

I. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to analyze how reggae music serves certain social movement functions for the Rastafarian movement. I intend to explore the relationship between reggae music and the Rasta movement. In particular, how reggae music serves as diagnostic, prognostic, and/or motivational frames through its lyrics and espouses elements of central Rastafarian themes. An understanding of the framing processes used in reggae music has important implications for understanding the effectiveness of music stimulating social consciousness and mobilizing the listeners. In the words of the King of Reggae, Hon. Robert Nesta Marley O.M., “Music is like the news. The music influence the people, the music do everything fe (for) the people. The music tell the people *what* to do, in Jamaica” (King, p. xii). Reggae music analyzed from the scholar activist paradigm is centered among the oppressed marginalized people, is critical of Babylon, capitalism, and the status quo, and is empowering at various levels. The data for the study come from the reggae musicians themselves, consisting of the lyrics of randomly selected reggae songs. Using both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, the reggae lyrics will be analyzed for their espousal of Rastafarian ideology and the social, economic and political themes represented, using the theoretical concept of framing processes from social movement theory.

Many of the themes in reggae music have broad implications for the greater global community. Many of the lyrics have very Marxist undertones with themes of exploitation, alienation, capitalist contradictions, and the call for a working class revolution. The musicians pick up where Marx left off, dealing with racism, slavery, repatriation, justice, colonization, oppression, and resistance. A proper understanding of reggae music requires an understanding of the conditions, culture, and context from which it originates. Therefore, this study will begin

with an exploration of the history of Jamaica, the Rastafarian movement, and the emergence of reggae music. I believe that any social revolution must first begin with an awakening of individual social consciousness. Concurrent with the diminishing utility of coercive social control, advanced capitalist societies established many social structures, organizations, and institutions to groom the masses for consensual social control. The content of reggae music attacks these very structures. Julian Marley sings, “Systems were made to rule. Systems were made to divide and abuse.”

The framing processes used in reggae music serve a critical role in the maintenance of the Rastafarian movement. The title of this paper, ‘Hear Dem Cryin,’ originates in the lyrics of a Stephen Marley song in which he sings, “If you’re not a part of the solution, then you’re a part of the problem; don’t blame it on the people, but on the leaders who lead them.” Empowerment of the oppressed requires an awakening of those who are not yet part of the solution. It is my contention that the conscious positive vibrations of reggae music can fulfill this role of awakening, if not succeed in the call for revolution.

I will review literature regarding the relationship between social movements and the arts, and the roots and ideology of Rastafari and its relationship with reggae music. How does reggae music utilize the theoretical concept of framing processes to identify problems, possible solutions, and explain the realities of the oppressed to generate support for their cause? The data, reggae music lyrics, will be obtained via a purposeful systematic sample of conscious reggae songs, and will be both critically interpretively analyzed and quantitatively measured for their portrayal of themes central to the Rastafarian movement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Beyond the general relationship between social movements and the arts, I specifically seek to understand the reciprocal relationship between the Rastafarian movement and reggae music. Should music have a political message? Can music have an effect on politics? Can music help lead to social change?

The Arts and Politics

According to Theodor Adorno, and the Frankfurt School of critical theory, art should have a political message (1962). Adorno subjectively categorizes the arts in terms of ‘high art’ versus ‘popular art’ with the difference not in elite taste, but based on art-for-arts sake (high art) versus market-driven art (popular art). For Adorno, art-for-arts-sake is not market driven and typically contains a political or social message; whereas popular art serves to maintain the status quo. However, not only ‘high art’ can be political. Andy Bennett notes that popular music has been linked with political issues and social change in *Cultures of Popular Music* (2001). Throughout the twentieth century, an additional art form known as folk music was central to left-wing U.S. politics, and Woody Guthrie and the folk revival of the 1960s globally illuminated and strengthened the link between music and political issues. “Prior to the mid 60s popular music had been considered by folk fans and other musical ‘purists’ to be too firmly located in the yoke of capitalism, and thus too ‘commercial,’ to lend integrity to the communication of socio-political ideas” (Bennett, p.25). During the 60s popular music saw a shift in lyrical content, and became capable of disseminating values in opposition to the hegemonic capitalist ideology. As stated by Garafolo, “While there is no question that...the forces arranged in support of the existing hegemony are formidable, there are also numerous instances where mass culture- and in

particular popular music- issues serious challenges to hegemonic power” (Bennett, p. 24). It appears that whether ‘high art’, ‘folk art’, or ‘popular art,’ the potential exists for political and social commentary. Each of these terms carries strong connotations and “the burden of a troubled history, each having been made the subject of intense cultural conflict over time, space and place. Echoes of these conflicts continue to resonate throughout current debates in important ways, especially when questions are raised about who has the power to define ‘what counts’ as popular music today” (Bennett, p.x, quoting Stuart Allan). Based on how one defines ‘popular’, ‘high’, or ‘folk’ art, reggae music could be categorized as any one, or combination of them all. This semantic argument is not germane to this study. What is important to note is that reggae music delivers social and political commentary and that, even if it were not internationally commercially available, the music would still be produced and heard in Jamaica. The point is that music does not have to be categorized strictly as either high art or popular art, and that reggae music encompasses elements of high art, popular art, and folk art.

Music takes on political significance in regards to its ability to influence our identity, as well as our motivation and capacity to act. In addition, music can define or destroy communities and plays a part in cultural revitalization and self-determination. In *Acting in Concert*, Mark Mattern considers community based political action through music (1998). He presents case studies of Chilean, Cajun, and Native American music. While in none of the examples was music able to overcome all political differences, Mattern concludes that, “by enabling Chileans, American Indians, and Cajuns to act in concert, music added to their overall capacity to determine their own fates...people used music as identifying each other as members of a collective body with shared interests, for working out the commitments and (some of) the disagreements of this collective body, and for opening various political spaces in which this

collective actor could engage in political practices to advance shared interests and negotiate differences” (Mattern, p. 144). Mattern’s work shows that communities which music helps form and sustain can be the social basis for political action, a political action that may not be possible if not for the music connecting the people. This is an important point to consider, as reggae music in Jamaica is more readily accessible than televisions or newspapers, delivering the message of Rasta straight to the ‘downpressed’ people. Music allows for the sharing of experiences both temporally and spatially, building communities which span generations and geographic regions (Mattern, 1998).

Music is more than an expression: it is “a determinant of diverse communities and can serve as a bridge between different people and communities by offering an accessible form of communication across cultural boundaries” (Mattern, p. 7). I intend to explore this concept further, as the cultural framing of reggae music provides a template for ethical social action to those that truly listen to the music. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison provide one of the first major attempts to connect the political sociology of social movements to cultural theory in *Music and Social Movements* (1998). They speak of the reciprocal relationship they found between social movements and music. “Movement ideas, images, and feelings were disseminated in and through popular music, and at the same time, the movements of the times influenced developments, in both form and content, in popular music” (p. 108). The combination of music and politics that occurs in social movements is an important, and often overlooked, source of cultural transformation. “Even with the ‘cultural turn’ in sociology there has been continuing separation between those concerned with political movements and those who study culture and its shades of movement” (Eyerman and Jamison, p. 5). For Eyerman and Jamison, social movements themselves are central in the reconstitution of culture. They contend that the culture

of everyday life (the values, norms, and habits that form the basis of social behavior), and the “art worlds” of cultural expression are deeply affected by the innovative activities and cultural traditions that take place in social movements (p. 5). The culture of Rastafari cannot be separated from the goals of the movement. The desired goals of the Rasta are a direct result of years of slavery, colonization, racism, oppression, exclusion, and exploitation.

Music and Social Movements

There have been a few studies that specifically examine the role of music and social movements (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Mattern, 1998; Ellison, 1989). The music and song of any culture, from any era, can serve as a window into their history and perceived realities. Throughout history music has been a central pillar of culture. From religious and social movements to cultural change, musical forms have been at the forefront. In *Music and Social Movements* (1998), the authors recognize that songs can conjure up long-lost social movements, and that music provides an important vehicle for the diffusion of movement ideas into the broader culture. Evidence for this claim can be found in the 1960s movements’ influence on popular culture by mixing music and politics. Even should the movement fade away, the music remains as a memory and political source of inspiration for new waves of mobilization. Eyerman and Jamison refer to this as the “mobilization of tradition” using the example of “We Shall Overcome” to show the relationship between traditions and social movements. The song began as a spiritual, was later taken up by the labor movement, and then transformed into the anthem for the Civil Rights Movement, and on to other uses for movements around the world (1998, p. 4). In *Lyrical Protest: Black Music’s Struggle Against Discrimination*, Mary Ellison notes that from spirituals to the blues, jazz to reggae, music with African roots has conjured up emotions and responses to oppression and injustice that would likely otherwise have gone

unheard. “Music has explored the range of human choices for black people with a lucidity and honesty rarely achieved by politicians” (1989, p. 1). As a direct result of structured inequality, according to William McClendon, it is the musical arena rather than the political arena which has been the real voice of black people. “Black music is a lasting symbol of sanity for black people...closely related to the spirit of resistance and struggle...It is one of the effective modes of communication for conveying the messages of black abhorrence and resistance to the repressive living arrangements created for black people. Black music is an amalgam of black life...an indigenous expression of collective black experience” (McClendon, p. 20-21).

Even popular music became politicized with the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s. From the Civil Rights Movement, to the Black Power Movement, the Female Liberation Movement to the Anti-Nuke Movement, the Peace Movement to the Free Love Movement, to various countercultural movements around the globe, music has played a vital role. Music and artists have been at the forefront of numerous mega-events, a level of cross-cultural communication for social change. In “*Popular Music and Social Change*”, Denise Dalaimo recalls Live Aid, Band Aid, Farm Aid, “We Are the World”, “Do They Know it’s Christmas?”, and “That’s What Friends are For” to show how popular music can mobilize support for important social issues. It is also noted how many hip-hop artists came together for “Self-Destruction,” the anthem of the Stop the Violence Movement, and how many hip-hop artists protest the explosive conditions that exist in poor urban communities (www.scsv.nevada.edu/~neese/socmusic.html). While the intentions of the musicians involved are well-placed, Mary Ellison notes that “it is not charity that will really alleviate poverty and inequality” (p. 155). Beyond any charitable intentions, as long as there is inequality in this world, the struggle finds hope and inspiration in music. In the words of Ziggy Marley, “the

struggle was not given to us, it was born in us. And it runs through our veins and creates the desire to help people...If a song makes sense, it will always be there for people to understand. Sometime, some way, some how, they will get the message. Maybe not in the time we expect or want. But the work that we're doing is not just for now. It is for all time" (Hausman, p. 9-10). Structural, systemic changes are needed in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. "Singers are gaining the confidence and strength to pit their wits and voices against the forces of oppression with fresh determination and energy...music is encouraging the dawning of a better day, a time when people are divided by neither economic exploitation nor the color of their skin" (Ellison, p. 155).

The core of this thesis is an exploration of the perceived reality of a marginalized group, the Rastafarians, through an interpretative analysis of reggae lyrics. A proper understanding of the Rastafarian movement requires an understanding of the conditions and culture from which it originates. Therefore, we must explore the history of Jamaica, the history of the Rastafarian movement and its goals, the emergence of reggae music, and the implications of both the movement for the music and the music for the movement.

Jamaica's Colonial and Political History

Jamaica ultimately became the largest importer of slaves into British America and the home of the wealthiest whites in the British Empire (Burnard, 2001). This tremendous wealth accumulated by small numbers of elite imperialists, combined with other socio-political structures, pacified the Jamaican elite to the revolution in mainland America. As T.R. Clayton points out, for Jamaican imperial statesmen, even if resistance was thought plausible, independence was not. British sea powers, along with local fears of a slave insurrection and/or

foreign invasion were socio-political constraints prohibiting empathy for the American rebellion (Clayton, 1986).

Rex Nettleford points out that labor disturbances eventually challenged the inherent injustices of a plantation society, displaying internal weaknesses of the Crown Colony System (1971). It was in 1938 that Norman Washington Manley established a political party of working class people. The Peoples National Party (PNP) had been born. Manley's politics of self-government was the "art of promoting and synthesizing difference and of creating out of the structural differentiation and cultural diversity a consensus dedicated to coordinated social action" (Nettleford, p.9). For the PNP socialism entailed state control of the means and extent of production, equality of opportunity, and the duty of the state to provide basic life needs.

In 1962, Jamaica officially became independent from 300 years of British colonialism. From 1962-1972, the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) had ruled, in support of political and economic programs for continued dependent capitalism. Intent on economic reform, the PNP returned to power in 1972 under the leadership of Michael Norman Manley, son of Norman Washington Manley- founder of the PNP. In *Democratic Socialism in Jamaica*, the authors explore Manley's vision of a social democratic society, defusing class conflicts by reforming capital and improving its management. In 1974, Manley declared the PNP a democratic socialist party with national self-determination and sovereignty over the country's resources, abolishing the exploitation inherent in capitalism. The PNP attempted to increase social equality via economic redistribution, cultural inclusion, increased political participation, and equality of opportunity. (Stephens and Stephens, 1986).

