

Members From The Millennium Council & BMARC Meet With Under-Secretary Dr. Deng At The United Nations Headquarters 12-10-09

"We must, by force of circumstances, look to the United Nations, however imperfect, however deficient, to preserve the peace and lend Us its support in Our endeavors to secure a better life for Our peoples, and We must concentrate Our efforts, little or great, to the achievement of its stated ends, for only thus can We secure Our free and continued existence." - Haile Selassie I On The UN Sept. 3rd 1961

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed UN Under-Secretary Dr. Francis Deng of the Sudan as Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide in 2007. Dr. Deng served as Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons from 1992 to 2004 and as Human Rights Officer in the UN Secretariat from 1967-1972. He is a Wilhelm Fellow at the Center for International Studies at MIT and a research professor of international politics, law and society at Johns Hopkins University. Before joining MIT Dr. Deng was a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the John Kluge Center of the Library of Congress.

Our meeting with Dr. Deng was prompted by the fact that his son Ras Reuben (Dennis Deng) came to our Rastafarian Ancient Living Arts & Kulture Event (RALAK) 2009 in Black Mountain to pursue interviews for a book he is authoring with his father. Ras Sela was then able to schedule a follow-up meeting with Dr. Deng at the UN headquarters in New York. The meeting was attended by Ras Sela Judah Fari - Administrative Executive for the MC (Ethio-Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council) and a member of BMARC (the Black Mountain Asheville Rastafari Collective), Dejazmatch Kwasi - Vice-President I-niversal Development of Rastafari (IDOR) and a member of The Haile Selassie Foundation for Law and Society, Empress Marina Blake - legal council for the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (Bobo Shanti) and a member of The Haile Selassie Foundation for Law and Society, Sister Maxine Stowe - International Consultant for the MC, Ras Roshon Abednego from BMARC and Ras Bobby Sullivan - member of BMARC and Minister of Education for the Rastafarian UniverSoul Order Prison Ministry Fellowship.

Note: On InI way to Wall Street to meet Empress Marina at 65 Broadway, InI walk passed the written memorial on the side walk where the Trinity Church is located bearing the name H.I.M Emperor Haile Selassie I to commemorate His visit to New York City on June 1st, 1954. InI delegation was on time for the 3pm meeting at the U.N. with Dr. Deng.

The meeting opened with an introduction by Ras Sela and then Dejazmatch Kwasi and Empress Marina gave prayers. D. Kwasi gave a description of the MC's aims and then introduced Sister Maxine Stowe. Sis. Maxine began by pointing out that indigenous groups have been more recognized over the last 10 years globally. In fact their ways of life have been recognized as key to the survival of the planet, so their interests need to be safeguarded. She further defined the MC and it's goal to follow H.I.M. Haile Selassie I's request to organize and centralize the Rastafari Movement. She explained how the movement has been somewhat splintered due to its persecution even though it has been globally adopted as a popular culture through reggae music, which has been a double-edged sword. She expressed "we have been fighting to sustain the root because the branches have been getting overwhelming."

Sis. Maxine identified the economic pitfalls behind the MC's move to secure, protect and manage the intellectual property of the Rastafari community worldwide. She also identified Repatriation as a focus, as Rastafari people are living in a hostile environment in Jamaica and worldwide, from its inception.

She pointed out how Jamaica has co-opted Rastafari culture for tourism without acknowledging the basic rights of the Rastafari Community. She also pointed out how there were problems with the Shashemene Land Grant in Ethiopia and that Shashemene needs cultural protection as a spiritual homeland. She then asked Dr. Deng how we could engage the UN on a variety of levels?

This question was answered later. Dr. Deng instead went into some of his personal history and his interest in Rastafari to give InI some reference. He was born into a very religious, traditional African society – the Dinka of Sudan. He pointed out that the Dinka’s spirituality is like Rastafari, in that it is more a way of life than a religion, as it permeates every aspect of their lives. His father was a tribal chief who was very keen on education. Dr. Deng and his brothers first went to a Catholic school, then to a Protestant school and then a Muslim school. He has a profound respect for all religions and feels that their ethical codes are very similar.

