

from: Rikka 6 (1) 1979

# RASTAFARIANS IN JAMAICAN PERSPECTIVE

**"Do not accept a title from another race"** is a quotation from Marcus Garvey which Rastafarians frequently repeat. It refers to Garvey's admonition that Black people should not accept the labels applied to them by Europeans. In Garvey's opinion, Black people should call themselves "Africans" or "Ethiopians."

This is a brief history of Africans in Jamaica both before and after Emancipation. Our intention is to develop a framework within which we can discuss the emergence of the Rastafarian movement. We want to outline the relevant social, economic, political and cultural factors which influenced the form it assumed and the direction it took. We also want to review briefly some of the critical episodes in the history of the movement itself in order to have a perspective for understanding its current strategies.

## Jamaica: Yesterday and Today

Jamaica is not an autochthonous society. Its indigenous inhabitants were killed off in the early days of colonization, to be replaced by white colonizers and Black slaves. These slaves were intended to provide the labour force for a highly specialized mode of production, the plantation. A key feature of the plantation economy is its need for abundant labour. Following Emancipation in 1834 the colonizers turned to India and other Asian countries for non-white indentured labour. As a result, in Jamaica and other West Indian nations today, the population consists of predominantly non-white elements, visibly stratified along class-colour lines. This in turn has bred hostility among the various segments.

For Fall Publication

### LIONS IN BABYLON

by CAROLE YAWNEY

PLOWSHARE PRESS

1345 Davenport Rd.  
Toronto, Ontario

M6H 2H5

Orlando Patterson in *The Sociology of Slavery* provides for us an extensive account of slave society in Jamaica. He depicts that country as a colony which attracted poor Europeans and corrupt members of the middle and upper classes, in addition to African slaves transported against their will. Patterson describes this early society in a way that suggests that almost total anarchy reigned, the implication being that it is a wonder that any kind of recognizable social life could emerge under these conditions:

... Jamaica developed into what it would remain for the rest of the period of slavery: a monstrous distortion of human society. It was not just the physical cruelty of the system that made it so perverse, for in this society was hardly unique. What marks it out is the astonishing neglect and distortion of almost every one of the basic prerequisites of normal human living. This was a society in which the clergymen were the 'most finished debauchees' in the land; in which the institution of marriage was officially condemned among both masters and slaves; in which the family was unthinkable to the vast majority of the population and promiscuity the norm; in which education was seen as an absolute waste of time and teachers shunned like the plague; in which the legal system was quite deliberately a travesty of anything that could be called justice; and in which all forms of refinements, of arts, of folkways, were either absent or in a state of total disintegration (Patterson, 1973: 9).

Initially race was used as the moral justification of slavery. The psychological consequences of beliefs about the inherent superiority and inferiority of certain races have as much impact as the sociological legacy of slavery. Feelings of inferiority based on race still characterize much of the under class, particularly when their low socio-economic position in the society seems to justify this view. David Lowenthal has this to say:

Coloured and Black West Indians not only admire whiteness, they follow whites in linking blackness with poverty, laziness, stupidity, and vice . . . Everyday circumstances are minutely compartmentalized in 'black' and 'white' traits. Colour frustration is endemic: the more a non-white West Indian accepts European evaluations, the more he rejects his own blackness. Self-contempt is the most damaging consequence of West Indian internalization of white values (Lowenthal, 1972: 258).

Jamaica was undoubtedly a "new-style" plantation society, in which absentee landlordism played a major role in the way the colony developed, and contributed significantly to the colonizers' rapacious attitude to that island, and to their lack of social responsibility; scholars, however, disagree among themselves concerning the extent to which absenteeism shaped the social and economic development of the colony. Eugene Genovese, in his comparative analysis of New World slaveholding societies criticizes Patterson for taking too narrow a view in trying to pin all the ills of Jamaican society on this factor (Genovese, 1971: 29). George Beckford argues that plantation society was slightly more efficient and stable than Patterson has depicted, if only because economic considerations were imperative (Beckford, 1972). Beckford emphasizes the role of the plantation as a total institution and examines in detail its mechanisms of social control, in particular its system of social stratification. He argues for the continuity of this ascriptive system into contemporary plantation society in Jamaica.

While there exists some disagreement about the social legacy of the plantation system in terms of the relationship between race and class in contemporary Jamaica, there is considerably more unanimity regarding the contribution of the plantation system

to Jamaica's continuing economic dependence. Beckford has argued that the persistence of the plantation system which dominates Jamaican agriculture has actually contributed to the underdevelopment of that country for several reasons. The modern form that the plantation has assumed — its industrialized form of production, in particular — has increased rural unemployment. At the same time, the fact that it produces crops for the export market while exercising a monopoly on some of the better land in Jamaica helps to undermine the capacity of the countryside to feed itself. Despite the fact that the majority of Jamaica's working class is employed in agriculture, that sector of the economy generates a comparatively low percentage of the gross domestic income (Jefferson, 1971: 110; Barrett, 1977: 7). On the other hand, the urban-industrial sector, with its smaller families and fewer dependents, receives considerably more for less input. Beckford has concluded that in the long run, in a plantation economy such as Jamaica, "the underdevelopment biases tend to outweigh the development impact" (Beckford, 1972: 183).

Havelock Brewster has argued that even the developments that have taken place in the areas of mining and industry "have been





achieved within the framework of an economic organization similar to that of the original sugar economy-pioneer manufacturing and large corporation mining" (Brewster, 1971: 39). In the early 1950's for example, one of the world's largest bauxite deposits was discovered in Jamaica. This reserve was mined by international corporations in a manner that benefited only a small minority of Jamaicans, while contributing to the further impoverishment of the countryside. Monroe has analyzed the role that bauxite mining has played in dispossessing the rural peasants of their lands on terms hardly in their favour (Monroe, 1972: 212). In the short run, while the dispossessed peasant might become a tenant farmer on company lands after he has sold his own holdings at a price too low to buy new properties, in the long run, Monroe argues, the impact of bauxite mining contributes to the greater oppression of the peasantry. For one thing, the cost of living in the bauxite mining areas rise. Ultimately, such dispossessed peasants either join the landless rural proletariat or become part of the chronically unemployed masses in the towns (Monroe, 1972: 212). Ironically, the development impact of bauxite has been experienced mainly in the more urban areas. While this attracts the rural unemployed, it also contributes to periodic shortages of labour in the rural sector at critical periods.