The crisis of foreign exchange, the oil shock, and the debt crisis of the early to mid 1970's have all negatively affected Manley's ability to finance his social programs. Richard

Bernal's essay explains that after failing to negotiate with the oil-rich Arab countries and the Soviets for alternative means of finance, Jamaica was forced to turn to the IMF. Between 1977 and 1979, the IMF was in direct control of Jamaica's economy. Structural adjustment programs had been established to solve the country's short-term balance of payments crisis, destroying the social programs established by Manley in the process (Bernal, 1984). This led to a breakdown of support in the class alliance supporting Manley and the PNP. Though many consider Jamaica's attempt at democratic socialism a failure, the Manley government did change the balance of power in Jamaica by raising political consciousness and political awareness of the people. Unfortunately, the two key elements to a democratic socialist path to development - the construction of alliances of social classes, and the building of a political movement to create and sustain support – were undermined by neoliberal policies (Stephens and Stephens, 1986). Jamaica's colonial past has become an IMF structural present. Foreign powers no longer directly control the nation, but control it through the mechanism of debt. When forced to cut spending and increase taxes so rapidly, as dictated by neoliberalism, the social costs become unbearable. In the words of Michael Manley, "You are taking a social beating" (Life and Debt, 2001). According to Manley, U.S. foreign policy and IMF policies set Jamaica back at least 50 years.

Due to its colonial past, Jamaican society has pervasive hierarchal structures of class, color, and gender. Evelyne Stephens points out that elite white Jamaican family practices reinforce and conserve social stratification in the wider Jamaican society (1993). Although the majority of the population is from African descent, West Indian cultural connections are principally European. It is the attitudes that accompany cultural European traditions that sustain the existence of color hierarchy. The Rastafarians themselves have "inherited all the complexities of race, gender, and family relations of the African-Jamaican population" (Rowe, p.

75). It is the hope of emancipating oneself from the mental slavery of these wider social norms, which propagate racism, sexism, classism, and patriarchy, that maintains the positive outlook of Rastafari (Imani Tafari-Ama, 1998).

Dread Talk

The African Diaspora has necessitated that African slaves and their descendents find ways of communicating without using their own languages. “Robbed of their language and forcibly tied to the institutions of capital, African peoples developed musical forms which were means of both communication and inspiration” (Campbell, p. 125). In addition to musical forms, new languages and dialects began to emerge in the island of Jamaica. As the majority of African slaves in Jamaica had only broken English in common, English thus forms the roots of the Jamaican Creole language. Though the official language of the island is English, the dominant unofficial language is patois, or patwa, also known as Jamaican Creole or Black English. Patois refers to any language that is considered broken or degraded in society. With patois there is no official dictionary and no official spelling system (Barrett, 1997).

Frantz Fanon had said that language assumes a culture and supports the weight of a civilization (1963). Any movement born of defiance of a society must also defy its language. With the spread of the Rasta movement a new Jamaican dialect began to emerge. Dread talk or Rasta talk is highly symbolic, religious, and lifts patois to a deeper philosophical level. According to Neil J. Savishinsky, Dread talk was created to express the Rastafarians “heightened consciousness and profound awareness of the true nature and power of the spoken word” (Dolin, p. 55). In the words of Rasta elder Bongo Israel, “Word, sound, and power is the symbol of man, seen? That’s what we use amongst Babylon. We don’t use a stick nor a stone nor a gun” (*Peter*

Tosh Red X, 1992). Patois and Dread talk are widely used in reggae music, which is arguably responsible for the increased legitimacy of the language.

In addition to the wordplay, wit, and deep philosophy of language, Dread talk is laced with biblical rhetoric and has taken on many biblical terms for symbolic expression, i.e. Babylon, Zion, Jerusalem, Rome, etc. The most powerful and most common letter, word, and number used by Rastas is 'I'. The phrase 'I-n-I' or 'I and I' frequently replaces pronouns such as me, he, she, we, and us. The use of I-n-I in Dread talk connotes that all people are equals, bound together by our common God, Jah. As Jah is "manifest in all persons...I-n-I connotes a three-fold relationship between any individual self, Jah, and other selves" (Johnson-Hill, p. 23). In addition, 'I-n-I' also "figuratively protects the individual against absorption into the impersonal mass" (*Rockers*, 1977). Many words in Dread talk are modified with a stress on the mighty 'I'. The 'I' in Haile Selassie I, does not represent 'the first' as much as the 'I'. One of the more frequent utterances of Rastas places the stress on the 'I', "Jah Rastafar-I." Many words are changed to begin with the letter 'I'. Examples include I-thiopia for Ethiopia, I-nity for unity, I-man for human, I-tal for vital (connotes diet), and I-ration for creation. In "Small Axe" Bob Marley proclaims, "The goodness of Jah, Jah, I-dureth for I-ver." However, the philosophy of Dread talk goes much deeper than the power of the 'I'.

The Rastafarians have recognized that the English language does not connect sound and meaning. For example, 'oppression' sounds like lifting up, not keeping down, therefore the Rastafarians frequently speak of 'downpression' or 'down-press-I'. The word 'wisdom' is intended to mean intelligence but sounds like it ends in 'dumb', therefore the Rasta replacement word would be "wizmon" or 'wise man'. The word 'understand' is changed to 'overstand'; the word 'hopeful' is changed to 'upfull'. Other examples of modified words and word play in

Dread talk include “con-fuse-I” for “confusion and “head-decay-shun” for “education” (Dolin, 2001). Reggae legend Peter Tosh frequently speaks of ‘the shitstem’ (system) responsible for the ‘shituation’ (situation) of poor people. The link Rastas draw between power and the spoken word is a direct inversion of the perception of vulgar, spoken language from a Western, colonial perspective” (Dolin, p. 61). In most developed societies the ‘vulgar’ is considered that which is rooted in Africa, and the ‘refined’ as that rooted in Europe. Rastas intentionally and frequently identify with traditions vilified under racist ideology (Dolin, 2001).

Reasoning sessions are talks among Rastas, typically with the aid of ganja, in which the Rasta brethren discuss history, politics, philosophy and the plight of society. These reasoning sessions are not quarrels of individuals making contradictory statements, but a true unification of the minds. For many Rastas ganja is viewed as a religious sacrament. The smoking of ganja “frees the mind from viewing reality in taken-for-granted ways” (Johnson-Hill, p. 26). Bob Marley has said that “rum mosh up your insides. Just kill ya, like the system. System don’t agree with herb because herb make ya too solid. Y’see, when ya smoke herb ya conscience come right in front of ya...the devil no like it if ya stay conscious...Yes, Rasta! Herb is the healing of the nation” (Davis and Simon, p. 44). It is through reasoning sessions with the sacrament of ganja where differing viewpoints are brought forth in efforts of “attaining a deeper understanding of Rastafari itself” (Johnson-Hill, p. 24).

Jah Rastafari

When I embarked on my quest to get to further know and ‘overstand’ the Rastafari, I quickly learned how complex, ambiguous and ever-evolving the movement is. I very much agree with Helene Lee that “anyone who wanted to reduce the Rastas to their square roots was obviously in for a struggle” (2003, p. x). In the 1960s, leading researcher on Rastafari in

Jamaica, George Simpson referred to the movement as a “religio-political cult” and a “Marxist-popular movement” (Johnson-Hill, p. 43). It has also been referred to as a “non-established, emergent religion” (Johnson-Hill, p. 5), a “cultural-moral movement” and a “state-centered movement” (Kebede, 2001) among other labels. Some focus on Rasta as a religion, others focus on Rasta as politico-cultural movement. What do the Rastafarians believe? What is the role of non-Africans? What is the role of women? Who is a Rasta? Though apparently straightforward questions, the movement of Rastafari is highly complex, therefore no single, simple answer could be given to any of the above questions.

Conceptualizing Rastas as dreadlocked, ganja smokers who believe Haile Selassie I is Christ reincarnated amounts to reductionism. Defining a ‘true Rasta’ among other things as one “who does not shave, cut or straighten the hair” (Murrell, p. 2) is misleading, as ‘dreadlocks’ were not popular among the movement until somewhere around 1950. As sang by reggae artist Morgan Heritage “Don’t haffi dread to be Rasta, dis is not a dreadlocks ting, divine conception of the heart.” As complex as the movement is, with varying beliefs and rituals from group to group, there is no one correct answer on what it exactly means to be Rasta. The point is that any conceptualization of Rastafari must be “broad enough to allow for a wide spectrum of beliefs and opinions regarding prominent figures, events, objects, actions, and contexts in the movement,” and not “so inclusive that everyone who identifies or sympathizes with some of the values in the movement is thereby understood as Rastafarian” (Johnson-Hill, p. 7).

The emergence of Rastafarianism is rooted in slavery and colonialism. One of the leading and groundbreaking theorists on anti-colonialism and the psychology of the oppressed is Franz Fanon. Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist, a thinker, a revolutionary. The works of Fanon have had major impacts on civil rights, anticolonialism, and black consciousness movements

around the world. He is largely considered the twentieth century's most important theorist of the African struggle for independence. Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique in 1925. By the age of 27, he had published his first major work, *Black Skin White Masks* and in the year of his death published his most fiery indictment of the colonial condition, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Originally entitled "An Essay for the Dis-alienation of Blacks," *Black Skin White Masks* is about the black man who grows up wearing a white mask. The effective dis-alienation of the black man entails immediate recognition of social and economic realities (Fanon, 1967). Written by a black intellectual in a whitened world, it explores how the master/slave, colonizer/colonized relationship are normalized as psychology. In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon attempts to overcome the dialectical system where black is bad and white is good, arguing that an entirely new social order must come into being (1963). His object is to teach his brothers and neighbors how to beat the oppressors at their own game. Jean-Paul Sartre states that, "The Third World finds *itself* and speaks to *itself* through Fanon's voice" (Fanon, p.10). Fanon was familiar with the writings of Karl Marx, and pushes Marx to a more global level, stressing the slave/peasant relationship, which carries moral and cognitive weight. "Everything up to and including the very nature of precapitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again...It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor a bank balance which distinguishes governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'" (1963, p.40). Fanon is a Marxist, more similar to than different from, but takes Marxist thought to a new level, dealing with subject matter ignored by Marx- colonization, slavery, racism, and decolonization. Just as Marx intended to show the

tactics and contradictions of capitalism, Fanon is demonstrating the tactics of colonialism and the complex interplay of relations uniting and opposing the colonists and natives.

Jamaica was a colony with a high slave population controlled by few barely literate British and Scottish statesmen. Religion was one of the means the colonial settlers used to justify their brutal actions. Franz Fanon compares the “DDT which destroys parasites” to the “Christian religion which wages war on embryonic heresies and instincts, and on evil as yet unborn...The church is the white man’s church, the foreigner’s church, not calling the natives to God’s ways but the ways of the white man, the master, the oppressor” (1963, p.42). The “dualism of biblical rhetoric, in particular ‘Black Satan’ and the ‘snow-white Lamb of God’ was used by colonial authorities to enslave Africans and place them in servitude” (Bennett, p. 77). However, the slaves too sought their solution, salvation, and deliverance in text of the bible, in the form of “an Africa which lay dormant and forgotten inside the language of the white master. Read between the lines the Text could be made to deliver up this Africa, to free it, and restore it to the ‘righteous sufferer’” (Hebdige, p. 33). It is biblical interpretation in this light that gave birth to Rastafarianism. In the introduction to the most updated *Kebra Negast*, Ziggy Marley recalls that in school the Jamaican youth were taught about ‘his story’. “We did not hear of African glory, black my story, the truth as revealed in the Kebra Negast. We came to realize that even the Bible is just a version of truth, and all of these versions are part of the whole, a vision of what happened, is happening, and will happen...There is no way the negative can ultimately conquer. When the whole battle, the whole war, is won, it will be good things that prosper; goodness must prosper in the end” (Hausman, p.7-8). This topic is the theme of Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers song “Black MyStory.”

Adopting a Fanonian perspective, could it not be possible that Western religions do not teach the ways of God, but the ways of the white man, the ways of capitalism? In this era of globalization, as the poor are faced with new economic problems “such as paying utility bills, keeping up with inflation, and continually searching for housing, they become increasingly preoccupied with material pursuits to the detriment of a broader religious consciousness” (Johnson-Hill, p. 313). When Karl Marx referred to religion as the ‘opiate’ of the masses, Rastafarianism was almost a century away from its conception. Far from an opiate Rastafari exposed “the established church, which for centuries, was the citadel of the status quo and the preservation of irrelevant religion...the church failed to reach out to the poor and needy and catered to the rich and the progressive in its liturgy and its teaching institutions” (Barrett, p. 110). Rastafari was the voice of the powerless, Rastafari was a form of higher social consciousness, and Rastafari demands a complete calling into question of the social order.

