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MAY 23-24, 2016, GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

GUYANA @ 50: UNDERSTANDING OUR INDEPENDENCE JOURNEY

2016 SPYMMOSIUM PAPER

“Toward a just and Caring Future”

Background:

JULY, 2011: Buxton Health Clinic: In a conversation with students and parents waiting for medical treatment: the topic progressed through a series of issues, then on to transportation and meals. (Share story!!!) As the talk progressed, one of the student’s startling revelation was, “it was no big thing going without lunch – on any given day.” I was taken aback, for a moment, then composed myself.

That’s not the “caring future” I envisioned for the young and future leaders of Guyana.

We briefly discussed other health issues, then returned to the dynamics of meals and transportation.

I stepped up to the cause and since then (2011) up until today, I have provided a stipend [**if for only 8]** to satisfy that need to the tune of approximately \$4,850 USD or \$970,000 over the past 5½ years. **For a just and caring future?**

This is not specifically the focus of my paper, but to recognize and care for the future.

And as we dwell briefly on that aspect of our future, I’m encouraged to remind us all of the words of Emperor H.I.M. Haile Selassie I, in 1951, in an excerpt from his address to students on September 23rd, 1963, “Education develops the intellect; and the intellect distinguishes man from other creatures. It is education that enables man to harness nature and utilize her resources for the

well-being and improvements of his life. The key for the betterment and completeness of modern living is education.”

Results and findings:

The emphasis on education, I propose, is the one aspect towards fulfilling the requirements for this equation. Thus, we have seen in the almost past five decades, though being thousands of miles apart, and on a different Continent, our hopes and dreams were real, to be realized, someday. And as he, Emperor Haile Selassie I, of Ethiopia, in 1951, stated succinctly, “wise men have always known the deep and pervading truth that it is better to give than to receive, for even as it conflicts with selfish and ambitious desires, it moderates and controls them.” This now, is our conviction. “Giving always demands sacrifice.”

By the same token, L.F.S. Burnham, in his address to the Fourth Biennial Congress in 1981, referring to The Non-Aligned Movement and Palpable Destiny-Liberation of the Poor, enumerated this to us, “I do not know what some will do, but as for me I’d rather die on my feet than live on my knees. We seem to be beset on all sides but we live in a dynamic world and the correlation of forces do not remain fixed and immutable. The world is not only round but also spinning around.” He was admonishing us to become stewards of our destiny. He wanted us to increase food production as in (Guyana 2030) and accelerate the exploitation of sources of energy; these being among a myriad of other proposals. *Preaching to the choir?* He was asking us to recognize our space in the global world and to come to grips with the potential of revolutionizing our economy. These [proposals] are well documented.

(a) Expand, improve comprehensive early childhood education.

I. Outline our conviction.

My humble interpretation of this is, “get to stepping; there’s work to be done!”

We do not know what the future holds, but those of us brave enough to partake in this Symposium have a vision - for truth. It is that while we may not [effectively or individually] change the present, we may be able to change the future.

For, “the evil that men do lives after them, **but the good is oft** interred in their bones.”

William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

(b) Ensure disparities-free, compulsory primary education.

II. Discuss the importance.

- Promote voluntary/compulsory mentorship programs (UG).
- Embrace evidence-based, pragmatic approaches to enhance learning skills.

“The Sun’s is a Shapely Fire”, so expounds Poet, A.J. Seymour as he writes to the nation, then the “young generation” of 12 to 15 year olds, in 1971. He shared, “what is important is for the children to realize that this is indeed our center of the universe as a new nation, that the everyday sights and sounds around us become beautiful especially when we see them through the eyes of the poet, with his richer appreciation and his gift of words.” Yes, there is hope for our future.

As a young nation then, A.J. Seymour and other intellectuals had envisioned a “bright and caring future” for this land. He extolls, “*Sun is a shapely fire turning in air,*

Fed by white springs and earth’s a powerless sun.

I have the sun today deep in my bones, sun’s in my blood, light leaps beneath my skin. Sun is a badge of power pouring in. A darkening star that rains its glory down.”

We could have hardly seen the significance of such words then, hopefully, now. The hope and glory of which he speaks is interred in our rich resources – people, land, minerals and rivers and plains. These are ours to develop; ours to enhance; ours to cherish.

(Take a look, metaphorically. Spread your greatness over all the earth – solar energy: traffic signals; solar panels: electricity and heat, all here in Guyana. It's rampant in the California desert; why not here?)

III. Promote Education Sector Plan (ESP) Priorities: These are established in the plans for the future.

ESP 2014-2018 MOE

A Move toward the future...simply put, do good and good will follow you. But what has that got to do with this topic? Everything!

For you see, the pork-knocker/pro prospector, the cane-cutter, or the rice farmer, all have a stake in the lives of the doctor, the lawyer, or the electrician or engineer. We cannot survive without each other; we depend on each other in this destiny.

Your world is as good as you make it. Gerald Douglas Johnson

These again, as we look back on history for a lesson or two, are the words of renowned Poet, Robert Frost: "The Road not Taken" "I shall be telling this with sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -

Took the one less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference.”

In a manner of thinking, this is attempting to reshape our views. I had not thought much of a just future, so much so about a caring one. I could not envision being here before such a distinguished body to help shape our future. But our lives take turns and we must be ready to embrace that change.

It's this, grant a helping hand to your fellow human being. The “movers and shakers” of yesteryear – and we can name a few, took bold steps to infuse our beings with their curiosity. It is our responsibility to “capitalize” – if I may use the term, on their generosity.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Ensure learning needs through equitable access; promote voluntary/(UG) mentorship programs, employ evidence-based, pragmatic approaches to enhance learning skills.

Take a turn, build a dream, make waves when the water is still – create. The future is in our hands, we can shape it, then let the next generation cultivate it. Then and only then will it be just; then and only then, will it be a caring one.

The resources abound. Let technology ease the burden in our lives. Is there another App that can be created or developed? Recycle waste products into reusable systems. Make the forests the jungle for raw materials: build, restore, and protect our environment. Make our waterways the conduit for transporting goods, services and talent. (I had not read of the Project: Guyana 2030 developed by Mr. Stanley Ming, until lately; thus had no idea that his proposals are entrenched in the furtherance of a “just and caring future” for Guyana.) These, if only for prudence's sake, we must adopt.

I can now safely say that we can “restore the richness in our culture”, let “cultural ambition” be household words. Breathe life again into the sustenance and production of our natural resources. A new world awaits. Let us be! A just and caring future is ours to own.

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