

Food Democracy Essay – Opinion Essay

Food democracy is a mechanism that dictates the expression of the demand for greater access and collective benefit from the food system, which is the complete opposition to the dynamic of food control (Koc, 1999). Throughout the globe, support for food democracy has grown with the organization of struggle against the forces of control of food and the pressure of democratizing the system. Food democracy struggle is a fight against food control, which is driven by greed and selfishness, and intent to provide for all people and not just for the few. Simply, “**thesis statement**”-food democracy is the reaction of the collective people, either public or private, on the industrialization and commercialization of the food industry, and to the provision of adequate, affordable, safe and human foods.

From time to time, and across various geographies, the struggle for food democracy has suffered its peak and its trough. In fact, food democracy has evolved out of the need to answer the current system of food democratization. In the mid-19th century, the struggle was to keep affordable and quality foods that are available to the people (Koc, 1999). This struggle is a fight against the adulteration of food supply. While, in the United Kingdom, in the mid-20th century, the struggle centered on the demand of social food that increased the aid of the government on the people as part of the intent to ensure the adequacy of food supply. But today, things have changed. Food democracy is more relevant in the protest against unhealthy foods in the market, and the intent to increase access to organic and healthy foods. The changes and development of the food democracy are driven by the demand of the time, but the ultimate goal is the welfare of the people – which is the final actor of the struggle.

Actually, there are four essential components that motivate the creation of a food democracy, namely: citizen participation, informed choices, number of choices, and local and national levels participation (Nabhan, 2008). As much as food democracy is a collective struggle, it is also an individual struggle for survival. This means that it is necessary for the people to understand their needs and the limited access to quality and affordable foods. Without the clear understanding of the populace on their current situation, it would be impossible for them to realize the need for protest, both in the political and civil struggle. The empowerment of the people is an important part of food democracy. As mentioned above, the ultimate goal of food democracy is the welfare of the people, but if the people do not participate in the struggle because of misinformation and indifference, the struggle for food democracy is impossible.

Of course, all players of the food sector must have their own responsibility in the food democracy struggle. Yet, as we see today, not all people are working to promote food democracy. Sometimes, the populace just yielded to the government or to the industry leaders, rather than fight for their right of access to quality and affordable foods. While there are groups that are fighting against the system of food control, the common people just allow food industry players to control access to food supply. The idea of a poor man in India is “What can I do? I don't have land to till and I don't have to speak and persuade the government.” Looking closely, this indifference of the citizen cripples the food democracy struggle. How can a protest advance its cause when those who are affected are not actively working for the promotion of their rights and for the regaining of their access to food supply.

Another problem of the food democracy struggle is the ebb and tide, as mentioned above. The fluctuation of the protest for food democratization is a problem that cripples the struggle itself. How can the protest reach the players of the food industry and the concerned group when the struggle is not constant and consistent? It should have been that if we want food democracy to progress and advance that the people their faith and thrust on it with constancy. This is an important value to any protest and struggle to avoid starting things all over again.

This struggle for food democracy must be properly coupled with the value of information. There are several facets and components of the food industry that must be clearly understood by the citizen to avoid misinformed actions and responses. For instance, the knowledge on how quality foods are produced will empower the citizen to review and evaluate the foods they get. This knowledge gives them the power to choose the foods they should buy.

The advancement of food democratization is always hindered by the low level of information of the people. Instead of discouraging the production of non-quality foods, the people are encouraging the production of these foods. But if the people know about how foods are produced, the right methods of producing quality and healthy foods, and these other factors, it would be easy for them rejected non-quality foods, in favor of good and quality foods. In fact, organic food industry is hurt by the impact of non-quality foods. Instead of acquiring new customers and increasing its market share, the industry is left behind because non-quality foods are cheaper compared to the organic and healthy foods.