Proto-Rastas and Rasta Forerunners

The triumvirate of Rastafari is popularly considered Haile Selassie I, Marcus Garvey, and Bob Marley. While these three charismatic figures are no doubt central figures to the movement, what of the other forerunners of the movement? Other important figures include names such as Athlyi Rogers, Balentine, Pettersburgh, Bedward, Charles Goodridge, Grace Jenkins, George Padmore, Archibald Dunkley, Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert, and “First Rasta” Leonard Howell. The Rastafarian movement originated as the language of resistance of Jamaicans of African descent. Marcus Mosiah Garvey laid the ideological framework for the movement forming the United Negro Improvement and Conservation League in 1914, under the slogan “One God. One Aim. One Destiny.” Though the ideological framework had been laid by Garvey in 1914, it would take in excess of another fifteen years for the actual Rastafarian movement to emerge, with the

crowning of Haile Selassie I in 1930. The Rasta movement is a mixture of religion, politics, and culture. It is a cultural-moral movement in that it contests the cultural codes of society without losing their political essence. It is also a state-centered movement in that it challenges existing laws and policies (Kebede, 2001).

Marcus Garvey and his Garveyites preached that all blacks should unite and retake Africa from the white colonial oppressors. Garvey recognized that Africans began to tire of the worship of a “messianic Christ who was tortured to death on a cross, amid thieves,” and what was needed was “a black messiah, a king in this world, to allow blacks to identify with kings and princes, not with crucified slaves” (Lee, p.37). Upon Garvey’s departure to the US in 1916 he encouraged his followers to “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King; he shall be the redeemer” (Barrett, p.81). It was this prophecy that a king would come from the east to lead the masses out of oppression that Garvey is best remembered for in the Rastafarian community. The coronation of Haile Selassie I in 1930 was seen as fulfillment of Marcus Garvey’s prophecy. It should be noted, however, that Garvey never mentioned the name Selassie I or Ras Tafari.

Athlyi Rogers founded the Afro Athlican Constructive Church in the 1920s, preaching Ethiopians as the chosen people of God and Marcus Garvey as an apostle. Self-reliance and self-determination for Africans was central to the church. Athlyi authored the *Holy Piby*, or Black Bible, considered by Rastafarians as a primary source of spiritualism. By 1924 Charles Goodridge was known to have been disseminating the *Holy Piby* in Kingston, JA (Lee, 2003).

In 1927 a young Ethiopian prince Tafari became Ras (chief). And in 1930 Prince Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned H.I.M. (His Imperial Majesty) Emperor Haile Selassie I (Might of the Trinity) of Ethiopia, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. For many Rastas, the terms Africa and Ethiopia are one in the same. The Greek word for

Ethiopia, Aethiops, means “land of burned faces’ and denotes the whole of Africa. “The temporal kingdom of Ethiopia was known as Abyssinia” (Lee, p.55). Psalm 38 is commonly cited in reference to the importance of Africa: “Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God.” Even a Western magazine unintentionally generated interest in the possibility of a Black Promised Land. The August 1928 issue of *National Geographic* was entirely about Ethiopia. “When copies arrived in black neighborhoods, people were enthralled by the rich images of African splendor. Why dream if the Promised Land already exists?” (Lee, p. 56). Following the coronation, the June 31 issue of *National Geographic* focused exclusively on Ethiopia and its newly crowned King Ras Tafari.

While there were many similar African rooted religions, it was the rise of the Conquering Lion, King Ras Tafari that allowed for the emergence of Rastafarians. The movement takes its name from H.I.M. His name is allocated to members of the movement. “Jah Rastafari!” is a shortened version of the biblical ‘Jehovah’. Enter “First Rasta” Leonard Howell. Howell was deeply influenced by fellow Jamaican Marcus Garvey. Garvey’s preaching of local and international political action, the liberation of Africa from white colonial oppressors, and African economic independence, combined with the writings of Karl Marx deeply impacted Howell (Lee, 2003). After several years spent in New York, Howell returned to Jamaica in 1932, when he first began circulating the portrait of Haile Selassie I. This is the technical starting point of the Rastafarian movement. Howell understood and disseminated to his followers that if you understand the secrets of a society you have a powerful tool to use against it. He targeted the “old, the sick, the downtrodden, women, the illiterate, those for whom the Bible had been their only solace in four hundred years of slavery” for audiences of his preachings (Lee, p. 48). Preaching the divinity of Selassie and selling portraits of H.I.M. for a schilling a piece to be used

as passports for repatriation to Africa, Howell developed a reputation as a strong spiritual man. Howell encouraged even the Garveyites that “King George’s flag is no flag for you. Yours is the Ethiopian flag – the green, yellow, and red flag, the robe of the Virgin Mary” (Lee, p. 66). By 1934 “under the leadership of Howell, Dunkley, and Hinds a solid nucleus of Rastafarians had been established in Kingston” (Barrett, p. 82). Howell was indicted and jailed on several counts of sedition, and after additional run-ins with the local police; he headed for the hill country outside of Kingston in 1940 where he established the first Rasta commune of Pinnacle (Barrett, 1999; Lee, 2003). After several police raids over the years, the police finally destroyed Pinnacle entirely in 1954, forcing the dispersal of the community into the slums of Kingston. Ironically the Jamaican establishments desire to crush the Rasta movement at Pinnacle resulted in the spread of the movement throughout Kingston. Rastas were seen to be “roaming the streets like madmen calling down fire and brimstone on Babylon, using the most profane language to shock the conservative establishment” (Lee, p. 89). Helene Lee points out that although Pinnacle never achieved the success imagined by Howell, it did establish for the Rasta a communal pattern of living and the use of ganja as a sacrament (2003). Leonard Howell’s last days were spent in a mental institute prior to passing in 1981. But as Leonard Barrett points out, “the success of revolutionary movements is made on the blood of martyrs; Howell was the real hero of the establishment of Rastafarianism” (p. 91). It was Howell, who in the face of the Jamaican establishment and even the majority of a skeptical population steadfastly preached the divinity of H.I.M. and the importance of Back to Africa. “The white man stole Africa from the Africans, and that the Black people should think that Africa is their home, not Jamaica...(white men) are robbing the people and keeping them down, but their eyes are now opened to everything and they can live independently without the white man. He urges to support his movement for the

Negro King Ras ta Fari is doing great things for them and they will be taken to Africa” (Lee, p. 67).

As has been previously stated, the Rasta movement is highly complex. Anyone interested in studying the movement and reducing the movement to its formal roots is up against a difficult task. The Rasta religion has no formal churches, schools, or creeds, though the *The Holy Piby* and *Kebra Negast* are the two fundamental holy documents to the religion. Being a decentered movement, the Rastafarians do not train “specialists who then propagate or transmit clearly elaborated methods, teachings, doctrines, or creeds to non-specialists” (Johnson-Hill, p. 5). This has allowed for the emergence of several branches of Rastafari, with beliefs and rituals changing from one group to the next. In addition to the highly traditional orthodox Rastas, there are ‘cultural Rastas’ or ‘political Rastas’ who would not claim to be religious adherents to the movement. By the 1970s there had been up to fifty different ‘circles’ of Rastas in Kingston (Johnson-Hill, 1995). For example, the Coptic Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Prince Edward Emmanuel’s Ethiopian International Congress (known as the Bobos), the Nyabinghi, and the Twelve Tribes of Israel are all affiliated with the Rasta movement. Bob Marley, the world’s most popular Rasta, was a member of the Twelve Tribes. Each tribe is associated with a month of the year and physical organs of the body of Christ. All members are equal, though they fulfill different functions, and all are allowed freedom in interpretation of the faith under the leadership of Brother Gad (Johnson-Hill, 1995).

The lack of a formal church and the various beliefs of the different branches of Rastafari have lead to differing opinions on the divinity of Selassie. “Some believed Selassie was God. Some believed him a messiah, an incarnation of the Christ energy. Others saw him as a powerful leader whose words were divinely inspired” (Lee, p. x). Indeed Archibald Dunkely is known to

have believed that Selassie was the son of the Living God, but not the Father himself. “Within a decade of Selassie’s coronation the nascent Rastafarian movement consisted of various collections of individuals who were loosely related to one another, if at all, and who represented a diversity of social groups and espoused a variety of theological beliefs” (Johnson-Hill, p. 18). I would argue however that these theological debates are not unique to the divinity of Haile Selassie I, but are some of the same debates over Jesus Christ. There is one apparent contradiction regarding the worship of Haile Selassie I for me. The words colonialism and imperialism are loaded with negative connotations. It would seem to me, that for a movement of the ‘downpressed’ born of colonial oppression, it is contradictory to worship an arguably brutal dictator with the title “His Imperial Majesty.” Can this contradiction be explained by the presupposition of Western imperialism and colonialism? Johnson-Hill points out that “Selassie was a black emperor of virtually the only African nation to successfully resist colonization...as ruler of a nation which remained relatively free from white colonial domination, he symbolized the new independence of consciousness which Garvey emphasized – a new sense of self-esteem and self-reliance” (1995, p. 17). While it would be grossly inappropriate to classify the role of Selassie as trivial, as the Rastafarian movement bears his name, I would argue that the importance lies in the symbolism of Selassie I, the Black King, bringing forth a dimension of sovereignty to excluded, repressed people. The movement transcends the individual. Both Ethiopia and Selassie I represent “the transcendence of a negative self-image, religious hegemony, and economic and political domination,” evoking “a process of constructing a new social order” (Johnson-Hill, p. 31). Therefore, as Johnson-Hill concludes, “The symbolic appropriation of Haile Selassie I in Rastafari is anything but a naïve or illogical development” (Johnson-Hill, p. 309).

The Rasta movement has been transformed over time. The Rastafarians have evolved into an intergenerational, interracial, and international network of resistance throughout the world (Johnson-Hill, 1995). The original six themes of the movement included: reincarnation, living god, Ethiopia as heaven, Black superiority, revenge against whites, and the role of Haile Selassie I. The two dominant remaining themes include: Haile Selassie I as the living god and the salvation of black people through cognition or physical repatriation (Kebede, 2001). The main obstacle to equality is imperialism. Therefore, the back to Africa movement can only be seen as ideological due to the impoverished conditions in Africa created by imperialism. Helene Lee points out that to even Marcus Garvey himself his “Back to Africa” movement was mostly metaphoric (2001). The logic behind physical repatriation was that Africa was “still filled with rich treasures. A land than can prevent wants and poverty, and will lift the burden of terror from our race” (Lee, p. 57). Thus the colonial pillaging of the African continent – of humans, minerals, and treasures – has necessitated that repatriation be more mental than physical. Though he did establish the community of Shashamane for repatriation of blacks to Ethiopia, Selassie I himself preached liberation before repatriation.

The Rasta view independence from Great Britain as a farce (King, 1998), and refer to all oppressive systems as “Babylon.” From the Rasta perspective, Western educational systems propagate the lies of Babylon. The evil Babylonian empire and its antecedent forms of expression must be destroyed for the creation of a just global society (King, 2002). Those in the west cannot recognize themselves because they are so “brainwashed by Babylonism.” According to one Rastaman, westerners “are so filled with the bad wine, they don’t see the movement of Rastafari is the good wine. Bad wine meaning the doctrine they have been

brainwashed with; Rasta is the new doctrine free from Babylonism” (Conversations with Rasta, 1978).

