

## **Supporting Material for the Proposal to Establish a CARICOM Working Group on Rastafari Populations and an AU Permanent Forum on Rastafari Issues**

### HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

This document does not represent the fullness of Rastafari inspiration and agitation but draws on significant instances that can be used to demonstrate the journey of the past seven decades that have brought Rastafari to the dawn of the Ethiopian (African) Millennium. Everton McPherson begins his Rastafari chronology with the marriage of Moses to an Ethiopian woman. However, a convenient starting point for this supporting document is the advent of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which branded the Pan-African world of the 1920s.

'The UNIA made concerted attempts at official international projection and representation. In the Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World (1920), paragraph 43 stated: **"We call upon the various governments of the world to accept and acknowledge Negro representatives who shall be sent to the said governments to represent the general welfare of the Negro peoples of the world."** Paragraph 52 said: **"We demand that our duly accredited representatives be given proper recognition in all leagues, conferences, conventions or courts of international arbitration wherever human rights are discussed."** ' Rastafari makes the same demand today from the perspective of free Africans. (Lewis, Rupert – *Marcus Garvey – Anti-Colonial Champion* , Karia Press, 1987:95-96).

'The Holy Piby' written by an Anguillian man named Robert Athlyi Rogers and published in 1924. This text, which gave Rastafari its Creed, became known as "the black man's Bible" and later 'the Rastafari Bible', **"...preaching a doctrine of the divinity of Ethiopia."** Rogers, who was the President of the Perth Amboy division of Marcus Garvey's UNIA in New Jersey, **"...declared that no black person could stay out of Africa and lead Africa, that the leadership of the African struggle must be based in Africa..."** The Holy Piby had strong impact in South Africa and Panama. (Scott, David - *The Archaeology of Black Memory: An Interview with Robert A. Hill* in **Small Axe**, 5 March 1999:80-150).

**"In the decade of the 1930s, a very bold man by the name of Leonard Howell transformed the Pan-African vision of Marcus Mosiah Garvey into a religious movement of workers and peasants, proclaiming the centrality of Africa in the ontology of black people, and demanding a radical change in their thinking about the self."** (Tafari, Ikael – *Rastafari In Transition*, Research Associates School Times Publications/Frontline Distribution Int'l Inc. & Miguel Lorne Publishers, Jamaica, 2001:xvii). Howell, established the Pinnacle commune in St. Catherine, that at its peaked was populated by thousands.

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Pinnacle "...was constantly under pressure from the authorities in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1954 the commune was broken up by the police." (Lewis, Rupert – *Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians* in **Chanting Down Babylon**, Eds. Murrell et al, Temple University Press, 1998:148). Powell's boldness encompassed a sensitivity regarding gender balance in his writing on Queen Omega the Black Woman, reflected in the title of the Empress of Zion publication, "She Hands us Her Rule Book from the Poles of Supreme Authority".

"The Head light of Ethiopia International Congress began March 1958, and today, 20 years after, the Congress has 14 Priests, 60 Prophets and 14 Empresses...I Prince Emmanuel will not go under a migration scheme. We are all African so all should get Redemption and be free to go to Ethiopia or Nigeria or Sierra Leone or Ghana or Liberia, to name a few." (EABIC Commemorative Booklet, *Black Supremacy in Righteousness of Salvation*, undated: 30-31)

An ultimatum sent in 1959 to Jamaica's Chief Minister by the Nyahbingi Order of Rastafari which read In part, "**We have never failed from declaring our intention of repatriating to our homeland Africa, we do not seek political power and titles from the British.**" (Campbell, Horace - *Rasta and Resistance*).

Further documentation is provided in the 1960 University of the West Indies Report on the Rastafari Movement in Jamaica which lists the demands of the RasTafari brethren. Topping the list is repatriation. The report recommended a government initiative for repatriation, noting that "**Substantial emigration to Africa will not be possible unless the Government of Jamaica takes certain initiatives.**" This proposal calls not only on the Government of Jamaica but on the CARICOM to collaborate with the AU in taking the initiatives necessary for Repatriation and Reparations.

In 1961 the Government of Jamaica's technical fact-finding mission to Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone included Antigua's Minister of Social Welfare, the Honourable E. H. Lake and three Rastafarians and who advanced the track-record of Rastafari agitating for Repatriation. (Mack, Douglas A. R. - *From Babylon to Rastafari*, 1999:94). Following is an excerpt from the Majority Report of that mission: "**The Mission found a desire, in the territories visited, for three departments of skilled immigrants. (a) Professional and technical, (b) Artisans, (c) Farmers. The African hosts to the Mission all observed that persons entering Africa in any migration scheme should do so with the intention of becoming permanent residents in the country, and not as transients.**"

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The question of citizenship would present no difficulty, they pointed out, since special arrangements would be made in this connection. But the matter of assimilation would be of prime importance and it was recommended that this be considered for special study on both sides. On almost every occasion it was a point for earnest conversation that centuries of exposure to western ideas and customs must tend to modify Jamaicans (and all the black people of the western hemisphere) into a way of life dissimilar to the African. Impatience with the African's traditions and customs, or too hard a try to "bring him into line" would wreck the finest efforts of the scheme. It could also operate the other way around. It was therefore strongly submitted by some members of African governments that an advance "goodwill corps" from both sides, Jamaica and the African States, should be sent into the countries of source and destination, to study and to teach."

