

Tobago's Youth Voice

Lumumba Obika
Executive member, Tobago

"Knowledge is power" and power is the ability to utilise this knowledge for the improvement of all members of one's society. When this knowledge is not assimilated into the conscience of our people, they become blind. The average youth in Tobago is blinded by lack of knowledge and guided by a plethora of misinformation.

When a person becomes blind, they can be easily diverted from their desired path of consciousness. These blind persons within Tobago, are greatly influenced by authoritative 'luminaries' of government, who are supposed to protect the citizens and ensure stability among Tobagonians.

Over the last decade, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced a shift from cultural validity to cultural instability. Youths no longer appreciate their own cultural and historical experiences, but now place more value on imported cultural expressions, thereby allowing our local cultural experiences to become a tool of a capitalistic oligarchy.

"A people without its culture is like a tree without its roots," is a time worn teaching that places emphasis on the problem that is affecting Tobago. An examination of this impending crisis reveals the acceptance of a never ending matrix, designed by gangsters, rappers, fashion icons, drug cartels, hustlers, the glamour of easy money, and the bling-bling fraternity - all of which are being promoted by the accessible mediums of communication.

These mediums are orchestrated to affect the subconscious of our young minds, to the extent where a teacher exclaimed that

a student said to him, "we crave BET." BET is an American cultural channel that projects foreign cultural alternatives to our nation's youth, thus creating an addiction for foreign content at the expense of the local content. Addiction is the inability of individuals to control their emotions and actions to the point where they become unable to break the chains of consumerism. The inevitable 'buy' culture has transformed the once generational secured assets (land) to capitalistic agents, transferring from members of society to the hands of foreigners.

Thrift therefore is not encouraged and so there is less focus on the traditional Sou-Sou or the modern day concept of the credit union.

Our youth are in matrix, an unacceptable void which needs to be filled. Too few appreciate the hard fought wars of Sandy slave freedom fighter; APT James, a visionary; or Aloysius Morean founder in education. Where have these founding fathers gone? Were their contributions non-existent? The moral values once personified by these greats must become entrenched within our society.

Family is the main pillar of society. However, this is not evident in today's reality. Little emphasis has been placed on the internal development of the family unit, especially as it pertains to our young men and women who are not being socialised to work towards the attainment of positive goals and ideals. Mass numbers of Tobago's young adults prematurely dismiss the education system. A majority of this youthful section of the population is consequently unemployable.

The environment in Tobago still focuses on cultural strength in the form of



Village Harvests throughout the year and the hallmark Tobago Heritage Festival. These cultural traditions in which some of our youth are still heavily involved, promote the strength in family and community. A sense of togetherness therefore pervades the wider society, which results in the ideology that proclaims, "we take care of our own." This unity is crucial for development and must be placed in the hearts and minds of the youth, above any foreign element.

The day will come when most young Tobagonians will appreciate our historical background, our heritage of thrift, the need for academic attainment and our strong sense of culture. To achieve this we must become enlightened, look to the positive icons of our past such as APT James, Aloysius Morean and Sandy to gain guidance which will propel us into the future and into a time where every one is respected, treated fairly and the sole ideological basis is the man and woman.

Tune in to:

NJAC Speaks/The Free Caribbean - 5 min. Radio programme

Monday - Friday - Radio 102 FM 12:10 - 12:15 p.m.

Monday - Friday - Radio 95.5 FM 6:25 - 6:30 p.m.

Check out NJAC's Website at

www.njactt.org