

Alicia Elliott

Age: 18

Ohsweken, Ontario

Across the Barricade

If you're a middle-class Caucasian male like me, your life is measured in how many victims you make of different minority groups. You can never be the victim; political correctness forbids it.

Following this line of thinking, the so-called 'racist card' is only available in nonwhite communities' decks. Obviously it's a trump no matter what is played before it. This gives me little faith in Canada.

My city is being held hostage by Indians. Any attempt to protest this is being stamped as 'racist' by every minority-loving media outlet in the country. My government has done nothing to stop the Indians from blocking our roads. The police have not acted on a court injunction to remove the protesters from the land they are occupying. Since the moment Caledonia residents started voicing our objections, we've had to wear the ugly label of 'racist.'

After seeing this and experiencing this, Canada isn't the country I thought it was at all. It's merely the country equivalent of a gawky boy too afraid to stand up to the school bully.

The same people I see right now across the police lines and tarp-laden barricades not three months ago were living in harmony with the town of Caledonia. No one would ever have thought something was wrong. We had no idea what level of hatred laid behind their stoic courtesy.

I've heard some folk say that the Indians have been planning this for a year - stockpiling tires to burn, intricately organizing every detail of my hometown's strangulation. Nearly every detail, anyway.

The part that they overlooked was the history of the lands they say are theirs. Everyone in Caledonia knows by now that the Natives sold their land to Canada in 1841. Conveniently for them, however, time is on their side.

The Ipperwash inquiry is still looming over Canada, making the government too afraid to assert anything against any Native, criminal or not.

"Leave it to him to want to trample more rights," an older man to my left says. "He's king of the terds."

A few chuckle at this, but the two silhouettes the man is referring to just beyond the police cars act as attention magnets.

Though the curtain of twilight is falling quickly, I can tell that one of the figures is one of them. The other, uniformed in dark blue, is obviously an OPP officer.

It's nearly 8 p.m. Now, and for another night I've drifted to the road blocks to meet with other residents as frustrated as I am. There are few people now, but once the sun kisses our town good-bye for the day, more will join our ranks.

"What's going on?" I ask the old man.

"That damn Indian wants the OPP to move the police line back. They want to cut off Canadian Tire's parking lot because they're scared. They think we're the violent ones," he rasps, raising his voice for everyone to hear towards the end.

Those Indians across the barricade are the ones that moved onto a land site and stopped construction, nearly bankrupting the developers. They blocked off our south road, effectively slaughtering many people's way to work and emergency vehicles. They are the reason my parents' property value dropped \$30,000. We couldn't give our house to a homeless man at this point. They, with their drums and dark complexions, are the monsters in my little brother's nightmares and the surreal tormentors just a chain-link fence away from his playground. They are breaking the law, but yelling 'racism' should the police try to enforce anything. Canada won't touch them. The OPP won't touch them.

Yet, somehow, we are scaring them.

"Good. Maybe we should drive 'em off since no one else has the spine to," I yell, to much applause.

Things will never be the same.

I've seen their angry eyes on the television and read their spiteful words in the newspaper. Though I haven't actually been to one of Caledonia's displays of aggression

and prejudice parading as a protest, I feel like they are glaring at me, screaming at me through the flat images. Fear is not a strong enough word to describe this horrible isolation.

Up until that first rally, my long ebony hair and dark skin were emblems of pride, wordlessly announcing to all my Mohawk heritage. Now I wish I could disappear from or mask others' glances, choose who finds that out about me.

It is resonating in my ears still, though they stopped chanting twenty minutes ago.

"We want blood! We want blood!"

The 11 o'clock news would never air footage of that. The Canadian media much prefer to spin our voices and our much less violent wants.

We want understanding, justice. We want to celebrate our ancestry without a foreign government trying to squeeze us into the 'good, non-ethnic citizen' mold at every turn.

Peering over my father's shoulder, I see the indistinct shadows of Caledonia residents. From this distance, they look like a black, shapeless cloud, occasionally illuminated by the police cars' lights.

I wish I could cross the barriers just once and talk to the Caledonians without them turning off their ears and closing their minds upon seeing the colour of my skin. Maybe if I could explain to them what really happened in 1841, they would stop harassing us and get angry with the real criminal here
- Canada.

As soon as we were given six miles on either side of the Grand River by the British Crown, the Canadian government wasted no time using slippery wording and outright fraud to steal it away.

The supposed surrender of the Haldimand Tract was an optical illusion orchestrated by Canada. It would appear that land was surrendered because there are signatures on the document. Look close enough, however, and you see the magician wasn't really a magician at all, but a con artist.

During a secret meeting between a small number of chiefs and Canada, the few Confederacy chiefs were led to believe that they had no power to stop the building of Plank Road over the Haldimand Tract, today known as Highway 6. Seven people at that

meeting supposedly signed a surrender. Yet, one of the signatories was not a chief, and one of the chiefs claimed he was never at the meeting to begin with. His signature seems to have been forged.

Regardless, the five valid chiefs' signatures were not even close to the fifty required for any agreement to be good.

In addition, the money agreed to in the supposed surrender was never accounted for.

The idea that Canada did all of this is horrible, but truth is hardly pretty.

The Ontario Provincial Police promised us they would not put together a surprise attack on our camp. They promised us they would notify us before coming in. Then they launched a surprise raid on our land reclamation site at 4 a.m.

My older brother was beaten by those police. Crimson and violet bruises mark his body like gravestones. The police picked him off the ground by his collar, choking him unconscious. When he came to, he was in a jail cell.

Fifteen others were taken to jail with him, all in varying degrees of pain and injury, but the police brutality never made it to any mainstream media outlet.

What did get media attention was the method we used to signal our brothers and sisters on Six Nations that we were in distress: burning tires. The way we chose to ensure the safety of the rest of the camp, blockading the roads, was all that any nonnative saw.

"A horrible inconvenience," the residents of Caledonia call our protest. I am unsure how many tears they shed finding out that tires were being burned for three hours. I don't know how their lives have been changed forever by our causing a ten minute road detour.

I do know that I cried for hours after finding out my brother was one of those attacked while I was at home sleeping. I know that he has a criminal record now for trying to correct an injustice done to our people years ago.

I know that I don't remember what it was like to go grocery shopping with my mother in Caledonia without being afraid.

Still, their unfeeling eyes burn into me from across the barricade.

Things will never be the same.