In the urban centres, in addition to the bauxite industry, tourism, construction and manufacturing have also contributed to an imbalance in income distribution which increasingly polarizes the class structure. In Kingston in particular, but throughout the island in general, there exists massive unemployment and underemployment. Jefferson has pointed out that despite the growth of mining, tourism and manufacturing in Jamaica, the Jamaican economy is characterized by the fact that "income . . . is very unevenly distributed relative to advanced countries, and even to those at a roughly similar stage of development" (Jefferson, 1971: 110). In other words, despite Jamaica's economic resources such as bauxite, and the gains made in industrialization, the gap between the rich and the poor appears to be increasing.

Thus far we have argued that the historical legacy of the plantation system produced a social structure in which the factors of both race and class are of importance in determining one's place in it. While scholars may disagree about the relative effect of race and class, we shall see below that in terms of the perceptions of the mass of the people, race appears to determine class.

This is a key understanding in terms of our discussion of Rastafarianism. Moreover, we have shown that far less disagreement exists among scholars in terms of the effect of the plantation economy on Jamaica's continuing dependence. In a very general sense, the Jamaican economy has been organized to meet the demands of an international market. This has had profound effects upon the lives of its people. There exists today massive unemployment and underemployment, a lack of skilled manpower, unequal distribution of income and resources, and widespread social problems.

The 1930's, a period of widespread political unrest in Jamaica, has profound implications for an understanding of contemporary politics. This is also the decade which witnessed the genesis of the Rastafarian movement. Working class unrest and a series of strikes during the 1930's culminated in the 1938 labour revolt which was dominated by events at the Frome estate, a rural sugar factory owned by the international company, Tate and Lyle. The impact of these activities and the emotionalism surrounding them has produced conflicting reports of what happened. Most observers agree, however, that these events laid the basis for the emergence of the two-party system: the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (JNP) under the leadership of two cousins, Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley respectively. These figures were to dominate the Jamaican political scene well into the late 1960's. A peculiar fact about the Jamaican two-party system, however, is that the only two labour unions, until recently, in the country were directly affiliated with the two parties. About this situation Gordon Lewis has the following to say:

*The dominant form of political unionism, in which the Jamaican unions have come to be run by the political parties as vote-catching annexes instead of being controlled by the workers, has inevitably taken the edge off the militancy (Lewis, 1969: 179).*

In 1944, the political situation seemed stable enough for Britain to end Crown Colony government and to introduce a new constitution based on the principle of universal adult suffrage. When an attempt to form a West Indian political federation in the late 1950's failed, Jamaica received political independence in 1962. While political leadership has oscillated between the JLP and the PNP in a way that makes Jamaica almost the model of the two-party system for the West Indies, political activity there has been increasingly characterized by violence. Since Independence, the political



ideologies of the two parties have tended to diverge as well. The JLP, which was in power from 1962 to 1972, has become increasingly identified with a programme of conservative politics, based on the principle of "Industrialization by invitation" which allowed for greater penetration of the economy by foreign interests. The PNP, on the other hand, under the leadership of Norman Manley's son, Michael, since its election in 1972, has gradually developed a programme of "Democratic Socialism." In the course of trying to diversify Jamaica's international connections and to promote greater self reliance at home, it has experienced considerable economic difficulties and political crises. Charges have been made openly against the United States by the Manley administration to the effect that the American government is pursuing a policy of destabilization in Jamaica, in order to weaken public support for the PNP's brand of socialism. The 1976 elections, in which Manley won an overwhelming victory for the second time in a decade, were preceded by a civil crisis which was the occasion for the declaration of a state of emergency that lasted several months. Neither party has been able to solve Jam-

ica's chronic economic problems. In fact, Jamaica as a nation has been unsuccessful in achieving political solutions for the problems brought about by the plantation system and continuing economic dependence. At various points in Jamaican history, it was only as a result of mass action or violence that political changes were even introduced. Thus, in considering attempts to redress the imbalances of Jamaican society, we have to bear in mind the impotence of legislative responses to date.

Historically, in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean, there have been other kinds of developments which can be regarded as forms of resistance to the plantation system and foreign domination. Here we refer to the widespread incidence of enthusiastic religions throughout the region, especially evident among the underclasses. George Simpson has surveyed the area and classified these nonconventional religions into five basic kinds of "cults", ranging from Vodun expression at one end of the continuum, to Rastafarianism at the other (Simpson, 1976: 310-311). His first four categories represent religions based on beliefs in spiritism and possession. Garveyism and Rastafarianism are classified in a fifth category as



"politico-religious cults", distinguished from the others by the absence of the belief in spirits and spirit possession, and by an emphasis on a secular ideology alongside a predominantly theological doctrine. In his discussion of the role of religion in the formation of West Indian society, R. T. Smith has noted that:

**Rastafarianism is the only example in the English-speaking West Indies of an attempt to fashion an aggressive social ethic based on a well-developed religious doctrine and incorporating African symbols in a clear way (R.T. Smith, 1976: 341).**

While Rastafarianism is clearly a development from Garveyism, we need to consider the historical and religious context within which both of these movements emerged, before we deal with the relationship between them. In the first place, many West Indian slaveholding societies refused to teach their slaves Christianity on the grounds that it would make them difficult to manage. Jamaica was no exception (Simpson, 1956: 334). As a result, certain African religious elements persisted among the slaves. Before Emancipation, however, British colonists, who themselves belonged to the Church of England, were disturbed by the fact that Christian missionaries from nonconformist religious groups, such as the Baptists and the Moravians, were making inroads among the slaves. Moore and Simpson have described at length the way in which the slaves achieved a high degree of syncretism between their African traditions and nonconformist Christianity (Moore, 1965, 1956). Following Emancipation, however, the former slaves grew increasingly dissatisfied with what appeared to be the growing institutionalization of their religious life (Barrett, 1977: 21). The result of this was a wave of revivalism in Jamaica in 1860 and 1861. Philip Curtin has argued that this "Great Revival" marked the point of departure for the separate development of the nonconventional missionary churches, on the one hand, and the Afro-Christian syncretic groups, on the other (Curtin, 1955: 68). Elsewhere, in a general work on the African heritage in Afro-American religion, Barrett adopts the argument that as a result of this event, the African religious initiative in Jamaica was able to develop independently of the strictly Christian denominations (Barrett, 1974). Thus we have in Jamaica a tradition of African-oriented religion in the form of Pocomania, Revivalism, and Revival Zion which exists outside of the predominantly Christian tradition consisting of both orthodox and nonconformist persuasions. The significance of this lies in the fact that both Garveyism and Rastafarianism developed in a historical context

in which there already existed a precedent for religious movements in which African elements were highly valued, if not predominant.

