

Through the eyes of a conflict theorist



In the film *Roger and Me*, Michael Moore tells the story of the exploitation of the numerous workers in his hometown, Flint, Michigan. He follows the numerous employees of General Motors who have lost their jobs and consequently, tries to contact the power steering CEO of General Motors, Roger Smith.

Smith closed down a large amount of the auto plants in Flint causing thousands of workers to be unemployed. Moore makes an attempt at demonstrating to Smith the harsh reality of the demise of Moore's childhood surroundings caused by Smith's his actions towards the people of Flint. The structure of society that results from Smith's profitable actions and his refusal to accept this harsh reality proves his lack of empathy for those beneath him economically. Smith's decisions to aid his company's financial status exhibit the economic inequalities present in society. These inequalities are closely represented by the ideas portrayed by conflict theorists.

Developed by Karl Marx, the conflict theory is defined as an idea which contends that various persons and groups form the number of differing levels of social classes within society. These societies have a diverse quantity of income, assets, and wealth, mainly weighing more towards the higher class and against the lower class. These more powerful, higher social groups, such the General Motors Company in the film, utilize their authority and control in order to take advantage of and abuse those groups with lower influences and lower dominance. At the end of the documentary, Moore closes with the statement, " the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. This statement correctly parallels with Marx's broad view of

society and more specifically with the society of Flint at the time of the occurrence of the downsizing of jobs by General Motors and Smith.

As conflict theorists would argue, Smith advantageously misuses his abilities as CEO of the large company to evacuate the tremendous amounts of factory workers of their jobs because of the inexpensive labor found in Mexico. Although the company is acquiring high amounts of earning and profit, by targeting labor forces outside of the country, the cost of labor can be further minimized, and the profit can be additionally heightened. The notion of lowering expenses directly caused the closing of the numerous auto plants in Flint and other towns and further reinforced the inequalities that exist in society. The repercussions of General Motor's decision to downsize and outsource were monstrous. More and more people were evicted from their homes because of their inability to pay their rent on time or in some cases, at all. The economy in Flint began to plummet.

Attempts to revive the destruction of the town failed. Efforts were made to transform the city into a popular tourist attraction. These endeavors soon proved to be unsuccessful. The residents of the settlement had no source of income.

Because of the subsistence of these inequalities, the responses from the public varied based on their involvement with the situation. The disparity between social classes evidently produces an assortment of reactions. Manifestly, the upper class residents show lack of sympathy for the working class factory employees. Downsizing does not affect the wealthy and therefore, they are not concerned with the happenings of the town. As Moore

states, the wealthy are becoming wealthier and their sole remark to the less fortunate is that they are to blame for their own shortcomings. Although the higher class community believes that the groups of people in poverty are in that state because of faults they possess, the conflict theory advocates it becomes increasingly difficult for those with lesser wealth to overcome obstacles.

When such obstacles arise, people forget morals and ethics and do what is best for their needs. This loss of values and principles causes crime rates to hit record highs. The strive for achievement of survival greatly outweighs the corrupt path that leads them out of defeat. Flint soon experiences economic and social chaos.

The elite pay no heed to the necessity of others. Furthermore, their lack of disturbance over the matter reinforces the conflict theory. Moore created his project to exemplify the severe destructive influence and impression left on the economy by Smith and General Motors. He demonstrates his bitter attitude towards the wealthy part of the social order.

His personal anger at General Motors is illustrated throughout the film. He employs his documentary in order to vividly provide evidence of the harmful and negligent approaches and outlooks of higher authorities in charge of composing the economic framework that the country revolves on. Moore successfully criticizes the societal policies of the United States because of their ignorance of the circumstances that occur in Flint, Michigan. The movie clearly authenticates the disparity between classes and the misuse of wealth and power in the country.

The immorality of downsizing and outsourcing and the refusal of the government to aid the poor are the two ideas primarily portrayed by Michael Moore's documentary. Societal rules favor the affluent population and hinder the meager public. This thought is illustrated by the conflict theory and also by Michael Moore. Moore desired for a change to be brought about through the showing of his films. He aspired that his demonstration of the truth would lead to a transformation in the social order. Moore intends the movie to depict the labor struggle of the inhabitants of Flint, Michigan and the horrifying circumstances they find themselves in.

All in all, Moore views the societal world as a stairway of inequality, the key point of the conflict theory.