

Hunger News & Hope

... a Seeds of Hope publication

Poverty in America

*Census Report Shows Record Number of Poor;
Middle & Lower Incomes Hit Hardest*

The US Census Bureau reported last September that 2.6 million people slipped into poverty during 2010, raising the number of impoverished people in the US to 46.2 million. The bureau reported that this was the highest number of people living below the poverty line (\$22,413 for a family of four) in its 52-year history of publishing such figures.

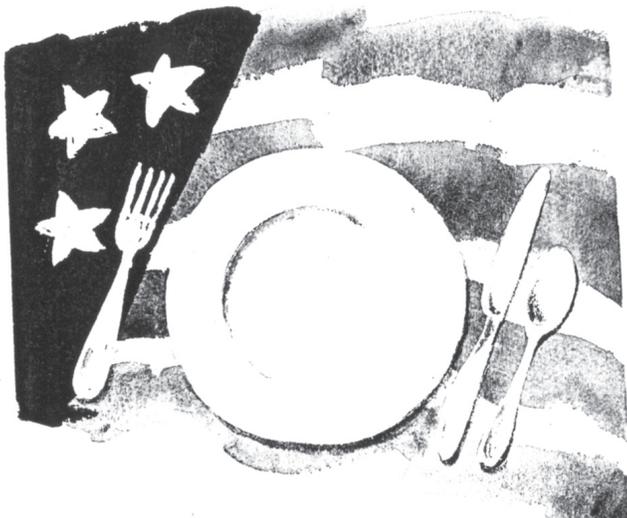
The report shows new signs of distress among the middle class. Economists are concerned over the fact that the median household income, adjusted for inflation, has not risen since 1996. The *New York Times* reported that the bureau's findings were worse than many economists expected.

The findings indicated that the so-called Great Recession, which began in late 2007, and the economic crises of the past four years, have taken the worst toll on the US middle- and lower-income groups.

To make matters worse, the recent, slight economic recovery has not helped those income groups. In fact, the economic recovery at the turn of the 21st century seems to have benefited only those on the highest end of the scale. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the period from 2001 to 2007 was the first recovery on record where the level of poverty was deeper, and median income of working-age people was lower, at the end than at the beginning.

The bureau's report shows that the past decade, now being called "The Lost Decade," has been marked by an increasingly alarming gap between the very top and very bottom of the income ladder. A record number of people in the US fell into "deep poverty," which is defined as

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Jobless in Austin

by Rebecca LaFlure

For two decades, Richard Billingsley devoted his life to serving others. But when he was laid off from his job at a domestic violence hotline in 2008, the Austin, TX, resident became the one in need of help.

"I love working in human services and helping people, but I just needed help myself," said Billingsley, an Army veteran with a master's degree in counseling and psychology. "It put me on the other side of the table."

Billingsley, 55, is one of millions of Americans whose lives have been adversely affected by the recession that began in December 2007. A Pew Research Center study released Sept. 24, 2010, found that 55 percent of Americans experienced a variety of difficulties due to the economic downturn, such as unemployment, pay cuts and missed mortgage or rent payments.

An estimated 26 percent of employed Americans were out of work at some point during the recession, according to a Pew survey conducted in May 2010, and they were more likely to feel overqualified at their current jobs.

Many people, like Billingsley, are still feeling the effects of a down economy. Billingsley could not find another job for two years and was forced to withdraw money from his savings and retirement accounts to survive. He worried about what would happen if he got sick, had a heart attack or needed surgery. How would he pay the hospital bills without health insurance?

"A lot of people over the years have expressed frustration with the system," he said. Now, he says, "I certainly see that."

Seeking financial stability, he went to truck-driving school and received his commercial driver's license in July 2010. He was hired to work for a large trucking company a month later. But six weeks into the job, Billingsley said it became apparent that he would have to remain in training for much longer than expected.

"The economy was still so slow that we didn't have much work," he said. "They made a promise to me that I would only be in training for so long. I couldn't live on what they were paying me for training."

Living out of a truck and unable to get by on such low wages, he left the trucking company and eventually found a job as a driver for Capital Metro Transit. Though Billingsley is thankful to have a steady paycheck, he still struggles to pay his bills.

