

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,840
[MUSIC PLAYING]

2
00:00:03,840 --> 00:00:07,680

3
00:00:07,680 --> 00:00:08,730
Hello and welcome.

4
00:00:08,730 --> 00:00:12,090
I'm delighted to introduce
Professor Julie Guthman, who

5
00:00:12,090 --> 00:00:15,500
is not only one of the
leading food scholars

6
00:00:15,500 --> 00:00:18,450
here but also worldwide.

7
00:00:18,450 --> 00:00:21,360
And we're just lucky
to have her agree

8
00:00:21,360 --> 00:00:24,570
to speak with us about her
important, critical work

9
00:00:24,570 --> 00:00:28,720
on food and agriculture
over the past few decades.

10
00:00:28,720 --> 00:00:30,460
Thank you so much
for joining us today.

11

00:00:30,460 --> 00:00:33,210

It's very exciting to
be hearing from you,

12

00:00:33,210 --> 00:00:34,950

and we're wondering
if you can begin

13

00:00:34,950 --> 00:00:38,160

by telling us a little bit
about your area of research.
And, also, why do you care?

14

00:00:40,510 --> 00:00:42,700

Well, I came to academia
as a third career.

15

00:00:42,700 --> 00:00:45,360

My first career I was
a community organizer,

16

00:00:45,360 --> 00:00:47,970

and I worked a lot in the
Central Valley of California.

17

00:00:47,970 --> 00:00:51,060

In my second career, I was a
nonprofit financial manager.

18

00:00:51,060 --> 00:00:52,790

And then I went
to graduate school

19

00:00:52,790 --> 00:00:59,760

in geography in the 1990s, not
expecting to be an academic.

20

00:00:59,760 --> 00:01:03,760

And making a very
long story short,

21

00:01:03,760 --> 00:01:07,350

I took a seminar with
my graduate advisor

22

00:01:07,350 --> 00:01:09,096

on agro-food
systems, and this was

23

00:01:09,096 --> 00:01:10,470

a time when there
was a lot being

24

00:01:10,470 --> 00:01:15,610

written on changes in the food
system and lots of big books.

25

00:01:15,610 --> 00:01:17,910

And as a part of
our seminar, we were

26

00:01:17,910 --> 00:01:23,070

asked to follow some
sort of global commodity.

27

00:01:23,070 --> 00:01:26,220

And this was a group
project, and our group

28

00:01:26,220 --> 00:01:28,680

decided to not do
a global commodity

29

00:01:28,680 --> 00:01:31,740
but to do organic salad
mix in California.
At the time, there
was nothing written

30
00:01:34,410 --> 00:01:37,750
on the organic industry from
a social science perspective.

31
00:01:37,750 --> 00:01:39,660
And so that became--

32
00:01:39,660 --> 00:01:42,720
we had a great
time in the class.

33
00:01:42,720 --> 00:01:45,690
We published an article
that's still cited today,

34
00:01:45,690 --> 00:01:48,930
and that became my
dissertation topic.

35
00:01:48,930 --> 00:01:52,740
And really looking
at how organic
agriculture is layered onto
the California landscape,

36
00:01:55,860 --> 00:01:57,660
and what are the
kind of possibilities

37
00:01:57,660 --> 00:02:02,860
and contradictions of changing
food systems through organics.

38

00:02:02,860 --> 00:02:07,020

So I was lucky to get
a job here at UC

39

00:02:07,020 --> 00:02:11,670

in the local and global
political economy of food.

40

00:02:11,670 --> 00:02:15,570

And it completely tied in
with my other two careers

41

00:02:15,570 --> 00:02:19,350

because I work in
community studies.

42

00:02:19,350 --> 00:02:21,780

And it drew on my
organizing experience.

43

00:02:21,780 --> 00:02:23,730

It drew on my nonprofit
financial experience

44

00:02:23,730 --> 00:02:26,520

because so many of our students
work in the nonprofit sector.

45

00:02:26,520 --> 00:02:30,450

And, of course, it drew on
my dissertation research.
So since then if I
were to characterize

46

00:02:35,580 --> 00:02:40,080

what my research has been

about in one or two sentences,

47

00:02:40,080 --> 00:02:43,970

I would say it's
thinking about how

48

00:02:43,970 --> 00:02:48,510

neoliberal-inflected
capitalism and white privilege

49

00:02:48,510 --> 00:02:51,180

has shaped the
conditions of possibility

50

00:02:51,180 --> 00:02:54,660

for transformation
in food systems.

