

# Weight of the nation reflection

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Reflection Paper on “ The Weight of the Nation” I sat down to watch the HBO documentary series “ The Weight of the Nation” with a sense of already knowing what issues would be raised in the film and where the health and other discussion topics might lead to. Having been exposed to many a documentary or newspaper / magazine article covering the topic, I really thought that the documentary would have nothing new to offer. Thus I sat down waiting to hear a rehash of information that I already knew about. Truth be told, I already knew that obesity was one of the highest ranking reasons for death and disability in the country. But what I did not realize was that it was more rampant than I first thought it to be. In fact, I thought that obesity was an illness that afflicted only people of weak will power. It was only after watching this documentary that I came to realize how wrong I was. Now I understand the urgency with which the government is trying to address the problem of obesity among the Americans regardless of his age. Since it has been proven that obesity is one of the highest contributory causes of fatal illnesses among the population, this problem should definitely not be taken lightly. And the solutions to the problem lie not only with the government, but also with the people whose lives are directly affected by their eating and lifestyle decisions. My mom and dad told me that during their time, they already had video games to play with but most of their time was still spent playing outdoors with their friends. Mainly because it was the only way that they could spend time out of the house and away from their parents. It turns out that the playtime they had actually helped foster good health habits such as exercise and the like within them. My grandparents also had their own story to tell as they told me of a time when there were no video games to be played with so the kids had no choice but to let out their

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energy in the playground and around the neighborhood with boisterous child play. Activities that, just like with my parents, somehow translated into a healthier lifestyle for them when they became adults. I do believe what my parents and grandparents told me, that actually having daily physical activities such as play time and helping with chores around the house (since there was still very little automation in the homes back then) actually helped keep their weight down because they managed to burn the food that they ate in a positive manner. Having struggled with weight loss myself in the past and present, I cannot help but identify with the struggles of the people as depicted within the film. While some people might think that losing weight is something that can be done at the drop of a hat, the reality is that it is not that easy for most people. Taking drastic measures could also prove to be more harmful to the person more than if they had just done their best to lose weight naturally through diet and exercise. As far as I am concerned, one of the first steps that I would take towards healthy eating would be properly portioning my food and incorporating exercise into my daily routines as best as I can. This film was a real eye opener in the sense that it did not change my assumptions about the factors that contribute to obesity but rather, added to my already existing knowledge about the problem and how to possibly best deal with the situation. Luckily, I live in an area of the community where there is a right balance between healthy restaurants and fast food joints so that I can always assure myself of a healthy meal and a quick fix snack whenever I feel the need to binge a bit. Reminding myself of course that calorie intake is one of the most important things to watch out for when I order fast food. But since fast foods now offer healthy alternatives such as salad bowls and the like, I am sure that I will be able to track and

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keep tabs of the fast food that I consume and keep it within a safe level. I was not surprised to hear about the disparity in life expectancy between the rich and poor in the neighborhood mainly because we all know that the rich can not only afford proper healthcare, but they also have more financial abilities to ensure that they lead a healthy lifestyle through the food that they eat and the activities that they participate in. I do know of a community nearby that does not have a large grocery store and the main problem of the people being serviced by the store is that they do not have much choice when it comes to healthy produce and alternative food products. The small grocery also only sells second rate items which is what the people in that area can afford. Needless to say, the community is not as healthy as they could be. The children suffer from vitamin deficiencies and the adults are obese even without eating a lot. These people are basically malnourished. However, my community has decided to help by planting healthy and affordable vegetables and fruits in an open plot of land that was contributed to specifically to help the small community survive and hopefully, become healthier. I guess all communities would also say that the documentary parallels their own community just as it did mine to a certain degree. My community also does its best to help educate the others about the dangers of obesity and the benefits of changing their lifestyle. Just like some of the families depicted in the film, my family has already increased its home cooked meals in order to prioritize the health benefits of the meals we have by increasing the amount of vegetables and fruits that we use in preparing our meals. I believe that these fast foods should be held accountable for the illnesses that their foods promoted in the past. As for the government policies, there will always be hits and misses, but that is not to say that their

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farm policy was a bad one. It can use a little more tweaking. Creating a level playing field for organically grown vegetables will definitely help out families in affording healthier meals with local growers getting the most support from the government and local communities regardless of government subsidies. As for the tobacco and food companies, I can see the parallelism being drawn being drawn between them. After all, both have lobbyists in Washington that try to influence legislation pertaining to food. Let us also not forget that food companies create addictive foods that can negatively influence our health and lifestyle. Encouraging people to eat healthier food is not simply a matter of making it more affordable. Fast food has been the norm for generations now and it will take a whole rewiring of the human DNA to make them resist the junkfood lifestyle. My suggestion would be to totally remove the offending foods from the market and not giving people any other choice except to purchase and eat healthier food. Don't get me wrong, food companies are not the total villains in this scenario. They are merely providing a service that, as with all products in the market, people do not know they need or want until they are told by these companies that they need and want these products. We cannot expect them to stop selling unhealthy food overnight. After all they are invested in a multimillion dollar business that could go bankrupt if they did that. But with government support, perhaps they can be persuaded to slowly direct their sales towards healthier food items. Since there are very little places in the city where one can enjoy a healthy lifestyle through exercise, I am quite happy to at least be living in a highly pedestrianized city. At least I get some of my exercise that way. Perhaps other cities and communities should also consider creating more pedestrian friendly streets in order to indirectly encourage people to

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exercise. It is also important that people feel safe in the streets when they walk so that they will be more encouraged to pound the pavement in order to become more physically active. Should I be in competition for funding to help fight obesity in my community, the first thing I will do is create a multi purpose park where people can enjoy jogging paths, a free public pool, and basketball court. There will also be a shaded recreational area where the kids can safely play motion sensor video games such as Kinect Sports and the like. In order to effect a positive change within my community, I would pair up with the community leaders and convince them to advocate the need to allot a specific portion of land within our community for a local organic vegetable garden and community park. The garden would help us provide healthy and pesticide free vegetables to the residents and the community park will give everyone a place to safely socialize and effectively exercise whenever they feel like doing it.