Billingsley is not alone in his search for steady work since the recession. Andrew Lippert, a 48-year-old living in Cedar Park, TX, an Austin suburb, said he never had trouble finding a job until he got laid off as a technician at an energy management company in January 2009.

"I could walk into a place or move anywhere and usually have a job within one to three days, a week at the most," Lippert said of life before the economic downturn. "I figured I would be able to find work quickly."

Within two months, he got a contract job at a friend's roofing company, but the company began to suffer from the slow housing market. Soon Lippert found himself out of work for a second time.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate was 9 percent in October 2011, compared with 10.1 percent two years before. However, the unemployment rate is still more than 4 percentage points higher than it was before the recession began.

He now delivers pizzas part-time at Pizza Hut and works a number of odd jobs. However, they don't begin to adequately support his wife and their four live-in children.

"Financially," he said, "I'm totally struggling."

Billingsley and Lippert have undergone significant lifestyle changes since the recession began. Lippert abides by a strict monthly budget and has resorted to asking friends and relatives to help pay his mortgage.

Billingsley, divorced with two grown children, recently moved in with a roommate to save money on rent, and uses public transportation as much as possible to avoid high gas prices.

Lippert said he has had more job interviews in the past two months than he's had in three years—a sign that the unemployment situation might be improving—but he still hasn't found full-time work.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate was 9 percent in October 2011, compared with 10.1 percent two years before. However, the unemployment rate is still more than 4 percentage points higher than it was before the recession began.

Lippert tries to remain optimistic, though he admits that it's gotten very discouraging.

"I've been trying. You know, you have your good days and you have your bad days," he said after attending a job search club meeting in Austin. "I'm just not used to this long delay."

—Rebecca LaFlure, a Baylor University graduate and former Seeds of Hope intern, is a journalist based in Austin, TX.

Innovative Shelter Compound Houses 1,000 Homeless People in Florida

The state of Florida seems to be attracting a great deal of attention from anti-hunger groups. Homelessness in Florida's cities has been described as some of the most rampant in the country.

The last issue of *Hunger News & Hope* included a story about activists in Orlando, and surrounding cities, committing acts of civil disobedience to bring attention to the numbers of hungry people there [see "Food Not Bombs: Standing Against Florida Laws," *Hunger News & Hope*, Vol 12, No 1, page 3].

In all of these places, agencies and individuals are working hard to respond to the ever-spiraling needs. In St. Petersburg, something especially creative and innovative is happening.

In 2007, near downtown St. Petersburg, police officers with box cutters slashed up a makeshift tent city, and the event was caught on video and posted on YouTube. An Associated Press reporter described the incident as "a national public-relations disaster."

Like officials in other Florida cities (and many across the country), St. Petersburg's leaders had instituted a panhandling ban and limits on large "public feedings," creating plenty of controversy with the churches and charities that were trying to help the crowds of homeless folks.

And the number of homeless people remained the same.

About a year ago, hundreds of people were sleeping in the public park, and visitors to St. Petersburg found themselves having to step over them to get anywhere downtown.

The city reported that sanitation workers had to spray sidewalks with disinfectant because so many people were relieving themselves on the street.

In 2010, the city's leaders hired Robert Marbut as a consultant. Marbut, a former San Antonio, TX, councilman and a White House staffer during the George W. Bush administration, had helped to organize a what he called a "transformational campus" in San Antonio. People were taken away from downtown streets, housed, fed and helped with mental illness and substance abuse issues at a large complex called Haven of Hope.

Marbut got to work last year, using both private and public funds to create another shelter compound in St. Petersburg.

During this past summer, homeless people found sleeping on the sidewalk in downtown St.

Petersburg, or urinating on the street, were not transported to jail. Instead, they were taken to a 22-acre complex with room for 1,000 people. The facility is now full, and city officials say that, instead seeing of hundreds of people living in the park, there are now only a half-dozen.

— Sources: An Associated Press story by Mitch Stacy, CBS News, St. Petersburg Times. For more information, check out the feature-length film *Easy Street* by Stephen Ashton and Andrew Lee, about a year in the lives of homeless people in St. Petersburg.

Poverty in America, *continued from page 1*

less than half of the official poverty line. More than 20 million people were added to that category in 2010.