This information will give the citizen a wide variety of options on foods. A problem with underdeveloped countries is the monopoly of the few in the food industry. Because only the few have access to agricultural and farm lands, only few can produce foods for the people. The food

democracy struggle would not be complete without the fight against this form of monopoly in the market. In Brazil, the democratization of land is working for the survival of the people against the control of the few over the food industry (Shiva, 2006). In essence, this is a political aspect of the food democracy struggle. Instead of just fighting against the evils of misinformation and the low level of citizen participation, the protest focuses on the policies of the government, especially with democratization of land, democratization and access to credit, and creation of a better market pathway.

Until these reforms are made in the agricultural sector, it would not be easy for the food democracy struggle to succeed. Monopoly over resources that are used to produce food and the low level of government support for democratization of the food industry stops the protest in grassroots. This is the reason why it is very important for the citizen to keep their struggle consistent and always on the purpose. If the citizenry keeps its ground on the struggle, the food democracy struggle would advance to the political level. This means that the government will be forced by the power of the people to change its politics and regulations as an act of retreat to the mandate and will of the people.

As the result of the breaking of the market monopoly, the people get a wider option of food to buy. This is characterized in most developed nations like the United States. Because a much larger number of people have access to the food production, the populace gets a better and wider option on what foods to buy. They are not just left on choices of poor quality foods, but they have the opportunity to look for better options and wider choices.

It must be understood with food democratization, the market is also freed from its illness. It improves the free course of the market to allow companies in competing with each other. This

competition results to the innovation of the food production process, the number of products in the market, and better prices for the masses. This phenomenon empowers the people to move forward with better choices rather than just succumbing to expensive, but of poor quality foods. If this is reached, the struggle for food democracy is also reached, and the result would create a positive ripple effect that can be felt across the board by the citizen.

However, for these goals to be achieved, it is very important for the struggle to happen in grassroots and national levels. Of course, in a macro scale, the struggle happened across the globe, especially in countries that do not have access to wider resources for food production such as in Africa. But in a micro or state scale, the food democracy struggle is a combination of fight engineered by both the locals and the national leaders. As mentioned earlier, it is necessary for the struggle to reach the political level of the country, but as outlined this only happens when the struggle in grassroots is consistent and constant.

Why a national and level struggle is important to the overall protest and the democratization of the food industry? First, locally the struggle enables the citizen or the masses to understand the situation. It is necessary for the citizen to know the components and aspects of their struggle. They must know what is happening around them, and they need to know what they can do to advance the cause. In local levels, neighbors must talk to neighbors and persuade them to join the struggle. Although, this is not a violent struggle, but it is necessary to raise a good number of people to advance the cause; otherwise, it is impossible to persuade the national level players to give attendance to this protest.

In fact, if we look closely, without undermining the impact of the national level, the most important part of the food democracy struggle lies in the grassroots. By shaking the foundation

of the local levels, the national level will see the importance of the struggle. Even if how hard the government denies it, the fight for change always start from the bottom to the upper levels of the society. Why? For a simple reason, those who are at the bottom part of the nation are greater in number than those in the higher levels of the society. This means that if the grassroots fight with consistency, it is possible to win victory for food democracy.

Yet, it is also impossible to ignore the impact of the national struggle. Those in the power can do much for the struggle than the grassroots, in terms of political struggle. Because they have the power to interact and work with the higher ups of the government and the nation, they can change the value of the direction of the struggle. This is the reason why the grassroots must influence them to consider the value of reforms that should be done, such as the democratization of land access, resources, and credit.

Simply, the food democracy struggle is not just about the protest against the greed of food control, but it is a struggle of social and political impact. Socially, it reports and shows to the people the problems of their society. It creates a system and network of truth that should be outlined in the minds of the people. The awareness of the people becomes the sword against the direct mistakes of the struggle. While in the political level, the food democracy struggle demands participation of the government. It is necessary for the government to work side-by-side with the people to ensure that the people get what they need.

Lastly, in terms of moral issue, the food democracy struggle is deeply rooted on the valuation of what is wrong and what is right. Food control stops the access of the people to food supply and it causes a problem of hunger and poverty. In the same manner, it is a struggle against greed and selfishness that cripple the foundation of the society.

References

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