



Witnesses to Hunger: Advocating from Firsthand Experience

In the United States 45 million people live in food insecure households, defined as the lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy life. In 2012, 8.1 million children were at risk of hunger. Despite the high rates of food insecurity, the participation of those experiencing hunger is lacking in the development and administration of policies and programs related to nutrition and poverty. Those with firsthand experiences with hunger and poverty are the true experts who can offer solutions to policymakers.

The women and men of *WITNESSES TO HUNGER* are parents and caregivers of young children. They are actively making our democracy function as they call for systems change to break the cycle of poverty. Advocating on behalf of themselves and their children, Witnesses work through their own photography, testimony and expert advising. They offer solutions and demand public accountability.



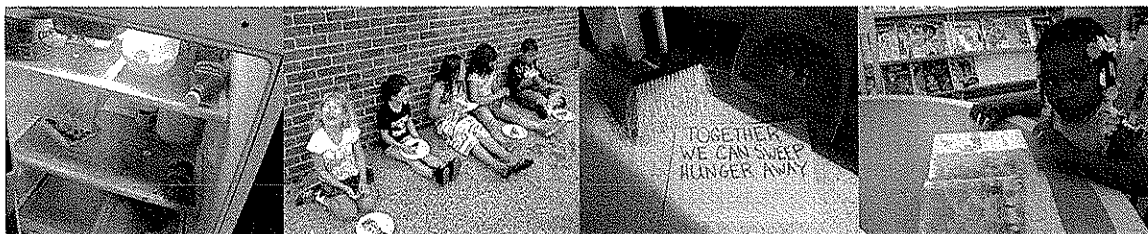
The Problem: High rates of hunger & poverty

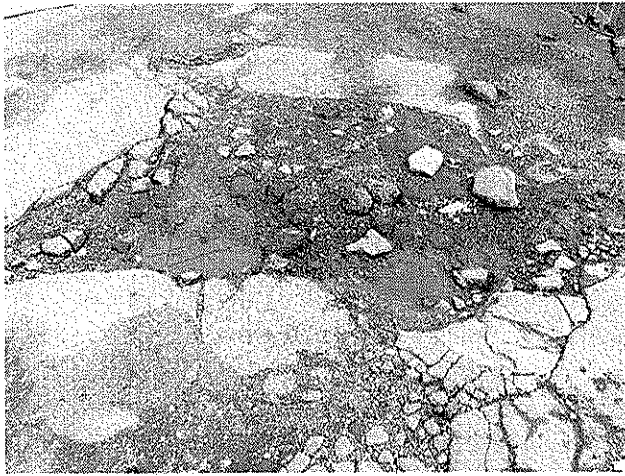
- 15% of Americans are living in poverty
- 1 out of every 4 children under 5 lives in poverty
- 12.2% of children under 5 live in extreme poverty
- 45 million Americans are food insecure
- 17 million children are food insecure
- 9 million infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are food insecure

The Solution: Families advocate on their own behalf

People who have experienced hunger and poverty must be part of the national dialogue when strategies and policies to address those issues are crafted and debated. Policies that members of Witnesses to Hunger advocate for include:

- Improve and increase access to nutrition assistance programs
- Ensure families have safe, stable and affordable housing
- Increase wages so families can move from benefit programs to self-sufficiency
- Expand educational opportunities that lead to living wages

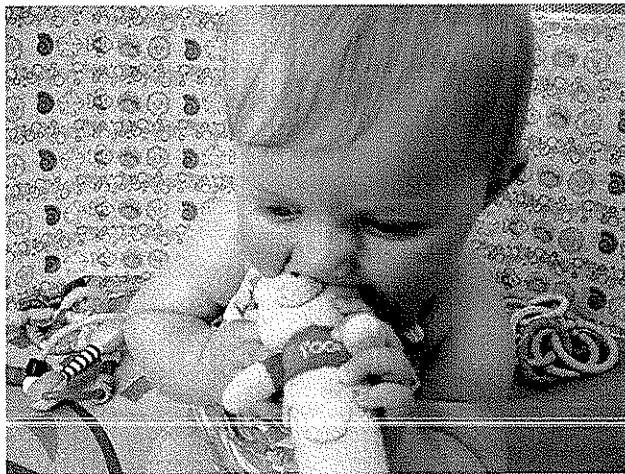




Don't See the Good

"There are potholes everywhere. You can't have a new car out here. If you have a new car, your shocks and struts are going to go. Then at the end of the winter, they will take a tar truck and just fill the holes in and then next year it'll be the same way. They say they're using our tax money for the good. I don't see the good."