The complex, decentered nature of the movement makes it difficult to get a definitive number of adherents to the movement. However, a June 1997 study placed the number of “practicing Rastas worldwide at one million, with more than twice that number of sympathizers and many million more reggae fans” (Murrell, p. 1). Even on the island of Jamaica, the number of Rastafarians is not known, but it is estimated to be roughly five to twenty percent of Jamaica’s total population (Johnson-Hill, 1995). Up until the mid 1960s most Rastas were lower class, but they are now found among civil servants and the elite. Though the overwhelming majority are of African descent, there are also “Chinese, East Indians, Afro-Chinese, Afro-East Indians, Afro-Jews, mulattoes, and even whites” (Barrett, p. 3). Speaking directly to race and class, the *Twenty-One Points*, a Rastafarian Movement Association document, declares Rastafari “open to all black people, irrespective of class,” and “all are free irrespective of color to join the movements crusade” (Johnson-Hill, p. 21). Any conceptualization of Rastafari as racist is misconceived. Is it not possible to be proud of African heritage, to affirm one’s blackness, or to affirm the plight of African people without being racist? For anyone who judges the Rastafari as a form of reverse racism, the movement speaks not to them, but about them. The Rastafari doctrine not only “effectively negates the white racism pervading the society, but also strives to overcome the logical premises which make any type of racism possible” (Chevannes, p. 62). In Barrett’s study, ninety percent of the Rastas he interviewed were ex-Christians, from Protestant or Catholic churches or Pentecostal sects (1997). Raised as a Catholic, I find this fact to be particularly interesting. From my preconceived notion of Rastafarians, notions gained with the insight of reggae music, I had the same thought as Jack Johnson-Hill, that “here was a group of

people who seemed to behave in ways that were more Christian than the Christians themselves. They warranted further investigation” (1995, p. x). Though predominantly male, females do play an important role in the Rastafarian movement, even as the majority are followers of their husbands. The feminist movement of the 1970s had an influence on Rasta male-female relations. Just as with traditional males across the globe threatened by the feminist movement, “the elder brethren must have felt themselves and their movement under siege” (Rowe, p. 81). Without direct confrontation with Rasta elders, females have steadily begun to take on more independence and exhibit more assertive behavior. “However she entered, she has remained in the movement, choosing to trod Rastafari on her own terms” (Rowe, p. 86). I would argue that any elements of perceived racism or sexism in Rastafari are merely reflections of the race, gender, and family relations of the larger Jamaican society. Social circumstances and intellectual and spiritual growth have led to significant changes regarding gender and race.

Rasta, Reggae, and Jamaican ‘Politricks’

As was previously mentioned, for much of the history of the movement the Rastafarians were a despised element of Jamaican society. The dominant public opinion was “the damn Rasta dem, wey de Rasta dem want, we just put dem in a damn boat and put dem out in the sea and sink the boat – say dem want go Africa!” (Murrell, p. 1). The Jamaican establishment too was expectedly hostile to the Rastas, as they were the antagonists of the movement. Police brutality, the raiding of Rasta communities, harassing and jailing of innocent Rastas, and the shaving off of the locks were common repercussions of entering the Rastafarian movement. As was stated previously, the Rastafarians view independence from the British as a farce, as the “reconstruction of the nation continues within the framework of cutthroat competition between capitalism and socialism” (Fanon, p. 75). Systematic persecution befell the Rastas as a result of the racial, class,

and religious differences among the island's population they so vividly represented; differences which the newly independent government of Jamaica claimed no longer existed (Bennett, p. 77). Lewis describes the plight of the Rasta in Jamaican society in *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari* (1993). "The Rasta played out a kind of existential absurdity in Jamaican society. They defiled the sacred image of the white Jesus as liberator through their own theology of Haile Selassie, and yet they also offended the spiritualist churches, which supported Jamaica's poor, by shunning the practice of possession trances. The Rasta call for repatriation to Ethiopia was a rejection of political involvement in their own society. Their refusal to imitate English mannerisms – the undisputed sign of respectability in Jamaican society – showed a disregard for convention. They viewed marijuana – a drug popular among the working poor as a palliative to help them endure labor in the fields – as a tool of illumination to make one aware of the bourgeois world. These traits marked the Rastas as a challenge and a threat" (Lewis, p. 9).

Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante are the forefathers of the two oppositional political parties of Jamaica, the Peoples National Party (PNP) and the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP). Through much of the turbulent 70s and 80s, Michael Manley was the face of the PNP and Edward Seaga the leader of the JLP. As was stated previously, it was Michael Manley who declared Jamaica 'social democratic.' It was with Manley's social democratic shift that the Rastafarians became more accepted in Jamaican society. As Bennett points out "Manley's electoral campaign 'favored Rastafarian symbolism'" and an article in the Rasta publication *The Ethiopian World* stated, "Manley has come to do the will of God for the Rastafarians" (Bennett, p. 78). As with others who commented on Manley's attempt at socialism, many Rastas believed Manley poorly executed the rhetoric of his social democratic policies. What was necessary was a complete calling into question of the social order, to remove the power elite and destroy the

corrupting influence of transnational corporations. “The structure of oppression is so convoluted that it is necessary to reject the very existence of bureaucratic structures on principle, regardless of whether they are progressive or conservative, capitalist or socialist” (Johnson-Hill, p. 313).

The Rastafari have an unswerving defiance for all political hierarchy. It is common for Rastas to refer to the realm of politics as ‘politricks.’ Politicians are considered corrupt, out of touch, and not to be trusted, living in “illusory worlds of their own making” (Johnson-Hill, p. 311). As the island became more entrenched in poverty and firearms began to pour into the streets of Jamaica, political violence peaked in the 1970s. The masses of the working class and the poor were aligned with Manley and the PNP, and the elite of Jamaica supported Seaga and the JLP. In addition to domestic support or opposition, international influences also effected the division between the two national parties. Regional socialists such as Cheddi Jagan and Fidel Castro supported Manley’s PNP, and wealthy Western capitalist powers backed their puppet regime of Seaga’s JLP. The Rastafarians found themselves caught in a political war between the PNP and the JLP, a war aided by meddling US foreign policy. Both parties tried to co-opt the energy of the Rastafari, as both sought somewhat of an endorsement from the Rasta community. The opposing parties both attempted to use Bob Marley, to get him on their side to gain the support of his followers. In these dangerous times of political gang violence, perceived support of one party over the other put the Iron Lion himself in the line of fire. Marley’s suspected allegiance to Manley’s PNP led to his attempted assassination on December 3, 1976. Gunmen opened fire at Bob’s Hope Road house shooting Bob, wife Rita, and manager Don Taylor. In Bob’s words, “Them come through the door and start shoot, blood claat. Dat mean me cyaan move. One time I move to one side, and the gun shot flew over deh...the feelin’ I had was to run but God jus’ move mi in time. His Majesty was directing me and as me move me feel like I get high...I tell

yuh, Rasta dangerous” (Sheridan, p. 61). He recognized that, no matter how peacefully he represented Rastafari, there were those in power that wanted him, and Rastafari, silenced. The Rastafarian reverence for land and their simple lifestyles fly in the face of the corrupt global power elite.

Bob ultimately used his neutrality, his disdain for the existing political structure, and his passion for peace, unity, and understanding in an attempt to quell the violence performing both the 1976 “Smile Jamaica” and 1978 “One Love” peace concerts. In defiant and inspirational fashion, Bob performed the “Smile Jamaica” concert just two days after being shot. The 1978 One Love concert in particular brought the two warring parties together. The Hon. Robert Nesta Marley, in a reggae concert of positive vibrations, brought the two opposition leaders, Michael Manley and Edward Seaga on stage uniting their hands in a moment of peace as apparent messenger of Jah. “Marley ad-libbed a mixture of both song and speech until the two casually dressed leaders, both looking a little sheepish, stood, one on each side of him, and allowed the reggae icon to join their hands above his head to his loud and triumphant utterance of “One love”, followed by the equally exuberant call and response of ‘Jah Rastafari!’” (Sheridan, p. 85). In *Spiritual Journey*, speaking on violence, Bob states “whose problem I-n-I going to solve by killing someone? Peace and unity make the world go round- the world need more love, less war...we don’t want our island to change, we want the world to change” (*Spiritual Journey*, DVD).

Reggae Music and Rastafari

Collective identity for the Rasta is maintained through language, music, and appearance. Reggae music is the most visible advertiser for the Rastafarian movement. Reggae denounces government housing, food shortages, political violence, slavery, and Babylon as the source of

past and present oppression. “Reggae addresses a community in transit through a series of retrospective frames which reverse the historical sequence of migrations. It is the record of a people’s journey – of the passage from slavery to servitude – and that journey can be mapped along the lines of reggae’s unique structure” (Hebdige, p. 31). One of the earliest and most thorough works on the emergence of reggae music, *Reggae Bloodlines*, states that the progress of the music has been “incredible, unprecedented, and totally unpredicted (except in Jamaica, where for years they’ve been saying that their music would take over the world)” (Davis and Simon, p. 1). Reggae music’s highly distinctive musical style is accompanied by equally distinct visual imagery and style. The distinct musical and visual styles are combined with “a form of cultural politics that emphasize the importance of Africa as a spiritual homeland for African diasporic populations around the world” (Bennett, p. 74).

The slave trade and colonial past of Jamaica has had long lasting effects on the “Jamaican descendents of African slaves that form the ideological base reggae has” (Simon and Davis, p.10). Simon and Davis trace the evolution of Jamaican music from mento, to reliance on American R&B post-independence, to the emergence of ska, to rock-steady, to reggae (1977). With each step in the evolution, the lyrical content became increasingly politicized, shifting from love songs to songs about hunger, police, and exploitation.

The word “reggae” first appeared in a 1967 Maytals song entitled “Do the Reggay.” As defined by Toots Hibbert, lead singer of the Maytals, “Reggae means comin’ from the people, y’know? Like a everyday thing. Like from the ghetto. From majority. Everyday thing that people use like food, we just put music to it and make a dance out of it. Reggae mean regular people who are suffering, and don’t have what they want” (Simon and Davis, p. 17). As reggae musicians began to take on more social, spiritual, and political commentary, they increasingly

became identified as Jamaica's leading prophets and social commentators. In the words of the King of Reggae, the late, great Bob Marley, "The message is to live. My message across the world is Rastafari! Righteousness shall cover the earth like water cover the sea. We're just children on the earth, but our mind all wiggly-waggy. No one teaching the real way of life, and right now the devil have plenty influence; but as far as me concerned, all the devil influence leads to is death. While Jah lead to life...Certain things that happen a long time ago must be revealed, and until that happen...I&I still in captivity" (Simon and Davis, p. 39). As Bob proclaimed in song, "One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain" (Trenchtown Rock). The music hits you, you feel no pain, but it is still happening; it offers an alternative vision and provides a reason for the listener to rethink their lifestyle and convictions and to purge the ideological brainwashing of Babylon from their system. Reggae artist Linton Kwesi Johnson remarked, "What the Rasta have succeeded in doing is to correct the imbalance of colonial brain-whitening. Rasta made Jamaicans proud of their history, their culture, their African heritage and their roots. As a spiritual force, it has brought a tremendous amount of creativity into reggae music. And it has contributed to the popular language of the people. A lot of people who are not even Rastas use Rasta words" (Bennett, p. 78).

Stephen A. King (1998) concludes that the effects of reggae music on the Rastafarian movement were not all positive. While reggae's international popularity increased the visibility of the movement, it caused a split between the 'religious' and 'political' Rastas. The more traditional Rastas saw the music as secularizing the movement, while the more political Rastas viewed reggae as a vehicle to get their message out. The author concludes that the marriage of 'music' and 'movement' caused the Rastafarian movement to become more political and secular. In "White Reggae: Cultural Dilution in the Record Industry," the authors conclude that the

international popularity of reggae music has necessarily meant cultural dilution of both the lyrics and the music (Alleyne, 2000). Reggae music is now marketed to middle class white college students as ‘rebel music.’ Music as a means of protest can be highly vulnerable to cooptation. The secularization and commercialization of the Rasta, embracing only the ganja, dreads, or reggae colors and music threatens to reduce the Rasta movement to a cultural fad. The internationalization of the Rasta movement has created many pseudo-Rastas, increasingly fragmenting a decentralized movement; exploiting marijuana and trivializing its religious and spiritual purposes (King, 1998).

While white groups such as Simon and Garfunkel, Eric Clapton, and the Rolling Stones may have threatened to reduce Rasta to a cultural fad, it was through their incorporation of and covering of reggae songs that the music began to spread throughout the world. It was not until after the pseudo-white-reggae became popular that the “true Jamaican reggae masters could emerge from obscurity to show the pop stars and the rest what roots music is all about, the way you play it and dance to it and what happens psycho-physically when humans are exposed to the thunder and sway of the real thing. And the real reggae turned out to be a new lens, bringing into sharper focus the turbulence and anguish of the little corner of the Third World called Jamaica” (Simon and Davis, p. 2). It was through reggae music that I was drawn to the plight of the Third World. Reggae music has opened my eyes, educated me, and has inspired me to join in the fight for universal human rights through the dissemination of knowledge in the music. But more importantly, the Rasta movement and reggae music have been a source of pride, inspiration, hope, strength, and defiance in a region of poverty and oppression. “The ability of African-Caribbeans to negotiate their socio-political circumstances was significantly transformed through the new cultural space which the Rasta image and reggae music created” (Bennett, p. 82).

Reggae music is empowering in at least two ways: in attempting to expose and reverse colonial social relations, and by giving a marginalized community a widespread medium to voice their discontent. Andy Bennett concludes that across the globe, reggae music has enabled marginalized ethnic minorities “to challenge issues of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation by the dominant white society” (p. 87). Thanks to the Hon. Nesta Marley and the spread of reggae music, Rastafari is now “not so much a marginal or aberrant millenarian phenomenon as it is a broadly based, distinctive religious consciousness – of one’s self, lifestyle, and vision of the good” (Johnson-Hill, p. 22).