The Census Bureau's September report found that African-Americans experienced the highest poverty rate, at 27 percent (up two points from the year before), but an amended report, issued in early November, stated that the Latino/Latina population was the hardest hit.

In the new report, the number of US residents who live in poverty was set at 49.1 million. The later figures are based on a new analysis that includes factors like health care. The rate of poverty is now higher among the Latino/Latina population than among African Americans. The figures doubled among the senior population.

The 2010 report found more than 16 million children living in poverty, the highest number since 1962. (Those are the figures that prompted the Economic Opportunity Act, or "War on Poverty," instituted by the US Congress under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration in the early 1960s.) This year's report stated that 22 percent of US children now live in poverty.

This year's report also said the number of uninsured Americans increased by almost a million and now numbers 49.9 million. Persons covered by employer-based insurance declined sharply, from 65 percent in the year 2000 to about 55 percent in 2010.

The level of poverty among people living in suburbs has grown as well. Until recently, rates of poverty were persistently higher in rural areas and inner cities.

An analysis by the Brookings Institution estimated that, at the current rate, the recession will have added nearly 10 million people to the ranks of the poor by 2015.

Analysts said that most of the increase in the numbers of poor people is caused by the rapidly rising unemployment rate.

Sources: New York Times, CBS News, Carsey Institute (University of New Hampshire), Brookings Institution, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Educating Homeless Students in America: A Ray of Hope

by Marie Haithman Curran

When a child becomes homeless, life is uncertain, chaotic and scary. Stability the child once knew disappears when his or her family's circumstances change and suddenly she is living on the street, in a shelter or with other families.

However unsettling her life may become, though, that child is still legally guaranteed a public school education and the assistance he or she needs to attend school.

Because of the holistically destabilizing effects of being homeless, the child's school-assistance needs are complex, ranging from retrieval of lost immunization records, to transportation, to mental health services.

Thanks to the McKinney-Vento Act, a US Federal Act designed to protect homeless children's rights to attend school, school districts are responding to the growing needs of these children and youth in crisis. Yet federal and state funds are limited, and many of the assistance programs lack the resources to adequately serve their homeless students.

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, a student is defined as homeless if he or she is "doubled-up" with another household because his or her family has lost their own housing—likely because of financial challenges. If the child is living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or campground, or in a shelter, then he or she is also considered homeless.

If a child is abandoned in a hospital or waiting for placement in a foster home, the child is considered homeless. A child is homeless when he or she sleeps or lives in any setting that is not intended for housing or a sleeping accommodation, such as a park, bus or train station, car, or abandoned or unsuitable building. If a migratory child or youth lives in any of the above situations, he or she is homeless.

The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that every district, overseen by a state coordinator and a District Homeless Liaison, uphold homeless students' educational rights. One of these includes a student's right to attend his or her "school of origin." School of origin refers to the school the student attended before becoming homeless. If homelessness causes a student to leave his or her school's neighborhood, he or she is eligible for continued enrollment and transportation.

However, as the number of homeless students increases, this becomes logistically complicated for schools, shelters and other services such as Child Protective Services.

The case of N-Dia Layne, a New York City fourth grader recently featured in the *New York Times*, illustrates how difficult it is to keep homeless children in their schools of origin.

When N-Dia and her mother Whitnee were moved from their overcrowded Brooklyn shelter to a shelter in Manhattan, Whitnee Layne, who had recently lost her job, decided

to keep N-Dia enrolled at the same Brooklyn public charter school.

Between tragically losing family members and becoming homeless, N-Dia had experienced more chaos than most nine-year-olds. Her mother felt compelled to keep N-Dia's schooling stable, but after moving to the Manhattan shelter, they had trouble with the two-and-a-half-hour subway commute to her school of origin.

Though Whitnee Layne requested busing for N-Dia, she was denied. Eventually, due to N-Dia's chronic tardiness and the resulting academic failure, N-Dia was asked to leave the school. She now attends public school in Manhattan.

Sadly, N-Dia's story is not unique. According the *New York Times* article, more than 50,000 students (children and youth three to 21 years old) are homeless in New York City. And about 65 percent of families face the same challenge Whitnee Layne has endured. Despite her request to stay near her daughter's school, they were moved to an area outside of N-Dia's school district.

