how we loved the way that my mom surprised us with an explosively delicious strawberry/banana milk shake. I still can taste every flavor: the sweet banana, the strawberry lumps, and the great touch of vanilla. Every little thing made it just perfect.

It is amazing how these memories became a poetic experience. The thought of these foods makes my heart thrill. I will always feel nostalgia for those delightful smells making rainbows in the sky, for the bright colors in the kitchen, and for all the flavors being like playful butterflies.

AFTER YOU READ discuss the author's use of simile and metaphor. Make a list of all the similes and metaphors you can find in the essay. Use similes and metaphors to write descriptions of your own favorite or least favorite foods.

Name Those Dishes	
Spanish	English
Guisado de pollo	Grilled chicken
Moro con coco	Rice and beans with coconut
Mangu	Smashed plantains
Pollo en salsa de coco	Chicken in coconut sauce

Make a chart of your favorite foods. Add columns for translations into other languages. Share recipes with classmates. Plan a potluck. Make labels that include all the ingredients in the dishes.

Sheryl Pérez de Ruiz is 25 years old. She was born in the Dominican Republic where she received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. In 2012, she came to the United States to be with her husband. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY, and attends the 1199SEIU English as a Second Program in New York City. She is looking forward to completing this program so she can speak English with confidence.



Togetherness around Mansaf

Amal Fana

Food is the bridge that connects people together.

People need food to survive, but society needs the togetherness of a shared meal to connect people to their culture. Food is the bridge that connects people together. It helps them deepen their roots and reminds them of their home countries. I've learned from my family that the best way to welcome my guests is by cooking for them the richest meal, which reflects my feeling of happiness that we are together.

Mansaf is one of my favorite meals to cook for my beloved ones. It is a Palestinian dish that I used to eat when I was growing up. I used to wait for my father to come back from the butcher shop holding a bag with big chunks of lamb. He was so excited to call my mother and me to help him.

My mother and I started cooking. Once the meat was half way cooked, we poured rich yogurt syrup onto the meat with a variety of spices. My youngest brother ran to the old-fashioned wood-burning oven to get the bread. I spread out thin layers of fresh Arabic flat bread called "shrak." Oh, how great the bread looked, especially after the yogurt syrup was poured over it.

Then we placed hot rice in the shape of a plateau on top of the shrak. On top of the rice, we arranged all the pieces of lamb. My mother told me to place the head of the lamb in the center. Finally, I garnished it with crunchy fried pine nuts and almonds and some minced parsley for added flavor. We ate it with a spoon or we used our fingers to scoop it into a ball and pop it into the mouth.

As a goodbye party, my family made this



Illustration by Amal Fana.

meal for me before I came to America. I was so blessed to sit down with my extended family and eat from the same platter. Everyone tried to give me the tenderest pieces of lamb. This delicious meal increased our love towards each other.

Now, when my husband and I invite guests into our home in Ohio, we warmly welcome them by cooking this most delicious dish to honor them and connect them to us and to our traditional culture.

AFTER YOU READ: Discuss the author's use of the metaphor, "food is a bridge." Explain what she means by that. Give at least two examples of how food has served as a bridge in her life. What about in your own life?

Amal Fana is a Palestinian who was born in Kuwait and lived in Jordan. She has been living with her handsome husband in North Royalton, OH, for the past three years. She studies at the Polaris Career Center in Middleburg Heights. Living in the U.S. has given her the confidence to achieve her dreams and goals.



Soul Food on Sundays

Peggy Tyler

I love to cook soul food – greens, sweet potatoes, and fried chicken. It is a tradition that my family has been doing for many years. My mother and

I know that my ancestors created soul food because they had to use the food from the gardens and the leftover meat that the slave-owners did not want.

grandmother would fix it on Sundays after church. Soul food means that it is connected to African Americans. I know that my ancestors created soul food because they had to use the food from the gardens and the leftover meat that the slave-owners did not want.

I prepare the greens by picking the stems off first. Then, I rinse the meat off and let it cook about an hour before I put the greens in the pot with it. I add my seasonings, salt, onion, and grease and then let it cook for about three hours until it is done.

While the meat and greens are cooking, I prepare the sweet potatoes. I boil them first and then put in the butter, nutmeg, cinnamon, and a little sugar to candy them. Then I let them cook over a



low fire for five minutes and then I turn them off.

I season the chicken well, toss it in flour, and fry it until it is golden brown.

When the food is ready, the whole family sits down to enjoy a meal together. I love to cook and eat good soul food with family and friends to show them that I love them and appreciate them. I still prepare soul food on Sundays like my mother and grandmother did. I taught my daughters how to fix it as they were growing up. Hopefully, when I have passed on, they will keep having the tradition of soul food on Sundays.

Peggy Tyler is a GED student at Black Hawk College in East Moline, IL. She is the mother of four children whom she raised in Chicago while working as a security officer at a security agency. She is also the grandmother of ten.



Share Recipes

Make a recipe card like the one you see here. Include the name of the dish, who created the dish, the number of people it serves, the ingredients, and the directions for making it. Add decorations or your own illustrations to the recipe card.

Make copies. Share them with classmates. Gather them together to make a recipe book.

<i>Recipe:</i>		<i>Servings:</i>
<i>from the kitchen of:</i>		
<i>Ingredients:</i>	<i>Directions:</i>	

Mom's No-Bake Cookies

Kirsten Maurizzio

When I was four years old, my mother had to go into an institution for a while, and I stayed with my grandfather. My mother and I were very close, and I remember before she went into the institution she made no-bake cookies for me and my sister. She told us she made them with love and, now that we ate her love-filled cookies, her love would be inside us while she was away.

The Hardest Goodbye

The next day my mom dropped me off with my grandfather, and she took my sister to my grandmother's. I've had to say goodbye many times in my life, but that goodbye was probably the hardest one I've ever had to do.

The next day I was feeling kind of down, so my grandfather asked me if I wanted to go out back and see his mint tree. He pulled off a leaf. "Try a bite," he said. It tasted like mint! I couldn't believe it. We were having a good time until suddenly I remembered my mom's no-bake cookies, and I felt terrible. I thought that by enjoying the leaves from the mint tree, I was going to wash out whatever I had left in my system from the cookies, and I wouldn't have my mom's love anymore. I got really sad and went inside.

A few months went by, and my grandpa did everything he could to make sure I was happy. He took me fishing and on nature walks, and we did arts and crafts. Then my mom came to visit at Christmas time. I talked my mom into making no-bake cookies. I ate those cookies extra slow that day so I could hold onto every sweet taste and every moment I had with her. The day was over before I knew it. It was time for my mom to go back. I was very sad but we had some cookies left over, so when I started to miss her terribly I ate one and it reminded me of her. Unfortunately, those cookies didn't last forever. After a few days, they were gone.

A Surprise Treat—Made with Love

Thankfully, I have the most awesome grandfather in the world, and he kept my mind off my mom for a while. A few months later, my mom was finally done with treatment. That was one of the best days of my life. My grandpa and I had a plan to surprise her with a treat. I asked my grandpa to help me find the recipe for no-bake cookies. Since my mom was always making them for us, I thought it was only fair to do the same for her.

When my mom finally arrived, I took her into the kitchen and I sat her down at the table, and I told her to close her eyes. Then I got the cookies and put them down in front of her. "Surprise," I said. She opened her eyes and smiled. "I made them with love," I said.

To this day, my mother's cookies are still my favorite treat. Every time I bite into one, all the memories from my childhood come back to me. Now that I am grown, I make these cookies for my children. And every time I make them, I tell my boys I made them with love.



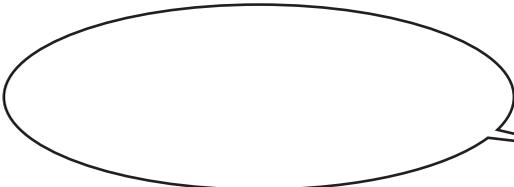
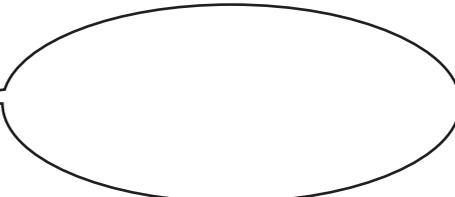
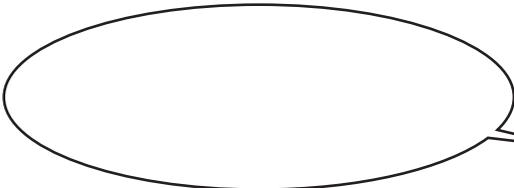
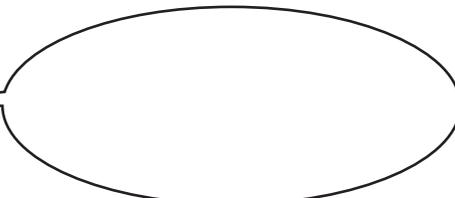
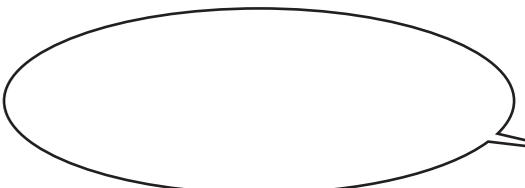
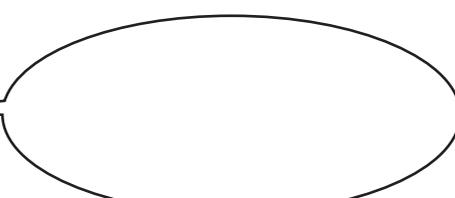
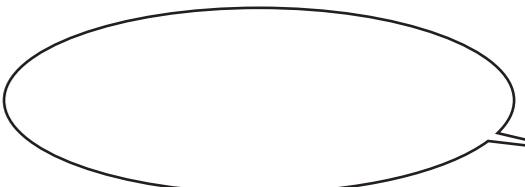
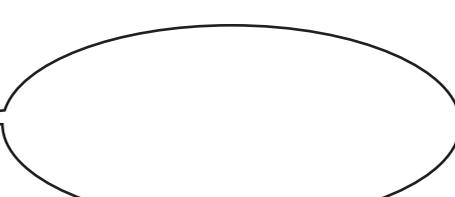
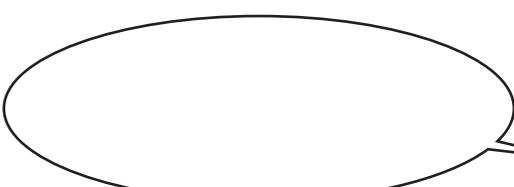
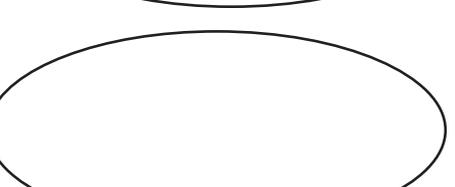
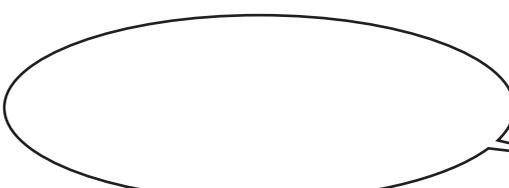
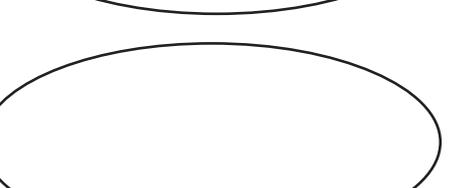
Kirsten Maurizzio is from Oklahoma, but moved to Hutchinson, Minnesota, in June 2013. She is currently an ABE student at Ridgewater College and is working towards a Healthcare Administrative Assistant degree. She has two wonderful little boys that are her influence towards getting her education.



Food Feeds Us in Many Ways

Cynthia Peters

Look at the articles on pp. 1-7 and find these writers. In the left circle, list the foods the writer mentions. On the right, list some non-nutrition-related benefits the author receives from these foods. Use this graphic organizer to help you make an outline; then write a paragraph or essay using the information you gathered.

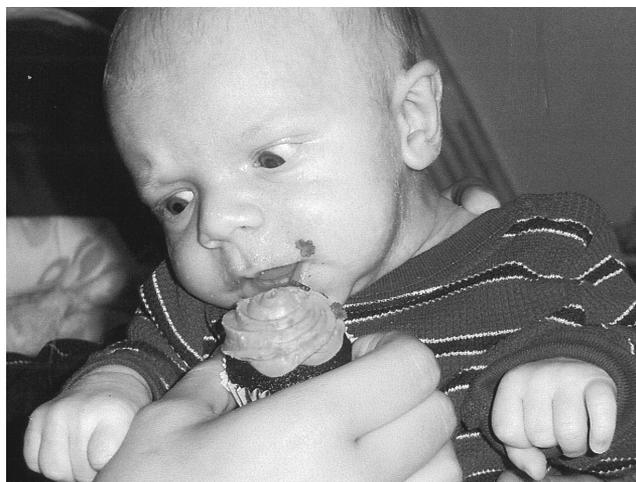
		
		
		
		
		
		

Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner with My Baby Boy

Michelle Paige

Thanksgiving of 2013 was the best Thanksgiving I could have possibly had. It was the first Thanksgiving with my two-and-a-half-month-old son Landyn.

Even though he couldn't really eat, I was able to give him some delicious mashed potatoes and let him try some of the juices from the turkey. He also got to try some yummy gravy. He made funny faces when he tried certain foods, and he smiled when he licked the frosting on a cupcake.



For Christmas dinner that year, we had ham. He enjoyed the pineapple and salty taste of the food, but he never actually took bites of anything. He just licked the stuff to get the taste of it. He enjoyed sitting at the table with us and trying different things that we ate. After dinner, we had apple pie, and he had baby apple sauce for his own little dessert.

But now I won't take holidays with my family for granted because you never know it if will be the last one.

Why am I writing about these two holiday meals? The truth is that these foods didn't really mean too much to me in all the years before. But now I won't take holidays with my family for granted because you never know it if will be the last one. I will always enjoy the food more because I got to have it with my son, who unfortunately passed away at three

months and 20 days old. He died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) three days after Christmas.

I wrote this so that you will maybe appreciate your next family gathering more. You never know if the next one will be the same.



Michelle Paige is a student at the Adult Learning Center in Nashua, NH. She is 21 years old and is working on passing the HiSet.

Fatty Meat in the Pocket

Olivia Kneprova

When I was a child, I hated fatty meat. My mother accepted this, but my teacher in preschool did not. Meals caused me stress every day. I ate the potatoes and sauce, but the fatty meat stayed on my plate.

In the 1970s, in the Czech Republic, food was expensive. The teachers wanted us to eat everything on our plate. They told us, "Look at the children in Africa. They are hungry every day. And here you are wasting food." I was sorry about the starving people in Africa, but it didn't change how I felt about fatty meat. I hated it. I thought: "I don't like fatty meat, and I won't eat this!"

Every day my mother dressed me in a long shirt with a big pocket. I took advantage of that pocket! When the teacher looked at another child, I carefully put the fatty meat in the pocket. I was done with it.

It stayed in my pocket all day long. My mother arrived at the preschool, and I was happy that I could go home. When my mother was washing my clothes, she discovered my secret.

"What is this?" my mother asked. She was horrified.

"I don't know," I replied, and I tried to look surprised.

"Why did you put meat in your pocket?"

"I didn't put any meat in the pocket," I said.

"And who did?"

"I don't know," I answered. "A teacher?"

I have hated fatty meat for all my life. I do not have to eat it now. Instead, I can eat what I do like and that is ice cream. I love ice cream. When I was a child, my mother was very careful about what I ate and she was afraid that I would get sick if I ate too much ice cream. I was allowed to eat ice cream only in summer.

