



THEATRICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

a PLACE AT THE TABLE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY





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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed for people who want to use the documentary *A Place at the Table* as a springboard for meaningful discussion and action to address the urgency of hunger in the United States.

Fifty million people in the US—including one in four children—don't always know where their next meal is coming from. In the film, directors Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush examine the issue of hunger in America through the lens of three people struggling with food insecurity: Barbie, a single Philadelphia mother who grew up in poverty and is trying to provide a better life for her two kids; Rosie, a Colorado fifth-grader who often has to depend on friends and neighbors to feed her; and Tremonica, a Mississippi second-grader whose asthma and health issues are exacerbated by the largely empty calories her hardworking mother can afford.

The following questions open up opportunities for people to explore the economic, social and cultural implications of hunger for our nation, and move people to take steps toward making healthy and affordable food accessible to all.

"Hunger: it's right here in the United States. It could be right next door and you would never know because people are too afraid to talk about it."

-Barbie Izquierdo

Barbie on the swings. Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

- According to the film, one in six Americans says they don't always have enough to eat. Were you aware that hunger was such a big problem in the US?
- Was there a character whose story you found particularly moving? How so?
- Have you or someone close to you ever struggled to put food on the table? How do/did you deal with that? Where did you turn for help?
- What did you learn from the film that you didn't know already? Has it changed your perspective in any way? If so, how?



**"One in six people in the United States is struggling with food insecurity. One out of every two kids in the United States at some point in their childhood will be on food assistance."
-Bill Shore, Executive Director,
Share our Strength**

GOING DEEPER

Hunger in America



85% of families that are food insecure have at least **one working adult** in the household. **Do you find that surprising? Why or why not?**

Rosie. Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

- In the film we learn that in the '60s, there was huge push to end childhood hunger that resulted in free breakfast and lunch programs, senior meal programs and the expansion of food stamps. As a result, by the late '70s, hunger was basically eradicated. Why do you think hunger has come back as such a pressing issue in our country? Based on what you know about our country's relationship with food security, do you think ending hunger is a possibility today?
- Both Trish Casey (Rosie's mother) and Barbie Izquierdo are working mothers who were forced to apply for food stamps, only to be turned down. According to Barbie, she was denied assistance: "because I was \$2 over the income limit, I was not eligible for even \$1 in food stamps." Were you aware that so many working people struggle with food security? What do you think are some potential solutions to help families feed themselves on small budgets?

Hunger and Poverty

- In the film, David Beckman, executive director of Bread of the World, explains that "in our country we put a lot of emphasis on self-reliance, on everybody fending for themselves, liberty . . . those are all great strengths, but as a nation it has not been our strength to do what we can to reduce poverty." What do you think he means by this statement? Do you agree or disagree? How do you think poverty has implications on things like economic competitiveness or national security, if at all?
- Barbie Izquierdo says that she grew up without enough food: *"All my life I know what it's like to eat Oodles of Noodles seven days a week, three, four times a day cause that's all we had . . . When I had my children I said I would never, ever let them taste it . . . but life brings you situations . . . it's up to you to be able to deal with it."* How do you think food security is related to the cyclical nature of poverty? In what ways do you think Barbie's childhood of insufficient food affected her ability to provide healthy food options for her own children?
- Rhee explains that she has to drive 45 minutes from her small town in Mississippi to reach a fully stocked grocery store, and Barbie has to travel over an hour each way on a bus. How far do you have to travel to reach a grocery store? How do you think proximity changes eating choices and behaviors?

Visit the **USDA Food Desert Locator**, an interactive map



Go to: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-desert-locator.aspx>

Hunger and Health

- One in three children born in the year 2000 will develop Type 2 diabetes. What are some of the factors shown in the film that add to the reasons why diet-related illness is increasing in young people at such an unprecedented level? What are some potential solutions to help slow down the rampant numbers of childhood diabetes?
- Dr. Booker explains that diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes, which are exacerbated by obesity, are a growing concern among children. He sees education as the only solution and that it needs to start "very early on." What are some examples from the film of ways that young people are being educated in their community about the importance of eating healthy food?
- As the film shows, Barbie's son Aiden experiences developmental delays because of poor nutrition. Many children like him don't have the adequate nutrition to support reasonable growth and development. Think about the children in your own community who are struggling with these very problems. What steps can you, your church, or your public officers take to better meet the needs of these children?
- Marion Nestle explains that "we are spending \$20 billion a year on agricultural subsidies for the wrong food." If you had \$20 billion to address food production, what would you do with it?

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For action ideas and additional information on how you can take your place in the fight to end hunger, visit WWW.TAKEPART.COM/TABLE or text **FOOD** to **77177**