Rasta and Framing

Much of the existing research on social movements has centered on resource mobilization, political opportunities, and many levels of framing processes. One of the prominent frameworks in social movement literature is resource mobilization theory. This theory is an analysis of strategies and tactics used by social movement organizations to mobilize individuals to collective action. My interest is not so much in how changes in political opportunities may affect the movement of Rastafari, but how the movement of Rastafari can change the political, social and economic landscape of the greater society. In order to understand how the movement of Rastafari can lead to social change, we must understand how they perceive their realities and disperse their world-view to potential sympathizers.

Social movements function as more than just “carriers or transmitters of mobilizing beliefs and ideas,” as they are also “actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers” (Snow and Benford, p. 198). But how do social movements go about producing meaning? Specifically, how do the Rastafarians produce meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers? One prominent social movement activity is

framing. As social movements “frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford, p. 198). Framing processes refers to how a movement perceives social phenomena, which lead to the development of a point of view. Frame analysis critically highlights important issues to the movement’s participants and sympathizers. Leading analysts of framing, David Snow and Robert Benford, define a frame as “an interpretive schema that signifies and condenses ‘the world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action in one’s present or past environment” (p. 137). Centered in a Rasta perspective, a Rastacentric world-view, I intend to explore ‘the world out there’ as perceived by the Rasta community through analysis of the framing in reggae music lyrics. As one of the ways meaning is produced in the Rasta movement is through framing process of reggae music.

Successful participant mobilization and action requires that the framing used by the social movement organization must be in-line with individual interests. Frame alignment refers to the need to link individual and social movement organization “interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complimentary” (Snow and Benford, p. 198). Once the individuals and organizations frames are lined up, there exists the potential for consensus mobilization. However to achieve consensus mobilization (support for views and aims) and action mobilization (activating individuals who agree with views and aims), social movement organizations must undertake “more specific tasks.” Snow and Benford thus suggest three core framing tasks, diagnostic and prognostic framing assist with consensus mobilization, while motivational framing assists with action mobilization. And the “more the three tasks are robust

or richly developed and interconnected, the more successful the mobilization effort” (Snow and Benford, p. 199). The diagnostic frame involves problem identification, the prognostic frame involves problem resolution, and the motivational frame invites sympathizers to participate.

More specifically diagnostic framing involves problem identification as well as the attribution of blame or causality. Snow and Benford point out that consensus on identifying the problem tends to be less problematic than consensus on attributing blame. Prognostic framing is “not only to suggest solutions to the problem, but to identify strategies, tactics, and targets” (1988, p. 201). Motivational framing is “the elaboration of a call to arms or rationale for action that goes beyond the diagnosis and prognosis” (1988, p. 202). According to Snow and Benford any social movement organization must develop these motivational frames exactly as defined in order to achieve action mobilization. However, they also acknowledge that movements whose goals are public goods, such as unalienable human rights, (such as the Rasta movement), are faced with a very stiff challenge in action mobilization. Due to this very fact and the constrained nature of motivational framing as defined by Snow and Benford, I would expect the reggae lyrics to fall short on motivational framing. One problem that I expect to encounter is that the reggae lyrics diagnoses and prognoses are framed “so cataclysmically...that ameliorative action seems highly improbable” (Snow and Benford, p. 203). Snow and Benford indicate that such framing lends itself to fatalism, and much of reggae music calls on Jah to redeem the righteous sufferers. Another possible flaw I could be faced with is that the song may focus “so singularly on problem diagnoses that the prognostic considerations are neglected” (Snow and Benford, p. 203). If this is the case I would expect that guidelines to action would be unclear.

There have been many studies performed on framing processes for various social movements, but no studies explicitly about framing processes used in reggae music. There have been studies on framing in the peace movement, anti-nuke movements, student movements, women's movements, environmental movements, and the civil rights movement to name a few.

There are examples of how the framing of various issues in international reggae music has been potent enough to stir up social change. Reggae music and the Rasta movement have been at the forefront of many third world liberation movements. Bob Marley's music was popular with the Sandinistas, the anti-apartheid movement, the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square, and even at the fall of the Berlin wall (Chang and Chen, 1998). Politics, music, and culture are inextricably intertwined in Jamaica.

Reggae music serves as a "political education" important in the "development of a counterideology or framing as an antidote to ruling class hegemony" (Snow and Benford, p. 204). The degree to which reggae music successfully frames the issues and the degree the frames resonate with the listeners of the music each influence the capacity for mobilization.

I intend to categorize the content analysis of reggae lyrics into the appropriate diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Reggae musicians identify grievances, attribute blame by identifying culpable individuals, groups, or structures, suggest a general line of action for problem resolution, and invite sympathizers to join in the good fight. When a frame strikes a responsive chord, ringing true with existing beliefs, values, folktales, etc., the frame is considerably more potent (Snow and Benford, 1992).

Rasta and Social Movement Theory

One of the few studies to connect the Rastafarian movement with social movement theory is Kebede's "*Decentered Movements: The Case of the Structural and Preceptual Versatility of the Rastafari*" (2001). The author points out that the Rasta lack any formal hierarchal structure or central leadership. For social movements that are in favor of egalitarian society, it is self-defeating to adopt principles of hierarchal organization. The Rasta therefore rely on informal networks, thriving in spite of formal organization. Kebede concludes that the lack of central leadership makes the movement less vulnerable to direct attack from the state, but more vulnerable to cooptation (2001). Jamaican government officials viewed the Rastas as exposing elements of Jamaican life that they would prefer remain hidden, as to attract more foreign investment dollars.

Social movement theory has yet to examine the specific challenges of international social movements in detail. As Stephen A. King points out, the response to the Rastafarian movement by the Jamaican establishment was not 'evasion', 'counter-persuasion', 'adjustment', or 'capitulation' as suggested by social movement theorists, but 'cooptation.' By the mid 1970's Jamaica had been promoting reggae music and the exotic Rastafarian culture as the 'official culture of the Island' (King, 2002). Currently the red, green, and gold, dreadlocks and reggae music can be seen and heard on Jamaican tourist advertisements. Yet, even with the attempted cooptation of the movement by the Jamaican establishment, the Rastafarians remain a strong source of inspiration and resistance. Murrell states, "The long, natty dreads on the heads of Rastafarians, who fearlessly chant down Babylon (Western political and economic domination

and cultural imperialism) with the help of reggae music, make Rastafari a highly visible movement and a globally powerful cultural force” (p.1).

One of most comprehensive studies of Rastafarianism is Jack Johnson-Hill’s, *I-Sight: The World of Rastafari, an Interpretive Sociological Account of Rastafarian Ethics* (1995). In this work, he organizes his data in terms of concepts of self (I-n-I), lifestyle (livity), and good and evil (Ethiopia and Babylon). This study is as thorough and invaluable to the literature on Rastafarianism as I have come across. However, while this work analyzes the meanings of more obscure dub poetry, it is my intention to analyze more popular, easily accessible reggae music. It serves little purpose to analyze songs that few people listen to, to understand how the artists frame issues to mobilize a constituency.

III. CHANT DOWN BABYLON – FRAMING A RASTA WORLD-VIEW

Social movement organizations, of which I consider the Rastafarians, devote effort to constructing particular versions of reality, developing and espousing alternative versions, and attempting to affect various audiences’ interpretations. It is my intention to introduce the reader to the Rastafarian movement, and to show that the lyrical content of reggae music espouses Rasta ideology and serves as prognostic, diagnostic, and/or motivational frames.

As a person who has been interested in reggae music for years, I am puzzled with the fact that the casual listener is largely ignorant of the poignant, relevant social commentary contained in the music. Given the current political climate, I find myself asking, “How can someone who claims to be a fan of Bob Marley support the war in Iraq or the policies of the Bush Administration?” Why are there so many students with Marley posters or bumper stickers, or students wearing Rasta colors that are so ignorant to the content of the music and the ideology of

the movement? Early in my graduate career, I had the good fortune of visiting the Dominican Republic for a week. Surrounded by (very privileged) undergrads on spring break, I mentioned that I was considering studying reggae music as a political social movement. With bewilderment and confusion in their eyes, a student replied, “Reggae music, political? No way! Reggae just sounds mellow and is something you put on to party to.” At that point, I felt it was necessary to do a systematic study of reggae lyrics to further explore the meanings and explicitly state the social, economic, and political issues that are a fundamental part of reggae music.

The literature review touched on two separate bodies of literature: literature on social movements, the arts, and framing processes and literature on Rastafari and reggae music. In the existing body of social movement literature, Western movements and theorists dominate. Within the field of sociology, there has been little research on Rastafari as a social movement, and even less on the role of reggae music and its implications for the movement. This research project connects the literature on arts and politics, and social movement framing processes, with the literature on Rastafari through both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the content of the lyrics of reggae music. Movement leaders, of which Reggae musicians can be perceived, intentionally use framing processes (song lyrics) to stir up support for the movement. The cultural framing in Reggae music serves a critical role in the maintenance of the challenging movement, Rastafari. The Rasta movement is a movement of understanding, righteousness, kindness, and humility for the entire human race. As stated by Ziggy Marley, “The human creature needs to evolve into a loving creature. I mean, if you don’t love, what are you?” (Hausman, p. 9). Contained within the lyrics of reggae music is a template for ethical social behavior.

IV. METHODS

Sociology has been developed within a system of colonial expansionism; it is, by and large, a study of the Western subject. Even when researching non-Western subjects, Western values and thoughts are used as the basis of analysis. As stated by Johnson-Hill, a “sociological interpretation of a Rasta world-view utilizes or presupposes interpretive concepts which have not been developed in relation to Afro-Jamaican cultural experience” (Johnson-Hill, p. 50). Western academia is a relentless project of accumulation of knowledge and data, with no recognition of why the knowledge is accrued. The pursuit of knowledge for whose sake? Western society is excessive and hypocritical. As Fanon says, “That same Europe where they were never done talking of Man, and where they never stopped proclaiming that they were only anxious for the welfare of Man: today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind” (1963, p.312). We must follow Fanon’s injunction and look for alternatives to European values and organization: “Let us combine our muscles and brains in a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.” The USA succeeded so well in its mimicry of Europe that it “became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions...If we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and make new discoveries” (Fanon, p.315).

I came to graduate school with an interest in race, inequality and political sociology. It soon became clear that the more I learned, the less I knew. My studies and my corresponding awakening were leading to severe cynicism and nihilism. My solace from my studies, my source of inspiration and support was frequently the message brought forth by the reggae music in my

stereo. A study of Rastafari and reggae music allows me to encapsulate the interests which led me to academia in the first place – race, inequality, and political sociology. Rasta, however, allows me to learn, increase consciousness, and remain ‘upfull’ rather than living an existence of misery and despair focusing on the corruption of U.S. politics. I was drawn to Rasta out of their disdain for existing political structure, their social commentary, their higher form of social consciousness, and their apparent ethical social behavior.

No one can control the situation they are born into. I had no control over being born a white male, born into the middle class privileges and excesses of America. I do have an obligation to use my abilities, and my position of privilege, to join in a struggle much greater than myself. As a white male studying an African rooted religion, movement, and culture I am aware of the challenges and internal conflicts that lie ahead. I am aware that I will likely be criticized by both whites and blacks alike. I am also aware that through the struggle I will be embraced by both. “Even if (whitey) could make that sympathetic passage from Notting Hill to Addis Ababa, from a whiteness which wasn’t worth much anyway, to a blackness which might just mean something more, he only found himself trapped further in an irresolvable contradiction” (Hebdige, p. 150). Ostracized by some whites as being pro-black or a race-traitor, I am also quite aware of the mentality of some blacks “before I trust a white person, I trust a snake” (from the Royal Parchment of Black Supremacy issued in 1926). Born a middle class white American male, raised as Irish Catholic, I now find myself a fellow traveler down the path of Rastafari towards a higher social consciousness. “Trust in Jah fire, no water can put out Jah fire, Jah fire gonna lift Rasta higher” (Morgan Heritage, “Don’t Haffi Dread”). I cannot consider myself a Rasta at this point. However, my interest in the psychology of the oppressed and in Rasta ideology and religion has brought me to a more spiritual place. For me, becoming a Rasta

requires a complete change of lifestyle- from the food we eat, to what we drink, to where we work, how we treat others, the jobs we undertake, and our attachment to Western comforts. The culture-ideology of consumerism dictates that competitive individualism depoliticizes social behavior (directing our attention away from political, social issues) to ensuring that we are caught up in getting the newest pair of shoes, or DVD player or whatever. This competitive corporate control lends itself to more consensual social control. The same way in which the global North controls the global South via the mechanism of debt, so via the mechanism of credit (thus debt) in the North is the populace controlled and pacified. In our excessive hypocritical society, what we purchase, what we consume dictates how important we are, how smart we are, how attractive we are, etc. Those in the West are pacified via mass consumption of essentially luxury goods - all of the trinkets and technology in our houses, etc. We are only able to buy such goods at cheap prices because of our exploitation of 'darker skinned others' across the globe. We exploit labor in the Third World, Latin America, Asia, etc. so that we in the West may live like kings and be pacified to the horrible conditions and the realities of the lives of the men, women, and children outside of our privileged society. The more we consume, the more we purchase, we are reproducing the inequalities that exist in the world. We must all become wiser consumers. When we begin to understand the repercussions of our consumption, maybe we will begin to change our consumption habits. It all starts with education and awakening. I speak not of typical western education which propagates the lies of Babylon, an educational system riddled with racism, classism, sexism, an educational system which produces only foot soldiers for capitalism. "I'm sick and tired of the isms, schisms" (*Get Up, Stand Up*, Bob Marley and the Wailers). I argue we must unlearn much of what our primary education has taught us. We must teach our

youth how to think critically, how to think 'outside of box', how to appreciate and develop on alternate perspectives, rather than teach our youth to the test.