I'm an adult now and I am a maniac for ice cream. I could eat it morning, noon, and night. It's interesting, though, that now that I make my own decisions about what I eat, I want ice cream only once or twice a month. And above all in summer!



Olivia Kneprova is from the Czech Republic. She came to the U.S. to learn English and took classes at the Polaris Career Center in Middleburg Heights, OH. She teaches music and the Czech language in her country.

Read Carefully and Write about It

1. Write one sentence that describes the main opinion Olivia expresses in this memoir.

2. Find an action she took because of her opinion; write it here using a complete sentence.

3. See if you can combine the two sentences into one sentence. Use "because" or "therefore" to connect the two clauses of your sentence.

Why I Hate to Eat Chicken

Sandra Francisca Cañez

When I was a child, I lived with my grandparents. My grandma had a big chicken coop in the backyard with a lot of hens, roosters, and chicks. My responsibility was to feed all the animals each morning. After I let the chickens out, I picked up all the eggs and gave them to my grandma.

In the afternoon, I ran behind all the chickens, catching them and counting them and putting them back in the chicken coop. It is hard work running after so many chickens, but I liked taking care of them. They were my responsibility. I had names for all of them – like “La Guerita,” “La Colorada,”



“Doña Juanita,” and “Tío Juan.”

One day, my grandma made a delicious soup with chicken and vegetables. We were eating when grandpa said, “La Guerita was so good and fat.” I was surprised and almost cried. I couldn’t believe that *my* chickens, my *lovely* chickens were sacrificed to feed us. I felt upset and sad. Grandma explained to me that we raised chickens to make some money for the family, as well as to be able to have healthy food, but I still didn’t understand. For a long time, I didn’t eat any chicken at all.



Sandra Francisca Cañez was born in Nogales Sonora, Mexico. She has lived in the U.S. for 16 years, and she is an advanced English student at El Rio Adult Learning Center in Tucson, AZ. She is married and has two kids. She is studying English so she can get her GED. She would like to attend college and study something that will allow her to help other people. She says, “This is the country of opportunities and if we want to be or do something, we have to fight for our dreams. It’s never too late to start.” She didn’t eat chicken for many years, but now she does.

Read Carefully and Write about It

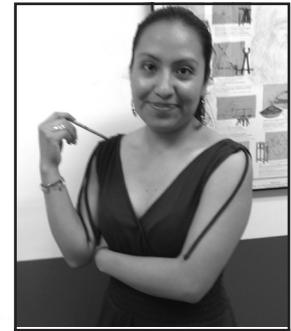
1. Summarize in one sentence the problem that Sandra describes in this memoir.

2. Summarize in one sentence the reason(s) she felt so strongly about this problem.

3. See if you can combine the two sentences into one sentence. Use “because” or “therefore” to connect the two clauses of your sentence.

A Healthy Idea

Yanira Montes



Yanira Montes is student at the Adult Learning Center at CUNY in Brooklyn, NY.

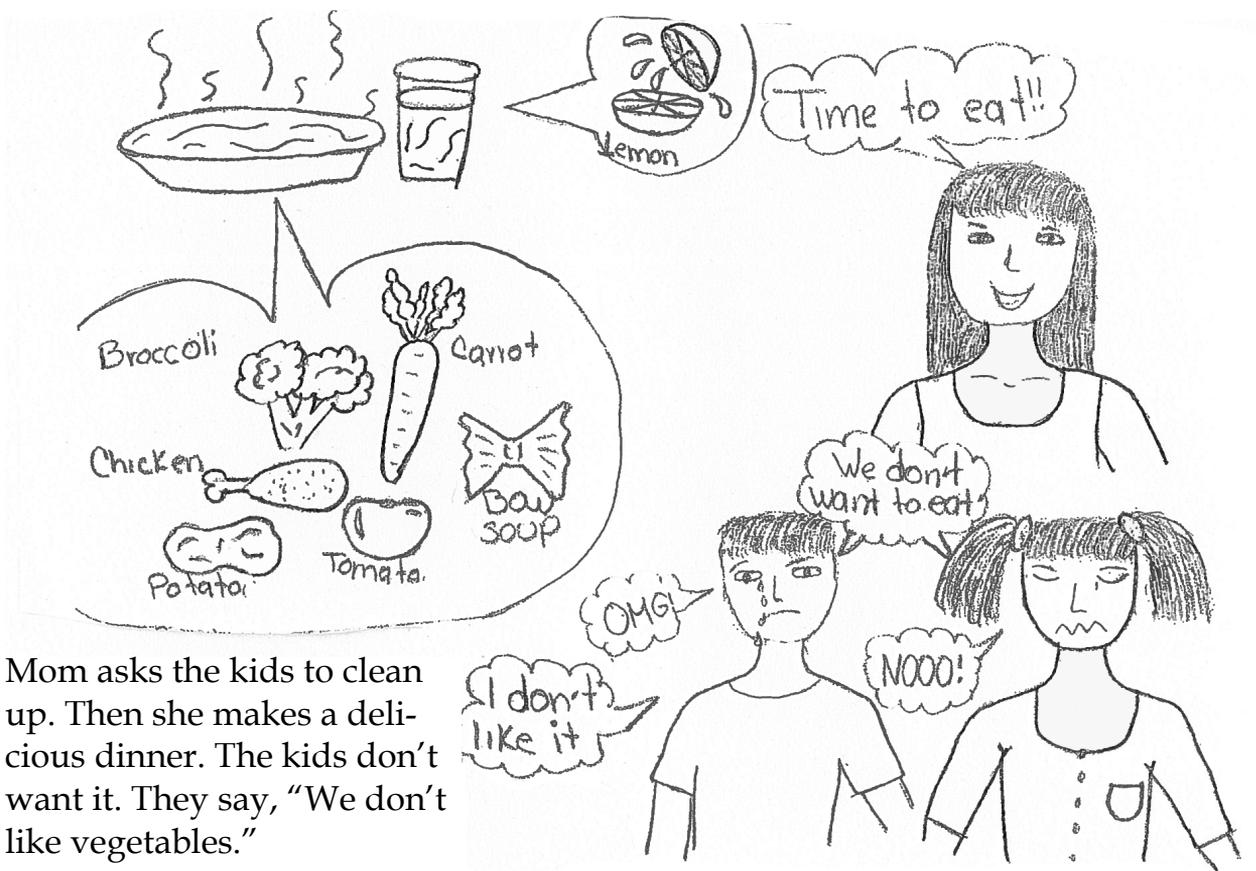


The mother goes to the store to buy food. The kids stay home and eat forbidden junk food.

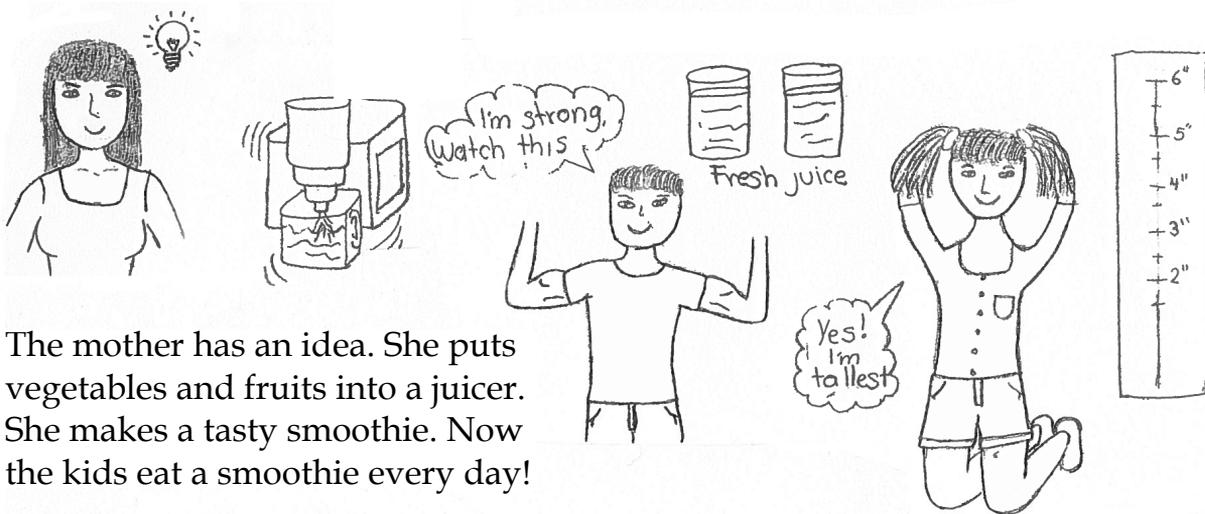


In 30 minutes, the house is a mess. Ice cream, crumbs, and candy wrappers are all over the floor. The kids hear the key in the door. "Uh oh," they say. "Mom is home!"





Mom asks the kids to clean up. Then she makes a delicious dinner. The kids don't want it. They say, "We don't like vegetables."



The mother has an idea. She puts vegetables and fruits into a juicer. She makes a tasty smoothie. Now the kids eat a smoothie every day!

AFTER YOU READ, name a problem the mother in the story faces. Find a solution that she tries. Make a picture story of a time you faced a food problem and solved it.

Eat Everything on Your Plate!

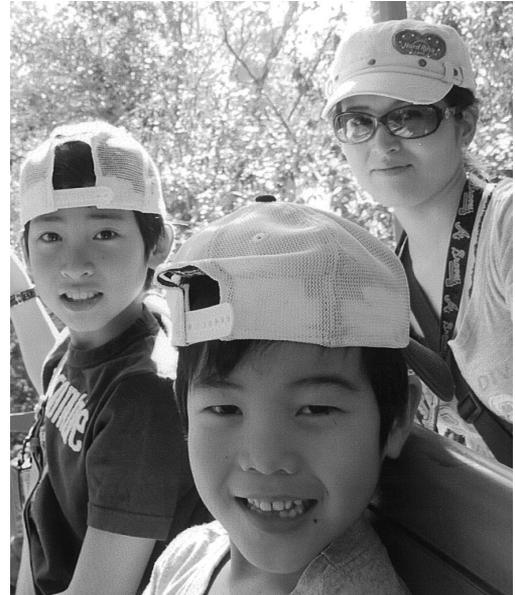
That is Our Family Rule

Sanae Kawakami

Every child has some foods that they dislike. But we have a rule in our house: that our kids must eat all their food, even if they do not like it.

My 11-year-old son does not like okra. He makes a face while he eats it, but he swallows it with water. No complaints. My younger son does not like eggplant. He sometimes whines, "I don't like this." But my older son says to him, "Eat it."

Sometimes they look a little sad at the table. Sometimes it takes my younger son time to finish his meal. But now they are able to eat all foods. I don't care if there are some foods that my kids don't like. As parents, sometimes we have to force our children to do things.



Sanae Kawakami, originally from Japan, is an ESL student at Central Georgia Technical College in Macon, GA.

Summarize and Reflect

1. **Summarize the problem** and Sanae's solution to it in one sentence.

2. **What do you think** of Sanae's solution to her problem? If you agree with it, say why.

I agree with Sanae's solution because ... _____

I disagree with Sanae's solution; instead, I would ... _____

I Was a Picky Eater

And My Parents Couldn't Do Anything about It

Shanaz Qaradaghi

When I was growing up, I didn't like to eat. In my opinion, all food tasted the same and smelled the same. When I was sitting at the dinner table, I felt so bad. I tried to find any excuse to not eat. I told my parents that the food was awful. Sometimes, I fought with my little brother on purpose so that my parents would punish me and send me away from the table.

Meanwhile, my parents never left me with an empty stomach. They tried so many ways to make me eat. I remember one time, when I was 7 years old, my dad ran behind me with a spoonful of rice. I tried to hide somewhere so he couldn't find me. My Mom spent a long time in the kitchen trying to cook food that I would eat. But I couldn't eat. It was not my fault. I didn't *want* to be a picky eater.

After I became a teenager, I changed a little bit. I started hearing from TV and newspapers that eating a healthy diet is very important for growing up. That's why I decided to help myself. I started eating some new foods. Then, after I got married, I started eating almost every food.

It's not good to be a picky eater. I gave a hard time to my family, but I am proud that I have a wonderful parents.



Shanaz Qaradaghi, originally from Kurdistan, is a student at the North Kansas City School District ABE program in Kansas City, MO. She is married and has two children.

Compare and Contrast

Read the stories on pp. 14-15. On a separate sheet of paper, write responses to the questions below. Your answers should be in one or two complete sentences.

1. Each author is writing from a "point of view." What is each author's point of view? Are they the same or different?
2. Are the problems that the authors experience the same or different? There may be some ways that their problems compare (are the same) *and* contrast (are different).
3. Are the solutions that the authors find the same or different? In what ways, if any, do they compare? And in what ways do they contrast?

All the stories on pp. 10-15 feature parents and children working out problems around food. Read and discuss them all. Write about how you solved similar food problems.

Let's Get Down to the Meat of the Matter

Timothy Lovett

BEFORE YOU READ:

- 1) Consider the idiom, "meat of the matter." What does it mean? Try using it in a sentence.
- 2) What does it mean to be "at the top of the food chain?"
- 3) Share what you know about where your meat comes from.

"Beware! I hunger," I bellow as I enter the hunting ground. The air is cooler here and it triggers a slight tingling sensation along my arms. The scent of prey surrounds me, setting my salivary glands in motion, and my primal instinct is ablaze. I stalk the aroma, paying close attention to my surroundings while heeding the warning signs.

On the "Hunt"

There are other hunters here with me; I give them a nod of respect when we make eye contact. We survey the land for a prize. However there is no competition among us because there is game aplenty here. I lick my canine teeth, which are designed for tearing flesh. My stomach is filled with hydrochloric acid that is designed to break down proteins, but my greatest tool is my fully developed brain. I am the alpha; I sit lonely at the top of the food chain, and I am the greatest species ever to be born of mother earth!

"Number 17... Now serving number 17." And I am number 17, as the woman behind the deli counter calls out.

I Like My Meat Already Packaged

After my basket is a pound heavier from the sliced deli style turkey, I walk over to the meat section and I think to myself how much I love meat. I love the smell of it cooking over an open flame, the look

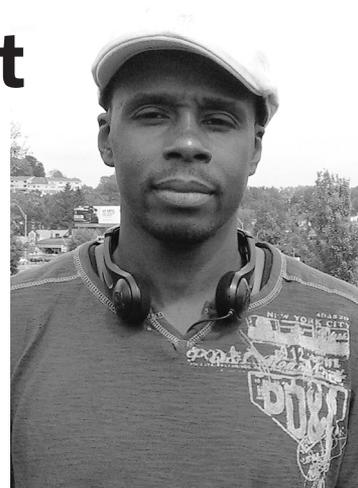
of the charred lines across the cut, and the juices that flow into your mouth as you chew it. I adore it, but I never really think about how it

gets from the animal to the supermarket. As far as I am concerned, it's just born there. I never try to make the connections between farm and food any more than I try to make the connection between cotton fields and the shirt I am wearing.

Brisket by the Bucket, Please!

Standing over the tenderloins, I pondered further on this. I drink milk, but I would never drink milk directly from a cow, I would never go up to a slaughtered pig and cut out a rack of ribs. I remember my father taking me fishing as a boy, and I caught a smallmouth bass by its eyeball. Not only did my father make me take the hook out of its eye, he made me cut its head off, and gut its body. I haven't been fishing since, and I didn't eat fish for some time after that. "I don't think I would enjoy you as much if I had to gut you myself," I say to the pack of pork chops I put in my basket.

We are omnivores so we can survive on beans and broccoli. It's just that I prefer brisket by the bucket, and I stand by that 100 percent.



"I don't think I would enjoy you as much if I had to gut you myself," I say to the pack of pork chops I put in my basket.

