

The University of the West Indies Open Campus Antigua and Barbuda

The Antigua and Barbuda Studies Association

And

The Antigua and Barbuda Youth Enlightenment Academy

Present

Our 12th (Two-day) Annual Conference

And

Distinguished Lectures

**"JOURNEYS IN ANTIGUAN/CARIBBEAN
THOUGHT AND DEVELOPMENT"**

On August 10, 2017

At

The University of the West Indies Open Campus Antigua

And on

August 11, 2017

At

The Antigua and Barbuda Youth Enlightenment Academy
Lightfoot, Antigua

WANTED:



**Offspring, Talent, Inheritance
and Assets Management**

By Lawrence A. Jardine

**Presented On the ACLM Panel
Friday, August 11, 2017**

On the occasion of the 12th (Two-day) Annual Conference

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In Antigua and Barbuda we play a game called *Warri*, which is our national game. This game, which was played by kings, was brought here by our African ancestors. In the 1980s, I often stopped at the Bata Shoes Store pavement to watch *Warri* masters play. I can recall Dagon, a soft spoken character when compared to his peers, masterfully playing *stump*, which is the local name given to *Warri's* endgame.

It is at *stump* time - *the endgame* - when players concentrate most fiercely, displaying craft, patience and foresight, trying to acquire the final decisive *seeds*. During this battling period of *stump* - *the endgame* - players repetitively tally their *seeds* - doing the math. The player who captures the most *seeds* wins.

Instructively, *seed* is a synonym for offspring. With that connection made, we could say that *Warri* is an African game for dignified men, engaged in meticulous offspring corralling and management.

However, in 1997, Antigua and Barbuda's Miss Saklie Richards became the World Warri Champion. From 1998 to 2002, it was Grand Master Trevor Simon, and in 2006, Grand Master September Christian won the World Warri Championship. On their journey to this prestigious title, they defeated players from Europe and our Motherland - because of their mastery of the endgame. We have not yet converted this achievement and talent to an industry. An endgame not envisioned, not realized.

Saklie Richards, Trevor Simon and September Christian, in collaboration with students at the Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology, could have been commissioned to develop the definitive *Warri* software and smart phone app. That is, a computer *Warri* program against which local students and international players would compete. Of course, this would include a database to track the performance of top local students, thereby providing useful statistical information for STEM planning. My question really

is, could *Warri - our national game - an old gift from Africa*, in a computerized version, as a component of an organized software industry in this electronic age, increase our foreign exchange earnings and directly employ one hundred (100) persons?

Could these, what I call *Talent and Tech* industries, diminish the effect of Sandals Resort International's punitive decision to close for five months, thereby affecting seven hundred (700) employees?

In his book, *Black and White The Way I See It*, the visionary Richard Williams, father of tennis super stars Venus and Serena, illustrated the potential of sports, and, perhaps more importantly, the art and wisdom of *stump* as he managed his offspring to fame and fortune. What if Mr. Williams was an advisor and honorary director of the Antigua and Barbuda Sports Economy Board? Mr. Williams could also be a member of our Citizen by Intelligence Program (CIP).

Preoccupied with the old relationships and developmental economic models, we fail to see, to believe and to invest in our own and the talents that we possess.

What if we had Sir Vivian Richards International School of Sports, a state of the art Sports Academy? This institution would showcase our finest sport performance professionals – nutritionists, educators, historians, therapists, psychologists, strategists, etc. They would converge to produce the finest offspring. In addition to its positive effect on West Indies Cricket, probable direct employment one hundred (100) persons.

But we have Crossroads and the American University of Antigua, among others. Why don't we believe and build industries around our offspring and their talents?

The anxiety and economic hardship that workers of Sandals will experience are nothing new; they are repetitive fouls from the capitalist's playbook. It's just a re-run of the same old sequel: episode 1, starring Moody Stuart; episode 2, starring Allen Stanford; episode 3, starring Butch Stewart.

All these re-runs have the same ending; the workers lose. But when will we start taking full and collective responsibility for our economic destiny? Continuously, our intelligentsia refuses to invest meaningfully in Antigua and

Barbuda to provide employment for our own. By intelligentsia I mean the top 20% of our older academic achievers.

In fact, this class is prominent in the brain drain exodus, sometimes flaunting education for prestige and personal development, but not for local economic production and our collective liberation. Metaphorically speaking, this class has learned to fish, but it is not fishing. It is looking for the bottom 80% to be entrepreneurs. In my view, it is time that the top 20% envision an economic endgame to produce, and to *recapture* the landscape. I am not letting the politicians off the hook, but it is also my respectful opinion that the economically delinquent top 20% needs to pitch in to assist our desperate and wit-exhausted politicians, who are left economically stranded, genuflecting to foreign investors – even on the Sabbath.

