

UNPUBLISHED LETTER TO THE GLEANER

From Esther Figueroa, Ph.D.

March 3rd, 2014

The Editor;

Ronald Mason, despite his postgraduate economic training that he keeps flaunting in his opinion piece "The Screeching Environmentalist" is an immigration attorney, who has demonstrated that he is a cowardly, petty man without the courage to name the source of his patronizing sexist vitriol - "screeching environmentalist" with "her knickers in a wad", who is also his "good lady" who requires his superior intellect to set her right - and rather than make an economic argument that has any substance, gives us an anecdote that we are somehow meant to universalize, while taking the easy path of slinging ideological mud at the uptown lady who can't understand poverty in the deeply insightful way he can, because well, he drove around in his car with wow his window down (how daring Big Man) and got begged five times. He could probably better understand poverty if he walked the urban streets and rural tracts of Jamaica, and took route taxis and coasters to get wherever he was going. Clearly he has not read Diana McCaulay's novel "Dog-Heart", one of the rare pieces of contemporary literature that interrogates the economic and political inequalities in the Jamaican society that leads to the sorts of beggars Mason exploits to make his rhetorical point.

What Mason needs to do to be credible is to objectively provide the economic facts that would prove how poverty in Jamaica (which is the state of the majority of Jamaicans) will be eradicated by Chinese infrastructure projects that destroy the Jamaican natural environment. These projects help to alleviate poverty in China (which is why the Chinese government funds them) by exporting poor Chinese laborers and undesirables (a long standing practice of Empire as we in the British Empire know all too well), but please provide the actualities as to how they alleviate poverty in Jamaica. How many of the people begging at those street lights will have employment of any type in the "logistics hub"? What sorts of impoverished Jamaicans whose language proficiency in English, Spanish, Mandarin, is low to nil will get employed? How many impoverished Jamaicans who belong to the right party or have the right Big Man or Don patronage who will be able to get jobs will be paid enough money, and have that employment for long enough to move them out of poverty?

The cliché "Poverty, my good lady, is the greatest threat to the environment" is the slogan and talking point repeated ad nauseam by the main threat to the Jamaican environment, the government of Jamaica. The vast majority of the world is "poor", and there are conditions under which impoverished people degrade the natural environment, but never to the degree that the rich do (driving in your car Mr. Mason is no doubt more damaging than walking), nor the overdeveloped, over consuming nations have, nor the newly powerful Empire of China which has some of the worst environmental conditions that are causing their people incredible health problems and hardships.

The free services that nature provides in terms of clean air, water, soil, mangroves and

reefs that buffer the shoreline from storm surge, are services that the poor need the most because they are the most vulnerable and the most affected by man-made environmental disasters. Mr. Mason it is time to understand the Real Economics - the value of 1 square kilometer of mangrove forest is US\$200,000 to \$900,000 ("What Has Nature Ever Done For Us", Tony Juniper, 2013). It is economically prudent to build the "logistics hub" somewhere other than the most intact mangrove forests in Jamaica. Looks like it's time for you and those stuck in False Economics that don't take into consideration the essential value and services of the natural environment to go back to school and relearn economics.

Yours

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