Did the Animal Feel Pain? I Don't Know. Just Tell Me if It's on Sale

Eighty percent lean ground beef is on sale this week, and this is why it goes in my basket over cube steak. The sale plays the biggest part in my meat consumption, not if the animals feel pain or not. I tried to explain this to another supermarket patron while she was trapped in the checkout line with me. "Do you think a lion cares if a gazelle feels pain?" I asked her. "Does an alligator think that young wildebeest may be a little uncomfortable being snapped in half? That's just nature's way, and it is neither good nor evil. It is just the way of the world." The store patron said that I was cruel, and the checkout lady made me bag my own groceries. Now *that's* cruel.

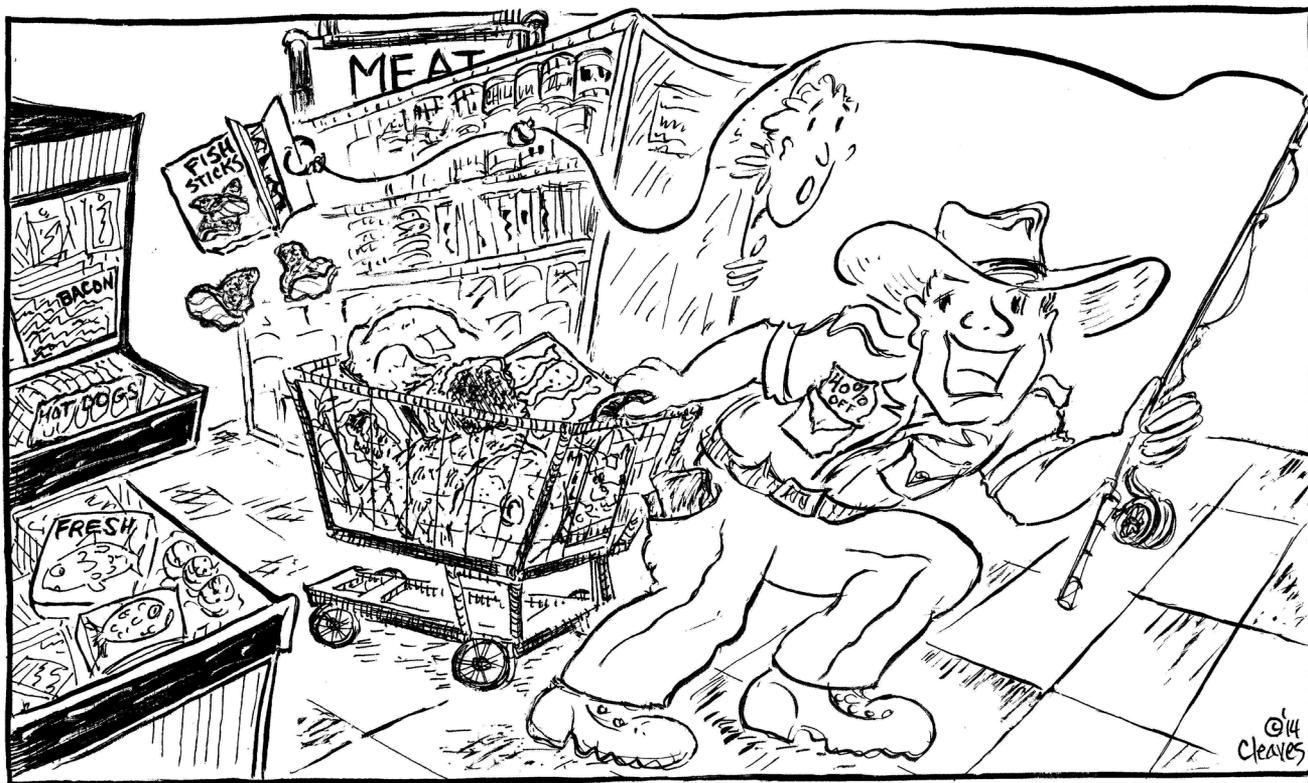
"I'm still going to hunt and fish, ladies," I blurt out as I make off with the spoils. It's just

now I hunt for coupons and fish for my debit card because I want the entire flavor of meat. But I want it without the gore. That's the true meat of the matter.

AFTER YOU READ:

- 1) According to the author, what is the "meat of the matter"?
- 2) The author uses humor to make his point. Circle the places in the text that you find funny. Explain what exactly makes them funny.
- 3) Find out more about where meat comes from. See p. 27.

Timothy Lovett currently lives in Northampton, MA. He is studying computer security and IT at Springfield Technical Community College. He is also an amateur comedian who enjoys Crossfit and creative writing. By next year, Tim hopes to complete his Associates degree, conquer Murph (a workout), get paid for a comedic gig, and complete a collection of short stories.



Describe what you see in this illustration. What elements of the story are captured here? Cartoon by Ann Cleaves.

The End of the Road

Kika Matthews

Today I still remember the screams and flavors of a poor animal that was going to delight us for months. My father raised pigs for us to eat, and when my mother said it was time, we knew tomorrow would be a day of hard work.

First we heated a big pot of water. After we killed the pig, we poured the boiling water on its skin to clean it and make the hair easier to remove. After that, my father hung the pig by the neck and we worked all day.

We chopped up the ears, feet, and tail of the pig, and then we cooked it in a pressure cooker with black beans.

It was hard work, but we had fun all day long with our family together.

There was nothing better than the meat my daddy would barbecue from the freshly killed pig. And my

mother cooked using every part of the animal, not just the usual parts you would buy in the store. For example, we loved to mix the pig's blood with cooked rice, green onions, parsley, salt, and pepper. We then would take this mixture and stuff the intestines with it to make blood sausage. Another favorite dish was called *feijoada*. We chopped up

the ears, feet, and tail of the pig, and then we cooked it in a pressure cooker with black beans. This was my family's favorite dish.

After separating all the meat from the animal, my mother would make sausages and salamis and all the kids would help. She needed us to help because this was a very hard job that took a long time to finish. We knew at the end of the day we would appreciate a delicious meal. It was the end of the road for the family pig, but the beginning of one awesome day with my family.



Removing hair from the pig.

Kika Matthews is a student at the YMCA International Learning Center in Woburn, MA. She is from Brazil and has been in the U.S. since 2001. She is married and has two daughters.



Food and History!

Where does *feijoada* come from? Some historians say that it was invented by slaves in Brazil in the 1800s. They used the pig ears and other parts of meat that their masters did not want. They cooked these discarded parts with beans, making a delicious and protein-rich meal. Other historians say that the indigenous people of Brazil were eating *feijoada* long before the slaves and the Portuguese colonizers arrived.

Learn history by studying food. Research *feijoada* to find out more about the political, economic, and cultural history of Brazil. What is the history of your favorite food or the "national dish" of your country?

Mugwort Dim Sum

Connie Hemiao Li

FOR THE MULTI-LEVEL CLASSROOM: This version is edited to be Level 4. See <changeagent.nelrc.org> for a Level 6 version.

When I was seven years old, I went to live with my grandmother for the summer. She was a Buddhist and vegetarian. According to her religion, it is a sin to eat meat. She planted vegetables, peanuts, and sesame in her big yard. She cooked different kinds of vegetables and wild plants. She often gave me mugwort dim sum, instead of cookies or candy. (Mugwort is a wild plant that grows in the weeds.)

One day I had a stomach ache. My grandmother cooked a bowl of herb soup for me. I tasted a drop and then refused to finish it. The taste was bitter. I wanted to run away. In my anger, I broke

a bottle of dry mugwort on the table. She still forced me to drink the soup.

The next morning, I woke up early and was full of energy.

"How do you feel?" my grandmother asked. "No more pain," I answered.

The next day, we went to pick mugwort. We carried baskets and walked to a field close to the village. I worked hard because I felt guilty about breaking the bottle of mugwort. A few hours later, we were all sweaty and tired. We went back home before noon because the sun was too strong. When we got home, we washed the mugwort and then

lay it in the sun to dry.

We used some fresh mugwort with rice powder to make the dough for dim sum.

We used some peanut, sesame, and coconut as the filling for mugwort dim sum.

We were busy for the whole day. I was so tired. I realized that it is not easy to collect a bottle of dry mugwort.

In the evening, after we cooked the mugwort dim sum, I was so excited and hungry that I ate a few of them immediately. That was the first time I ate something that I helped to make. Oh, my God! It was so delicious. I will remember it forever.

Mugwort is not only food. It also has a high medicine value. It has been used for thousands of years to reduce inflammation and relieve pain. Chinese people believe that mugwort soup can stop a cold. When I gave birth in China, I drank mugwort soup and took a bath with mugwort twice during the first month after giving birth. I felt much warmer after that.

Last year, I went back to China to visit my families. My 100-year-old grandmother still lives in the village, and she is healthy. All members of her family are skinny, and no one is obese in the village. I think one reason is they eat mugwort more than meat.

Mugwort dim sum made my childhood very special. It taught me that I can get rewarded from hard work. And it was a healthy food that I loved. As long as I had mugwort dim sum, I forgot about cookies.

Connie Hemiao Li is a student in the CLIP program at the College of Staten Island in NY. She is from China.



Mugwort is not only food. It also has a high medicine value.

Food and Health!

What does the author say about meat? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

What foods do you use for health?



Of Food, Love, and Death

Alessandra Di Bello

I clearly remember the day I saw what I was doing to myself.

I was 32 years old. It was a hot summer afternoon. I was in the kitchen, eating. Someone said, "Come out to the porch and see the new puppies. They are so cute."

Slowly and unwillingly, I dragged myself out.

One of the puppies was bigger than the others and fatter. His incredibly short, inadequate legs, and his round body, made him look like a big brown meatball skewered on thin sticks.

"That's me," I thought. "Fat. Unnatural. And disgusting."

Food has always been in the life of my family: our joy, our pain, our devil.

cooked end of a pork rack; slices of stale bread; and everything else I found on the table.

I ran into the bathroom, trying to vomit.

"I'm bulimic," I realized.

Food has always been in the life of my family: our joy, our pain, our devil. It was my mother's main commitment since she was a kid and had to cook for the whole patriarchal family. Up to her very last moments, she was stirring an imaginary mushroom risotto, lying in a hospital bed, refusing to eat. She used food to kill herself. It was the most powerful weapon she knew.

Food killed my dad, too. He had always been a hungry, happy eater and enjoyer of life. But all that fat and good food hardened his arteries and destroyed his organs.

And they created me.

I express my creativity and love by cooking. Serving tuna fish with seasonal herbs, *mussels tiella*

baked with thin slices of tomatoes, potatoes and oregano, or rack of lamb wrapped with Italian *lardo* makes me feel like a mom nourishing her beloved children.

Food is also my blue side, the black spot in my soul. And, like a thick rare steak, when it's cooked "black-and-blue," sometimes my soul bleeds.

What I'm talking about here is overeating, bolting it down, gobbling like a duck for *foie gras*. It's food as a disease. It's eating up to die, trying to kill yourself.

When my parents were sick, I started eating day and night, hiding while I ate. I also hid my feelings under a smiling, quiet, happy mask. Nobody saw what a fault line was cracking my spirit.

I ate because I felt guilty being healthy while my parents were sick; I ate to fight my anxiety; I ate because I felt inadequate or misunderstood or simply not loved enough.

Do people need to be hundred percent loved? I need to be a thousand percent loved! When I ate, I bit, chewed and swallowed the love I missed.

You think you can control it. You think you can quit. "But not today," you say to yourself. "Tomorrow I'll be stronger." But tomorrow you'll find another alibi to overeat.

Moving to New York from Italy helped me with my daily struggle against bingeing and bulimia. It was like cutting the umbilical cord a second time. There were no more places or people (dead



I hid my feelings under a smiling, quiet, happy mask. Nobody saw what a fault line was cracking my spirit.

I am a survivor, and like any survivor I take care of my only prize: my life.

or alive) reminding me of my “failures.” I had to face different challenges, like learning a new language and being accepted in spite of being an immigrant, a stranger. Instead of crying about my emptiness, I changed my routine. At first I walked to discover the town; now it’s my pleasure. I have stopped buying more food than I really need. Cooking just for my husband and me is gratifying and relaxing. I challenge myself at school, in the street, going to volunteer, and meeting and helping other people.

I have put an ocean between me and my creepy ghosts. I am a survivor, and, like any survivor, I take care of my only prize: my life.

Occasionally, I still feel the hole enlarging inside my stomach. But now I grab a book or go out for a walk. Sometimes it works, sometimes I lose the battle.

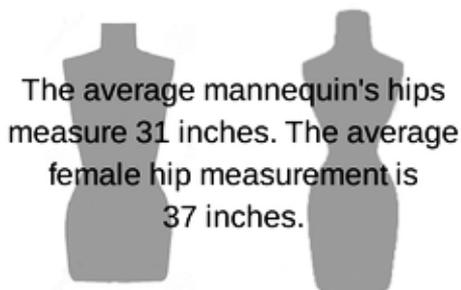
I may not have won the war. But I know I’m a warrior who doesn’t give up.

Alessandra Di Bello, originally from Italy, is an Advanced ESL student at New York City College of Technology (CUNY) in Brooklyn, NY. She says: “I’m lucky. New York is my pot of gold. My husband is my cane, my warm sunny side, my deep breath. My teacher is Virgil, the poet, showing me the way.”

Where does body image come from?

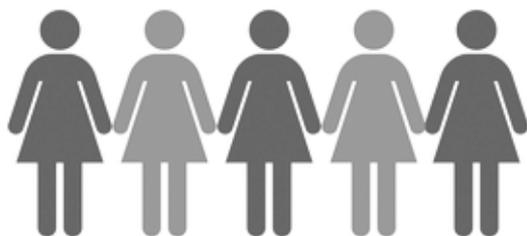


Barbie's dress size is six sizes smaller than the average woman's.



The average mannequin's hips measure 31 inches. The average female hip measurement is 37 inches.

Dieting industry earns \$40 billion a year.



10 million women battle anorexia or bulimia



50% of commercials aimed at girls spoke about physical attractiveness, while none of the commercials aimed at boys referred to appearance.

After reading the article by Alessandra Di Bello and considering the above infographic, discuss the various personal and public factors that may contribute to so many women having eating disorders. Infographic by Araceli Mendez. Source: <www.raderprograms.com>.

Communicating about Food

Jessica Soto

Since I was a child, I have always been a big girl. Because of this, my mother was very strict about what I could eat. At home, she only fed me very healthy and delicious food. I was curious about junk food, but I was not allowed to have it because of my weight.

Hiding My Habit

My curiosity about junk food was so intense that I would find a way to eat it behind my mother's back. I adored junk food. I ate so much of it that I would get a bad stomach ache and sometimes throw up. My mother was scared to see me be so sick. She wondered what could have caused it.

Time passed and I gained more and more weight. My mother decided to take me to a doctor. He said I was in good physical health, and maybe I was eating something that could be causing these strange stomach aches. My mother was confused, though, because she always gave me healthy food.

Deciding to Be Honest

Eventually, after seeing my mother worry a lot about my health, I opened up and told her the truth. I told her that I couldn't stop myself from trying all these yummy junk foods that I could get at school and from the corner store.

I thought she would be mad at me. I had been hiding my junk food addiction behind her back. But her reaction was quite surprising. She said she was sorry for basically forcing me to want these foods. She said she was going to seek professional help for both of us and be a bit more flexible with her menus. We scheduled an appointment with a nutritionist. We explained my situation. The nutritionist talked to us about greasy food, junk food, and sweet food, and she explained how these foods were bad for our health.

Since the encounter with the nutritionist, our lives have changed a lot. My mother learned that



trying to control my food was not the best way to support me. And I learned that I was contaminating my body with all this junk food. I noticed that telling the truth to my mother made it possible for me to get her support in a real way.

A Fresh Start

Following the advice from my nutritionist boosted my energy. I was much more active. I joined the basketball team and volleyball team, and I started taking swimming classes. I started going to a gym for girls my age, and I started losing weight. My life became so much fresher. I was still a big girl, but I was healthier. And I wasn't keeping secrets.