Endgames are the embodiment of vision and mission statements. For example, Walt Disney's previous mission statement: *Make People Happy*. Or the woman who was so intoxicated by Carnival spirits and revelry that she told Calypsonian Stingray, "*Do as You Like with Me.*" Perhaps a more sobering, uplifting and dignified endgame is: "*Never Again.*"

But let me continue with an economic relationship between the top 20% and the bottom 80%. In the last fifty (50) years virtually every major and minor enterprise created by the bottom 80% of African Antiguan, in and around the city of St. John's, has disappeared. Here are some of my time:

John I. Martin, Keith Edwards Wholesale, Dicky Lake's Supermarket, Daniel Bakery, The National Bakery, Mary King Bakery, Laurent Drug Store, Mark's Restaurant, Brother B's Restaurant, Bailey's Store, O'Neil Pharmacy, Shannon's Upholstery, Wallace, Graham Supermarket, Alexander's, Masses House, Stanley R. Walter Store, Cornwall Supermarket, Chelsea Electrical and Refrigeration, Outlet Printery, Benjies Department Store, H. C. Grant, Christian Windows and Doors, Food City. And the list is increasing...

With few exceptions, the offspring of these early commercial pioneers have received tertiary education and have become members of the top 20% class. As the above closures would suggest, the economic and entrepreneurial baton was not passed, received and relayed. There has been no transition

from a merchant class to an educated productive class. As such, when compared to our ethnicities, our top 20% has not acquired as much capital by the means of local commercial activity to create meaningful employment, and to financially assist our artists: musicians, painters, sculptors, poets, etc.

As this trend is indicating, the typical African Antiguan family enterprise struggles to endure the second generation. Is there a communication gap or a philosophical divide between generations? Do the parents not trust their offspring? Is it offspring envy? Do the offspring scorn its parent's business model, not understanding that assets are generally accumulated across generations, starting from very humble beginnings? What is the reason for this generational dissonance? Is it that African Antiguan businesses are poor at succession planning? This is perhaps a phenomenon that requires in-depth research and analysis.

This economic discontinuity also means that acquired entrepreneurial wisdom and intelligence are not significantly transferred to or inherited by the offspring. This creates an undesirable disruption in the continuance of economic enterprise and culture, as the nation struggles with the unemployment problems.

Generally speaking, this IT generation, which is arguably void of the cultural moorings of its parents, is starting economically from scratch, again. Economist, Professor Thomas Piketty, in his book *CAPITAL in the Twenty-First Century* – a discourse on wealth, capital and income distributions, highlights the significant contribution of inheritance in related economic mobility.

Do the African Antiguan offspring tend to prefer education as prestige - climbing a perceived social ladder, as compared to inheritable enterprises that require vision, discipline, sacrifice and frugality to successfully manage and expand?

As an example, I know of a successful organic farmer who cultivates a sizable acreage, and who has an aversion for artificial preservatives. To his resignation, his offspring is off to study AI – Artificial Intelligence. This disconnection between generations appears to be a pervasive African

Antiguan problem, affecting our abilities to develop long-term enterprises and to transition to secondary production.

So far, I have been sketching an observed generational disconnection in some Antiguan Black family enterprises and talents over the past fifty (50) years, and the fact that during that very same period, the offspring of *Freed People* have acquired unprecedented tertiary education. I have not discerned a comparable increase in corporations or co-operatives to suggest that our offspring have moved on to adopt those business models. In fact, I know that in the IT sector most are jobbing and freelancing - doing *their own little thing on the side*.

Let me share with you one of the inherited dilemmas of our newly educated offspring. I am in the software development business, so I have met a few accountants, HR managers and IT professionals. Their "*abundance*" has led to this new trend; they are all working on contracts: twelve (12), eighteen (18), twenty-four (24), or thirty-six (36) months - if lucky, mainly in the hospitality and food supply sectors. There is basically no full and open-ended employment for these young qualified offspring anymore. One actually told me that because of this, they have become very proficient in writing resumes and job applications. Needless to say, they can hardly acquire a bank mortgage to construct a home, or start an enterprise. However, they can - and often do, purchase used cars online.

We need to create new economic models and relationships for our offspring, by looking at other linkages between their managerial, technical and enterprising abilities. For example, take a look at my neighbor of the 80% class, a road-side master automobile mechanic, who desperately needs administrative and technical assistance.

What if Kebra the accountant, Marsha the business major, Deon the Information Technology wizard and Joyce the HR manager, harmoniously and *respectfully* rallied around Roy, the master mechanic? Just imagine the LED sign... *Roy's Professional Auto Repair Shop - the Trade-in Killer*. We need to incentivize this entrepreneurial convergence and model for our offspring.

I have borrowed the term *Freed People* from Natasha Lightfoot, who used it in her book, *Troubling Freedom*. To my mind, Lightfoot used that term and

wrapped it in a very creative narrative to zoom in on the predicament of a people in limbo – freed but still not free. As such, she mitigated some distractions of racial labeling, thereby moving a human struggle to the fore of her discourse.

