

Pirating Affluence



I have devoted a lot of time this semester to trying to figure out exactly what the paradox of affluence is; what do those three words actually mean? I visited southern Sri Lanka over the summer for a month in an effort to teach English to Tsunami depressed preschool children. I spent my entire time there trying to find something that was a perfect symbol for the paradox of affluence. However, I was never able to uncover any one thing that I could point to and say I felt universally reflected our honors study topic. Recently though, Somali pirates have been all over the news and while watching one day it occurred to me that they were the perfect symbolic representation for the paradox of affluence.

Somali pirates have essentially hijacked the world news recently as they have stolen merchant vessels off the straits of Jibar. On the 15th of November, the largest maritime hijacking of all time occurred with Somali pirates assuming control of more than 100 million dollars worth of oil. The world's leaders have been trying to secure this area of the ocean but the task has proven to be nearly impossible seeing as how it makes up over 100 million square miles of water.

These incidents perfectly demonstrate the paradox of affluence. It is a paradox in and of itself that all the first world, the major economic powers of society, are powerless to stop a bunch of rag tag pirates from a third world country. It seems in this case that money and affluence cannot combat poverty, war and the frustrated people of a decidedly less affluent country. It truly goes to show that all of mankind is interconnected and that the paradox of affluence is one of the major issues facing our world today.

The enclosed picture in this essay perfectly illustrates issue number five of the Phi Theta Kappa Program Guide, and in an undeniably interesting way. Issue number five looks at how affluence contributes to the rise and fall of societies, and how it relates to their strengths and weaknesses. The problem that the affluent countries of the world are now facing with the pirates off the coast of Somalia is one that is challenging their affluence. This does not occur as a result of internal conflict (what issue five mainly looks at it), but rather from an outside force.

It seems that the United States of America and all other affluent countries are powerless to stop these small groups of pirates from Somalia, Africa. For decades now, Somalia has been forced to suffer through famines, catastrophic droughts and countless cultural and civil wars. The affluent countries of the world have done virtually nothing to help in over 15 years and now it seems we are paying the price.

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Yahoonews.com/picture/pirates/4a23b