

Book List for Hunger Action Month from “Facing Hunger in America:”

Edin, Kathryn and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Mariner Books, 2016. Jessica Compton’s family of four would have no cash income unless she donated plasma twice a week at her local donation center in Tennessee. Modonna Harris and her teenage daughter Brianna in Chicago often have no food but spoiled milk on weekends. After two decades of brilliant research on American poverty, Kathryn Edin noticed something she hadn’t seen since the mid-1990s – households surviving on virtually no income have skyrocketed to 1.5 million American households, including about 3 million children. The authors illuminate a troubling trend: a low-wage labor market that increasingly fails to deliver a living wage, and a growing but hidden landscape of survival strategies among America’s extreme poor.

Berg, Joel. *All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008. With the biting wit of *Supersize Me* and the passion of a lifelong activist, Joel Berg has his eye on the growing number of people who are forced to wait on lines at food pantries across the nation—the modern breadline. *All You Can Eat* reveals that hunger is a problem as American as apple pie, and shows what it is like when your income is not enough to cover rising housing and living costs and put food on the table. He challenges the new president to confront the most unthinkable result of US poverty—hunger—and offers a simple and affordable plan to end it for good.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001. A highly recommended classic which chronicles the author’s experiences supporting herself in 3 locations (Florida, Maine, and Minnesota) at low-wage jobs such as waitress, house cleaner, and big box retail salesperson. Work was exhausting, psychologically demeaning, and anxiety-ridden; it required her and her co-workers to eat poorly, neglect their health, live in substandard housing, and live only a car-repair’s distance away from homelessness. Ehrenreich’s powerful conclusion is this: that for those of us more comfortably-off “the appropriate emotion is shame—shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others. ... To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else.” (page 221)

Winne, Mark. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008. (You can read excerpts here: <http://www.markwinne.com/excerpts-from-closing-the-food-gap/>) This book is chock full of the author’s first-hand experiences and lessons learned from decades of work to improve community food systems, from community gardens, farmers’ markets, and community supported agriculture to the history of public responses to the problems of hunger and food-related disease.

Miles, Sara. *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*. Chicago: Ballantine Books, 2008. This book chronicles the author’s painful, challenging, and rewarding experiences as she discovers Christianity, starts a food pantry, and welcomes everyone to be served. We were moved by words Sara used to introduce the idea to the congregation: “Because of how I’ve been welcomed and fed in the Eucharist, I see starting a food pantry at church not as an act of ‘outreach’ but one of gratitude. To feed others means acknowledging our own hunger and at the same time acknowledging the amazing abundance we’re fed with by God.” (p. 116)

Hudson, Helen. *Dinner at six: Voices from the soup kitchen*. Balgowlah: Wildfire Press, 2002. This book compiles life stories told to the author (a regular volunteer at a soup kitchen) by people who came to that soup kitchen for meals. Readers see the diners first through the eyes of the volunteer, and then in their own words. Their stories are full of tragedy, transience, and physical and psychological challenges. Yet their humanity shines through and reminds you of the crucial role soup kitchens play in their lives.

Top 10 Books to Help Kids Understand Hunger: <http://letslassothemoon.com/2012/09/13/book-on-hunger/>