Now it is necessary to discuss in some detail the movement founded by Marcus Garvey, and to establish its relationship to Rastafarianism. Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica, and although he established his organization there in 1914, he developed his platform in the United States. Garvey's ideology of continental separation — Africa for the Africans, at home and abroad — had mobilized, some claimed, millions of Blacks. Garveyism was a phenomenon which profoundly threatened the hegemony of Europe in Africa. Thus the imperial powers, more than any other single factor, were responsible for the collapse of the Garvey movement. Even before Garvey was imprisoned in the United States in 1925, and deported to Jamaica in 1927, the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) was outlawed by many colonial governments. For example, in Haiti, Trinidad, Santo Domingo, and Guyana, Garveyism faced severe restrictions — its leaders were often imprisoned and its members deported. On the continent of Africa, only Ethiopia and Liberia were not colonized. Elsewhere Garveyism was perceived as a threat by colonial administrations. Vincent writes:

**In the French colonies, the authorities believed the U.N.I.A. had been involved in a number of violent demonstrations by black soldiers in 1919 and 1920. Consequently, they declared the association illegal — in some countries the punishment for having copies of Negro World (the official U.N.I.A. tract) was five years hard labour; in Dahomey it was life imprisonment (Vincent, 1971: 176).**

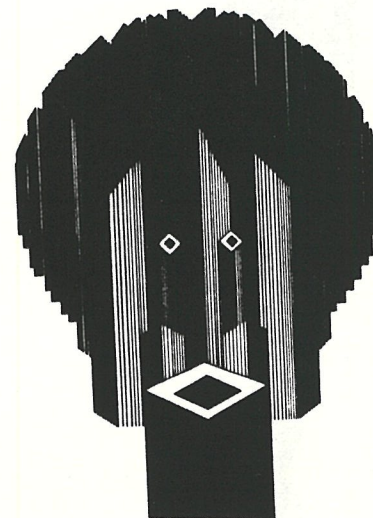
The strongest U.N.I.A. movement outside the United States was in Jamaica. When Garvey paid a visit there in 1921, the British authorities were so concerned that they stationed two battleships in Kingston Harbour during his stay (Vincent, 1971: 171-172). After his deportation, Garvey remained in Jamaica until 1935, and it was during this time that he attracted an even larger number of followers. However, the pressures brought against him by establishment interests eventually caused him to leave, and he died in England not long afterwards. It is ironic that following Jamaican Independence in 1962, Garvey and several other previously discredited revolutionary leaders were elected to the status of "National Heroes." In a wave of nationalistic fervour, his ashes were returned.

Garveyism was a powerful social force which spawned several kinds of Black initiatives. Vincent discusses many of these movements, both in the United States and

elsewhere (Vincent, 1971). Many of them drew upon the teachings and symbolisms of Garveyism for their content. In particular, notions of Repatriation to Africa, pan-Africanism (the unity of all people of African descent), the independence of Africa, and the autonomy of Ethiopia, all played a role. Vincent claims that "most early followers of the Rastafari movement, which started in the slums of Kingston in the early 1930's, were from the rank and file of the Jamaican U.N.I.A." (Vincent, 1971: 227), while Horace Campbell in an address to the sixth Pan-African Congress writes that:

**The Rastafarian movement grew out of the womb of Garveyism. They represented the desires of the people to forge progressive links with Africa. (Campbell, 1975: 50).**

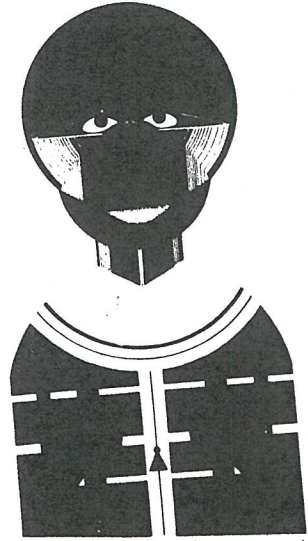
While Rastafarianism has drawn substantially upon Garveyite ideology — particularly with respect to Africa and the liberation of Black people — and while many followers of Garveyism in Jamaica apparently transferred their allegiances to Rastafarianism, we must emphasize that sociologically the two movements share little in common. The Universal Negro Improvement Movement was a centralized, constitutionally organized, and hierarchically directed operation, with hundreds of local chapters each with its own slate of officers and membership roster. Marcus Garvey as a charismatic figure was central to its continuing success. Rastafarianism, by contrast, is predominantly a decentralized and polycephalous social movement, organized in network fashion



with few formal organizational trappings. While both movements originated in urban ghettos, they appeared to attract individuals who held different orientations to the larger society. The difference between the American industrial north and colonial Jamaica is significant in this regard. Garveyites were primarily motivated to generate Black pride and to raise the status of the Black people by improving their standard of living and by competing with non-Blacks on an equal footing. Rastafarianism on the other hand, developing after the collapse of Garveyism and the Great Depression, rejected any strategy of accommodation within the larger society. It tended to adopt a far more revolutionary view of the social system than Garveyism, in that Rastafarians envisioned the necessity of a total change of the social order before the Black Man would be able to achieve equality. Thus while both movements were dedicated ultimately to the liberation of Black people, their relationship in time and space resulted in different social forms. The Rastafarian brethren, despite their many differences on other matters, continue to regard Marcus Garvey as second in stature only to Emperor Haile Selassie.

We have now reached the point at which we can engage in a discussion of the specific events surrounding the emergence of Rastafarianism. Before embarking upon a historical account of the movement, however, let us summarize our argument so far. We have maintained that in social terms one of the major legacies of plantation society has been the creation of a social order visibly stratified by both race and class, with the majority of the population falling into the "poor and black" category. This situation has been intensified by the economic legacy of plantation society and continuing dependence on foreign capital. Contemporary Jamaica is plagued by chronic problems. We have also established that the two political parties in Jamaica have been unable to deal effectively with this situation to now. In addition, because of the close association between the trade unions and the political parties, we have argued that political trade unionism has also proved unsuccessful. We also discussed other ways in which Jamaicans have responded to this situation. We have interpreted the efforts of several religious movements in Jamaica to preserve some aspects of their African tradition as a form of resistance to the cultural domination of colonialism. We examined Garveyism from this point of view as well. In addition, we saw that the explicit racial ideology of Garveyism represented an attempt to deal





with the feelings of inadequacy and racial inferiority which colonialism produced. With these observations in mind, let us now examine the shape that the Rastafarian movement took. We hope to demonstrate that most of its social and ideological strategies are understandable in light of the above.

