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Hunger and Eating Habits Causing Obesity in America

In the past decade or so, America has slowly staked its claim for the title as the fattest nation in the world. Obesity has become a country-wide epidemic and is now competing with smoking for the most preventable deaths annually. Overweight related illnesses have now claimed an average of 400,000 lives per year and many are now looking to fast food and the overall unhealthy food market as the cause.

Morgan Spurlock recently brought about much more media attention to the obesity epidemic with his commonly know documentary, *Supersize Me*. This piece somewhat resulted from a recent lawsuit headed by two teenage girls who are dangerously overweight and are pointing their fingers at McDonalds as the cause. As a conclusion to this case, the judge ruled that if McDonalds is indeed attempting to attract customers for every meal of every day and that a customer actually attending their restaurants at that rate would be in mortal danger then the girls had a legitimate case.

This lawsuit has been widely disputed as an attempt for a scapegoat; I however, somewhat disagree. McDonalds does an effective job of appealing to the young and unknowing and therefore make it very hard for parents to win the battle for nutrients. Being that these teenage girls were around for the creation of the Happy Meal and other such devices I can somewhat see how bad habits were easily created thanks in some part to the Golden Arches. In fact, Spurlock himself makes this connection by beginning his documentary with a group of children singing a song about the joys of fast food.

However, parents of course play a role as well. Many parents in America need to take attempts to stop their children from diets of Oreos, Happy Meals, and other such bad

foods. Thus, the solution should be for the companies to be regulated and for parents to make nutrition more of a priority. A compromise must be made, companies that sell bad food need to stop their strong and obvious efforts of recruiting children into bad habits and parents need to occasionally take the time to make a nutritious, home-cooked meal.

I think one of the main contributors to the growth in obesity is the changing mentality of America. Although the feminist movement was a wonderful thing, it left a hole in the household that has yet to be filled in many families with the father or the mother. Thus, with no one cooking dinner at home, fast food became way too convenient. Taking advantage of this demand for convenience, fast food then became more appealing with the invention of the drive-through. Now you don't even have to leave your car to get food, and if you have a late-night craving for something greasy new late hours will guarantee you your shot of oil for the day. Therefore, I believe that a growth in the importance of convenience and a decrease in the need for anyone to make a home-cooked meal have equally contributed to the increase in America's waistline.

Leading into my next theory I think that genetics has also contributed to this growing epidemic. Due to obesity becoming a growing problem and therefore more overweight people emerging, this creates more overweight people who procreate, birthing children who now possess obese genes. Thus, it becomes a chain reaction where increased obesity in adults will lead to increases in children and will thus, continually increase until more adults begin to lose weight and pass on healthier genes. If one has doubts in this theory they can simply look at the statistics, after all if both the parents of a child were obese they then have a 70% chance of being obese themselves versus only a 10% chance if their parents were a more healthy weight.

I also think that many people are being misinformed as to how they can amend their weight problems. The words diet and diet pill have become synonymous with actual weight loss which more times than not is a lie. A diet implies something temporary which means that once the dieting process is over the weight will reappear. Diet pills are also often unregulated and therefore can be quite dangerous and ineffective. People need to instead be told about the changing of habits rather than temporary fixes to situations.

I was fortunate enough to have an old-fashioned mother who always preached the importance of a home-cooked meal. My family only went out once every 2-3 weeks and every other night we were treated to something from the kitchen. My mother also taught us the importance of regular exercise and therefore there was always at least a treadmill and a bike in the workout room. I'm also quite lucky to have a fairly good metabolism thus, I haven't had to fight obesity too much. However, if I were to gain a significant amount of weight I would feel the immediate need to engage in better habits and more exercise thanks to the values I've been taught. Currently, I don't have any significant problems with my eating habits being that they've carried me through life this far without any problems arising.

Obesity is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Corporations need to practice more ethical advertisement methods and parents need to make health a priority to their kids at a young age. Without these changes America's waistline will continue to bulge until it bursts.