



# *The Losses of Antigua*

*Candice Yu*

A Small Place was written by Jamaica Kincaid in 1988 and demonstrates a tourist's personal experience in Antigua and Antiguan indigenous livelihood. Antigua was colonized by England more than 300 years ago, and eventually gained "independence" from the British colonization in 1981. However, the independence of Antigua actually was in name only and the British colonization had enduring influences on Antigua. Instead of reforming, both Antiguan and the Antiguan government still persisted in using former colonial etiquette. Antiguan maintained their lifestyles and the Antiguan government continued the previous British system. In general, the theme of A Small Place is to criticize the losses of equality of locals, political system, and culture in Antigua..

Local citizens did not receive equal treatments since they were regarded as inferior. Visitors believed that they were "un-Christian-like", "small-minded", "like animals", and "uncivilized". In addition, they were not treated equivalently as the British even though both of them could speak the same language. Due to being colonized, Antiguan not only learned English to comprehend the British edicts, but also obeyed orders to gratuitously service and work for them. Colonization prejudiced colonizers against Antiguan. They acquired the ludicrous hypocrisy of superiority from the British, which was one of the products and ideologies of imperialism, and accepted and

inherited self-violation of their own (Busia 227). The British colonizers ceaselessly imbued with the image of inferiority to Antiguan and Europe, and consequently, tourists from developed countries such as North America had strong discriminations towards Antiguan even though slavery and colonization were abolished. Because of the past colonization, Antiguan were treated unequally, and people around the world still have stereotype about them.

Strictly speaking, Antigua did not refine the colonial British political system. Firstly, taxi drivers could afford a luxurious car because the government made loans more available. Secondly, the government accepted economic loans from wealthy families to establish extraordinary mansions and houses (in spite of the universal acknowledgement that they were engaged in illegal and immoral activities). Without doubt, the government and the wealthy were complicit. The government relied on consortiums to support its revenues and politicians' lives, and the wealthy relied on the government's authority to seek benefits.

The government corruption was caused by British domination (Byerman 93). The dominant order between colonial period and independence did not change. The British colonizers reinforced the hierarchy between the colonizers and indigenes by enslaving and exploiting. Antiguan government neglected the Antiguan's well-beings to





only concern with material benefits of the bourgeoisie. Compared with the wealthy's luxurious facilities, poor people suffered from incomplete public infrastructure including schools and hospitals. Therefore, the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Even though the British colonizers and the independent Antiguan government strengthened the hierarchy to different targets groups, they were essentially the same. The Antiguan government still continued the unfair colonial British political system.

Antigua lost its cultural identity because of the lack of library. There once was a splendid library that every Antiguan was proud of. However, it was damaged because of the earthquake in 1974. After the earthquake, Antigua gained independence from Britain, but kept claiming that "repairs are

pending". Fifteen years later, the sign still remained, which implied this building was not useful enough (Byerman 94) to be allocated a part of fiscal supports. As a matter of fact, the library is not only the place to preserve books and information, but also the sacred storage of literal symbols and cultural relics. Literal symbols reify previous factual matters to be available for reference and involve creative intellectual activities. Additionally, the documents in library could be viewed as the foundation of a regional culture and a history. Books are essential for transforming early files to be comprehended. It also can play an important role in national development. Indigenous can receive cultural information from books to deeply understand their region and apply them as a tool to cultivate progression of early ideologies and theories. As the splendid library

was damaged, Antigua's own cultural identity was lost as well.

In summary, the story of *A Small Place* reveals the losses of Antigua in terms of its culture, political system, and equality of indigenes in spite of the abandonment of colonization. The library was a cultural depository but it was damaged and nobody would repair it. Government corruption and hierarchy was inherited from the British colonization, and Antigua did not refine it. Antiguan did not receive equality from others. And because of the colonization, people around the world still have stereotype about Antiguan. Indeed, the abolition of colonization was what a country or a region desired for. However, after the independence, prolonged influences from the colonial times were vestiges of its grave

history, which were still worth working to be obliterated.

#### Works Cited

Byerman, Keith E. "Anger in a Small Place: Jamaica Kincaid's Cultural Critique of Antigua." *College Literature*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, pp. 91–102.

Busia, Abena P. A. "Worlds in Tension." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1989, pp. 226–229.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.

