

# Bob Marley and the Resistance to War: From Vindicationism to Emancipation and Spiritual Health

Bob Marley y la Resistencia a la Guerra:  
de la vindicación a la emancipación y la salud espiritual

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## ABSTRACT

Bob Marley became a philosopher of emancipatory politics. Emancipatory politics starts with a basic and simple assumption that the African people think; and politics must be based on openness, accountability, and the liberation of African women, collective leadership, and the security of the producers. At the dawn of the twentieth century the Rastafari confronted a number of revolutionary traditions. These were the traditions of the liberal democratic revolution against feudalism. Like most black people, the Rastafari knew that this liberal democratic revolution did not include black and brown peoples. Rastafari understood the racist logic of manifest destiny and the vindicationists of the first period were opposed to this liberal democratic creed that accepted imperial wars as pacification.

**Key words:** Bob Marley, Walter Rodney, Africa, reggae music, rasta woman, philosophy

## RESUMEN

Bob Marley se convirtió en un filósofo de la política de la emancipación. Política emancipadora que parte del supuesto básico y simple de que el pueblo africano piensa; y de que la política debe basarse en la apertura, en la responsabilidad y en la liberación de las mujeres africanas, en el liderazgo colectivo y en la seguridad de los productores. En los albores del siglo XX, el Rastafari confrontó una serie de tradiciones revolucionarias. Eran las tradiciones de la revolución liberal democrática contra el feudalismo. Al igual que la mayoría de la gente negra, el Rastafari sabía que esta revolución liberal democrática no incluía a los pueblos negros y/o cimarrones. El rastafari comprendió la lógica racista del destino manifiesto y los vindicacionistas del primer periodo se opusieron a este credo liberal que aceptaba las guerras imperiales como pacificación.

**Palabras Claves:** Bob Marley, Walter Rodney, África, música reggae, mujer rasta, filosofía

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2005, at the moment of the sixtieth birthday of Bob Marley, one branch of the Rastafari movement organized a major peace concert in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Under the banner *Africa Unite*, this peace concert drew more than 250,000 persons to sing and dance to the tunes of the core philosophy of the Rastafari, *Peace and Love*. Hundreds of thousands of Rastafari and non-Rastafari had used the occasion to promote conceptions of love in the society that has been designated as the seat of the African Union.

For many Rastafari, this was coming home to Zion. In Ethiopia itself, millions of workers, traders, students, working women, merchants, and cultural artists took a close look at the implications of standing up for peace and justice. Would the same government that ceded the space for the peace concert open up the space for a new tradition in the politics of Ethiopia? Would the political leadership in Ethiopia and Africa teach the importance of Bob Marley for political emancipation from imperial domination?

These questions have been answered very clearly in the negative by the political intellectual and social policies of the present leadership of the Pan African world. Less than three months after this Peace and Love concert in Addis Ababa the ruling party and government of Ethiopia used the instruments of the state to ensure that a small elite aligned with the United States remained at the helm of the government. An election, labeled fraudulent by international observers, was followed by repression, military skirmishes, and within another year, a military incursion into Somalia “to fight Islamists.” This expansionist campaign confirmed another tradition, that of militarism, repression, and rule by a small elite that dominate the institutions of coercion and administration. The current ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is comprised of a political alliance that at one moment had proclaimed itself to be a Marxist Leninist “revolutionary force.” This front has held power since it marched into

Addis Ababa in 1991. Since that time the front has provided the conditions for a small group to accumulate wealth.

Our discussion of Bob Marley is to be able to place the resistance of the Rastafari in the global context of the peace and justice movements, especially the revolutionary movements of the Caribbean. Robert Nesta Marley was born in the island of Jamaica in 1945. He was the product of an interracial relationship between an Englishman and an African woman from Jamaica. Marley identified with Africa and broke the long tradition of mixed-race persons who denied their African heritage. Bob Marley was born in the last days of World War II and as a child, he lived at Nine Miles in St. Ann, but moved to Kingston with his mother while still in his early teens. This move arose because of the dislocations wreaked on the Jamaican country side in the wake of the demand for raw materials for war making institutions (the mining of bauxite in Jamaica). He grew up in Trench Town among the most oppressed sections of the working class of Kingston and was influenced by the Rastafari movement. This was a movement that linked itself culturally to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a multinational, multiethnic, and multireligious state of close to eighty million citizens.

One of the revered traditions of the current leadership in Ethiopia relates to the celebration of the continuity of the integration between the state and one of the organized religious forces, that of the Orthodox Christian Church. Christianity has been practiced in Ethiopia since the fourth century and this has been a source of inspiration and spiritual energy for African Christians at home and abroad. Positive references to Ethiopia in the Bible, especially the quotation, “Ethiopia stretches forth her hand unto God,” had influenced a brand of African nationalism that was termed Ethiopianism. This positive reference had been used by literate Africans at the turn of the twentieth century to vindicate Africa from the racist propaganda that raged after the imperial partitioning of Africa. Vindicationism

and Ethiopianism flourished even further after the victory of the Abyssinians over the Italians at Adowa in 1896. Supporters of Ethiopianism included Africans who adhered to different religious practices. The positive identification with Ethiopia included Christians, Muslims, and Africans of diverse religious affiliation.

When the Rastafari movement burst on the world stage in Jamaica, it had started out as another vindicationist movement and identified with the official Christianity of the state and the Emperor of Ethiopia. Thus Jamaican peasants and workers were involved in a movement that had to address political and religious realities in both Jamaica and Ethiopia. Slowly, these Africans who claimed Ethiopia as their home began to learn that not all Ethiopians spoke Amharic and that the cultural and ethnic makeup of Ethiopia was richer than the simplistic and homogenous nation that was represented by the media.

This learning process has been continuous for the past eighty years to the point where one can now reflect on the traditions of the Rastafari. This reflection has been sharpened by the experiences of those Rastafari brethren and sistren who have made Ethiopia their home. From the early days of the movement, anthropologists and sociologists had noted that the Jamaican peasants claimed Ethiopian citizenship. The Rastafari had called for repatriation to Africa and had been in the forefront of the call for reparations in order to repair society.

The contradictions of calling for repair while holding on to the images of a semi feudal regime had been clear to citizens of Ethiopia, especially the overwhelming majority who were not Christians and who were not aligned to either faction that had held power since 1930. These contradictions became fully exposed at moments of grand Rastafari celebration such as the celebration of the 100th birthday of Haile Selassie (in 1992).

The Rastafari movement derives its name from the given name of Haile Selassie before he was crowned emperor in 1930. The given name was Ras Tafari. This Emperor was deposed in a

military uprising in 1974 but the Rastafari sang, *Ja Lives*, and continued to proclaim the divinity of Selassie. Yet, because of the consistency of the message of peace and love, the Rastafari philosophy has transcended the other limitations and contradictions of this movement and, in the process, brought forth another tradition, that of humans seeking to live in peace on a militarized planet.

