

Matthew Goncalves

One Lunchroom at a Time

If you could choose to fix one problem in the world, what would it be? When I think of the question the first thing that comes to mind is education, second is our youth. School lunches in France are better than in the United States because of their administration's intentions, the kind of food they are served, and the way it is served. It is in fact something so simple, but the importance of it goes a long way and that is the first thing I would like to cover before getting into the specific details of lunchroom situations in the U.S. compared to France.

Majority of people when asked such a question would think of the biggest problem that they believe our planet faces. That is such a plain way of thinking because in reality the smallest problems hold the biggest threat. I would save the world starting with people's well-being; America believes itself to be the greatest, but the entire continent of Europe disagrees, more specifically the French. Before discussing anything else, let's get a major issue out of the way. We all want a world without violence, better salaries, equality, and all that good stuff. Problem is, not only do we not make any effort to make those things happen, but when we see problems with simple resolutions we look away as if because it is easy then it's probably not important. Which brings me to the main question: How do we expect to make a major impact in our planet if we are not even capable of feeding our children the right things? REAL food perhaps. We might have good intentions to feed the hungry in attempt to stop world-hunger, but what good are our intentions if we toss the people in need a McDouble? In reality, we're just poisoning them. We Americans put little thought into what we actually do for people because we're more

concerned with the fact that we are reaching out to help others, so that automatically makes us good people. And because of this way of thinking; we will never progress.

As stated in an Article on Time Magazine “In the early 1930s, farmers were facing financial ruin thanks to the price collapses, laborers were having extreme difficulty finding work, and poor children were experiencing increasing malnutrition and hunger. School lunch programs emerged as the perfect solution to all three problems”(Rude np). It is clear that when the program first came about our intentions were to feed the hungry children, but that was not our ONLY intention. There were other problems we needed to resolve, and it just so happened that we could feed the children of our country while doing so. Some might argue that I don’t know this for sure, but how else do you explain this: School lunches were once great in America; kids were eating healthy foods and the employment rate increased with the program, but once employment was steady and it was no longer a problem that is when the program began to fall. Why? Because people no longer cared like they did in the beginning. Everyone just wanted to do their job, get paid, and go home. People don’t appreciate anything they have like they did when they didn’t have it; and if our intentions are limited like that then our children will continue to be fed garbage.

What we consume is something really important; it makes a huge difference in our lives and determines whether we will have a good or a bad day. The article says “With less federal support, school lunches in the 1980s and 1990s became increasingly privatized and nutrition standards often took a backseat to the bottom line. This same period saw childhood obesity rates in the United States skyrocket”(Rude np). This all works like a domino effect, so if our intentions fall apart, so does what types of food we feed these kids and everything that comes after. In my

experiences students have been served frozen microwaved, processed foods. Our hot meals are a bit warm, if not just cold. Our milk is sometimes expired, and much more. But students just eat it because there is nothing else to eat, and some of us just starve because we can't eat any of it. We don't get a variety to choose from, and we certainly don't have separation between an appetizer, entree, or dessert like the children in France do. There is no sense of care for what our children eat; it's almost like they are factory workers who by law the government is now forced to feed, so they just slap whatever on a tray and give it to students as they come down a line. Children need to choose from a variety so that they can start to realize what they are eating and with that they slowly start to teach themselves what foods are good for what and make healthy choices for themselves.

The third detail I would like to talk about is table manners. It's funny how something so simple can impact an individual's life so much. I'm not saying that we have to be like France and serve children food on glass plates with real forks and spoons, but we should treat the lunchroom more like a restaurant or even a family dining room. Children need to learn to share with their peers, say please and thank you, keep their space neat as they eat, and help clean up afterwards. Teaching them this form of manner at a young age will ensure a much higher chance of them understanding to be respectful towards other people and that they will get that respect right back, children can discipline themselves if they are wired to in a natural way.

Works Cited

Moore, Michael, Director. *Where to Invade Next*. IMG Films, 2015 Amazon Video, Amazon.com.

Rude, Emelyn. "An Abbreviated History of School Lunch in America". *Time*, Time.com, Sep 19 2016.