



**2022 INTERNATIONAL
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS OLYMPIAD
CASES PACKAGE 17**

Welcome to the cases for the Senior High School Ethics Olympiad. An Ethics Olympiad is a competitive yet collaborative event in which students analyse and discuss real-life, timely, ethical issues. An Ethics Olympiad differs from debating in that students are not assigned opposing views; rather, they defend whatever position they believe is right and win by showing that they have thought more carefully, deeply, and perceptively about the cases in question. Experience shows that this type of event encourages and helps students develop intellectual virtues such as ethical awareness, critical thinking skills, civil discourse, civic engagement, and an appreciation for diverse points of view. Please feel free to email us if you have any queries at; admin@ethicsolympiad.org

Cases 1, 2, 3, & 4 are from the Centre for Ethics and Public Affairs at the St Andrews University (John Stuart Mill Cup Cases). Click here for more information about the John Stuart Mill Cup; <https://millcup.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/> Cases 6, 7 & 8 were published by the National High School Ethics Bowl Case Writing Committee under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license at the University of North Carolina. For more information about the National High School Ethics Bowl visit <http://nhseb.unc.edu> Case 5 is from the University of Texas - Ethics Unwrapped. Click here for more information about Ethics Unwrapped- <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/>

Case 1 - University Admission by Lottery

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Case 1. University Admission by Lottery

In the current university admissions system, the chance that a pupil will progress to a highly selective university largely depends on factors such as their social class, ethnicity, which school they go to, and what area they live in. For example, in 2017/18, young people from the most advantaged areas in the country were five times more likely to enter a highly selective university than those from disadvantaged areas.[1] Privileged students have more opportunities and resources available for extracurricular activities, personal statement tutoring, interview training, and other ways of improving their profile as applicants. This perpetuates inequalities: attending a top-ranking university highly benefits your future socio-economic status.

A controversial proposal for improving the fairness and equality in university admissions is to replace the current selection procedure with a lottery. This is not unheard of: Dutch universities used a lottery for oversubscribed courses until 2017 and are moving back to this approach because it was found to lead to more diversity and equality. [2] One option is to set a minimum requirement of exam results for admission onto each course and enter all applicants meeting this threshold into a lottery. This would make the student body at highly selective universities more diverse, give disadvantaged pupils a better chance at improving their socio-economic status, and help to reduce social inequality.

However, there are expected downsides. A lottery does not ensure that the most motivated and capable applicants will get a place, which seems contrary to the idea of meritocracy. Also, it has been argued that applicants will lose a sense of control over which university they will attend and may feel that they are not rewarded for their efforts. [3] Pupils may then become less motivated to engage in enriching extracurricular activities, such as ethics tournaments (!). Finally, degrees from elite universities may become less meaningful to employers, though it is an open question whether this is an unwelcome result. [4]

Discussion questions

1. Should applicants be selected for university courses purely based on their merit?
2. It can be argued that the current admissions system is not a meritocracy in practice, since students from less advantaged backgrounds often cannot afford to attend the best university that would accept them. Does this help to justify moving to an admissions procedure that explicitly does not select applicants purely based on their merit?
3. If university admission by lottery would decrease the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, does this justify implementing it?

1 <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/HEPI-Policy-Note-20-Social-Mobility-Challenge-FINAL.pdf>

2 <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/12/11/loten-voor-studie-weer-mogelijk> ;

<https://northerntimes.nl/minister-for-education-proposes-return-to-lottery-admissions/>

3 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/willarddix/2018/08/16/the-problem-with-college-admission-lottery-proposals/>

4 <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-7-questions-about-an-elite-college-admissions-lottery/2019/033>

Case 2. Anti-Natalism

Everyone you have ever met has been conceived. Usually, people think having children is a good thing. We congratulate parents who have recently had children. They also receive various social benefits. In most countries' new mothers – and increasingly, fathers too – are entitled to paid parental leave. And the state typically provides child support to help parents raise their offspring. There are even social stigmas attached to people who choose not to have children.

