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## **Eating Garbage: Freegans versus Consumer Culture**

Freeganism directly confronts capitalist structures that result in a food system that has 50% of the world's food supply is wasted between field and fork (Lundqvist, et. al., 2008) along every stage of the supply chain. In response to high food waste levels, Freegans (loosely organizing in North American and British cities) choose to live off of a portion of this waste – dumpster dine – rather than consume newly purchased food. More specifically, Freegans scavenge through local food market dumpsters to gather edible food that has been thrown away, an action typically understood as only undertaken by the most destitute in society. However, Freegans undertake this action by choice, not as a result of economic circumstances for the purpose of protesting against the waste central to commodified food. These actions directly protest a wasteful food system and problematize food discourses that tell us “you are what you eat”. While this common phrase would have eating garbage being directly linked to being metaphorically garbage, a lived reality for those forced to consume the waste of others, Freegans use this activity to directly protest profit motive definitions of food quality and edibility. Beginning with this dilemma between destitution and political act, this paper will present preliminary findings from my dissertation research with Toronto Freegans to detail the cultural and discursive ramifications of this radical food choice.