

THIS IS HUNGER

A community engagement program of **MAZON** | A Jewish Response To Hunger

Facilitator's Guide



MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger

WITH OUR THANKS

Thank you so much for your interest in bringing *This Is Hunger* to your community. Whether you're an educator, clergy or lay leader, student, or anything in between, we have compiled everything you'll need to successfully lead this program in this guide.

As a *This Is Hunger* Facilitator, you are joining MAZON's mission of ending hunger in the United States. We hope these resources empower you as an educator on the issue of hunger, and as a representative of MAZON in engaging with and galvanizing students and communities in the fight to end food insecurity.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to the MAZON team if you have any questions. You can reach us at thisishunger@mazon.org or 310-442-0020.

With our deep gratitude for your partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Abby J. Leibman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Abby J. Leibman
CEO & President

*All featured photos by Barbara Grover for MAZON.
Additional stories may be available upon request.*

CONTENTS

I. WELCOME

<i>Intro to This Is Hunger</i>	5
<i>Intro to MAZON</i>	6
<i>So, Advocacy?</i>	7
<i>Quick Facts About Hunger in America</i>	8
<i>Charity Alone is Not the Answer</i>	9
<i>The Top Ten</i>	10

II. FACILITATOR IN ACTION

<i>Facilitating the Experience</i>	13
<i>Student Program</i>	15
<i>Adult Program</i>	20

III. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

<i>Text Study 1 & 2</i>	22
<i>Hunger Quiz</i>	26
<i>SNAP Education</i>	28
<i>Station Activities</i>	30
<i>Advocacy Action</i>	32
<i>Questions You Might Get</i>	33

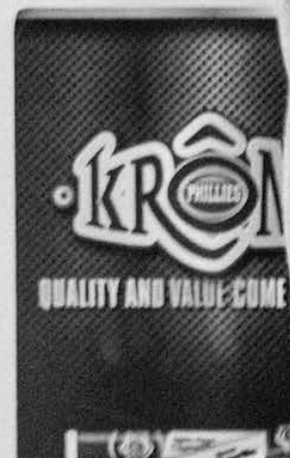
PART I: WELCOME TO MAZON'S THIS IS HUNGER EXPERIENCE

**We Welcome
SNAP EBT
Customers**

**For information on applying
for SNAP benefits, call 1-800-221-5689**

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy,
this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race,
color, national origin, sex, age, religion, marital status, disability, or
rehabilitation for prior activity.

To file a complaint of
discrimination, write:
USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9422



INTRO TO THIS IS HUNGER

The faces of hunger in America are both familiar and hidden from view, yet they are all too real and far too many.

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger has a long tradition of engaging the American Jewish community, as well as anti-hunger organizations, to become catalysts for change. We know all too well that there are persistent myths about hunger in America. Until our nation recognizes the profound prevalence of hunger here at home, we will never be able to rally the political will required to end it.

That's why MAZON created *This Is Hunger*, a powerful community engagement program that encourages individuals to challenge their beliefs about who in America struggles with hunger and why, and empowers them to take action to end hunger.

This Is Hunger Experience

By sharing the TIH Digital piece, you and your participants will virtually meet with real people struggling with hunger. Our subjects share their stories with their own voices and words.

To complement and expand on the piece, we encourage you to invite participants to engage in activities and experiences – and, most importantly, thought-provoking discussions – to deepen their awareness about the complexities of hunger, and to join MAZON in educating the rest of our nation and advocating for change.

This Is Hunger Facilitator Guide

The resources included in this guide are aimed at helping educators and other community leaders prepare participants for what to expect during *This Is Hunger*, offer facilitation tips for guiding a group through the experience, and provide suggestions for de-brief conversations and follow-up activities.

Recommended Audience

This Is Hunger is recommended for students in 6th grade and above, as well as adults. At the discretion of educators and guardians, younger students can find value in it as well. The materials included in this resource may be adapted to the demographic of the participating group.

INTRO TO MAZON

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

MAZON, which means “food” in Hebrew, was the first national organization to rally the American Jewish community around the issue of hunger, and remains the only national Jewish organization dedicated exclusively to that same cause.

Since its founding in 1985, MAZON has established itself as a leader in the national anti-hunger movement by recognizing emerging needs and issues and mobilizing an expansive network of advocates – from organizational partners and youth activists to synagogues and concerned individuals – to amplify the call for systemic solutions to hunger.

MAZON strives to take a holistic approach through four interrelated strategies:



Education: MAZON works to educate key stakeholders to build awareness about hunger in America and Israel, bolster understanding about overlooked issues and populations, and engage the Jewish and anti-hunger communities in policy change work to address hunger.

Advocacy: MAZON practices and promotes advocacy as a means for ensuring not only that food reaches those who are hungry today, but also that no one goes hungry tomorrow. Our bipartisan advocacy work, through policymaker education and shaping legislation on the federal and state levels, helps to ensure that government programs are responsive to every person in need of food assistance and the unique barriers underserved populations face.

Capacity Building: MAZON provides funding, technical assistance, trainings, and other resources to hundreds of traditional and nontraditional partners, including charitable food programs, legal services providers, and advocacy organizations, building leadership capacity within the anti-hunger and Jewish communities to participate in advocacy.

Surfacing and Spotighting Overlooked Issues: Working with and listening to its broad network of anti-hunger, social justice, and Jewish community partners, MAZON identifies overlooked issues and vulnerable populations and finds policy solutions that meet unmet needs.

SO, ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is at the heart of everything we do.

For over 30 years, we have been building a powerful, nation-wide collective of anti-hunger advocates. As we turn minds towards justice and pass courageous policy, we can achieve our goal of systemic change – transforming the very fabric of our country that allows hunger to persist.

MAZON works towards systemic change by partnering with:



Policymakers: we work with local, state and federal leaders to protect and strengthen federal nutrition programs and advocate for public policies that address the root causes of hunger.

- Advocate for smart and effective public policies to eliminate hunger and its causes
- Identify opportunities to strengthen nutrition assistance programs
- Lead initiatives and campaigns to engage concerned individuals and community groups



Targeted Communities: we develop and implement strategic initiatives designed to encourage the anti-hunger community to effectively address emerging issues.

- Promote access to more nutritious food in food banks and the emergency food network
- Address the unique barriers to achieving food security among military families, veterans, college students, seniors, LGBT seniors, and Native American communities



Synagogues: we have a network of nearly 1,000 synagogues who mobilize their congregations and their communities to help us end the injustice of hunger.

