



The Laborer

“Well, I’m weary of the spoils of my ambition, and I’m shackled by the comfort of my couch. I’m just a little jealous of the freedom that you have, unfettered by the wealth of a world that we pretend is gonna last.”

—“*Land of the Free*,” lyrics by Andrew Peterson

THIS MAN’S MISSION EVERY DAY is to roll in his goods to sell to tourists, each for one dollar! I was caught by the glimpse of this burden. Unlike so many of us, encased and seated in air-conditioned offices, what is daily life for him? He toils under heat and rain, with worn shoes and callous feet—no Nikes here. He displays a hardworking and honorable profession, a vendor selling fine artwork, tapestries, and carvings.

I had joined a group excursion, during a recent NASFA regional conference, to a major archaeological site on the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico. Apart from the pre-Colombian structural ruins, I was struck with the residents running the sales. In that moment, I re-

alized this man could be satisfied in his lifestyle. In that moment, I remembered how stratified the world’s wealth is. In that moment, I surged with contentment, for what I have, and urging, to give to others who have not. My lessons in that moment were: Work hard. Be grateful. Share your wealth.

So, the next time we travel and see something to buy for less than it’s worth, consider paying the artisan what it is worth, in a small redistribution of personal wealth. I am all for bargains, but sometimes not paying enough is, in a sense, stealing.

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YOU’RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.