### The History of the Rastafarian Movement

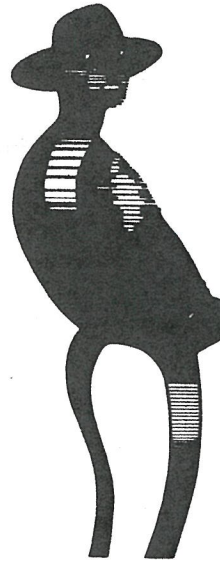
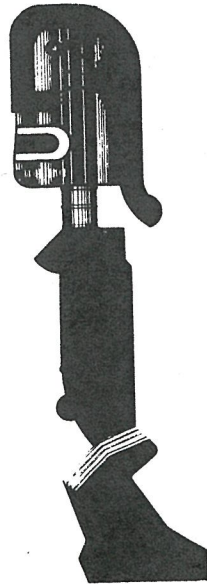
The experience of a changing colonial situation has profoundly affected the adaptive strategies of the Rastafarian movement. At this point we would like to review briefly the historical phases through which the movement has passed, as well as some of the historical events which are critical in understanding its current direction. In the reconstruction which follows we will be emphasizing the relationship between certain groups within the movement and elements of the dominant society. While we are able to sketch some of the internal developments which have taken place within the movement since its inception, the historical record remains very poor in this regard.

#### 1. Formative Urban Period

The decade of the 1930's provided the context for the emergence of Rastafarianism. Marcus Garvey had predicted that when a Black King was crowned in Africa the time of deliverance would be at hand. In 1930 Ras Tafari was crowned Emperor, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Could he be the one

of whom Garvey spoke? Later, in 1935, the world witnessed the invasion of Ethiopia by the Italians under Mussolini, and the League of Nations' subsequent refusal to honour its treaty with Ethiopia. It turned a blind eye to the acts of genocide being perpetrated there. This was seen by many in Jamaica as dramatic evidence of collaboration on the part of the Great Powers to oppress the last of the free African states and to suppress the liberation of Africans. These events were seized upon by the Rastafarians, and coupled with an extreme sense of alienation from the mainstream of Jamaican society, formed the basis of what initially appeared to be a utopian ideology.

Apparently, Rastafarian leaders started to make doctrine independently of each other at first. Among these leaders were Leonard Howell, Nathaniel Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds, and Paul Erlington. Howell, Hibbert, and Dunkley had all lived abroad at some point in their life. Howell was to become a major influence in the movement. The University of the West Indies report suggests that he had been a world traveller, that he had fought in the Ashanti War of 1896, and that he claimed to speak one or more African languages (Smith, M.G. et al., 1960: 6). Howell and his deputy, Robert Hinds, were very active Rastafarian preachers. In addition to successfully establishing a following in Kingston, these two brethren founded a large community in St. Thomas, a parish to the



east of Kingston. While these developments were taking place, Hibbert and Dunkley were cooperating to some extent on building an organization in Kingston. Hibbert had belonged to a Masonic society, the Ancient Mystic Order of Ethiopia, in which he had achieved the position of a Master Mason. He attempted to organize his followers formally by founding the Ethiopian Coptic Church. Dunkley, on the other hand, based his teachings mainly on the Bible (Smith, M.G. et al., 1960: 7), but agreed with Hibbert on several issues.

In early 1934, however, Howell and Hinds were arrested in St. Thomas and charged with sedition. They had apparently sold 5,000 photographs of Emperor Haile Selassie to unsuspecting citizens as passports to Ethiopia. The government took advantage of this swindle to prosecute both Hinds and Howell on the grounds that they had been inciting sedition in their anti-British, anti-white, antigovernment preachings. Hinds and Howell were sentenced to prison for one and two years respectively, while both Hibbert and Dunkley were arrested and sentenced on various charges several times in the mid-1930's. In this regard we can observe that a pattern of persecution of the movement was established at a very early period in its history.

In 1935, when Italy invaded Ethiopia, a new wave of Rastafarian activities was triggered which helped to polarize racial ideology. Local newspapers published accounts

of an alleged secret society organized by Haile Selassie to overthrow white domination by force and race war, called the International Order of Niyabingyi. In retrospect this appears to have been part of a propaganda war somewhat along the lines of the International Jewish Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. At the same time, apparent complicity of the Vatican in the invasion had undermined the authority of the Church. At this juncture the brethren reasoned that until they could return to Ethiopia physically, they should withdraw from the white-contaminated sectors of Jamaican society, meaning in effect its cities. While Brothers Hibbert and Dunkley appear to have adopted a low profile by the end of the 1930's (as little is known of their activities since then), Howell undertook a new venture. He founded a rural Rastafarian commune about twenty miles northwest of Kingston.

#### 2. Rural Encapsulation

While Rastafarian activities undoubtedly continued in some centres in Kingston during the 1940's and early 1950's, the main focus of the movement appears to have shifted to the countryside in order to avoid interference from the authorities. Howell's community in Sligoville, which was called "Pinnacle" is said to have housed nearly 2,000 followers. It was organized in a strictly authoritarian fashion, with Howell serving as its chief. Barrett suggests that it was patterned after the independent Ma-





Domestic & International Flights  
Specializing in Orient Tours

## K. IWATA TRAVEL

courteous, efficient & prompt Service  
around the World. . . .



