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“Get Up and Move! Fighting Childhood Obesity in Communities of Color”

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For the first time in our history, the United States is raising a generation of children who may live sicker, shorter lives than their parents. (Partnership for a Healthier America)

“Mmm” I love the taste of Soul Food, especially during the 4th of July. This year I did have my share of it too! While this food is so tasty, too much of a good thing may be harmful to our health. I would never tell anyone to discontinue “Soul Food,” but I am saying that we need to limit how much we eat and the size of the portions. And, we need to give our children healthier food choices.

In a book titled The Health Cost of Soul Food: The Roots of Soul Food, the term “Soul Food” originated from the cuisine developed by the African slaves who lived in the American South. Soul Food became an inexpensive way to eat and was developed from the undesirable cuts of meat such as fatty meats and intestines of pigs, unwanted vegetables. Today, Soul Food has impacted food preparation and has influenced American cuisine and social fellowship all over the world regardless of any health consequences that may result.

In recent decades, Soul Food has been criticized as unhealthy and has been blamed for the higher incidence of obesity in the African-American population. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, more than half of adults in the United States are estimated to be overweight or obese. Obesity is more common among African American and Mexican American women than among white women. In addition, researchers find that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and Hispanics also suffer disproportionately from obesity which is a primary risk factor for Diabetes, Hypertension, Cancer, Heart Disease and Stroke.

Unfortunately, the obesity epidemic has found its way into the bodies of our children! Childhood obesity has tripled since 1980 – especially among children in communities of color. This has led to increased type-2 Diabetes and bone and joint disorders.

One of the provisions in the new health care reform law is First Lady Michele Obama’s “Let’s Move” Campaign to solve childhood obesity epidemic. The Let’s Move Initiative is an action plan that empowers parents, caregivers, communities, schools, and organizations including faith communities, to reduce childhood obesity by fostering healthier food choices and increasing physical activity. Visit www.letsmove.org for more information. Increasing physical activity helps to reduce obesity. An innovative idea to increase activity is called “Instant Recess.” Instant Recess is short 10 minute physical activity breaks that can be incorporated into any community and/or organizational setting. The strategy was developed by Dr. Toni Yancey (www.toniyancey.com) and has been adopted as a national effort.

The threat of not only childhood but adult obesity is real and will remain until we as a community take appropriate action. The 4th of July is over so let’s make a commitment to eat healthier and to “Get Up and Move!”

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