ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Sowing the Seeds for Food Justice: A Review of Three Urban Farm and Garden Programs in Denver, CO
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ABSTRACT: Food justice is a movement that addresses the racial and economic inequalities found within the food system by empowering communities to grow their own nutritious, affordable food and create culturally specific foodways. Often food justice programs have been delivered through community gardens, farms, and greenhouses in cities where many people live in food deserts, neighborhoods where the population is both low income and has limited access to fresh and healthy food. In the Denver metro area there are forty-five neighborhoods that are classified as food deserts. Several non-profit organizations in Denver have sought to develop a sustainable and just food system and eliminate food deserts in the area. Three nonprofits representing the most common types of urban agriculture organizations are Denver Urban Gardens, Greenleaf, and Growhaus. I analyzed their role in supporting food justice and community impact by evaluating their growing space, educational outreach, amount of food distributed, and whether their mission statement addressed the racial and economic inequalities within the food system. I also evaluated state and national food and agriculture policies to identify barriers to and opportunities for expansion for the food justice movement. I found that Greenleaf and Growhaus supported food justice, but could only do so for a relatively small population. I found that Denver Urban Gardens was capable of producing the most food, but their mission statement lacked the recognition of the racial and economic inequalities found within the food system and thus lacked the creation of culturally specific foodways which are essential for food justice. Through the analysis of both domestic and international food and agriculture policies, I found that the creation of an Urban Agriculture Department along with other social reforms would be ideal to achieve national food justice.