

2nd Place

What is Corruption? A youth view.

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There he goes, poor Jack, climbing up the beanstalk once more to feed himself and his widowed mother. He grabs the golden harp while the giant snores but this time it's different. The harp screamed out to its owner. This was completely unexpected because not even the goose that laid golden eggs made a sound. Jack ran out, still clutching the terrified harp in his arms. He jumped down the beanstalk, grabbed an axe and chopped it down. He not only destroyed the tree but witnessed the fall of the mighty Giant. "Jack and the Beanstalk" is a seemingly innocent story that is constantly perpetuated to toddlers. What we fail to realize as a society is that this story embodies the definition of corruption from a youth's perspective.

The story is only new to children between the ages of 3- 5. They remain oblivious to the activities until the fable becomes an unfortunate reality. Through the actions of adults around them, they learn that corruption is a norm. We realize how much of a problem it is when nepotism, black mailing, fraud and extortion begin to blossom. The beans that became rooted in the soil were the perceived need for money and power. They were carelessly thrown out the window by people who saw, but ignored their potential danger. Then, the beans began to germinate, eventually forming a beanstalk. Corruption spurted from this land many years ago, and the soil's fertility helped it to grow.

Youths learn about corruption from their leaders, the giants at the helm of our society who hoard the bags of gold; the goose that lays golden eggs and possesses the golden harps. Corruption continues to grow because the giants water it. The major leaders of our country do not provide enough of the right routes to help young people access their needs. The youth who suffer the

most are from the lower socio-economic group of society. As they are taught to depend on a "cooked goose" during re-elections, instead of being taught to rear their own, in order to produce golden eggs. So before asking them to have more ambition and create something for themselves, ask our leaders to change.

Until we are able to change our leaders, the country will continue to be ill and regurgitate the problem of crime. Criminal activity the biggest fruit that the beanstalk offers, it is an offspring of corruption. This is so as corrupt acts happen silently, unlike in the story, the beanstalk did not grow overnight. The few that witness the process are silenced by fear. When children begin to understand the purpose of the plant, 'Shhh!' becomes a constant sound to stop them from making a fuss. However, this only works for a limited time because the opinion of youths become relevant when they have guns instead of magic beans. Children who should have remained unheard, now speak loudly by raising weapons.

Young 'Jacks' can be found all over the country. However most of them reside in inner city communities. With an absentee father and mother struggling to feed the family, it is not surprising that when a mysterious stranger offers them an opportunity, they take it. According to Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions published in 2003; persons between the ages of 17- 25 share 55.7% of all crimes committed including forgery. Although this information was garnered in 1998, which was less than twenty years ago, it remains an issue today. This is proven by an article released on February 24, 2015 by the Jamaican Observer disclosing information on three young men, two of whom are 23 years of age and one 19, they were being held in police custody for lottery scamming. Most of these young people feel as if they are left without better options and as a result corruption is not a dictionary term for them, it is a lifestyle born out of the need to move up the social ladder.

The problem most persons can identify from an early age is the allocation and misuse of resources that the land has provided for us. Giants who dictate and regulate the movement of these resources, sleep sweetly to the sound of their golden harp. Until the youths they have trained so well begin to demand more from them. At that time, the situation changes and youths are thrown in jail cells for practicing what their leaders teach. Giants use the youths as scapegoats. During this time mothers can only cry on bending knees with their hands clasped. They mourn not only for their children but from finding the larger portion of their small income in the pockets of their pastors. Some of these ministers are giants who preach against this plant, aid in its growth through their actions.

As a result organizations such as the NIA (National Integrity Action), OCG (Office of the Contractor General and NCC (National Contract Commission) have been formed. They pursue to be axes that will remove the beanstalk and the giants. The beanstalk has stolen too much of Jamaica's resources and now the country faces economic turmoil. The organizations aim to help young people realize that they can climb down from the beanstalk. The NIA, OCG and NCC work to help citizens to see a positive future for Jamaica where they will be able to hold their leaders accountable.

It is indeed heart breaking that what seems to be a fable now is taking the moral route to success. 'Success the right way' has become a childhood story less frequently told because many think that it is too expensive and time consuming. As a result, corruption is now postulated by a majority of Jamaican youths as a necessary evil, or in more relatable words 'wi need fi eat a food'.