- Damaris A., Witnesses to Hunger, Camden



Nutrition Makes a Difference

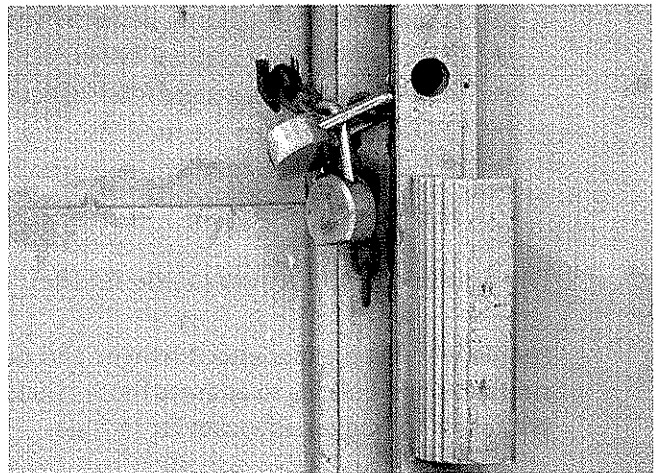
"I ate really healthy when I was pregnant with her, with the help of WIC. I think there was a difference in her health because of the nutrition that I had gotten with her. I had poor health with my older children because of the unhealthy food I ate during my pregnancy, and it made a difference. WIC made a difference. Receiving WIC for the first year of her life helped her to be a healthy baby who has a good immune system and great developmental skills."

- Margaret M., Witnesses to Hunger, Baltimore

Yet I'm Still in a Shelter

"There are a lot of abandoned buildings around here, a few every couple blocks. And yet I'm still living in a shelter. I might be there for up to a year. I can't live with my mom anymore; my mom has five kids at home... plus me and my son made seven. And she's struggling herself. We barely had food. We had a fridge full of food maybe one week out of a month."

- Ilesha M., Witnesses to Hunger, Boston



Together on the Stoop

"With what we get from welfare, it's enough to live off of but it's not enough to do anything to make our environment safer for our children... The jobs that I need I can't get because I need an education. But I'm held back, I'm at a standstill."

- Christina K., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia

The Search Continues

"I spent three and a half months in a shelter with my two children and then I got my apartment. The crazy thing about it is that I still have to do house searches and job searches to qualify for welfare, even though I have a job and an apartment. My caseworker says that I have to look for something that I can afford. All the housing that's low-income is like a year waiting list or more. I'm on the list through Section 8 and I went over there today and they told me that I might not get called for three years, maybe five."

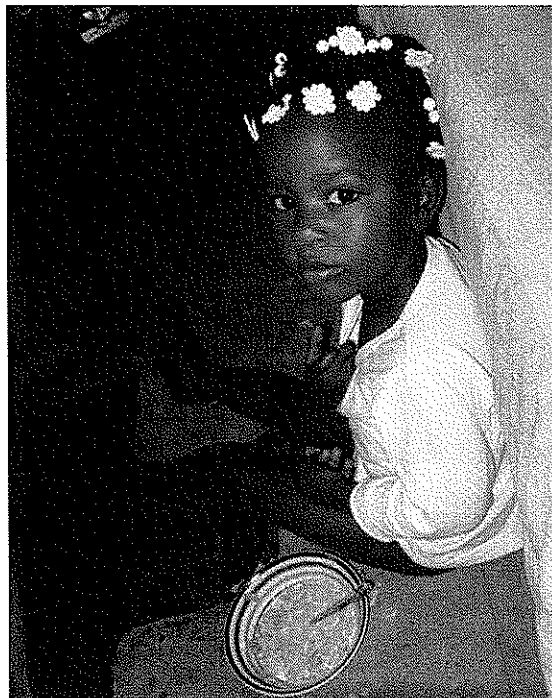
- Kathy, Witnesses to Hunger, Camden

10/1/12	Pennsauken Housing Authority	No Answer	683-2514	836	
10/1/12	Ardenwood Towers	No Answer	346-5535	838	
10/1/12	Barrytown Court	No Answer	809-246	836	
10/1/12	Christen	Not Working	718-9919	836	
10/1/12	Daystar	Not Working	714-9919	836	
10/1/12	Spring Ave	No Answer	456-0759	836	
10/1/12	Tanner Ave	No Answer	671-755	836	
10/1/12	Franklin	No Answer	344-3255	836	
10/1/12	Boyle Court	Williams	511-000	836	No App
10/1/12	1047 N. 11th St	No Answer	482-2150	836	
10/1/12	Harmon House	No Answer	541-9287	836	
10/1/12	John Wesley Lodge	No Answer	541-2111	836	

Needle in the playground

"I take my son there, that's the cleanest park in the neighborhood. That's a needle and that's a little boy's feet. You have to be with them at all times, making sure and inspecting. Something needs to get done because the kids are just going out and seeing everything from the environment. They learn from that."

