



*Students enjoying Victoria over the winter break.
Photo Credit: Hulwa Khaleel*

International Affairs with Robert Janes

- Laas Pearl Parnell

Robert Janes was the speaker at the International Affairs before the last one and I personally thought he was brilliant. He came to talk about Indigenous issues being faced in Canada but also included examples from other places around the world. He mentioned the Northern Gateway project and the nations in Canada that would have to deal with the problem if there was ever an oil spill from this project. He also talked about the Mohawk protesters at Oka and the problems they were protesting against in their area. I think one of our students Jessica really concluded the whole thing with her comment "You just get it." I agree with her. He seems to just get it and how he accumulated enough knowledge throughout the years to "just get it" he has spent a lot of time with first nations people. I remember him mentioning something about how much you can learn just by sitting down with an indigenous elder and listening to what they have to say. When I asked him about what we can do about the Enbridge situation on Haida Gwaii I felt somewhat pride when he talked about how "bad-ass" the Haida nation is.

In the example he gave about our grandmothers being on the frontline in that protest, it's true. The protest is called Athlii Gwaii, it happened in 1985 when people wanted to clear-cut one of the islands on the lower part of Haida Gwaii. At first it was just the young men involved in the protest but after a little while they saw their grandmothers and grandfathers arriving on the shore in zodiacs. The boys told them they don't want them to get hurt and

said they should go home but the elders refused. They said they wanted to protect their land just as much as any Haida did, so the boys let them stay. It lasted for a while, they stayed in a cabin and food was sent down by boat from the villages. Then people started getting arrested. Just to be cruel and to torture the boys, the RCMP officers who had to arrest the elders were their own grandchildren. My uncle had to arrest his grandmother because his boss told him to. He didn't want to, he said if his boss made him do it that he would quit. But his grandmother told him it was ok, that he had to do it. So escorting his grandmother to the helicopter so she can be brought to the village to be arrested he was crying but she stood proud.

The elders were brought up to the main villages by helicopter and then escorted home but right after they got home they got on a boat and made it right back down to the protest. The younger guys had to spend a night in jail first but as soon as they were let go they went right back down to the protest. The communities were as involved as they could be by staying in the village and making food for the protesters and sending them everything they needed. We also received support from other nations, such as the Mayans.

The Mayans came down and placed one crystal on either side of the island and no one knows the exact location of the crystals, only the two people who placed them there.

Upcoming Events

- Valentine's Day Dance – February 10th
- Special Topics Day (indigenous Issues) – February 16th
- Project Week - February 26th – March 4th

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One out of those two people is still alive and will take that secret to his deathbed just like the other did. It is said if these crystals are ever taken from those spots then everything we fought for to protect this island will become void.

This protest shows that Haidas are willing to protect their land from people wanting to harm it, we will do everything we can to protect it from Enbridge. There are many nations in Canada fighting against the Northern Gateway project and I believe that if we keep fighting with everything we have then we will eventually win.

A Rich Country full of Poor People - Abraham Samuel Perez

Guatemala: 108,000 sq. km of land, almost 14 million where 4 out of 10 have the ability and are available to work and where more than half are in their most productive years, between 20 and 50 years old.

This Central American republic is blessed with abundant natural resources, diverse microclimates and ecosystems, in which, *according to figures from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre*, are concentrated 1246 species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles-- 6 percent of them endemic. In Guatemala there exist more than 8500 vascular plants of which 13 percent are endemic as compared to Spain which has 5,050 or Canada which contains 3270 vascular plants species.

The country, which is considered in fifth place on the list of biodiversity "hot spots" in the world, has 14 eco-regions ranging from mangrove forest (4 species) in both ocean littorals, dry forest and thorn bushes in the eastern highlands, subtropical and tropical rain forest, wetlands, cloud humid forest in the Verapaz, Pacific Piedmont, and other regions, mix, quercus and pine forest in the highlands. (Conservation International, 2009). Guatemala has coasts on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and lies strategically between North and South America. The annual average temperature is 18 degrees Celsius (approximately 64.5 degrees Fahrenheit) in the central zone.

The monetary richness of the country in absolute figures is approximately US\$7 bn of GDP per year. On average, each Guatemalan citizen would have an income of US\$5,200 per year, but the reality is that a very few possess much more wealth than that while the majority of Guatemalan citizens (6 out of 10) have an annual income of US\$730 a mere \$2.00 per day.

