

Dear Friends,

In September 1973, musician Harry Chapin was a guest on my ABC radio network show 'On This Rock'. On air, we shared our sadness and anger at the rampant hunger and poverty so prevalent around the world and in our own backyards. After the show Harry invited me to his house for dinner, during which I suggested that we put together a concert to benefit the millions of people who were starving in Africa at that time. Harry's response: "I'm no George Harrison, but let's give it a try." We began organizing a large scale concert with the United Nations, but it never got off the ground. What we learned was a very valuable lesson. Even if we had succeeded and raised a million dollars with the concert and then raised a million each night for a year it would still have been only a drop in the bucket. We realized that, to truly affect change, we both needed to make a lifelong commitment to ending hunger starting right here in the USA. We needed to support local solutions to this global problem. We needed to look at the root causes of hunger. And we needed to find a way to help people to break out of the cycle of poverty. That, in a nutshell, is how we founded WhyHunger (formerly World Hunger Year) in 1975.

Just as the organization was picking up speed, Harry died in a tragic auto accident in 1981. Most people thought WhyHunger would die with him but his family, friends, fans and the music community made sure that did not happen. WhyHunger has continued the tradition that we started by staying focused on several fundamental principles: working together to combat the root causes of hunger, poverty, racism and economic injustice, as well as supporting grassroots solutions and promoting self-reliance.

Today, we are a grassroots support organization which works with community-based organizations throughout our country and around the world that have innovative programs, which go beyond giving people emergency food. These organizations help people to help themselves through food production, job training programs, nutrition education, community economic development, healthcare, youth programming, leadership development and more. These are wonderful programs run by hard-working, caring people. Every day they create miracles in the lives of thousands of people all over the world. The problem is they are almost all underfunded and understaffed, often working to solve systematic problems that result in hunger. WhyHunger helps these folks to build their capacity to sustain their programs and services through technical assistance and by connecting them with each other to share best practices. We also raise money for these organizations from performers, foundations, businesses and individual people with generous hearts as a part of our Artists Against Hunger and Poverty Program, the Grassroots Action Network, Global Movements Program and the Nourish Network for the Right to Food. And we provide them with vital information on hunger and poverty and connections with the media and government as well as national, state, and local organizations.

Every day we respond to the emergency food needs of poor and hungry Americans through our WhyHunger Hotline 1(800) 5-HUNGRY, texting service and Find Food database. Each month we serve hundreds of our fellow citizens from all across America who are hungry connecting individuals in need to emergency food in their own communities through our extensive network of community-based organizations. We also connect people to government feeding and poverty programs including SNAP, (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps), WIC (Woman, Infants and Children Supplemental Food Program), Summer Feeding, School Breakfast and Lunch, and Earned Income Tax credit.

We tell the story of hunger and poverty on our website through the personal stories of poor and hungry people and each Thanksgiving we broadcast our Hungerthon on radio stations across the country reaching millions of people with information about hunger and poverty and with ways to take action. Through our Global Movements Program, we work with US and international social movements and civil society organizations, linking WhyHunger's domestic work on hunger and poverty to global movements for food sovereignty and the basic rights to food, land, water and sustainable livelihoods.

During our long history, we have also created some remarkable organizations. The New York Hunger Hotline, which we founded in 1978 has helped more than a million people to receive emergency food and has been a catalyst in the creation of hundreds of food pantries and soup kitchens in New York City. Long Island Cares, now called The Harry Chapin Food Bank which WhyHunger started in 1982, was one of the first suburban food banks has distributed millions of pounds of food to the people of Long Island and helped thousands of people out of poverty. The Center for Food Action in New Jersey, which WhyHunger founded in 1978, coordinates food policy for the whole state of New Jersey as well as emergency food distribution that helps hundreds of thousands of hungry people each year.

After all these 42 years I am still passionate and deeply involved in the work of WhyHunger. I am thrilled that we continue to partner with some of the most effective community based organizations all across our country and around the world including Boricúa Organization for Ecologic Agriculture, a collective of farmers in Puerto Rico that have been growing food the right way, preserving the land, not poisoning the water or land and producing delicious food for many people. As you may know 80 percent of farmland in Puerto Rico has been damaged. Just this week WhyHunger has raised \$10,000 to help these farmers to restore their land and produce good food once again. AND we continue to be appreciated both in the U.S. and throughout the world as a leader in promoting food justice and fighting poverty, as well as helping to change the emergency food system to focus more on helping people get out of poverty.

Please take a look through our website to learn more about our work and perhaps to make a donation to help us continue.

Peace,
Bill Ayres

Co-Founder and Ambassador
WhyHunger