- Visit partner synagogues to raise awareness about hunger and identify specific hunger-related issues within each community
- Unite synagogues, grantees, and like-minded advocates into a powerful constituency



Grantees: we support the advocacy work of organizations advancing long-term anti-hunger solutions in their communities and nationwide in the U.S. and in Israel.

- Provide funding to traditional and nontraditional partners, including food banks, legal services, and advocacy organizations
- Provide training and resources to strengthen the advocacy skills, knowledge and impact of anti-hunger organizations
- Utilize insight from partners to inform and leverage our own advocacy priorities

QUICK FACTS ABOUT HUNGER IN AMERICA

What is food insecurity?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a **lack of access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.**

Who is food insecure in America?

40 million Americans struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table.

- That's 12.5 million children and 10 million seniors
- 12.2% of all Americans, or 1 in 8
- More food insecure Americans than the entire population of Canada (37.4 million)

What resources are available for food insecure people?

They rely on help primarily from two sources:

Government Programs

The USDA has 15 distinct food and nutrition programs to combat domestic hunger.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most widely used of these programs and has over 40 million participants.



Private Charity

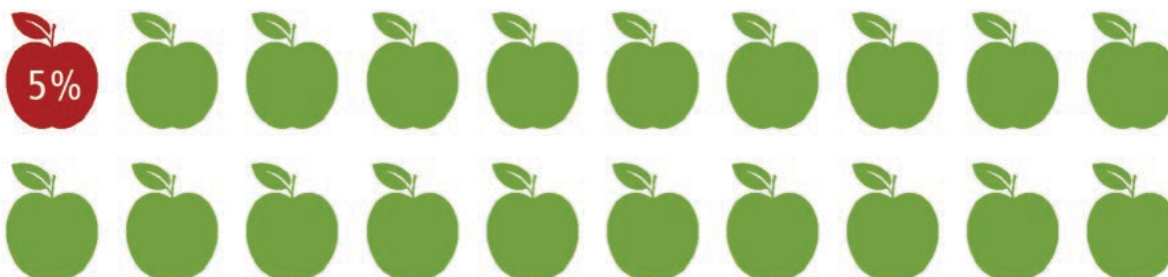
Charitable organizations were not conceived to feed entire communities, but to help

alleviate what was thought to be a temporary or emergency situation. While these organizations play a vital role in addressing hunger, they struggle to keep up with the need.



Why isn't private charity the answer?

The charitable response could never fill the gap if government programs continue to erode. The overwhelming majority of food assistance in this country comes from federal programs. **Only about 5% is provided by the charitable sector.**



CHARITY ALONE IS NOT THE ANSWER

Among the pervasive myths about hunger in America is the notion that it is better for local charities to feed people, not the government. The massive scale of the issue of hunger, the complex factors contributing to this problem, and the response necessary to adequately address it reveal a far different truth: charity alone is not the answer to ending hunger.

Charitable organizations – including MAZON's nationwide network of partners on the front lines – were not conceived to feed entire communities. Instead, these food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens were founded to alleviate what were thought to be temporary or emergency situations.

The charitable sector provides an important short-term fix, but is inherently insufficient to solve the systemic problem of hunger.

Many of these agencies are small operations open only a few days a week and for a few hours of each day. They are largely volunteer-run, often out of basements or closets at local houses of worship, and they primarily distribute food that has been donated from within their communities. They simply could never have the capacity to feed the more than 40 million people who need help. The U.S. Department of Agriculture plays a strong and vital role in ensuring that hungry Americans have access to food by administering 15 distinct food and nutrition assistance programs. **These federal assistance programs serve as our nation's frontline defense against hunger.**

We cannot food bank our way to an end to hunger, nor do charities have the means to fill the gap left by declining government support. Only the government has the capacity to address an issue with the magnitude of hunger and work toward a solution to this problem.

It is essential that government nutrition safety net programs are operated with the utmost effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. While in the best of times the USDA works diligently to ensure this is the case, there are still significant and at times devastating holes in these programs' coverage. Striving daily to ensure government nutrition programs are protected and strengthened is the embodiment of our national commitment to account for the needs and rights of all Americans and our collective responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is proud to stand as a partner in this shared effort to end hunger in the U.S.



THE TOP TEN

Ten things you should know about hunger

We want you to be familiar with the reality behind *This Is Hunger*. These ten facts are a starting point. We're happy to share more resources on these topics with you!

10: 40 million Americans struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table.[i] That's more food insecure Americans than the entire population of Canada.

9: You can't tell someone is hungry just by looking at them. Hunger affects people of all ages, races, and backgrounds – people in every congressional district, in every community, and in many congregations – around the country.

8: Food insecurity is higher in rural communities than major cities.[ii] Families in rural communities face particular challenges in accessing resources such as a lack of public transportation and greater distances between social service agencies and where people live.

7: 10 million seniors (ages 60 and up) struggle with food insecurity, and yet three out of five seniors who are eligible for SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) do not participate in the program.[iii] For seniors, who often face the impossible choices like paying for food or paying for medicine, removing the stigma and other barriers to SNAP enrollment is critical.

6: With over one in four Native Americans living in poverty, Native American communities are among the most vulnerable groups, experiencing unacceptably high rates of hunger and diet-related health challenges such as obesity and diabetes.[iv]

5: 12.5 million children in America don't get enough to eat. That means they can't learn or grow to their full potential.[v] Children who regularly do not get enough nutritious food tend to have significantly higher levels of behavioral, emotional, and academic problems, and tend to be more aggressive and anxious.[vi] School meal programs address this problem, and they work. A national study showed that students who eat school breakfast, for example, miss less school, do better in math, and are 20% more likely to graduate from high school.[vii]

4: 26% of military families surveyed – more than a quarter – participate in WIC, the federal nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children. This number suggests that food security is an ongoing challenge for too many families of active-duty military personnel.[viii]

3: According to a national survey, nearly half of food bank clients reported “fair” or “poor” health; 33% of client households have at least one member with diabetes; for hypertension, this number increases to 58%.[ix] With diet-related illnesses skyrocketing, food banks understand that it's not enough to simply provide hungry people with calories. They are now taking a proactive approach to improving nutrition by sourcing more nutritious food for distribution. Food banks with formal and strict nutrition policies are the only group that, on average, distribute twice as many fresh fruits and vegetables as unhealthy beverages and snack foods.[x] You can help by making sure that the food you donate to your local pantry or food bank is nutritious.

