

Navigating the complex issues of our modern world calls for independent thinking. This can be formed through a liberal education, which teaches broad thinking uncharacteristic to other fields, a necessary tool for solving problems like the poor treatment of international workers. International production endangers the livelihoods of workers, and there is little promise that this unjust system will change without the aid of bright minds.

In my social justice class, we studied the journey of a t-shirt from the harvesting of the cotton to the shipping of the final product to the U.S. Through this process, we focused on the effect of each step on human lives. Around the world, workers risk their lives in fabric factories every day for a few cents an hour. The ethics in the production system are appalling; in response to this need, we brainstormed ways to improve the wellbeing of workers. Raising the prices of a t-shirt by two dollars or buying shirts only from reputable companies, which support the wellbeing of their workers, would provide a living wage for the workers.

In my government and politics class we discuss real world issues, including the effects of policy on international workers' rights. Not only do I get to exchange opinions on current events with my classmates, but I also get to develop creative solutions to issues, practicing skills that are vital for my future. Looking at the political options for helping underprivileged workers, we found that existing factory inspection laws are not adhered to in countries like Bangladesh. Reinforcing this policy would ensure more humane environments for generations of workers to come. From these two classes, I

learned that there are many real opportunities to support workers; I never would have learned of these possibilities without a liberal education.

The consideration of both the social and political justness of clothing production has given me a full, intelligent view of the issue. I feel that I can now logically process the best solution; without these opportunities at school, my only source of information might be from the news or Internet, where media can decide what I see and think about an issue. However, these courses have allowed me to think independently, and I feel like I can actually contribute something to the hard-to-please "adult world."

Exposure to so many angles from different classes provides me with a full, diverse understanding on a single topic. Liberal education allows me to understand the connection of a topic to U.S. and world culture, relating topics to my life rather than learning about an abstract topic only applicable in the secluded world of school.

However unappealing a distraction from the acclaimed STEM focuses may seem, pursuing a liberal education is imperative for problem solving skills in a diverse, changing world. This approach allows us to use our full potential for critical thinking, as our new ideas are critical to improving our world and creating a promising future for ourselves.