51

00:02:54,660 --> 00:02:58,060

And I care about
that because I think

52

00:02:58,060 --> 00:03:03,090

that much of the organizing
activity, much of the food

53

00:03:03,090 --> 00:03:08,850

movement activity these
days, is about building

54

00:03:08,850 --> 00:03:12,900

better models of growing
and distributing food

55

00:03:12,900 --> 00:03:18,240

but not really undermining the
existing problems with the food

56

00:03:18,240 --> 00:03:21,810
system and therefore ignoring
a lot of the social justice

57

00:03:21,810 --> 00:03:26,940
issues that underpin the
way the food is produced

58

00:03:26,940 --> 00:03:28,740
and distributed.

59

00:03:28,740 --> 00:03:29,460
Great, thank you.

60

00:03:29,460 --> 00:03:32,100
I I'd like to actually ask
you to directly address

61

00:03:32,100 --> 00:03:34,710
the students in this
course and perhaps

62

00:03:34,710 --> 00:03:38,610
for those interested in studying
issues of social justice

63

00:03:38,610 --> 00:03:40,090
and sustainability.

64

00:03:40,090 --> 00:03:42,480
What are some of the
critical issues regarding

65

00:03:42,480 --> 00:03:44,370
food and agriculture

today that you would

66

00:03:44,370 --> 00:03:45,840

like for them to focus on?

67

00:03:45,840 --> 00:03:47,920

Sure, that's a great question.

Well, for me, it's

really important,

68

00:03:49,620 --> 00:03:51,460

and it really builds

on my last question.

69

00:03:51,460 --> 00:03:54,480

It's really important to

start thinking about not only

building positive alternatives

in the food system, which--

70

00:03:57,360 --> 00:03:59,040

there are many.

We have organic

agriculture, we have CSA,

71

00:04:01,082 --> 00:04:02,790

we have farmers'

markets, and they're all

72

00:04:02,790 --> 00:04:06,900

producing lovely food

that benefits a few.

73

00:04:06,900 --> 00:04:11,510

And many of the people that are

most hurt by the food system--

whether it's farm

workers that are exposed

74

00:04:13,260 --> 00:04:16,310
to pesticides or farm
workers and food workers who

75

00:04:16,310 --> 00:04:21,810
are very poorly paid, who work
in marginal conditions, who are

76

00:04:21,810 --> 00:04:23,850
subject to sexual harassment--

77

00:04:23,850 --> 00:04:30,210
or whether it's food-insecure
consumers who cannot afford
to buy the best of food.

78

00:04:31,320 --> 00:04:36,510
Those folks are kind of being
ignored in our existing food

79

00:04:36,510 --> 00:04:37,680
system work.

80

00:04:37,680 --> 00:04:40,080
And so I would like
to reverse that,

81

00:04:40,080 --> 00:04:43,010
and so those folks
become most heard.

82

00:04:43,010 --> 00:04:45,120
And part of doing
that is doing more

83

00:04:45,120 --> 00:04:47,320
than building alternatives.

84
00:04:47,320 --> 00:04:50,880
It's also paying attention to
ways in which we can undermine

85
00:04:50,880 --> 00:04:54,690
existing food systems through
more oppositional movements,

86
00:04:54,690 --> 00:05:00,000
through policy work, through
anti-pesticide activism,

87
00:05:00,000 --> 00:05:04,960
through living-wage
campaigns, through reforming

88
00:05:04,960 --> 00:05:06,290
our immigration policy--

89
00:05:06,290 --> 00:05:08,740
which I know is a big
challenge these days.

90
00:05:08,740 --> 00:05:12,610
But, boy, that's a really tough
and important, important issue

91
00:05:12,610 --> 00:05:14,540
for justice in the food system.

92
00:05:14,540 --> 00:05:16,450
So I teach my
students, and I'd like
to encourage your

students, to really think

93

00:05:18,700 --> 00:05:23,680
about doing the harder work but
really the more important work.

94

00:05:23,680 --> 00:05:25,010
Great, thank you so much.

95

00:05:25,010 --> 00:05:27,820
So one of the things
that the Right Livelihood

96

00:05:27,820 --> 00:05:30,640
College is trying to do

97

00:05:30,640 --> 00:05:34,930
is to connect students
with the work of laureates

98

00:05:34,930 --> 00:05:36,430
they're doing worldwide.

99

00:05:36,430 --> 00:05:38,410
So what do you imagine
would be possible

100

00:05:38,410 --> 00:05:40,950
if students and faculty
such as yourself
were to connect with Right
Livelihood laureates--

101

00:05:43,690 --> 00:05:45,970
what were some of the
things that you'd like

102

00:05:45,970 --> 00:05:48,280
to see in those connections?
I'm just going to draw on some
of my more recent research

103

00:05:51,610 --> 00:05:54,170
on this California
strawberry industry.