However, shouldn't *Freed People* - even when they are celebrating, be always suspiciously looking over their shoulders, in perhaps a phobic and relentless pursuit to secure and extend freedom? Shouldn't that be a primary agenda item of our curricula from kindergarten to university? Isn't that what our education is also for - never again, but freedom?

Are we just laid-back, with eyes wide shut, counting chickens, waiting for the Reparations bonanza, which from current projections, our offspring will most likely squander - one way or the other?

Professor Hilary Beckles, in his book *Britain's Black Debt*, which I believe should be compulsory reading in secondary schools - here, said this:

"The British state believes that the longer the reparations case is denied, the more remote it will become. These officials seem to believe that as each generation comes to maturity, the less concerned they will be with matters of history. Playing the time game is considered their best strategy. Future generations of black youth, they believe, will have less interest in the experience of their forebears and are unlikely to commit politically to matters such as reparations."

Having recognized Natasha Lightfoot for the classification, *Freed People*, it appears to me that as *Educated Freed People*, we are losing our way; we are to some extent off course.

So far, I have mainly looked at disconnections on the merchandizing side of the enterprise equation. Now, I would like to reflect at the consumption patterns and preferences of our offspring.

If the world is a stage, then our offspring are members of the supporting cast, playing the roles of walking mannequins, spiritedly - but unaware, displaying our trade deficit.

Smart phones from China, leather shoes from Spain, ankle chains from Switzerland, tattoo ink from Japan, respectfully I will not numerate the items between the knees and the shoulders, gold chains from USA, lipstick from France, and false hair from India – all mainly acquired online, circumventing local brick and mortar enterprises.

This deficit will be paid, if not by trade and foreign exchange earnings, then eventually by the currency of land. As the Russians say, *the only place you can find free cheese is in a rat's trap.*

Our offspring are offline, disconnected from our *Troubling Freedom*, schooled with a curricula that is history neutral, consumption loaded, pride insensitive, production indifferent, past experiences submerged, future blind-sided and liberation aborted.

When will the *Educated Freed People* rise to the occasion and eradicate this recursive pathological indifference in our offspring? To elevate their minds, straighten their posture, and sharpen their sense of justice and worth... Perhaps the success of the African Reparation Movement hinges on this.

An Englishman, with whom I worked, once told me this: *"Do you know what's wrong with you guys; you don't nip things in the bud."*

Micro biologist, Ernst Mayer in his book, *What evolution IS*, said this:

"Indeed, the selection event is to favor individuals that have succeeded in finding a progressive answer to current problems. The summation of all these steps is evolutionary progress."

In one of the most disturbing books I have read, *Childhood Under Siege*, Joel Bakan explains how corporations assemble the finest psychologists and marketing experts, who use concepts such as the *Nag Factor* – how children nag parents to purchase products – and addiction, to influence the youth, who internalize the subliminal suggestions of about thirty thousand (30,000) video commercials per year. Incidentally, they also use racial factors when marketing to Black communities. Among other things, here is a fact Bakan investigates:

"A massive and growing kid marketing industry is targeting children with increasingly callous and devious methods to

manipulate their forming and vulnerable emotions, cultivate compulsive behavior, and addle their psyches with violence, sex, and obsessive consumerism.”

Brothers and sisters there is urgency to design and rollout new curricula of enlightenment for our offspring. As I have tried to show, the lack of formal education is no longer our major problem. We have the tools and the talents. But our mindset – *the pregame* – is wrong.

This new curricula for our offspring must focus on pregame requirements to execute the economic endgame strategies as our celebrated Warri Grand Masters do - as they tally seeds.

The Indians are doing it, the Chinese are doing it. They have moved homework to the classroom, and the Chinese are teaching mathematics at the rate of the slowest student. That is, they do not move on or change the topic until every student masters it.

We must teach our *Troubling Freedom* and history at the rate of the slowest student, until they all understand. This too is a prerequisite and beginning of a new economy.

As the Chinese are demonstrating, patience with our offspring could be a most rewarding virtue...

I thank you.

Lawrence A. Jardine is the founder of the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Enlightenment Academy. He is a Software Developer and, the founder and manager of DMS - Data Management Solutions Ltd., which is the leading payroll software solutions developer in Antigua and Barbuda. Lawrence is a graduate of the Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, Ontario Canada, where he studied electronics and developed his love for computer programming. He has worked for two parent companies, the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of Germany, for over twenty-five (25) years. He has also been the national champion in two (2) disciplines: Pocket Billiards and Dominoes. In 2006, he won the National Independence Short Story Competition. Lawrence is a Professional Billiard Instructors Association (PBIA located in the USA) Certified Pocket Billiards Instructor. He is also the chairman of the Leonard Tim Hector Memorial Committee (LTHMC).