162 Spadina Avenue / Toronto  
Ken Kutsukake 869-1291

room communities in Jamaica (Barrett, 1977: 86). Income was derived mainly from the cultivation and sale of cannabis, and it was on this account that Howell and some of his followers were again arrested in 1941. However, he returned to the settlement in 1943, where he continued to manage its affairs until a massive police raid finally broke up the community in 1954. During this period, the Dreadlocks fashion was cultivated, as members grew their hair in long locks after the style of Ethiopian warriors. They also came to be associated with ideas of racial purity and violent behaviour, as it is claimed that Howell's brethren frequently raided and terrorized the surrounding towns and farms. However, this is a period of Rastafarian history for which we have very few accounts, other than newspaper reports and police records. The raid on Pinnacle in 1954 is well described from the government's point of view by an American who witnessed them (Lepinske, 1955). While only a hundred-odd followers were arrested, the rest were scattered and the settlement was completely destroyed. Confronted with the untenability of keeping a separate collective base on Jamaican soil, many of these brethren began drifting back into Kingston to live. Up to that time, there appear to have been few Rastafarians in town. George Simpson, who conducted research into local religious movements in 1953, reports that there were at the most only one hundred and fifty brethren living in all of Kingston (Simpson, 1955: 168).

### Urban Entrenchment

In the mid-1950's Rastafarianism again became an urban phenomenon. Several events were to occur following the destruction of Pinnacle which contributed to a mounting crisis for the movement in terms of its relationship with the dominant society, which culminated in a special government inquiry

into the movement in 1960. At this point we would like to consider the rapid growth of the movement from 1954 until the early 1960's. This constitutes in our opinion a third phase which was characterized by several kinds of initiatives on the part of various groups within the movement without any sense of overall direction. During this phase the Dreadlocks or locksmen came to gain ascendancy as the prototype of the Rastafarian brethren. In the public eye they were associated with ideas of racial violence, criminality, and cannabis use, largely on account of the alleged behaviour of the Dreadlocks at Pinnacle. Moreover, their separatist ideology came to dominate the movement, and Repatriation as a literal goal was actively sought. At the same time, Kingston was experiencing rapid growth as a primary city. West Kingston began to take on a formidable dimension as a sprawling urban slum. Peasants dispossessed as a result of bauxite development began to drift to the city in large numbers, where few, if any, opportunities awaited them. The urban lower class which formed the basis of the Rastafarian movement continued to grow.

During this period many Rastafarian brethren grouped into local branches of the Ethiopian World Federation as a result of the very successful campaign of Mrs. Mamie Richardson, one of its New York members. The Ethiopian World Federation (E.W.F.) is an organization founded in New York by a representative of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1937. Its stated aim was to assist Black peoples of the West to repatriate to Africa, Ethiopia in particular. Let us clarify here its relationship to the Rastafarian movement. The E.W.F. consists of many local groups (called "Locals") which elect their own officers and plan their own activities, but which are constitutionally bound to their headquarters in New York City. Its membership is open to anyone who is interested in African cultural affairs, since its Repatriation programme has not been very successful. In Jamaica it struck a responsive chord among several members of the Rastafarian movement, who felt that it might further their goal of Repatriation. However, several other Jamaicans interested in the aims of E.W.F. also joined it. Some Jamaican locals consist of both Rastafarians or non-Rastafarians, others consist predominantly of either Rastafarians or non-Rastafarians, while a handful are dominated by Dreadlocks brethren. While the E.W.F. continues to function in Jamaica, it seems to have reached the height of its activities

in the 1950's before sectarian squabbles between the various locals paralyzed any potential it might have had for developing a pan-African consciousness among the lower classes. The majority of Rastafarian brethren remained outside of any formal organization.

In 1958 a prominent Rastafarian leader, Brother Prince Edwards, organized the first major Rastafarian public convention, on the promise that after the celebrations those in attendance would embark for Africa. Several thousand people were present during the twenty-one days that celebrations continued. Many who lived in rural areas had sold their property and belongings in anticipation of a new life in Africa. The occasion resulted in numerous conflicts between the brethren and the authorities, culminating in a major confrontation at a park in central Kingston which the brethren attempted to "capture." Repatriation did not materialize; many disillusioned Rastafarians thereupon drifted into the squatter settlements in West Kingston.

Several more incidents occurred towards the end of the 1950's involving hostilities between the police and the burgeoning Rastafarian population. None of these events helped to improve the image that the public held of the brethren. Finally, in late 1959 the public's worst fears were realized. Reverend Claudius Henry, a Jamaican resident in New York, had returned to the island for Brother Prince's convention. Afterwards he remained to establish the African Reform Church. In 1959, Henry was involved in a Repatriation fraud. Henry sold several thousand tickets to Ethiopia at a shilling each. The University of West Indies Report estimates that perhaps 15,000 were sold in all (Smith, M.G. et al., 1960: 16). When the day appointed for the departure arrived, and the ships did not materialize, the thousands of people assembled threatened to break the peace. Once again, a violent confrontation ensued, and Henry and several followers were jailed.

Rumours were circulated that Henry was planning a takeover of the government as revenge. In April, 1960, the authorities raided the premises of Henry's church where it is alleged they found a substantial cache of arms. Henry was indicted for treason and jailed for six years, although he denied all charges. However, shortly after his imprisonment, a national state of emergency was declared when news reached the authorities that a Rastafarian rebellion had broken out in the Red hills area near Kingston. Several people on both sides were

killed, and the leaders of the alleged insurgency were charged. Henry's son Ronald was hanged for his role as director of the affair. The entire Rastafarian movement was now regarded as a subversive element within Jamaican society.

### Reorientation

Although the above activities represented the work of a minority of brethren, the entire movement was called into question. Accordingly, several leading brethren requested that the government appoint a commission of scholars to investigate the movement and to report publicly on their findings. This step is significant for two reasons. To this point, there existed no social mechanism which was capable of transcending the various groups in the movement in order to speak for the movement as a whole. This represented the first of many attempts to develop pan-movement channels of communication. Secondly, it represented the first effort on the part of the movement to defend itself collectively. To this point, when individual brethren or local groups ran askance of the authorities, there was no representative movement body to speak on their behalf. The government complied with this request.

In 1960, the University of West Indies Report on the Rastafarian Movement was published serially in the local newspaper. It cast the movement in a far more favourable light than ever before. It concluded that "the great majority of Ras Tafari brethren are peaceful citizens who do not believe in violence" (Smith, M. G. et al., 1960: 27). Moreover, it went on to argue that the Rastafarians had legitimate complaints about the inherent inequality of Jamaican society which should be taken seriously by those in authority before the movement changed into a revolutionary organization. Among other suggestions, it recommended to the



RESTAURANT  
KOREAN CUISINE

tel.  
**KOREA HOUSE** 536-8666  
666 Bloor St. W./Toronto, Ont.