THE TOP TEN

Ten things you should know about hunger

2: Charity can never replace the federal nutrition safety net. Charitable organizations are not set up to feed every hungry person in their community. Food pantries and soup kitchens do great work, but they were created to provide support during temporary or emergency situations, not to solve systemic problems. The U.S. Department of Agriculture plays a vital role in ensuring that hungry Americans have access to food by administering 15 distinct food and nutrition assistance programs. These government nutrition safety net programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), must be operated with the utmost effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in order to help millions of Americans feed themselves and their families.

1: Hunger in our country is not about a lack of food, but a lack of political will. Ending hunger is possible if we raise our voices and advocate for positive, systemic change. Together we can transform *how it is* into ***how it should be***.

[i, ii, iii, v] USDA [iv] Feeding Ourselves: Food access, health disparities, and the pathways to healthy Native American communities. Report prepared by Echo Hawk Consulting. Commissioned by the American Heart Association and Voices for Health Kids (RWJF) 2015. [vi] Harvard School Breakfast Research Summary, "IMPACT OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND LEARNING: An Analysis of the Scientific Research," 2008 [vii] "Hunger in Our Schools, 2015" a national research project by No Kid Hungry, Share Our Strength [viii] 2015 Military Family Lifestyle Survey recently conducted by the organization Blue Star Families [ix] Feeding America's 2014 Hunger in America survey [x] MAZON'S "A Tipping Point: Leveraging Opportunities to Improve the Nutritional Quality of Food Bank Inventory," 2018





PART II: FACILITATOR IN ACTION

FACILITATING THE EXPERIENCE

Goals

For the program:

- to inform and empower the American Jewish Community to spark communal action,
- to illuminate the issue of hunger in a compelling way,
- to awaken us all to the very real and preventable existence of hunger in America,
- to challenge the culture of stigma towards people in poverty and the programs that support them, which has allowed hunger to thrive in the U.S. for too long,
- to encourage us to raise our voices on behalf of the millions of Americans who struggle with hunger every day, and
- to join MAZON to transform our nation's response to hunger once and for all.

For the participants:

- to delve deeper into the issue of hunger and learn more,
- to find personal connection points, and
- to begin to take actions towards ending hunger.

Context

The heart of the experience features photos and personal interviews by photojournalist Barbara Grover, who traveled the US collecting stories from dozens of the millions of Americans who struggle to put food on the table each day.



Mindful moment: Students/participants may or may not have personal experience with hunger and poverty. Regardless of your personal experience, as the facilitator you should adjust your language to be as inclusive as possible; for example, try not to intentionally or unintentionally draw a divide between an “us” that is a community of volunteers and activists, and a “them” that is experiencing hunger. (Of course, this is a false line to draw for many reasons!) In your facilitation, refrain from using examples that ask people to imagine being hungry or experiencing poverty themselves.

Prepare

- Read through this guide so that you are familiar with all of the various components. Make any adjustments necessary to ensure that the lesson reflects your particular facilitating style, your students/participants, and the time allotted. **Please note:** while the video is about 14 minutes long, the program can last from 35 minutes to two hours, depending on the additional programming elements included and level of engagement in the discussion.

FACILITATING THE EXPERIENCE

- MAZON has a number of activity modules that you can include in your program. Please find these modules in Part 3: Additional Resources & Activities.
 - Text Study 1 & 2 (10 min each)
 - Hunger Quiz (10-15 min)
 - SNAP Education: \$1.40 Meal Planning Challenge (10 min)
 - Station Activities (20 min)
 - Quote Reflection
 - Social Media Issue Education
 - "What Can You Do?" Worksheet
 - Additional Stories
 - Infographics
 - Advocacy Action (15 min)
- Decide on activities, and gather materials needed for your program.
 - Print or collect any resources you need to have on hand to comfortably facilitate, including but not limited to this document, materials as outlined in each activity, local statistics on hunger, and sample local volunteer opportunities.
 - Local statistics: SNAP: State Fact Sheets ([CBPP](#)) and SNAP Community Characteristics – Profile of SNAP Households by Congressional District ([USDA](#))
 - Choose your method of playing the [This Is Hunger video](#) and set up any needed AV equipment.
 - Provide pens or pencils for each participant.
- Discuss potential advocacy actions and any questions you may have with your MAZON staff contact.

Please note: select printable materials are available [here](#). For more suggestions on how to incorporate hunger, justice and Jewish values into your on-going curriculum, check out MAZON's educational resources [here](#).

STUDENT PROGRAM

Introduce students to MAZON (5 min)

- Ask students what “MAZON” means
 - Mazon is the Hebrew word for food or sustenance.
 - If they are familiar with the *birkat hamazon*, encourage them by asking what the blessing after meals is.
- Explore what being a “Jewish Response to Hunger” may mean.
 - Ask students to reflect on what it means to them.
 - MAZON is based on Jewish values. What values, lessons, or stories from the Jewish tradition suggest that Jews should help the hungry?
 - *tzedakah*, or charity; *tzedek*, or justice; *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world
 - Many others besides! You may [visit our website](#) for more ideas.
 - MAZON works to educate and mobilize the Jewish community.
 - Though these are admirable responses to hunger, MAZON **does not**:
 - Provide kosher food to food-insecure Jews (or directly provide food to any food-insecure person, for that matter);
 - Pack meals on Jewish holidays; or
 - Specifically work to end hunger among only Jews.
- Further clarify: MAZON is a national organization seeking to end hunger among people of **all** faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel, and MAZON works towards this goal by engaging in advocacy.
 - Ask students to define “advocacy.”
 - When you advocate, it means you speak out for something or someone. In MAZON’s case, we do our advocacy by educating people of all ages about hunger and working with elected officials to create change on a national scale.
 - Ask students what the difference is between hunger and food insecurity (though we often use them interchangeably).
 - Hunger is a physical feeling, while food insecurity is lack of consistent access to sufficient nutritional food.



Go Deeper

For homework, ask students to [watch this video](#), which shows a real-world example of MAZON’s advocacy work, and return with questions. They can research your state’s history with the National School Lunch Program, and if lunch shaming is an issue in your state.



Optional (10-35 min): Introduce Text Study and/or play the Hunger Quiz

Please find these modules in Part 3: Additional Activities & Resources, pages 22-27.