- Crystal R., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



Breakfast

"With the money food stamps provide, I was able to feed her breakfast that morning. Without it what would she have eaten? I wanted to show that with the help she was able to eat breakfast that morning. She had cereal. She had milk. She didn't have to go without."

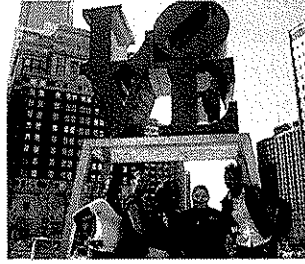
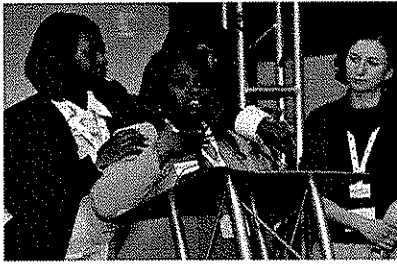
- Crystal S., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



I Want my Children to Be Safe

"I want my kids away from the city. But it's not easy to save money with a low income. Every day all your money is going towards things you need. You don't get money to save. But I need them to learn that there is more out there than life on the streets."

- Christina K., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



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The Boston Globe

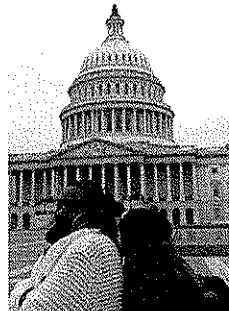
Photos from the front lines of hunger displayed at State House to spur action

By Kay Lazar, Globe Staff

What does hunger look like?

For one mother in Boston, it's a receiver with a bag of peanut sprouts and little else -- to feed a family of six.

Eight women in Greater Boston who live with hunger and poverty while raising their children were armed with cameras over the past year to photograph their daily experiences.



in plain sight
poverty in america

'All you can do is pray': What poverty in America really looks like

PHOTO BY KAY LAZAR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE





DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Center for

Hunger-Free Communities

The Center for Hunger-Free Communities, founded in 2004, is a research, advocacy and policy center of Drexel University School of Public Health that engages in multi-faceted research and action with the goal of developing innovative, empirically-tested solutions to the challenges of hunger and economic insecurity. Hunger is a product of low wages, joblessness, poor housing, violence and lack of educational opportunities. We work across the nation and in Philadelphia's communities to ensure policies and programs help treat and prevent hunger.

Our Mission and Vision

The Center works with partners from public and private organizations, universities and the community to:

- Find science-based solutions to hunger and economic insecurity;
- Report on and monitor the health consequences of poverty and hunger;
- Engage those who have experienced poverty as full partners in developing research, programs and policies that work;
- Establish and support opportunities for an on-going national dialogue on poverty.

We envision a world where children born today will inherit a nation free from hunger; a nation where all members of the community partner to keep families economically secure; and a nation where all people have an equal voice in policies that affect their lives.

Our Core Activities

In affiliation with the Drexel University School of Public Health, the Center for Hunger-Free Communities brings together the work of the following programs:

- **Witnesses to Hunger**, a groundbreaking research and advocacy project featuring the voices and photography of parents and caregivers of young children who have experienced hunger and poverty firsthand. The photographs, along with the parent's life stories, have been exhibited throughout the country, offering living testimony to the need for legislation that eliminates poverty and hunger in the United States. The parents also work to encourage more civic engagement in their own communities and in neighborhoods across the country. Project sites include: Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Camden.
- **Children's HealthWatch**, a multi-site research effort that is assessing how public policy affects the food security, development and health of very young children. The Center for Hunger-Free Communities coordinates the Philadelphia site of Children's HealthWatch, which includes pediatricians and public health researchers who monitor child health from the front lines of pediatric care and use their research to inform policy.
- **Building Wealth and Health Network** is an emerging research study that develops a new model of public benefits and microfinance that will leverage participants' own strengths to become financially self-sufficient. The study is an official TANF demonstration project that aims to build financial, social and human capital through three program components: 1) asset-building through matched savings, 2) financial literacy education and 3) trauma-informed peer support groups. In partnership with the PA's Department of Public Welfare, the project will run for five years beginning in 2014.

