



Black, White, and Green: Farmers Markets, Race, and the Green Economy (Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation Ser.)

Alison Alkon

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Farmers markets are much more than places to buy produce. According to advocates for sustainable food systems, they are also places to “vote with your fork” for environmental protection, vibrant communities, and strong local economies. Farmers markets have become essential to the movement for food-system reform and are a shining example of a growing green economy where consumers can shop their way to social change.

Black, White, and Green brings new energy to this topic by exploring dimensions of race and class as they relate to farmers markets and the green economy. With a focus on two Bay Area markets—one in the primarily white neighborhood of North Berkeley, and the other in largely black West Oakland—Alison Hope Alkon investigates the possibilities for social and environmental change embodied by farmers markets and the green economy.

Drawing on ethnographic and historical sources, Alkon describes the meanings that farmers market managers, vendors, and consumers attribute to the buying and selling of local organic food, and the ways that those meanings are raced and classed. She mobilizes this research to understand how the green economy fosters visions of social change that are compatible with economic growth while marginalizing those that are not.

Black, White, and Green is one of the first books to carefully theorize the green economy, to examine the racial dynamics of food politics, and to approach issues of food access from an environmental-justice perspective. In a practical sense, Alkon offers an empathetic critique of a newly popular strategy for social change, highlighting both its strengths and limitations.

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