In the past forty years the literature and writings on the philosophy of the Rastafari and Bob Marley have served to shed more light on the role of music and the song as a mobilizing force in society. Bob Marley was a cultural artist who became internationally known as a defender of love, freedom, and emancipation. The concert in Ethiopia was supposed to bring a message of peace and unity to the headquarters of the African Union. The Rastafari movement and individual Rastas had been eloquent advocates of African independence, self-affirmation, self-determination, and African unity and the Rastafari songs of love and inspiration are now enjoyed in all parts of the world. In particular, Bob Marley's call for emancipation from mental slavery struck a responsive chord with humans seeking alternatives to the present mode of social and economic organization.

In this essay, I argue that the music and lyrics of the Rastafari not only provide inspiration at the level of emotion and music but also inspired an emancipatory framework for understanding reality. This emancipatory framework stands in sharp distinction to the epistemologies of positivism or structuralism, or what this presentation terms the episteme of Babylon. It is the episteme that is associated with what is termed modernity in the contemporary academy.

## **RASTAFARI PHILOSOPHY: A QUANTUM LEAP**

Professor Rex Nettleford, the preeminent Caribbean scholar and cultural performer, has written on the tremendous contribution of the Rastafari

in the search for dignity and freedom. Nettleford (1999) noted,

Of all the people who have been fighting for human dignity, for Black dignity, and justice to people of African ancestry the Rastafarians are the only ones who have made the kind of quantum leap that all civilizations must make, in terms of determining its own God, its own image and this is a fantastic development and this of course is not usually understood.

It is the principle of a quantum leap that is one of the most important traditions bequeathed by the Rastafari movement. It is a principle that can break the old mechanistic ideas of positivism and historical materialism that have dominated Eurocentric thoughts. The authors of the book on *Quantum Society* noted,

If we are to rediscover the moral and spiritual roots of our society, we must do so in a way which mirrors, which extends and develops rather than contradicts, the knowledge that science is giving us about the nature of the physical and living worlds of which we are a part. (Zohar and Marshall, 1994, pp, 1-13)

These scholars and the scientists seeking to grapple with the quantum realities of life understood that the “human brain is a natural link between our perception and values and the ‘cosmic dance’ of physical reality.” In the Rastafari mind the natural mystic flowed to the point where the Rastafari were involved in a cultural revolution on a global scale. The Rasta spirit became a powerful weapon for social and personal transformation. This was communicated through a developed knowledge of science, especially in relation to the physics of music. At the same time the Rastafari sought to reawaken the moral and spiritual roots of Africa beyond Ethiopianism and vindicationism (Savishinsky, 1999, pp. 126-144). One of the core arguments of this paper is that the ideas of emancipation from mental

slavery opened up possibilities for grasping the Rastafari standpoint, or what I call, the Rastafari epistemology. The Rastafari movement helped to reveal the extent to which “our whole perception of ‘modernity’ is a mechanistic perception.” This movement in theory and practice stood in opposition to the mechanistic modes of thought that stressed hierarchy (according to ever-descending units of analysis). The Rastafari never accepted the hierarchy that placed Europeans as superior human beings.

This mechanism stressed not only the superiority of Europe but also the unbridgeable gulf between human beings and the physical world. Expressed in the idea of the separation between spirit and matter and the domination over nature, mechanistic modernity sought to represent itself in universalistic terms. Rastafari dented this universalism and called the whole system of thought “Babylon.” In this essay, Babylon is identified with the epistemology of the Enlightenment that proclaimed the sanctity of the individual and the inviolability of private property (Bauman, 1989)<sup>2</sup>. It was in this era that the capitalist economic system, the Cartesian view of life, the positivist natural science, and the universalistic worldview gained acceptance.

The Rastafari movement by its perseverance opened issues of the nature of human agency, the nature of society, and the epistemology of social inquiry. It is here where the Rasta confronted the traditions of militarism, modernity, and the Cartesian philosophy. By their reasoning and grounding, the Rastafari strengthened a philosophy that broke the boundaries between the spiritual and material, black and white, Christians and non-Christians, believers and nonbelievers, rational and irrational, and the racial hierarchies of humans. One of the core principles of the movement throughout these periods was the fact

<sup>2</sup> This book argues forcefully that the Holocaust must be understood as a central event of modernity. This same indictment of modern processes of “rationalization” is to be found in the book by Anthony J. Hall (2003). *The American Empire and the Fourth World*.

that humans existed as part of a wider universe, and hence, were part of nature. Today, in the twenty-first century, the environmental philosophy of the Rastafari is more appreciated and it is during this same period when the voices of Rasta women are being heard to expose the patriarchal traditions within the movement. Thus, in the latter part of this essay we will highlight some of the contradictions within the movement. The intellectual interpretations of the Rastafari movement had been dominated by studies that termed the Rastafari cultists “escapists” and “millenarian.” These interpretations formed a component of the positivist paradigm of Western social science that accepted the eugenic hierarchies of the early twentieth century. We now know that one of the early impulses for the study of the Rastafari had been informed by the requirements of the British intelligence establishment. The work of Robert Hill in bringing out the role of Michael G Smith in his study of the Rastafari Movement has clarified the real impact of the studies on cultural pluralism and imperial machinations (Paul). However, for African peoples and other dominated peoples, this epistemology of positivism reproduced ideas and standards celebrating domination and imperial expansion. Insofar as one branch of Marxism accepted the crude mechanistic hierarchies of Enlightenment thinking, those Ethiopians (from the Dergue) who embraced this variant of determinism and predictability could not inspire the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In celebrating Bob Marley and the popularity of reggae spokespersons, the scholar runs the risk of reinforcing the Western preoccupation with the individual leader, especially masculine leadership. The challenge will be how to document and celebrate revolutionaries such as Bob Marley and Che Guevara by developing democratic and emancipatory intellectual frameworks (epistemologies) that challenge the liberal and gender-based knowledge systems of the West. Herein lays the challenge between two intellectual outlooks, the masculinist and militarist conception of the

current leaders of Pan African world and the peace activists who imagined all of the peoples of the world living in peace transcending racial hierarchies and capitalist exploitation. Our task in this paper is to engage the issues of resistance and peace to the point where we can begin to repair the destruction unleashed by the cultures of militarism, perpetual war and genocide

The Rastafari sought to perform the cosmic dance in relation to the physical realm and the spiritual plane. Bob Marley was one of the numerous philosophers (or natural mystics) of this movement who strove to popularize the ideas of peace, love, and spiritual health while critiquing the imperialist system (Babylon). This effort posited an alternative based on the recuperative possibility of peace and love, the healing potential of “positive vibrations.” It is in this sense that the Rastafari philosophy posed a direct transcendence of the binary ideas of Eurocentrism. We argue that Rastafari, philosophy, and reggae music can best be understood in an intellectual milieu that grasps the richness of the African intellectual cultures and ideation system. It is an intellectual heritage that breaks the dichotomy of the spiritual and earthly planes of existence. The ability of the Rastafari philosophy to address both the material conditions of the super exploitation of Africans with another form of spiritual reflection and spiritual energy is a supreme example of offering a way out of the false dichotomy offered by Western ideation systems that remain intent on separating spiritual and metaphysical realms from material realities.