Like the Laynes, many families are left with a difficult choice. If the child commutes to his or her school of origin, there is a high chance he or she will fail because of tardiness. If the child, already dealing with homelessness, is moved to a closer school, he or she undergoes additional stress. Too many children fall behind because of these stressors.

However, some school districts, including the Waco Independent School District (WISD) in Waco, TX, are rising to the challenge of increased homelessness. Though Waco is a small city of about 120,000, it has 1,500 homeless families within its school district. This percentage compares to numbers in much larger cities.

With a 26 percent poverty rate, many Waco families are doubled-up, and many others are living in shelters, motels or in vehicles. Dr. Jack Henderson, the WISD Director of Student Management, and also the District Homeless Liaison, initiated a Homeless Outreach Services program that now services these families; it goes above and beyond the minimum requirements of the McKinney Vento Act.

Working with Henderson are Cheryl Pooler, the program's Social Worker, and Chelle Samaniego, the Homeless Grant Clerk. Together they work to bring Waco homeless families resources and new hope.

Waco's growing Homeless Outreach Services program is atypical for such a small community; they receive grant funding usually only available to larger cities. Other small communities throughout the region, state and country are also plagued by crippling multi-generational poverty and

homelessness, and do not have growing homeless outreach programs.

Cheryl Pooler credits several factors for the growth of Waco's program. First, Henderson worked to bring in available but hard-to-receive grant funding. This initial investment has created a rippling effect: Pooler's (and Samaniego's) position is made possible by grant funding, and, beyond working directly with students and families, she is able to bring in both additional grants and local, non-governmental community resources.

The more awareness is raised, the larger the program continues to grow. Individuals, churches and nonprofits generate services (such as donated backpacks and school supplies, or even a school-uniform recycling program). Homeless Outreach Services is then able to serve an increased number of families. The program has grown, and is thus eligible for additional grant funding.

Hope is set in motion.

In social work, for every happy ending, there are more sad endings. Yet the happy endings do count, and are precious to the families that experience them. The devastating course of impoverished families can change when children attend and finish school. Pooler shares an example of a family in crisis being led to stability.

"A woman was living in her car with her 10 children," she said. In a situation like this, children are not necessarily asked what they learned at school, and their homework is not looked over. This is an issue of survival. Most likely, chaos ensues. When Homeless Outreach Services identified the family as homeless (through the lack of a permanent address in school enrollment papers), they discovered the mother was a military veteran.

Although that mother didn't know it, US veterans are eligible for housing if they are working. The woman "was already working a part-time job. That was half the battle and she didn't even know it," Pooler explained.

Not long after her children were recorded as homeless, she was placed in an apartment. Waco community groups helped her stock her new home with necessary home supplies. While the program explicitly serves homeless children, the reality of an entire family was radically shifted.

Another encouraging development in Homeless Outreach Services involves increased help for "unaccompanied youths." This term refers to teenagers who have run away or been kicked out of their homes, either because of conflict or lack of space. According to the McKinney-Vento law, unaccompanied youths are classified as homeless.

Because these students are minors, they are ineligible for shelters. "Going to school is an inconvenience [for the students]," Pooler states, because school does not pay. Pooler has brought in a Baylor University School of Social Work graduate intern to follow these youths who are in crisis.

Pooler, her associates and other concerned community members work hard to provide opportunities for Waco's homeless students and families, but they are dreaming even bigger dreams. Waco, they say, needs to address more fully the issues of poverty and homelessness in children and youth.

One dream is a safe, stable and education-oriented shelter for Waco's homeless children. Many children in poverty, who have been removed from their parents, are bounced around in foster care and can land as far as San Antonio (more than 180 miles away). Children like this are stripped of their chance to attend their school of origin.

"Every time a child changes schools, he falls behind six months," Pooler said. If there is nowhere for a child to go in

In social work, for every happy ending, there are more sad endings. Yet the happy endings do count, and are precious to the families that experience them.

Waco, though, going to San Antonio may be the best option. Many larger cities, including Dallas (98 miles away), have outstanding children's shelters, and Pooler believes a shelter would also profoundly benefit Waco. Children living in the shelter would be able to grow up with stable schooling and a caring, stimulating environment.