The average education level is 4 years of primary school. According to UNICEF, chronic malnutrition affects one out of two children in general and 8 out of 10 indigenous children in particular! Ironically, at the same time, Guatemala

is reported in the Guinness Book of World Records to have hosted the world's largest buffet in 2009.

In general terms, 20 percent of Guatemalans live with 80% of the income generated by the productive resources of the country. We can unequivocally say that Guatemala is not a poor country. Guatemala, in fact, is a country rich in resources, rich in quantity and quality of its people, rich in cultures, rich in access to climates and sunshine; in access to oceans and abundant ecosystems. But also Guatemala is a country where very few rich people live amongst far too many poor people. It is a country with widespread illiteracy, and with way too many malnourished children and families.

Explanations of this socioeconomic situation are abundant in newspapers and political discussions. Some are stagnated in oversimplified ideological debates between communism and capitalism, without even addressing the true meaning of those terms. The underlying reasons, however, are deeper than a simple dichotomy--state or markets. In order to understand today's Guatemala we need to see the whole picture. The youngest generations ought to start asking questions like: How did Guatemala come to this point?

Why and how are the productive resources including access to financial capital limited to so few? Are successive governments responsible since these inequalities have been persistent over time in Guatemalan history? Is there a potential that the government can provide access to tools of economic and social development to those who have never had them so they may take control of their own lives and get out of poverty by their own means? Is that not the main idea of Democracy? What is the cost, for those who don't live in poverty, of all those inequalities that exist in today's Guatemala?

It sounds contradictory that, in the name of freedom, limitations are imposed hindering access and promote unfair conditions for some while denying the same opportunities to compete in equal

conditions in an economic system where access to equal opportunities is crucial for economic and human development.

It is imperative to rethink the prevailing means and methods to create wealth and increase economic growth in Guatemala. The limitations of public resources and the non-transparent and inefficient way of utilizing them have saddled Guatemala with embarrassing socioeconomic indicators. The concentration of productive resources in a very small portion of the population relegates the rest to a life of economic misery, yielding over time negative social and environmental consequences for the entire population in Guatemala and beyond. What is required is to weigh the environmental and social consequences concurrently along with the economic growth indicators measured such as GDP per capita.

The debate about the concentration of the productive resources and their utilization has been avoided for years and it is about time to undertake it. Guatemala cannot collect some resources for the majority (Gov. tax burden is just 12 percent of GDP) and simultaneously maintain all that great potential of human capital below the poverty line. Guatemala could generate, in one generation, a sustainable change so our own children and grandchildren could live in a country and world with hope for the future..



Photo Credit:

http://www.travelblog.org/Wallpaper/tikal_guatemala.html

On Wednesday January 18th, late night crammers, last-minute homework do-ers, and lazy journalists (psht, definitely not us!) were probably startled to see internet giants such as Wikipedia, Craigslist, Google, and hundreds of other blogs and websites go offline for 24 hours in support of “The Stop SOPA/PIPA” protest. Wikipedia plastered over its black background “the U.S. Congress is considering legislation that could fatally damage the free and open Internet.” and Craigslist told readers “Tell Congress: Please don’t censor the web!” Why all the fuss? Here’s a breakdown of SOPA & PIPA;

SOPA is the **Stop Online Piracy Act** that was introduced in October 2011 aimed at curbing the amount of pirated media circulating the Internet by forcing companies to block access to foreign sites offering any material those breeches US laws on copy infringement.

PIPA is the **Protect Intellectual Property Act** was introduced in May 2011. It is a rewrite of the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeit Act that failed to pass in 2010. It was geared towards protecting the intellectual property circulating the internet from copyright infringement as well. The intellectual property industry is said to provide an estimated 19 million jobs and account for more than 60 per cent of American exports.

The main argument is that SOPA poses a huge threat to free speech. Wikipedia argues it would compromise the functioning of their

‘Sup with SOPA? – Shani Pinder

website as it depends heavily on contributions from different sources all over the world. Even websites that participate in legal internet activity are threatened just by allowing access to websites that contain counterfeit or stolen content, like Reddit and BoingBoing.net, who admitted that they would be in legal jeopardy if SOPA & PIPA came into effect.

