

Name: Brittney Garbutt

Age: 24

Country: Belize

### What Is

What is an island?

It's a body of water surrounded by land- No wait!

It's the opposite, there's more liquid than sand.

This little island, with the name heard so sparsely across the world;

Has been my home since I was a young girl.

Here, where there was once simply sand, some trees and sea. The folks would hunt and fish and sell their 'catch' so energetically.

Ambergris Caye, is the name of my island, on the coast of Belize.

A third world country on the world map, that's barely there to see.

The island is small, San Pedro, it's other moniker, is not but a speck- though its importance is far larger.

The majority of people here are Creole and Spanish or Mestizo if you will. They work, they chat, while cooking, cleaning or eating their fill.

There are the other ethnicities of course, shades of colors all mixing. Caucasians, blacks and browns, everyone knows everyone in this tiny town.

That was then.

Now it's different, not much, but *more*.

More buildings, more people, more tourists galore!

It's here that the Tourism has come to peak. Here in the belly of the Caribbean sea where the people have learned to adapt and thrive.

Not only do we fish, but guide, snorkel and dive.

We here are in the water when the tractors and cranes groan. Placing new buildings on soil once green and overgrown.

We here are the vendors, making our living on the street-side upon hot summer sand.

Once grainy, now look at all the cement that spans.

The jackhammer on the 'soon-to-be' hotel next door, humming its intent.

Rooms and rooms built for nothing but rent.

At first, it wasn't bad.

There was still fish, and with new hotels came new tourist- money to be had.

The reef protecting us were bright, beautiful and beaming with life.

Now I swim, I guide, and it fills my heart with strife.

The coral color is dull, the fish are in hiding.

The tourists don't know, so they don't mind.

But it's only a matter of time.

We here are quick to run home from the rain to be cosy inside with family.

Behind us, the sludgy grime of pumped chemicals, old cement and boat gasoline pouring into the sea; sediments of the 'new-and-soon-to-be'.

Those here say we "are fine", but the damage has been done and is still being-

Being continued.

And being ignored

It's over-fishing to feed a growing population.

Over-building to house the very same.

It's the loss of our culture due to Americanization.

All caused by the greed, the lust for money and power- *idolization*.

All we have now, is all we have left.

Enough only for this generation, but what of the next?

Belize, is a jewel and San Pedro its shine.

I can't sit back and watch the self-destruction of this little island of mine.

So what is an island?

Well, if things continue like this...

My island-*my home*- will be the next Atlantis.