The theme of self-emancipation seeks to bring the fusion of the ideas of spirituality with the revolutionary changes in the material and technical conditions of production. Fusion and quantum consciousness exploded in reggae music in order to provide emancipation from mental slavery so that humans could open up their appetite for self-expression. Will it be possible to bring this energy to the political plane to intervene against the spread of war and militarism in the region of the Africa?

## RECURSION AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF VINDICATIONISM.

In *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, this author (Campbell, 1987) traced the growth of the Rastafari movement from the Leonard Howell's peasant commune to its international status. This study has been supplemented by numerous others establishing centers for the study of Rastafari in universities internationally. But quite a number of these studies continue in the western positivist tradition, and few grasp the movement's dynamism and change over time. Rex Nettleford (1999) has been one of the consistent commentators whose analysis has changed since his initial study for the University of the West Indies in 1960 to his present observations on the quantum leap in the consciousness of the Rastafari. Similarly, Walter Rodney (1969) and Eusi Kwayana are two other thinkers who fully understood the revolutionary possibilities of the Rastafari philosophy.

Eusi Kwayana, also recognized that the Rastafari were not only rejecting British society, but were in the process of creating a new tradition in Caribbean society. In his words:

The placing of the stamp of Babylon on the whole of official society and the wide acceptance of this description is one of the landmark achievements of the Caribbean Revolution. The more it is seriously accepted, the more the culture divides into two poles of authority: a necessary forerunner to any long term revolutionary objectives. Those members of the society who do not accept or embrace the dress, or need the religious ideas, accept the language, those who do not accept the language with the movement's definition of the order of things, accept the music. In fact, such is the power of art that Bob Marley's music has done more to popularize the real issues of the African liberation movement than several decades of backbreaking work of Pan Africanists and international revolutionaries. (Kwayana, quoted by Campbell, 1987)

Both Walter Rodney and Rex Nettleford were part of the black intelligentsia informed by the vindicationist traditions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that affirmed the history of Africa and the contributions of Africa and African civilizations.

The Vindicationist tradition had its origins in attempts by black intellectuals, writers, pamphleteers, and memorialists to vindicate Africa and Africans, to defend them against their traducers in Europe and the Americas who hurled calumnies about a dark Africa devoid of the African past. (Martin & West, 2000, p. 87)

Space does not allow for an in depth interrogation of the vindicationist traditions in the Pan African world. What is important for this essay is the relationship between Ethiopianism, vindicationism and the Rastafari movement. According to Martin and West (2000), Ethiopianism and Vindicationism arose as a radical critique of Euro-centrism. The Rastafari movement had emerged as vindicationism at the grassroots but matured in the womb of the struggles against Babylon. The intervention by Walter Rodney in the second period provided the important break from the defensive vindicationist orientation to the positive and assertive emancipatory trajectory.

## THE WALTER RODNEY INTERVENTION

Rodney, a trained historian unearthed the actual lived experiences of peoples from past great African kingdoms and is well known for his work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney, 1973). As a student at the University of the West Indies, from 1960 through 1963, Walter Rodney was inspired by the vindicationism of the Rastafari and their love for Africa influenced his choice of doctoral research. On graduating from the London University, School of Oriental and African Studies, Rodney spent one year in

Tanzania, and Rodney returned to Jamaica to teach at the University of the West Indies in 1967. This placed Rodney in Jamaica in the period immediately following Haile Selassie visit in 1966.

Walter Rodney consciously avoided the chit-chat of the petty bourgeois intellectuals, and 'grounded' himself in the hills and gullies of Jamaica sharing his knowledge of African history and his knowledge of Ethiopia. When he observed the Rastafari studying the Amharic language in Jamaica, he sought to educate these Jamaicans as to the multinational and multiethnic nature of the Ethiopian state. In the process, Rodney was critiquing the conception of the homogeneous nation state theory. Ethiopia was an imperial state and Rodney explained Ethiopia so that, in his words, "History [was] to be used as a weapon." This was the theme of his *Groundings* with the Rastafari and central to his thesis of "African History in the Service of the Black Liberation." (Rodney, 1969).

In his lectures and communications, Rodney spelled out the positive aspects of the Ethiopian traditions, while painstakingly clarifying the contradictions of the imperial nature of Ethiopian society. Rodney outlined the contradictions of the deification of kings and kingdoms by pointing out to the Rastafari that the majority of the African peoples did not live in kingdoms, and that as workers and peasants, the challenge was to identify with the positive attributes of hospitality, respect for the elders, the law, and sharing traditions of the African ideation system. He elaborated on the contradictions of vindicationism by explaining that:

The first contradiction, the first dilemma which one faces in attempting to utilize African history as one of the weapons in our struggle is a realization that, in a very real sense, we, as black people, are placed in [the] invidious position of having to justify our existence by antecedents, having to prove our humanity by what went before. (Rodney, 1969)

From this first dilemma, he went on to outline that history was not static, and that the Rastafari should not develop a static view of Ethiopia. Instead Rodney noted: "The second rule is that African history must be seen as very intimately linked to the contemporary struggle of black people." (Rodney, 1969).

In his conclusion to this seminal essay, Rodney then articulated the need to transcend the tradition of celebrating great men and kingdoms in Africa.

For me then, African history, as carried out by the black brothers and sisters, will have to be a process of coming to grips with all the aspects of African history and with trying to determine what are the categories into which we should fit things, as distinct from saying, let us start and try to determine whether we can reconstruct African history along the same terms in which European history has been reconstructed. Because that analysis, where you utilize only the European criteria is itself the same process of bastardization; the guy oppresses you and then he selects your terms of reference. Even when you're fighting him you use his terms of reference. But what I am trying to suggest here is that we have to break out from those terms of reference. (Rodney, 1969)

This was the essence of his challenge to the old vindicationist tradition of celebrating great kings, kingdoms and empires. Walter Rodney, in the process of his groundings, sharpened another term of reference, that of survival and self-emancipation. The translation of this challenge fell to philosophers and griots of the natural mystics movement such as Mortimer Planno. This author can attest to the confidence and tenacity of these grassroots thinkers who 'assailed the church-state coalition which had legitimized oppression in the name of civilization'. Planno, one of the principal philosophers of the movement at that time, worked closely with Rodney (learning and

teaching)<sup>3</sup>. Planno was the crucial link to those members of the movement that linked liberation in Jamaica to liberation in Africa, instead of insisting on repatriation to Ethiopia. He stressed that liberation of Africans at home and abroad had been the significant theme in Rodney's groundings.

Planno was influenced by Rodney, and in turn became one of the griots who welcomed hundreds of young persons to the movement. Among the new adherents who came under his influence was Bob Marley while he was still a 'Rude Bwoy' in Kingston. Here was a fractal recursive process at work. Rodney sought to break with the old vindicationist traditions and in turn, he set in motion a new process that would ensure emancipation. Planno was one of the links in the recursive chain between the emancipation from mental slavery as articulated by Bob Marley and the self-emancipation of the masses as articulated by Rodney. This Guyanese intellectual, Walter Rodney, grew with this movement as he was influenced by the Rastafari and in turn he was a great influence in this movement. For the Jamaican government, this fusion between the radical thinking of Rodney and the natural mystics proved too potent, and Rodney was deported. Later he was assassinated in Guyana because he had worked for the emancipation of the working classes, regardless of race and gender.

