
BURNING AN ILLUSION

© 2011 Norman Samuda Smith



“The Government is not infallible. Government is only an executive control, a centralized authority for the purpose of expressing the will of the people. Before you have a government, you must have the people. Without the people there can be no government. The government must be therefore, an expression of the will of the people.”

Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887 – 1940)

Summer madness in the guise of riots reigned through the streets of Britain’s cities in August. Modern day news is broadcasted through cell-phones, laptops, computers, tablets and all kinds of gismos. Britain’s youth, live and direct were burning an illusion the ‘powers that be’ have portrayed to the world that here in Britain *everything is cool, we’re all getting on rather well thank you, we’ve got the Olympic Games coming soon and we’ve had a royal wedding.*

The riots vexed our politicians who had to cut short their summer holidays to attend emergency talks in the House of Parliament. They pointed fingers at ‘irresponsible parents’ and labelled the rioters across the nation ‘thugs’ and ‘gang members’; while the media subtly tried to portray the rioting as a race issue, which it clearly was not. The statistics in August revealed that three-quarters of the rioters arrested were between the ages of 10 to 17, a further three-quarters of the number charged had previous criminal records, and a vast number of ordinary shoppers who were just shopping, got caught up in

the moment of madness and saw the opportunity to grab some free designer gear while the police were not around. So after the politicians finished pointing their fingers, finished spitting out revenge justice, and as the riots continued outside while they debated 'state of emergency tactics', they finally asked, why did this happen in their 'Green and pleasant land'?

Let's rewind back to September 1970, it was a couple of weeks before my twelfth birthday, I was starting secondary school having just left junior school to attend an all-boys' school here in Birmingham which was well-known for its academic achievements of its pupils as well as its highly rated disciplinary system. School uniform had to be worn with pride, the colours of the uniform was the law, any other colour apart from grey, green, black or white was frowned upon. In the mornings when the school bell rang, and we walked into the school, the teachers were at the entrance doors. If your shoes were not polished, they sent you home to polish and shine them, if you forgot your tie; they sent you home to get it. If you were late for school, no excuse, you got the cane, failure to present your homework on time, the cane. You had to be polite to the teachers, no answering back or cheekiness, and last but by no means least, the school was always responsible for your actions the minute you stepped onto the pavement in the morning until you arrived home in the evening, even after sporting activities. Which meant if one did anything wrong by way of fighting, stealing, anything bad, the school would punish you for that.

It was a Victorian type discipline, which suited the ethics of many West Indian parents of that era who were avid disciplinarians, and it suited our community. We as youths were taught by our parents that we must have respect for our elders. When we saw the elders we knew when we were on the streets, we would be polite and say hello Mrs Brown or Mr Brown, if we didn't, our parents would be told and we would get punished for being disrespectful. It was hard and fun being a youth of West Indian origin in England during the 70s, but in hindsight we knew our boundaries and knew what we could and could not get away with. We were taught, the school takes over the responsibilities of our parents for the few hours that we are there, and they remain responsible until we walk through our front door in the evening. Not all schools were like the one I went to, some of them had bad disciplinary records, but the majority of them coped well with their incidents.

Where am I going with this? – Well, from whence our political leaders decided to take away the power of parents and teachers in regards to disciplinary measures, such as a smack if their child steps out of line, that's where it all broke down. Children can now 'divorce' their parents and take them to court for assault. When a son steps up and decides to big-up his chest on his mother and says: *'You can't do nothing to me mom!'* or a teacher who tries to restrain a youth within reason when he/she is out of control or disruptive and is charged for assault, it then becomes plain to see, as that generation grows into adults, you're gonna get chaos, no boundaries. I'm not saying that capital punishment should make a revival, but the discipline of our youth should run parallel with parents' morals and school standards.

So why did the riots kick-off? – Opportunism? – Boredom? – High unemployment? – The shooting of [Mark Duggan](#)? – Or could it be deep down everyone seized the moment to vent their suppressed displeasure about the billions of pounds in U.K. bank bailouts doled out during the recession, has allowed banks to resume earning huge profits while the average Brit have had scant relief from high unemployment and job insecurity; that the richest 1 per-cent of Brits do not pay their fair share in taxes? Sounds familiar don't it? – The post-mortem continues.

'Til next time – Everyting Bless

All rights reserved. No part of this article may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the writer Norman Samuda Smith.

First Published in [PANTHER NEWSLETTER: ISSUE 20](#)
