

Dolphinarium Essay Competition 1st Place – Secondary School



DOLPHIN PARK OR NO DOLPHIN PARK?

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There have been contentious debates among Saint Lucians on whether or not the island should invest in a dolphin park. A dolphinarium, frequently referred to as a Dolphin Park is a large aquarium for dolphins. The animals are usually held captive in a large pool for entertainment to tourists. While proponents contend that the Park will reap substantial benefits to our fragile economy by creating opportunities for increased employment and income generation for tour guides, taxi drivers and vendors, the proverbial question remains - at what cost to the environment, human health and safety, and the dolphins themselves? I am strongly opposed to a dolphinarium in Saint Lucia because this action would solely and selfishly benefit financial and economic interests, while detrimental consequences threaten the existing physical and marine environment, sea bathers, and the dolphins.

My stance is predicated on facts rather than emotion. A dolphin Park will separate these animals from their families and their natural habitat. It will have negative impacts on our coral reefs, and other marine life; and most importantly, the waste expelled from the captive dolphins, will not only pollute the recreational sea space within Pigeon Island, but dangerously affect the health of sea bathers.

Captivity compromises the health of these precious animals. Out of their natural habitat, dolphins are subject to bad health and cannot exercise their hunting skills. Their diet consists of dead fish daily which is of low nutritional value to them. Several case studies worldwide have alluded to this regrettable outcome. Is our tourism dollar worth more than the lives of these beautiful animals?

In the wild, dolphins tend to have a generally low stress level. However, dolphins in captivity are said to have increased stress levels. They are constantly forced to swim, perform tricks and be rode by strangers as a showcase to tourists. With increased stress levels, there becomes a diminished ability to fight diseases. They display high levels of aggression, depression, frustration and anxiety. With this, the animals are likely to snap and injure humans, and even causing death.

Dolphins were created for the oceans. If it was intended for them to be captive animals, would the perfect God not have created them as pets as he did with dogs and cats? Therefore it is my firm belief that to enslave these animals for the selfish purpose of our entertainment and our dollars, would be to alter the will of God.

The idea of implementing sea pens for the dolphins to live is quite hazardous to the environment. Research has shown that the pollution from dolphin sea pens redound to negative health impacts on everything it comes into contact with. Nutrients from the dolphins' fecal matter increase the production of cyanobacteria blue-green algae which produces toxins. A toxin is a poison or venom which is produced by microorganisms and have the ability to cause disease when present in the body at a low concentration. This diffuses through the water and kills coral reefs as well as affect the health of sea bathers.

In conclusion, whilst I understand the thrust to create employment opportunities and increase our visibility and marketability as a tourist destination, it should not be to the detriment of the dolphins, the environment, and human health, as there can and will be exponential financial implications in the long term. Can we really afford this? The cost-benefit to future generations should be the foremost consideration.

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