America’s Shame

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Article Analysis

Introduction

Peter Singer’s America’s Shame is an informative piece that engages its readership in a

critical exploration of the United States with respects to its leadership in both the local and global

levels. Singer (2009) presents a bold narration of how the administration has failed to promote

efficacy in various areas including education, international business, and global poverty

eradication. Such sentiments are based on factual examination of the country’s current policies

and actions in the mentioned spheres. Singer chooses a rather direct approach in defining his

article as a critique by choosing his potentially controversial title America’s Shame. When placed

into perspective, this critique places immense emphases on the social aspects of the United

States. The author gears his arguments towards the ‘morality’ concept in his evaluation of the

country. First and foremost, he acknowledges the fact that morality is just but a matter of

perspective. This kind of reasoning follows the conventional belief that what one society might

consider moral is likely to be viewed as immoral by another. However, regardless of the

equivocal nature of the concept of morality, Singer believes that some moral actions are

universal: for instance, individuals from diverse geographic backgrounds will agree that offering

aid to the poor is a moral act. On that note, the author criticizes the United States’ participation in

the eradication of global poverty.

At this juncture, it appears wise to note that Singer believes that the current education

system is fully flawed. Surprisingly, such a bold declaration is quite factual considering the fact

that the system fails to prepare its students with respect to the eradication of world poverty.

Inasmuch as the school’s nurture fundamental knowledge and skills to enhance individual

productivity, it does not equip the students with the right worldview (Singer, 2009). Singer

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points out the limited scope as a primary challenge: the curriculum does not explore concepts

beyond the country’s borders. Such an approach hinders the students’ ability to grasp the

conditions experienced by the outside world. In this sense, it is obvious that a student who lacks

an understanding of the challenges faced by people from poor regions is highly unlikely to

partake in the alleviation of their socioeconomic troubles. For this reason, the author

recommends an alteration of the United States curriculum: he states that the system should find a

way of ensuring the students apply the theoretical facts in the eradication of poverty.

As far as the author’s recommended solution is concerned, he argues that the most

appropriate way to transform the factual representation of its history. Such a progressive goal can

be attained by ensuring that the global perspective is integrated in the curriculum (Singer, 2009).

In some way, the author is suggesting a philosophical intervention: it involves changing

classroom concepts to fit the needs of the society on a global scale. Such an approach is highly

likely to enhance the students’ view of the international society as well as their ability to

contribute in the eradication of globally detrimental phenomena including poverty.

Singer also offers a critical view of the popular characterization of America as a highly

generous nation. According to him, the country lags behind its counterparts in the Organization

for Economic Corporation and Development. As a matter of fact, there is a huge gap between the

United States’ national income and the resources it allocates to foreign aid (Singer, 2009). While

Singer fails to support this assertion with statistical facts, he uses it to debase the highly

publicized “America’s generosity”. To enhance his arguments, Singer (2009) highlights the

country’s contradictory stance with respect to the promotion of human rights. In this case, the

country’s fuel deals with non-democratic countries are placed into scrutiny. The author argues

that these business deals taint the country’s image as a moral agent. One would be compelled to

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agree with the preceding postulation considering the fact that purchasing oil from countries ruled

by dictators only enhances their capacity to cause and maintain mayhem in their countries. From

an analytical perspective, the author is making a rather peculiar point here. Supporting such

countries contradicts the United States position in global poverty reduction. At this point, the

reader is urged to reflect on the fact that the earnings from the fuel deals are often plundered by

few individuals in leadership positions. It becomes apparent that one cannot confidently claim

that the United States promotes the lives of the poor citizens by doing business with their corrupt

leaders.

As noted earlier, Singer believes that the United States is not doing enough to eradicate

global poverty. In a successful attempt to prove this argument, he critically examines the

country’s food aid program (Singer, 2009). It suffices to state that the availability of food aid in a

country does not necessarily eliminate the challenges faced by its citizenry. Perhaps, the author

grounds this argument on the belief that world poverty is caused by various dynamics in the

social, economic, and political realms. When viewed from this point, it is clear that food aid does

not address the key problems that facilitate poverty in these regions. For instance, corruption,

poor economic goals, illiteracy, political instability, and lack of resources are among the various

causes of poverty. This implies that the United States can offer long-lasting assistance by

addressing these factors instead of focusing on food and medical aid alone.

Conclusion

By now, it is obvious that Singer’s America’s Shame is a piece that critically evaluates

the country’s contribution to the eradication of global poverty. The author points out various

systemic flaws in its education system, international business, resource utilization, and foreign

aid. These flaws directly contradict the country’s publicized position as a global leader in

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charitable works and poverty eradication. According to Singer, this publicity is undeserved given

that the country’s interventions are superficial; hence, they fail to address the real needs. An

analytical view of this piece is quite instrumental in enhancing the reader’s understanding of

Singer’s grievances. It is worth noting that the author does not critique the United States for not

partaking in global poverty eradication. Rather, he is simply stating that the country has failed to

fully utilize its current options with respect to the matter.

References: Singer, P. (2009). America’s shame. The Chronicle of Higher Education, 55(27), B6–B10. (EBSCO AN 37137370)
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