### REGGAE AS A RALLYING CRY

Reggae as a form of communication was simultaneously a rallying cry in the period of racist wars in Africa. At the time of the South African invasion of Angola in 1975, Bob Marley and the Wailers put the words of Haile Selassie to song to mobilize the Pan-African world against apartheid.

<sup>3</sup> Caribbean academic philosophers who recognized philosophy in the main as emanating from the European ideation system referred to Mortimer Planno as a "Folk Philosopher."

Until that day the continent of Africa  
Will not know peace

We Africans will fight, if necessary

And we know that we shall win

As we are confident in the victory

Of good over evil, of good over evil.

(From the song "War" on the album *Rastaman Vibrations*)

This was at a time when the government of apartheid South Africa in alliance with western imperialism wanted to preserve the system of white superiority and exploitation over the region of Southern Africa. The music and messages of the Rastafari demonstrated the reality that the fate of the movement was not one that was simply linked to the fate of Ethiopia. The Ethiopia to which the Rastafari referred was larger than the territory that was called modern Ethiopia.

Hence the songs of antiapartheid and antiracism were new sources of energy for a worldwide antiapartheid movement. The song "War" by Bob Marley and the song of Peter Tosh, "We must fight against apartheid," acted as a source of mobilization for a liberation process that drew in peoples of all parts of the world to organize against the military machine of apartheid. Sanctions, boycotts, and diplomatic isolation complemented the mass democratic struggles of the organized and unorganized peoples of South Africa. This antiapartheid struggle drew in peoples in all continents, with the people of Cuba lending military support for the defeat of apartheid military forces at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988.

Reggae went to the roots of slavery and the resistance of the enslaved to inspire the youth.

Do you remember the days of slavery?

Do you remember on the slave ship how they  
brutalized my very soul.

When I hear the crack of the whip my blood  
runs cold.

The reproduction of reggae music became a capital intensive exercise with the use of electric

keyboards, synthesizers, mixers, and reverberators. For the Wailers, the partnership with Chris Blackwell of Island Records was a symbol of the new partnership of reggae with transnational capital. The force of the music led the transnational capitalist corporations such as EMI, Columbia, and CBS to sign on reggae artists. But even this quest to use the most advanced technology did not soften the content of reggae, for Bob Marley and the Wailers, in their first album with Island Records, went back to the horrors of slavery to bring a new thrust to Reggae:

Slave Driver the table is turning.  
Catch a fire so you can get burn  
Every time I hear the crack of the whip  
My blood runs cold.  
I remember the slave ship  
How they brutalized my very soul.  
They say that we are free  
The only thing that change is poverty,  
Good God I think it is illiteracy  
Is only a machine to make money.

Not even the packaging which went into this album could detract from the ways in which activist Walter Rodney's lessons of Groundings and Foundations were circulated. Imperialism was faced with that contradiction of trying to sell the music to make profits while at the same time promoting the anticapitalist ideas of Rasta. Bob Marley and the Wailers deepened the use of Jamaican language in their reproduction of the song that spoke of "Concrete Jungle," and "Four Hundred Years" of the same philosophy. Never forgetting the spirit of joy and the humor of the slave, the Wailers wailed "Trench town Rock." The political leadership in Jamaica was not insensitive to the power of the song, hence, both political parties attempted to mobilize particular reggae artists in their electoral battles.

The Rastafari movement became a reference point to maintain some form of self-worth, but this movement did not escape the deep patriarchal tendencies of Caribbean society. Reggae

artists turned to the international audience because the presence of a large Caribbean community in North America and Europe meant that their records could be sold outside Jamaica. Inside the Eastern Caribbean, migrants from Europe and students from University of West Indies (U.W.I.) who had risen above petty island chauvinism helped to introduce the music of reggae at a time when Rastas were still denigrated as "dirty niggers." At the end of the sixties, Jimmy Cliff was the most popular in the Eastern Caribbean and his songs "Wonderful World", "Beautiful People", could be heard in the bars and dances of Trinidad and Dominica. His forceful protest of the war in Vietnam linked reggae to an anti-imperialist movement that was developing in the Caribbean. These songs were all linked to the deep spiritualism of the Jamaican society.

Ethiopia was especially torn by militaristic conceptions and the wars in Eritrea and the Ogaden reinforced the ideas of peace and love among the Rastafari. Rastafari were developing a new self-image, that of peaceful nonviolent cultural spokespersons. In Jamaica itself, the explosion of political violence and U.S. intervention affected the Rastafari community in numerous ways but throughout all of the turmoil, the Rastafari maintained a sense of dignity and sought to remain aloof from the internecine struggles. Not even Bob Marley could stand aloof from these struggles. He was shot in 1976 in the midst of the destabilization of Jamaica by the CIA.

## THE WOMEN IN THE RASTAFARI MOVEMENT

Despite the emancipatory lyrics of Reggae and the profound appeal of Bob Marley, one of the fundamental contradictions of the movement was the sexist and macho elements of this movement. Many Rastafari women found ways to express themselves and slowly Rasta women made their opposition to patriarchy known inside and outside the movement. Educated Rasta women, like the educated Rasta men, could not escape the

positivism and mechanistic assumptions of the Babylonian epistemology<sup>4</sup>.

Rastafari women have forced this issue of patriarchy into the open. Thus, scholars make a distinction between the old Rastafari movement of the preindependence period and the Rastafari movement of the twenty-first century. MutaBaruka, the reggae artist, acknowledged this contradiction in the movement and has written articles opposing the deep patriarchy in some parts of the movement, writing:

A return to the feminine principle is very important in the unraveling of our ancient spirituality. What we have professed has helped us so far, but it's up to us to now move it further. We can no longer be like Christian fundamentalists—or Islamic fundamentalists for that matter—who are stuck in a history that does not provide them with an understanding of new thoughts and new life styles. We are living in a new era of information—a time when one can travel from London to New York in three hours, when one can click a switch and illuminate a stadium filled with thousands of people, a time when a person committing a crime in one part of the world can be viewed instantaneously in another through modern technology. This is the age of information, but inspiration without information sometimes leads to superstition. (MutaBaruka, n.d.)

MutaBaruka added,

We must not confuse Spirituality with Religion. Rastafari must not be bound by religious perceptions because this will cause stagnation of the movement and thereby create fundamentalism. We must be open to the different cultures of Afrika and not demonize them because of biblical interpretations. (MutaBaruka, n.d.)

The important point to note is that this discussion of patriarchy is coming from within the Rastafari movement. The spread of the AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean made it impossible for any movement to go forward without confronting issues of gender oppression, patriarchy, gender violence, and the insecurities of homophobia. The AIDS pandemic demanded an informed society beyond the ideas communicated in Leviticus and demanded that proper sex education become part of the new political culture. Increasingly, there are scholars who are breaking the silences relating to sexism and homophobia in the Rastafari movement and among sections of the Rastafari.