“U.S. advertising networks could also be required to stop online ads and search engines would be barred from directly linking to websites found to be distributing pirated goods.” Websites like Facebook and Google, where advertising constitutes a considerable amount of profit, would have to discontinue online ads and links to sites that could potentially contain stolen content. The search engine Google has repeatedly said the bill goes too far and could hurt investment. Although social media giants Facebook and Twitter oppose the pending legislation, they declined to participate in the blackout due to the fact that their services span hundreds of countries. Twitter’s chief executive tweeted that it was “foolish” to shut down an international service over a national issue.

The bill is said to be too obscure and broad, so much that it will change the direction of the worldwide web, which prides itself on the distribution of free information. The future of these bills is indeed in limbo. Many politicians who were once adamant supporters of SOPA/PIPA have relinquished their political and financial support including but not limited to; Republican Senator John Cornyn of Texas, Florida politicians Marco Rubio and Dennis Ross, along with Maryland’s Democrat Ben Cardin.

In contrast, some vehement politicians in support of the bill have said “Hyperbole, hysteria and hypotheticals cannot change the fact that stealing is wrong, costing jobs and must be contained.” On the other hand, for entertainment companies, publishers, pharmaceutical companies and many industry groups controlling piracy costs billions of dollars each year. Since last week Tuesday, US Congress halted the bills and they’re in review. Whether they will be thrown out, or revised will be up for discussion again soon. What do you think? Should you be concerned about this? Or even if you’re just looking for a few kicks search #factswithoutWikipedia –

You’d be surprised as to what you may find.

Does the international community have the right to intervene in human rights violations? – Raied Haj Yahya

Does the international community have the right to intervene in human rights violations?

Following the last international affairs presentation on China-Tibet, I had a few thoughts that I felt I could share in the UBUNTU newspaper.

This topic, and other topics that involve violations of human rights, raise a variety of ethical questions regarding human rights and the commitment of the international community to human rights.

What does the term “violation of human rights” mean?

Violation of human rights does not have to be genocide of a nation. In fact, violation of human rights can be as “simple” as treating people unequally because of their race, color, sex, language, religion, and political or other opinion.

There are many violations of human rights around the world. Who, if anyone,

has the right to intervene in domestic affairs of independent states?

I believe that the international community has the right, or more precisely, is committed to, protecting the rights of all humans, and thus committed to intervene in human rights violations and initiate changes and lead to solutions. But who is the international community? And where does it get its legitimacy? If we talk about the international community, it means it is international. Having said that, I think that in any interventions in violations of human rights, the international community should consist of a diverse and wide spectrum of countries and nations that aim to help the people suffering from these violations without aiming to gain something from this aid. For example, why did the “international community” offer help to Libya, and intervene strongly to force Mubarak, the former president of Egypt, to step down, but does not intervene in the Syrian

revolution? Is it because Libya has oil and petrol and because Egypt has natural gas and plays a major role in the politics of the Arab World and the Middle East? Is a Syrian citizen’s life worth less than an Egyptian’s or a Libyan’s?

Why did not the international community intervene in violations of human rights in Syria for the last decades, and in Libya during Ghadaffi’s era (and maybe now), and in other countries? Is it because Syria is not rich of natural resources or economic interests? Is it because Ghadaffi had a lot to trade with the international community?

What makes the life of one man in Tunisia wake up a whole nation; initiate a revolution, and overthrowing a regime while the lives of several people in Tibet who burn themselves do not have the potential to open the eyes of the Chinese governments of the violation of human rights and crimes against humanity in Tibet?

Why does not the international

Community and the United Nations, support the liberation of the nation in South Sudan and give the nation their right for independence, but have no interest in bringing to a just and possible solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that can support the independence of both nations in a peaceful coexistence situation?

I think that in order for the international community to intervene in the violations of human rights around the world in an effective and just manner the following must be done:

1. International intervention should be international, and should be fair. International intervention should occur every time there is a violation of human rights, and not only

where there is a benefit to be obtained. Helping a nation that has natural resources and ignoring others that lack them is just the same as if you were walking on the street and you see two humans dying. One of them is rich, the other is poor. You help the rich one because you will benefit from him, but you ignore the poor one.

2. At no time will we reach a point where a country is perfect, but ethically, if a country wishes to intervene in a human right violation issue it should first aim to fix all problems, injustices and violations of human rights that exists within their borders, if they exist.