I am still somewhat overweight, but I know how to eat good, tasty, and healthy food. I am very active and full of energy, and I have 100% capacity to properly raise and feed my one-year-old son. It is important to me to teach him the best I can about food. My early experience with junk food reminds me that junk food doesn't add anything to your life; it only takes away.

AFTER YOU READ: How did things change for Jessica when she decided to be honest?

Jessica Soto is a student at Blue Hills Adult Secondary Education in Canton, MA. She is from Colombia and she is the 24-year-old mother of a gorgeous one year old. They live a healthy and active life.



Addicted to Food

Delon Lewis

Searching for Comfort

Food is like therapy to me. I can't count the number of times I have gone to work in my kitchen, trying to heal an emotional scar. I would fry some chicken and fish, cook the collard greens, and bake some macaroni and cheese, yams, and biscuits which are all comforts of home. African American people have been doing it like this for generations. Comfort food makes me feel warm inside, even if it's just for that brief moment.

I have many stresses in my life that send me searching for comfort. I'm the mother of three special needs children; therefore I'm unable to work.

I have many stresses in my life that send me searching for comfort.

I live off of social security and SSI. Every month, I have to choose which bills to pay. My children and I went without gas

for a whole year which meant no way to cook, no hot water, and no heat in the house.

My last job was 11 years ago and I worked at Burger King. My family has been hurting since then because mommy just doesn't have it. My husband is incarcerated, and he does what he can, but until he's released, it's all on me.

Food as a Best Friend?

When I feel sad, I do what I've always done: eat. When I'm lacking in confidence, food doesn't judge me. It doesn't offer bad advice and truthfully it's my best friend. And I realize that lately I've been leaning more and more on my "bestie." I've even gone so far as buying food and hiding in my car to eat it just so I won't have to share.

My eating habits could end up being a problem. I've gained a few extra pounds, and because I'm African American, I'm at a higher risk of

certain diseases. I wish I could lose weight but it's hard to quit doing something that makes me feel so good. How do you get rid of your best friend when that friend makes you feel invincible?

It's hard to admit, but I, Delon Lewis, am addicted to food. Just like other addicts, I have a personal battle ahead of me to get control of this addiction.

Addiction is Not a Personal Failure

But it's more than a personal battle. Here in the inner city, where I'm from, the quality of life is poor, and I'm not the only person suffering and turning to food as an escape. Each one of us needs help to struggle with our demons, but we could also work to change the conditions that drive people to seek comfort in addictive substances. It all starts with raising the collective quality of life for society's most marginalized citizens. If we don't work together to change things, the next generation will be at an even higher risk.

AFTER YOU READ: Summarize the author's main point. Why do you think she wrote the article? What is your opinion of her message?



The author, right, with her sister.

Delon Lewis is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She is from Philadelphia, PA, but currently lives in Gaston, SC. She has been writing for years, and this essay represents a small piece of her feelings about a very big problem.



Small Steps to Healthy Habits

Luis Rivera

Too Much Fast Food

I had a health problem. I ate too much fast food, which is high in fat, salt, and sugar. Fast food was making me overweight and sick. I knew I had to make changes. So I made small steps to change my eating habits.

Make Small Changes

Here are some of the things I did: I added a daily salad full of different color vegetables to my diet. I switched from butter to olive oil. These small changes became a habit for me. After I developed these habits, I looked for more ways to change my eating habits.

Treat Yourself but Eat Smaller Portions

You might want to enjoy a high-fat, sugary food every once in a while. But try to eat a small portion, and see if you can learn



a new way to fix it so it is not so unhealthy. Now you can have it more often!

You Don't Have to Be Perfect



I learned that you don't have to be perfect, and you don't have to completely eliminate foods you enjoy to have a healthy diet. The long term goal is to feel good and to have more energy and reduce the risk of cancer and other diseases. Don't let



your missteps derail you! Step by step, make your food choices count, and soon you will achieve your health goals.



Luis Rivera is a student at Mid-Manhattan Learning Center #5. He is a native Bronx, New Yorker, and he works in Brooklyn, NY, as a machine operator in a factory. He loves to play baseball, football, and basketball, and he is studying to get his GED.



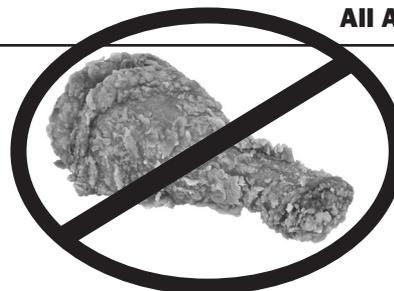
That's Good Advice!

Write down Luis's (above) and Barbara's (p. 25) tips in the left column. Add more ideas for healthy eating from p. 26. Which are the tips you might try for yourself or with your family?

Good advice for healthy eating	I will try this	Will try w/ family

No More Frying!

Barbara Washington



These Foods Were Killing Me

I always knew the way I cooked wasn't healthy, but I did it anyway because I enjoyed the taste. I used lard or Crisco to fry my meats. I fried potatoes, chicken, pork chops, and steaks. I even added the used grease from the meat to my corn bread to make the edges right. When I cooked my greens, I put smoked ham or salted pork in them and always added grease from the meat for extra flavor.

Before bed, I would eat a bowl of ice cream with donuts or cookies. And I drank a Pepsi to wash it all down. The foods I loved to eat were killing me. I weighed 238 pounds. It was hard to walk up the stairs, and running was a no-no.

Getting Help from My Doctor

When I went to see my doctor, she told me I had very high cholesterol and was going to have a heart attack or a stroke because the meats in my diet were not healthy. Along with this, I had acid reflux because of the soda, chocolate, and coffee.

I was on the border of getting diabetes due to my late night snacks.

My doctor asked me to go see a nutritionist, and she showed me which foods were good for me and gave me tips on exercising. I learned how to use oils that do not come from animal fat and how to replace smoked ham with smoked turkey in my greens. (To my surprise, this tasted great.) She showed me how baked food can taste just as good as fried food. And she fixed delicious salads. Everything that she changed in my diet was good for me and my family, *and* it was tasty.

Eating Healthy!

I started baking my meats instead of frying them. It's healthier and less messy. I stopped eating pork, and I slowed down on beef. Now, I eat leaner meats, like fish, chicken, and turkey. To bake bread I use low fat margarine or canola oil. I eat more fresh vegetables and fruits, and I don't eat after seven. I no longer eat junk like I used to. If I get hungry, I drink some water or have a piece of fruit. I stopped buying ice cream, cakes, and soda. Instead, I drink tea and one percent milk.

I exercise three times a week and I speed walk wherever I have to go. After the change in my diet, my cholesterol went down. I'm no longer on the border for diabetes, and my acid reflux is better. Now I weigh 180 pounds. I know it's still a lot but I feel much better today than yesteryears.

Eating healthy is a beautiful thing, but loving my body and watching what I put in it is even more beautiful.

Barbara Washington was born and raised in Far Rockaway, Queens, N.Y. Her mother is Cherokee Indian and her dad is African American. She is the mother of two adult children and the legal guardian of her six-year-old niece. She is active in her church, and she is studying at Brooklyn Adult Learning Center in Brooklyn, NY.



FATS! EAT THESE, NOT THOSE	
Good Fats	Bad Fats
mono- and poly-unsaturated fats found in avacadoes, almonds, canola oil, trout, and salmon:	trans-fats and saturated fats found in shortening, fried foods, and processed foods like cookies and donuts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are shown to improve cholesterol levels • could promote healthy nerve activity • may help reduce risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke • are shown to improve vitamin absorption • are required to maintain healthy immune system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are shown to raise "bad" cholesterol (LDL) • may lower "good" cholesterol (HDL) • can increase the risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke
More information and activities at < www.goodfats101.com >.	

So What Should We Eat?

Cynthia Peters

“Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

With these seven words, Michael Pollan, an expert on food, offers what may be the simplest and most effective advice about what to eat.

“Eat food.”

Buy whole foods, not processed food. If you do buy packaged food, read the label. If it has ingredients you can't pronounce, don't buy it. Cook your own food, so you know what's in it. It is likely you will cook with less salt and less fat and fewer calories than you get when you eat out.

ONE EASY TRICK: Shop the perimeter of the grocery store. (See graphic on the right.)

“Not too much.”

In the last few decades, portions have been supersized! You know it's easy to overeat when the size of a large popcorn at the theater is only pennies more than a small popcorn. Supersizing is just one of the reasons two-thirds of adults in the U.S. are overweight these days. Another reason people are gaining weight is the increase in high fructose corn syrup, which we started consuming in large quantities in the 1970s.

ONE EASY TRICK: Avoid high fructose corn syrup. Maybe this isn't actually so “easy,” as high fructose corn syrup is everywhere! The problem with this corn-derived sweetener isn't just that it is high in empty calories; it also makes you feel hungry even when you're not.

“Mostly plants.”

You don't have to be a vegetarian, but eating less meat could be good for your health. What's wrong with meat? Many animals are raised on huge factory farms, where they are fed genetically modified grains, treated with growth hormones,

Shop the perimeter of the grocery store for the most nutritious food

Fruit

Vegetables

Lowfat dairy

Lean meat, eggs, and nuts.

Whole grains

Avoid the processed foods that you usually find in the inside aisles, like chips, cookies, soda, and packaged meals.

and pumped full of antibiotics. These chemicals are concentrated in the animal's flesh, and so we end up eating them in high doses. Many meats are also high in cholesterol and fat, which can cause heart disease and other problems.

ONE EASY TRICK: Think of meat as a side dish, not the main dish. Vegetables should take up two-thirds of your plate. Take it further and think of meat as a condiment—a small amount of meat can add a lot of flavor to a vegetable-based dish!

Cynthia Peters is the editor of The Change Agent.

FIND OUT MORE: See our website for Issue #28 on health, especially p. 45 on the history of corn syrup.

Factory Farming & the Meat We Eat

Joyce Thompson

Most Americans eat meat, but they have no idea where it comes from. And many of the large corporations that control the meat market in the U.S. would like to keep it that way!

Fast-Growing and Fatter Beef Cows

Today the top four beef packers control 85 percent of the market. Their names are Tyson, Cargill, JBS, and National Beef. These large corporations use practices that help them make more profit but are bad for the people who eat the meat and very cruel to the animals. Cows are supposed to be fed grass because grass is easy for them to digest. But

When you eat beef from factory farms, you are getting beef that is higher in fat and full of antibiotics and hormones.

when beef cows are 6 months to one year old, the farmers feed them lots of grain (like corn) to fatten them up. These grains are unhealthy for the cows, and so the farmers have to give them antibiotics to deal with their health problems. The corn is very acidic, which creates a good environment for bacteria to grow in the cow's stomach. One of these bacteria, *Escherichia coli* or *E. coli*, is dangerous and even lethal to humans. Farmers also give the cows growth hormones so they make more meat faster. When you eat beef from factory farms, you are getting beef that is higher in fat and full of antibiotics and hormones.

"Redesigned" Chickens

What about chicken? Chickens are raised and slaughtered in massive processing plants. People like to eat white meat so they "redesigned" the chicken to have large breasts. Farmers keep a large number of chickens confined in small spaces and

feed them hormones to make them grow faster. They grow so fat, they can't even move.

The growth hormones speed up their growth so much that they reach their full size in 49 days; under normal conditions, it would take 90 days. They also get lots of antibiotics to help them fight all the bacteria that grow in the massive, overcrowded, and poorly ventilated chicken coops.

What Meat Should We Eat?

I believe it's healthier for consumers to purchase organic meats because they're chemical and hormone free. Yes, organic meat is more expensive, but it is also healthier to eat less meat in general. So eating less meat but eating organic could work out for your budget.

Joyce Thompson was born in Boston and is studying at Project Hope (in Roxbury, MA) to pass the HiSet. She plans to further her education by going to college.

Sources: "Food, Inc.," directed by Robert Kenner. Magnolia Pictures, 2008. DVD; <www.aspc.org>.



Pricing Organic Whole Chickens

Store	Brand	Price per Pound
Costco	Coleman	\$2.49
Ingles	Coleman	\$2.98
Trader Joe's	Trader Joe's	\$2.99
Local Farmer's Mkt.	Bell & Evans	\$3.49
Whole Foods	Bell & Evans	\$3.69
Whole Foods	Whole Foods	\$4.69

This research was done by <www.southernsavers.com> in 2013. What do you notice about it? Make your own grid showing current prices at stores near you.

Fast Food: Bad for Your Health

Igee M. Reed

My favorite memory of food is when my mom and dad would cook for me. During my childhood, my parents were on food stamps, but they were able to manage and to provide for my brother and me very well.

Both of my parents were great cooks and we couldn't wait for dinner. They would cook food such as neck bones, chicken rice, carrots, string

I gained a lot of weight because it was easier to go to a fast food restaurant than it was to cook for myself.

beans with chopped onions, soups, and my favorite—butter cheese biscuits. I remember this time very well because it was the time that I ate healthy and nutritious food, which kept me fit.

After my parents passed away, I stopped eating healthy food. I gained a lot of weight because it was easier to go to a fast food restaurant than it was to cook for myself. As a consequence, in 2012, I was diagnosed with Type II diabetes. Both diabetes and obesity are big problems in our society today. This is because there is such easy access to greasy, fattening, and poor quality foods that are much cheaper than healthy foods.

In the last few months, I have been working on changing my bad eating habits by attending nutrition and diabetes groups, which help a lot with understanding healthy food choices. In addition, by eating healthy food and eliminating sugar from my diet, my diabetes is under control. At this point, I am also on food stamps, which allows me to go to local food markets and purchase foods that are healthier than McDonalds and other chain restaurants. With help from my nutritionist and endocrinologist, as well as having access to local food stores (like ShopRite or the farmer's market), I can work on my health issues.



Igee M. Reed is a student at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) Adult Education Program in Trenton, NJ. Igee is 32 years old and wants to continue to live a healthy lifestyle. He also wants to get a job and to be successful.

Making Sense of Fast Food

How did fast food affect the author's health? What did he do to regain his health?

Research the history of fast food. How and why did it become so popular?

Read the article by the fast food worker on p. 29. On Youtube, find the 2-minute video, "Faces of the Boston Fast Food Movement." What would it take to turn regular jobs into decent jobs? For more on this topic, see Issue #36 of *The Change Agent*, "Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs."

Do you eat fast food? Why or why not? Go to <www.acaloriecounter.com/fast-food.php> to look up nutrition information about fast food so you can make more informed decisions.

Fast Food: Bad for Workers Too

Sabrina Johnson

I've worked at McDonald's off and on since I was 16. Let me tell you, working at McDonalds is not what you think it is. It is not like what you see in commercials. Customers can be so rude. We bust our behinds to make the customers happy. And we don't get a "thank you" or a "good job."

And the managers are always hollering at us. One manager is 18-years old, and she is always yelling at the maintenance person who's in his 40s. That's somebody's parent! Managers shouldn't be hollering at people. They should be treating us with respect.

There is just such a lack of respect. One of my co-workers has a little bit of a disability. Instead of working with her more or giving her more training, they just holler, "You take too long with the customers." I tell her, "You have to speak up. Don't let people walk all over you like that."

I get paid \$8.50 an hour. I got a 50-cent raise because they put me in the drive-through window. It was so cold. I'd be at that window from 6:30 to 3:30. It's a lot more stress. You have to wear a headset, and you hear this beeping noise, and you hear all this background noise, and then the customers would be screaming in my ear. And it

hurts my ear. I've been trying to get out of there, but they won't take me out. I'd take the 50-cent pay cut to get out of that kind of stress.

If we had a union, we would get treated with more respect. If we had a union, we would have a way for people

to stick up for each other.