Not everyone *has to* have children, but we do think of ourselves as having a *right* to have children. However, recently, a dissenting voice has received some attention: Anti-natalism is the view that it is morally wrong to bring children into the world. It is notable that no one is able to consent to being born. Given that being conceived is a precursor to all the suffering one can ever experience, and that everyone who suffers this ordeal (as an anti-natalist may phrase it) will ultimately have to face death, conception might look like the type of act for which you should get permission before inflicting upon someone. South African philosopher David Benatar has been a prominent advocate of these types of arguments, which he advances in his controversial book, *Better Never to Have Been*. Recently, anti-natalism was even covered in popular news outlets, after Raphael Samuel, an Indian businessman, sued his parents for being born.^[1]

There are, less extreme groups which also advocate procreative restrictions. For instance, *Birth Strike* is made up of members who have decided that they will not have children under current circumstances. Typically, they cite the climate crisis as a reason why we should not bring additional children into the world. [2] They see the ability to abstain from having children as a way of demanding that certain social and economic changes are made.

Discussion Questions

1. Given that in all circumstance becoming a parent means condemning one's child to physical and mental pain from time to time, is there anything effective that one can say to justify choosing to become a parent?
2. If your answer to the first question was yes, consider this question: If the circumstances are particularly bad—e.g., if as a potential parent you know your children would have lives that, due to the climate crisis, involved low air quality, overcrowding and increased risks of serious diseases—would it be wrong for you to have children?
3. Can abstaining from procreation be an effective form of protest?

1 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-47154287>

2 - <https://www.birthstrikeforfuture.com/>

Case 3. Homophobic Discrimination and Freedom of Speech

In Switzerland, on March 7, 2013, Mathias Reynard, a member of the Swiss national council (which represents the Swiss population), proposed a parliamentary initiative to include sexual orientation as one of the characteristics protected under an already existing law, art. 261*bis* of the Swiss penal code. This law protects a person's or a group's racial, ethnic and religious membership from discrimination and incitement to hatred. Reynard and advocates for lesbian, gay and bisexual people's (LGB) rights in Switzerland argue that the modification will help reduce violence against LGB people as well as encourage acceptance of LGB people [1]. In November 2018, the Federal Council (the executive body of the Swiss government) approved the modification of the penal code in the following way [2] (a translated extract is presented here):

Art 261bis

Discrimination and Incitement to Hatred

Whoever, who publicly, incites to hatred or to discrimination against a person or a group of people due to their racial, ethnic or religious membership or due to their sexual orientation;

Whoever, who publicly, propagates an ideology aiming at downgrading or denigrating in a systematic manner this person or group of people; (...) Is punished by a custodial sentence of a maximum three years or a monetary penalty.[3]

Inside the Federal Council, two political parties (the PLR and the UDC), and a canton (Schwytz) argue that this law is a threat to freedom of speech and information and a threat to freedom of conscience and belief. This view is shared by the FDU, a Christian party, who initiated a successful referendum against the modification of article 261*bis*, leading to the suspension of the application of the modified article. This is until a vote by the Swiss population on February 9, 2020 (which is in the future, as of this writing) decides whether the penal code will include the modification in article 261*bis* or will remain without it. The main arguments by the FDU are like the ones given by the PLR and the UDC. They also add that this law would give more rights to LGB people compared to other people, especially those who condemn homosexuality [4].

Discussion Questions

1. Is there a difference between homophobic discrimination/incitement to hatred and expressing negative opinions towards homosexuality? If so, what is the difference?
2. Would this law prevent debates over the defensibility of homosexuality?
3. Regarding the parliamentary initiative, do you think that such a modification of the article 261*bis* could be effective in the long-term at preventing homophobia and biphobia?

¹ <https://www.shortlist.com/news/switzerland-lgbtq-gay-trans-law-crime-homophobia>

² <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2018/5327.pdf>;

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/erweiterung-derantirassismus-straftorm_copy-of-schweiz-hat-neuen-gesetzesartikel-gegen-homophobie/44595810

³ <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2018/5327.pdf>

⁴ <https://contre-les-discriminations-oui.ch/de-quoi-sagit-il>;

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/lgbtq-rights_why-oneparty-is-opposing-the-criminalisation-of-homophobia/44670950

Case 4. Statues

Edward Colston was a politician and philanthropist. He was also a slave trader. On the 7th of June 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the killing of George Floyd, protesters tore down a statue of him in Bristol and threw it in Bristol Harbour.[1] Statues of historical figures have become a topic of political debate in the last few years. In the U.S., there remain many statues of generals who fought for the Confederacy. 160 were taken down in 2020 [2], but hundreds remain. In NZ the statue of British army officer, John Hamilton was removed from the city centre of the Hamilton in 2020 following the death of George Floyd.[3]. In Australia there have been widespread calls on social media for the removal of monuments to colonisers, explorers and colonial administrators, including ones of Lachlan Macquarie and Captain James Cook in Sydney [4]. Those who want the statues removed see their presence as a celebration of the racist views harboured by the individuals represented. In this light, the continued display can be seen as a celebration of that racism.