Empress Marina spoke up and said that a religion can be neither “right” nor “wrong” but should be evaluated on whether or not it is useful to its people. She also said that the God of a people should have the same physical attributes of its people and that Christianity with a white Jesus is a denial of Self for Black people. Rastafari rescued Black people from slavery and the version of Christianity, which was used to enslave their minds.

Dr. Deng felt that we should not color God and that “we are all God’s children. Some may be bigger brothers, but we are all still children under God.” He pointed out the mixed parentage of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I through Solomon from the north and the Queen of Sheba from the south. He seconded that he has always wanted to see a book containing the ethical codes from all the religions, so humanity could see the similarities and not be so separated by their ideas of divinity. He also stated that the ancient Judaic traditions are very close to the traditional African religions.

D. Kwasi then gave a brief history of the Rastafari Movement leaving out some of the theological aspects. The group decided that theological concerns could eat up too much time and were not the focus of this meeting. He spoke of some of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I’s achievements and highlighted the persecution of Rastafari people in Jamaica along with the co-optation of the movement’s symbols for tourism globally.

Sis. Maxine related the fact that unlike Dr. Deng’s society where all their ancestry could be traced, the African Diaspora had lost its ancestry and was in limbo. “H.I.M. Haile Selassie I is the individual who can take us back. Jamaicans simply replaced King George with H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie I so that we have our own king.

Dr. Deng replied that certainly the historical burden has to be dealt with, but asked: “How do you bridge this with Africans? Africans would not be liberated by Selassie’s coronation as the west had been and many Africans do not identify with the divinity of Selassie.”

Sis. Maxine replied that Rastafari goes beyond the coronation and deals with ancient wisdom. D. Kwasi pointed out that there are already many Rastafari people in Africa and that the significance of Selassie I is not lost on them. They are inspired by H.I.M. Haile Selassie I’s work to liberate all of Africa, forming the Organization of African Unity and that the widely known song “War” by Bob Marley includes H.I.M. Selassie I’s speech supporting the liberation of Angola, Mozambique and South Africa.

Dr. Deng continued the train of thought by pointing out that many in Africa are inspired by Ethiopia because it was the only country in Africa not to be colonized. He also related how H.I.M. Haile Selassie I had been instrumental in drafting the Addis Ababa Agreement, also known as the Addis Ababa Accord, which was a series of compromises in 1972, ending the first Sudanese Civil War between North and South.

Dr. Deng then related again that he would like to see InI push the moral and ethical codes of the movement ahead of the divinity of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I. Ras Sela offered a point of clarity that no one can define God and that this discussion can never end, so the God concept is not a Rastafari concept since the Elders of Rastafari know he is the Almighty manifested in the flesh in InI time.

Dr. Deng concluded that ending the discrimination against Rastafari people is a very important cause. In fact the UN has a new mandate that every country has the “responsibility to protect” their own populations (see www.responsibilitytoprotect.org). Their website outlines how “the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) will bring together Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world to strengthen normative consensus for RtoP, further the understanding of the norm, push for strengthened capacities to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and mobilize NGOs to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations.”

Also Dr. Deng stated that the UN can do work on the level of world diplomacy, but any formal proposals made to the UN need to be sponsored by member countries and not just individuals. He recommended that we study how genocide was avoided in South Africa as a potential model. “I believe the cause against discrimination can be pursued,” he said. “This is an impossible mandate which must be made possible.” He offered the help of his office to be a catalyst for this global cause. He said InI should continue to document the discriminating activities and then “we will find a course of action.”

Now it is time for the Rastafari peoples to come together as one all over the world. InI legal minds have a great task ahead of them within the Halls of the United Nations. This work is going to take the Rastafari people out of the streets into the international diplomatic arenas of the world. It is every Rastafari person’s duty to support this work at the U.N, in whatever form or manner they can afford. InI wait for the report from InI legal minds in order to take the next step towards Zion.

Perfect Love & Ises,

Ras Bobby & Ras Sela



InI delegation in the lobby (from l to r: Ras Bobby, Maxine Stowe, Ras Roshon, Empress Marina, Ras Sela, & Dejazmatch Kwasi)



In the office of Dr. Deng (from l to r: Ras Bobby, Ras Sela, Dr. Deng, Maxine Stowe, Empress Marina & Dejazmatch Kwasi)



BMARC’s Rastafarian Ancient Living Arts & Kulture Event package being presented to Dr. Deng by Ras Bobby