I used to work at a grocery store, and we had a union. I loved the union. You could call your representative anytime of the day or night.

If you had a problem with the manager, you called the

union in, and they would come with you to meet with the manager.

Fast food workers in Massachusetts are working with an organization called MassUniting. They're nice people. They're trying to help us get a union and a raise to \$15 per hour.

If we started getting paid \$15 per hour, that's more money in our pockets. We might be able to do things like pay for car registration. We might have to work only one job. For all the workers who have kids, it would make a big difference to have only one job. So many people are living paycheck to paycheck. They can't take a day off to do something with their family. \$15 per hour would give people a chance to live with a lot less stress in their lives.

Sabrina Johnson, 22 years old, is originally from Philadelphia. She volunteers with MassUniting in Boston, MA, to organize fast food workers.

AFTER YOU READ: See the article on p. 28 and do the activities in the gray box. Also, see the "Good Jobs..." issue of *The Change Agent* for more articles and activities related to work.



Rally at McDonald's Boston, 2014.



Sabrina Johnson

Junk Food Easy to Find Healthy Food, Not So Much

Gabby Martinez

My family has more access to junk food than to healthy food! At this moment we have two convenience stores and one pizza place and a pharmacy near our home. A convenience store sells a lot of junk food and processed food. These foods are not nourishing for our bodies.

Another important problem is the price. It is cheaper to buy a cheeseburger than to buy an apple. We buy fast food because it is easy and

We are sitting in fast food restaurants ordering unhealthy meals, and the healthy meals are out of reach of our hands!

cheap rather than buy a fruit cocktail. We are sitting in fast food restaurants ordering unhealthy meals, and the healthy meals are out of reach of our hands!

The closest supermarket is five miles away from our home. I shop there once a week, and I look for special sales on fruits and vegetables. Also, I buy seasonal fruit at the nearest farm outside the city or at the closet community garden. There are some gardens in Fresno, like Al Radka



Fresno is in the middle of the Central Valley in California, one of the highest-producing agricultural regions in the country. Yet many people here lack access to healthy food. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture calls Fresno a “food desert.”



Park, but there are not enough. Our community needs a mobile fruit and vegetable stand that can sell healthy food in all parts of our neighborhoods.

We need healthy food in our neighborhood because it helps us teach our children about how to have a good diet. The best way for children to learn is to grow up with access to lots of fruits and vegetables. In Mexico, my family worked and lived near fresh produce. There was limited access to fast food. Children and their families ate fresh crops as they became ready. I remember my mother growing fresh papayas and selling them right near our family home.

In Fresno, we should have fresh produce within a safe walking distance of our neighborhoods. Then our families would have the chance to buy nutritious food, and parents could buy in quantities and at good prices.

Gabby Martinez is a GED student at Fresno Adult School in Fresno, CA. In 2014, she organized with her community and persuaded a local school to open its gates on the weekends so that children would have a safe place to play and get exercise.



This interactive “soundscape map” allows you to listen to the sounds of food being prepared and eaten in Fresno, CA. Go to berkeley.news21.com/theration/soundscapes and click on the various dots to listen.

Bees Essential to Food Production

But They Are Dying by the Billions

Amber Michele

If you haven't heard the latest buzz about bees, it's time you listen up. Though we may swat them away, hoping to dodge their sting, bees have a rather important job to do that affects us all.

In 2006, scientists noticed that bees were disappearing in droves. Apparently, the little insects responsible for pollinating over one third of our crops were deserting their hives in large numbers. Scientists coined the term Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and they noted that in the winter of 2006, "more than a quarter of the country's 2.4 million bee colonies – accounting for tens of billions of bees – were lost to CCD."

This loss could cost agricultural businesses and consumers \$8-12 billion. But the consequences of CCD could be much more disastrous than just financial loss. Without the bees to pollinate the plants and trees that give us our fruits and vegetables, our food supply could take a huge hit.

Looking for the Cause of the Collapse

Scientists are not completely sure what causes Colony Collapse Disorder. The most recent research from the Harvard School of Public Health claims that pesticides are to blame – especially a certain kind of insecticide called neonicotinoids. According to Forbes magazine, "Neonicotinoids are often used to prevent insects from destroying crops as early as at the time of planting, and could be carried within the plants and transferred to bees through pollen later in the growing season."

What Can You Do?

The most important ally of the bees is you! In Europe, people organized to get their governments to ban neonicotinoids. In the United States, similar efforts are beginning. In Eugene, Oregon, for example, community members persuaded the

city council to ban the use of neonicotinoids on city property. You could join with others to convince your city or region to do the same. Or you could write to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ask them to call for a national ban on this dangerous pesticide.

Meanwhile, as consumers, we can make sure the "green" from our pockets has an impact on the green in the fields. By supporting organic farmers and buying organic produce, we are sending a strong message of support for the bees. We don't want to eat food that has been treated with chemicals that could create many problems, including causing our bee colonies to collapse. Together, we can get ourselves out of the woods and into a meadow of healthy honeybees buzzing all around.



Amber Michele, former student at the Local 26 Hospitality Training Center in Boston, MA, has 15 years of experience doing hotel and restaurant work. She started her blog, "Elevated Living," to share perspectives on the hospitality industry and to raise awareness and advocate for others.



AFTER YOU READ: Using the context of the article, say what you think these terms and phrases mean:

1. "heard the latest buzz" (first paragraph)
2. "take a huge hit" (second paragraph)
3. "the 'green' from our pockets" (sixth paragraph)
4. "out of the woods" (sixth paragraph)

BE AN ALLY OF THE BEES: Do more research on neonicotinoids and use that information to write a letter to the EPA asking them to ban this dangerous pesticide.

Restaurant Reality

What Tipped Workers Want You to Know

Amber Michele

This may come as a surprise, but the minimum wage for many servers, bartenders, and bussers is \$2.13 per hour. The minimum wage for these employees is lower than the regular minimum wage because they earn tips to make up the difference. Since 1996, the federal government has raised the regular minimum wage four times, but the tipped minimum wage has not been raised at all.

Tipped workers often give a percentage of their earnings to others who have supported them throughout the shift. For example, let's say you spend \$100 at a restaurant. You leave a 15% tip (\$15) for the server. She gives 20% of the total tip (\$3) to the bartender and 20% (\$3) to the busser. That leaves her with \$9. Although, the law requires restaurants to supplement their employees' wages if tips do not meet the federal minimum wage, restaurants do not always comply.

We Are Proud of Our Work

Many will argue, "Well then, go to college and get a better job." Alas, it is a huge generalization that working in the hospitality industry means you lack an education. In fact, many are in the business because they are trying to work off college debt. Others choose restaurant work for the flexibility it offers. I know many educated individuals who don't want to sit in a cubicle from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday.

There are also those who do restaurant work because they do not have a formal education.

Do You Work in a Restaurant?

Look up UNITE HERE or the UFCW—two unions that represent restaurant employees. And check out the Restaurant Opportunities Center, which works to improve wages and conditions for the nation's 10 million restaurant workers.



There may be immigration or language barriers, or even prejudice and discrimination that prevent them from getting promoted. As someone once told me, "These are the invisible hands that set the table." This is the crew that helps to put on the theatrical show and the beautiful dance that is each service. They often work without acknowledgement. They experience wage theft and threats, and they have few advocates, yet they are the ones who keep the restaurant wheel spinning.

We Want Justice and Dignity

It is rare to find any form of advocacy and protection in the restaurant and hotel industry, but it does exist. I've worked on both sides of a union, as a member of one and as a supervisor of unionized employees. When it comes to protecting workers from safety violations and wage theft, unions are extremely effective. Unions also offer classes, helping members further their education, job skills, and English language skills. Unions also work to improve policies and laws (such as minimum wage laws) that help all individuals.

No one should be looked down on because of the work that he or she does. From the bus boy to the bartender, from the waiter to the host, we have families and personal lives, and we are human just like you. Do not define someone by their job. It is what they do, not who they are.

Amber Michele, former student at the Local 26 Hospitality Training Center in Boston, MA, has 15 years experience in hotel and restaurant work. Her blog, "Elevated Living," shares perspectives on the hospitality industry and raises awareness and advocates for others.



Minimum Wage Math

Cynthia Peters

1. If lawmakers had increased the minimum wage during the last 40 years to keep up with inflation, it would now be \$10.90 per hour. Instead, it is \$7.25 per hour.



Assuming a 40-hour work week, how much less money does a minimum wage worker make per week today than s/he would have had if the minimum wage had kept up with inflation?

2. Tipped workers get only \$2.13 per hour, and this rate has not increased since 1991. Advocates for a higher minimum wage (see <www.raise-theminimumwage.com> are calling for lawmakers to increase the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour and to make the tipped minimum wage be 70% of that.



If the tipped minimum wage were 70% of \$10.10, what would it be?

3. Tipped workers receive a lower minimum wage because their tips are supposed to raise their pay to at least minimum wage. If their tips do not increase their pay up to minimum wage, the employer is supposed to make up the difference.



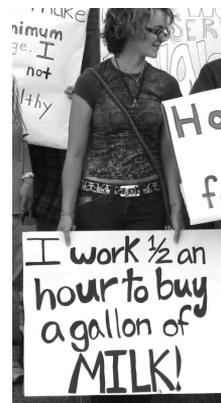
Sally works at a diner. At a recent 6-hour shift, the total bills for her tables came to \$300. She received 15% of this total in tips. She gave the busser and the cook each 20% of her total tips. How much did she have left? When she adds that amount to her base pay of \$2.13 per hour, is she making at least the federal minimum wage? How much over or under is she?

4. If Sally's employer does not ensure that she gets at least a minimum wage, this is called wage theft.



At the end of her shift (see #3), how much should Sally's employer pay her to ensure she is getting a minimum wage and to ensure that they (the employer) are not violating the law by committing wage theft?

5. Some states have higher minimum wages. In Massachusetts, the minimum wage has been \$8.00 since 2008. It is scheduled to go up to \$9.00 in 2015, to \$10 in 2016, and to \$11.00 in 2017. Low wage workers and unions fought for these increases, and were proud to win the highest minimum wage in the country.



However, they had hoped to tie future increases in the minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI measures changes in the prices we pay for basic goods and services. (Find out more about the CPI at <www.bls.gov/cpi>.) Lawmakers did not agree, so the Massachusetts minimum wage is *not* tied to increases in the CPI.

Make a line graph showing the change in the Massachusetts minimum wage from 2008-17. Imagine that activists had convinced legislators to tie the minimum wage to the CPI and imagine that the CPI increases every year by 3%. Add ten more years to the chart and extend the line to show what would happen. Draw another line using another color to show what you think will happen given that the minimum wage is not tied to the CPI.

See <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues> for an answer sheet and for more ideas about how to use real world math in the classroom.

Growing Up with Not Enough

Tekesha Dones

I grew up in New York City. It was rough living. Sometimes there was food and sometimes not. It depended on my mother, whether she was too drunk to cook or too drunk to shop for food.

Surviving on Cornflakes, Candy, and Combos

I remember one time when I was maybe ten years old, my brother and I were hungry. He cooked some rotten meat with butter, and I ate some cornflakes with peanut butter. Basically, my brother and I took care of ourselves. Sometimes my mother would go to the store and buy rice and beans, potato chips, candy, and combos (crackers with cheddar cheese inside). I would take the combos and candy and hide them under my bed.

A Job at McDonald's Makes Things Worse

When I was 19, I was going to the Easter Seals school, and I was homeless. I met a lady who suggested that I live in her building. She was the one who taught me how to cook the basics. I got a job at McDonald's and I gained about forty pounds. Eventually I stopped working there because I wasn't making enough money to pay my bills, and my medical insurance was being cut off. It turns out it was better for me to be on public assistance than it was to have a job that didn't pay enough. After that I moved many times.

Feeding My Daughter

By the time I became pregnant with my daughter, I was homeless again and had no food. When my baby was born, she was underweight and she failed to thrive. She almost died. The doctors wanted to put feeding tubes in her, but my mother finally jumped in and helped me. It was about time! My mother forced my daughter to eat, so tubes weren't needed. My daughter continued to gain weight little by little.



Getting Help

When my daughter was about three years old, we moved into a place next to a very educated man who knew everything about food. He became my role model. I really admired him. He taught me how to eat right and not be afraid to try new things.

When I started at Read to Succeed, one of the teachers, Gail, talked to me about good nutrition, gave me tips about eating, and gave me good recipes. I admired her too.

A couple of years ago my daughter and I started going to soup kitchens for lunch with people from my AA meetings. We went there to eat and hang out. I would leave some chicken marinating at home for our supper. At night I would cook the chicken for my daughter and me.

I Have Come a Long Way!

Now I go to supermarkets and read the labels. I cook healthy food like broccoli and other vegetables. I bake chicken without the skin. I make mashed potatoes or baked potatoes. I make spaghetti sauce with my own secret recipe. I have more energy. I am no longer sluggish. I get sick less often. I have come a long way from being that child eating cornflakes and peanut butter.

Tekesha Dones is a student at Read to Succeed in Hartford, CT. She is a single parent of her 13-year-old daughter Janae. Tekesha hopes to become a CNA in the future.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE about what it's like working at a fast food restaurant? See p. 29.

LOOKING FOR FACTS about hunger in the U.S.? See the box on p. 37; then take the quiz on p. 36.

Hunger is Painful

Jake Coakley

I recall growing up with very little food. I have kept it a secret for most of my life.

We didn't have food stamps or welfare or even public housing back then. The only thing we had was pride. I would ask my Mommy for five cents to buy lunch at school, and she would cry. I never quite understood why until many years later. I never knew she had no money and that we were poor.

One day, when I was grown, she told me the reason she cried when I asked her for money all those years ago. She cried because she felt bad that she couldn't provide for me. Looking back, I think I might not have asked as much, had I known. Now I realize how painful it must have been for her. It was painful for me, too.

My father died when I was young, and my mother had to take care of our family. She got a job on the farm and took me to work with her. I told myself that if I ever grew up, I would not have any children because I did not want them to experience the pain that I had from hunger.

I pray that no other child would ever experience this kind of hunger.



Jake Coakley grew up in South Carolina. He is now 72 years old. He has received many blessings. He and his wife have provided for 6 children. Three years ago he learned to read, and he can now read his Bible with understanding. "A new world has opened for me," he says. "I am so happy now." He is a student at WAITT House in Roxbury, MA, where he serves on the student advisory council and on the board. "To all the people like me," he says, "flush your pride down the toilet and go back to school."

Take It Further

Discuss some of the ways Jake's perspective has changed over time. What does he understand now about his mother and their situation that he didn't understand before?

Read his bio. to find out what happened to Jake.

See "Who Should Feed the Children?" on p. 37 and try the "But why...?" activity at the bottom of the page.

Everyone Needs Help Sometimes

Marchiondia McCaskill

I never really knew anything about the WIC system until I became pregnant with my son. My godsister told me about the program. I went to every appointment that they had for me. The appointments were important to me because they taught me about motherhood. The staff also gave me pamphlets and other resources to learn about my new baby. WIC gave me checks so I could get healthy foods, and I was grateful for that. If I didn't have WIC, I'm not sure we would have had the healthy things we needed. It is important to eat healthy, not only for yourself, but also for your unborn child.

As I was getting close to my third trimester, I discovered something horrifying: I miscarried my son. I didn't call the WIC office to let them know; I just stopped going. I thought my world was going to end! However, God blessed me with a beautiful daughter, and I'm just thankful for my little blessing each and every day.

So, I went back up to the WIC office, and ever since then I've been getting help from the women at the program. There are mothers out here, like myself, that just need a little help. WIC provides just that – enough help so that you can make sure

your children have everything they need, like baby food and milk. I'm really thankful that they can be here to help you in your time of need. If I was to rate this program, I would give it a 100% approval rating. I would recommend that

all of the mothers out there who need help join the WIC program. Everyone needs help sometimes. If I did it, then you can, too.



