

A Colonized people in search of Self-Determination (part II)

Escrito por Edgardo Martínez Mitchell
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Continuing with my response to Dr. Bush's article, "A community in search of itself," I must say that I agree with him that (1) we need to find ourselves in order to move on, (2) that hanging on to resentment and anger does not help, that (3) Criticizing and expecting pity from the government or from other people will not assist, and that (4) we cannot go back to exactly what we had and thus harbor a 'ghetto' type mentality.

Nonetheless, for a colonize people to be able to find itself, it is crucial that they overcome their state of mind where discerning between self-determination and colonialism is distorted. The point is that it is almost impossible for the Raizal People to find itself within the current colonial context, and even though they may succeed in transforming the current state to something that is more forward-looking such as the proposed idea of autonomy, it is clear of the need to tackle the minds of the people who still believe things can change under the actual colonial state. This is precisely the purpose of the "Democracy School" being organized at the Christian University, to help bring about consciousness and provide the historical, philosophical, biblical, legal, theoretical and practical ways to implement democratic processes through their human and constitutional rights to remove the evil of colonialism.

In his opening message to the 2015 Caribbean Regional Seminar on Decolonization held in Managua, Nicaragua this past May, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted, "Much has been achieved, yet we have not completed the task of decolonization or reached the goal of eradicating colonialism." Ban Ki-moon also stressed that, "the international community has an obligation to ensure that a full measure of self-government is achieved in the remaining Territories, in accordance with the UN Charter and it's relevant resolutions." When the UN was created in 1945, almost a third of the world's population lived in territories that were dependent on colonial powers. Today, there are still 17 "Non-Self-Governing Territories" around the world. These countries recently met at the annual seminar on decolonization where they were able to sit together and have their voices heard. Its interesting to note, that the Falkland Islands, with a

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population of less than 3000 inhabitants, is one of the territories seeking to be decolonize from Britain. The Raizal People are missing out of this process and of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2011–2020).

Finally, I could not agree more with Dr. Bush, who I thank for jumpstarting this discussion, that the Raizal should not “feel superior or to ignore the need to be part of a global island community, and worst of all to ignore or negate rights of other ethnic groups.” This is not who we are. From the outgo, Raizals have been a welcoming people; with a servant-hood spirit; who has taken God’s word literally to “esteem others better than themselves;” who has always shown love and hospitality to strangers, as Scripture requires. Raizals loved so much that individual immigrants and the State interpreted it as naiveté and took advantage. So, when they voice their claims for freedom and dignity, it should not be equated with sense of superiority, but a desperate plea for life. In the midst of the frustration and heat of the struggle some individuals will utter words of bitterness and sentiments of aggrandizement, but deep down in their soul and heart Raizals continue to be a people of peace, humble spirit, respect and love for all.

Allow me to end with a Christmas note since the season is at hand. I am feeling good about Christmas. Baby Jesus is not born yet; Mary is not even in labor, but it is Christmas already because of Joseph. Through an angel, God said to Joseph in a dream, “I want you to marry Mary. I want you to go ahead and marry her. I want you to take care of her. I have chosen you to raise baby Jesus. You feed the baby. You care for the mother. You care for the baby (Matthew 1:18-25). Christmas for me has already started because I know that when Jesus is born, the man who will teach him, raise him, care for him, show him how to be a carpenter, take him to the synagogue, teach him the Bible, and teach him justice and truth is a good man and he will do right. When you have somebody like that, it is already Christmas, and Christmas will last as long as God can find in every community one person who says, “I will do what is right.”

What is right is to call things for what they are, to seek God, to seek justice and freedom for the oppressed, and to explain the human condition in light of the love, grace, kindness, hospitality, and forgiveness of God. As long as there is one person in San Andres, Old Providence and Catalina Islands who will do right and tell it as it is, it will be Christmas. The question, of course, is whether or not you will be that person. Don’t lose hope; freedom is provided for, Jesus is on his way. Immanuel is his name: God with us! Merry Christmas!