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Social Justice

In today's society, poverty, corruption, sex trafficking, and drug abuse are just a few of the social and political issues that ravage our world today. It is hard to tell if people really care about one another and if anyone believes the biblical commandment, "Love your neighbor as your self." As discussed in Evicted, there are serious housing issues in America due to high poverty rates. In Far From the Tree, we learned about different social hurdles that children and their families have to overcome to survive; such as autism or dealing with a child prodigy. In Just Mercy, we discovered the inequalities and injustices in the American justice system. The concept of social justice offers some relief and some possible solutions to some of these issues, but what does social justice mean? I believe that social justice is acts of relieving the less fortunate or victims of crimes of problems but I also believe that it is a human construct and it is fluid, changing with the circumstances. There are several examples from several different texts and guest speakers of what social justice is and how we can work on fixing social and political issues.

Social justice has multiple often used definitions. One definition is acts of relieving the less fortunate or victims of crimes of problems. This could come in the form

of legal aid to people accused of criminal acts who could not afford legal counsel or get their case to certain courts, such as an appellate court. It could also come in the form of foreign aid such as sending food to food desert countries or aiding in reconstruction after a natural disaster. Another definition of social justice is that it is a human construct and it is fluid, changing with the circumstances. Social justice is a human construct it was created by humans and is up to interpretation it is different for everyone yet just like money it has a certain connotation that everyone typically thinks. While it is a human construct it's also fluid, it changes depending on the circumstances of the people receiving aid. Since it is dealing with people, it does not have one set answer when it comes to aiding others. It develops with each issue and the more we try and solve it the more problems we come across because with each solution a new tangent arises and each circumstance is different.

An example of social justice being fluid is when social activists and researchers look into the issue of poverty. There are multiple reasons why people go into poverty. Therefore, there is no one solution for combatting poverty. Poverty is also a social construct it is below the economic threshold of what we believe we need to properly sustain our selves in today's society. In Mathew Desmond's book, Evicted he discusses how U.S. society has a housing crisis with impoverished people and that the legal and social systems of the country are making it impossible for the impoverished to get back into an economic position to not be above the poverty threshold. In fact, once you fall below that threshold you become stuck there in a snowball/avalanche-like effect. An example of poverty snowballing is when Desmond tells us the story of the forty-year-old man who fell into poverty; he lost his house as well as had to go to rehab because he

had a heroin addiction. In another story, he talks about this older black man named Lamar who is in a wheelchair, has two boys and an addiction. The book talks about how he even though he gets a couple of different jobs and then is hired by his landlord to help pay for his rent the landlord still evicted him. He is an example of the snowball effect because once he fell into poverty he just had a hard time to get out of it. When he tried instead of waiting in line at the social service office, he injected heroin into his body. The housing issue due to poverty is also a complex issue it has many causations so there have to be multiple and complex solutions. Mathew Desmond gives several examples of solutions to the housing issue in America. One example of a remedy is providing housing though like what has been reiterated multiple times this is just one of the multiple ways and even if it helps one person it might not help the next person. Another solution that Desmond talks about is giving the poor legal counsel so they need to fight the landlords. In America, ever since Ronald Reagan's presidency, 90 percent of landlords are represented while the members of the tenants do not have the same representation as to the landlords.

While poverty and evicted is one aspect of social justice we have the book, Far from the Tree, to discuss different social issues that children and their parents have to deal with issues such as autism and being a child prodigy. There are several different types of social issues that occur in the united states one Autism. Andrew Solomon discusses in his book Far from the Tree one chapter is about autism and how children with autism and their families are treated in today's society. What does autism have to do with the definition of social justice? In today's society, we often try to ignore those that are different than us and so we try not to help autistic people which continues with

the thought that it is a human construct because it is something that we made in our head that. In Andrew Solomon's book, he gives several examples, such as For example, one mother had to fight to get her son into a school and said, "you wouldn't keep my son out of your school because he is brown so why are you not allowing his enrollment because he is autistic?" Discriminating against the mentally disabled is a serious problem in today's society.

Another issue that Andrew Solomon's Far From the Tree, the chapter of child prodigies: the definition of a prodigy is a child who can perform tasks at an expert level before the age of twelve. Prodigies are a human construct, they are people who are just on a higher level in a certain area but humans in all their creativity they have created a stigma where prodigies are isolated and alone because no one understands them and just like the autistic we are afraid of what we don't understand. Prodigies are still children and still needing development but because of the fact that they have this genius talent, their regular characteristics are neglected such as their social skills. Just like prodigies, social justice is a human construct and is often feared for being something that people do not understand, but yet people want the idea of having social justice that when they are down or having problems they want to think that someone will come and help them just because they did there good Christians but then reality sets in and then they realize that no one is necessarily coming to rescue them. While Andrew Solomon gets the human construct version of social justice and that it is all fluid as well and it changes with situations and varies from person to person.

While Far From the Tree was about the social issues facing children and their families, Just Mercy is about the American justice system and follows the story of this

man that is on death row for a false sentence. Talking about correcting a wrong is like one and there is no greater act of social justice. Bryan Stevenson talks about discusses the severity of the United States legal system. The United States is one of the only countries in the world to condemn children to death row and we label the criminal their worst acts. Stevenson discusses how the United States has made mistakes in the legal system to where hundreds of people have been released after being proved innocent of noncapital crimes through DNA testing. The United States legal system needs to be adjusted to where instead of just looking to close a case and put the blame somewhere, the system actually found justice for the victims. The system should be where it alleviates the pain of the victims. Sometimes we make who is supposed to be the “criminal” the victim, for instance, in Just Mercy, we follow the story of Walter Mcmilliam an African American who was put on death row and even when he was proven to be innocent and yet was still not let off of death row the legal system would rather kill an innocent man than accept responsibility that they were wrong.

In my life, I have experienced similar situations about social justice I came from a pretty poor family when I was younger. It was pretty bad we got food stamps and went to the food bank on top of that. It did not help that on top of all that my mother was a smoker so a lot of the time what little money we had she would use it on cigarettes. I heard about all these different programs that were in place but I soon realized that all these social workers as much as they wanted to help everyone they could not fix everyone’s issues whether it is poverty, abuse, or criminal activity. I learned at a very young age that the people who go out and help the poor and criminals while they mean well and try doing the same thing for all situations and it just does not work we are all

human beings we are all different and need different things. In today's society we have a goal in mind but not really a vehicle of reaching the goal and so I learned that we have a situation about so many injustices that seem impossible to overcome.