Marchiondia McCaskill is 22 years old and the mother of a beautiful baby girl named Heaven. She attends a GED program at Learn to Read in Jacksonville, FL, where she gets help from an amazing woman named Ms. Sherri.

What is WIC?

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal program that gives money to states so that they can provide food, health referrals, and nutrition education to women and their children.

True or False?

Read the box on the next page. Circle T (true) or F (false) for the following questions:

Hunger in the U.S. is caused by a scarcity of food.	T or F
Nearly half of the people enrolled in SNAP are children.	T or F
All the children who receive free or reduced price lunch at school also get free meals during the summer.	T or F
There are some counties in the U.S. where people are not food insecure.	T or F
About 20% of homes with children are food insecure.	T or F

Agree or Disagree?

The author says, "Everyone needs help sometimes." Do you agree or disagree? Explain and discuss.

Who Should Feed the Children?

Daniel Suarez

Why are children hungry? Children are hungry because parents don't have money to feed them. Some parents don't have jobs, and others spend their money on things they don't need.

Where do these children get food? These children depend on other family members bringing them food. Sometimes they go to soup kitchens. They don't always go with their parents because their parents often don't care. I have known 7-year-old kids taking younger brothers and sisters to soup kitchens to get something to eat.

Some kids wait until they go to school and eat as much as they can at breakfast and lunch because they won't eat again until the next day. They will pack extra food into their backpacks to save for later at home. Some kids beg for money at gas stations, in front of convenience stores, or on street corners. In extreme cases, they will steal.

Who should feed these children? In an ideal world, the kids' parents are the ones who should feed them. However, this is nowhere near an ideal world. The question remains, who should feed these children?

I would like to know because I was one of them.



Daniel Suarez is a student at Read to Succeed, an adult literacy clinic in Hartford, CT. This is Daniel's second article to be published in The Change Agent. He plans to complete his Associate's degree at Capital Community College and then pursue a career in law enforcement.

Hunger in the U.S.: 10 Facts

1. 1 in 6 people in America face hunger.
2. In 2011, households with children reported a higher food insecurity rate (20.6%) than households without children (12.2%).
3. Food insecurity exists in every county in the U.S. In 2011, 17.9 million households were food insecure.
4. 50.1 million Americans struggle to put food on the table.
5. In the U.S., hunger isn't caused by a lack of food; it is caused by poverty.
6. More than 1 in 5 children is at risk of hunger. Among Blacks and Latinos, it's 1 in 3.
7. Over 20 million children receive free or reduced price lunch each school day. Less than half of them get breakfast and only 10 percent have access to summer feeding sites.
8. For every 100 school lunch programs, there are only 87 breakfast sites and just 36 summer food programs.
9. 1 in 7 people are enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Nearly half of them are children.
10. 40 percent of food is thrown out in the U.S. every year, or about \$165 billion worth.

GOT THE FACTS? NOW TAKE THE QUIZ ON P. 36

Source: <www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-hunger-us>

Dig deeply by asking, "But why?" (over and over again).

Start with the author's point that children are hungry. Ask: "Buy why?" One of the author's answers is: "Parents don't have money." Ask: "But why don't parents have money?" A possible answer: "Because parents don't have good jobs." Ask: "But why don't parents have good jobs?" Continue asking "but why" to dig down deeply into the question.

To Address Hunger, Address Poverty

Sergio Hyland

More than 46 million Americans are currently living in poverty. Some define poverty in terms of wealth and material possessions, or the lack thereof. But people *experience* poverty in terms of insecurity — such as the likelihood of going to bed hungry, of waking up hungry, of deciding whether or not to spend this month's paycheck on electricity or food. That's poverty.

Poverty Getting Worse

While politicians speak about the need to feed America's hungry, they hypocritically allow hunger to get worse — mainly, by making it possible for *poverty* to get worse. For example:

- Corporate profits have soared in the past 5 years, but those profits have not been put back into the economy where they might create good jobs for people. Without jobs, people aren't going to have enough money for food.
- Since the 1970s, real wages have gone down or stayed flat. Even if you work full time earning minimum wage, you still might not have enough to feed your family.
- Government programs don't go far enough in combatting hunger. According to the USDA, in 2012, "An estimated 14.5 percent of American households were food insecure."

Where Is the Public Debate?

You might think there would be some public debate about these blatant immoralities. Maybe some people are talking about these problems, but those stories are lost among the more "important" stories, such as the octopus that uses its tentacles to predict the outcome of the ball games! Invariably, the only people fighting against hunger 24/7 are those suffering from it.

What does it say about a nation that, on the one hand, lets a good portion of its children be

"food insecure" but, on the other hand, gives away thousands of dollars in prize money to the person who can gorge himself with the most hot-dogs in the fewest minutes?

People Need a Fair Chance

What makes this issue even more problematic is the false perception that by "giving away" food to the poor, the government is somehow enabling and encouraging dependency. This idea is rooted in capitalist propaganda, which says that every individual, if they try hard enough, can make it to the top. Yes, some may not try very hard or they might take advantage of the system. But they are the exception. In reality, people *want* to be able to provide for themselves. There's a certain kind of pride that comes along with earning a living. But people need a fair chance.

Just think about it. How close are you to going hungry? If some unforeseen and unfortunate event occurred and you lost your job, where would your next meal come from?

This problem has a solution. America is the wealthiest nation on earth. It has the resources to stop hunger, but it doesn't have the political will. We all must get involved in the fight against poverty and extreme inequality. If we address poverty, we'll be addressing the root cause of hunger.

The next time you feel that pain in your stomach, think not simply of satisfying it, but also remember those who may not have that "privilege." What can you do to make a difference?

Sergio Hyland is a husband, father, and grandfather. He is currently housed at SCI-Greene in Waynesburg, PA. He is a social justice activist, and he is devoted to writing. You can find more of his work on his Facebook page titled Rebel Notes.



We Live in a Food System

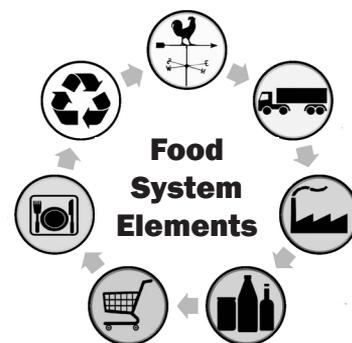
Alex Risley Schroeder

Have you ever thought about where the food you eat comes from? And what it takes to get it to you? All of us live and eat in a food system! The term food system describes the full cycle of how food is grown, transported, processed, marketed, sold, eaten, and thrown away.

Nearly every one of us in the U.S. counts on the global food system for our food. Tour your grocery store and see if you can figure out where the grapes or apples came from. And where was the wheat grown in the bread you eat? According to some estimates, food on our plate travels an average of 1500 miles. There are many concerns about the global food system, including:

1. the environmental impact of agricultural production, especially the energy, water, and pesticides that are used to grow food.
2. the energy it takes to transport food around the world and the effect this has on the climate.
3. our high levels of food waste.

4. the inequities in distribution that leave so many people hungry.
5. the conditions experienced by the workers who harvest our food, transport it, stock the store shelves, and cook in kitchens or wait on tables.



As people, communities, and states consider these issues with the global food system, there is a growing movement to reduce our dependence on globally supplied foods and to build sustainable local food systems. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a local food system instead of a global food system?

Through her work with the MA Workforce Alliance, Alex Risley Schroeder helps coordinate the development of the MA Food System Plan.

A Statewide Food System: Vermont Feeds Vermonters

Vermont has taken the lead in the U.S. by developing a statewide food system whereby Vermont increasingly feeds Vermonters. Their "Farm to Plate Investment Program," which was approved by the state legislature in 2009, aims to:

- increase economic development in Vermont's food and farm sector.
- create new jobs.
- improve access to healthy local foods.

Vermont's effort to grow and distribute local food has created over 2,000 jobs in the past four years. These jobs include growing and processing food, distributing food, and man-

aging food waste. Other states also have food system plans. Does yours? If you live in Massachusetts, you can help create the state's food system plan: <www.mapc.org/massfoodplan>.

AFTER YOU READ: Based on the information in this article, use your own words to describe a food system.

READ FURTHER about how building local food systems can create jobs at <change-agent.nelrc.org/issues>.

LEARN MORE by using the resources at <www.discoverfoodsys.cornell.edu>.

Massachusetts Limits Food Waste

Alex Risley Schroeder

In October 2014, Massachusetts will require large institutions like colleges, prisons, and hospitals to stop throwing away leftover food. The state hopes that by 2020 when the ban is fully implemented, there will be 450,000 fewer tons of food waste going into the garbage. Massachusetts companies generating more than one ton of food waste per week will be required to separate food waste from other garbage. The graphic below illustrates the six ways that companies can reduce their food waste.

A Hierarchy of Strategies

The best way to reduce waste is at the top of this upside down triangle: make less food. Making less food saves food, energy resources, and time. If, however, food is made but not served at a restaurant or banquet hall, or put on the store shelves and not bought, the next best way to reduce waste is to re-distribute this food to people who need it. Although food safety can make this strategy seem



challenging, there are organizations that make it possible to re-distribute food safely.

Food waste, which includes food scraps (like apple cores and carrot peelings) as well as the half-eaten piece of pie, can be fed to livestock. This strategy turns food waste into feed for hogs and other animals.

The fourth strategy, called “industrial uses” in the EPA’s Food Recovery Hierarchy, moves food waste to energy generation facilities. These include anaerobic “digesters” that create electricity from combinations of food and agricultural waste like plant material and animal manure. This food waste comes from large-scale food processing companies (like hot dog manufacturers) and places that throw out a lot of food, like hospitals and big schools. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection describes anaerobic digestion as “a process that puts organic wastes into an enclosed chamber where microbes break down the material, producing an energy-creating bio-gas. The bio-gas...can be put to a variety of uses. It can be used to create heat for industrial processes or fed into a generator to create electricity, or used in a combined heat and power system to produce both electricity and heat simultaneously. Bio-gas



can also be converted to compressed natural gas and used to fuel vehicles like buses or trucks.”

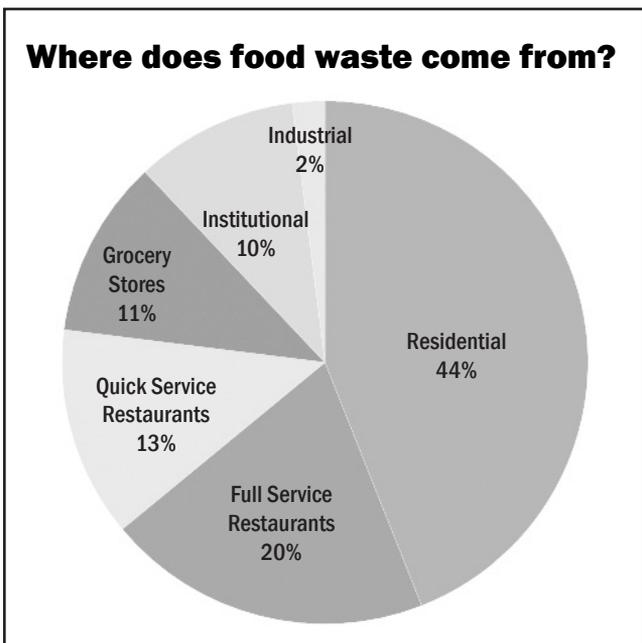
Composting, the next strategy, turns food waste into rich soil that farmers and gardeners can use to fertilize their crops. The goal of these food waste recovery strategies is to significantly reduce the need for the final strategy of landfilling or incineration.

Food Waste is a Big Deal

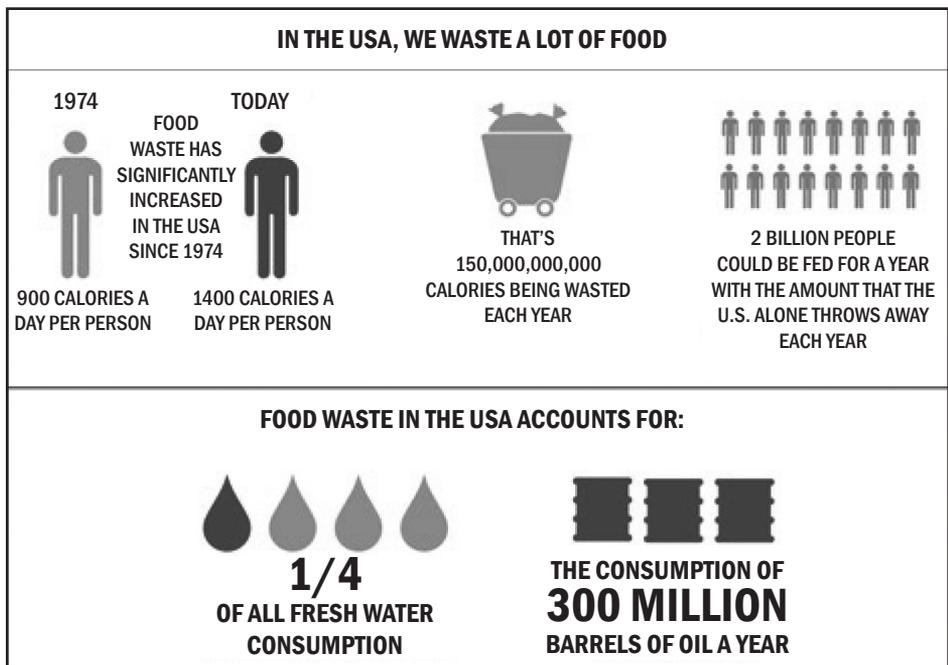
Reducing food waste is important, not only in Massachusetts, but across the United States. According to research by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), “an estimated 40% of all food gets thrown away in the United States each year...[and] leftover food is the single largest component of U.S. landfill waste, which makes it one of the country’s largest sources of waste methane.” And methane gas is a significant contributor to global warming.

In addition, NRDC research indicates that “food production... accounts for 10% of the U.S. energy budget, 50% of its land use, and 80% of its freshwater use.” In other words, when we waste food, we are also wasting all the environmental resources (water, energy, and land) that were used to get it to our plates.

Alex Risley Schroeder has 25 years of experience in adult basic education and workforce development. Through her work with the MA Workforce Alliance, she helps coordinate the development of the MA Food System Plan. Her business, Finding Earth Works, consults with ABE programs about the sustainable economy. She has four laying hens in her backyard.



Work together with others to think of ways you can reduce food waste. Look for ideas on the Internet.



Make several true statements about the data you see in this infographic. Based on the data in the chart, write two sentences about the connection between food waste and other environmental issues. Source: <www.treehugger.com>

Who Owns that Life Form?

Leonardo Castillo

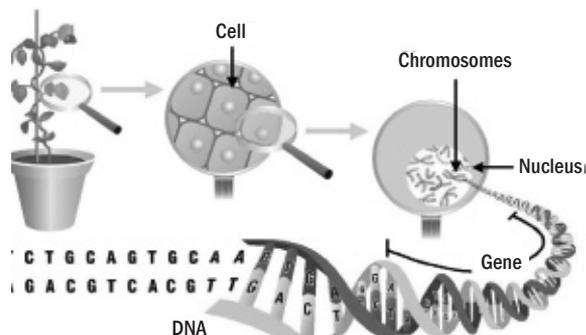
Before you Read

KEY VOCABULARY: genes, monopoly, patent

BACKGROUND ON GMOS: Scientists have learned how to change the genetic structure of various life forms. These are called genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The food industry now uses GMOs to make crops that grow bigger and faster and are resistant to pests.

WHAT IS A GENE? All plants and animals are made of billions of tiny cells. Inside each cell is a nucleus that contains deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). All living things pass their DNA on from one generation to the next. Genes are made of DNA. DNA contains all the information about the organism. Genes pull information from the DNA and instruct the organism how to grow and develop.