Witnesses to Hunger

Witnesses to Hunger, a program of the Center for Hunger-Free Communities, partners with the real experts on hunger – the parents and caregivers of young children who have first-hand experience with hunger and poverty. The members of Witnesses to Hunger share their expertise and create change through their roles as **photographers, educators and advocates, and advisors.**

All too often, policies and programs to address hunger and poverty are created without the participation of the people who are most affected. Witnesses to Hunger seeks to increase the participation and inclusion of low-income community members in the development of programs and policies to address hunger and poverty in the United States.

Witnesses to Hunger incorporates three key activities:

Photography:

Participants in Witnesses to Hunger take photographs to show the human experience of hunger and poverty and their ideas for change.



Education and Advocacy:

They speak out about their own experiences with hunger and poverty to educate the public, the media, and policymakers, and to improve policies and programs on a local, state, and national level.



Advisory:

They advise organizations by sharing their personal experiences, connections, and stories in order to improve programs and advocacy for those who experience hunger and poverty.



For More Information:

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Center for Hunger-Free Communities



HungerFreeCtr



HungerFreeCtr

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Recommendation from Witnesses to Hunger

Witnesses to Hunger

The moms and dads of Witnesses to Hunger are the true experts when it comes to child nutrition programs as many of them and their children rely on the programs.

Knowing the importance of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, the members of Witnesses to Hunger share their expertise on the programs that impact the lives of their children and families.



Photo: Whitney H., Philadelphia

Below are recommendations from members of Witnesses to Hunger on how to strengthen the programs under review in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Ensure the Payment Process Updates Continue

- Update the WIC payment method to an electric benefits card, making it easier for mothers and young children to access WIC foods, protect program integrity, and achieve economies and efficiencies in the delivery of serves. Encourage states to continue with the transition prior to the 2020 deadline.

*"While on WIC I almost always had healthy cereal to eat. And when my son was diagnosed with lactose intolerance, I was not able to afford his milk but WIC covered it."
- Quanda B., Boston*

Increase Produce Allotment

- Increase the \$6 allotment to purchase fruits and vegetable for children.

Offer More as Kids Get Older

- Cover children *up to their sixth birthday* to ensure all kids on WIC would transition smoothly to being eligible for school lunch and breakfast. Currently, WIC covers children up to their fifth birthday. Many times the fifth birthday cut-off puts kids who are not yet attending school at a nutritional disadvantage.

School Breakfast and Lunch

Improve Accessibility

- Increase the number of children directly certified for no-cost school meals based on their participation in other means-tested programs.
- Encourage school districts to support additional ways to serve breakfast, including breakfast after the bell and grab-and-go options.
- Expand meal eligibility so that children from households with incomes up to 185 percent of the national poverty line can receive meals at no charge.



Photo: Christina K., Philadelphia

Improve Food Quality

- Offer a healthy variety of foods based on scientific knowledge that meets high quality nutrition standards.

Provide More Time for Meals

- Encourage schools to allow students more time to eat their meals to ensure less plate waste.

*"If my children can't bring lunch that day, I know they will get a healthy lunch and breakfast at school."
- Tianna G., Philadelphia*

Offer Nutrition Education

- Fund nutrition education for all child nutrition programs so as to provide children at all stages of growth and development with the skills necessary to make lifelong healthy choices.

Summer Food Service Program

Improve Accessibility

- Improve the area eligibility test by lowering it from 50 percent to 40 percent, allowing more low-income communities to participate in the program.
- Provide low-income families with children who receive no- and low- cost meals during the school year with an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card with additional funds for the summer to purchase meals.



Photo: Damaris A., Camden

Improve Food Quality and Quantity

- Serve up to three nutritionally balanced meals a day at summer feeding sites.

Accommodate Food Allergies

- Ensure policies take into consideration children with food allergies.

*"Children in food insecure families can get two meals a day and continue to eat healthy even when school is out."
- Nia T., Camden*

For more information about Witnesses to Hunger and their thoughts on the Child Nutrition Authorization and other issues around hunger and poverty, contact Kate Scully at kate.scully@drexel.edu or visit www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org.

