The Unaffordable Temptation

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by Margarette Purvis

During my first week at the Food Bank I spent countless hours learning new faces and trying to match them with the names from the org chart. I met new and old donors, bonded with my new assistant and ran a gazillion reports to help me gauge my new home's temperature. When I wasn't performing those tasks I was working on VERY IMPORTANT responsibilities like finding my closest grocery store, best delivery spots and of course the closest dog park for my "who hid my back yard" pooch.

I've enjoyed an exciting week to say the least. Nevertheless, nothing in the midst of appointments, greeting new friends, connecting with old partners and relearning passwords prepared me for a visit to a local store for a "fruit run." As a lover of bananas and coffee, bananas and peanut butter and bananas with just about anything...I was NOT prepared for my new home's new price for an old favorite. You see, in Atlanta I was accustomed to buying a beautiful bunch of bananas for $.50/lb. In NYC the lovely check out girl reported that they were selling this same fruit for $.50/EACH. Since I'm now in a pretty public job I chose to not let my inside thoughts escape my mouth. So I quietly handed her enough money to purchase ONE.

On the walk back to my apartment clutching **the most expensive banana I would ever consume in this lifetime**...my mind wandered to families served by our soup kitchens and pantries who love bananas as much as I do. How in the world do they afford to have the entire family enjoy a fruit that's probably lying on the ground in tropical cities everywhere? How in the world has a banana become the Milano cookie for NYC youth? You see when I was a child there were 'kid treats' and 'adult treats'. Want a Chips Ahoy? Have at it...sometimes. But, reach for a Pepperidge Farm Milano cookie and you quickly heard how they were for "company." In our family all items marked "for company" meant that they were both expensive, adult and never intended for any kid sharing our DNA or living within a 50 mile radius.

So as I walked away gripping the TRULY golden banana, I couldn't help but think that SURELY fruit should be accessible to all. Isn't that why it's often referred to as dirt candy? I mean when families aren't allowed to CHOOSE fruit are they doomed to choose between health issues? I'll pass on the bananas and take heart disease. No apples for me but high blood pressure...maybe.

I posed this question to two program managers this week and both stated that more and more they're seeing children under the age of five years old tasting many fruit for the first time in an emergency pantry. Unfortunately, conversations with our member agencies prove again and again that bananas, like apples, peaches and grapes are simply not a part of many family's diets purely because of the COST. So yes, that means that the fruit that tempted the world's shared ancestors can't even be afforded by many of our nameless, faceless neighbors living in fruit-less homes everywhere.

I'm excited about my future at the Food Bank. There are so many exciting

programs and opportunities to learn more about, expand upon and develop. However, right now...nothing makes me prouder than the fact that just last week we won **Feeding America's Mighty Apple Award** for being the largest distributor of FREE produce in the country. We are a FOOD BANK and that's what this work is about. We provide what the neediest New Yorkers and their communities DESERVE...making our SHARED Apple Mighty INDEED.

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