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW: What have you heard about GMOs? What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of having GMOs in our food supply?



Health Problems

There are many reasons to be concerned about GMOs. One is that they might be bad for our health. One of the main goals of GMOs is to make the crops resistant to the pests, but pests evolve and the crops aren't resistant anymore. Farmers have to use pesticides that are more and more strong, poisoning the crops, the ground, and the water. Besides, researchers in France have found that these foods can cause cancer in the long term. Because of this, the European Union has banned GMOs, and Hungary has burned all the GMOs that it had.

Corporations Decide

Another problem with genetically modified foods is that five corporations (Monsanto, DuPont, Dow, Bayer, and Syngenta) own 80 percent of the U.S. corn market and 70 percent of the soybean business. They also control more than half the world's seed supply.

Once a country gives permission to farmers to grow genetically modified crops, the farmers cannot put away seeds for the next season. Why? Because the genetic structure of the seed is "owned" by Monsanto (or whatever corporation has a patent on that life form).

Sometimes, the pollen from genetically modified crops blows into fields where there are conventional crops. They cross-pollinate, and some





Percy Schmeiser is a farmer from Saskatchewan, Canada, whose Canola fields were contaminated with Monsanto's Round-Up Ready Canola. Watch the documentary, "David vs. Monsanto," which you can find on Youtube.

of the genetically modified material gets into the conventional plants. In Canada, a farmer (pictured above) did not want to grow genetically modified crops, but his crop was accidentally pollinated by Monsanto's genetically modified crops. Monsanto sued the farmer. His neighbors and others had to

help him raise money to meet the legal costs coming from a corporate lawsuit. In January 2014, the Supreme Court upheld Monsanto's right to sue farmers whose crops are accidentally pollinated by GM plants.

Because of the health risks, we should immediately stop growing genetically modified food. Independent scientists should conduct serious, in-depth studies about the consequences of growing GMOs. And we should work to limit the power of corporations to control so much of what happens to our food!



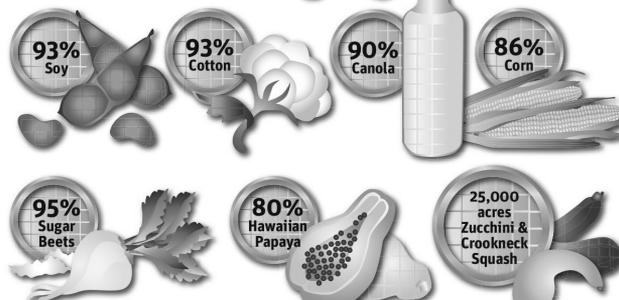
Leonardo Castillo is a student at University Settlement in NY, NY.

Sources: <www.surysur.net/2013/01/2012-el-ano-del-fiasco-de-los-transgenicos/#more-36444>; <www.nationofchange.org/all-hail-hungary-country-bravely-destroys-all-monsanto-gmo-corn-again-1377179931>; <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monsanto_Canada_Inc._v._Schmeiser>

Want to Avoid GM Foods?

80% of packaged food in the U.S. contains GMOs.

% of genetically modified crop grown in the U.S.:



See <www.wikihow.com/Avoid-Genetically-Modified-Foods> for more information. Image above from: <www.organicconsumers.org>.

You Call that a Tomato?



Go to <www.nytimes.com>. Search for "You Call that a Tomato?" Learn more about the history of GM foods by watching a 10-minute video on the FlavrSavr tomato.

How Do We Know Our Food is Safe?

Ruben Holguin

If you were a parent in the 19th century, and your baby was colicky or teething, you might have bought Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. This remedy really worked! Mr. H. A. Alger from Lowell, Massachusetts, wrote to the *New York Times* in 1860, that his son had been suffering greatly due to teething. But when he gave him Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, the "effect was like magic." His baby fell right to sleep; all his "pain and nervousness disappeared."

It turns out, each dose of this miracle product contained 65 grams of morphine, as well as alcohol and other chemicals that could cause coma, addiction, and death in an infant. No wonder the baby fell right to sleep!

Government Regulation

How did such a dangerous product get sold to unsuspecting consumers?

Back in the 19th century, there were no strong laws or federal agencies to regulate the products put on the market. The government felt that it was the consumer's responsibility to buy food and drugs that were safe. However, many people disagreed. They felt that the manufacturers of the

product needed to be held to certain standards. For example, the Ladies Health Association began organizing to force owners to clean up unsanitary slaughterhouses. They helped lead a grassroots movement of people called the Pure Foods Movement. Their efforts pressured Congress to pass the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906. This law made it the government's responsibility to test for "adulteration" and "misbranding" of food and drugs.

In 1930, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) took on the role of protecting the public health by assuring the safety, efficacy, and security of human and veterinary drugs, biological products, medical devices, food, cosmetics, and products that emit radiation. To this day, the FDA continues to work to make sure that food and drugs made in the USA or imported from other countries are safe to eat and are free from contamination or viruses that can make us sick.

How does it work?

Before the FDA approves products for consumers, it has steps to follow to make sure that all products are safe. Let's say a company wants to sell sugar. The company would send their product to the FDA for testing. The FDA looks for any contamination or viruses that may cause the consumer harm. If the FDA finds high levels of dangerous chemicals, for example, then the FDA tells the company that it needs to reduce the amount of that chemical or their product will not be approved by the FDA. If the FDA agrees that the product is okay, then the product can have a label saying it is "FDA-approved." The company must then follow FDA guidelines for how it ships and handles its products to ensure that the product remains safe and free of con-





Art by Dan Berger. Concept by Mike Adams. Reprinted with permission from <www.naturalnews.com>.

tamination. Failure to follow the FDA guidelines will result in a recall of the product, which means the product must be called back for the FDA to inspect and potentially throw away.

The FDA is a great example of how the government can help protect the public's safety by regulating and testing the food and drugs we consume. Imagine if we each individually had the headache of testing and being sure every single product we consume is safe!

Can We Trust It?

However, the public has to beware! The FDA does not have a perfect record of defending the public's interests. For example, some of FDA officials have connections with the very corporations they are supposed to be regulating. Often, food and drug companies will offer high-paying jobs to FDA officials — giving them the incentive to keep the companies' interests in mind. Since 1992, the FDA has agreed with multinational corporations like Monsanto that it is not necessary to require labeling of genetically engineered foods. More than 60 countries in the world require corporations to let

consumers know if they are eating genetically engineered food, but the U.S. does not. A 2004 article in the *New York Times* showed strong ties between the FDA and the drug industry and argued that the FDA has become less effective at monitoring dangerous drugs.

What can you do?

It was grassroots organizations like the Ladies Health Association that helped force the government to regulate our food. The same kind of pressure is what we need now to make sure the food and drug manufacturers are fairly regulated and consumers are protected. What can you do?

1. Research local groups that are working on consumer protection issues.
2. Learn about the Genetically Altered Food Right-to-Know Act <www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr1699> and contact your legislators to let them know how you feel about it.
3. Learn about what is really in our food and other products so that you can make educated decisions about what to eat: <www.ewg.org>.

Ruben Holguin, born in the Dominican Republic, is a student at North Shore Community College. He started his GED at Operation Bootstrap in Lynn, MA, and finished it while incarcerated. In May 2014, he received the Dr. Cheryl Finkelstein Award for Outstanding Community Service. Ruben is a member of Voices of Adult Learners United to Educate (VALUE), an education advocate, a mediator for gang members, and a speaker at GED graduating classes and national conferences.



AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to this article, from the 19th to the 20th century, there was a shift in who was responsible for food safety. Explain the shift.
2. Evaluate the political cartoon. Start by saying what you see. What is the cartoonist's message?
3. What do you think? Whose responsibility is it to make sure our food is safe?
4. Learn more about genetically modified foods. See pp. 42-43.

Growing Roots Through My Hands

Elyse Hardy

At 16, I was struggling to find a job, and I was also very depressed. I heard about the Youth Agriculture Program (YAP) from my therapist, who suggested that a job might be a good way to keep me focused and busy over the summer. Thanks to YAP, I learned not only about gardening, but also about business, marketing, and customer service. Most importantly, the work was meaningful, which is the best antidote to depression!

After many weeks of hard work, sunburns, blisters, and dirty fingernails, our garden began to flourish!

five-gallon buckets full of stones out of the garden, and we established a pump system so we could get water from a nearby stream. Next came digging trenches and bringing in mulch and compost

It all began with a large plot of land, full of weeds, rocks, and poor soil—a very overwhelming sight! During the first week of work, we mostly hauled



Elyse Hardy (right) and other YAP participants working in the garden. All the photos on pp. 46-49 are from YAP.

to fortify our soil. Then we planted.

I was always interested in agriculture, but I had never grown anything successfully aside from a potted violet or a bean plant in a Dixie cup from school. I hadn't had much faith that this whole thing would be a success at all. The prospect of

Skills I Learned at YAP

Elyse Hardy

I never would have known where to start in the working world if it wasn't for the YAP program. Here is some of what I learned:

CUSTOMER SERVICE: At YAP, I learned how to deal with the public and be polite to customers. I went on to use those skills when I worked at a local pizzeria and then a salon.

PROBLEM SOLVING: Now, I manage the embroidery department at FollenderWerks Inc., and I need to think analytically and calmly in crisis situations—which I got a lot of experience doing at YAP.

KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR HELP: Perhaps the most important skill I learned at YAP was how to ask for help. No matter what we do in life, we will always need help; it is always possible to find people who care.



Elyse Hardy at work

actually having enough crop to sell at the farmer's market was mind-boggling!

After many weeks of hard work, sunburns, blisters, and dirty fingernails, our garden began to flourish! We could never keep up with the harvest. We sold lots of our crop at the farmer's market and donated all extra to the Meals on Wheels program. We still had food left over, so we started baking

I felt needed and a part of something. Members of the community would frequently compliment us on our dedication and hard work.

and cooking and selling those products as well. I still use some of these recipes, including zucchini oatmeal bars and tomatillo salsa.

We became involved in a network of organic farmers, and they came by occasionally to help in our garden. I was learning from others, and I was contributing something important to my community. I felt needed and a part of something. Members of the community would frequently compliment us on our dedication and hard work.

At the end of the season, it was sad to see the plants start to die off, but my life was so enriched from the experience. I learned many job skills, felt connected to my community, and benefited from the tranquil, centering, and meditative activity of gardening—all of which adds up to an excellent treatment for depression.

Elyse Hardy received her high school diploma from the Burr and Burton Target program in Manchester, VT. She is hoping to start taking community college classes this year.



AFTER YOU READ

- 1) Discuss the title. What do you think the author means by it?
- 2) What did the author learn besides job skills?
- 3) See the article on pp. 48-49 for more on YAP.

What Is YAP?

In 2006, The Tutorial Center, Inc.—a community education center in Vermont—created its Youth Agriculture Project (YAP) to provide a fun, motivating, hands-on work experience for at-risk young adults, ages 16-24, mostly high school dropouts.



YAP is a dig-in, get-dirty, try-new-things program that takes education, personal development, and job training out of traditional classrooms. YAPPERS experience success while developing transferable job and life skills by growing, harvesting, and marketing plants and vegetable crops.

They also grow knowledge, self-confidence, motivation, and curiosity—each becoming a bit wiser, a bit stronger, a bit better prepared for a positive future.

- 89% of YAP participants achieved an educational goal in the year following their YAP experience.
- 57% of YAPPERS obtained a job in the year following their YAP experience.
- YAP donates over 2,000 pounds of food each year to Meals on Wheels.
- YAP youth earn ServSafe work certificates for safe food handling.
- In Manchester, VT, YAP created and now manages a community garden, providing vegetable plots for 15 families.
- In 2011, YAP launched the YAP Food Network, which allows small-scale local farmers to sell produce to area institutions such as the local hospital.
- In 2013, YAP in Bennington, VT, started a 1.5-acre farm that provides food directly to the local hospital.



Find out more at <tutoringvermont.org/yap>.

What You Plant Now, You Will Harvest Later

Renette Gonzalez

Dropping Out of High School

I was supposed to graduate from high school in Arizona in 2007, but instead of graduating I dropped out. School was difficult because I had a hard time focusing. In 2008, I left Arizona and moved to Vermont to live with my aunt and uncle. I wanted to go back to school, but all I could think about was how much I hated school and how much I had struggled before. I was 19 and had already been out of school for over a year. I thought it was going to be the same struggle, only in a different state.

Finding an Alternative Program

Not knowing what to expect, I enrolled into a high school completion program at The Tutorial Center (TTC) and started fulfilling the credits I needed to graduate. I had class five days a week, and eventually I progressed to the point where I was able to take dual enrollment classes at the Community College of Vermont. I had so much support from instructors at TTC. They made me feel comfortable and built my confidence as a student; I was able to graduate in 2009.



After getting my high school diploma, I enrolled in another program, Bridge to College. This class prepared me for college, and it also led me to an opportunity for a summer job with the Youth Agriculture Program (YAP). When I first signed up for YAP in 2009, I had never done any vegetable gardening, but I thought I'd give it a shot anyway. I thought it would just be a way to make a little money until the next thing came along.

Little did I know that YAP had more to offer than just a summer job. I ended up having a lot of fun working in the programs' gardens, doing different workshops, going to the farmer's market, and doing different services within the community. I participated in the program twice, and both times I left the program feeling like I grew in some way. (No pun intended!)

Learning While Growing

At YAP, we had three gardens to work in. One garden was located at the local middle school. On Tuesdays, we worked there, harvesting crops and baking cookies in the Home Economics room to sell at the Farmer's Market. I still drive by the various plots we tended, and I marvel at how developed they have become. Each time I drive by and see youth working, I always hope they can learn as much about gardening and the community as I did.

Now that I have learned about growing vegetables, I can't wait to have my own garden one

day and make dishes like pesto and tabouli with my own harvest.

While working in the program, we met interesting people and attended different workshops. At one workshop, we learned about bees and their importance to the environment and to food production. Having a hands-on opportunity to tend the hive made the experience even more memorable.

We also had a workshop where we learned how to do worm composting. This was neat because it showed us an inexpensive and fast way to make compost, even if you have a small garden and limited space.

At one of the nutrition workshops, those of us who were soda drinkers in the group (including myself) had the chance to physically see and touch the amount of sugar being consumed in just 8 ounces of soda or supposedly “healthy” juices or drinks. It was an eye-opening experience.

Fulfillment and Inspiration

It was fulfilling to get out into the community and provide a service while being able to learn about various topics like bees and nutrition. While doing all these different services, the program also made us think about future employment. We built resumes and discussed ways we could build off our successes in the program. I participated in the program again in 2010, and this time I was not a participant, but more of a mentor.



YAP inspired me to continue my education after high school and become more involved in the community. I work during the day and take night classes. I participate in various community events like Relay for Life and Bark for Life (which support the American Cancer Society) and the Penguin Plunge (which supports the Vermont Special Olympics). Overall, YAP teaches you to put your best foot forward. The motto that guides YAP’s work holds true, not just for food, but for whatever we do in our lives: *“Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.”* —Og Mandino

Renette Gonzalez is a student at the Community College of Vermont, and she is almost done with her Medical Assisting degree.



The Science behind Growing

Share what you know. What do plants need to grow?

Photosynthesis. “Photo” is Latin for “light.” And synthesis means to combine. What do you think the process of photosynthesis is?

Plants “breathe” in carbon dioxide. And the “exhale” oxygen. Besides giving food to humans, what are some other roles that plants play in the environment? (See Issue #27 of *The Change Agent* on climate change, especially p. 7 regarding CO₂ in the atmosphere.)

The nitrogen cycle plays a big role in plant growth. See more on p. 51.