After the Edward Colston statue was taken down, a statue of Winston Churchill in Trafalgar Square was boarded up for protection.[5] Although celebrated for his leadership as Prime Minister of the U.K. during World War II, Churchill expressed racist views – describing whites as a “stronger race, a higher-grade race” – and is blamed for the Bengal famine, which resulted in millions of deaths. [6] Those who oppose taking down statues of controversial figures often point to their historical significance. Statues may be seen as having an educational role, or as important in maintaining the cultural identity of citizens. Boris Johnson argues that removing statues is “to lie about our history”. [7]

Discussion questions

1. It is often suggested that statues help to maintain a community’s cultural identity, have a role in public education, or help us to remember our history. Should these considerations have a bearing on whether we retain statues of racists from earlier eras?
2. As well as being a slave trader, Edward Colston was a renowned philanthropist, and Churchill is celebrated for his role in defeating the Nazis in the World War II. If we accept that these people are responsible for atrocities, could their good deeds still justify having a statue honouring them?
3. The toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol was an illegal act. If there is a strong case for removing the statue of a racist figure, is it ever justifiable for activists to break the law to remove it?

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/08/who-was-edward-colston-and-why-was-his-bristol-statue-toppled-slave-trader-black-lives-matter-protests>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/23/160-confederate-symbols-removed-public-spaces-2020>
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_monuments_and_memorials_removed_during_the_George_Floyd_protests#New_Zealand
4. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-10/black-lives-matter-protests-renew-push-to-remove-statues/12337058>
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53023351>
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29701767>
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jun/12/boris-johnson-says-removing-statues-is-to-lie-about-our-history-george-floyd>

Case 5. Something Fishy at the Paralympics

Some of sports' most inspiring and heart-warming stories have come from the Special Olympics (for athletes with intellectual disabilities) and the Paralympics (for athletes with intellectual impairments and visual or physical disabilities). The Paralympic games are held in parallel with the Olympics every four years and have become a very big deal. Sports Illustrated reports that "Paralympic sport has grown into big business, with countries and sponsors pouring in millions of dollars to fund and promote athletes whose stories highlight the best of humanity." [1] Australian Paralympians are sometimes provided "tens of thousands of dollars in government funding and other perks, including college scholarships, vehicles, and housing." [2] In the 2020 Paralympics, U.S. athletes were slated to receive \$37,500 for each gold medal they won.

Unfortunately, sometimes Paralympian's cheat much like regular Olympians have been known to do—they take illicit drugs [3] or they drive their blood pressure up ("boosting") to drive heart rate and improve performance. [4] And, unsurprisingly, the Russians systematically cheat in the Paralympics just as they do in the traditional Olympics. [5] But the most significant cheating involves gaming the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC's) classification system.

The IPC classifies the disabilities of competitors in order to provide a structure for competition. Fair competition thrives only if athletes have similar levels of disabilities, so athletes are grouped into classes based on "how much their impairment affects fundamental activities in each specific sport and discipline". [6]

Obviously, by pretending to have a more serious disability than they actually do, athletes could convince officials to group them with athletes of lesser abilities. And there is evidence that this has happened. For example, among the wrongdoing [1]:

- Swimmers tape their arms for days, removing the tape just before classification. Because of the taping, they are unable to fully extend their arms.
- Athletes arrive for the classification in a wheelchair when they do not otherwise use wheelchairs or wearing braces that they normally do not wear.
- Athletes submerge in cold water or roll in snow soon before classification to worsen muscle tone.
- Athletes intentionally perform below their ability ("tanking") in assessment races.
- Remarkably, even the shortening and removal of limbs has reportedly occurred.

