

Real Hunger Games are Exposed in ‘A Place at the Table’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 1, 2013 - 8:33pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – There has been an attitude shift in America in a couple of generations toward the poor and unlucky in life. What was once a campaign to end poverty and take care of that part of the population, has turned into a demonization of them. This is one of the main themes in “A Place at the Table,” an overview of the continuing hunger problem in America.

“A Place at the Table” reveals not pure starvation as the main problem, but “food insecurity,” as in where is the next meal coming from. What was once a system of food banks in America that nearly eradicated the problem in the late 1970s, has turned into a political process of endless hearings and the famous “makers versus takers” assertion in the previous presidential campaign. Filmmakers Kristi Jacobson and Laura Silverbush explore the current food insecurity through statistics, interviews and actual victims of the circumstance.

The documentary opens with some eye-opening statistics. While programs for the poor seem to be the first victims of budget cuts, federal subsidies for farmers continue – including for the corporations that are increasingly taking over the food producing industry – even though the policies were designed to help stabilize pricing during the Depression. This is a telling example of how lobbying and legislative advantages for corporations take precedent over feeding the poor.



A Family Struggles with Food Insecurity in ‘A Place at the Table’
Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

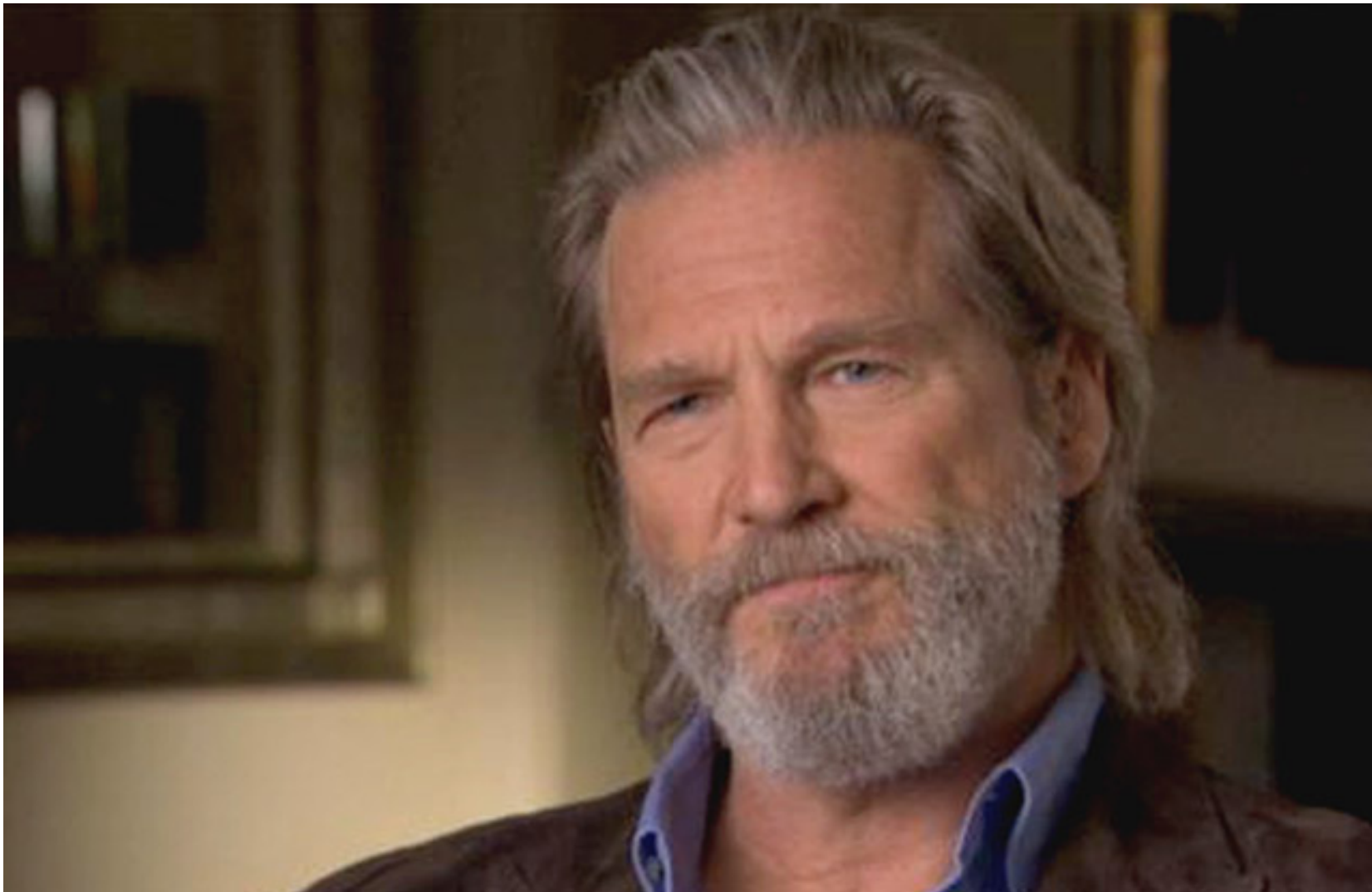
Another revelation that comes out of the film is that obesity is tied into food insecurity. Because subsidized foods are often the cheapest to produce (think high fructose corn syrup), the cheap products from those subsidies become what poverty level buyers consume. So part of food insecurity is “food deserts” (areas with inaccessibility to healthier foods), lack of education on nutrition and volunteer food banks also doling

out what is cheapest.

This is a difficult issue to pin down, as food insecurity is an invisible problem, as [director Kristi Jacobson noted](#) [13] in an interview with HollywoodChicago.com. We tend not to see the physical side of this problem, according to the film, and in the last couple of election cycles the Republican party has staked their power on convincing Americans that there is a “moocher” class. But assuring that people didn’t go hungry was a former commitment of the U.S., and the problem was nearly solved by the late 1970s. Recently, however, subsequent cuts to any federal and state budgets always seem to start with aid-to-poor programs.

Most effective in the film were the black and white statistics, which expose what kind of country we’ve become. Government money is increasingly doled out as favors to donors or high roller corporations, while aid initiatives die through lack of support. There are no lobbies for feeding people. Filmmakers Jacobson and Silverbush point out exactly what is happening, and many of the statistics and revelations surprised them, as it should surprise those who see this film.

There are advocates for this issue, one of the main ones being actor and activist Jeff Bridges. He appears throughout the film, firming up some of the points made and effectively calling out the government on others. Many of the experts interviewed offer informative opinions, as they battle on the front lines of the problem, and more visibility is gained through the efforts of those profiled in the film, which is being paired with an advocacy project ([website link below](#)).



Actor and Activist Jeff Bridges in 'A Place at the Table'
Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

The saddest part of the film are the actual victims of this crisis, and several levels of those in need are presented, most distressing being children. Food insecurity also affects the working poor, and even a police officer in Colorado takes advantage of a food bank because his dollar won’t stretch enough for his family. The stakes are high for all these people, and the time, effort and emotional torment in pursuing necessary food is agonizing.

Given the onslaught of the 24/7 news cycle, this issue has certainly not been given the due it deserves. Hopefully “A Place at the Table” will be the lightning rod for real change in eradicating food insecurity, in the richest country in the world.

“A Place at the Table” has a limited release nationwide on March 1st, plus release on iTunes and Video On Demand. See local listings for theaters, showtimes and channel locations. Directed by Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush. Rated “PG.” The filmmakers have set up a website for more information, click on ['Take Part.'](#) [14]



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