Backyard Chicken Coop

Jane Agnatodji

In 1990, there was political violence in my country, Togo, which is in western Africa. There were protests and clashes between the military and the civilians. There were shootings, grenades, tear gas, kidnapping, and all sorts of bad things. My house wasn't far from the military camp. As a result, we had to leave the city and move to farmland.

Raising Chickens in Africa

After a year on the farm, we built a chicken coop behind our kitchen. My mom raised chickens, pigeons, and guinea fowl. She gave each of my daughters a hen, and she gave my son a cock. She also gave us their food and antibiotics, which we added to their drinking water. First, we spread the coop with insecticide to kill fleas in it. After a week, we let them into the coop and locked it for three days. If they were not locked in for three days, they might wander about and go astray, not knowing their dwelling place. On the fourth day, we freed them to move around.

We all cared for them by feeding them twice a day and cleaning the coop and their water basin. For their food, we mixed corn, millet, peanut shell, the skin and heads of smoked fish, soy bean, acacia, and sorghum, and we took all that to the mill to grind it into flour. Grinding the mixture is necessary so that they can easily swallow it. We then fed them the mixture, sprinkled with a little water. If chickens are well fed, they lay more eggs.

They Start Laying Eggs!

To my great surprise, they began to lay big eggs. Wow! They laid the eggs in different spots and



when done with laying, they would not leave the eggs. They would lie on them, and we had to go to where they were to feed them. The newly hatched chicks roamed around with their hens, so we tied a rope on the hens' legs and tied it to a tree so they would not go far from their coop. We fed the little ones broken pieces of rice.

As they started to increase in number, we couldn't afford their food, medicines, and veteri-

Making a Backyard Chicken Coop	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could afford our children's school tuition fees. • We didn't have to buy chicken or eggs for food. • We could buy household goods and pay our bills more easily with the money we earned. • We collected the chicken manure and sold it and used it in our vegetable garden. • We got pleasure from these animals, who were like pets to us. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could get a disease called the "Chicken cholera." It is contagious and can easily kill them, so we had to pay to vaccinate them. • They ate a lot of food every second of the day. • If they were not well fed, they laid no eggs or sucked their own eggs. • Spilled water and rain water in the coop made it stinky. • Sometimes thieves stole the chickens. • Worst of all, the shrews came in and sucked their intestines and killed them.

nary bills, so we began to sell some of the eggs and some of the chicks. In 1993, we made a sign and we put it on the main road near my house. The sign said, "Poulet et Oeuf Bicyclette," which means Chicken and Egg Bicycle. There wasn't really a bicycle, but I wanted a name that would make people laugh, and "Poulet et Oeuf Bicyclette" came into my mind. On Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, Easter and other occasions, we sold a lot of eggs and chicks. I didn't like to sell the cocks, but I did sell the hens.

We made lots of money from this little coop. Gardeners bought their manure too. When I started my garden, I stopped selling manure. I used it as fertilizer in my vegetable garden. Yes! It helped us a lot, and we gained a lot of advantages from it because it gave us not just food but many other favorable and impressive things.

Raising Chickens in Minnesota

Because of the experiences my son had raising chickens in our home country, he has now con-

structed a chicken coop at his house here in Minnesota. I moved to the U.S. in 2010, after my son became a U.S. citizen and was legally able to bring me here. Every summer, he cleans, arranges, and does whatever is necessary to the coop before ordering the chicks and their food. Then he electrifies the coop with light before their arrival. He built a grille to surround the coop, so the chicks can't get out. In mid-November, he kills them, separates them in Ziploc bags, and freezes them in order to eat the meat throughout the winter.

Because I once owned a chicken coop, that is why I don't eat chicken! They are domesticated pets to me. I kept them for pleasure! I loved them and cared for them.

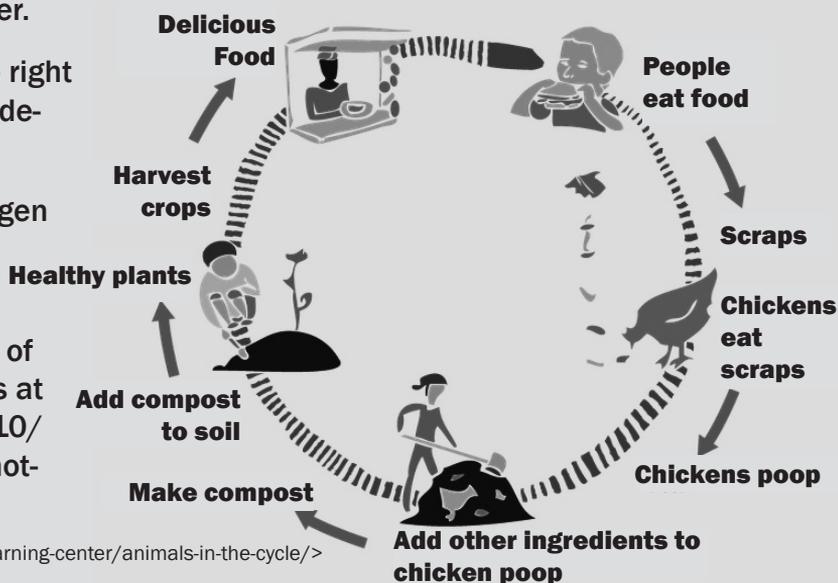
Jane Funmilayo Agnatodji is a Basic Skills day student at the Adult Academic Program in Golden Valley, MN. She is originally from Togo in western Africa. She is a mother and grandmother, active in singing and reading.



Get the Scoop on Chicken Poop

Chickens are valuable not just for their eggs and meat. Chicken manure is rich in nitrogen, and so it makes a great fertilizer.

- Look at the diagram on the right and use your own words to describe what is happening.
- Learn more about the nitrogen cycle at <www.ck12.org/biology/Nitrogen-Cycle>.
- Find out about the dangers of synthetic nitrogen fertilizers at <www.ewg.org/agmag/2010/07/nitrogen-fertilizers-toll-not-just-dead-zones>.



Source: <<https://earthmatter.org/compost-learning-center/animals-in-the-cycle/>>

Farmworkers Fight for Justice

“We won’t stop until we are treated like human beings.”

An Interview with Farmworker Lupe Gonzalo



Lupe Gonzalo (left) is a Florida farmworker and an organizer with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). She is from Guatemala. She came to the U.S. looking for work so she could take care of her family. She worked in the fields for 12 years. For the last three seasons, she has worked full-time with the CIW.

Tell me more about being a farmworker. What are the hours? What is the work like?

Before the Fair Food Program (FFP) [see box explaining FFP on next page], we worked 12 or 13 hours in the fields. We could never be sure how much time we would work because nothing was ever guaranteed. We’d get up at 3:30 or 4 in the morning to go to the parking lot to look for work. We waited there, and we hoped they’d choose us to work. If they chose us for work, we might get to the fields at 6 or 7AM. However, often, we

couldn’t start picking until 10 AM since we had to wait until the tomatoes were completely dry before picking. The whole time we waited was unpaid since we got paid by the piece-rate.

When we finally started to work, we experienced many abuses. We endured extreme heat and pesticide exposure, as well as physical and verbal abuse. One time a crew leader beat a young worker for taking a drink of water. Abuse like this was the norm back then. He came to the CIW office with a bloodied shirt. We took the shirt as a sort of flag and marched to the crew leader’s house. We declared, “A hit to one of us, is a hit to all of us.”

For us women, sexual harassment was our daily bread. The crew bosses used to hold a lot of power, and they abused their power. They knew the mothers needed to work everyday to provide for their families, and they took advantage of that. We couldn’t do anything about it. We knew if we spoke up, we would lose our jobs, and if we lost our jobs we wouldn’t be able to provide for our children. So our only choice was to continue working without saying anything.



Photos by Claudia Saenz, Student/Farmworker Alliance.



How did you decide to become an organizer for the CIW?

I spent 12 years working in the fields. I saw first-hand how the CIW was helping to change the conditions for tomato pickers as well as organizing farmworkers in the community. And I wanted to be part of it. If we want to transform an industry, we have to fight for it. We have to fight for our dignity and respect.

Tell me about one of CIW's victories.

Our Campaign for Fair Food started in 2001, focusing on Taco Bell. After winning the first corporate agreement in 2005, we now have agreements with 12 major retailers. In 2010, we reached an agreement with the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, which represents 90% of the Florida tomato industry. The new partnership between corporations, the tomato industry, and farmworkers meant that we could raise standards and protect workers' rights in the fields.

Can you say more about how this victory changed farmworkers' lives?

For decades, farmworkers in Florida were ignored. But now, for the first time, we are able to educate other tomato pickers about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Food Program (FFP).

One of the rights we now have, thanks to the FFP, is getting paid at least minimum wage. Under the FFP, companies have to install time clocks. For the first time, our hours are being counted! Consequently, they don't pick us up so early for work. They come when the field is ready to be picked. This has made a huge difference in the lives of families. For example, a father told us he is now able to make breakfast for his child, walk him

What is the Fair Food Program?

1. Participating buyers (such as Taco Bell and Whole Foods) pay an additional penny per pound for tomatoes.
2. Participating buyers must agree to zero tolerance for forced labor and sexual assault.
3. Farmworkers can carry out education sessions on the farms and on company time to insure workers understand their new rights and responsibilities.
4. Workers can register their complaints (including a 24-hour hotline) leading to investigation, corrective action, and, if necessary, suspension of a farm's Participating Grower status, and thereby limiting its ability to sell to Participating Buyers.
5. There are Health and safety committees on every farm to give workers a voice about their work environment.
6. Ongoing auditing of the farms ensures compliance with each element of the FFP.

to school, and still get to work on time. At night, when we come home from the fields, we no longer feel the weight of all the abuses. So we are more available to our families.

We are on a path of transformation—one that is full of dignity. Our lives are improving in the fields and also at home.

What else has changed?

We used to earn piece-rate, which means we got paid for every bucket we filled. This meant that even if you spent many hours in the fields, your wage at the end of the day could still be very low. Now, we are not only guaranteed a minimum wage, we also receive bonuses in our pay checks. There are 12 participating corporations that have committed to working with us to change conditions in their supply chain. They are paying one penny more per pound to buy tomatoes. It might

not sound like a lot but it's a significant increase for workers. Between January 2011 and May 2014, workers received more than \$14 million in bonuses due to the extra penny per pound.

How did you get these 12 corporations to sign on to the FFP?

These corporations didn't just sign on because they woke up one day and decided it would be a good thing. They signed on because we pressured them to sign. We said, "Enough with those abuses." We formed alliances with consumers throughout the country. Students have played a crucial part in the Campaign for Fair Foods. For example, they told Taco Bell they were going to kick them out of their colleges unless Taco Bell agreed to sign on to the FFP. Our strategy has worked. It's been hard, but we're seeing the changes.

Walmart—the biggest retailer in the world—joined the FFP last January, *before* we even mounted a campaign against them. Walmart realized that this is the future, so they stepped up and did the right thing.

What are some challenges that the Fair Food Program faces?

One challenge is getting other major buyers to commit to the FFP. For example, Wendy's and Publix refuse to negotiate with us. So we have campaigns focused on pressuring them to come to the table. Until we are treated like human beings, and that is the norm throughout the whole industry, we won't stop fighting.

We want Wendy's and Publix to take off their blindfolds and see that they have a responsibility to the workers who pick their tomatoes. Consumers must also take responsibility to know under what conditions their tomatoes were harvested.

Videos Featuring Lupe Gonzalo

1. International Women's Day – <ciw-online.org/blog/2013/05/lupe-honored>
2. The Perennial Plate – <<http://vimeo.com/39128568>>

What Can You Do?

1. Get involved in the Wendy's campaign. Visit <ciw-online.org/wendys> and find out how you can call or write to Wendy's, or educate others about the campaign.
2. Find out how you can help hold large supermarkets (like Publix, Stop & Shop, Giant, and Kroger) accountable. <ciw-online.org/supermarkets>.
3. Keep learning more about the issue. Visit <ciw-online.org/resources> and find articles, fact sheets, and short videos.



Photo from <www.justharvestusa.org>.

Another challenge is expanding the program outside Florida. But we want to ensure the FFP will be strong in the tomato industry before moving into other crops and other states in the future.

Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you for giving me this chance to spread our message. We know that when people are committed to justice, change will come. When we struggle together, we achieve so much. When we work shoulder to shoulder, we have so much force.

Lupe Gonzalo is a mother, a farmworker, and an organizer with the CIW. She was interviewed by Cynthia Peters, the editor of The Change Agent. Claudia Saenz, from the Student/Farmworker Alliance interpreted for Lupe and Cynthia during the interview.

More Resources from *The Change Agent*

Articles in Audio

On our website, you can find many audio articles from this issue and about 5 years' worth of back issues. Use our sortable Table of Contents <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/reading-levels/> to find print and audio articles by level.



Extras for this Issue

Find additional articles and resources for the Food issue here: <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/>.

Back Issues on Many Themes

In March 2014, we did a special issue on immigration, a highly relevant topic in current events and in the classroom. Last September, we focused

on “Technology,” and before that on “Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs.” Previous issues were about the economy, health, fashion, and resilience, to name just a few. We have paper copies of some of these and PDFs online of all of these. Look for them on our website.



Aligning with College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards

View this sample CCR grid on our website at <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/ccr/>. Find similar grids for the current issue on Food (as well as many others) by going to <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/> and clicking on “See more” underneath the issue you are interested in. You need to be an online subscriber to log in to view these materials.

THE 10 ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING CAN BE BROKEN UP INTO 4 GROUPS

Anchor Standards	In Everyday English	TCA Excerpts
Key Ideas and Details (R.CCR.1-3)	What does the text say? What does it not say? What does it mean? How can you prove it?	pp. 3, 6-7, 10, 16, 23, 37, 44, 46, 47, 52-53
Craft & Structure (R.CCR.4-6)	How does author use language to communicate? How is the text organized? Who wrote this and how/why does that matter?	pp. 22-23
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (R.CCR.7-9)	How does this connect with other sources? Does it measure up? Is it valid?	pp. 36, 42-43, 45, 50-51

Free Webinars

Want to watch webinars on how to use this issue and previous issues in the classroom? See <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/webinars/>.

Free “Tech Tips for Teachers”

This blog is intended for adult education teachers and tutors looking for straight-forward help on integrating technology into instruction. Created by World Education (which is also the publisher of *The Change Agent*), this blog will provide just the right inspiration to you to try something new! <<http://techtipsforteachers.weebly.com/>>



Change Agent CALL FOR ARTICLES

THEME: Prison and Justice? Since 1970, there has been a dramatic increase in the U.S. prison rate. Although we have only 5% of the world's population in this country, we have 25% of the world's prisoners. Mass incarceration in the U.S. has had a dramatic effect on the whole society, and so we plan to explore this topic in the next issue of *The Change Agent*. We particularly invite adult learners to share their experiences in writing or with illustrations. Use one or two (not all!) of the following writing prompts to guide your writing:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Share a personal experience you have with imprisonment – either directly or indirectly. What effect did it (or does it) have on you and your family?
- Tell a story from your experience that shows the reader what it is like to be in prison or to visit someone in prison. Use details that help show or reveal your experience to the reader.
- Do some research and write a short essay or create an illustration or cartoon (please include your sources!) that explores:
 - o The history of the War on Drugs and how that has affected the incarceration rate.
 - o The racial disparities in the criminal justice system.
 - o The relatively new phenomenon of privately owned, for-profit prisons.
 - o The idea of punishment vs. rehabilitation.
 - o The idea of restorative justice.
 - o The prison abolition movement. What is it? What do prison abolitionists advocate for?
- Read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. What is her argument? What do you think of it?
- Write a story from your own experience about restorative justice. Perhaps you were the victim of an injustice or the perpetrator of an injustice. What way did you find to make amends and healing?



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