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Inequality Reflection: Mexico, India and the U.S

“We reserve the right of admission”, I read on the door of McDonalds as I excitedly walked into the fast food chain on a night in Kolkata. I didn’t really pay attention to the sign, I was craving food and French fries -- nothing in the world mattered to me. As I ordered the food and complained about how long it was taking to be ready I slowly realized what I had just done by entering the establishment. Have I contributed to discrimination and segregation in India? I asked myself as I walked into the upper floor to eat my burger. Is it unethical to finance establishments that diminish the value of people based on their socioeconomic status? Eventually, the food lost its flavor. I decided to share my concerns with some of my friends eating there, expecting to make them me feel better, but the more I talked to them about it, the more I realized I was a privileged teenager in India.

Although, I believe that inequality itself is a shame and I despise it, I don’t believe that the eradication of it is possible and feasible in the capitalistic world we live in. In fact, I often say, “I hate capitalism,” to my friends and family because I am aware of the problems that this system creates: in order for one to succeed, another must fall. This is problematic because many times capitalism prioritizes money, personal interests and success over human relationships, rights and even the environment. I realize this sounds like a generalized statement, and it might be, but it does not make any less true the well-known events in which big multi-billion companies like Nike violate human rights when they are found to use child labor in developing countries to manufacture sportswear, or when business empires like Lehman Brothers started in the slave trade. On a similar note, I believe that gender, race and –logically- socioeconomic

inequality are linked to emotions of greed and selfishness that come from capitalism and that are predominantly found in cis-gendered, straight, white old males.

I don't intend to write an essay against capitalism; in fact, I believe the foundations of capitalism are good. What I'm arguing is that this system is the cause of many inequalities and the problem is that in countries that are highly capitalistic, social mobility is close to non-existent. I see this happen in Mexico, a highly unequal country with a GINI coefficient of .481; the low-class people are at a disadvantage because public education lacks of resources and quality; on top of that, the living conditions are unsanitary and unsafe. Unfortunately, their options to move up the ladder are limited; without proper education and with companies only looking for students graduating from private schools, these people are forced to live below the poverty line if they choose not to join the organized crime – a pattern now seen in many of the teenagers that drop out of school.

Migrating to the U.S is the dream many of these people have. Many die on their journey to illegally cross the border, while others successfully make it only to find themselves in a society in which they are discriminated and oppressed by xenophobic Americans.



Although I acknowledge that I am not in the same disadvantage as most of the Hispanics are in the U.S, I have been a victim of discriminatory comments – I have even been asked if I'm

“on a visa” in America. It is obvious how America, like many xenophobic Americans want, reserves the right of admission to Hispanic people, especially Mexicans.

Knowing this infuriates me. I have come to realize that, for the most part, everything in a person’s life depends on when and where they were born. Had I been born in a low socioeconomic family in Mexico, I might have had to migrate to the U.S illegally to work and send money to my family. Similarly, had I been born in the slums of India, I would not have access to clean water, air conditioning, and probably the possibility of education in a prestigious private university in the U.S. People don’t choose where they come from and the circumstances in which they are born, but fortunately they can choose where to go and try to move up the ladder – or at least they can try.

So when I think of all the Mexicans moving to the U.S looking for opportunities, and I remember that many companies, apartment complexes, people and the country itself “reserve the right of admission” and thus degrade the humanity of these people because of their ethnicity, nationality and socioeconomic status, I realize that greed is the reason why people prefer to oppress and therefore create inequality in order to maintain their position of power and supremacy.

Imagining the humiliation of being denied the admission in an establishment or a country terrifies me. To think that the vast majority of the population in Mexico and India are denied the opportunity of moving up the ladder and they are left in inhumane conditions like the slums makes me lose hope in humanity. Fortunately these problems are finally being addressed, and that is the first step to facilitate social mobility in an economic status.