Anyone is capable of speaking the utterances of social change and equality, but it starts with being the change you envision in the world. It is not possible to step into the reality of another race or culture. Therefore, those of us in Western academia, as products of an imperial system, have an obligation to recognize our privilege and make more honest attempts at understanding the realities and the contributions of the marginalized. We must open our minds, think outside of the Western capitalist perspective we have been socialized in, and center ourselves among the marginalized and oppressed. I believe it is necessary to reflect on the point of view of the colonized, and need to make more frequent attempts at understanding the psychology and structural constraints of the oppressed. Under colonialism, the people are called to fight oppression; post independence the people are called to fight poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment. So I face the question, “What are you called to fight?” “The people realize life is an unending contest” (Fanon, p.94). We need to realize that our realities are not the realities of the majority of men and women on this globe. To achieve tangible social change, to achieve equality in reality requires that “the European peoples must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains, and stop playing the stupid game of Sleeping Beauty” (Fanon, p. 106). I do not intend to trivialize the ideology of Rastafari or otherwise attempt to reduce the Rastafarian message to hard quantitative data. Rather, I believe that “as literary constructions the symbols expressed in Rasta” reggae music “represent an unusually rich set of data” (Johnson-Hill, p. 91). I am not interested in generating knowledge for a class to propagate itself. Rather, my interests lie in the kindness, humility, and one love of the Rastafari – the emancipation of humankind.

In social science, the problem determines the method. This deductive thesis project moves from the general issue of politics and the arts to the specific relationship between the Rastafarian movement and reggae music. Analyzing how reggae music serves certain social movement functions for the Rastafarian movement is open to both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data analysis, logic in practice, follows a non-linear path, is oriented toward constructing meaning, and draws heavily from the humanities. “It can be highly effective for creating a feeling for the whole, for grasping subtle shades of meaning, and for switching perspectives” (Neuman, p.141). In a world dominated by number crunching, qualitative methodology is too often viewed as not being scientific. Neuman, quoting Woodrum, notes, “Content analysis remains an underutilized research method with great potential for studying beliefs, organizations, attitudes, and human relations. The limited application and development of content analysis is due more to unfamiliarity with the method and to its historic isolation from mainstream social science than to its inherent limitations” (2003, p.311).

A purely qualitative approach, however, would require visiting with and interviewing reggae artists, Rastafarians, and the urban poor of Jamaica. While that is the goal for future research, it is unfortunately not practical for this project. Therefore I will quantitatively measure what percentage of songs contain elements of the three core framing tasks and in what percentage of songs is each framing task dominant. In addition I will measure what percentage of the songs sampled reference the four central themes of Rastafarianism as I have constructed, and what percentage of songs is each of those central themes dominant. I will also measure any outright direct identification with Rastafarianism in the lyrics. Using each reggae song as the unit of analysis, this content analysis of reggae music lyrics aims to identify the music’s diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing of social, economic, and political problems, and

quantify the relationship between the message contained in reggae lyrics and Rastafarian central themes.

As the problem determines the method, the research methodology must be appropriate to answer the research question. The question is not *if* reggae music espouses Rasta ideology and frames certain political and social issues, but *how* it does so. Therefore this project uses non-probability sampling in the song selection process. According to Earl Babbie, at times it is appropriate to “select your sample on the basis of your own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research aims” (1990, p. 97). To keep the study manageable, I will select a purposive sample of 25 reggae songs and analyze the content of the lyrics, assessing how each particular song frames political, economic, social issues from a Rastafarian world-view. It would be a grave mistake to treat the lyrical data as though it existed in a vacuum. As stated by Johnson-Hill in his analysis of Rasta dub poetry, “the sociological challenge concerns interpreting the experience of the underside, or the black and brown majority, which was originally subordinate in the plantocracy and continues to be subjugated in the post-emancipation period” (p. 92).

As was previously mentioned, there are different types of music that could fall under the broad category of reggae music. From mento to ska, roots to dancehall there are not only instrumental differences to the music, but lyrical differences as well. The term ‘roots reggae’ carries a specific connotation regarding both musical style and lyrical content. And while this term encapsulates most of the reggae music of interest in this study, it is a bit too constraining of a label for my purposes. For example, artists such as Buju Banton or Damian Marley may not be considered true ‘roots reggae’, but their lyrics are laced with political and social commentary. My interest lies in conscious reggae, music with a unique desire to offer hope through song,

music that brings the voice of the people to the world, music that educates and enlightens, music that preaches peace, love, and understanding.

The primary consideration in selecting my purposive sample was to select songs which have generated my interest in the Rastafarian movement, songs which are politically and socially conscious and provide a conscious positive vibration. In arguably the most thorough study of reggae music, *Reggae Routes*, the authors specifically chose each song because it “highlights an important artist, is socially significant, or evokes a particular time or has a nice story” (1998, p. ix). Using the same approach allows me to measure the concepts of interest in this case-study of reggae music. Each of the songs selected to be analyzed has played instrumental and complementary roles over the course of my graduate career. Upon studying political sociology and social theory it became clear that much of what I was learning was echoed in the message of the reggae music I was listening to. Thanks to my relative privilege in global society and the flaws of the western educational system, here I was paying a considerable tuition to learn what is already known, to some extent, by the oppressed and marginalized around the globe. Each of the songs to be analyzed not only aided my academic growth, but stimulated in me a higher level of consciousness and spirituality. Therefore my purposive, non-random sampling approach is theoretically appropriate to my particular research aim.

Any of lists that I have come across regarding the ‘top reggae artists’ have been highly subjective, hotly debated, and overall inappropriate for my research interests. I find it inappropriate to use ‘best seller’ lists as well, as ‘best sellers’ are mediated through a white power structure which tends to promote slack music as opposed to critical conscious music. Beginning with the music of Bob Marley and the Wailers, I have selected songs from some of the most popular conscious reggae artists, both in and out of Jamaica, including modern artists.

To add a historical-comparative component to the study, I have split the sample in to two time periods, reggae music pre-1987 and post-1987. The year 1987 was the shooting death of reggae legend, former Wailer, Peter Tosh. Though the death of Bob Marley in 1981 had an impact on the reggae music industry, artists such as Peter Tosh, Dennis Brown, Burning Spear were able to carry on the roots rebellion of reggae music. But following the shooting death of Tosh in 1987, many in the reggae community perceived a drastic shift, both lyrically and musically.

Instrumentally much of the music went from music provided by band members to digital, computer enhanced sounds and beats. Much of the lyrical content seemed to shift from highly conscious political lyrics to slack lyrics about sex and homosexuals, commonly referred to as dancehall music. Even with this shift from roots to dancehall reggae, there emerged dancehall artists with the talent and desire to provide a conscious roots message over modern dancehall beats. Having the song sample split into two time periods allows for the comparison of one period to the other to see if there are changes in the dominant framing tasks and the espousal of central Rastafarian themes in reggae music over time. Following are the songs which comprise my non-probability sample of conscious reggae music. Each song will be listened to multiple times and the lyrics transcribed in their entirety. The songs in my purposive sample are to be content analyzed for their espousal of Rastafarian central themes and to assess whether the lyrics and overall song message serve as diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frames.

Reggae Artists and Song Sample

In designing my song sample, I wanted to consider a range of conscious reggae artists, from the late 1960s to the present, artists popular both in Jamaica and internationally. As was previously stated, the primary consideration in selecting my purposive sample was to not ignore songs which have steered me to this project, selecting songs which contain political and social

commentary, songs which educate and inspire, as well as entertain. Based on these criteria alone, there are well over twenty-five songs which qualify. Other factors influencing final song selection included ability to translate (or find translations) of reggae songs and self-limitations on the number of songs used per artist. Table 1 displays the songs selected and respective artists for my purposive non-random sample.

Table 1.

Song Sample
 Twenty-Five Conscious Reggae Songs
 Entirely Purposive, Non-random Sample

| <u>Song</u> | <u>Artist</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1) "Small Axe" | Bob Marley and Wailers |
| 2) "Redemption Song" | Bob Marley |
| 3) "War" | Bob Marley |
| 4) "Fools Die" | Peter Tosh |
| 5) "Marcus Garvey" | Burning Spear |
| 6) "Columbus" | Burning Spear |
| 7) "Revolution" | Dennis Brown |
| 8) "Weight in Gold (Rally Round)" | Steel Pulse |
| 9) "Come Back Jesus" | Alpha Blondy |
| 10) "Reggae Strong" | Lucky Dube |
| 11) "Heathen" | Black Uhuru |
| 12) "Come Down Father" | Beres Hammond |
| 13) "Any Which Way...Freedom" | Mutabaruka |
| 14) "G7" | Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers |
| 15) "Free Like We Want 2B" | Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers |
| 16) "Don't Haffi Dread" | Morgan Heritage |
| 17) "Destiny" | Buju Banton |
| 18) "World Wide Corruption" | Yami Bolo |
| 19) "World Leaders" | Yami Bolo |
| 20) "Educated Fools" | Damian Marley |
| 21) "Stand a Chance" | Damian Marley |
| 22) "Who We Are" | Ky-mani Marley |
| 23) "Raid Di Barn" | Anthony B |
| 24) "I Know You Don't Care" | Ziggy, Damian, Buju, Yami, Morgan Heritage, Bunny |
| 25) "Solutions" | Stephen Marley |

It was Bob Marley, the King of Reggae, who was largely responsible for the growth and visibility of the Rastafarian movement both inside Jamaica and across the globe. Therefore, three of Bob's songs have been selected in my sample. "Small Axe" is Bob's statement that small people have more power than they realize, warning the colonial world at large, where Bob exclaims, "If you are the big tree, we are the small axe, ready to cut you down." "War" is Bob's adaptation of Haile Selassie's speech presented to the UN in 1968 on human rights and racism. "Redemption Song" is one of the last songs recorded by Bob Marley. The song exposes the complexity of Bob's mind, and is a passionate plea for the listener to "emancipate yourself from mental slavery" and help him sing "another song of freedom."

Peter Tosh was a fellow Wailer with Bob Marley. Citing differences with fellow band members and management, Tosh released his solo debut in 1976. "Fools Die" is musically quite different from the majority of reggae music. The song is essentially an accusation that poverty is a creation of Babylon as yet another means of oppression and exclusion.

Winston Rodney is widely known as Burning Spear, a reference to Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta. Performing for over three decades, Grammy award winning Burning Spear is fierce proponent of self-reliance for all African descendents. "Marcus Garvey" is a tribute to the man as well as an appeal to the listener to understand ideals and hear the prophecies of Garvey. "Christopher Columbus" rails against the man and the western notion that Columbus discovered Jamaica, exclaiming "Columbus is a damn blasted liar."

Dennis Brown has been hailed as the "Crowned Prince of Reggae" and was said to be one of Bob Marley's favorite artists. His hit track "Revolution" is a call to "fight the right fight here this time."

Steel Pulse has been performing since 1975. They are a Grammy winning reggae band from the UK. Their hit song “Weight in Gold (Rally Round)” is a call for support of Garvey’s ideals and to recognize Africa as a frame of reference over Europe.

Alpha Blondy is a reggae artist from the Ivory Coast. The name Alpha Blondy translates to “Bandit Number One”. It has been said that Blondy, heavily influenced by Bob Marley, declared himself a Rasta in his teens and was so serious about the movement he was placed in a mental hospital for two years by his parents. His songs are sung in Dioula, English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew. “Come Back Jesus” is a plea to the creator to put an end to war and suffering and bring peace and love to rule the globe.