The most infamous example of Paralympic cheating was by Spain's basketball team at the 2000 Sydney Paralympics: none of the 12 players was mentally disabled as represented. [7] Recently several Paralympians, especially Para-swimmers, have claimed that cheating the classification system is an "epidemic". [1]

After the Spanish basketball team was finally punished in 2017, the IPC removed basketball as a Paralympic sport until officials could prove to the IPC's satisfaction that they had the classification problem under control. [7]

And, after believable allegations of widespread classification cheating among Australian Paralympians, [8] Australia has launched an online course that is mandatory for all its Paralympic athletes. The course outlines the classification process and requirements for all staff, coaches and athletes, explains penalties for noncompliance, and trains everyone on ethical decision making. [9]

At this time, the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, along with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether or not the increased visibility (and awareness) of Paralympic cheating changes the way these games are played in the future remains to be seen.

Case 5. Something Fishy at the Paralympics Cont.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the steps being taken by the IPC (banning basketball until the sport can clean up its act) and individual countries like Australia (with its online training course) necessary? Are they sufficient? Explain your reasoning.
2. It has been argued that because the Paralympics are about winning (just like all sports) and that sometimes people in other sports cheat, it is no big deal that Paralympians cheat. Indeed, “[s]ome Paralympians and disability-rights speakers take doping scandals as positive news. They say it proves disabled people can achieve the same things as anyone else, including cheating. People, they argue, can identify more with a role model who has made mistakes.”^[11] Do you find this a convincing argument? Explain.
3. What can be done to improve ethics in the Para-Olympics?

1. Robert Sanchez, Dirty Pool at the Paralympics, Sports Illustrated, March 2020, at; <https://www.si.com/olympics/2020/03/03/paralympiccheating> .
2. [Sydney Paralympians relive Spanish basketball cheating scandal - ABC News](#)
3. Roger Collier, Most Paralympians Inspire, But Others Cheat, Canadian Medical Association Journal, Sept. 9, 2008, at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2527388/>
4. Kevin Carpenter, The Dark Side of the Paralympics: Cheating Through “Boosting,” Law In Sport, Aug. 27, 2012, at <https://www.lawinsport.com/more/blogs/kevin-carpenter/item/the-dark-side-of-the-paralympics-cheating-through-boosting>
5. Rebecca Ruiz, Russia Is Banned from Paralympics, Again, for Doping, New York Times, Jan. 29, 2018, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/29/sports/paralympics-russia-doping.html>
6. International Paralympic Committee, November 2015 IPC Athlete Classification Code (2015)
7. Simon Tomlinson, Are These the Biggest Cheats in Sporting History? Staggering Story of the Healthy Spanish Basketball Team Who Pretended to Be Mentally Handicapped to Win Paralympic Gold, The Daily Mail, Oct. 14, 2013, at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2458715/Spanish-basketball-team-pretended-disabled-win-Paralympic-gold.html>
8. Craig Lord, Jessica Long on the Poison Pool in Paralympic Swimming Where ‘Classification Cheats Prosper,’ Swimming World Magazine, March 5, 2020, at <https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/jessica-long-on-the-poison-pool-in-paralympic-swimming-where-classification-cheats-prosper/>
9. Scot Spits, Misrepresenting Disability on a Par with Doping: Paralympics, Australia, Sydney Morning Herald, July 31, 2019, at <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/misrepresenting-disability-on-a-par-with-doping-paralympics-australia-20190731-p52cm2.html>
10. Chris Dutton, Paralympics Australia Launches Crackdown on Cheats, Canberra Times, May 29, 2019, at <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6188557/para-sport-launch-cheating-crackdown/#gsc.tab=0>
11. BBC, Paralympics: Olympic Implications, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/sport/aspects/paralympics.shtml>

Case 6: Wholesome Discipline

The aim of punishment is often framed in terms of retribution for past wrongdoing and deterrence of future wrongdoing. A rapidly spreading alternative to these traditional conceptions of punishment is known as restorative justice, which does not primarily aim to “inflict punishment on the offender, but rather, to restore all parties to a prior state of ‘wholeness.’ [1]

In response to dissatisfaction with zero-tolerance policies in schools and their disproportionate impact on disadvantaged students, educational leaders have turned to restorative discipline. Many use mediation between victims and offenders, between a group of offenders, or between the community and the offender as a vehicle for healing and growth. For example, if a student is guilty of bullying, school leaders might facilitate a conversation between the bully and their victim(s), or a discussion among a group of bullies to unearth their motivations, to educate them on the harms of bullying, and to repair injuries caused. [2] While a more punitive model of discipline in schools would use familiar modes of punishment (detention, suspension, shaming, legal citations), restorative practices aim for reconciliation, reform on the part of wrongdoers, and collaborative problem-solving to address infractions and their causes.

