

I stood in front of the class, and asked everyone to come to the front, and sign their name on the left side of my sheet, and include their favourite colour on the right. I let the group know that my favourite colour was blue. Once they had written their name, I directed them to stand on either the right or left side of the classroom.

Once finished, the class was divided into two groups: one group which chose the same favourite colour as me (GROUP A), one group who elected for a different colour (GROUP B). The reasoning for this division was unknown to the class.

I announced to Group A: "Congratulations, you have the privilege of remaining in my class for the evening."

To Group B, I said: "Now you will be punished, but you have the opportunity to change your answer and avoid punishment. Would you like to change your answer?"

Group B held firm to their choice, and so I explained their punishment.

Group B was given the same punishment that Mona, an Iranian girl killed by the Revolutionary Guard: "12 days (which, was incorrect: it was 8 months) of prison, interrogation, and torture, and eventual death by hanging, watching your cellmates (10) die in front of you, with you being the last to be hung. In the process, your family would be used against you, and your father will be killed."

The class then sat down, and I quoted some parts of Payam Avkhavan's *In Search of a Better World* that really struck me. Particularly, Payam's reaction to hearing the news of his friend Mona's death (as articulated above), a couple years after he moved to Canada:

"Here I was, a Canadian teenager, worried about popularity among my high school friends, while back in Iran, the youth were being killed for writing an essay. It became increasingly difficult to reconcile my mundane concerns with the enormity of what had transpired. (Akhavan, 2017 p. 64)"

On the whole, the book helped me realize:

1. How quickly we forget our freedoms.
2. Why we cannot remain comfortably detached from the painful realities and urgent challenges that these ideas convey.
3. That there will be no meaningful change if we look down at anguish from 30,000 feet.