The RasTafari Brethren protested the exclusive process by which the report was produced and proceeded to write their own account.

## **21st CENTURY INITIATIVES**

**2001** - CRO represented by a member of the Ichirouganaim Council for the Advancement of Rastafari (ICAR) at the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Other Intolerance in Durban, South Africa.

**2002** - CRO represented at the African and African Descendants Caucus in Barbados

**2002** - The African Union (AU) launched its Diaspora Initiative in Washington and presented its report to the Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers in Sun City, South Africa in May 2003. The Executive Council "**adopted a decision calling for the development of structured process, and institutions, for a sustained collaboration between Africa and its Diaspora**", and;

**2003** - Global Rastafari Reasoning in Jamaica made the following recommendations:

**This Reasoning must send a strong message to the Government of Jamaica, CARICOM and the AU that we want to return home. Some suggestions were offered:**

**(i) This Reasoning must seek the support of the UWI to update the 1960 Report on I an I and to use its findings to assist in bringing governmental attention to the matter of repatriation once again.**

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**(ii) Make a formal enquiry of the Government the Jamaica with regard to the outcomes of the historic Mission to Africa and to again place the matter of repatriation and reparations on the regional government agenda (CARICOM).**

**(iii) Urge GOJ to actively promote travel to the African continent and other levels of integration.**

**(iv) Establish an Advisory Council comprising those who met repeatedly with HIM and who can offer, experience, historical documents and connections to I an I pursuing repatriation today.**

**2004** - The African Union Technical Workshop on Relations with the Diaspora held in Trinidad and Tobago, 2-5 June 2004 noted that **"the AU has set for itself the goal of developing a people-centred organization, which would incorporate the views and address the needs of all its peoples, both inside Africa and in the Diaspora...[and] that the success of the Diaspora Initiative would depend, in large part, on the effort that the Diaspora was willing to invest In this enterprise...[and that] investment of effort would only be useful In a framework that set clear, achievable goals, well-defined paradigms, and appropriate structures and mechanisms to facilitate success In the pursuit of this common endeavor"**.

**2005** - In discussing The Way Forward, the January 2005 Report of the AU Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), identified the need for **"Support by the Member States for deepening the process of the integration of the Diaspora in the framework of the AU, including the development, encouragement and consolidation of structures for effective partnership and for legitimate and credible Diaspora representation In ECOSOCC and in wider AU's structure and processes."** The CSSDCA has since been transformed into the Civil Society and Diaspora Organisation (CIDO) Unit.

**2005** - CRO represented at 1st Diaspora RASTAFARI Summit in Hispanic America held in Panama, two outcomes of which are the government supported Rastafari Agri-Tourism Village and the feasibility study for the revival of Marcus Garvey's Black Star Line as a repatriation initiative.

**2005** In keeping with both the Outcomes Document on the African Diaspora Global Conference: Caribbean Regional Consultation in Barbados (2007) and the Statement and Plan of Action of the South Africa - African Union - Caribbean Conference in Jamaica (2005);

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this proposal must be considered in the establishment of "...mechanisms for the institutionalization of links between Africa and the Caribbean and for follow up conferences to be held on a biennial basis" and for the development of "...integrated development and the sharing of technical and financial expertise."

**2006** - Convening under the theme of the Rastafari Creed and prioritising "Rastafari Practicality – Social and Economic Development", the community in Jamaica began working toward the establishment of a Rastafari Development Fund in a process facilitated by The Haile Selassie I and Empress Menen Students Foundation of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.

**2006** - Ras Derek (Irek) Gonzales of Cultura Ambiente in Puerto Rico represented Rastafari at the Africa Youth Summit in Tripoli, Libya and distributed the CRO position paper on Building Strategic Alliances.