Another, and possibly more readily attainable, dream is transitional housing for youth ages 16-24. This would be more than a shelter; it would provide "re-parenting" for young people who have basically raised themselves. Assistance to stay in school or job training is often not enough for youth who have never learned the mental and emotional skills a stable upbringing provides.

Involved, transitional housing would help teach "self-care, self-control and financial management," to teenagers struggling to cross the childhood-adult threshold, Pooler said. Many of Waco's unaccompanied youth are mothers, so this kind of housing opportunity would not only benefit that mother, but also a young child.

While the potential of every school district's student-homelessness program does depend on availability of government funding, it also depends on regular people and non-governmental organizations. As one can see in Waco's Homeless Outreach Services, the relationship of government and community assistance is intertwined and beneficial.

To get involved in your school district's homeless student assistance program, contact your local District Homeless Liaison.

—Marie Curran has lived and worked at the World Hunger Relief, Inc., Training Farm in Elm Mott, TX, and now volunteers as a writer and liturgist for Seeds of Hope. Her paying job is at the Talitha Koum Institute, a therapeutic nursery and in South Waco, founded by members of Crossties Ecumenical Church. Sources: New York Times (www.nytimes.com), the Serve Center of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (<http://center.serve.org>), the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO—www.utdanacenter.org), the National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org), the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (www.naehcy.org), personal interviews.

Bittersweet Reality: Chocolate Companies and Child Labor

by Crystal Goolsby

Many holidays in the US are occasions for chocolate treats. Many people—adults and children alike—look forward to the many sweet treats offered during special days. Halloween trick-or-treat bags will hold showers of miniature Hershey bars wrapped in fall colors. Christmas stockings will be filled with chocolaty delights wrapped in red, green and silver foil. On Valentine’s Day, people express their love with heart-shaped boxes of chocolates.

However, as people are licking the melted remnants off of their fingers, children across the Atlantic have a very different story to tell about the traditional confections so many people in Western society look forward to.

Children in other parts of the world—particularly in West Africa, in places like the Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana—do not know the wonders of unwrapping and devouring a candy bar. These children toil for hours, picking the cacao beans that provide the base ingredient for a multitude of decadent and indulgent delights.

The children who work on cocoa farms receive very little pay, if any. Some of them are forced to work by their families, while others are sold into slavery. These children receive no education. Their only task is to pick the cacao beans. They work in unsafe conditions, and they receive cruel treatment if they do not perform to the liking of their superiors.

Some 80 percent of the world’s cocoa is from West Africa, and about half comes from Cote d’Ivoire, where 200,000 children work on cacao farms. An estimated 12,000 are victims of human trafficking.

The cacao beans are bought by chocolate dealers and sold to big chocolate companies such as Hershey’s and Nestle, usually for unfair prices.

A UNICEF report in 1998, a BBC documentary in 2000 and an award-winning series of stories in Knight Ridder newspapers in 2001 first brought this issue onto the world stage. As a result, the chocolate industry was forced to address fair-trade and child-slave issues before anyone else tried to intervene. A number of chocolate companies and private organizations banded together in 2001 to create the Harkin-Engel Protocol (named for US Congressman Eliot Engel and US Senator Tom Harkin, both of whom worked with leaders in the industry and international officials to create the agreement).

The protocol was a commitment to eliminate child labor on cocoa farms by the year 2005.

When 2005 passed with little change, the goal was altered to a reduction in child labor to 50 percent by 2008. That year also came and went, with little or no progress. The commitment was again renewed in September 2010. The new protocol involved the governments of Ghana and the Cote d’Ivoire, as well as world players in the chocolate trade. These parties promised to reduce child slave labor in chocolate production by 70 percent by 2020.

Still, improvements have yet to be seen.