It is on the question of sexism where one can have a full appreciation of Bob Marley as a human who had profound weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses are reproduced for history in the book by Rita Marley (2004), *No Woman No Cry*. Yet, it is this same Rita Marley who has been at the forefront of celebrating the positive contributions of Bob Marley. This was best exemplified in the holding of the birthday celebrations for the sixtieth birthday of Bob Marley in Ethiopia in February 2005.

It is in this sense that Bob Marley represents both the old concepts of Rastafari and also the new concepts. Here one can see the dialectic expressed in the life of the leading proponent of the Rastafari. From inside the movement numerous Rasta women such as Yaa Asantewaa and Makeda Silvera have been waging a relentless struggle against all forms of patriarchy within the Rasta movement while guarding against those who attack all Rasta men as chauvinists. From the works of these women emanated the pressures to give voice to the opposition to patriarchy

<sup>4</sup> Imani Tafari-Ama recognized the limits of the modernist discourse and chooses to represent her case through the postmodern discourse of bodies and identity. In this study she sought to link the patriarchal anxieties of young males and the intense violence in the urban areas. Using a postmodern framework for exploring identity politics, this author brought to the fore the burning questions of the crisis of inner-city violence in Jamaica through the lenses of the political economy, gender, power, and embodiment. Despite the postmodern epistemology that placed great emphasis on identity politics, the author reinforced the voice of Rasta women, a voice that had been rendered silent by the dominant discourses on Rastafari. Rastafari women have raised their voices in opposing the sexism of those who turned to the Bible to justify the exploitation and violation of women.

within the Caribbean and in the African Diaspora. These women were part of the New Rasta of the twenty-first century. One academic argued that this new Rastafari movement has taken principles that are essential to the Rasta faith (such as protection of and respect for the environment as well as demand for equal rights) and extended them to encompass a broader range of global issues.

The new Rastafari is a global cultural practice, an expression in particular of black people and especially black women, but one which is also inclusive of revolutionary white men and women.

In this sense, the new Rastafari has made global demands for greater equality for black and other majority world women as well as a greater respect for the ecological system as a whole. Furthermore, the effects of this process have been reciprocal in that the wider movement of black feminism has helped to foster changes in moving toward a more egalitarian Rastafari culture as well. (Turner, 1994)

### **RASTAFARI AND THE CONTRADICTIONS: THE WAR ON DRUGS—CAPITALISM AND MILITARISM IN NEW FORMS**

Whether it is the music, the locks, the beard or the spiritual use of marijuana as a holy sacrament, or the gender relations within the Rastafari movement, all aspects of Rastafari culture are connected to the repressive tendencies of the dominant culture. This is a culture of militarism and violence. By the end of the Civil Rights period in the United States and the intensified anti-apartheid struggles in Africa, the United States had intensified its militarization of the earth with the spread of militarism and military forces around the world. This is what I have termed elsewhere 'the military management of the international system.' Hollywood featured warfare and violence and the new information technologies were mobilized to ensnare the youth with war games and violent videos. Jamaican youths were attracted

to this militaristic culture and in the book on *Blood, Bodies and Bullets* we were reminded as to the extent where gang leaders in the oppressed communities identified with the masculinity of Hollywood.

The interconnections among militarism, dollar imperialism, capital accumulation, sexism, masculinity, homophobia, and violation have been brought forward by feminist scholars who have deepened our understanding of the gendered nature of the armaments culture. The Rastafari were opposed to this culture and pedantically held on to the ideals of peace and love. But, however much the Rastafari preached the virtues of peace, Jamaican and Caribbean societies could not escape the militarization of the region in the expanded warfare around the globe. In the context of the Caribbean, this global militarism was justified as a war on drugs. Peter Tosh and others wailed on the need to decriminalize the use of the Herb by singing the song, "Legalize It." It was the intellectual and political leadership of the Rastafari movement which forced the pace of the decriminalization of marijuana which we are now witnessing in the Caribbean and in the USA. One of the many challenges in this period will be for the Rasta movement to deepen and develop cooperatives so that the decriminalization of marijuana does not strengthen international capitalism.

The album of Bob Marley, *Burning*, defied the state's conception of the Rasta. It was on this album cover where Bob Marley was pictured smoking a joint of marijuana. Inadvertently, the cover of the album helped reinforced popular misconception that Rastafarians were mindless smokers of ganja. This is despite the fact that the content of this album included the clearest political message of the Wailers, "Get Up, Stand Up, Stand Up for Your Rights." This political rallying call by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh was backed up by the words "You can fool some people sometimes, but you can't fool all the people all the time." The album contained printed lyrics so that those who did not understand the Jamaican language could follow the themes of the songs.

The images and language of standing up and resisting oppression had been consciously mobilized by young persons who felt the brunt of police repression. Today in the heart of the imperialist centers the youths are fighting this form of militarism and are organizing around the theme Black Lives matter. This repression had been visited upon the Rasta movement as a whole and on individual Rastas through the so-called war on drugs. Throughout the Caribbean there is the use of the Dangerous Drugs laws to imprison those who use marijuana. The state does not seek to distinguish between the antisocial elements who take on the physical appearance of the Rasta (False Dreads) and the true Rasta who denounce all forms of violence, greed, and capital accumulation.

Rastas may use marijuana and some individual Rastas may use cocaine but this personal use must be distinguished from the international trade in cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. The trafficking of cocaine in the region of Central America and the Caribbean has strengthened the agencies of repression while the violence and gunrunning from this trade has completely deformed many of the societies in the region. Cocaine, which is traded like other commodities, requires a vast and capital-intensive infrastructure which is beyond the capabilities of most poor people, including the Rastafari. If one is to approach the question of substance abuse from the point of view of the health, security, and leisure of the peoples of the region, then there would have to be a different approach from the militaristic approach to drug use that is inscribed in the War on Drugs. The War on Drugs reinforces militarism and police presence in all parts of the region at a moment when the forces of democratization call for new forms of political participation.

Drug production, smuggling, and distribution have become a sophisticated transnational business that has been facilitated by the neoliberal policies of privatization and liberalization. Therefore, the impulse to remove government regulations has led to a boom in an industry

that handles over US\$ 600 billion worldwide. The trade in drugs is part of the global capitalist structure, but imperialism finds it convenient to use the war on drugs to intensify the militarization of the Caribbean.

Not only does the trade in cocaine launder billions of dollars through the Caribbean banking system, but also the war on drugs stimulates capital accumulation and repression at the same moment. It is in the Caribbean and Latin America where the war on drugs meets the war on terror to serve the needs of international capitalism.

- (a) This trade recycles billions of dollars, which are laundered through unregulated banking systems
- (b) The war on drugs legitimizes military intervention by Drug Enforcement Agencies in the day-to-day life of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America
- (c) The war on drugs justifies the abrogation of human rights as the murder rates heighten and people call for sterner measures to deal with the problems of violence
- (d) The efforts at dealing with narco-terrorism prop up the disinformation and psychological-warfare strategies of the war on terrorism.
- (e) Through Plan Colombia, the United States gives itself the right to intervene in the region to fight terrorism.