**2007** - Formation of the (all Mansions) Ethio-Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council in Jamaica

**2007** The Outcomes Document also made the following recommendations:

- **Explore mechanisms and measures to facilitate the free movement of people such as the removal of visa restrictions; and**

- **Call on the AU and CARICOM governments to develop mechanisms [with] Europe, Canada and the United States to ensure that reparations and repatriation implementation take place without further ado.**

With regard to Reparations, the CRO supports the position espoused by the Rt. Hon. PM Arthur at the Opening of the African Diaspora Global Conference (2007), that, "**The common stance of Africa and its Diaspora on this issue should be affirmative, not negative. We are for peace and development. We are for reconciliation with justice. We are for an equal standard of living for all people. What we seek to create should therefore be a moral force for the benefit of all humanity.**"

**2007** - Excerpts from Millennium Proclamation from the Ancient Council of the Nyahbinghi Order of Rastafari .

Whereas, the Government Fact Finding Mission of 1961 proved successful in regard to the Rastafarian quest for Repatriation, yet to date nothing as been done by the Government to facilitate such a process;

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Whereas all the above injustices and discrepancies have continued to affect the progress of the Rastafarian Movement.

We the Vanguards of the Movement hereby demand the following;

1. That full recognition of the Rastafari Movement be Constitutionally enshrined.
2. That in recognizing the Rastafari Movement an exemption under the Law, be granted in respect to our possession and use including smoking of Ganja, our Sacrament.
3. That a formal apology by both Government and the Opposition be given to the Rastafarian Movement for injustices meted out to the Rastafari Movement since its inception.
4. That financial and other assistance be granted to the Movement for the establishment of centers and welfare institutions to assist the many victims of police brutalities.
5. That discrimination against the Rastafari Movement in the workplace and educational institutions be a thing of the past and deemed unlawful, punishable by fines and or imprisonment.
6. That all rights and privileges accorded to all established churches and religions be given to Rastafarians
8. That in recognition of the Rastafarian goal of Repatriation that dialogue between the Jamaican Government and Governments of Africa, through the African Union be established in this regard.
9. That the demand for Reparation for the inhumane institution of slavery inflicted upon the Jamaican people by its former colonizer, Britain, be a responsibility of the Jamaican Government.
10. That in unison with the Barbadian Government a Pan African Commission be established in fostering closer links with the Continent of Africa.
11. That April 21st (Anniversary of the visit of H.I.M.Haile Sellassie I the First to Jamaica), November 2nd (H.I.M. Emperor Haile Sellassie I the First Coronation Anniversary) and September 11th ( Ethiopia New Year now recognized as Africa New Year) be dates for Rastafarian children to attend their traditional ceremonies, thus exempting them from schools.

**Nyahbinghi Order Ancient Council, September 2007**

**2007** – Rastafari represented at the Addis Ababa Diaspora Consultation at the AU Headquarters on 15-16 October. Key thematic areas include:

Global Dialogue	Economic Cooperation
Regional Development and Integration	Knowledge Sharing
Historical, Socio-Cultural and Religious Commonalities	Peace and Security
Women, Youth, Children and Vulnerable Groups	

**An inexhaustive list of networking organisations is provided below.**

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# **ALMIGHTY RASTAFARI KINGDOM**

## Networking

### Mansions/Organisations/Councils/Committees/Affiliates

Ancient Theocratic Nyahbinghi Order (I/U)  
 Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (I/U)  
 Twelve Tribes of Israel (I/U)  
 Empress of Zion Inc. (I/U)  
 International Rastafari Community (I/U)  
 Rastafari Alliance for Solidarity (I)  
 Caribbean Rastafari Organisation (R/U)  
 Caribbean Pan-African Network (R)  
 Trinity Trod (SR – East Caribbean)  
 Solidarity Rastafari Organization (SR– St. Martin)  
 Virgin Islands Roots Dawtas (BVI & USVI)  
 Triple Crown Culture Yard (L – Anguilla)  
 Gas Freeman Foundation for Unification of Rastafari (N-Antigua)  
 Rastafari Turtle Dove Deliverance (N – BVI)  
 School of Vision (N – Jamaica)  
 Youth Black Faith (N – St. Vincent & Grenadines)  
 Yanola Council for Advancement of Rastafari (N-St. Lucia)  
 Birchouganaim Council for Advancement of Rastafari (N-B/dos)  
 Guyana Rastafari Council (N)  
 Trinidad and Tobago Rastafari United Inc. (N)  
 Alianza Rastafari de Panama (N)  
 Lion of Judah Rastafari Organisation (L – St. Kitts)  
 Gziabeher Inc. (N – Puerto Rico)  
 Ethio-Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council (U–Jamaica)  
 Jamaica Rastafarian Development Committee (U – Ethiopia)  
 Rastafari National Council (N/U – South Africa)  
 Rastafari Yut Initiative (L – South Africa)  
 Rastafari United Movement (N/U – South Africa)  
 Melchizedek Order (L/SR – South Africa)  
 ORAL (N-Botswana)  
 Ambassade Culturelle de la Diaspora (PA – Benin)  
 World Federation (PA– Ethiopia/USA)  
 Global Afrikan Congress (PA)

PA - Pan-African  
 SR – Sub-Regional

I – International  
 N - National  
 U - Umbrella

R – Regional  
 L - Local

19<sup>th</sup> October 2007