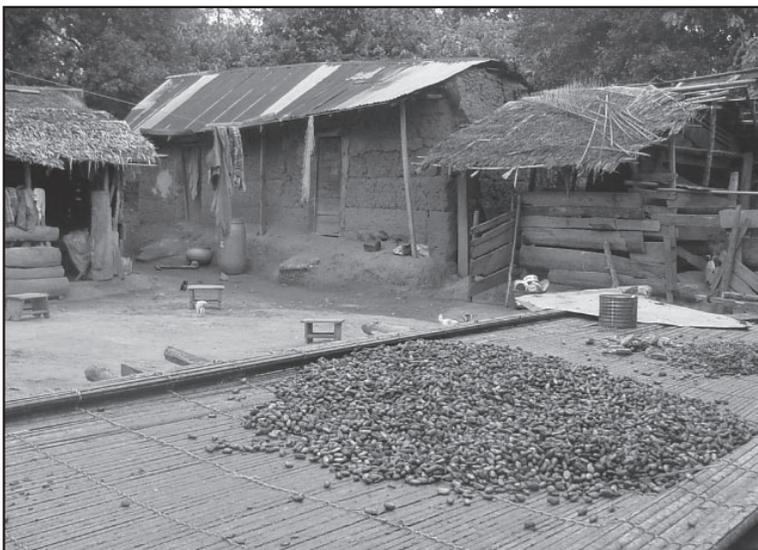
Part of the difficulty in achieving the objective is that chocolate companies are not always aware that the farms, from which they buy their cacao beans, utilize unfair child labor. Multiple dealers often work between the big chocolate companies and the farms. Chocolate company executives rarely see the actual farms from which their beans come. Simply put, they cannot fix that of which they are not aware.

Plenty of companies do know that this issue exists, however, and yet they turn a blind eye to it. One of the biggest culprits is the Hershey Company and its subsidiaries. Hershey’s is the largest chocolate company in North America. In spite of concentrated protests by “chocolate activists,” Hershey’s executives do not appear to have acknowledged or commented on the existence of child labor in their trade. The Nestle Company has also come under fire. [See “What about Nestle?” on page 7.]

So what can consumers do to combat this heartbreaking problem? One way is to buy only Fair Trade or Direct Trade chocolates. Fair Trade chocolate companies only buy cacao beans from certified exporters, who verify that the farms from which the beans come are child-labor free.

Direct Trade chocolate companies buy directly from the farms that produce the beans, and they maintain very close ties with these farmers. Some even utilize a third

*Left: Cacao beans drying at a farm in Ghana, West Africa.
Photo by Ben Bryant.*



party to review the farming practices, for extra insurance against unethical forms of labor.

There is also an initiative called the Cocoa Campaign. The campaign's website includes a petition to end child-slave labor on cacao farms. The campaign also calls for people to write letters to the major chocolate companies about this issue. Its biggest target is Hershey's, since the Pennsylvania-based company seems to have made the smallest effort toward achieving the goals of the Harkin-Engel Protocol.

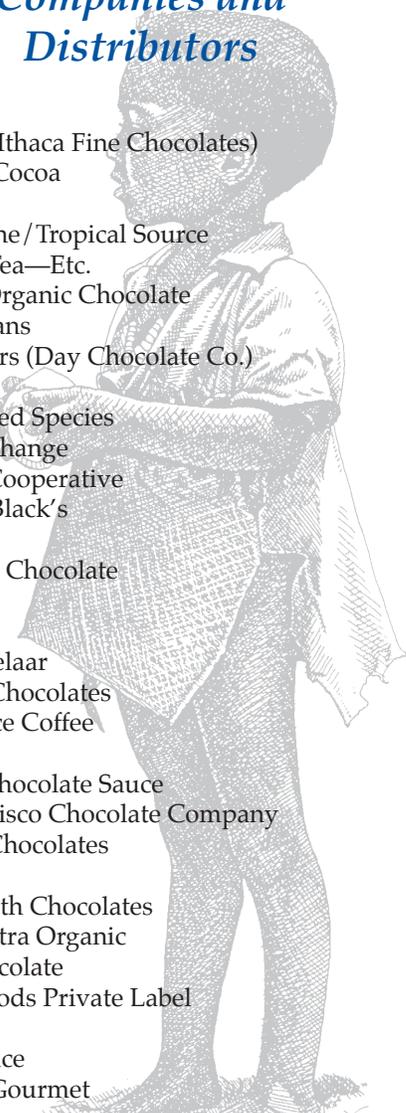
Without mass participation, this problem cannot be resolved, and will most likely continue to be overlooked. Consumers, producers and governments must all make efforts to discourage the purchase of unfairly produced goods.

The first step is to increase awareness and pro-activity. So the next time you go to nibble the ear off of a chocolate Easter

bunny, you may want to remember that very small hands could have played a very real and tragic role in its journey to you.