Cocaine and cocaine trafficking reinforce the distortions of the forms of capitalism in the Caribbean and during the second and third periods of the explosion of the Rastafari phenomenon there was a determined effort to place the stamp of criminality on the Rastafari movement. Throughout the period of the growth of the Rastafari movement there were sociologists who simply labeled the Rastafari as violent cultists (Cashmore, 1979). Numerous communities and police departments employed sociologists who reproduced this label of violent cultists. Through their own efforts, the Rastafari have largely dispelled this notion of violence in their ranks, but

throughout the world there are quite a number of young persons who are incarcerated because of their social and spiritual identification with the Rastafari movement.

### **RASTAFARI: FROM RESISTANCE TO TRANSFORMATION AND SELF-EMANCIPATION**

Rastafari became internationalized through Reggae music. Throughout the world humans were introduced to the philosophy of the peace and love through the words of reggae artists. Marley's music carried forward a long Caribbean tradition of music linked to human activity such that his songs of education, of inspiration, of mobilization, though encrusted in religious tones, touched the youths of the region. This was so clear after the release of the album *Rastaman Vibration*. It is through the African heritage of the Caribbean peoples that reggae broke out of the false dichotomy of the spiritual and earthly planes of existence. *Rastaman Vibrations* communicated the energy force that could be understood in all languages, by all peoples. Throughout the Caribbean where the music was accessible, the people identified with the words of this album so that Bob Marley became a household name in the region. The album *Rastaman Vibrations* was a classic, depicting the use of the song to enlighten: a song of Africa liberation, "War"; an occupational song on the plight of the worker, "Night Shift"; a song of praise, "Roots Rock Reggae"; a song of criticism castigating the Central Intelligence agency of the United States, "Rat Race"; along with a song of hope, "Want More."

The energies communicated in the song of peace for the peoples of Southern Africa endeared the peoples all over the world to identify with the anti-imperialist and antiracist components of the Rastafari movement. The concepts of love—love of humans, love of life—becomes the anchor for the peace movement. In 2000, *Time* magazine named the song of the Rastafari, "One love," the song of the century. Yet, the same media do not

seek to engage the principles of love. The mainstream media is still one of the central bases for the reproduction of the ideals and values of the armaments culture. It is in this sense that the two key ideas of the Rastafari movement, *peace and love*, require serious reflection in this moment.

This reflection is also urgent for societies in Latin America and Central America where the Rastafari movement grew among the youth. Many leaders who internalize a crude understanding of Marxism cannot understand the fascination that the Rastafari holds for youths of African descent. Katrin Hansing (2006) in her book on *Rasta, Race and Revolution*, examined the emergence and development of Rastafari in contemporary Cuba. In the book she explored why and in what ways as well as by whom the culture has been taken on and how it manifests itself locally. This book brings out the internationalization of the Rastafari movement by showing how Rastafari has been Cubanized into a culture through which individuals are exploring, reevaluating, positively identifying with, and speaking up and out about their blackness. In light of Cuba's historically complex race relations and still existing problems of racial discrimination and deprecation of Africa, she argued that Rasta in Cuba is contributing enormously in raising positive awareness about Africa, Cuba's African heritage, and race problems, and in so doing offering a counter narrative to the official discourse on race, equality, and what it means to be Cuban.

### **BOB MARLEY AND THE STRUGGLES FOR EMANCIPATION AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

Bob Marley joined the ancestors in 1981 when the movement had not yet reached its peak. Yet, such was the power of the art of the natural mystic that even after his passing the lyrics and sounds touched the lives of millions in all parts of the world. For this reason while Walter Rodney emerged as the bridge from vindicationism to self-emancipation, Marley represented the bridge

to spiritual health and emancipation from mental slavery. While demonstrating some limitations in his own philosophical outlook, particularly in relation to his conceptions of multiple partners, Bob Marley was able to popularize reggae not only as a way of critiquing imperialism (Babylon) but also to posit an alternative based on the recuperative possibility of positive messages, the healing potential of *positive vibrations*. (Ojo, 2000)

While he was still alive during the violent struggles of Jamaican society, Bob Marley did not remain aloof from the political struggles for he had made a call for “Revolution” in his album *Natty Dread*.

Those who study wave theory and the physics of music are examining the lyrics and vibrations of the music produced by Bob Marley and reggae artists to see how this art form and spiritual message emerged as a revolutionary form.

Firstly, Bob Marley used religious metaphors to stimulate the imagination of the sufferers. In the song: *It Takes a Revolution to Make a Solution*, Marley starts out with the need for a memory of truth. He used the word revelation, which served as the opener for his call for truth. Secondly, this truth telling and the politics of truth would allow the people to expose the mainstream politicians who perpetuated what was termed, ‘the Babylonian system.’ In contemporary society politics is about accumulation, exclusion and divisions. Bob Marley said that one cannot trust a politician: “Can’t trust no shadows after dark” adding: “never trust a politician to grant you a favor.” Thirdly, Marley also calls on the people to self-organize by standing up for their rights. Earlier, Marley had called on the people to “Get up, Stand up, stand up for your rights.” Now, in this song on revolution, Marley was calling for the people to fight so that “Rasta can never flop.” Finally, Marley used the metaphor of the storms and hurricanes to remind the people of the chaos caused by capitalism and to call for the overthrow of capitalism: “blood a go run.” Marley states: “In this process of revolution there will be redemption as righteousness covers the

earth, as the water covers the seas.” For Marley, the weak of mind and heart can not make revolution. The weak conceptions of inferiority had to be transcended in order for revolution to develop. Revolution and freedom was the constant theme of the lyrics where Bob Marley was calling for the prisoners of Babylon to be free,

Too much confusion; so much frustration  
I don’t want to live in the park  
Can’t trust shadows after dark  
Like the birds in the tree, the prisoners must  
be free.

The intensity of the struggles for change in Jamaica placed Marley on the side of the people, and in doing this he was shot. In December 1976, three days before a planned “People’s Concert” Marley became a victim of the thuggery and violence of the Caribbean. Despite the effort to stop Marley, the wounded cultural leader gave a moving concert in Kingston at the National Heroes Circle in December, 1976. Bob Marley escaped death in 1976 only to succumb to cancer in 1981, when he was only 36 years old.

