

# Let victims of hunger speak for themselves

To the editors:

I have been fortunate for the most part of my life. I was born to parents who had professional occupations and I was schooled by the more respected members of the educational spectrum. Subsequently, I never had to apply for food stamps or public assistance of any kind.

However, my story is not about how my life has changed and how I'm in need of assistance, my story is about how fortunate I am to be working with people all over Western NY who are actually victims of this most brutal injustice we call "HUNGER!"

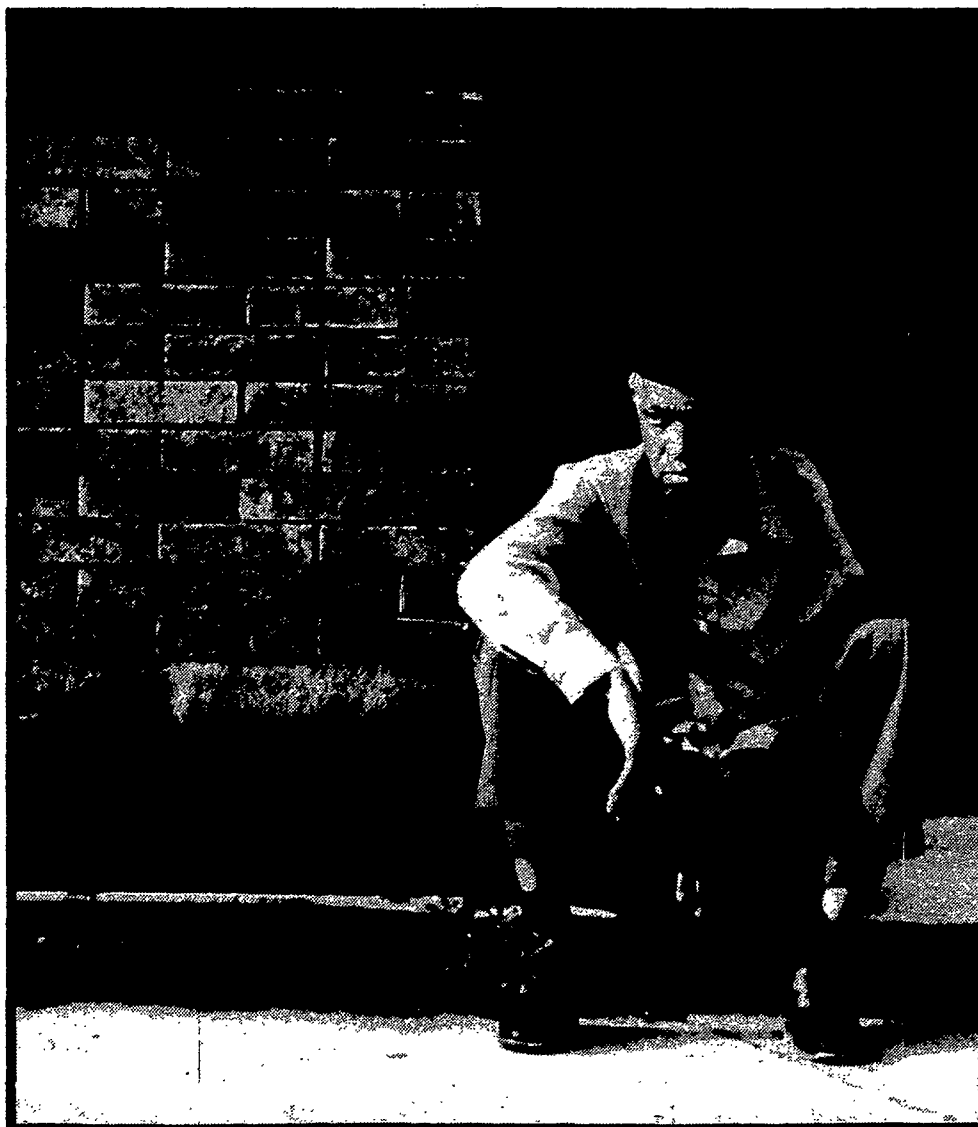
As I travel across New York, speaking to meetings of Emergency Food Providers and clusters of Emergency Food Recipients, I am constantly amazed how informed these people are. Often we take the position that if someone needs assistance, then we have to speak for them. We never speak "with" them, or have them speak for themselves, we often speak for them. This is one of the many ways that we perpetuate the myth that the deserving poor, the undeserving poor — if we are truly able to make that distinction — the hungry, the sick and the aged are all too stupid or lazy or just not as well-versed as

ourselves. So it is up to us to speak for them.

Perhaps our local government and state government should invite the recipients to speak on the issue of hunger. I know that many of the clients that I have come in contact with are informed on the issues of SNAP, Food Stamps, State Budget, Public Assistance and many forms of food provision. I have had the pleasure of being informed, myself, on issues of competent service through our state offices. Perhaps it's time we started taking on the place of recipients so that we can more fully understand our bias' and our misinformation. Perhaps it is time we started to let the victims tell their own stories and share their own projections on solutions and possibilities in the effort to eradicate hunger. Perhaps it is time we stop making this issue an US & THEM issue and embrace the all of it. Perhaps it's time to stop blaming the victims.

