

Letter from the Editor

The Caribbean Studies Students Union, otherwise known as CARSSU, is proud to be launching its first ever academic journal which is premised on what we like to call, the *Caribbean Quilt*. It is true that a tropical region such as the Caribbean is seldom thought of in relation to any type of blanket. Yet we believe the “quilt” to be relevant to the publication of this journal for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the Caribbean is historically a space of massive diversity; this includes its flora and fauna *and* the history, peoples, cultures, and experiences that have defined its complexity and dynamism. In our Canadian political discourse, specifically in Toronto where ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cultural identity’ are commonly referred to, we have a tendency to collectively forget that ours is not the only time and place where these issues have been taken up in some way. The Caribbean has thrown a wrench into the ideology surrounding the virginity or purity of cultures, as a space it has historically complicated the idea of identity by being a site of hybridity, as well as a testing ground for (and against) European modernity.

Worrisome to mention for some, it has also been ground-zero for European colonialism in the Americas – specifically Hispaniola, present-day Haiti. As a result, it has been home to many of the modern world’s historically marginalized, most populous in the form of indigenous peoples, enslaved peoples, and indentured labourers. One of our primary aims with this journal was to stitch together as much of this diversity as we could in our content, making this a key component to our “quilt.” Another involves not limiting our approach to one in which *only* the social science essay gets its due. To engage a broader audience and to acknowledge and respect different forms of expression, we have included poetry, paintings, photographs as well as the standard essay.

Our theoretical canvas is certainly less heterogeneous and serves as the overall fabric for our project. As a union we are pedagogically committed to interdisciplinary work and to a type of thinking which is largely critical of dominant discourses related to politics, economics, history, and even sport. This means that, at the very least, the lens

through which we are examining certain phenomena is not one in which power is meant to be reinforced or praised.

Through adopting a critical approach, we hope to come up with more thorough and meaningful responses to the questions affecting the Caribbean and the diaspora. We have found it necessary to examine issues with as much of a focus as possible on the inequalities, forgotten histories, inconvenient truths, and unsettling experiences that remain outside the purview of the popular.

An alternate name to this journal may very well be “*Displaced*.” It opens with the experience of a young Haitian student in an unfamiliar setting, and continues with poems and pieces that, through no concerted effort or attempt, echo (to the careful reader) the underlying theme of displacement. This lack of an attempt to abide by a “definitive” theme simply for the sake of doing so however makes this journal all the more special, and all the more organic.

The *Caribbean Quilt* is not simply the weaving together of material, but of the actual people who contributed to this edition. Because many young Caribbean scholars and students often find themselves isolated from one another, the enterprise of creating this journal was one in which we simultaneously hoped to develop and sustain linkages between very bright minds in the university, linkages which up until now have never existed.

Lastly, the quilt relates to the climate we find ourselves in, that is, outside of the Caribbean. Some of the contributors were born there, some have simply been, others have never even set foot in what they nostalgically refer to as “home” (I should include myself in this latter category). For whatever reason however, many contributors still identify as Caribbean first and Canadian second, finding their experience in the Great White North to be difficult, and having their own identity in a constant state of flux and tension. The launch of this journal is thus partly aimed at giving their voices a home, however rudimentary.

Editor

Kevin De Silva, CARSSU
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