



OPINION

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Institutionalized Ignorance and Intellectual Prostitution: Mortal Sins

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An analysis of UNB's "Intercession in the West Indies - Barbados Journal/St. Lucia Journal", an article published in the November 13th, 1992 issue of *the Brunswickan*.

The aim of this analysis is to shed some light on what seems to be a case of institutionalized ignorance which was made evident in the above article. Also, there is the even more important issue of intellectual prostitution which this article will explore.

Institutionalized Ignorance:

To illustrate this point there will follow a close examination of various quotes taken from the article in question. These are the comments of UNB students who were part of a group studying in Barbados and St. Lucia during the Intercession of 1991-92 academic year.

1. UNB Student commenting on Barbados:
"On this second day, we take our first trip into Bridgetown and onto the University of the West Indies campus: I can't help but notice the attention such a large group of white people is attracting. I wonder if the African/Caribbean students in Fredericton ever feel this 'attention', or if I'm just being self-conscious and over-sensitive to my own color."

The logic implicit in such a statement depicts the kind of cultural baggage which the UNB students took with them to the Caribbean. The evident obsession with identity by complexion seems to indicate that this student expected to be perceived as a color instead of being perceived as another human being. Is it that some individuals have a hard time seeing others or themselves as human beings rather than colours? Do these people expect others to see them the same way?

Probably with some adequate preparation, these UNB students would have been ready for the shock of being greeted in the Caribbean not as a color or race but as human beings.

2. Student commenting on the Caribbean:
"Before coming to the West Indies, I had no concrete ideas of what it would be like. I am ignorant of the culture, language, and history."

The student here should be admired for this high level of honesty. The point however is that: when one considers the proximity of Canada to the Caribbean (a mere five hours or less by air), one has to ask the question, "What has the educational system of this country done to these students?" Has the curricula in History, literature, sociology, and Anthropology at the high school and university level (UNB in particular) been so myopic as to blind the student to the experience of the cultures, languages, and history of the other countries of the continent and subregion of which Canada is a part?

3. A profound statement from the Barbados journal:
"I feel uneasy being in a foreign country, using foreign money, eating foreign food, listening to a foreign language (or so it seems). SUDDENLY, I REALIZE THAT I AM THE FOREIGNER!"
Are you sure??? ... No kidding, Sherlock!!

4. Another statement from the Barbados Journal:
"While shopping one day, I notice an elderly lady buying her groceries. She kept her money in a handkerchief. When told the total, she gave all her money to the check-out girl to count. It took everything she had to pay. It made me feel very sad. This woman just gets by with the bananas or whatever she sells every day. It must be a very difficult life; it helps me to understand how they can look at the tourists the way that they do."
First and foremost, it needs to be stated that this was too much of a bold, conceited and naive statement, without any conceptual facts.

"...It must be a very difficult life..."
What constitutes a difficult life? The "amazing" fact that some people carry money in a handkerchief instead of having it neatly packed away in a wallet? In relation to the lady addressed - For all we know, the money in the handkerchief could have been her weekly budget put aside for groceries. There was absolutely no reason to feel remorse for such a normal life situation. The whole point of this is that money is tucked away just about any place that may be "convenient" for that individual, and their financial status is not affected to any degree.

5. Student commenting on an experience in Barbados:
"Walking is a suicidal experience!"

It would be educational to know why walking in Barbados is such a suicidal experience, instead of reading a statement such as that hanging with an exclamation mark. Personally, I have walked in Barbados for over 18 years of my life and I am still alive today. How would one interpret such a statement?

Is sunstroke a common experience for walkers (or maybe frostbite?) Did the walking experience involve theft, rape, fatalities or what?

The motive behind such a statement with no explanation is unclear, however it does leave a negative image for anyone who may have been interested in visiting the country.

6. Student having a 'bad' feeling in Barbados:
"It really gets irritating to have to continuously be dipping into our pockets for money for gas and that, but this is usually the way, once one leaves Canada and the U.S. As Prof. Pool explains, we are all perceived as 'rich.'"

This was the final statement from the Barbados Journal and by now one wonders if some of the students aren't being "tipped off" to relate some form of negative outlook about their Caribbean experience.

For someone who has never left home before, that is, left living under the security of mummy and daddy, the seemingly irritating feeling of digging into a pocket for money may be a novelty. However, most things in life are NOT FREE and wherever one chooses to travel, may it be to the Caribbean, Europe or North America, there will always be that frustrating feeling of dipping into a pocket. Get used to it...it's a fact of life!

7. Quote from St. Lucia Journal: a student's assessment of the hotel staff:
"I wonder if they feel that the hotel represents a plantation and that they are still enslaved."

Why is it so difficult for this student to view the hotel staff in St. Lucia as being a hotel staff just as any other in Fredericton - The Sheraton for example? The student in question was obviously suffering from what THE LATE GREAT BOB MARLEY calls MENTAL SLAVERY. It is hoped that their Caribbean experience has helped to liberate these students and professors alike from that "intellectual cave."