Lucky Dube is another reggae artist from Africa. Originally Lucky was a performer of Zulu music called Mbaqanga; His first reggae album was entitled “Rastas Never Die.” His song “Reggae Strong” addresses the fact that many reggae stars have been killed, and though the music may change, the message remains the same, and reggae music is not going anywhere.

Black Uhuru takes their name from the Swahili word for freedom, uhuru; their name thus means “Black Freedom”. Their song “Heathen” addresses the violence and resulting police curfews and roadblocks encountered in the Jamaica of the 1970s.

Beres Hammond has been hailed as Jamaica’s greatest practicing singer/songwriter. Beres’ career has spanned over 30 years and multiple albums. “Come Down Father” is a plea to the Father to free humans from themselves.

Mutabaruka is both a reggae artist and Rasta dub poet. “Any which way...Freedom” is a take off of Malcolm X’s Ballet or Bullet speech. The song encourages the listener to “be a part of the solution” as “by the ballet or the bullet, by the bible or the gun, any which way freedom must come.”

Ziggy Marley is the eldest of Bob Marley's sons. At the age of ten, Ziggy was sitting in on recording sessions with his father. Together with brother Stephen and sisters Sharon and Cedella, the foursome became known as Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers. "G7" is a song about the Great Seven, the most powerful, rich nations in the world and their undertakings to ensure their dominance over the so-called Third World. "Free Like We Want 2B" is a song questioning the degree of freedom Jamaican's, blacks, and humanity in general possess.

Morgan Heritage is a reggae family composed of five children of Jamaican reggae artist, Denroy Morgan. Their anthem "Don't Haffi Dread" is clarification of who can be a Rasta and what the movement is about. The song clarifies that dreadlocks are not a necessity to be a Rasta and that the movement is not about hairstyle, but content and intentions of the heart.

Buju Banton is among the more popular modern reggae artists. Having released albums both in ragamuffin dancehall style and in conscious roots style, Buju is widely identified as one of the torch bearers of reggae music throughout the 1990s. "Destiny" is Buju's cry to Jah to allow the marginalized control over their own destinies. The song contains both musical and lyrical similarities to Tosh's "Fools Die".

Yami Bolo has been referred to as the "Jamaican Stevie Wonder". Spreading the message of love, happiness, and spiritual strength, Yami Bolo has remained true to the spirit of reggae music. "World Wide Corruption" (recorded under birth name Rolando McLean) is a song about the corruption, pollution, and destruction of the globe. Going a step further, "World Leaders" lambastes the leaders of the world for the current state of affairs and holds them responsible for the corruption, pollution, and destruction spoken of in "World Wide Corruption".

Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley is the youngest of Bob's sons. Bringing the conscious dancehall element of reggae music to the Marley family, Damian continues the proud Rastafarian

beliefs of his father and siblings. “Educated Fools” is an attack on western education and politics, blaming the plight of the oppressed on the educated fools who have ruined the world. “Stand a Chance” speaks of starvation and homelessness in a world full of greedy leaders, a world divided by the haves and have-nots, questioning the actual survivability of the people under current conditions.

Ky-mani Marley is another of Bob’s performing sons, whose vocal talents rival that of his father. “Who We Are” is a song about the increased visibility and misunderstandings of Rasta in the greater society.

Anthony B has been referred to as the living personification of African consciousness in reggae. “Raid Di Barn” is about exploitation, inequality, and dishonesty in a world where “nobody want to plant di corn, everybody want to raid di barn.”

Also included in my sample is a collaborative effort among many of the artists already listed. “I Know You Don’t Care” is performed by Bunny Wailer, Ziggy Marley, Damian Marley, Yami Bolo, Morgan Heritage, and Buju Banton. The song is about the police murder of Amadou Diallo and how blacks are living in a system of institutionalized racism, unprotected by the white man’s constitution.

The final song in my sample is entitled “Solutions” by Stephen Marley featuring Buju Banton. Son of Bob, Stephen Marley has been with brother Ziggy Marley as a part of the Melody Makers since their inception. Aside from his contributions to the Melody Makers he has been a producer for other family members and for other reggae artists, and is currently working on his solo debut. “Solutions” is an inspirational song encouraging the listener to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem and to demand more from, and to hold accountable, our leaders.

Coding

Each of the songs selected in the final sample was transcribed in their entirety. Using each song as unit of analysis, the lyrical data was then allocated to the various framing boxes and the central themes of Rasta. For the initial coding step, the song was analyzed as a whole and allocated to either the diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational framing box. The entire lyrical content of the song was then added to the dominant framing task box, denoted by two asterisks next to the dominant framing task (**). The determination of the dominant framing task of each song was not done quantitatively. I did not count the number of lines of each song and determine that the majority of lines were of a certain framing task. I relied instead on hermeneutic, rhetorical analysis to determine the dominant framing task of each song; my interpretation of their interpretation of the world through song. After each song had been allocated to its dominant framing task, other lyrics within the song were pulled out and allocated to the other framing task boxes as appropriate. However, to keep the lyrics within the context of the song, the song lyrics were allocated in their entirety to the dominant framing task and then only excerpts of lyrics allocated to other framing tasks. No privilege was given to the verse over the chorus or the chorus over the verse, but the song was treated as a whole.

The next step was to allocate the lyrics to the dominant Rasta theme addressed in the song. In developing my code sheet I compiled much of the information learned in the literature review into four main categories or central themes of Rastafari: Babylon, Jah, Ethiopia, and Livity. An additional category entitled "Direct Identification with Rasta" was added to note any lyrics which directly identify the artist or the cause as belonging to the Rasta movement. The central theme of Babylon encompasses all structures of oppression. This encompasses colonialism, slavery, capitalism, police, government, politicians, society, and evil among other

terms. The central theme of Jah is a reference to the creator, under many different names. This theme encompasses the divinity of Selassie, Jesus, God, Lion, King of Kings, I-n-I, Father, Lord, Most High, Divinity, and the natural world over the man-made world. The central theme of Ethiopia is meant to denote the entire of Africa, home of the original man. Other terms such as Zion, Mama Land, Father Land, repatriation, Marcus Garvey, chosen people, good, red green black and gold are all tied to this central theme. The central theme of Livity designates the Rasta lifestyle and a collective vision of the good. Terms such as unity, peace, love, freedom, education, ganja, understanding, self-reliance, and Ital are all under the umbrella of livity. Having designed four central themes of Rastafarianism, each song must be allocated appropriately based on themes addressed in the lyrical content.

The song lyrics were placed in their entirety in the appropriate Rasta central theme box based on the dominant theme espoused in the song, denoted by double asterisks next to the theme (**). After the song was allocated to its major Rasta theme, any lyrics addressing any of the additional central Rasta themes were placed in the appropriate theme box. A list of popular terms which represent each theme is included under each theme heading. Each time that specific term or variant of that term appears in the lyrics, it was counted to allow for quantitative representation of the frequency of that theme and those specific terms in general. By including variants of terms, I mean to count ‘oppressor’, ‘oppression’, and ‘downpression’ as a representation of the same idea. The same goes for ‘politics’, ‘politicians’, ‘political’, etc. Each song therefore, had a four part coding process: allocate the lyrics in their entirety to the dominant framing task, then allocate additional lyrics to additional framing tasks as necessary, allocate the lyrics in their entirety to the dominant central Rasta theme addressed, then allocate additional lyrics to additional Rasta themes as necessary.

V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

I must begin this final section by noting limitations on the data collected. The two main limitations on generalizing from my data include: sample size and the non-random purposive nature of the sample. To conduct a more complete, in depth study, I would increase the sample size considerably and use either a fully random sample or an interval sample from a purposively constructed song population. When selecting my song sample, I knew of certain songs that I wanted to address and have included them in my sample. For other songs I found myself arbitrarily pulling songs from a purposive list of songs from certain artists. It is important to note that none of the songs were chosen in an attempt to use songs that would fit my code sheets. While I was familiar with the songs in the sample, at no time prior to the analysis, did I ever consider the concept of framing in reggae lyrics. As my study measures the concepts of interest described in the problem statement, framing processes and Rasta themes, the aspect of content validity is met. To assess the intercoder reliability of my study, PhD student and fellow reggae aficionado Jeff Toussaint randomly coded five songs and then compared the results to my code sheets. No noticeable differences were seen in the coding. Due to the small sample size and non-randomness of the sample, I must be cautious not to generalize beyond my own sample. While I may consider the impact, or offer a possible explanation for the data, any generalizations made are constrained due to the nature of my sample.

Having allocated the lyrics of the twenty five reggae songs into their respective framing and Rasta central theme boxes, the code sheets were analyzed and the information entered in table format. During the course of the coding a dominant framing process and a dominant Rasta central theme began to emerge – Diagnostic framing and Babylon. When considering the entire sample, 56% of the songs were dominantly diagnostic with a theme of Babylon (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Cross tabulation of Dominant Framing and Dominant Rasta Theme

| | Entire Sample (25) | | | | | | Songs Pre-1987 (10) | | | | | | Songs Post-1987 (15) | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Diag. | | Prog. | | Motiv. | | Diag. | | Prog. | | Motiv. | | Diag. | | Prog. | | Motiv. | |
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Babylon | 14 | 56 | 01 | 04 | 04 | 16 | 03 | 30 | -- | -- | 04 | 40 | 11 | 73 | 01 | 07 | -- | -- |
| Jah | 02 | 08 | -- | -- | 01 | 04 | 01 | 10 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 01 | 07 | -- | -- | 01 | 07 |
| Ethiopia | -- | -- | -- | -- | 02 | 08 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 02 | 20 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Livity | -- | -- | -- | -- | 01 | 04 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 01 | 07 |

Table 3.
 Reggae Lyrics and Framing
 N = number of songs with elements of that framing task

| <u>Framing Tasks</u> | <u>Entire (25)</u> | | <u>Pre-1987 (10)</u> | | <u>Post-1987 (15)</u> | |
|--|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Songs w/ Diagnostic framing | 24 | 96 | 10 | 100 | 14 | 93 |
| Songs w/ Prognostic framing | 19 | 76 | 05 | 50 | 14 | 93 |
| Songs w/ Motivational framing | 13 | 52 | 08 | 80 | 05 | 33 |
| Songs w/ Diagnostic and Prognostic framing | 18 | 72 | 05 | 50 | 13 | 87 |
| Songs w/ Diagnostic and Motivational framing | 12 | 48 | 08 | 80 | 04 | 27 |
| Songs w/ Prognostic and Motivational framing | 09 | 36 | 04 | 40 | 05 | 33 |
| Songs w/ All 3 | 08 | 32 | 04 | 40 | 04 | 27 |

Note: percentages calculated with base 25, 10, or 15 and will not sum to 100.

Table 4.
 Dominant Framing Process for Songs
 N = number of songs dominated by that framing task

| <u>Framing Task</u> | <u>Entire (25)</u> | | <u>Pre-1987 (10)</u> | | <u>Post-1987 (15)</u> | |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Diagnostic | 16 | 64 | 04 | 40 | 12 | 80 |
| Prognostic | 01 | 04 | 00 | 00 | 01 | 07 |
| Motivational | 08 | 32 | 06 | 60 | 02 | 13 |

Note: percentages calculated with base 25, 10, or 15 and will not sum to 100.

In Table 3 we can see that there was only one song in the entire sample which contained no elements of diagnostic framing, and table 4 shows that diagnostic framing was the dominant framing task 64% of the time. For a movement which is so critical of western society and education, it would be expected that diagnostic framing would be the dominant framing task in reggae lyrics. It is appropriate for a paper entitled “Hear Dem Cryin,” that the findings show reggae music is dominated by diagnostic framing. The prevalent problems identified in the lyrics analyzed include racism, housing problems, hunger, poverty, violence, war, politicians, and inequality and injustice in general. In contrast to the dominance of diagnostic framing, only one song in the sample was dominated by prognostic framing (table 4); however, elements of prognostic framing were found in 76% of the entire sample (table 3). By comparing the pre-1987 and post-1987 songs in table 3, we can see that songs with elements of prognostic framing increased by 43% over time and that songs with motivational framing elements have decreased by nearly 50% in the post-1987 sample. This suggests that the reggae songs pre-1987 contained more specific calls to action, while the more modern reggae songs have decreased their calls to action, but more frequently suggest remedies to the problems faced. Common suggested solutions found in the reggae lyrics include prayer, education, unity, caring, sharing, and loving, at the same time as offering solutions of resistance and revolution. While we had previously found that diagnostic framing was the dominant framing process in 64% of the entire song sample, in the songs pre-1987, diagnostic framing was the dominant framing task in only 40% of the songs, whereas motivational framing was the dominant framing task 60% of the time (table 4). However, in the songs post-1987, motivational framing as the dominant framing task dropped to only 13%, and diagnostic as the dominant framing task increased to 80%, doubling over time.