STUDENT PROGRAM

Introduce students to *This Is Hunger* (1 min)

- MAZON created *This Is Hunger* to inform our community about the reality of hunger in our country, which is at a truly devastating point, and engage them in action to change the policies that allow hunger to persist in our communities.
- Share that the video they are about to watch is designed to personalize their understanding of who in America struggles with hunger and why.
- Encourage students to give the people who shared their stories their respect, attention, and silence while watching the video.

Play Video (14 min)

- See [Program Script](#) to follow along. You may print as needed for deaf or hard-of-hearing students, or any other students that would benefit.



Mindful Moment: This can be a sad or overwhelming presentation to absorb. Consider including trauma-informed exercises at this juncture, such as asking students to take a moment to breathe together, roll their shoulders, and gently rotate their head from side to side. Tell your students that they are welcome to share any reflections that they may have on their experience with you privately.

Reflect (10 min)

- Share that the stories they just heard are ones that are not often told, and when they are, they are often not heard. And we think they should be. That's why it means a lot – to the anti-hunger community and to the people who shared their stories – that the students have taken the time to hear them.
- Suggested questions to help students process their experience:
 - This can be a lot to take in, so before we move into the next part of the experience, does anyone want to share your reaction or ask a question about something that was unfamiliar?
 - What did it feel like to hear the stories that were shared?
 - Whose story was particularly meaningful for you? Why?
 - Identify some connections between the different stories you heard.
 - Employment challenges; costs of raising children/childcare; nutrition challenges; receiving food assistance; medical issues
 - People often hear that someone is struggling to find work, and suggest that they move. Mark says he doesn't want to move away. Why doesn't he want to move? Why might it be difficult for Mark or others to move? Is it acceptable, moral even, to ask someone to uproot their life to find stability in employment, etc.?
 - Regarding Blanca and Dylan– what are unique challenges for children experiencing food insecurity?

STUDENT PROGRAM

- Marilyn says, “I’m not fixing meals that are nourishing.” What makes something nutritious? Does everyone need the same nutrition? What factors must be considered to plan a nutritious, flexible diet for any given person? (E.g. religious practices, health needs, allergies, sensitivities, foods needed to take medicine, cultural foods, picky child eaters, celebrations). Is providing calories sufficient, or should we as a society/our government through federal benefits/our charitable institutions require a certain level of nutrition?
 - Things to consider:
 - Children aged 3-4 often need to be introduced to new foods 15 times before they develop a taste for it. It is difficult for families on limited budgets to invest in these new foods if in the meantime that food is getting wasted, and the child still needs calories.
 - The question of whether government programs should only allow recipients to purchase “healthy” food is fraught, even within the anti-hunger community. It can be a question of perceived health and a sense of taking away people’s autonomy, or prohibitively restricting them.



Go deeper: The debate around purchasing sugar-sweetened beverages using SNAP dollars is an excellent research topic for interested students. There is a related conversation regarding the charitable food system. Many food banks are starting to have nutrition standards; MAZON conducted a study on this topic, which can be viewed [here](#).

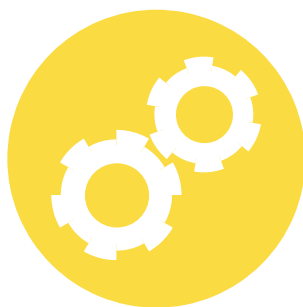
- Mark says he didn’t want to rely on federal benefits for support because there are people “more deserving of it than [him].” Explore the idea of who “deserves” to be hungry, who “deserves” support.
 - MAZON teaches that food is a civil right.
 - The concept of *b’tzelem Elohim* teaches us that every person is a reflection of the image of God, meaning every person has inherent value and deserves basic dignities. Therefore, every person deserves food, regardless of other factors.
 - SNAP is a flexible program that meets people’s needs, whatever they may be. SNAP is an entitlement program, which means the federal government is responsible to every eligible person that submits for benefits. One person will not inadvertently take away another person’s benefits, just by virtue of receiving those benefits themselves.



Go deeper: Ask your students to research FDR’s Four Freedoms, and consider hunger in light of “Freedom from Want.” What other societal contracts do we (as Americans, as Jews, as humans) have that show that we believe that everyone deserves to be free from hunger?

STUDENT PROGRAM

- Molly says, "Have you ever heard people talk about, they're standing in the grocery line and somebody pulls up the Bridge Card and they've got a fur coat on? Have you ever heard things like that?" She's talking about assumptions one can make about someone who accesses federal nutrition benefits. What myths or assumptions have you heard about people living in poverty? How can we challenge those myths? If someone has these markers of "wealth" (e.g. fur coat, mobile phone, a home, or a car), does that preclude them from being food-insecure? If a person finds themselves experiencing financial hardship, is it always the right answer to try and sell these items? How will they get to work or the grocery store in a place with limited or no public transportation? How will a potential employer or a child get in touch with that person without a cell phone?



Optional - Highly Recommended (10 min): SNAP Education – \$1.40 Meal Planning Challenge

Please find this module in Part 3: Additional Activities & Resources, pages 28-29.

Optional (20 min): Station Activities

Please find these modules in Part 3: Additional Activities & Resources, pages 30-31.

- Quote Reflection
- Social Media Issue Education
- "What Can You Do?" Worksheet
- Additional Stories
- Infographics

Optional (15 min): Advocacy Action

Please find this module in Part 3: Additional Activities & Resources, page 32.

STUDENT PROGRAM

Close (5 min)

- Lead final discussion:
 - After this experience, what will you do with what you have learned?
 - What is one thing you plan to take away?
 - How can you continue to take action in your community, whether you align yourself with the charitable or justice response to hunger?
 - What other issues that you care about intersect with hunger?
 - MAZON believes that there is a link between (1) stigma against those who live in poverty and the programs that benefit them, and (2) policy change. Positive policy change leads to decreased stigma, and decreased stigma leads to positive policy change. Reducing stigma – which is to say, combatting harmful myths, is key to ending hunger in our country. How will you educate others using what you learned today, and be part of this larger effort to end hunger?
- Share with your students: Whether you knew it or not, you've just taken your first step towards being an anti-hunger advocate. I hope this experience today has not only made you think but also made you want to act. I encourage each of you to remember this: You may be only one person, and you may think you can't make a difference. But you can. We can. Together, we have the power to create the kind of real change that will help vulnerable people in your community and millions of people across the country. You just have to choose to get involved. I really hope you do choose to get involved.