Advocates argue that such restorative practices lead to increased accountability, more supportive school environments, positive social and emotional learning, and a more equitable distribution of punishment in schools. There is a distinctive educational value, too. Restorative practices present opportunities for students to learn the sorts of social skills and character traits necessary for students to flourish as adults. However, restorative practices in schools are not yet well understood by researchers. One study found that restorative practices in Pittsburgh public schools in the US, improved school climate and decreased the average suspension rate, but also that those same programs led to a worsening of academic and disciplinary outcomes. [3] Another study found that restorative intervention “did not yield significant changes in the treatment schools,” but self-reports by participants showed signs of positive impact on school climate for the future. [4] Yet another study found that “students attending schools with collaborative climates and less punitive approaches to discipline have lower risk of being suspended and better academic outcomes.” [5]

Some take the widespread support for such practices in the absence of a solid body of research to be a sign that moral sentiment has moved ahead of demonstrable results. [6] Critics also worry that leniency in punishment does not sufficiently penalize students who misbehave and fails to deter future misbehaviour. Some also see restorative practices as a way of artificially driving the number of reported school suspensions down, thereby papering over underlying problems among students and within schools. When minor behavioural problems are ignored, they may turn into serious infractions, thereby exacerbating the school-to-prison pipeline.

Discussion questions

1. Is there a morally significant difference between the use of restorative disciplinary practices on young children in schools as opposed to adult offenders?
2. What obligations do victims (whether individuals or communities) have to offenders?

¹ ["Prisons Today and Tomorrow"](#)

¹ [Colorado School Safety Resource Center, "Examples of Restorative Justice Actions in Schools"](#)

¹ [RAND, "Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions?"](#)

¹ [Evaluation of a Whole-School Change Intervention: Findings from a Two-Year Cluster-Randomized Trial of the Restorative Practices Intervention](#)

¹ [Discipline in Context: Suspension, Climate, and PBIS in the School District of Philadelphia](#)

¹ [The Cart Before the Horse: The Challenge and Promise of Restorative Justice Consultation in Schools](#)

Case 7. Killer Art

Since the arrival of postmodern art, and in particular performance art, there have been legitimate concerns raised about the impropriety of some artworks. Whereas in the past artworks have generally only been considered capable of being instrumentally immoral, some new art works seem to be in themselves morally dubious.

Cases of such artworks abound. In 1974, grandmother of performance art, Marina Abramovich, created a piece called 'Rhythm 0' which invited audience members to do anything they liked to her with a variety of items. The items ranged from feathers, to knives, to a loaded gun. She is reported to have said "I was ready to die."^[1] In the event, she was groped, stripped of her clothes, cut with razor blades, and had a loaded gun aimed at her head.^[2] Other examples include Marco Evaristti's 'Helena & El Pescador'. This work displayed 10 food blenders each containing a live goldfish. The visitors were given the option of blitzing the fish and some did.^[3] Finally, famous Chinese artist, Ai Wei Wei, photographed himself smashing a 2000-year-old, Han dynasty urn.^[4] Such an act of destruction was considered unethical by many.

To be sure, each of these performance pieces varies immensely in their potential ethical transgressions. Assuming any blame is warranted at all, it's not clear the artists themselves are blameworthy—in the first two cases, they merely set the conditions for others to do harm. Though none of the works were found to be illegal, they may still be immoral.

These works all have commendable ethical intentions – they seek to improve the audience's moral sensibilities in an educational and challenging way. Abramovich's piece is a warning of people's potential to violence when they are absolved of responsibility; Evaristti's piece forces the audience to confront humanity's immense power over animals, and Wei's piece encourages the audience to preserve art and heritage. As a result, it could be argued that a piece of art successful in conveying its message might generate more overall good than is lost in producing the piece. Additionally, many argue that the principle of artistic freedom is important. For example, when defending Evaristti, his lawyer argued that, "an artist has the right to create works which defy our concept of what is right and what is wrong." Limiting art might do more harm than good. ^[5]

However, as regards the good intentions of the artists, it's not always clear that an artist's intended message is the one actually received. In general, when people engage in acts of harm, it's plausible that people become desensitised to harm and are more likely to commit further harm. It's also not clear why it's necessary for the works to be immoral themselves in order to achieve an effective message: many people believe conventional art is highly successful in achieving moral education.