And maybe, in Pearson College, in order

to allow for discussions that represent the whole picture, we should have people from sensitive areas. For example, instead of listening to the opinions of one side, we can listen to what people from the different sides think. We have students from both Israel and Palestine (that hopefully provide the community with the whole picture through diverse opinions); we have Canadian aboriginal and non-aboriginal students.

Maybe this should be our motive to search for a student from Tibet that can help the community understand the issue from a different perspective?

AFRICA MUST RISE...NOW! – Felix Tettey (PC 36, Ghana)

It's sad enough that we've been this drawn back for at least 50 years. Indeed it is sad enough that our leaders, both past and present barely do anything about it. It's even sadder that we are blinded not to know what part we as intellectuals play in our destruction.

I just returned from the motherland and as much as I was excited to be home again, to see friends and family, a whole lot saddened my heart. A friend of mine Charity, posted the link to a blog article, 'You Lazy (Intellectual) African Scum' on facebook and after reading this I couldn't stop thinking.

I've always believed in the ability of Africans, I've always believed that, the way forward for Africa depends on the abilities and prowess of its people... and I will always do. We've allowed ourselves to be infiltrated, to be controlled and destroyed from within. From the article, Walter clearly states that, "[he] was part of the IMF group that came to rip you guys off." Asked whether he still was with the IMF, this was what he had to say, "I have since moved to yet another group with similar intentions. In the next few months my colleagues and I will be in Lusaka to hypnotize the cobra. I work for the broker that has acquired a chunk of your debt. Your government owes not the World Bank, but us millions of dollars. We'll be in Lusaka to offer your president a couple of millions and fly back with a check twenty times greater." Now the issue with the IMF and World bank is great enough for me to devote a whole session of scribbling to.

My point here is just to reiterate Walter's, "African intellectuals are letting their people down (that's just a nicer way of putting it in Walter's words, "they are lazy"). If with their education, the economists in

power can't see the poison in dependence on Aid, then yes they are lazy. If for over 50 years universities haven't come out with any finding to design a stone cracker to prevent people from using doing so manually, then yes they are lazy. If by now our leaders can't support indigenous innovation and also critically examine our interactions with the outside world without politicizing issues for the prime sake of making corruption easier, then yes they are lazy. If African intellectuals are not going to wake up to do something about our situation, then yes we are lazy!

A friend of mine, (more like a brother actually) from Burkina Faso puts it this way, "For us to catch up with them they need not just to stop, but also move back about 50 years into the past for us to be able to catch up." Think about it carefully, until drastic changes are made, that is the bitter truth. But looking at China and the other Asia countries gives me hope... but that's only if drastic changes are made. For more than 60 years, we've tried to copy the West....results?? (You and I know the answer to that). If you ask me it's time to wake up from our slumber. What is stopping us from taking the path that China took? What is stopping us from foregoing our dependence on Aid to rather come up with solutions to our own problems?

Interestingly enough, those we follow empower their intellectuals to bring about development and growth in their individual countries even if it involved the exploitation of "you-know-where." So far whichever macroeconomic book I read, I realise that most of those ideas were given a try. Since I read Dambisa Moyo's Dead Aid, I always ask myself, "is it that our polit(r)ical leaders haven't read this? Rather, I think the answer to my question is that they'd rather stick to their corrupt ways than to bring in someone

to expose them even if it involves the destruction of the majority. Apostle Kwadwo Safo is a Ghanaian I always use as an example: this man started manufacturing cars, cranes, forklifts, televisions and all that from scratch! The good news though is, as much as our leaders in Ghana love our nation and seek our development, they contributed less than zero dollars to this man's research and projects -- Less than zero because instead of helping him improve, he's only told he doesn't meet the standards! I don't know about you, but I go crazy anytime this issue comes up! With just a little push, the number of job opportunities that could be created for the unemployed millions is just... oh well!

There is one very important thing I have come to learn and that is the only way forward is by considering ourselves Africans, not Sudanese or South Sudanese, nor Hausa or Igbo nor Hutu or Tootsis...We are just one people and until we realise that fact, those who take advantage of us will continue to exploit us based on those differences. Our leaders have failed us. Our leaders failed us. Our leaders are failing us. Will our future leaders fail us? If your dream is to make it big and stay abroad to enjoy your fortune then I've got a message for you – Our people needs you!

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago... but the next best time is now."

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