ADULT PROGRAM

When planning a program for an adult community group, we invite you to be creative with your implementation. *This Is Hunger* can be the heart of the program, and you can include a selection of the modules outlined in the Student Program; they are perfectly appropriate for an adult audience. You know your community best: consider if they will respond to facilitated discussion or individual exploration, and proceed with that in mind.

We also invite you to use *This Is Hunger* as the beginning of larger program created to meet your community's needs – from a [Hunger Shabbat](#) (if your community's Shabbat observance will accommodate a video being played), to a panel discussion with community leaders, a MAZON representative, local elected officials, and/or other anti-hunger or anti-poverty activists or professionals, for example. Please don't hesitate to reach out to MAZON to brainstorm possibilities.





PART III: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

TEXT STUDY 1 & 2

10 MIN EACH

Activity Description

Prior to introducing your group to *This Is Hunger*, engage them in a thoughtful conversation about why there is a national, Jewish organization dedicated to ending hunger for people of all faiths and backgrounds. To help them understand the Jewish values that undergird this commitment to ending hunger, study one or both of the following texts.

Prepare

Print quote(s) for each student or make a large display copy. After each text are **Questions to Consider**. You may choose to distribute the questions as well.

Note: Suggested responses appear below, and can be shared with the group after they have had an opportunity to reflect. Some responses may need to be modified depending on the age of the group. Use your best judgement in leading the conversation.

Text #1:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the strangers: I, Adonai, am your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Questions to Consider

- **What is the message of this text? What are the Israelites supposed to do?**
 - At harvest time, the farmers were supposed to leave the crops at the edges of the fields for people living in poverty (who may not have their own fields).
 - The farmers were also supposed to leave the fruit that fell to the ground and leave some of the grapes on the vine so that people living in poverty and strangers could collect them.
- **What is the significance of leaving the food for people in need to come collect themselves – instead of gathering it up and bringing it to the market or delivering it to them in person?**
 - Allowing people to come collect the food on their own lets them maintain their **dignity and anonymity**; they can collect the fruit and grain at night when the farmer is not in the field, and therefore the farmer won't necessarily know who came to pick it up. This saves the person from any embarrassment. In gleaning for themselves, individuals are also given a role in their own self-improvement, which is empowering.
 - When each person is able to come collect food for themselves, they are able to select the amount that is appropriate for their family and they are able to **choose food according to their own needs**.

TEXT STUDY 1 & 2

- Rabbinic tradition teaches that the **edges of a field actually *belong* to people living in poverty** – and that if a farmer acts as if it is his or her property, it is as if the farmer is stealing from them. When people come to collect the food from the edges of the field, they are actually coming to claim what is rightfully theirs. They don't need the farmers to bring it to them because it is not a gift in the first place.
- **What is the significance of leaving food for the stranger?**
 - If the Torah didn't specify that we must leave the food for the stranger, we might be inclined to only help the people we know.
 - We are responsible for all people in our communities who are in need, those we know and those we don't know, those who are like us and those who are different from us.
 - MAZON is a Jewish organization and based on these Jewish values. MAZON works to end hunger for people of all faiths and backgrounds.
 - Because we know we too were "strangers in a strange land," we are encouraged to see ourselves in the stranger. Even if someone is not familiar to us or outside of our immediate community, we see a fellow humanity in them. We feel a responsibility to them.
- **Is this a practical response to hunger today?**
 - Most people are not farmers, and most people don't live near a farm. This doesn't represent how we can be generous as a community, or how community members can find help safely and efficiently.
 - However, this is a social contract that we can replicate.
 - The modern-day Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps) preserves some of these same values. This program, known by the acronym SNAP, allows individuals to purchase food at the grocery store with a debit card just like anyone else in the check-out line, which maintains anonymity and dignity. This also gives SNAP recipients the ability to buy food according to their family's needs rather than relying solely on what is given to them at the food pantry.
- **Today, how can we, as individuals, live out the spirit of this ancient commandment to "leave the corners of our fields" for those in need?**
 - Engage in advocacy to change policies that affect hungry people;
 - Support federal nutrition programs like SNAP and school meals so that hungry families and kids get enough to eat;
 - Educate yourself and others about the reality of hunger in America and stay on top of current issues;
 - Donate healthy/nutritious food to food drives (our ancestors donated fruit, vegetables and whole grains – we can do the same!);
 - Volunteer at a food pantry/soup kitchen; and
 - Give tzedakah to anti-hunger organizations.

TEXT STUDY 1 & 2

Text #2:

If your brother becomes poor, you shall not allow him to fall. He is like a [heavy] load resting on a wall; one [person] can then hold it and prevent it from falling, but once it has fallen to the ground, five cannot lift it up again. (Sifra 109b on Leviticus 25:35)

Questions to Consider

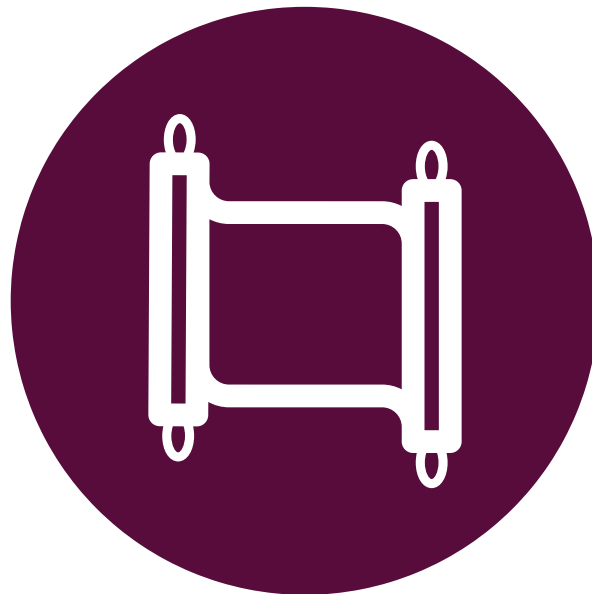
- **What is this text's message? How is a person in poverty like a heavy load?**
 - A heavy load on a wall can be supported and kept from falling by just one person reaching out a hand and holding it up. Once the heavy load has fallen from the wall, it is much harder to pick up – and five people can't even lift it. Likewise, there are things we can do to help people who have become poor so that things don't become worse – but if they aren't supported then things can become much more difficult and it becomes harder to help.
- **Why do you think the text says “if your brother becomes poor” instead of speaking about people in general?**
 - By saying “brother” the text implies that people in poverty are just like us, like family. All people are our brothers and sisters and we have an obligation to care for those who are struggling and keep them from falling. They are not strangers; they are like our siblings.
- **How can we help “lift up” our brothers and sisters in poverty so that they don't fall? What does it mean to “lift” someone up?**
 - We can lift hungry people up by donating money or food, volunteering, or advocating for policies that will help people get back on their feet.
 - To “lift someone up” means to elevate them, to raise their status and their dignity, to bring them higher, closer to where they want to be.
 - This word also has a spiritual element – helping others and lifting them up is a sacred act; it brings us closer to each other and to achieving our goal of working for justice and repairing the world in partnership with God. Together we can transform the world from *how it is* into ***how it should be***.

