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# COMIDA, NO BOMAS: FNB TAKING A BITE OUT OF FOOD INJUSTICE

BY AARON  
"BROTHER" LEVY  
& KYLE BOGGS



## BROTHER LEVY

The spread before my eyes is splendid: barley and vegetable medley soup, signature mashed potatoes, a nice green salad with raisin-bread croutons, and several lovely and delicious vegetable side dishes. This moveable feast is provided every Sunday at the historic **Murdoch Community Center** by the Flagstaff Chapter of **Food Not Bombs**. Taken out of the oven or off the stove nearly twenty minutes before it is served by a volunteer army of peace loving and ardent local activists, this **Food Not Bombs** chapter is the fourth manifestation of this national movement to encourage communities to not waste food, promote peace, and make their homelessness and poverty more visible.

In 2005, **The National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty** ranked Flagstaff 10<sup>th</sup> on their list of the top twenty "meanest cities." The criteria that informed the list included the number of a city's anti-homeless laws, the enforcement of those laws, and the severity of the penalties, among others.

Flagstaff was added to the list after an anti-camping ordinance, which is really a pleasant way to refer to an anti-homeless ordinance. The *Arizona Daily Sun* reported, "Under the current law, anyone camping or sleeping in a car or in public within the Flagstaff city limits could be subject to trespassing and camping violations, totaling up to \$2,500 in fines and six months in jail time." Since the ordinance was enacted, 41 homeless individuals have been arrested. This law also inadvertently targets victims of domestic violence who are trying to escape dangerous living conditions. So, the question is: *what kind of city is this?*

There are two fundamental understandings of Flagstaff that make it the city it is. One version of Flagstaff is an image: a nostalgic, simple

livin', railroad workin', acoustic pickin', comfy-nights-by-the-fire projection that exists largely as a fantasy. This rendition of Flagstaff is featured pictorially in every visitor's guide at the train station. It appears on NAU's promotional material. It is in the hearts and minds of Phoenixians who dust off their North Face fleece vests, pile in their SUV's, and drive up Interstate 17 for a fun weekend in their vacation home. Any time a pristine photo of the San Francisco Peaks appears next to a logo, event, or place of business, this folk tale of Flagstaff is at work.

Then there is the version of Flagstaff that, in both unique and complex ways, reflects many of the same struggles that other cities face. Race, gender, and sexual orientation inequalities, environmental injustices, traffic conges-

tion, animal abuses, violence, and, among much more, poverty and homelessness.

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the law, as the *Daily Sun* put it in an article on November 20, was driven "to officially consider easing the prohibition on people sleeping on public property and reducing the amount of jail time for violating the ordinance."

A few days later, the *Daily Sun* ran a staff editorial that began with a dose of reality. "First, let's get our terms straight. Flagstaff doesn't have a camping problem. It has a homeless problem. And it has a housing problem."

The trouble is, a modified anti-homeless law is still an anti-homeless law. However, it just might, in service of the fantasy, get our name off that darn list. **Or, just maybe, city officials were having a hard time getting \$2,500 out of the pockets of homeless people.**

In much the same way, easing fines and jail

time for people that have nowhere else to sleep does not help them. Criminalizing someone for his or her socio-economic status is immoral, no matter the circumstance. *So what does help the homeless and the poverty stricken?*

Looking at the problem realistically, **Food Not Bombs** answers this question simply: *a free hot meal every Sunday.*

The first Food Not Bombs chapter was founded in 1980 by a group of seven anti-nuclear activists in Cambridge, Mass. The group believed that feeding people healthy vegan food would be the best method to protest the corporate and hegemonic patriarchy that encourages

and, indeed, perpetuates homelessness, poverty, and violence.

The group of seven held the first Food Not Bombs outside the **Federal Reserve Bank** in Boston where 50 homeless people were fed vegan and vegetarian dishes. This event was the catalyst for an international movement that is now in its 28<sup>th</sup> year of existence.

The food for the meal is collected by gathering surplus produce from local stores. In Flagstaff the primary participating businesses are **New Frontiers, Biff's Bagels, Village Baker, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture),** and **The Tortilla Lady. Phebe Faus**, who operates The Tortilla Lady, is a member of the board for **Flagstaff Shelter Services** and describes her enthusiasm for her involvement with FNB: "We are happy to contribute tortillas every week as we believe in the mission of FNB. They are making a positive impact on the community!"

There is still much work to be done. Despite the generosity of locally-owned businesses, there exist larger chain food stores that operate on safety guidelines requiring them to throw out perfectly good produce. In some cases, dumpsters have pad locks to deter the hungry from eating.

The reason that FNB serves vegan and vegetarian food is because it is healthy and promotes peaceful dieting and lifestyle. Vegan and vegetarian food is the easiest and cheapest to procure and cook. So far, FNB has prepared such incredible dishes as garlic mashed potatoes, the aforementioned raisin-bread croutons, and the most incredible **No Thanks No Giving** feast.

Another important tenant of FNB is that it be completely unrestrictive. Anyone in the community, even **Mayor Sara Presler**, is welcome and encouraged to attend. As Flagstaff Chapter member **Zachary Freels**, a Political Science Major at NAU, explains, "Food not Bombs is a chance to come together as a community, whether you are privileged or homeless. This is important because society generally isolates the less privileged, which makes poverty become invisible in our community. This is one of the chief reasons why Flagstaff never makes any effort to eradicate poverty in our community and instead criminalizes homelessness. **The purpose of the event is to show there are enough resources to share with people rather than engage in violence and conflict over perceived scarcity.** Each week about 50-60 people are fed with food that ordinarily would go to waste. This demonstrates that with initiative, a group of people can improve their community."

