Radical History of School Meals

1890s-1946: The first wave of non-profit school meal organizing

1930s

- 1933-1939 The New Deal: provided free food & free labor from the federal government
- 1/3 of 5 million drafted during WWII were rejected due to effects of childhood malnutrition

1939-1945 WWII

1929-1938 The Great Depression

1943

Ellen Swallow Richards led vision for a nonprofit school lunch program!

1914-1918 WWI

Progressive Era School Lunch

1890s

Reformers:

- Ellen Swallow Richards
- Emma Smedly
- Caroline Hunt

"Penny Lunch"
programs

 Investment of free food & labor from the government to non-profit school lunch programs stopped due to war investment needs of food & labor

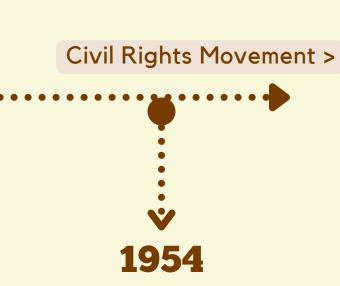
 Coalition formed asking Congress to enact a bill that would guarantee federal support for school lunches

1946

National School Lunch
Program (NSLP)

Act Passes!

 American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) formed



Brown vs. Board of Education:

Source: The Labor of Lunch

Federal Policy

Grassroots Activism "right-to-lunch"

Radical History of School Meals 1960s & 1970s: A time of large social & racial change in the US

- 1962 School lunch appropriation formula revised to account for participation & poverty by state
- 1964 Food Stamp Act & Economic **Opportunity Act**
- 1966 Special Milk Program (SMP)
- 1968 NYC public schools invest in 367 elementary "frozen food" kitchens

- 1966 Child Nutrition Act (CNA)
 - instates 'free' lunch bracket
 - 1968 funded
 - 1970 uniform eligibility set

- 1970 USDA overturns rule to allow forprofit management companies to outsource school lunch operations
- 1975 USDA begins free breakfast program
- 1979 Participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) reached a peak with an average of 27 million lunches served per day

1971-1976 USDA Secretary Earl Butz: "cornification" of American Food System

1/2 of public schools participate in NSLP, reports of poor children unable to afford & access lunch

1960s

1954-1968 Civil Rights Movement

1970s

- 1966-1975 **National** Welfare Rights **Organization (NWRO)** brought together 25,000 mostly black mothers to take on local, state, and federal government for rights to school lunch for their children
- 1967 Committee on School Lunch Participation (CSLP) formed uniting woman across race & religion to tackle the "food justice problem" in NSLP
 - Printed Daily Bread publication to release findings of widespread discrimination and racism under NSLP
 - Asked for universal free meals USDA rejected and only funded meals for the poor = means tested social welfare program

- 1968 Poor People's Campaign (PPC) led by Dr. Martin Luther King called for free lunch
- 1969 Black Panther Party (BPP) start Free **Breakfast for Children** Program all 45 chapter cities

1970 - ASFSA starts "Feed them All" universal free school meal lobby initiative

Source: The Labor of Lunch

Radical History of School Meals

1980s to **NOW**

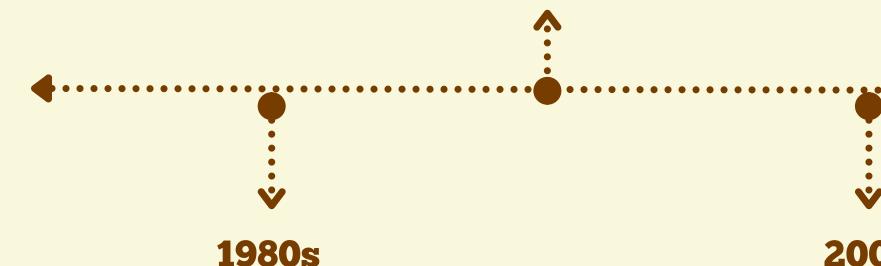
1990s

- 1994, the "Healthy Meals for Americans Act" reinforced established nutrition standards for the NSLP and School Breakfast Programs
- Less federal support, school lunches became increasingly privatized

2020

Covid-19 Pandemic

- 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic
 - Alarming spikes in childhood hunger. Especially impacting communities of color.
 - USDA-issued waivers have enabled schools to serve free school meals to all their students during COVID-19.
 - Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) issued to students/families



- 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (cuts funding, increases regulations)
- 1982 nearly 3,000 schools dropped out of the NSLP as a result of budget cuts. Decline continues until 1989

2000s

- 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) reauthorized numerous child nutrition programs until 2015 - \$0.06 increase
- Changes to the Direct Certification process to increase access
- Establishes the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to increase access

2020's cont

- 2021 HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL passes in Maine, maintaining Universal Free Meals permanently
- 2023 <u>LA Unified School District</u>
 <u>Cafeteria Workers strike along side</u>
 <u>service worker union with support of</u>
 <u>teachers and win 30% wage increases</u>

Source: The Labor of Lunch