



The Seagulls Won't Come Down: A Caribbean journalist's account of his 12 years' odyssey in the Middle Kingdom

Owen Baptiste

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With an outsider's inside knowledge of China and its young people, Owen Baptiste is no longer silent about his twelve years in the Middle Kingdom, from the classrooms of Guangzhou to the hutongs of Beijing. Baptiste, a Caribbean journalist for more than 45 years, visited China in 1990, 1992 and 1997 with his wife, Rhona, as guests of the China Association for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries. In 1998 they went to teach English Writing and Oral English at a teachers' college in Guangzhou. At the end of eight years they moved to Beijing to investigate further the history, culture and politics of the Chinese. But *The Seagulls Won't Come Down* is more than an exposé of the colourful times Baptiste spent with his students and their families as he re-invented his life. The recollections and anecdotes, written as letters to his sons, are a primer of teaching English to the Chinese. They tell the story also of the years with the Caribbean News Agency, the Trinidad Express, the Trinidad Guardian, the Barbados Advocate, and the Jamaica Observer, and of his return to Trinidad to take part in plans to establish a School of Journalism. In all of this work, Baptiste doesn't spare his contemporaries or himself for the deplorable state of journalism and the failure of media managers to assist in the building of better societies in the Caribbean region. These letters contain as well knowledge about teaching in China since the policy of opening up to the outside world, and background to the controversies that surround the Lhasa riots of 2008, the Wenchuan earthquake that killed more than 89,000 people, and the \$40 billion Beijing Olympics that shocked the world of sports with its grandeur and efficiency.

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