This was the spirit behind the formation of this manifestation of Food Not Bombs in Flagstaff. Since 1995, there have been four FNB chapters serving the Flagstaff Community. The present chapter was started in late October 2008 by the **Peace & Justice Coalition** at NAU.

The group describes itself as: "a non-partisan, student organization focused on promoting peace and justice in Northern Arizona while fostering continued interests in national and international affairs. Established in 2006, **NAU Peace & Justice** has sponsored numerous community events examining the human cost of war, the impact of US Imperialism, and the destruction of our Civil Liberties. Through education and non-violent direct action, NAU Peace & Justice hopes to raise community awareness on

a variety of issues while encouraging students to take a stand against the injustices occurring in our communities."

The Peace & Justice Coalition's desire was that FNB would become a self-sustaining community action against economic injustice within the Flagstaff Community. The most appealing part of any FNB chapter is that it relies on a grassroots infrastructure to operate. This creates an operation that relies on its community, independent from local, state, or federal governments.

A good example of how effective FNB can be is when catastrophes strike a community. Oftentimes, the local FNB chapter is the only group whose infrastructure is resilient enough to meet the needs of those caught in the aftermath. This was the case in the wake of the 1989 San Francisco Earthquake, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

With such an ability to feed the hungry of a community, one would think that FNB would be welcomed into a city with open arms. This is not always the case. The second chapter in the United States was founded in 1988 in San Francisco, which almost immediately faced opposition from the local police. On August 15, 1988, forty-five riot police descended upon a feed at the entrance to Golden Gate Park and arrested nine volunteers who were sharing food.

More recently, FNB experienced repression in Las Vegas, Nev., when their operation was in violation of a city ordinance that prohibited mass feeding of the so-called "indigent" population in city parks. Though this ordinance was recently ruled unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, the spirit of the ordinance highlights a familiar trend working across the nation, to dehumanize and render homeless "invisible."

FNB chapters are encouraged to work with other grassroots groups in order to encourage community activism. As such, the Flagstaff FNB has worked with **Táala Hooghan Infoshop, Associated Students for Women's Issues** out of NAU, and several other organizations with a core belief in social justice.

It is amazing how easy it is to set up and facilitate a FNB chapter. There are currently nine chapters operating in Arizona. Recently, the Flagstaff Chapter visited with the Prescott Chapter to share recipes and "pick the cook's brain." One can visit the organization's website, **foodnotbombs.net** to learn about a chapter in your area or how to set one up. You can also learn about chapters to visit when traveling nationally and internationally.

*As a member of the Flagstaff Chapter of Food Not Bombs, Brother Levy would like to invite you to the next amazing feast at the **Murdoch Center** (on cold and stormy days) or **Wheeler Park** (on fine weather days). You are of course also invited to volunteer either material or elbow grease. You can email the Peace & Justice Coalition at **naupaceandjustice@gmail** for more details.*

*Please remember you are a vital part of your community and your voice and action are necessary to make this world better. Happy New Year from Brother Levy and Kyle Boggs and the rest of the Noise Staff.* ☺

**PAZ Y JUSTICIA EN EL AÑO NUEVO.**

**Kyle Boggs is a part-time dreamer, part-time bike enthusiast, part-time teacher from his home in Flagstaff. [undertheconcrete.org](http://undertheconcrete.org)**

**Aaron Levy is a long timeresident and local legend from Flagstaff. Find him where an open mic and spotlight is available. [aaronlevy@thenoise.us](mailto:aaronlevy@thenoise.us)**

**Best of  
Flagstaff  
2007  
2008**



## BETH'S BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

*This soup is a must for the winter months. It is warm, soothing, and so good. Choose a new bread each time for an entirely different taste without any additional work.*

### Ingredients

- 3 Butternut Squash (medium to large)
- 6-7 cups of water or Vegetable Broth
- 1 large Onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 Celery stalks, chopped
- 2-3 tbsp fresh Parsley, chopped
- a few drops of Olive Oil

### Directions

- 1) Pre-heat oven to 375°F. Cut squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds, dark orange stringy part and discard. Set squash facedown on a lightly oiled baking sheet or glass pan. Place in oven and let roast until skin becomes golden brown & wrinkled (about 20 min). Remove and let cool. Scoop out inside of squash and discard skin.
- 2) Put onion, celery, squash, and vegetable stock in a large pot. Stir in parsley and bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat. Allow to simmer until veggies are soft (15-20 min). Remove and let cool.
- 3) Blend soup in a food processor or blender until smooth. Pour soup back into large pot and reheat on low-medium. Use extra broth for desired thickness. Add sea salt to taste.

### Options

Adjust with white pepper, or freshly grated ginger root. Add maple syrup for extra sweetness. Garnish with toasted pumpkin or sunflower seeds. Sprinkle fresh parsley on top.

### BREAD SELECTIONS

Italian with Rosemary, Pisanò, Ciabatta, Roasted Garlic with Red Bell Peppers, 9-Grain with Sunflower and Pumpkin Seeds, Sourdough, French, 3-Seeded French. \*Pre-order Soup Boules out of any bread for a fun and different presentation. Just toast them a bit before the soup is poured in.

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