

Standing twelve feet high, spanning nearly a hundred miles, embedded with twenty bunkers and over three hundred watch towers, the Berlin Wall epitomized much more than a simple barrier. Built in the midst of the Cold War by the German Democratic Republic under orders from Josef Stalin, the Berlin Wall served the dual purpose of safeguarding the Russian sector against Western espionage and impeding the emigration of East Berliners. While the former is a justifiable concern for a disconcerted state, the latter is much more precarious. By abolishing exchange across its demarcation, the Berlin Wall not only eradicated the free movement of people, but also ideas. To the Communist administration, the transaction of ideas with the West meant an invitation for potentially destructive democratic dogma. An equivalent fear manifested in the West. McCarthyism took hold of America, creating circumstances where any idea out of the norm could result in mortification. Simply put: Exchange was dangerous. This was the consensus until June 12th, 1987, when a voice resonated against the concrete slabs dissecting Berlin:

"Come here to this gate!

Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate!

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Ronald Reagan was declaring not the downfall of the Soviets, nor the conclusion of Communism, but the end of the long-standing concept that contradictory ideas must be silenced; that exchange is dangerous. The barrier in Berlin may have consequentially

fallen, but a barrier of the same nature still stands in the modern globe. It is between my motherland of Bangladesh and the developed world.

A small South Asian nation with a large population and lots of problems: that is how my homeland appears on paper. Upon deeper analysis, one finds that my people are highly cultured, excel in philosophy, and have a strong and honorable heritage. Though my people are respectable, many of our circumstances are not. With one of the highest rates of corruption in the world, dire overcrowding, frequent environmental catastrophes and extreme poverty, my motherland has much to learn from the nations of the developed world: how to grow and reap agriculture more resourcefully, efficiently plan families, eliminate corruption within government, how to succeed as a country. All these lessons are plentiful and available in the developed world, and the thirst for knowledge and development is clear amongst Bangladeshis. Yet the interaction is simply not occurring on a major scale. A barrier of information exists, and this is due to a lack of “ambassadorship”. As shown by the Berlin Wall, ideas travel with people, and there is a significant lack of these people, these “ambassadors”, communicating ideas between Bangladesh and the developed world. I like to think that I am one such ambassador.

Through the toil and efforts of my parents, I have had the luck of receiving an American education, most recently at Minneapolis’ Southwest High School. In my seven years as a resident of the United States, I have made a constant effort at learning every aspect of America that can be used to develop my own nation. I am an intern to Mayor of Minneapolis, a position I desired so as I can observe how a successful city should be governed. I work closely with the Minneapolis Police Department, where I am

continually learning what it takes for the law to be upheld in a community. I study closely all the aspects that fashion my surroundings, and take into consideration how the better aspects can benefit my own society. I am not, however, simply an ambassador-in-training. Although age is a hindrance to my active participation, I cease any and all opportunities to break down the barrier of information that come my way. Each summer, when I have the prospect of visiting Bangladesh, I spend a considerable amount of time in the high schools teaching English to students often older than me. I emphasize the importance of not simply passing proficiency tests, but understanding the essence of the language, and appreciating the existence of a *lingua franca*. By relating to my classroom audience the experiences I have accumulated in the United States, I attempt to prepare myself for a greater role as an ambassador of ideas. In the three hundred hours I spend in Bangladeshi high schools each summer, I also encourage the younger students to explore other languages and cultures of the world, to never limit their potential. Of course, in the midst of it, I make sure the students are prepared to excel in the national standardized tests. Although a minor hammer, my volunteering is nonetheless a spirited chisel at the barrier separating Bangladesh and the developed world. Feeling blessed by the opportunities bestowed upon me, I also recently spearheaded the creation of a scholarship for the talented, but disadvantaged, youth living in the western district of Jessore, Bangladesh. A project still in its initial stages, the MinneBangla Foundation Scholarship has already accumulated enough funds to send nine Jessore orphans to an excellent high school. The scholarships will be distributed over the course of this upcoming summer. An educated Bangladesh, in my view, is a prospective ambassador; another hammer striking away at the barrier of information.

My nation is full of potential. I believe that unreservedly. However, belief without action is an affront to the belief itself. To fulfill my self-imposed obligation to my country, I have chosen to be an ambassador, a courier of beneficial ideas. In action, I speak to the Bangladeshi youth of my generation; assist as many of them as I can. In belief, I am an optimist, unwilling to accept that my people and my nation cannot overcome this barrier of information with the developed world, keeping us from advancement. Yet, when circumstances lead me to succumb to the thought of the obstacles and hindrances that may keep my nation from success, I seek consolation in the people of Berlin during the Cold War. They too had obstacles and hindrances that seemed to be insurmountable. Nevertheless, the Berliners overcame their barrier. Although it took decades of perseverance and resilience to defeat, the Berlin Wall fell, and the people finally danced. In that, I find great solace.