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“LEAD ME HOME”

Abstract

The present reflection is based on the documentary “Lead me home” by Pedro Kos and Jon Shenk (2021). This report aims to make the reader aware of the precariousness that exists in the United States today. This documentary also addresses different issues such as the growing humanitarian crisis that is beginning to unfold in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the abysmal differences between classes, racism, and precarious salaries, among many other issues. It can be concluded that people living in precarious situations are always the hardest hit in crisis situations, and even more so if they belong to a social minority.

Keywords: precariousness, racism, united states, humanitarian crisis, social work

This documentary addresses issues such as poverty and social exclusion in a very powerful way, as it is filmed with people who suffer it first-hand. In the past five years, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle have been declared states of emergency regarding homelessness. This documentary was recorded between 2017 and 2020 and explains the growing humanitarian crisis that these US cities are experiencing. On a given night, over a half million Americans experience homelessness, and this is a social problem that must change as soon as possible.

This short documentary has led me to consider the distribution of social class in the United States. A country as large as the United States has a very high poverty rate and no middle class. Society, in general, is distributed by the middle class, the upper class, and the lower class. The documentary has made me reflect on this, since the differences between rich and poor are abysmal. I believe that there is no middle class where people have an average socioeconomic level since, as is commented on, salaries in the United States are too low or too high. This means that people with such low salaries end up in precariousness and poverty. Furthermore, I think that the way this country deals with this social problem is not entirely correct because, as many of the witnesses in the documentary explain, they have been waiting a long time to be given a home so they can leave the street.

Moreover, this film has been a great inspiration for me, as it has helped me realize that poverty and precariousness do not exist only in third world countries. Even in the most developed countries in the world, this social problem is still happening, and the poverty rate is increasing every day. I had a totally wrong idea about what poverty really was because I thought that poor people were the ones who had no income or job, and that is not the case. There are many people who, even if they have a job, live in poverty, because with their low salaries, they cannot afford a home and the daily food they must consume. Poverty does not only come from not having a house or not having money, it also comes from not having the necessary resources to afford a home and a decent life, that is, it is a situation in which it is not possible to satisfy the basic physical and psychological needs of a person.

The film also inspired me to collaborate with associations that help people at risk of social exclusion and poverty in developed countries. Because collaborating with international NGOs is good, but being able to help people in need face to face. I think it can be even more fulfilling.

In addition, the documentary cites several issues that have made me reflect. On the one hand, it talks about the growing humanitarian crisis that is beginning to unfold in the United States, especially due to the global pandemic that we are currently experiencing COVID-19. This crisis of poverty and precariousness is occurring in practically every country in the world, but it is in developed countries where it is hitting the most, because the hospitality industry has plummeted and many companies that used to need a large number of workers have reduced their workforce to a minimum. This global pandemic is causing everyone to go through difficult situations, but those who are suffering the most are vulnerable groups and those at risk of social exclusion, such as people with precarious salaries and chronic diseases, among others.

In addition, a study in the United States has calculated that the poverty rate is much higher for people of color than for white people, and here we encountered another social problem, racism. People of other races suffer much more precariousness and poverty than any white person, this still happens in all countries of the world nowadays. I believe that the only way to combat racism is education, since no one is born thinking that one person is better than another due to the color of their skin. Schools should have programs and activities to promote equality between different races.

Talking about the impact that this video has on me, I could say that at the beginning I felt a negative impact, as I felt a lot of sorrow and sadness when I saw people in that kind of situation. However, after watching the whole documentary and reflecting on it, I thought about the things that could be done so that homeless people could have a better quality of life, such as building more soup kitchens or giving minimum living pensions to these kinds of people.

Regarding how this documentary has changed my attitude and perspective towards people in need, I could say that these images have made me get out of my comfort zone and see the reality of a very high percentage of people. Since I was a child, my father and I have collaborated with different NGOs to help different third world countries,

especially African countries, get them the necessary food and medicines. On the other hand, I never stopped thinking that there are also many people living in developed countries who are going through very difficult and inhuman situations. The documentary has made me put myself in the place of these people. Living in a big city and seeing people driving around in their high-end cars, with the latest generation cell phones, and seeing how individuals enter their homes while you have no roof over your head and nothing to feed yourself with, has to be really hard. That is why I think that more public funds should be invested for people in need, and as they have mentioned in the documentary, create more shelters and sheltered apartments in cities where there are more homeless people. I know that you cannot change the world from one day to the next, but with small steps you can go a long way.

To conclude this reflection, I would like to talk about the things I have learned thanks to this film. On the one hand, it has taught me how fortunate we are, as we are very lucky to have a home and enough food. Also, it has led me to appreciate the environment in which I live, to see how lucky I am to have a family and friends who have always been there to help me at any time.

Many of the people who spoke in the documentary mentioned that they had reached this situation of poverty due to poor family relationships or the environments in which they ended up. It is vitally important to develop healthy relationships and create a good family bond, but when circumstances are difficult, as they were for these people, staying afloat and having a normal life is really difficult. On the other hand, I have learned to empathize more with people who suffer from poverty in developed countries. Before seeing this documentary, I only looked at poverty in countries in the third world. After watching the film and thinking about it, I think it is even more difficult to move forward in a developed country due to the ease of drug-consumption facilities that exist. Getting into drug addiction is very simple and getting out of that loop is really complicated when you also live in poverty.