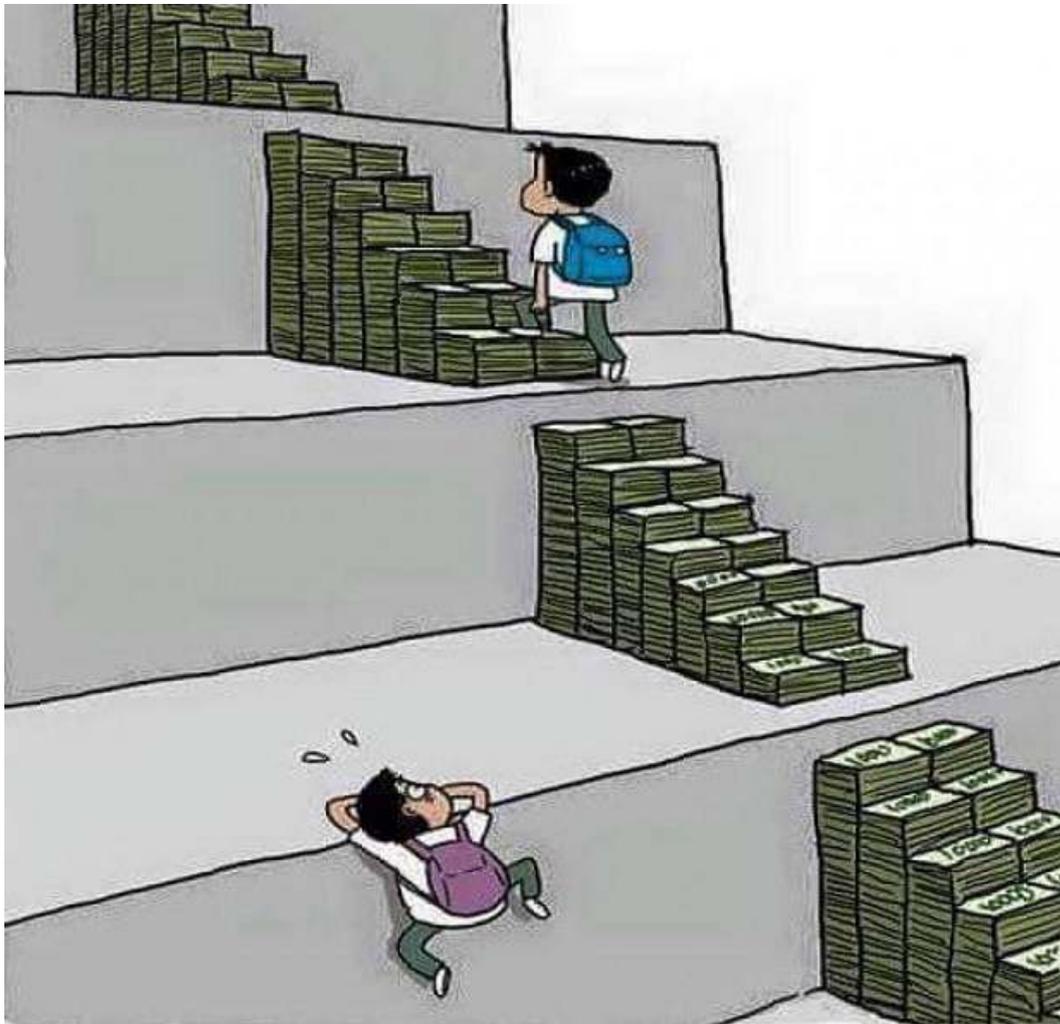


PARALLEL WORLDS



This is a story about two parallel worlds. One day, in both worlds, a little girl was born. It was the same baby, the same day, the same hour but not the same context.

In the first world, the girl was called Malia and was born in a rich and safe part of Bangkok, next to one of the most important shopping centers in the world. Her mom was an important professor from the main university of Bangkok and her dad was an essential surgeon in a NGO. They loved Malia like she was their own life. Actually, she was their only daughter.

In the second world, the same baby was born, without any medical assistance, a few meters apart in a suburb in Bangkok center. She was called Ailam and was the third children of the family. Her mom barely had studied and she worked in a floating market selling take-away food she did by herself while her dad worked in a dirty factory near the district he lived in. He was working from 6a.m. to 5p.m. and he had to supply all his family's needs with a low salary, so they did not have enough money for a decent home and they lived in a poor hut. Besides, the area they lived in was neglected and dirty because there were built a lot of luxury buildings next to it so the rich companies wanted the poor families that lived in that zone to leave.

As I said, both babies lived a few meters away but now you can see that the conditions were pretty different.

When they started growing, they showed a great capacity of understanding and a lot of ability to learn, so when Malia parents realized that, as soon as they could, decided to join her to a special school in where children had an unusual intelligence. It was pretty expensive, but they had enough resources to pay it.

However, Ailam could not go to a special school despite of the fact that her parents wanted her to. They just had not enough money to pay something like that, so Ailam limited herself to go to an ordinary school, wasting her opportunity of take advantage of her intelligence.

Later then, Malia and Ailam turned 12 and it started to be more differences between them little by little.

Malia was really beautiful; she had had an easy childhood and she had always been a very charming girl but it's true that she was a little bit spoiled due to the fact that she always had what she wanted. Anyways she was hard-working and determined from birth, she already talked two languages and she was about starting to study another one, she showed a lot of interest about science and

she was a great athlete, she played in a volleyball team. All this made that she was really healthy and she had lots of friends.

