All About Food

To Address Hunger, Address Poverty

Sergio Hyland

More than 46 million Americans are currently living in poverty. Some define poverty in terms of wealth and material possessions, or the lack thereof. But people experience poverty in terms of insecurity—such as the likelihood of going to bed hungry, of waking up hungry, of deciding whether or not to spend this month’s paycheck on electricity or food. That’s poverty.

Poverty Getting Worse

While politicians speak about the need to feed America’s hungry, they hypocritically allow hunger to get worse—mainly, by making it possible for poverty to get worse. For example:

• Corporate profits have soared in the past 5 years, but those profits have not been put back into the economy where they might create good jobs for people. Without jobs, people aren’t going to have enough money for food.

• Since the 1970s, real wages have gone down or stayed flat. Even if you work full time earning minimum wage, you still might not have enough to feed your family.

• Government programs don’t go far enough in combatting hunger. According to the USDA, in 2012, “An estimated 14.5 percent of American households were food insecure.”

Where Is the Public Debate?

You might think there would be some public debate about these blatant immoralities. Maybe some people are talking about these problems, but those stories are lost among the more “important” stories, such as the octopus that uses its tentacles to predict the outcome of the ball games! Invariably, the only people fighting against hunger 24/7 are those suffering from it.

What does it say about a nation that, on the one hand, lets a good portion of its children be “food insecure” but, on the other hand, gives away thousands of dollars in prize money to the person who can gorge himself with the most hotdogs in the fewest minutes?

People Need a Fair Chance

What makes this issue even more problematic is the false perception that by “giving away” food to the poor, the government is somehow enabling and encouraging dependency. This idea is rooted in capitalist propaganda, which says that every individual, if they try hard enough, can make it to the top. Yes, some may not try very hard or they might take advantage of the system. But they are the exception. In reality, people want to be able to provide for themselves. There’s a certain kind of pride that comes along with earning a living. But people need a fair chance.

Just think about it. How close are you to going hungry? If some unforeseen and unfortunate event occurred and you lost your job, where would your next meal come from?

This problem has a solution. America is the wealthiest nation on earth. It has the resources to stop hunger, but it doesn’t have the political will. We all must get involved in the fight against poverty and extreme inequality. If we address poverty, we’ll be addressing the root cause of hunger.

The next time you feel that pain in your stomach, think not simply of satisfying it, but also remember those who may not have that “privilege.”

What can you do to make a difference?

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