After the abortive attempt on his life, Bob Marley consciously pushed this music of the Caribbean to become part of the world anti-imperialist culture. From the working-class communities of Jamaica, reggae was taken to the salons of Paris, the big concert halls of Germany, and to the streets of Holland, to the independence celebrations of Zimbabwe and concerts in Central Park, New York. Reggae spoke for the oppressed Caribbean person but was also becoming an important vehicle in the counterculture of the age of cultural repression. Reggae served as an antidote to the culture of repression which was promoted by the Anglo-American media. Herein lay the genius of Bob Marley. As an international artist Marley demonstrated that a cultural artist was at his best when he was close to the struggles and aspirations of the people. This was clear from his last two albums *Survival* and *Uprising*. In *Survival* he returned to the message of Walter

Rodney, who spoke of how millions survived the system of slavery. Walter Rodney's last words in *Groundings* were:

Not only have we survived as a people, but the black brothers in Kingston, Jamaica, and in particular, these brothers who up to now are everyday performing a miracle. They live and are physically fit; they have a vitality of mind. They have a tremendous sense of humor, they live in depth. (Rodney, 1969)

Marley joined the concept of survival with the quest to survive the proliferation of the nuclear weapons of the world. *Survival* spoke of Bob Marley's personal "Ambush in the Night" pressing for "Africans Unite" with "So Much Trouble" in this "Babylonian System." Quoting from Marcus Garvey: "A people without knowledge of past history, the origin and the country is like a tree without roots." This musical expression linked Rastafari and the Caribbean people to the advanced struggles for liberation at the front line of racism and imperialism. African guerrillas who were in the bush fighting the Ian Smith regime heard this song as one of their songs of resistance. Marley's appearance at the Independence celebrations of Zimbabwe led him to make the prophetic statement, "*Soon we will find out who are the real revolutionaries.*" (Campbell, 2003)

## REGGAE AND THE PHYSICS OF MUSIC

The Rastafari and Ethiopian traditions that emerged at the start of the twenty-first century were traditions that broke with the mechanistic philosophies of Babylon. In this essay it was our approach to draw from the quantum leap in the consciousness of the Rastafari to draw out the fractal framework that could shed light on the processes of emancipation from classical vindicationism and celebration of kingdoms to emancipation. This framework was greatly assisted by music and power of reggae. Bob Marley was one

of the numerous philosophers of this movement who strove to popularize the ideas of peace, love, and spiritual health while critiquing the social system (Babylon).

One is able to see clearly the ability of reggae music to transcend the binary distinctions of the European ideation system. Both in language and in philosophy, reggae music seeks to transcend the binary vision of reality as a means of exposing the militarism and destruction of Babylon and offering a transformative vision of a future beyond Babylon. Albert Einstein as a peace activist sought to rehabilitate the human spirit and his work moved the study of science and physics beyond the simplicity and determinism of the European Enlightenment. In this way there was a break with the old paradigms of rational and irrational human beings. This break with the conceptions of simplicity, determinism, and predictability has opened new doors for an appreciation of the diverse scientific contributions of peoples in all societies (Goonatilake, 1998). In the process of rethinking the paradigms of science and the revolutionary breakthroughs in the study of string theory and wave theory, physicists who are studying wave theory and the study of the universe have noted the importance of music in physics:

All sound and vibration would be just plain noise. Noise, therefore is unorganized vibration. But none can doubt there is order recognizable throughout nature from the uniformity of atomic structures and behaviors to spiral galaxies whose swirling arms of orderly stars span light years and billions of years of activity. This innate order has been long recognized, researched and categorized and may be found in music theory. In vibratory terms disorderly vibration can be organized in terms of music principles. Therefore music is organized vibration or sound set in orderly principles of structure and behavior. The principles that make sound into harmonious music are the same principles that govern all associating vibrations throughout the universe—and that includes everything that there is. (Pond, 2000)

In the analysis of music and physics, one scholar pointed out: “how any given vibration gives rise to a complex yet simple series of subordinate vibrations known generally as harmonics and these harmonics are relative to one another as are musical intervals.”

Scholars of all disciplines studying the relationship between mind and body, between spirit and feeling, between energy and the body place great emphasis on the positive vibrations of music:

Musical notes produce their own specific sound vibrations of energy. Waves of sound energy travel from the source and resonate in our ears, and in specific areas of our body. When we feel uplifted by music we are feeling the energy waves—the energy vibrations—in our upper torso and arms. Increased energy in our upper torso and arms come up in our mental thoughts as kindness—toward ourselves and with others. This is a biological effect. It has also been shown that increased physical energy stimulates the flow of endorphins in our body, which, in turn, increase our mental thoughts of well being, as well as blocking physical pain perception. (Kramer, n.d.)

Reggae music and philosophy can best be understood in an intellectual milieu that grasps the richness of the interplay among mind, body, spirit, emotion, and energy. This is very linked to the African knowledge system (Emeagwali, 2003) (Eglash, 1999). There is now an established body of scholarship that seeks to interrogate this intellectual heritage that rehabilitates the scientific and historical contributions of Africa to the contemporary world. The ability of the Rastafari philosophy to address both the material conditions of the super exploitation of Africans with another form of spiritual reflection and spiritual energy is a supreme example of offering a way out of the false dichotomy offered by Western ideation systems that remain intent on separating the spiritual and metaphysical realms from the material realities.

Malidome Some has introduced to the larger Western world the importance of the *Healing Wisdom of Africa*. This book is now established in the academy as an important contribution toward understanding the “finding of life’s purpose through nature, ritual and community.” (Some, 1999). These three concepts are central to the life (livity) of the Rastafari culture, nature, ritual and community. In this way the Rastafari movement follows a course that is linked to the traditions of retaining a world-view consistent with the dignity of the human being. Insofar as the Rastafari movement was linked to an emancipatory project, it is important to see this movement as part of a larger movement of spiritual renewal and affirmation in the context of the contemporary struggles against globalization and lobotomization. This struggle against robotization and lobotimization is very urgent when the capitalists want to turn the present technological revolution against humans in the service of international capital.

The struggles against lobotomization in the biotech century place the Rastafari movement in the ranks of those who oppose Western pharmaceuticals and those who are resuscitating the eugenics ideas of Hitler. Humanity is in need of repair from the destruction of slavery and the crimes of contemporary capitalism. This struggle is one for the transformation of the relations between humans and this transformation requires the emancipation of all humanity, not just Africans. Bob Marley sang:

Emancipate yourselves from mental Slavery  
None But Ourselves can free our minds  
Have no fear for atomic energy  
For none of them can stop the time.

Bob Marley became a philosopher of emancipatory politics. Emancipatory politics starts with a basic and simple assumption that the African people think; and politics must be based on openness, accountability, the liberation of African women, collective leadership, and the security of the producers.

## CONCLUSION

At the dawn of the twentieth century the Rastafari confronted a number of revolutionary traditions. These were the traditions of the liberal democratic revolution against feudalism. Like most black people, the Rastafari knew that this liberal democratic revolution did not include black and brown peoples. Rastafari understood the racist logic of manifest destiny and the vindicationists of the first period were opposed to this liberal democratic creed that accepted imperial wars as pacification.

The Marxist Revolution in Ethiopia, the Cuban Revolution in the Caribbean, and the new revolutionary process in Latin America have extended the conceptual base for an understanding of revolutionary politics. This essay sought to expose the ways in which the mechanistic conceptions of the Marxists in Ethiopia could not inspire radical thought. In all of these confrontations, the Rastafari brought a simple message of peace. After seventy-five years of repression, intellectual distortions and attempts to co-opt the movement, Rastafari survived and became part of the network of movements calling for another world. After resisting Babylon, the challenge was to be part of a new formation, one that is based on the social transformation of society in order to save humanity from the destruction of Babylon. There are numerous movements among peace activists, antimilitarists, women's movement, antiracists, and the environmental justice movements who passionately share some of the core ideas of the Rastafari. The World Social Forum has been developing as a network to bring these peace and justice formations together. This author is of the view that the Bamako call of the World Social Forum reflects a collective search for health and peace.