Don't blame the victim! Look in the mirror, you might see a victim staring back at you!

J. Claud Cotnoir-Stewart II  
Regional Organizer  
Hunger Action Network of NYS



# Tuition increases place schools beyond many budgets

To the editors:

I am writing this letter because I am very concerned about the skyrocketing cost of tuition in the Northeast Quadrant.

Five years ago I was paying \$832.00 a year for tuition. Now after receiving a letter explaining next year's increases, I will be paying \$1,650.00 a year. That's a whopping 98.4 percent increase in 5 years.

I for one can no longer afford the luxury of sending my children to a Catholic School. It's not that I do not want to pay "my fair share," but I can no longer afford to do so.

These cost increases are going to drive people away from Catholic Schools. On top of the tuition cost there are school supplies, uniforms, and gym clothes. Also we are bombarded with an array of fund raisers every year. Not only do Catholic Schools do it but everybody does it — Boy Scouts, Bowling Centers. Everybody does it, all at the same time. Both of my children were top sellers in each of their respective classes at school, so we do believe in trying to raise money for these causes.

I don't always use a church envelope when giving money to the Church, now that we don't pay tuition to the parishes. I still give money in the collection basket. In the past couple of years I have not given to the Bishop's Thanksgiving Appeal because it has been too much.

If my daughter chooses to go to Bishop Kearney High School, after next year, I'm afraid that Catholic Education is going to

be impossible for my children to have. Even if costs were not to increase, it could possibly cost me close to \$400.00 a month for a Catholic Education. This is a cost I can't even consider.

How can the parents see justification in a 18 percent increase over last year, when last year's cost of living index went up only 6 percent? I was fortunate to get a 4.6 percent raise this year. Many people, I'm afraid, will not get any at all. Even with that raise I'm going to be 1.74 percent behind last year.

Many people will say that we parents will have to make sacrifices from now on. But, what you may not realize is that many of us are doing just that already. I am being honest when I tell you that there is not much outside of my son's bowling league,

my daughter's dance class, and Cable TV that can be cut from my monthly budget. It is not to the point where I am going to have to choose between eating and sending my kids to Catholic School, but my budget is nearing full capacity.

Not only is education cost going up, but so is everything else. As you know, the economy is not exactly on an upward trend. Many of us in the workplace face layoffs, cuts in hours worked, or cuts in pay. I had my hours cut for about 6 or 7 months last year before having them return to normal. This week they were cut again. If this continues it will be even hard to make the tuition payment I am required to pay this year, at the start of next year.

I know I'm speaking for many parents when I say that many of us will be wat-

ching our ability to provide quality education for our children slip right through our fingers.

This problem of constant cost increases is one which should be at or near the top of just about everyone's list involved with Catholic Education. How long will we be able to support it? How much longer before all middle-class people are forced out of Catholic Education? Is there any way to bring down cost? Cuts in programs to be made? Or do we wait until it dies! I would like to be able to have my children continue to enjoy the fruit of a good quality education. What are we going to do? The time to act is now!

Tom Bigdoski  
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# People at the bottom suffer most from program cuts

To the editors:

As the budget cuts come down like walls around us, it is very clear that those at the bottom of the economic ladder are the major victims since programs serving, empowering and advocating with poor people have always been given the smallest allocations in this country, those are the programs first to be cut.

Those cuts lead to pitting of one good program against another — the arts vs. the homeless and hungry vs. the environmental and health programs. Suddenly the monies

we'd been told were non-existent reappear in the form of "scuds," "sorties" and "body bags." And each one of those missiles could fund massive programs at home.

As the debate over the crumbs left on the plate increases, we see racism growing and hungry people blamed for their plight. It becomes impossible to get "Up and Out of Poverty" when adequate jobs are few and assistance is only 84 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (\$11,000 for a family of 3).

As hunger and malnutrition increases, we are charting a future with a growing unhealthy population, physically and mentally.

We must speak out and support school breakfasts, universal health care and the preservation of our resources both people and land.

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# Those who declare God feminine proclaim Jesus Christ a deceiver

To the editors:

Recently my pastor gave me a number of papers titled "Lent '91."

I opened the first one, marked February 17, 1991. I naturally thought these were spiritual readings for Lent. Practically the first thing I started to read, and incidentally the last thing, was a case of blasphemy. In referring to God the Father, it made Him feminine. Everything was Hers, She, etc. Now to me this is blasphemy against God the Father and also against God the Son.

Are they trying to tell us that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a liar and a deceiver? After all it was He, who throughout the New Testament makes statements such

as "My Father who sent me..." "I am doing my father's will" etc., and when the apostles asked Jesus how they were to pray, He gave them the only prayer He left to us, the "Our Father."

Now either Jesus is a liar and a deceiver or the people who insist on referring to God as feminine are committing blasphemy. I believe that Jesus Christ is God and as we say in the Act of Faith "... because these things were revealed by God, Who can neither deceive or be deceived." I rest my case.

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