Discussion questions

1. Should artists ever create unethical, or even illegal, artworks?
2. Should unethical art, such as is mentioned in the case, be censored? Should art ever be censored? If so, by whom?
3. Suppose art should sometimes be permitted to blur ethical boundaries. In virtue of what should it be allowed to do this? Is all art like this or only some art?
4. If a piece of performance art is unethical, who is blameworthy? Consider each of the examples given in the case.

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/may/12/marina-abramovic-ready-to-die-serpentine-gallery-512-hours>

2 <https://www.elitereaders.com/performance-artist-marina-abramovic-social-experiment/>

3 <https://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/08/28/marco-evaristti-and-his-goldfish-are-still-making-waves/>

4 <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/art-crime/0/steps/11886>

5 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3040891.stm>

Case 8. The Medical Brain Drain

Maryam just finished her medical training in Nigeria. She dreams of using her degree to gain citizenship in the US, NZ or Australia. This hope was, in fact, the main reason she went to medical school in the first place. She knows that countries like the US, the UK & Australia, are facing a healthcare worker deficit and prioritizes health workers in their admissions policies. If Maryam can leverage her degree for citizenship, she can ensure a life of comfort and stability for herself as well as her family.

Yusuf is one of countless Nigerian citizens in desperate need of medical care. While healthcare worker shortages are common, the need in low-income countries like Nigeria is particularly dire. Whereas the Australia & New Zealand have 3.7 health workers per 1,000 citizens, Nigeria has 0.4. (India has .85 health workers per 1000 citizens) [1] This is not just because Nigeria cannot train enough health workers to meet their needs, but because places like Australia. continue offering citizenship to Nigerians with medical degrees. According to a recent estimate, there are 8,000 doctors from Nigeria working in the U.S., whereas there are only 35,000 Nigerian doctors working in Nigeria. Because of this shortage, Yusuf never receives the care that he needs. [2] This is known as the medical brain drain. It involves high rates of medical workers migrating from low- to high income countries. And though there is disagreement on the empirical effects of the brain drain—including whether remittances adequately compensate, whether people pursue medical training because they can migrate, and whether return migration occurs enough to mitigate the problem—there is reason to think that the brain drain undermines the ability of low-income countries to meet the healthcare needs of their already underserved citizens. In other words, the cumulative effect of high-income countries and medical workers from low-income countries pursuing their interests through migration policies is that the globally least advantaged receive even less adequate healthcare. Such people likely die prematurely and live lives with more pain and less flourishing.

Critics of the brain drain allege that high-income countries are taking advantage of their bargaining power. Because they can offer medical workers salaries that are exorbitantly higher than those offered in low-income countries, they are able to secure a large number of medical workers without having to pay for their education. Critics also argue that emigrating medical workers are taking advantage of their communities. From birth and through their medical training, scarce state resources were used to help shape their in-demand skills. After receiving this education and training they immigrate to greener pastures and larger pay checks, leaving behind an already poor—and now even poorer community.[3].

However, their opponents note that none of the actions undertaken are at odds with everyday morality. High income countries receive many more petitions for citizenship than they can, or will, accept. They simply use domestic labour needs as one way to decide between would-be migrants. Moreover, people like Maryan are just seeking to escape poverty and instability. And the rights to choose where to live, where to work, and what work we want to do are among the most important rights that we have.

Discussion questions

1. Does Maryan do anything wrong by choosing to leave Nigeria for a wealthier country? What kinds of duties, if any, does she have to her fellow Nigerians and to the Nigerian government?
2. Is it unjust for countries to offer residency or citizenship to people like Maryan over people like Yusuf? If so, what kind of immigration policies would be just?
3. If the brain drain undermines justice in healthcare in Nigeria, is it permissible for Nigeria to place restrictions on emigration, keeping people like Maryan there for several years upon graduation?

1. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.PHYS.ZS?locations=NG>

2. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2016-march-2017/diagnosing-africa's-medical-brain-drain>

3. <https://theconversation.com/why-nigerias-doctors-are-leaving-and-how-the-problem-can-be-fixed-117860>