It is within the call for transnational citizenship and genuine democracy where the Rastafari in Ethiopia stand beyond the petty nationalisms of nation-states. The Rastafari started out supporting an empire during colonialism and are now firmly against all forms of imperialism and militarism. Transnational citizenship, African

Unity, peace, transformation, and human dignity are the new struggles beyond vindicationism. The Rastafari movement supports the call for unity and peace in Africa; it calls on intellectuals and cultural artists to give meaning to the calls for peace which were issued in Addis Ababa. This call now includes the call for a genuine multiethnic, multireligious, multinational, and multilingual democratic and federated state in the region of the Horn of Africa.

Diversity is a necessary component of democracy. As Wamba-dia-Wamba (1996) asserts "The challenge of world social movements is to see the entire humanity be constituted as one community of people, i.e. democratisation." (p.13). As one writing from within the Rastafari movement, it is important to make the distinction between imperialist democracy (which is an oxymoron) and true democracy. The current phase of colonialism is imperial democracy in that it labels people as "minorities" so that those "minorities" cannot have a voice. One of the suppositions that can be extracted from the present global struggle is that when we talk about race (in the externally imposed colonial definition of the word) we are talking about hierarchies; hierarchy is a concept that negates true democracy. Therefore, we should speak in terms of diversity, which recognizes difference while removing the implication of hierarchy, or racial superiority.

This is the new tradition for which the Rastafari is striving in Jamaica, Ethiopia, Africa, and the Caribbean and indeed in all parts of the world, in short a democratization which involves a planetary civilization.

I want to go on record to say that the Rastafari are opposed to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia just as the Rastafari movement is opposed to the occupation of Iraq and the occupation of Palestine.

The present arc of war across the Horn of Africa and the Gulf along with the war situation in Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, the Sudan, and multiple theaters of war ensure that there are major tasks involved in building the ideas and

practices that ensure that the militarists all across the globe pay an extremely high price for this new phase of militarism, plunder, and global inequality and insecurity. According to the natural mystic, many more will have to suffer, many more will have to die. Our challenge in this period of transformation is to ensure that the suffering and dying will not be in vain.

In short, there must be a movement about the reconstitution of politics, the reconstitution of ideas, and the transformation of society. This has been the task of the peace movement and numerous thinkers such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu, and Albert Einstein who have contributed to the need for a new conception of society. This movement is growing in the ranks of those who are calling for reparations, peace, and justice. The reparations movement takes the question of peace to a new level in calling on Europe to recognize the crimes of genocide and enslavement. The peace movement has been enriched by the ideas and practices of peace activists on all continents and the work of the Rastafari movement builds on the traditions of peace and love.

The Rastafari movement had emerged in the colonial period as part of the vindicationist project of Africans who wanted to establish their place in history along the same lines as the kings and leaders of Western civilization. However, the realities of the traditions of African resistance along with the material oppression of the sufferers produced a philosophy that slowly transcended vindicationism. This was best exemplified in the move from preoccupation with Ethiopia and Haile Selassie to the questions of liberation in Africa and African Unity. In February 2005, the sixtieth birthday celebration of Bob Marley was used as a form of mobilization to support the African Union and to support peace in Africa. Contemporary reggae artists in the twenty-first century continue to mold reggae music as a form of communication and inspiration to challenge the systems of oppression with the assertion of the humanity of Africans, indeed all humans.

We started by identifying the quantum leap in the consciousness of Jamaicans as it related to dignity. This quantum leap has opened thinkers to grasp the Rasta stand or the emancipatory philosophies of the Rastafari. Quantum physics, fractal thinking, and deep spiritual powers places this movement on the plane that is recognized as whole new terrain where humans rediscover the moral and spiritual roots of humanity. These ideas and qualities include

- 1) Must be holistic—where any part affects another part. As Jean Houston says, “we have leaky margins.”
- 2) Must transcend the individual/collective dichotomy—where individualism and community goals merge.
- 3) Must be plural—where we accept that “all meanings are true,” for the person who holds the meanings. (Matherne’s Rule: AMAT)
- 4) Must be responsive—where society becomes a living machine “designed to cope with ambiguity and creative challenge.”
- 5) Must be bottom-up or emergent—where front-line citizens make the decisions, not top-level bureaucrats.
- 6) Must be ecological—where humans are recognized as part of nature and treat nature as part of themselves.
- 7) Must be spiritual—where we seek spiritual answers to basic questions of life and society.

The Rastafari movement in the past eighty years inspired the resistance to war and reggae music remains a vital element of the global peace movement. This music is however caught in the middle of the war to control the minds of the youth. Imperialism has now sought to mobilize social media on the side of imperial mischief in Cuba and Venezuela. Working through what it termed an *Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI)* for Cuba, the State Department had organized a Twitter account to foment confusion among the youths in Cuba. This battle is now manifest in the struggles within the Hip-hop movement.

However, while this struggle is joined in North America, there are numerous forms of reggae and reggaeton that are exploding in all parts of the earth where people sing the songs of freedom and love. This was seen explicitly in the place of reggae artists in Tunisia.

It was Che Guevara, the revolutionary, who stressed that a true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. This idea of love has been stressed by the Rastafari movement from the beginning as the basis of peace and justice. The Rastafari emphasized that the struggle against Babylon must be motivated and guided by love rather than hatred of the oppressor. It was in this area that the literature on the Rastafari has served to be a basis for disinformation and slander. Sociologists who wrote on the Rasta claiming that it was based on hatred and violence could not distinguish between opposition to white racism as a political act and love as a spiritual bonding force for human beings.

The concept of love as manifest in the Rastafari movement in the twenty-first century goes back to the ideas of community sharing and social collectivism and this has been an essential aspect of the Rastafari movement. Cheikh Anta Diop emphasized social collectivism as one of the core elements of the African ideation system and the concept of the collectivism is manifest in everyday life. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere sought to develop this principle at the national level in the concept of ujamas or African familyhood.

These concepts were to serve as an antidote to the individualism and greed of the contemporary culture. The concept of *One Love* can make a difference in the lives of the youth who are mobilized by the psychological warfare and self-hatred of a system that spreads war as peace and hate and selfishness as love. In the contemporary period when there was a President (George W. Bush) whose policies are based on love and compassion, it is even more urgent for the genuine peace activists to distinguish themselves from the ideas of war that are presented as freedom.

Capitalist society has debased love to associate love with sex and sexual intercourse, especially heterosexism, while spreading hatred for persons of the different sexual orientations. Yet, from the Rasta philosophy and the women's movement it is necessary to highlight the point that love is what everyone needs, rich and poor, black and white, fortunate and unfortunate. Rasta philosophy suggests that without democracy and freedom, peace and healing, love and the use of love and patriotism will be another tool of dictatorship. For this reason, the movement in the twenty-first century has to transcend the love of great heroes, great empires, and great males.

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