It is a shame to state that certain "bright" students, as the ones who attended Intercession in the West Indies, allowed their various false assumptions to outweigh the significance of their journey as a whole. For the expectations previously made had severely jeopardized their very "fortunate" adventure of being in the Caribbean. Their narrow-minded views had seriously clouded their vision of the beauty such an Island represents, through both the people and the landscape. These particular students needed to realize that anywhere one may travel, the destination has both its good and bad points, plus different cultural lifestyles. Some individuals had only been concerned with their own culture, and how it is viewed, and were not interested in any other. This is too bad because they obviously had not learned at all what this culture had to offer and what its foundation was to make it the way it is. They had not seen Barbados and St. Lucia as they truly are, but instead had only viewed these two islands as what they had perceived them to be. It needs to be stated that such naive assumptions of a place one does not have any accurate details on, should be overlooked thoroughly and corrected if need be.

For next time, if any of you plan on visiting the Caribbean, keep your expectations at home, and get ready for a whole new adventure that will not only allow you to share and explore new cultural ideas and trends, but it will also allow you to have a more positive outlook and appreciation for another lifestyle other than your own. Don't remain "cooped" up in your views, free up your minds, accept the differences and try to look at the big picture!

There seemed to be some large gaps in the organizational structure of the program. It may be eye-opening to inquire as to how much focus each course placed on text as opposed to focus on the very critically important factor of exposing students to the perspective of the people who live the culture and are a product of the history being studied. The questions raised by the comments of the students in question speak very loudly of the need to restructure the program to be offered next year.

The above analysis is meant to stimulate serious discussion on the question of whether or not education at UNB, particularly within the Social Sciences, infects students with the INSTITUTIONALIZED IGNORANCE SYNDROME. Now, on the issue of INTELLECTUAL PROSTITUTION:

It should be made abundantly clear to those concerned that the integrity of the Caribbean (Barbados and St. Lucia in particular) is not a product in the market place nor is the dignity of her people a card on a negotiation table. To sacrifice those at the altar of intellectual prostitution and academic opportunism is to commit a mortal sin. To advance personal ambitions at the expense of tarnishing the image of a nation is repugnant, particularly in light of the work done by The Caribbean Circle on this campus to promote the region. How could anyone stoop so low? It should be hoped that the hotel staff in St. Lucia, the hosts in Barbados, and those in St. Lucia would be pleased to learn of what their guests, the UNB students and instructors, had to print in *the Brunswickan* (November 13th, 1992 issue) about their hospitality. So much for Courtesy!

Section I

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge, and without any references to your mother or father.

- How many times a week do you wash your hair?
- Who is not your least favorite band?
- What is the accepted common name for your father's wife?

Section II

Please write the first thing that comes to your mind when you read the following words.

- Social Club
- Graham Crackers
- Randy Travis
- Beet Sugar

Section III

Write a brief ending to the following story:

Beetle stumped blithely along the merry tinklebaum. "Oook!" He chorped. "The bungdown blimpo bananasplasher has broken!" Just then Fred walked in. "WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S HOLY IS GOIN' ON AROUND HERE!" He yelled, and threw his coat violently onto the glass-topped coffee table. "But the cat likes him so much! Don't! Don't!" Yelled Jessica as she saw Fred reach for his gun. RRRINGG!! RRRINGG!! Went the phone. "DAMN!" Yelled Fred. "If I could only convince them that my serum works, they'd listen and I wouldn't have this short temper!" It rained. AS the cascading rivulets flowed down the sides of its face, the

Section IV

Jim, Sue and Ralph want to go to the Social Club to see the big show. The show will cost them each \$1.50 for the cover charge, fifty cents for the coat check, and \$2 for a beer. Jim gets three dollars from Sue. Sue's bursary check was not processed in time, so she borrows four dollars back from Jim. Ralph didn't remember where he spent all his money the previous evening, so he borrowed twenty dollars from Jim. After they got to the big show, Sue bought the first round and left a sixty-three cent tip. The band had CD's for sale, and as they were an excellent band, Ralph bought five CD's. Given that Jim's bursary was six hundred dollars more than Ralph's, and Sue's father is overprotective and generous:

- whose turn is it to buy a round?
- What was the name of the band?
- Was it worth the two dollars to Sue to see "The Big Show?" Explain your answers.

Section V

If you emptied out your pockets, and looked at the contents individually, what geometric patterns can you discern?
Note: please make no references to currency.

Section VI

Draw a picture of your soul.

Section VII

True or false:

- musicians get their money from little shrubs.
- Drummers get their money from musicians.
- The Cosmo is now a country bar
- Winter Carnival has already happened
- Juan Valdez works for Beaver
- There is absolutely no difference between Coke and Pepsi
- Stevie Ray Vaughan played the SUB in October
- Andrew Fuller has the complete collection of Village People albums.
- The Atken Centre is in Fredericton, N.B.

Section VIII

Combine something natural and something man-made. What did you call it? Is this a good name for a band? Would you go see this band? How much would you pay?

Section IX

Fill in the blanks:

- "Of course I'm going. It's supposed to be _____!!!!"
- _____ and _____ played at the Social Club this last week.
- My favorite CHSR show is the _____ hour
- _____ and _____ are original songs by "The Hype"

Section X

Multiple Choice (choose one only)
Fredericton is:

- boring and apathetic
- Silly
- nifty-keen
- a nice place to retire
- a mecca for high-quality entertainment
- all of the above
- b and e
- b