

Before last summer, I never imagined that hunger issues could exist in New York City. Had you asked me to define issues tied to food and hunger, my mind would quickly think of global issues such as food scarcity and availability; problems that could only exist in a third world country and not in a metropolis. Working with the Mary Mitchell Center in the South Bronx opened my eyes to the food issues that affect so many and seem to be unheard of.

Working in a team (four students), our job was to help the Mary Mitchell Center, a community center providing after school programs, summer camps, martial arts classes and countless more services to their neighborhood, alleviate the effects of the food desert they found themselves in. The problem wasn't the lack of food in the area but rather the availability of the right food; sugary drinks had overrun fresh produce, neon colored chip bags and the all-too-convenient dollar menu.

It was a crash course of new terminology from the first day onwards; food justice, food access, sustainability, organic farming — the list kept growing. The manner of combating the problem was to create a nonprofit business, a community delivery system of fresh produce and whole grains at a competitive price. After a summer of research, trips to New York's Hunts Point and meeting with community advisors we determined what the Mary Mitchell Center could do. Our final deliverable was La Canasta, a business providing healthy food to the community.

-Betanzos, Jorge, "For the Win: Erasing Hunger at Home. Obama White House Archives" (2012) excerpt.