—Crystal Goolsby is a freelance writer in Austin, TX. Sources: "All About Taza Chocolate Direct Trade" (www.tazachocolate.com), "Cocoa Campaign" (www.laborrights.org), "Oversight of Public and Private Initiatives to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Cocoa Sector in the Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana," Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University (www.childlabor-payson.org), "Child-labor Chocolate" (www.thelutheran.org), "The Dark Side of Chocolate" (<http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com>), "Tracing the Bitter Truth of Chocolate and Child Labor" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>), "The Cocoa Protocol" (www.freeetheslaves.net) "Slave Free Chocolate" (www.slavefreechocolate.org), "Companies Point Fingers as Students Protest Conditions at Chocolate Plant" (www.nytimes.com).

Fair Trade Chocolate Companies and Distributors



AlterEco
Art Bars (Ithaca Fine Chocolates)
Caminio Cocoa
Chuo
Cloud Nine/Tropical Source
Coffee—Tea—Etc.
Dagoba Organic Chocolate
Deans Beans
Divine Bars (Day Chocolate Co.)
El Rey
Endangered Species
Equal Exchange
Frontier Cooperative
Green & Black's
Guittard
Health by Chocolate
Larabar
Malagasy
Max Havelaar
Nirvana Chocolates
Providence Coffee
Rapunzel
Robin's Chocolate Sauce
San Francisco Chocolate Company
Shaman Chocolates
Sojourn
Sweet Earth Chocolates
Terra Nostra Organic
Theo Chocolate
Whole Foods Private Label
Valrhona
Vital Choice
Yachana Gourmet

Source: University of California, San Diego Computer Science and Engineering Department

What About Nestle?

People who have been active in the anti-hunger world during any of the last three decades will want to know about how the Nestle Company, the object of boycotts off and on for all that time, has responded to fair-trade cocoa issues. The Swiss-based company, formed in 1905, is the world's largest food and nutrition company, operating in 86 countries and employing more than 280,000 people.

The first boycott began in 1977, as a result of Nestle's production and aggressive marketing of infant formula in developing countries. In 1981, The World Health Organisation developed a code that regulates the promotion of infant formulas, which some activists claim that Nestle is still violating. These practices were particularly noticed during the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s, when many anti-hunger experts claimed that the Nestle formula was contributing to the deaths of countless Ethiopian infants. Boycott participants claimed that—aside from the fact that breast-feeding had been shown to save more infant lives than the use of formula—the formula powder was, more often than not, mixed with unclean water.

The boycott was temporarily called off in the late 1980s, when Nestle officials agreed to stop marketing the formula in developing countries. Then, in 2002, Nestle leaders decided to sue the country of Ethiopia for \$6 million. When 40,000 of protestors came out of the woodworks, threatening to begin a new boycott, the company backed off.

Nestle has been blasted by environmental groups, food-safety groups, child-labor groups and fair-trade groups. The company was forced by public opinion to stop buying milk from illegally seized farms belonging to the wife of Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe. Even though Nestle signed the Harkin-Engel Protocol in 2001, its partner cocoa farms in Cote D'Voire were investigated by INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organisation) in 2009. The company was targeted in the 2010 documentary *The Dark Side of Chocolate*.

In 2010, Nestle launched a fair-trade branded Kit Kat bar in the UK and Ireland, as well as a fair-trade coffee blend called Partners Blend, but, so far, the company's detractors, including Oxfam America, have not been overly impressed.

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be

quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

What Jesus Didn't Say

by Katie Cook

Jesus didn't say to Peter, "Do you love me? Then go out and build magnificent structures with arches and columns and gold-leaf frescoes."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

He didn't say, "Go and organize institutions in which the leaders will have more power and wealth than anyone else on earth."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

He didn't say, "Take the things I've said and done and put them in a book that you will raise up as an object of worship."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

He didn't say, "Put my words in red ink and then do everything you can to forget them or discount them."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

He didn't say, "Work out a system of belief whereby to exclude and punish anyone who disagrees with you."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

He didn't say, "Become as prosperous as you can, dress as sumptuously as you can, and show how you are blessed by your possessions."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

And then he said, "Follow me."

—based on John 21



optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

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