



Our Worst Enemy Anonymous

1. Aysha is a 13 year old girl who lives in Afar, Ethiopia. While many 13 year olds in America are responsible for nothing more than picking out what outfit they will wear to school, this is not the case for Aysha. Afar Ethiopia is a “remote region of Ethiopia where clean water is not easy to come by”(Suriyaarachchi). Every day at 6:30am Aysha begins her exhausting journey of collecting water for her family. Aysha travels four hours by foot, pulling a camel loaded with jerry cans to be filled with water. After finally arriving at her destination, there is no guarantee that the water she is collecting is clean. Not only does she run the risk of collecting contaminated water, but the unsanitary containers that she is carrying increase the case of water-borne illness. After collecting the water, Aysha travels another four hours back home, collecting just five litres of water. Five liters is a little over one gallon of water. To put that number into perspective, the average American uses about 82 gallons of water each day at home according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). By the time she gets back home, she has little energy left to become educated or even spend time with her family. Aysha falls asleep only to come back and do it all again the following day, not knowing if the water she gathers is even healthy enough to survive on.
2. This unfortunately is a sad reality for many children across the world besides Aysha. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) approximately 4,000 children die each day from waterborne diseases. This equates to about 1.5 million children dead each year, which is only a portion of the 3.4 million people that die each year from waterborne illness. These waterborne illnesses can come in all shapes and sizes. While the most common waterborne disease is

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diarrhea, waterborne illness is certainly not limited to that.

3. Cholera, typhoid, and amoebiasis are all diseases that affect many communities across the globe that struggle with contaminated water. According to the WHO, “approximately 2 billion people utilize a drinking water source that is contaminated with feces which is linked to about 502,000 diarrheal deaths per year”. These numbers are not to be taken lightly. With approximately 8 billion people on earth, one fourth are using unsafe water. This is something that needs to be addressed.
4. As Americans, the issue of unsanitary water is not something that we are faced with on a regular basis. We have the privilege of not needing to worry about where our water comes from or wonder if it is safe enough to drink. We can simply turn the faucet on and have an endless supply of clean water at our lips in seconds. Our country has set up certain protocols and regulations to ensure that every American household has access to clean drinking water, which is truly a blessing. But with great power comes great responsibility. Due to the Millennium Development Goals pact that the United States has entered into with the United Nations as well as the promise to defend against all enemies foreign and domestic, it is the responsibility of the United States to help underdeveloped countries in their pursuit of clean drinking water.
5. It is important to note the distinction between underdeveloped and developed countries. While there are some developing countries that are affected by unclean drinking water as well, the large majority of those affected live in underdeveloped countries. An underdeveloped country is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “a country that is less developed economically than most others, with little industry and little money spent on education, health care, etc” (“Underdeveloped country”). This definition accurately defines what an underdeveloped country is due to the comparison that it makes to other countries. The primary way that we know whether one country is less developed than another is by looking at the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI “looks at each country’s human development, such as life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators. It [HDI] ranks countries on a scale from 0-1, from least developed to most developed”(World Population Review). The World Population Review provided a chart

of all the undeveloped countries that exist in the world and found an average HDI value of 0.5. This 0.5 rating falls into the low human development tier, which is the furthest tier away from developed countries. A developed country, usually in the HDI range of 0.8-1.0, is a country with a high quality of life, stable economy, and advanced technological infrastructure. The United States for example scored a 0.9 HDI value, proving the major difference between the underdeveloped and developed countries. With the United States being ranked 12th in the world, not only do they have a moral obligation to help those without clean drinking water, but they also have a legal obligation.

6. The moral obligation that the United States has to assist underdeveloped countries in their pursuit of clean drinking water is homemade. Thousands of Americans gather to witness this obligation each and every election year. The Presidential inauguration is one of the most moving moments that Americans get to experience as a new administration gets sworn into office to lead the country. Within what is known as the presidential oath of office, a phrase exists that makes the United States responsible, not only for the safety of their own citizens, but for other nations as well. This phrase in the United States Oath of Office reads:
 7. I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same: that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God. (President of the United States)
8. There is a lot to unpack within this oath that the president of the United States swears to follow. The most important feature of this oath is the promise to “defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...”. The first thing to unpack here is what classifies an enemy. Commonly, citizens of the United States will call the extremist Islamic group known as Al-Qaeda an enemy. While I do not disagree with this title, I believe that we are missing the true enemy. On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda killed approximately 3,000 US citizens and was labeled a global enemy (September 11 Attacks). As horrific as the events

on 9/11 were, last year alone more than 3 million people died of waterborne disease. Why is it that the United States was willing to spend 6 trillion dollars on a war against terror but is not willing to spend more than a few million on the world's most renown killer? For a country built on Christian principles such as "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39), the United States has fallen very short on lending a helping hand to those in need. Waterborne illness is the enemy that we need to be focused on. It is the enemy that the United States has promised to defend against yet has continually failed at defending. It is the reason why the United States is needed now more than ever.

