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Extra Credit with Movies

On November 30, 2011, I went to the IRC and watched *Cappuccino Trail: The Global Economy In A Cup.* The movie started with a startling statement that said that “coffee is a drug.” This statement caught my attention and made me want to learn more about coffee. The movie consisted of three separate stories: Managing Director of Café Direct, Penny Newman, travels to Machu Picchu to make an agreement with the farmers; Urban Espresso teacher, Michael Fairhom, teaching a class how to prepare a cup of coffee so great that customers return, and consumers, Lawrence and Natasha, shopping at a British Safeway trying to differentiate between different coffee brands. It was heartbreaking when I learned about the unfortunate lifestyle and conditions that the coffee farmers go through. Coffee has become a highly-demanded cash crop that has yielded less and less over the years. I didn’t know that coffee farmers receive so little for a bean that consumers consume “2 and a half million cups a day.”

This movie relates to Dean Cycon’s *Javatrekker: Dispatches from the World of Fair Trade Coffee* that says “swirling beneath [the coffee] are worlds within worlds of culture, custom, ecology, and politics” which is similar to the connection that the movie made and said “each sip of coffee that we take brings us in contact with the poor, who grow it.” I learned that the price that farmers receive is an insignificant part of the price of coffee that consumers pay, approximately “one quarter of one percent.” Cycon also that argues that “the price [of coffee does not] include a reasonable profit for the farmers to maintain to improve their lives.” This is further evidenced when movie stated that “a pound bag of coffee beans might earn a farmer $50; the ‘street value’ of that same bag—10,000 cups of coffee—is around $20,000.” There are many steps that the farmers have to take before they put their beans on the market, and I cannot help but to feel sorry for the farmers. The movie made heavy appeals to my ethics and less than halfway through the movie, I wanted to make a change. The saddest scene that moved the audience, and the appeal to pathos that was most heavy, was when the Machu Pichu farmers lost everything to the El Nino weather, including their homes and villages, railroad line, and their major coffee crops. Learning that coffee takes three years to establish means that the farmers would not make any of the little profit they make until they could establish new trees.

Overall, I found *Cappuccino Trail: The Global Economy In A Cup* to be very informative and the conditions of the farmers have made me want to help. I could help by buying fair-trade coffee so that farmer’s receive a higher price for their beans and subsequently will have more money to make a living off of. After watching this movie, I am turned away from companies like Starbucks or Nestle. I have always sworn by Starbucks, but now I would rather go the extra mile and brew my own fair-trade coffee. (AH! This is similar to the whole buying a product and helping out….not as business-like as TOMS but helping out these farmers would sure feel good.)

On a fun note, I never knew that coffee grow in these red cherry-looking things. I always thought that just the beans grew—clearly I’ve never thought about how the beans grow in depth. Just a fun and surprising fact that I learned from watching this movie!