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### **Brian Barry's "Why Social Justice Matters"**

#### **Summary**

Brian Barry's "Why Social Justice Matters" criticizes the social justice system of the American institutions. He argues that social justice is not only applicable in third world countries such as Bangladesh but also in developed countries such as the US. His concerns are that the social justice in America is not the perfect "black male born and brought up in some areas has less chance of reaching the age of 65 than a child born and brought up in rural Bangladesh" (Barry 3). This is an indication that institutions in the US can not be said to have measures that ensures that all are treated fairly.

Barry argues that the theory of social justice should be put in place across all countries and to provide for a universal standard against which a society can judge its members. The whole concept of making a social justice system a universal conception of justice is for the sake of providing basis on which a country can be criticized by those within its boundaries and the ones outside. The point that Barry is making in this argument is good and valid. This is because practices and institutions should reflect local norms, with which it can conceal corrupt practices, oppress the poor and the marginalized and exploit the working class. With a social justice system, citizens can find a platform in which they can hold their leaders accountable.

Barry argues that rights, opportunities and resources are the most important parameters of creating social justice in any society (Barry 13). In an unjust society, these three aspects of social justice are abused and neglected. Basic human rights are violated and citizens are left struggling to be alive. They find it hard to find food, have decent housing, and are denied the right to access education facilities. Opportunities to attend good schools should be available to all children regardless of the social class which their parents belong or their gender (Schmidtz 15). Workers should have equal opportunities in the work places to express views and develop their talents while job vacancies should not be only available to those who are connected or to one gender. Resources should be shared evenly across all social classes and genders. This makes the three parameters the most important in ensuring social justice.

"Institutions are obviously key to the realization of social justice." (Barry 17). Institutions are crucial in ensuring social justice because they have features which are shaped by the law. Although they are not the end in themselves, they are the means through which social justice can be facilitated. Institutions have a recti-factory function which can be used to ensure that distribution of rights, opportunities and resources is done evenly.

#### **Works Cited**

Barry, Brian. *Why Social Justice Matters*. NY: Polity Press, 2005.

Schmidtz, David. *The Elements of Justice*. NY: Cambridge University Press. , 2006.