

AROUND THE WORLD TO EXPOSE HUNGER IN THE U.S.A.

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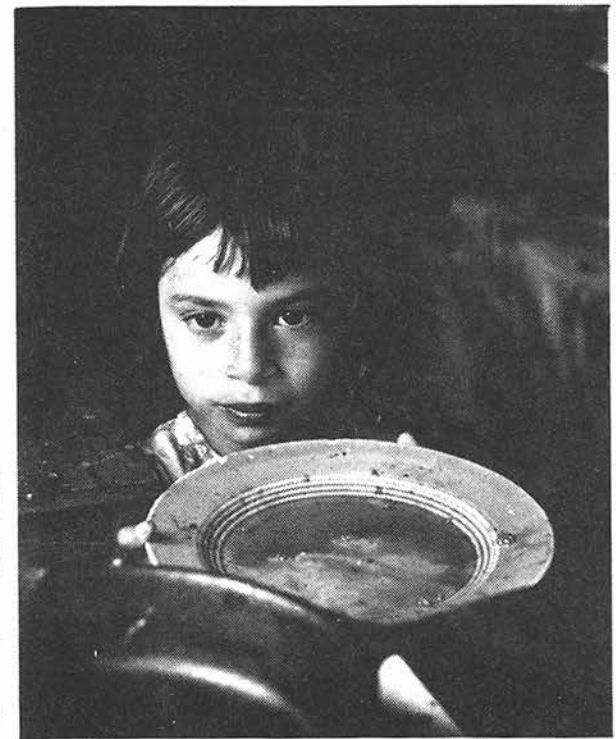


I was awarded a scholarship by the Presbyterian Church to attend a nutrition seminar on hunger. This was a round-the-world trip, which took 27 other women from different parts of the States and myself through Paris, Rome, Lebanon, India, Thailand, Phillipines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and last Tokyo. I was indeed fortunate to see all these parts of the world, but my main interest was that it was a seminar on hunger. And hunger, I felt, related to what a hell of a lot of recipients go through, day after day. No matter how well they budget, I know from my own personal experience and from working with

recipients daily, that 21¢ per person, per meal is not enough! And that, hermanos, was my main concern, the need to voice the welfare recipients woes.

The trip held a combination of many things for me; I was the only Chicana, the only grass roots person. The only grass roots person. The group consisted of pros, teachers, dieticians, secretaries, professors, pediatricians, etc. Though some in the group may have felt sincerely the desire to understand our problems, most were completely out of touch that there are problems here, at home. Before we even left the States I felt the sting of discrimination from some of the group, and before long I knew this was just the Church's way of establishing good or better relationships around the world. I decided to make the most of it.

I saw a lot of poverty, actual starvation, especially in India. I felt deeply and sincerely for this people, but I knew my work was here, at home, with my own people. I came to the conclusion more than ever, that this is the richest country in the world, and for hunger of any kind to exist here is inexcusable! India, for example, is a very underdeveloped country. Though it grows plenty of food, it loses 50% of what it produces because of bad storage. There seems to be great weakness in the rural areas, no organizations, underemployment, government poor, cultural beliefs, overpopulated, the problems seem endless. But what of our food problems here? We've no bad storage, the U.S. has the most modern machinery available in the world. In fact, we produce more than enough. So much in fact, farmers are paid not to grow crops! Food stamps were also created to get rid of surplus food. And the poor, still have that hidden hunger, never have enough, in a land of plenty? The man has



become selfish, he does not want to distribute evenly in any form, let it be housing, job opportunities, education or whatever. It caters only to the Anglo, the middle class, the skilled. It has let the welfare system become a political football where the poor get poorer, as the saying goes, and the rich get richer. Welfare seems to be just a way of easing society's conscience. Like you know, we are providing something. But let's get down to the nitty gritty carnales, who's on welfare? The oilmen, the farmers, the politicians, that's who. You just end up getting the crumbs off the table. Ya Basta! Are you willing to sit back and take it? Are you going to let it control you? Its up to you. No matter how you come back and say, well, I'm grateful for getting something or: I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate in a program-- whatever you kept telling yourself, ask yourself, are you willing to settle for those crumbs off the table? I'm not, that's the symbol of "La Causa," of the Chicano Movement, all over. Let's get together and do it!

QUE VIVA LA RAZA
Alicia Escalante