Key Concepts

- Jewish values, like those expressed in the texts above, clearly indicate an obligation to alleviate poverty in general and end hunger in particular. Each of us is responsible for helping those in need, no matter who they are.
- Hunger in America today has reached staggering rates: More than 1 in 8 Americans struggle with hunger - that's over 40 million people; which is more than the entire population of Canada.

TEXT STUDY 1 & 2

- Hunger vs. Food Insecurity – an important definition of terms: when we talk about hunger in America, we are really talking about food insecurity. The USDA defines food security as “access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”
- For most people in America, struggling with hunger doesn’t mean they are hungry all the time, but it does mean that, for example, parents may skip meals so their kids can have enough to eat, they live with a constant anxiety about whether they will have enough food, or the food they can afford is unhealthy and doesn’t give them the nutrition they need.
- Beyond the statistics are millions of individual people – and some of their stories will be shared as part of *This Is Hunger*.
- People who are experiencing food insecurity qualify for government nutrition programs that provide important assistance and help individuals and families get access to the nutritious food they need. Two of the most important programs are SNAP and the School Meals Program:
 - SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, what used to be known as food stamps. SNAP allows low-income families to purchase food each month at the grocery store.
 - The School Meals Program allows kids from low-income families to get a free or reduced-price breakfast or lunch while they are in school, which means they can focus on learning instead of being hungry.



HUNGER QUIZ

10-15 MIN

Prepare

Assign letters to four corners of room, get students on their feet, and ask them to go to whichever corner of the room corresponds with what they think the answer is to the following questions. Adjust questions and language to age of students and level of participation.

Label corners of room with A, B, C, or D to assist students in choosing their corner. If appropriate for your classroom, print responses to each question to hang in corners of the room, or give each student a copy of the questions and responses (though not with marked answers, of course!).

How many people in the US are hungry or food insecure?

- a) 3 million b) 17 million **c) 40 million** d) 86 million

Context: Total population of the US is 326 million.

Discuss: 40 million represents about 12-13% of total population. That is more than the entire population of Canada. There is hunger in every Congressional district in the country.

How many of those people are children?

- a) 450 thousand b) 7 million **c) 12 million** d) 24 million

Discuss: Hunger disproportionately affects children (the percentage of children in the hungry population is larger than the percentage of children in the population as a whole). Why might that be the case? What are the particular challenges that face children who are hungry as opposed to adults?

What is the most common way Americans receive food assistance?

- a) Government programs** b) food pantries c) meal programs d) begging

Context: Briefly describe government programs: Food assistance programs include National School Lunch Program and SNAP (formerly known as food stamps).

Discuss: Ask students to give their reasoning for choosing their corner. Often, children and adults alike will choose one of the charitable responses to hunger (b or c) because they are most familiar with them.

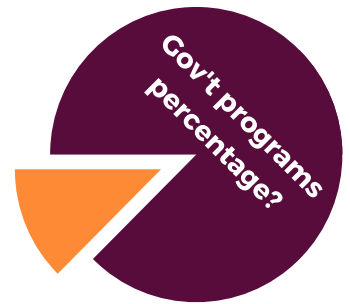
What percentage of food assistance in this country is met by government programs?

In other words, if you are looking at the whole pie chart of how people in our country can receive food assistance, what part of that pie is represented by government programs? We are assuming the other part of the pie is taken up by charitable programs like food banks/pantries and meal programs.

- a) 32% b) 57% c) 78% **d) 95%**

HUNGER QUIZ

Discuss: Present the enormity of need and misconceptions that people have regarding the charitable response to hunger. This is usually a shocking number for people of all ages – most people are very unfamiliar with the massive scale of government programs, and the inability for charitable programs to fill in the gap if those government programs are eroded.



Can you tell someone is food insecure just by looking at them?

a) yes **b) no**

Discuss: Ask students to give their reasoning for their answer. Hunger is often invisible in the US; perceived socio-economic status, employment and body size do not necessarily correlate with being hunger-free.

Why is it important to know these facts and figures?

Discuss: When you're educated, you can educate others – including voters and elected officials. When you're informed, you can be part of changing the system for the better.



SNAP EDUCATION

10 MIN

\$1.40 Meal Planning Challenge

MAKE A MEAL FOR
Joaquin

Vegetables

- Carrots \$0.50 / cup
- Broccoli \$0.75 / cup
- Green Beans \$0.40 / cup
- Spinach \$0.60 / cup
- Kale \$0.25 / cup
- Lettuce \$0.25 / cup
- Hot Peppers \$0.10 / cup

Grains

- Pasta \$0.10 / cup
- Whole Wheat \$0.20 / cup
- Quinoa \$0.10 / cup
- Wild Rice \$0.10 / cup
- 100% Whole Grain Bread \$0.20 / 2 oz
- Corn Cobs \$0.30 / 2 oz
- Cereal \$0.10 / cup
- Crackers \$0.10 / 2 oz

Fruits

- Blueberries \$0.80 / cup
- Bananas \$0.50 / cup
- Watermelon \$0.10 / cup
- Strawberries \$0.10 / cup
- Apples \$0.10 / cup
- Berries \$0.10 / cup
- Cherries \$0.10 / cup
- Peaches (Canned) \$0.10 / cup

Protein

- Lean Ground Beef \$0.10 / cup
- Lean Ground Turkey \$0.10 / cup
- Chicken Breast \$0.10 / cup
- Salmon \$0.10 / cup
- Eggs \$0.10 / cup
- Hard Boiled Eggs \$0.10 / cup
- Black Beans (Canned) \$0.10 / cup
- Red Kidney Beans \$0.10 / cup
- Natural Peanut Butter \$0.10 / cup
- Milk \$0.10 / cup

Dairy

- Milk \$0.10 / cup
- Cheese \$0.10 / cup
- Greek Yogurt \$0.10 / cup
- Yogurt \$0.10 / cup

INSTRUCTIONS

- Look over the plate at the food options and their prices.
- Select and circle five items—one from each food category.
- Calculate the Total meal cost.

