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Reflection of Angela Jones' Lecture on Poverty

The lecture started off with a quote: "If we can conquer space, we can conquer world hunger" - Buzz Aldrin. This quote had already got me thinking about how incredible of a feat it is that we've sent humans and animals into space. If it's possible to survive in the infinite vacuum we know as Space, how are there billions of people who have a hard time surviving on Earth? This relatively simple idea reached out to get my attention and make me feel sympathy for all of the starving children and families in the world. On a morning like any other, our guest professor gave a lecture that truly impacted me to my core.

At the start of the lecture, I was surprised to learn just how many countries around the world there are who don't have access to clean water, medical services, and basic education. Around 22,000 children die from poverty every day, globally - that's about 8 million per year. About 1.2 billion of the world's population are now living in extreme poverty conditions. I think everyone is aware that poverty exists in our world, but it was more of a shock to me to find out the overall impact of that poverty on your likelihood to survive, and just how prevalent poverty is in our world. Why did this depress me to such an extent, and why did I feel so now when it looked like many of the students around me had not felt the same way? Perhaps it was the underlying idea I've had that unfortunate circumstances could materialize with anyone as a result of chance - possibly an idea only present in my mind at the time as a result of the unfortunate circumstances I have encountered in the past. It felt a bit weird that I appeared to be more sensitive to the situation than my peers.

It is relatively shocking, to me, to consider that in our country we all have access to clean water, food, medical care, education, and more. I felt truly saddened to learn about the way these people are forced to live. Not only do people live this way in a few countries, but dozens of countries; primarily in South America, Africa and Asia. Not just that, but some European countries are also living in extreme conditions.

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Our guest professor, Angela Jones from the University of Austin, had witnessed the type of poverty we've been talking about first-hand. She showed us videos of herself helping poor children in Djibouti. They were all very young, and they looked like they were only made up of skin and bones. It was my first time seeing people like this, and I was quite shocked. I can't imagine what it must be like for them, but I can imagine how upset and sad the volunteers on the video might have been; it is how I felt just by watching the video.

Throughout the lecture Angela asked us to brainstorm ways to support these children in Djibouti and other third-world countries. Upon being asked, I felt a sense of tranquillity and relief, as thinking of ways to help save millions of lives would alleviate the sorrow I was feeling. I could hear some people muttering the same thought I was having: "what could we do to help them without physically going to that country to support them?" To me, these problems felt like a world away from us, without any solution.

Angela showed us another video of a lady helping a two year old boy, who also looked severely malnourished. Then Angela showed us another piece of footage, which was taken three years later. In this footage, it was the same boy who was now five years old. He was clothed and looked healthy. He also had a backpack on his back for school. I was happy for the boy, yet still sad for all of the others who undoubtedly didn't get the help they had needed. Later on, Angela showed us some videos that illustrated how some countries used to be the third-world, but are now no longer. They used to have the same problems as countries like Djibouti. She showed us how these countries were once full of poverty and how they were transformed with the help of foreign aid. To see how the people of those countries are no longer living in extreme conditions brought some solace back to me.

As a result of the lecture, I learnt that it does not actually take that much effort to help children in third world countries. An option we were suggested was to get together to raise money for charities, which provide things that these children don't have access to. It is hard to know how much of what is donated goes directly to the children in poverty, yet I would like to believe that even a little can mean so much to these children.

Even though I naturally want to hold on to what I have, I have no excuses for not supporting children and families in desperate need around the world. I know that even the most minimal effort can change the lives of so many unfortunate people. I would like to change the attitudes of people in regards to this epidemic for the sake of the world. I believe that no one should be forced to live in poverty, and no one has chosen to live in it. Too many children die every day; it's truly something that shocks and depresses me.

It is amazing that some countries have managed to bounce back from poverty thanks to foreign aid. I think that foreign aid might be the best, if not the only, option for the millions of children and families in poverty around the world to get help in a way that is extremely beneficial to them. No one wants to be born into poverty and I feel true sorrow and remorse for these unfortunate people in our world. I think that if you have an education, food, clothing, and any other liberties you would find in first world countries, you should act upon this now. The fact that we, and many other countries, are no longer in poverty, is no excuse to not help. This is the reason why I've decided to donate to charity.