

# First Lady Michelle Obama Kicks Off MomsRising.org's "Food Power" Conference with Video Appeal to Fight Childhood Obesity

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New York – MomsRising.org answered First Lady Michelle Obama's call for parents to get involved in the fight against childhood obesity. The grassroots organization kicked off National Nutrition Month with a "Food Power" conference and film screening to promote healthy eating habits and urge participants to support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recently released guidelines on school meals.

A video welcome from the First Lady motivated moms, dads, bloggers, and community activists gathered in Brooklyn, NY. "I'm so thrilled to have MomsRising.org and all of your grassroots muscle and passion working right by our side because as we've seen again and again through 'Let's Move,' people like you play a vitally important role in helping our kids eat healthier and get the physical activity they need," Obama said. "If you all are not leading the way in your community then who will?"

African American children suffer disproportionately from obesity. A 2010 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report revealed that African American women were 70% more likely to be obese than Non-Hispanic White women and African American girls were 80% more likely to be overweight than Non-Hispanic White girls. This crisis prompted MomsRising.org, an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization with more

than 1.1 million members, to team up with filmmaker Byron Hurt to screen his award winning documentary “Soul Food Junkies” at the “Food Power” gatherings.

“We’re very excited to be working on the same path that Mrs. Obama and Byron Hurt are to improve children’s health,” said MomsRising.org executive director, Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner. “Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S. and we all need to work together to reverse this dangerous and deadly trend.”

“Soul Food Junkies” ([www.itvs.org/films/soul-food-junkies](http://www.itvs.org/films/soul-food-junkies)) offers a sometimes humorous exploration of the Black community’s affinity for foods like fried chicken, fat-flavored collard greens, and fried pork chops, despite the fact that these foods increase risks for diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes, heart disease and obesity. Inspired by the premature death of his father, Hurt traces the origins of soul food back to slavery and encourages healthier approaches to soul food preparation. The film features appearances from activist/comedian, Dick Gregory; poet, Sonia Sanchez; writer, Michaela Angela Davis; and commentator Marc Lamont Hill.

In addition to the film screening, several parents shared personal stories about their battle to get their families to eat healthier meals. A panel of experts discussed practical ways to defeat the epidemic of childhood obesity. As MomsRising.org is focused on taking action, the break-out sessions provided attendees with a choice of three campaigns to sign-on to: How to get junk food out of school, how to stop junk food marketing to children, and breastfeeding, health care and preventing childhood obesity.



MomsRising.org campaign director, Monifa Bandele, speaks to media to promote healthier school meals during the MomsRising.org “Food Power” conference in NY.

“Each of our workshops focused on action and provided participants with the tools to get engaged,” said Monifa Bandele, campaign manager, MomsRising.org. “The attendees left the ‘Food Power’ conference with marching orders to heed First Lady Michelle Obama’s call for the community to act.”

Speakers at the Brooklyn launch event included Karen Showalter, MomsRising.org; Dr. Aletha Maybank, NYC Dept. of Public Health; dream hampton, MomsRising.org; Migdalia Rivers, LatinaOnAMission.com; Tanya Fields, Brown Girl Swagger; Lorraine Gonzalez, Children’s Defense Fund; Jessica Donze Black, Kids Safe and Healthful Foods; and Joy Spencer, Center for Digital Democracy, among others.

MomsRising.org is challenging childhood obesity through improving school meals. The issue of nutrition and the role of schools foods in contributing to childhood obesity are gaining currency. The USDA recently opened up a 60-day comment period on its updated national nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold through vending machines and a la carte lines.

The recent “Food Power” conference is just one of many planned

events around the country as MomsRising.org gathers support and gains awareness for its cause. The next event – a film screening and panel discussion – will take place in Detroit, MI at the Fellowship Chapel on Thursday, March 21, 2013 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00. The free event is open to the public.

About MomsRising.org

[MomsRising.org](http://MomsRising.org) is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States. MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination that penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start. Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2012, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the third year in a row. In 2013, Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its "Best of the Net" list.