104

00:05:54,170 --> 00:05:55,780
And it's a huge
research project.
But what brought
me to that research

105

00:05:57,790 --> 00:06:04,120
is this campaign to get rid
of methyl iodide, a highly

106

00:06:04,120 --> 00:06:08,830
toxic chemical that was
designed to replace methyl

107

00:06:08,830 --> 00:06:10,510
bromide as a soil fumigant.

108

00:06:10,510 --> 00:06:12,580
There's a long story there
that I won't get into.

109

00:06:12,580 --> 00:06:19,030
And the food movement joined
with anti-pesticide activists

110

00:06:19,030 --> 00:06:21,760
and labor activists and
environmental activists

111

00:06:21,760 --> 00:06:25,390
and public health folks
and mounted a huge campaign

112

00:06:25,390 --> 00:06:29,440
against methyl iodide that,
by a lot of circumstances,

113

00:06:29,440 --> 00:06:32,020
a lot of luck, and a lot of
contingency but good strategy

114

00:06:32,020 --> 00:06:34,420
actually brought
push-back on it.

115

00:06:34,420 --> 00:06:38,230
And that chemical is no
longer on the market.

116

00:06:38,230 --> 00:06:40,840
To me, it's a hugely
important lesson
of what can happen if
different groups get together,

117

00:06:44,200 --> 00:06:49,930
target something quite specific,
think strategically, and go up

118

00:06:49,930 --> 00:06:54,580
against, really, one of the
biggest agricultural chemical

119

00:06:54,580 --> 00:06:55,850
companies in the world.

120

00:06:55,850 --> 00:06:56,920

And they won.

121

00:06:56,920 --> 00:06:58,864

To me, that's a
model, and that's
what we should be
thinking about--

122

00:07:00,280 --> 00:07:04,210

is winnable fights where
we think strategically.

123

00:07:04,210 --> 00:07:07,430

And I think that's
the direction to go.

124

00:07:07,430 --> 00:07:10,240

So I want to congratulate
you on not only being

125

00:07:10,240 --> 00:07:14,020

a recipient of the prestigious
Guggenheim Fellowship

126

00:07:14,020 --> 00:07:16,780

but also being recently named
a fellow at the Radcliffe

127

00:07:16,780 --> 00:07:19,030

Institute, and this is exciting.

128

00:07:19,030 --> 00:07:20,740

So just wondered
if you could share

129

00:07:20,740 --> 00:07:22,960

a little bit with the
students what your plans are
in the forthcoming years.

130

00:07:24,070 --> 00:07:24,570

Sure.

131

00:07:24,570 --> 00:07:27,340

Well, I'm very honored
to get this award.

132

00:07:27,340 --> 00:07:29,980

Both awards-- they're
really extraordinary,

133

00:07:29,980 --> 00:07:31,600

and I feel very lucky.

134

00:07:31,600 --> 00:07:34,030

So I've been doing research
on the strawberry industry
for the past four
years, and it's mainly

135

00:07:35,950 --> 00:07:39,610

been on the regulatory
politics of the chemicals used

136

00:07:39,610 --> 00:07:42,160

in strawberry production,
mainly the soil fumigants.

137

00:07:42,160 --> 00:07:45,190

And I'm finishing
that up, and I'm

138

00:07:45,190 --> 00:07:47,020
moving toward writing
a book that's quite

139

00:07:47,020 --> 00:07:48,280
different than that research.

140

00:07:48,280 --> 00:07:49,860
And it's really about--

141

00:07:49,860 --> 00:07:51,820
I would call it an
environmental history

142

00:07:51,820 --> 00:07:54,310
of the strawberry
industry in California,

143

00:07:54,310 --> 00:07:56,800
really focusing on how
many of its advantages,

144

00:07:56,800 --> 00:08:00,010
both social and natural,
have been inverted

145

00:08:00,010 --> 00:08:05,500
into a set of interlocking
threats, which are really

146

00:08:05,500 --> 00:08:07,900
going to affect how the
strawberry industry can move

147

00:08:07,900 --> 00:08:08,400
forward.

148

00:08:08,400 --> 00:08:10,630

And it really can't in
its current configuration

149

00:08:10,630 --> 00:08:12,850

without something
really shaking loose.

150

00:08:12,850 --> 00:08:14,666

So I'm excited about
writing the book.

151

00:08:14,666 --> 00:08:16,540

I'm excited about getting
the work out there.

152

00:08:16,540 --> 00:08:18,498

Wonderful, we're looking
forward to reading it.
OK, thank you.

153

00:08:19,390 --> 00:08:23,040

[MUSIC PLAYING]

154

00:08:23,040 --> 00:08:29,163