

Four Faces of Senior Hunger

Contributed by [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#)

Source: Mazon: Hunger Seder



DOROTHY, PINE RIDGE RESERVATION, SOUTH DAKOTA

“I live in a trailer on our ancestral land in Wounded Knee. Many people here struggle like I do. Because I have the grandkids, I get welfare and food stamps. Otherwise, I couldn’t feed my family. Buying food comes first. Then, I pay for electricity. Food is so expensive on the reservation, and our food stamps only last about two weeks. When it runs out, I go out and sell beadwork really cheap just so I can continue to

feed my family. But there aren't many tourists in winter, so we eat lots of crackers—we call them Indian potato chips—because they are filling and then we won't be hungry."

CHARLES, LOUISIANA

"I never imagined this would be my life. My only income is \$1200 a month from disability. I live in low-income senior housing and get Medicare, but after my bills, I can't cover everything else I need. I try to save for the doctor by using blankets instead of the heat, but I still don't save enough to treat my diabetes and a heart condition. After my medical, I'm only left with about \$160, plus \$17 in food stamps, to spend a month on food. I'm supposed to be on a special diabetes diet, but I just can't afford it. What really hurts me is when my daughter calls and asks for \$25-\$30 and I say 'baby if I had it, I'd give it to you.'"

BARBARA, NEW YORK

"Most of us in the gay community never thought we'd end up poor. Many of us don't have the support system as we age that straight people do. So, when we get old, we either live poor or we commit suicide. When my wife Pat got cancer, and later dementia, we used up our savings. Now I'm alone - living on \$800 from Social Security and widow's benefits. But who can live on \$800 a month? The food pantry, and free senior dinners, is how I get enough to eat. I've tried to go back to work - even though I'm 70 years old and almost blind - but every place I've tried has refused to hire me. They said I'm a liability."

GEORGE, TENNESSEE

"I'm a WWII Army vet. I was married fifty-five years to my wife Ruby. We just had each other. I tried to save enough for retirement, but the \$467 a month from Social Security is real handy. Don't draw no army pension or nothing. I'm 97 now. As long as I'm able, I don't want to go to a nursing home like Ruby. It cost me thousands. But it's getting harder for me to do things like cook or drive - now my nephew takes me to the store. If I didn't get the meals from the community center, I'd be eating out of a can. Wouldn't have a hot supper. And I still need someone to bring me food on Fridays to hold me over for the weekend."

To read more personal stories about hunger, visit: thisishunger.org/stories