Total meal cost: \$ _____

Turn page over >

Mazon A Social Enterprise by Mazon 10850 Wilshire Blvd #400 Los Angeles, CA 90025 | (800) 813-0557 | mazon.org

JOAQUIN RELIES ON SNAP (A.K.A. FOOD STAMPS)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most effective defense against hunger. The program reaches millions of low-income households that need help putting food on the table, the majority of which are families that include children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

While the national average SNAP benefit is a modest \$1.40 per person, per meal, SNAP plays a critical role in lifting millions of people—especially children—out of poverty. Research shows that improving food security through SNAP significantly improves health and other outcomes for both adults and children.

If your total meal cost for Joaquin was more than \$1.40, start again and try to make a meal that will fit Joaquin's budget.

- How difficult was it to make a meal with \$1.40?
- Would you want to eat this meal?
- How nutritious is the meal you created?

"When I go shopping with my food stamps, I think of what my mother taught me when I was nine - 'She'd say, 'Mum, you want to count the number of dollars of one food and compare it to the other food.'"

"There's ways to try to get the most out of your dollar. If you're hungry it doesn't matter if the quality of the food is good or not. If you're hungry you got to feed yourself."

"If I didn't have food stamps I don't know what I would do. I would be barely scraping by on food for sometimes. The \$300 in food stamps that I receive it does help, it does help a lot. It's a week-to-a week if I'm lucky."

thiishunger.org | mazon.org

Activity Description

In the \$1.40 Meal Planning Challenge, participants put themselves in the shoes of families and individuals relying upon the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by planning a meal in under \$1.40, the average amount received per person, per meal from the SNAP program. SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) is the cornerstone of the nation's federal food assistance programs, providing monthly benefits that allow eligible low-income families to purchase food.

Ask students to make a meal that they would like to eat – breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Please note the prices are listed for California, and are for a single portion of that food. After they have time to consider and calculate their total meal costs, ask students to share their meals. Together, they may flip the page and read the back. If time allows, encourage students to try to make a meal that meets the budget.

Prepare

Print a meal planner placemat for each student.

Discussion Questions

- Is it possible to make meals with this budget? Would that be a pleasant or nutritious way to eat?
- What are obstacles to cooking nutritious meals?
 - If people are working multiple jobs and/or have to consider child care, it can be difficult to make time to shop for and cook nutritious meals.
 - As this activity demonstrates, produce and other nutritious items are often more expensive than processed foods – hence the distinction between food and sustenance in the meaning of the word “MAZON.”

SNAP EDUCATION

- If a person does not have a steady income and paying their electricity bills is an issue (or if their housing situation is unstable), it may not be realistic to buy fresh produce and protein, or other food that is not shelf-stable. Indeed, having a functioning and available kitchen may be in question.
- How would dietary restrictions (allergies, kashrut, etc.) or medical issues impact purchasing decisions?
- How should we address this issue as a society? Should we decrease food costs, increase benefits like SNAP, or something else entirely?

SNAP Basics

- As of 2018, 40 million Americans relied on SNAP benefits. That equates to 1 out of every 8 people in the United States. SNAP is broadly available to many households with low incomes. Visit the [Center on Budget and Policy](#) to learn more about SNAP eligibility, and restrictions to that eligibility.
- Nationwide, the average SNAP benefit per person is about \$127 per month, or \$1.40 per person per meal. More than 90% of SNAP benefits are spent by the third week of the month. With SNAP, you can't buy hot (prepared) foods, vitamins and medicines, household supplies (soap, paper products, etc.), pet foods, non-food items, alcohol, or nicotine.



STATION ACTIVITIES

20 MIN

These modules may be presented as group, small group, or individual activities – please proceed as best fits your students' needs. For small groups or individuals, it can be beneficial to create stations where students can interact with each activity. Give students time to engage with all of the stations, and then gather students together to share.

Quote Reflection

Prepare: Choose a quote like those below, write it on a large sticky note/butcher paper, and invite students to add their comments to the paper, reflecting on how the quote relates to what they have learned today. Lead a discussion on their comments when gathered as a group.

- Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy. – Proverbs 31:9
- You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it. – Pirkei Avot 2:21

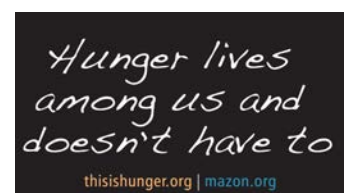
Social Media Issue Education or “Advocacy Selfies”

Activity Description: Invite students to take “advocacy selfies” while holding signs like those below. If preferable, ask students to create their own signs based on what they learned in this session. You can post group pictures to your school's social media page, or you can invite students to post on their own social media pages (if appropriate). Encourage them to share their experience of *This Is Hunger* and any facts, reactions, and aspirations for anti-hunger work. Use #thisishunger and be sure to tag @MAZONusa on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Prepare: Print sample signs, and/or provide paper and markers for additional sign making. Set up selfie station with a phone or camera, or ensure at least some participants have a camera available for individual or group pictures.

Discussion Questions:

- What does posting on social media accomplish?
 - There are many myths around people who are food insecure in our country, and those myths need to be broken down to help us reach our policy goals. Every person that you can educate is another potential voter or change-maker.
- How else can you share what you learned today?



STATION ACTIVITIES

“What Can You Do?” Worksheet

Activity Description: This worksheet invites students to reflect on actions they personally believe are most effective for ending hunger and to identify their preferred approach – charity and/ or social justice. By offering real-world examples, it also makes these options concrete.

Prepare: Print one copy for each student or small group.

Key Concepts:

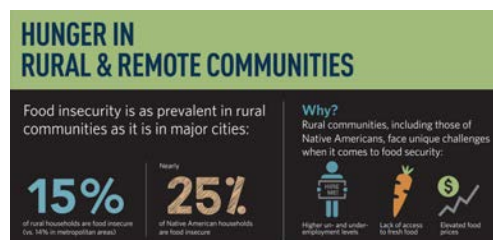
- Charity: short-term solution with immediate impact; helps individuals; no change on a large scale; not enough resources to address the huge problem; like a band-aid
- Justice: long-term solutions with big impact that lasts; change the system; address the problem on a scale equal to the challenge; government has the capacity/resources to end hunger and its causes – we have the responsibility to hold them accountable
- While charity (emergency aid) can be essential, we cannot end hunger without social justice (advocacy).

