

## The Fight against Hunger: Confronting Everyone's Responsibility

It would be a rush to claim that there is such one practical way to fight hunger in society. Hunger is one of the oldest societal problems in the world. It is amazing to see that though people get accustomed to see that hunger problem takes place elsewhere in the world, it can be easily found around the corner. West Alabama, for example, is not an exception from this problem. I used to think that the United States was free from problems commonly found in the Third World countries. At least so does it seem from an outsider's point of view such as mine. However, it is not the case. In fact, hunger can be found just in our very backyard. During an on-campus poetry reading which I participated in one day, I was struck by the very purpose of the reading: food donation in Alabama. A program proved that there was, and has always been, an underlying problem in one of the modern societies in the world: hunger. Although a variety of food drive program and other forms of practical initiatives against hunger have helped improve the increasing concern of hunger, hunger will not be effectively eradicated unless the real cause of hunger is resolved.

One of the constant variables of hunger in a society may be seen in terms of food distribution, which implies not only the agricultural resources available in a region, but also the effectiveness of food distribution in the region. *The American Rural Health Association and the National Rural Health Care Association* defines the term "food insecurity" to describe U. S. households' incapability to get enough food for family members, which is mostly found in poor rural areas of the Deep South (Stuff, et al., 2004). The research goes on to say that poor, rural families have very limited access to grocery stores and that a family's incapability of providing enough food at home may certainly relate to poverty. Poverty, a significant factor in a capitalistic society such as ours, restricts people from acquiring access to not only food, but also reliable jobs, better education, and appropriate health care. In addition, hungry children lose important nutrition to support their developing body and are prone to diseases. The study specifically states that "children from food-insecure households also are more likely to show behavioral, emotional, and academic problems" (p. 177). Consequently, there is a series of repercussion complicating the problem of hunger in society, which we should take this problem seriously from the beginning.

Second, hunger in society is one implication of capitalism and class. When a certain number of people are unemployed, they will not be able to provide for their family. I visited a Tuscaloosa library during a Read-for-A-Child last year and found out that parents had sent their children in the area to such school programs even during their school breaks just to get the children fed at school. Even when employment rate is sufficient, the question continues on the quality of work available and the range of salary received. Alabama minimum wage is among the lowest in the country, and it has not changed for a long time. In today's dilemma of increasing gasoline price, how would a household earner justify his or her household income going mostly to the gasoline for the car he or she uses to go to work? Tuscaloosa city provides very minimum means of public transportation. It certainly will not help working class residents to go about doing their jobs.

Third, education reform must be critically observed and effectively carried out to prepare future generation for better jobs and opportunities to lead a better life. Although it is true that public education is available to nurture the intellectual needs of society right from childhood, without collaboration among schools, community outreach programs, and commitment from Corporate America to care about the future of younger generation an educational success will not

### Reference

Stuff, J. et al. (2004) "High Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger in Households in the Rural Lower Mississippi Delta." in *the Journal of the American Rural Health Association and the National Rural Health Care Association*. Vol.20, 2, 2004, pp. 173-180.

ever take place. First of all, it is only a myth that education reaches the four corners of the country. We should not even be surprised to learn that some adults in this day and age are illiterate. Access to education is as important as putting the food on the table every day. A child's rights for education will eventually set him or her free from intellectual insecurity, which therefore grants him or her more options in life. One of the options certainly is not to go to bed hungry at the end of the day.

In spite of everything, what could we, as able-bodied, privileged human beings aware of hunger problem occurring in our society, do to show that we are willing to take an active part in fighting against hunger? There is a saying that we should think globally but act locally. Accelerating hunger awareness by implementation of food programs across West Alabama which some groups have been doing could be a great way to sustain. In the University of Alabama, for example, food donation drives have been organized all over campus. I notice that canned food donation is now part of contribution from guests at social functions. Integrating creative performances with charity events to promote fight against hunger would also be considered excellent way to channel our intellectual and academic achievements into an action showing commitment to community. After participating in two public readings for food drive on campus, I have not heard such a program alike anymore since. It would be a good idea, for instance, if the Theater and Dance Department could throw one night performance with all proceeds going to feeding hungry children in West Alabama. Lately, the University's *SPIRIT* campaign has been very successful in promoting opportunities for students struggling to pay for their education to get scholarship in order for them complete their study. Campaigns like this could be extended to fight against hunger. If one could spare \$2 for participating in *SPIRIT* campaign, certainly one could afford an extra \$2 for helping to feed hungry children. Student organizations on campus could encourage their members to allocate portions of their activities to help with the UA Community Service Center and the West Alabama Food Bank. Religious communities could also participate in giving West Alabama community food supplies. Most of all, people who are food-deprived need our undivided compassion and commitment. Children should have their attention away from noticing that there is no food at home. Children should never hear their parents argue about not getting enough money to buy food. Finally, children should never even think that hunger is part of their lives and that there is nothing they can do about it. Working class adults should have the opportunities to learn extra skills to better prepare them for more competitive job market. Adults should also discover that there is a way out of hunger. Our continued compassion toward the unfortunate people and our consistent commitment to push regional and national assessment for hunger problem in the country should be materialized in order to eradicate hunger from the face of the earth.

In conclusion, food drives and other forms of coalition against hunger have always been and will be a relief from some tension of this particular problem of hunger in society. In addition, the rise of awareness among scholars, local communities and authorities, and people from a variety of religious and social associations actually helps society learn better about its own problems and have a new respect for food. Hunger may seem to be under the radar for many people, especially those already with so much comfort in their lives. Such comfort and material indulgence factor in our ignorance to the underlying problems within society. Therefore, unless those underlying problems, namely food distribution, employment and education are resolved, practical solutions to hunger seems so far away.

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