Licensed Dining Room

SAKE • BEER

Ginseng Tea

Sliced Barbecued Beef

Short Ribs of Beef

Kim Chi

Special Korean Recipes





government that it send a mission to Africa to inquire about the possibility of Repatriation, since this seemed to be the central concern of the brethren which should be resolved once and for all. The government implemented this recommendation and three Rastafarian delegates were included on the mission. The report and the mission touched off a public furor. Clearly Jamaicans were unprepared to treat Rastafarianism seriously. Then, in 1963, six alleged Rastafarians went on a murderous rampage in Coral Gardens, near Montego Bay, the heartland of the tourist industry. This set off repercussions across the country and Rastafarians everywhere were persecuted once again. Mau has described the repression that followed the Coral Garden affair (Mau, 1973: 58) and even today many brethren can produce vivid accounts of mass arrests and detentions during that period.

These events served to remind the brethren of their precarious social position. The newly independent government under Bustamante, the J.L.P. leader, took the Coral Gardens occasion to clarify its position on Rastafarianism. It held cannabis responsible for the Rastafarian threat to national security, and vowed to stamp out its use. Nettleford describes these events in detail and remarks that "during this time the war on ganja and the war on Rasta became one and the same thing" (Nettleford, 1970: 81). In Churchillian terms Bustamante stated in a pamphlet entitled "This Menace to Our Future":

Wherever ganja is grown, whether on the hills, on the plains, in the forests, or on platforms between trees or in pots, I intend to see that there is no resting place for these evildoers until this country is rid of the menace (Daily Gleaner, Oct. 19, 1963).

As a result the Dangerous Drugs Law was amended establishing stiff mandatory penalties for ganja-related offences.

The brethren also drew their own conclusions about their relationship with the two political parties during this period. While it was the P.N.P. government which sponsored the mission to Africa, it was the J.L.P. government which adopted extremely repressive measures as a result of the Coral Gardens affair. For these and other reasons, Rastafarians today, while totally rejecting party politics, still appear to be more partial to the P.N.P. than to the J.L.P. Because P.N.P. philosophy also seems to be egalitarian than the J.L.P.'s, it is that much more compatible with Rastafarianism.

During the 1960's several leading brethren of the movement recognized the need for social mechanisms which could promote

communication and understanding among the diverse elements of the movement. While no forms of permanent organizations emerged, several initiatives were made in this direction. The brethren had developed their solidarity to the point where on several occasions the government found it necessary to convene a committee of leading brethren for consultation. The growing sense of solidarity among members of the movement in general was suddenly intensified by the visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to Jamaica in 1966. This was a major event in terms of the movement's history. For the first time several thousand Rastafarians participated publicly in a state drama. In fact, the response of all Jamaicans to the Emperor's visit was so enthusiastic that the authorities were unable to exercise control over the crowds at the airport. The Emperor was unable to disembark from his plane. The Governor-General had to call upon a prominent Dreadlocks Rastafarian brother from West Kingston to ascend the steps of the plane and to appeal for order. This has been interpreted by members of the movement as a major validation of their status.

Thus we can conclude that during the period of the 1960's there developed among members of the movement an increasing feeling of solidarity. While this did not result in any formal pan-movement associations, several critical events served to reinforce this point of view. By the end of the 1960's it appears that even the Dreadlocks, traditionally the most separatist wing of the movement, had concluded that if they were not to be isolated and crushed, they would have to forge alliances with all progressive elements, not only with pan-Africanists. Thus by the end of the 1960's the Rastafarians opened what had been a relatively closed society as far as journalists and social scientists were concerned. A wave of Rastafarian studies appeared around this time.

Let the Siddiques prepare and host your next adventure in curry dinner comparable to that found in the best Indian restaurants . . .

For your next party try a tempting Chicken Bhoona or Kashmir . . . Pakora . . . Papadum

Special Lunches daily 11-2:30 - \$1.50 up  
Catering & Fast Take-out

**Golden Bengal**  
RESTAURANT

Mashud & Bushra Siddique 536-0003

1454 Dundas St. W. E of Dufferin

## Revivalism

This stage comprises the 1970's. It was during this period that Rastafarianism experienced a popular revival, especially among the youth who were attracted to it on a large scale. This appeal has to be understood in light of the spread of Black Power ideas to the Caribbean at this time, coupled with severe repression of any attempts along the lines of militant opposition. For example, in 1970 in Trinidad we witnessed the suppression of a military coup and the preparedness of the Americans and British to intervene if necessary. Régis Debray has argued that "revolution revolutionizes the counter-revolution" (Debray, 1967: 21). Since the Cuban revolution, Western nations have been especially concerned with political disturbances in the West Indies. Jamaica, which traditionally has had an image of radicalism, is undoubtedly an object of concern. Rastafarians therefore have been sensitive about maintaining an image of peaceful nonviolent protest, which under the circumstances, they argue, represents a nonpolitical alternative.

It is always difficult to determine the numbers involved in an amorphous social movement such as Rastafarianism. However, at the end of the 1960's, two different accounts estimated the number of declared brethren to be 70,000 (Barrett, L. E., 1968: 2; Nettleford, 1970: 49). Owens questions this estimate as being too high, putting the number at 50,000 in West Kingston. A recent article in the London *Sunday Times* (October 3, 1976) on the subject of Rastafarians in England reports:

Their movement indeed has doubled in numbers in Britain in the last two years to more than 5,000 (there are about half a million throughout the world).

The growing popularity of the Rastafarian movement was seized upon by the P.N.P. in the 1972 elections. Their successful campaign was based largely upon an implied association with the Rastafarian movement. Many election issues directly concerned Rastafarian symbolism and figures. Both parties argued about the "Henry pamphlet affair." This concerned a one page poster-type pamphlet apparently published by Claudius Henry, who had been released from jail some years before and who had established a collective rural settlement. Local people claim that he was greatly assisted in this matter by P.N.P. patronage. The pamphlet in question declared that a divinely ordained Trinity of the Godhead consisting of Henry as Moses, Michael Manley, the P.N.P. leader as Joshua, and Selassie as Lord of Lords, would solve the economic and political ills

## NATURE TRAVEL SERVICE

246 Queen Street East / Toronto <sup>MSA</sup> 153  
Telephone (416) 363-6394

Gus Yaki, president

Africa . . . Hawaii . . . Florida . . .  
Scandinavia . . . Baffin Islands . . .  
Yukon . . . Maritimes . . . for Nature  
Lovers . . . to all parts of the world . . .  
by Air . . . canoe . . . bicycle . . . hiking  
under Expert Leadership . . . Identification  
of Flora and Fauna . . . an  
unforgettable adventure . . .

of Jamaica. The manner in which each party handled this publication was a source of controversy for weeks.

