



**Dr. J. Larry Brown**  
**Faculty, Harvard School of Public Health;**  
**Director, National Center on Hunger and Poverty**

**Dr. J. Larry Brown is the nation's leading scholarly authority on domestic hunger. He directs the National Center on Hunger and Poverty, and serves on the faculty of the Harvard School of Public Health. Dr. Brown chaired the Harvard-based Physician Task Force on Hunger in America, leading a team of prominent medical leaders on field investigations into half the states of the nation during the 1980s. Their work drew sustained national media attention, and led Congress to take concerted steps to address the crisis.**

Brown chaired the Medical Task Force of USA for Africa/Hands Across America, and also initiated the Medford Declaration to End Hunger in America in the early 1990s, a document signed by leaders of organizations with combined memberships of over 100 million people. He is the past chairman of the board of Oxfam America, and also served as Assistant Director of Peace Corps/VISTA under President Carter. Dr. Brown is the author of numerous articles in both scientific and popular arenas, including *Scientific American* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Medical and Health Annual*. He is the author of several books, including *Living Hungry in America*. He has appeared frequently on national television programs including Nightline, The Today Show, and Good Morning America. The recipient of numerous awards, perhaps Dr. Brown's favorite is that from the Children's Book Council Conference, which reads: "... for recollecting the lost and hungry children of America to a distracted nation by putting at their service the tools of science and the highest ideals of professional commitment."

Since its inception in 1989, the Center on Hunger and Poverty has played a leadership role in determining the extent of food deprivation and hunger in the United States. Of particular concern to Dr. Brown is the impact of hunger on young children. Mild hunger is the most prevalent type of hunger in the U.S. but scientific evidence links even mild hunger with permanent impairments in cognitive function in children (learning, memory and judgment).

Along with actor Jeff Bridges, Dr. Brown spoke at the Solidarity Now to End Childhood Hunger symposium sponsored by Children Uniting Nations and Hunger Free America. The event was held in Los Angeles in January 2002. The following excerpts are taken from Dr. Brown's speech at this event: "There are 31 million people in households across America that are hungry ... 12 million of these people are children. They do not know where their next meal is coming from and typically have to cut back on the food they serve to their children."

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"Science has documented what mothers, school nurses and teachers have believed for years, that hunger hurts kids. They suffer more stomachaches, headaches and missed school days. A human brain is impaired when a child misses meals. Even missing one meal can impair cognitive behavior. When there's not enough dietary energy, the brain allocates the limited dietary energy in this order: (1) towards critical bodily function, (2) to height and weight gain, and if there's enough left, the remaining dietary energy is then, lastly allocated (3) to brain function. "[When] you have the body of a hungry child in the classroom . . . you don't have his or her brain." "We are the richest nation in the history of the world with millions of people going hungry and wondering where their next meal is coming from and we're still unable to rid our society of this scourge. This is a solvable problem. We have programs in our arsenal that work and work well when they're used fully. We have an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen America by safeguarding our children. We simply have to take the programs we already have and make sure they reach those in need. We don't need new programs ... we need to do a better job with what we have."

"The fact that more than one in every ten Americans is impacted by food insecurity makes us quite unique among wealthy democracies in the world. The U.S. is not the only nation where people go hungry but it is the only wealthy industrial nation where such a high percentage of its population suffers from nutritional deprivation due to inadequate incomes. Nearly one in five children, in our nation, lives below the poverty level - we have more than enough food to end this problem - the real issue is not whether America can end hunger, the question is whether we have the leadership to do so."

In my religious tradition it is said, 'if you save one life you save the world.' We can make the world better by protecting and nurturing the small brains that we hold in our collective hand."

*Dr. Larry Brown, from his book, "Hunger in America: The Growing Epidemic"*

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