On the other hand, Ailam did not suffer the same fate. She did not have that happy childhood. In fact, it was rough. Since she had to skip a lot of classes to help her mum cooking for the floating market, she did not have a nice and complete first education. She learnt to read and write but she barely knew how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. As she had not that nice childhood, she was not as happy and charming as Malia, but she was hard-working and determined from birth too. Besides she was so humble and grateful so people loved her too much. When she went to high school she made a lot of friends and everybody knew her, and it seemed things were going to go better, but they didn't. A few months after she turned fourteen, her dad died of Cancer and so did Malia's dad.

It was a rough episode in their lives but it did not affect the same way in each one.

At first, Malia felt depressed and gloomy. After all, her dad was her example to follow and she lost him. The followed two months were blue in her family but then it started to change. People started to forget it, anyways she and her mother had money to spare so it was not an economic issue to lose her father salary, and Malia started to look at it like a motivation. She found her life goal, find the Cancer cure.

In the meanwhile, Ailam had lost her father too. As she had had a tougher life than Malia, she knew how to roll with the punch and she did not felt that miserable but it affected so much to her family economy. Her father was the main economic source of the family and without him they were not going to survive, so Ailam was forced to leave the school and find a job, inasmuch as she was the only female children of the family and her brothers could not cook as they are boys. She started with her mother selling take-away food and even though it was not that bad, it obviously was not her dreamt job.

At the age of sixteen, Malia was that good at school that was called from Harvard to study in there the grade or career she wanted. Malia logically accepted and she went to the United States of America to study. She chose medicine as a career with the goal of finding a cure for the Cancer and she was a brilliant student. Besides, as she did not left volleyball, she played in the Harvard volleyball team and she reached a lot of achievements as athlete and she learned to play piano.

In the other world, Ailam was still helping her mom in the floating market with a drab life, she was wasting her natural talent. But one day, suddenly, she met a boy coming back home and they started to see each other. He was handsome but he was kind of dumb and really possessive, he always wanted to know where and when was going or doing she. Anyways, Ailam was really lost then and she fell in love with him, and so did him.

They were a happy couple for two years, but when she turned eighteen, she wanted to be more independent and he didn't allow her to, so they started fighting so often until she gave up and decided to do whatever he want. She quit going out with friends, she quit working and she quit doing whatever he didn't want her to do. Since her mum did not agree with her in this decision they started to distance themselves until she left her.

Ailam was not silly and when she realized what she had done she did everything she could to fix it. But it was too late. She looked for a job, but she had no studies so nobody wanted a hick. She looked for her old friends, but they did not want to know anything about her. She looked for her mother, but since she left her she did not have enough money to survive so she went sick for lack of nutrients and she was about to die.

At the same time, Malia was studying a lot for getting the graduate of medicine. When she did it, instead of stopping studying and getting a job she decided to fight for what she really wanted from the very beginning; find the Cancer cure. She joined the NGO in which her father used to work and she starting researching about it.

She knew it was going to be hard, but she knew that if somebody had found it before her father would had not died, so that was her purpose.

And finally, after four years of intense investigation, she and her scientist group found the desired cure of Cancer.

In the meantime, in the second world, Ailam was already 24 and she was totally lost. As she could not have a decent job she was forced to work as a prostitute. She was totally lonely.

At the age of thirty, that babies that were born a few meters ago were not the same anymore. One of them, Malia, was a total achiever and had had a relatively easy life. On the other hand, Ailam, had had a luckless life, full of troubles.

Malia earned the Nobel Prize in Medicine and was famous all over the world. She married a girl she met while she was studying at high school and they started a family. They all were happy.

At the same time, Ailam died because of a serious illness.

While Ailam's life tragically ended, Malia's life was just starting. Just do not forget that they were the same person, but in different worlds.

What if the Cancer cure was on the hands of someone who cannot pay his studies?

With this story, I wanted to show how much the context of anyone can influence on who we are and all the injustices that a poor person can suffer. That everyone is worthy of having a nice education independently of gender, race or whatever. Another point I want to highlight is that nobody is a bad person from the very beginning. We are different, right, but I think everybody in a nice context is a nice person and it's very difficult not to take bad decisions in a bad environment. Maybe the person you call 'slut' would had found the Cancer cure if she had grown in another context.

10 quotes on the power of human rights education

1. "Human rights education is much more than a lesson in schools or a theme for a day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity. On this International Human Rights Day, let us continue to work together to develop and nurture in future generations a culture of human rights, to promote freedom, security and peace in all nations."

Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, Nobel Peace Prize winner

2. "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Eleanor Roosevelt, American political leader and activist

3. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela, South African civil rights activist

4. "An intensive human rights education for all communities needs to be provided to overcome the old prejudices."

Ruth Manorama, Indian activist

5. "Human rights education is key to addressing the underlying causes of injustice around the world. The more people know about their rights, and the rights of others in society, the better equipped they are to protect them."

Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International

6. "The effects of human rights education can be dramatic in awakening people to the value and power of their own lives [...]."

Daisaku Ikeda, Japanese philosopher, activist, author and educator

7. "Education... is the key to unlocking other human rights."

Katarina Tomasevski, Croatia, UN Special Rapporteur

8. "Even in kindergarten, children should learn – and experience – the fundamental human rights values of respect, equality and justice. From the earliest age, human rights education should be infused throughout the program of every school – in curricula and textbooks, policies, the training of teaching personnel, pedagogical methods and the overall learning environment... [Children] can be guided by human rights education to make informed choices in life, to approach situations with critical and independent thought, and to empathize with other points of view."

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Jordanian UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

9. "Knowledge will bring you the opportunity to make a difference."

Claire Fagin, American nurse, educator, academic, and consultant

10. "Human rights education should involve more than the provision of information and should constitute a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels in development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies."

UN General Assembly