Another election issue concerned the *rod of correction*, an ornate walking stick given to Manley by Selassie on his 1969 visit to Ethiopia. It was used throughout the campaign as a party symbol, as opposed to a bell and clapper, the J.L.P. symbol. A prominent member of the J.L.P., the Minister of Finance, whose riding is in West Kingston (where the largest concentration of Rastafarians is to be found) challenged Manley's claim to the true rod by producing another which he claimed was "truer." Each party organized mass rallies around this issue and the press covered it extensively.

In addition, the P.N.P. based its campaign around such slogans as "it's time for a government of love" and "hail the man," a common Rastafarian greeting. It even went so far as to organize a musical bandwagon, which travelled about the country, playing Rastafarian-inspired songs drumming up support. Throughout this period Rastafarians were very critical of this abuse of their culture and made many sardonic 45 r.p.m. records to this effect.

One of the first items on Manley's agenda after winning this election was to send another mission to Africa, ostensibly as a goodwill gesture from his government. This team of five delegates included one Rastafarian, a person who had also been a member of the 1960 Mission to Africa. By the time the 1976 election campaign was underway, several Rastafarian brethren appeared to be giving Manley "critical support" in his struggle to be re-elected. This was a source of controversy among the brethren, which had to be resolved at the individual level. While Rastafarians do not vote, their



moral support is politically valuable. At one point just prior to the election an assassination attempt was made upon the life of Bob Marley, an internationally famous Dreadlocks singer, because of his involvement in a P.N.P. benefit concert.

With many Caribbean governments paying lip service to the African liberation movement, Rastafarians are being recognized more and more for their contributions to an awareness of African culture and history. In actual fact though, Jamaicans have traditionally held contemptuous attitudes towards their African origins, even though approximately ninety percent of the Jamaican population is Black. We have already seen that Marcus Garvey's attempts to raise African consciousness among his fellow Jamaicans were lamentably unsuccessful. Rex Nettleford has discussed the fact that attitudes towards Africa began to change in the 1960's (Nettleford, 1970). Selwyn Ryan has actually credited the Rastafarian movement with keeping alive a vision of Africa until a greater part of the West Indian society was prepared to accept it (Ryan, 1975: 1). This is a very general statement, though, for in actual fact, African consciousness holds different implications for different people. Many Rastafarians themselves are ambivalent about attempts to usurp their cultural initiatives.

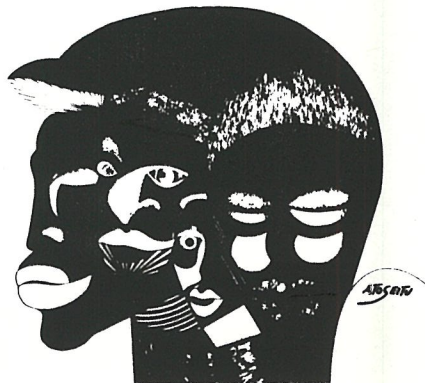
Nevertheless, Rastafarianism spread to most of the other West Indian islands during the 1970's. This movement has been assisted to a large extent by the popularity of Bob Marley's music. In some of the islands, the Rastafarian movement has been regarded by the authorities as a threat to the status quo. In Dominica, an Unlawful Societies Act was passed in 1973 which made it illegal even to wear Rastafarian insignia. On the other hand, the movement seems to be easily tolerated in places such as Trinidad. While an examination of the diffusion of Rastafarianism throughout the West Indies is beyond the scope of this essay, it is a development of which the brethren are well aware. While they are generally impressed by the growing popularity of the movement, however, it has generated some concern over the question of orthodoxy, an issue which has not been of much concern until now. According to newspaper and other popular accounts, the kinds of people joining the movement abroad are criminals and radicals with a propensity for violence. While brethren reject this extreme position as propaganda, they nevertheless have expressed concern for making available on a larger scale the teachings of the movement so that those aspiring to become Rastafarians can have access to "orthodox" inter-

pretations. To the extent that Rastafarianism was a locally based movement in Jamaica, one learned the doctrine and ritual mainly through personal associations with brethren in small group situations. It remains to be seen how the popularity of the movement beyond Jamaica in the 1970's will affect the way in which the teachings are transmitted.

The period of the 1970's has witnessed some successful attempts to organize the movement in a more cohesive fashion. During the period of this fieldwork, for example, a small group of brethren from central Kingston formed the Rastafarian Movement Association. Without compromising their spiritual and cultural understandings, this group became very active in an overtly political fashion. For one thing, it published regularly a newsletter, sometimes weekly, sometimes biweekly, which expressed Rastafarian opinion on a variety of subjects. In particular, it carried reports of the persecution of the brethren by those in authority. It also organized public meetings, marches, and cultural events, and was active in seeking alliances on the university campus. While the R.M.A. has seen some changes in terms of its leadership and social organization, it continues to be very active still.

There were several other Rastafarian groups, less expressly political but equally as active, which were successful in recruiting large followings during the 1970's. Here we might mention the Twelve Tribes of Judah, which is modelled after the E.W.F. It has gained an extensive following among middle-class youth. While no single Rastafarian organization emerged as dominant, most experienced significant increases in their membership.

One final event to note in relation to the events of the 1970's is the founding of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jamaica.



While membership in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, like the Ethiopian World Federation, is open to anyone, Rastafarians dominate it, at least in Jamaica. The E.O.C., like some of the Rastafarian organizations described above, has achieved considerable success in recruiting members. We might also note that Rastafarians who belong to the E.O.C. may also belong to some of the other popular organizations such as the R.M.A. or the Twelve Tribes.

What all this seems to suggest is that during the decade of the 1970's there appears to have been a significant growth in the Rastafarian movement. Moreover, while most Rastafarian brethren probably still do not belong to any formal association, there is no doubt that the number of successful organizations within the movement has increased. Finally, there is evidence that Rastafarians on the whole have become more active in the public life of Jamaica. In fact, certain Rastafarian associations actively cooperate with non-Rastafarian interest groups.

During Manley's 1972-1976 term in office, there were many political initiatives undertaken by various interest groups. One of the most significant was the establishment of the Worker's Liberation League (W.L.L.), a movement committed to the pursuit of Marxist-Leninism and the establishment of "scientific socialism." This group has been active in organizing an independent workers' trade union movement. Despite their disappointment with Manley's hesitant economic policy, the W.L.L. nevertheless gave Manley critical support in the 1976 election campaign. At the same time, the W.L.L. has been forging links with members and leaders of the Rastafarian movement around the issues of African liberation and education. The W.L.L. recognizes the role that Rastafarians have played in the area of culture and it officially regards the movement as a religion which has a right to practise in its own way.

In reviewing the events of the 1970's several questions are raised. While we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of the movement, and despite efforts on the part of many brethren to organize the others in a more formal fashion, generally speaking we may say that the majority of Rastafarians do not belong to recognized groups. Secondly, while Manley's government appears to be moving in the direction of socialism, and although a viable Marxist-Leninist party has been established, the majority of those dissatisfied with the way things appear to be joining the Rastafarians. Young people in particular are attracted to the movement. Thirdly, Rasta-

In the next issue . . .

featuring

## THE PACIFIC RIM

*Issues and concerns from the Philippines, India, the divided Koreas, Indonesia, Japan and other countries along the Pacific Rim.*

further material on

## REDRESS for Japanese Americans

farian brethren themselves are not leaving the movement in order to join either the P.N.P. or the W.L.L. This situation needs to be explained.

In summarizing this general review of the history of the movement, we have shown that at various points the activities of a handful of extremist brethren have had negative repercussions for the movement as a whole. We have also seen that while it may have been in the interests of the movement to have established formal pan-movement associations, this has not taken place. Our discussion has also revealed that the movement has grown increasingly strong with the passage of time. Therefore it can no longer be regarded as marginal by the non-Rastafarian public. It remains to be seen how public acceptance of the movement will affect its future course.

— Carole Yawney

**Carole Yawney** is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Atkinson College, York University; she is currently on sabbatical doing further research on Rastafarians in Jamaica which is the theme of her Ph.D. thesis presented to McGill University in early 1979. Her areas of teaching concern are Race and Racism, and Problems in Caribbean Sociology. Her forthcoming book, **Lions in Babylon**, will be published in the Fall by Plowshare Press.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrett, L. E.  
1968 *The Rastafarians: A Study in Messianic Cultism in Jamaica*. Puerto Rico, Institute of Caribbean Studies
- 1974 *Soul-Force*. New York, Anchor-Doubleday.
- 1977 *The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance*. Boston, Beacon Press
- Beckford, G. L.  
1972 *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World*. New York, Oxford University Press



- Brewster, H.  
1971 Sugar, Our Life or Death? In: Girvan, U. & O. Jefferson (eds.) Readings on the Political Economy of the Caribbean. Kingston, New World Group. pp. 37-48.
- Campbell, H.  
1974 Pan-Africanism. Document of the Sixth Pan African Congress. Better Read Graphics; Dumont Press Graphix
- Curtin, P. D.  
1955 Two Jamaicas. Cambridge, Harvard University Press
- Debray, R.  
1967 Problems of Revolutionary Strategy In Latin America. New Left Review, 45: 13-41
- Genovese, E. D.  
1971 The World the Slaveholders Made. New York, Vintage Books
- Jefferson, O.  
1971 Jamaica's Post-War Economic Development. In: Girvan, N. & Jefferson, O. (eds) Readings in the Political Economy of the Caribbean, Kingston, New World Group, pp. 109-120
- Lewis, G.  
1969 The Growth of the Modern West Indies. New York, Modern Reader
- Lepinske, H.  
1955 Jamaican Ganja: A Report of the Marijuana Problem. New York, Exposition Press
- Lowenthal, D.  
1972 West Indian Societies. London, Oxford University Press
- Mau, J. A.  
1973 The Threatening Masses: Myth or Reality? In: Lowenthal, D. & Comitas, L. (eds.) op cit., pp. 55-77
- Monroe, T.  
1972 The Politics of Constitutional Decolonization. Kingston, Institute of Social & Economic Research
- Moore, J. G.  
1965 Religious Syncretism in Jamaica. Practical Anthropology, 12: 63-70
- Nettleford, R.  
1970 Mirror, Mirror: Race, Identity and Protest in Jamaica. Kingston, Collins & Sangster
- Patterson, O.  
1973 The Sociology of Slavery. London, Granada Publishing
- Ryan, S.  
1975 Africa in Caribbean Perspective. Paper presented at Canadian African Studies Association Meetings, York University, February, 1975
- Simpson, G. E.  
1955 Political Cultism in West Kingston, Jamaica. Kingston, Social & Economic Studies Journal, University of West Indies  
1956 Jamaican Revivalist Cults, Society of Economic Studies, 5: 321-442  
1976 Religions of the Caribbean. M: Shepperson, G. (ed.) The African Diaspora. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 280-311
- Smith, M. G. et als  
1960 The Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica. Kingston, Institute of Social & Economic Research
- Smith, R. T.  
1976 Religion in the Formation of West Indian Society. In: Shepperson, G. (ed.) The African Diaspora. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 312-341
- Vincent, T.  
1971 Black Power and the Garvey Movement.



*Toni Jagersten*

On September 6, 1978 the staff of the Native Canadian Centre, located at 16 Spadina Road in midtown Toronto, wined and dined one of its favourite people. It was a bitter-sweet occasion — happy on the one hand because it was an opportunity to express their appreciation and feelings of respect for Toni Ming Jagersten and her dedication to the Centre over the past twelve years — and sad on the other hand for this was a farewell party for a valuable staffmember who had won everyone's affection and admiration.

Of her long association with the Native Canadian Centre as Executive Secretary, Toni — who is interviewed by Rikka on page 58 — recalls . . .

\* \* \*

Little did I know when I first wandered through the front door of 210 Beverly Street that I would not leave until 12 years later.

I guess I am one of the few people who happened into a Friendship Centre — or into any Native organization for that matter — without any particular desire to work with Native people. An employment agency had sent me for an interview and I got the job.

As best as I can remember, the staff was then comprised of an Executive Director, a Program Director, a Courtworker/counselor, a part-time bookkeeper and myself. However, there were regular volunteers who worked three shifts — morning, afternoon and evening. The place was a hub of activity and one could almost reach out and touch the goodwill.