9. Not only does the Constitution promise to defend, but it also talks about preserving life. The Constitution vows to preserve the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Declaration of Independence). The right to life that is mentioned in this context refers to the ability of an individual to live his or her life to the fullest, just the Creator designed. The very life that the constitution promises to preserve, is the life that is being taken through contaminated water. With millions of people dying each year due to waterborne illness, this "promise" that the United States has built into its Constitution has been violated. By not safeguarding the lives of millions of people, the United States has broken a sacred promise that our founding fathers sowed as roots for this country. This moral obligation has been broken and the United States is responsible for picking up the pieces, which in this case is protecting underdeveloped countries from the problem that the United States let get out of hand.
10. While the United States is not short of moral obligation to help those suffering from the effects of a dirty water supply, the US also has a legal obligation to do so. Alongside other members of the United Nations, in 2000 the United States set forth on a journey known to complete what are known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The intent was to achieve eight goals by 2015 that would better the globe and all the nations inside it. These goals ranged from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, to improving maternal health, to combating major diseases such as HIV. While sufficient progress was made on most of these goals, they were not achieved. Recently, as of 2016, these goals have been taken over by what is known as the Sustainable Development Goals.

These goals are very similar to the MDG, yet provide an outline of seventeen goals to be achieved by 2030. A few of these goals to note include totally eradicating both poverty and hunger, as well as ensuring availability and sustainability of water and sanitation for all. Specifically highlighting the goal of clean and sanitary water, referred to as goal six, the United Nations outlines what needs to be done in order to achieve this goal. As of 2020, approximately 2 billion people lack “safely managed drinking water”(United Nations). In order to achieve this provisional goal, the United Nations estimates that the current rate of progress needs to double. As of 2020, there are approximately 129 countries that are still not on track to achieve this goal. Legally, by joining the United Nations, the United States has agreed to international cooperation. and a failure to follow these goals would result in a violation of the United Nations pact.

11. As with any argument, there are multiple angles that we can look at it from. On the topic, I chose to interview a US Army veteran who served two tours in Afghanistan. When asked the question if the USA should help foreign countries in their pursuit of clean drinking water, he responded: “Umm... that’s a tough one. On one hand it is the right thing to do, but on the other hand that sounds like a costly battle”. He went on to say that morally the United States should be willing to help out in some way as long as it does not interfere with the American economy. He touched on the fact that it is the responsibility of the USA to look after their citizens first and foremost, and anything beyond that is “charity work”. He later stated that the USA didn’t become the greatest country in the world by giving all of its money away and mentioned the idea of underdeveloped countries “figuring it out for themselves”.
12. Contrary to popular belief, helping underdeveloped countries in their pursuit of clean drinking water is not as expensive as it sounds. While it does come at a price, it is all relative. Compared to the amount of money that the United States spends on wars and the military, helping those in need comes at a fraction of the cost. With the United States teaming up with other members of the UN, a large sum of money could be achieved in a very short amount of time with contributions from many other countries. On the topic of interfering with the American economy, helping those in need of fresh drinking water would only help our own economy. By helping underdeveloped countries, not only will America be saving millions

of lives, but we will also be creating new alliances, trade partners, and acquiring new products that can be a help in our economy. With the large majority of underdeveloped countries being located in the sub-saharan African region, the United States could have crops that would never exist on American soil. Finally, on the belief that these countries will figure it out themselves, the sad reality is that they won't. With the limited amount of resources that these underdeveloped countries have, largely due to overpopulation and geographic location, they are never going to be able to get ahead of this issue and will always be at the mercy of other countries to get them out of this tragic situation.

13. Put yourself in the shoes of Aysha, that little 13 year old girl. Why should she have to suffer because she just so happens to live in a country with extreme poverty? This issue matters now more than ever before. The United States is obligated both morally and legally to help these underdeveloped countries get a taste of life for the very first time. With millions of people around the world dying on a daily basis because of this issue, there is no time for second thoughts. The United States has the power and responsibility to put this massacre to end and needs to be held accountable to do so.

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