Reggae music was born of the Rastafarian movement and reciprocally the Rastafarian movement has experienced a rebirth due to the popularity of reggae music. Few people outside of Jamaica would have any idea of what Rastafarianism is were it not for reggae music. “Most of the reggae musicians are Rastas...reggae has thrust the Rasta cosmology into the middle of the planet’s cultural arenas, and suddenly people want to know what all the chanting and praying and obsessive smoking of herb are all about” (Simon and Davis, p. 63). Speaking of his early days advising young reggae musicians, Rasta elder Mortimer Planno explains, “My intention was to build dem head mentally, about Rastafari” (*Peter Tosh Red X*, 1992). In eight of the songs in the entire sample (32%), the artist expressed some form of direct identification with Rastafarianism (table 5). Damian Marley sings “Rasta nuh beat Binghi drum we claat it, we live longer cause we food no salty, we grow stronger and dem cant assault we, so hail Rastafari love and exhault it” (“Stand a Chance”). Morgan Heritage instructs us on what it means to be Rasta, “You don’t haffi dread to be Rasta, this is not a dreadlocks thing, divine conception of the heart” (“Don’t Haffi Dread”). Burning Spear wails, “What a long stay from home, I-n-I longing to go home, within a red, green, and gold robe, come on Twelve Tribe of Israel” (“Columbus”). Here Spear is touching on the concept of an exile in Babylon, longing to return to Africa, wrapped in the colors of Rastafari, and identifying with a particular sect of Rastafarianism. In other songs in the sample though there was no overt mention of Rastafari in the song lyrics, affiliation with the movement is implied. For example when Ky-mani Marley sings, “Babylon wanna know who we are,” (“They Wanna Know”) the ‘we’ implies Rastas. When Bob Marley declares “we are the small axe, ready to cut you down” (“Small Axe”), the ‘we’ again implies Rasta. When Steel Pulse demands that we “rally round the flag, rally round the red, gold, black, and green,” (“Weight in Gold (Rally Round)”) though no mention of Rasta, the implication is clear.

Table 5.
 Reggae Songs and Rastafarian Central Themes
 N = number of songs with each theme represented

| <u>Rasta Theme</u> | <u>Entire (25)</u> | | <u>Pre-1987 (10)</u> | | <u>Post-1987 (15)</u> | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Babylon | 24 | 96 | 10 | 100 | 14 | 93 |
| Jah | 18 | 72 | 07 | 70 | 11 | 73 |
| Ethiopia | 12 | 48 | 04 | 40 | 08 | 53 |
| Livity | 11 | 44 | 02 | 20 | 09 | 60 |
| Direct Rasta ID | 08 | 32 | 02 | 20 | 06 | 40 |

Note: percentages calculated with base 25, 10, or 15 and will not sum to 100.

Table 6.
 Dominant Rasta theme represented
 N = number of songs dominated by that Rasta theme

| <u>Rasta Theme</u> | <u>Entire (25)</u> | | <u>Pre-1987 (10)</u> | | <u>Post-1987 (15)</u> | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Babylon | 19 | 76 | 07 | 70 | 12 | 80 |
| Jah | 03 | 12 | 01 | 10 | 02 | 13 |
| Ethiopia | 02 | 08 | 02 | 20 | 00 | 00 |
| Livity | 01 | 04 | 00 | 00 | 01 | 07 |

Note: percentages calculated with base 25, 10, or 15 and will not sum to 100.

Rastas are constantly battling against Babylon, evidenced by the fact that 96% of songs sampled touch on the theme of Babylon (table 5), while in 76% of songs sampled Babylon was the dominant central Rastafarian theme (table 6). One of the main focuses of the Rasta movement is to encourage African heritage and pride over European values and organization. In

this area, reggae music has been a success, especially the reggae music of the golden era of reggae, the 1970s. As evidenced in my non-random sample, in table 6, the earlier reggae music had more instances of Ethiopia being the dominant central Rastafarian theme (20% to 0%). This could be a simple matter of need. The visibility of the Rasta movement was null on the world scene until the arrival of reggae music. The earlier reggae music, new on the world music scene, could have possibly necessitated Ethiopia as a central theme to forge Africa as a central part of the Rastafarian reggae identity. As the movement, and the music, have advanced through time and space, it is possible that the ‘African-ness’ of the movement is now taken-for-granted as an established fact, and attention has thus been focused elsewhere in reggae music, rather than on Ethiopia as the dominant central theme. Or could the decrease in Ethiopia as the dominant central Rasta theme lend support to the claim of the more traditional Rastas? Some of the traditional Rastas were weary of reggae music, believing it could cause a split in the movement. Does the lack of any songs in the post-1987 song sample with a dominant theme of Ethiopia support the traditional Rastas claim that the centrality of Ethiopia is disappearing? I would argue not, as the lack of Ethiopia as the dominant theme is in no way to be taken to mean that references to, and the importance of Ethiopia/Africa have disappeared in modern reggae. In fact, songs with actual references to Ethiopia, though not the dominant theme actually increased from 40% to 53% over time (table 5).

Initially I had intended on counting the number of occurrences of certain terms or variants of those terms in the lyrics of each reggae song. As I began coding the songs it became clear to me that while the concept addressed by those terms (i.e. Babylon, oppression, colonialism, governments, etc.) may be present in the song lyrics, the actual term or variants of that term were not included in the lyrics. For example there were songs which were dominantly

addressing the Rastafarian theme of Babylon which contained not a single occurrence of any of the words under the master heading of Babylon. When Bob Marley sings “If you are the big, big tree, we are the small axe,” he is warning the colonial world at large, yet there is no mention of colonialism, slavery, capitalism, etc. So while there was an attempt to count the actual occurrences of the words, or variants thereof, there were so few actual occurrences of the terms that the numbers become meaningless. What is important to note is why this is the case. Marginalized groups, due to their marginalized status, must frequently code their messages so as not to be understood by those who hold power over them. As evidenced by the above Bob Marley lyric, much of reggae music is couched in metaphor and symbolism.

Snow and Benford said that diagnostic and prognostic framing were intended for consensus mobilization. Due to the heavy occurrences of diagnostic framing, I would argue that the data suggests that reggae music utilizes framing processes to generate consensus mobilization around the central Rastafarian theme of Babylon. It would make sense for a movement not interested in converting people, but reorienting their focus from European traditions and values towards African traditions and values, to fall short on motivational framing as defined by Snow and Benford. For rather than providing direct calls to action, which could indicate direct attempts at conversion in order to generate mobilization, reggae music focuses heavily on diagnosing the inequalities, injustices, contradictions, and brainwashing of Babylon, in an attempt to generate consensus mobilization around the Rastafarian world-view. While the lyrics may possibly fall short on specific calls to action, the very elegant diagnoses of multiple problems are motivational in themselves. I therefore disagree with Snow and Benford that “diagnostic frames alone, no matter how richly developed, do little to affect action mobilization” (1988, p. 203).

I had previously argued that reggae music could fulfill the role of awakening the individual consciousness of those who truly listened to the music. In fact this is the crux of Rastafari and reggae music, to increase awareness, educate, uplift, entertain, and lead to a higher form of social and spiritual consciousness. Speaking from personal experience, this has been the case for me. Over the course of immersing myself in the literature and ideology of Rastafari, and analyzing the lyrics of reggae music, I have achieved higher levels of peace, happiness, and consciousness. Indeed, it was the positivity and political defiance of reggae music that led me to this project and my interest in the Rastafarian movement and religion. I first learned from Peter Tosh that “without the truth there is no consciousness” (*Peter Tosh Red X*, 1992).

Reggae music has “opened possibilities at the cultural, political, and technological level, and was an inexhaustible source of courage and moral support, such that reggae artists were able to enter the international arena and force onto the world an expression of oppressed peoples which had been considered culturally and artistically inferior” (Campbell, p. 134). Reggae music is political in its lyrical content and its symbolic function. The collaborative “I Know You Don’t Care” declares, “we’re livin in a system, we are the victims...and they say the constitutions for the benefit of all, its all a lie.” Damian Marley gives a warning to “political scholars, political thieves and political liars, political cocaine and gun suppliers” (“Educated Fools”). Stephen Marley encourages us “don’t blame it on the people, but on the leaders who lead them” (“Solutions”). Yami Bolo speaks of “political gun warfare, cartridge fallin down like rain, its a cryin shame, world leaders are the ones to be blamed” (“World Leaders”). Peter Tosh speaks of poverty as tool of Babylon and the righteousness of the poor, “The rich man’s wealth is in the city, vexation of the soul is vanity, destruction of the poor is their poverty, the poor man’s wealth is in a holy, holy place” (“Fools Die”). Mutabaruka speaks directly to “leftists and capitalists,”

saying “food, clothes, and shelter have no politics, de almighty creator belongs to no religion, ideologies won’t bring about a solution, now turn to yuh songs in de bible and show me your AK-47” (“Any Which Way...Freedom”). These lyrics expose the hypocrisy and corruption of western society. Symbolically, reggae music is political in that it has the ability to influence the identity as well as the desire and capacity of the individual listener to act. “By de ballet or de bullet, by de bible or de gun, any which way, freedom mus come” (Mutabaruka, “Any Which Way...Freedom”).

Over the course of this thesis project my relationship with reggae music has changed. While I believe there is room for critical analysis of music, I firmly believe that music is music – it is what it is. Reggae music lyrics, which are almost entirely critical of Western organization, were not intended to be allocated into boxes of severely limited Western constructs. After all, “educated fools have ruined the world” (“Educated Fools”, Damian Marley). And in the introduction to Mutabaruka’s “Any Which Way...Freedom” he warns “meanwhile ya dancin to dis musik, and tryin to figure out these lyrics...WATCH OUT, de revolution a come.” The theoretical framework from which these core framing tasks were derived is flawed when considering non-European, anti-Western movements. I would argue, as Snow and Benford have regarding the Peace movement, that the Rasta movement’s “rationale for participation is framed most generally and pervasively in terms of moral considerations” (1988, p. 202). That given the elegant diagnoses of the problems and the moral dilemma exposed, “we have a moral imperative to do something about it” (1988, p. 202). Just as the movement ‘bibles’ or ‘handbooks’ discussed by Snow and Benford are said to “function to supply a vocabulary of moral rationales for action,” I would argue that reggae music, with its elegant chanting down of Babylon, fulfills a similar function (1988, p. 203). Jamaica has given these noble people nothing but poverty and

oppression, and yet they can be so full hope, praising Jah in both good times and bad. Most reggae musicians themselves are mired in the struggles of poor black people. And yet in their struggle they are “able to draw inspiration from the people,” and in turn, stir the “physical and psychic energies of the people, which enable them to withstand the pressures of poverty, unemployment, gun men, and ganja enforcers” (Campbell, p. 134).

The data from this non-random sample of twenty-five conscious reggae songs suggests that Rastafarian reggae music can be seen as a consensus mobilizing structure which espouses Rastafarian ideology. Reggae artists have been able to construct frames which encourage awareness and resistance via frame alignment of shared experiences, culture, and history. In reggae music we see the interrelationship between Rastafarian culture and Jamaican/Western structure. The duality of structure implies that all structure is both enabling and constraining. So while the structure of the established global world system constrains Rastafarians’ ability to have control over their own destiny, also through this structure this challenging movement has emerged and its framing of important issues through the medium of reggae music had led to an increase in visibility, membership, and support for the movement. Rastafari remains a powerful source of pride, heritage, identity, and inspiration. “The gains of the movement forced back the racists to find new rationalizations for their moribund theories. Rasta culture shows the potential of the people once the social structure is changed, so that theirs is a full release of the people’s creativity” (Campbell, p. 150).

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Appendix A.

Reggae Lyrics Content Analysis Code Sheet

Content Analysis Number:

| | |
|------------|--|
| Song Title | |
| Artist | |
| Year | |
| Label | |

| SOCIAL MOVEMENT FRAMES | REGGAE LYRICS | Problem, suggested solution, or call to action |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Diagnostic | | |
| Prognostic | | |
| Motivational | | |

| Rastafarian Central Themes | N | Reggae Lyrics |
|--|---|---------------|
| Babylon -Oppression -Colonialism -Queendom -Slavery -Capitalism -Police -Government -Politicians -Evil -Society | | |
| Jah -Hailie Selassie I -Jesus -God -Lion -King of Kings -I-n-I -natural world -Father -Lord -Most High -Divinity | | |
| Ethiopia -Africa -Zion -repatriation -Mama Land -Father Land -Red, green, black, gold -Marcus Garvey -chosen people -good | | |
| Livity -Unity -Peace -Love -Freedom | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| -Education -I-tal -Ganja -Understanding -Self-reliance | | |
| Direct Identification w/ Rasta | | |