Additional Stories

Activity Description: Introduce additional stories to show a diversity of experience. Similar to the video, each story can be used as a topic of discussion and reflection.

Prepare: You can [print additional This Is Hunger stories](#), [purchase a display book](#) to keep in your classroom, or set up a computer station [linking to stories](#).

Infographics



Activity Description: Invite students to review the infographics and remember one or two facts that are interesting or surprising to them to share with the class.

Prepare: Provide copies or otherwise display infographics.

Go deeper: Students can use these facts as a starting point for further research, if desired.




ADVOCACY ACTION

15 MIN

"Change starts by one person ... be that change in the world."

Activity Description: Make an immediate impact by creating an opportunity to engage in advocacy on the spot.

Prepare: Visit MAZON's [Take Action](#) page to see the latest featured actions, or get in touch with MAZON staff to plan an appropriate letter writing campaign (or similar). Provide computer or tablet station(s) and pull up your chosen action on the MAZON website, provide postcards to write to your chosen elected official about an issue gleaned from the website or discussed with MAZON staff, or provide whatever medium for advocacy as discussed with your MAZON contact.



Go deeper: To fully train students in how to undertake advocacy, give them the opportunity to lay the groundwork for this action. This will require research into appropriate targets for the advocacy ask (often, your state's Senators or local Member of Congress). This is a wonderful learning opportunity for students on how to find and address their elected (e.g. visiting house.org). Similarly, teach them how to draft an appropriate letter (e.g. including correct titles, writing with respect regardless of political affiliation, characterizing an issue thoughtfully, sharing their feelings about it in a compelling way).

You can also explore MAZON's [Legislative Meeting Toolkit](#). The Toolkit provides instructions to schedule a meeting with an elected official and/or their staff. You can use that meeting to deliver your postcards and/or discuss what your students learned about the federal food safety net.



QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT GET

Why launch *This Is Hunger*?

We have an opportunity and an obligation to ensure that our country responds to those who are most vulnerable. Over forty million Americans – one in eight people of all ethnicities and ages – struggle with hunger every day. Now more than ever, we must work together as an informed, engaged and active community committed to ending hunger.

How is participating in *This Is Hunger* going to help end hunger?

The first step in ending hunger here at home is to educate people about the reality of this devastating problem. And that's what *This Is Hunger* is designed to do – to raise awareness about hunger and rally people into the fight to end it. Anyone that learns more about this issue has a responsibility to share that message. As *This Is Hunger* changes how people see hunger in America and inspires those who participate to spread that message, we will build the political will to change policy.

How does the changing political landscape impact MAZON and the effort to end hunger?

MAZON came into existence in 1985, in the middle of a time when safety net programs were being dismantled. And yet, we were able to make a significant impact not only on the rest of the anti-hunger community but in the lives of hungry people everywhere because we rolled up our sleeves and got to work. Because the stakes are so high for so many people, now more than ever, our work is critically important; now more than ever, we cannot give up.

What is the story behind the creation of *This Is Hunger*?

We commissioned Barbara Grover, photojournalist and documentarian, to travel the United States to document the reality of hunger in America. Once we saw what she'd been able to capture, we knew that we had an incredible tool to help us raise awareness about the hidden problem of hunger in America. We then recruited Marni Gittleman, who was a member of the visionary creative team behind Noah's Ark at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, to help us bring it to life.

Initially, we envisioned a traditional traveling exhibit of photographs and corresponding stories. But as we considered our goals, we quickly recognized that we needed this to be more than just an encounter – that we needed visitors to do more than read a story and look at a picture. If we were going to inspire them to join our effort to end hunger in America, it was vital that we got them to truly engage, and the only way to make that happen was to provide a more interactive experience. Thus, *This Is Hunger* was born. The physical exhibit lives on in Southern California.

To give our partners across the country access to these powerful stories, we worked with Director Chris Greene to develop the digital *This Is Hunger* experience.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT GET

How long has *This Is Hunger* been in the works, and how did MAZON pay for it?

MAZON debuted the first iteration of the program in Fall 2016, and our team was crafting this experience well before that. The initial tour was a significant investment and was entirely self-funded. As an advocacy organization, education is a vital component of our mission, and *This Is Hunger* is the most powerful thing we've ever done in that regard. For the digital piece, we are lucky to have generous support from the Ellen and Ronald Block Family Foundation and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund.

The people you feature don't look hungry...

Hunger in America doesn't fit the stereotypical image most people envision. People in America who struggle with hunger look just like you and me, because they are like you and me. They are our family, our neighbors, our friends. That's why *This Is Hunger* is so important – if we're ever going to rally the political will to end hunger here at home, we have to challenge the misperceptions about who in America struggles with hunger and why.

Food insecure Americans often struggle to feed themselves and their families healthy food, and find themselves having to make the rational, economic choice to fill up on food that is less nutritious – it's generally easier to find and cheaper to buy. In the longer term, however, these "empty calorie" foods can lead to weight gain and illness, which is why we now see people who struggle with both hunger and obesity.

Are the people in *This Is Hunger* okay with you using their pictures and stories?

Everyone featured in *This Is Hunger* has explicitly agreed to allow us to share their stories, because they want others to understand the reality of hunger in America. They recognize the value of what MAZON is trying to do, and they want to help make sure that others don't have to struggle like they have.

How were the people whose stories are featured selected?

Barbara Grover gathered more than 70 stories, representing a cross-section of experiences. Some highlight the tragedy of generational poverty; others depict the mundane circumstances that could plunge any of us into hunger. We want everyone to find something in this experience that they can relate to, so we tried to present as wide a range of different depictions as possible.

Can you tell me a bit more about the people featured in *This Is Hunger*?

Bill is from Michigan, and we've since learned he is now employed once again. Blanca is from New Mexico; she went to college and is working on criminal justice reform. Dylan and Mark are from Kentucky (no relation). Marilyn lives on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota; she is Oglala Sioux. Whitney is from Ohio.



THIS IS HUNGER

A community engagement program of **MAZON** | A Jewish Response To Hunger

MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger