

Tell out King Rasta Doctrine Around the Whole World:
Rastafari in Global Perspective
Carole D. Yauney

THE REORDERING OF CULTURE:
LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND CANADA
IN THE HOOD

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TELL OUT KING RASTA DOCTRINE AROUND THE
WHOLE WORLD: RASTAFARI IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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This paper discusses the implications for the Rastafari movement, of its spread worldwide in the last two decades. It suggests that further opportunities for Rastafari mobilization, which began in Jamaica in the early 1930s, exist outside the Caribbean, especially in North America and United Kingdom. On the other hand, Rastafari communities abroad have to deal with pressures such as racism, criminalization, and commodification in more intense ways than in the Caribbean. The author argues that all these factors influence the shape that Rastafari takes outside the Caribbean, as well as at its point of origin. It suggests that the impact of this development is most noticeable in the role that orthodox Rastafari culture (Nyabingi) plays as well as the position that Rastafari women hold.

Cet article examine la mondialisation récente du mouvement Rastafari, créé en Jamaïque dans les années 1930. Toutefois, les nouvelles communautés Rasta implantées surtout en Amérique du Nord et en Grande Bretagne, doivent affronter le racisme, la criminalité et la commodification d'une manière beaucoup plus intense que les communautés vivant dans la Caraïbe. L'auteur, tout en expliquant que ces sources de conflit ont une influence importante sur l'orientation du mouvement à l'extérieur de la Caraïbe aussi bien qu'en Jamaïque, montre que l'impact de cette évolution récente se fait sentir surtout dans les rôles joués par la culture orthodoxe Rastafari (Nyabingi) et par les femmes.

THE TITLE OF THIS PAPER is borrowed from a traditional Rastafari chant which exhorts Rastafari to get their Bible, read it with understanding, and then tell out King Rastafari doctrine around the whole world.¹ Since its genesis in Jamaica in the early 1930s Rastafari has managed to export its culture of resistance around the globe.²

This is a rather remarkable achievement for a theocratically oriented religious movement, generally lacking institutional support and centralized forms of organization, which could make proselytization easier.³ In addition, in most societies where it has manifested, Rastafari has been under siege by the State, by the media, by the dominant culture. Despite all this, and through overcoming its own internal contradictions and sectarian politics, Rastafari continues to be a vibrant and dynamic force for social change, maintaining its potential to confront the dominant society in many ways.

Although caution should be exercised when generalizing about Rastafari, a few observations can be made about it as it has developed in the Jamaican context. Rastafari themselves date their genesis to 1930, the year Ras Tafari was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. While the Bible, in particular the Hebrew Testament and Revelations, is a key text for Rastafari, their orientation is profoundly Afrocentric. The collective repatriation of black people to Africa, to Ethiopia in particular, is a major goal.

This paper addresses some of the implications of the globalization of Rastafari, both for the movement itself, and for the communities in which it has made an impact. I am using the concept of "globalization" here in a counter-hegemonic sense to refer to the world-wide spread of Rastafari.⁴ A major issue arises: to what extent has Rastafari the capacity for developing a universal cultural appeal beyond the confines of its local, Caribbean-based, specifically Jamaican, Afrocentric orientation, without fundamentally altering its premises? Moreover, what kinds of contradictions or dynamic tensions (in the sense of creative challenges) does the process of globalization generate within Rastafari?

On the one hand, while many Rastafari claim that theirs is a universal religion for all peoples, some, on the other hand, want to protect it as a predominantly black heritage. The increasing global dissemination of Rastafari, partly through reggae music and active travel, mainly by elders and brethren, has brought this question into sharper focus. In other words, is Rastafari a liberation theology and culture of resistance relevant only to Caribbean people of African descent, or other black folk in the diaspora, or can it be adopted by other people without being appropriated by them?

This dilemma appears to parallel the experience of the First Nations peoples of the Americas. On the one hand, many First Nations elders have taught that their traditional attitudes and practices, particularly regarding "Mother Earth," hold the solution to the current environmental crisis in the West. On the other hand, there is considerable ambivalence about non-Native people taking the Teachings, professing to walk the Way, and in particular, becoming teachers themselves. The globalization of Rastafari raises similar issues—we need to determine precisely what are the specific aspects of Rastafari that form the basis of its resonance where it has gained a footing beyond the black community.

Moreover, now that far more Rastafari are physically present in other states of Africa, in addition to Ethiopia where some have been settled since the 1960s, we need to examine this particular cultural exchange. Although this is not the repatriation on the political scale envisioned by Rastafari, it still constitutes a significant dynamic. While the message of Rastafari was initially spread via the electronic and performance mode of reggae, the implications of more sustained contact between Rastafari and the citizens of various African states such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa, needs to be explored. What shape does Rastafari take in new and different contexts? And, what is the feedback effect upon various Rastafari communities in the Caribbean and the North?

In this paper I hope to show that since the early 1980s, with Rastafari communities in the diaspora reaching a kind of critical density, there have been a series of international events which have served to focus and precipitate a self-conscious development within Rastafari, not only to resist ongoing attempts to repress it and other black cultural expressions, but also to actively seek to raise its creative and critical profile. This has both accelerated the pace of international networking and consolidation among Rastafari, and attracted much more positive public attention.

While particular circumstances and an availability of certain kinds of resources have made it possible for the Rastafari communities to take on challenges in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States not easily met in the Caribbean context, where Rastafari has been conditioned by a longer history of containment and repression, developments among Rastafari communities in the diaspora of the North have also had a feedback effect on Caribbean-based Rastafari communities.

In this paper I review some of these developments to show how some longheld attitudes and practices have been reinforced at the same time that Rastafari have engaged in new initiatives as part of this globalization

process. For example, since the early 1980s several international conferences and cultural events have been held mostly outside the Caribbean, a setting more conducive to examining certain issues within Rastafari than is possible in the more conservative context of the Caribbean, particularly in Jamaica. Here I refer specifically, among other things, to the role of Rastafari women, not only as partners and mothers, but also as artists and organizers, in a movement which traditionally has had male leadership.

John Homiak, a Washington-based anthropologist and long-term researcher of Rastafari, who has also played a role in facilitating some of these international Rastafari cultural exchanges, has argued that this process seems to have highlighted certain contradictory tendencies within Rastafari, such as the tension between egalitarianism and hierarchy (Homiak, forthcoming "b," pp. 15-18). Homiak's research in this focus-*es* mainly on the challenges to the concept of leadership or "Eldership" within Rastafari that globalization entails (Homiak, forthcoming "b").

With regard to reinforcing traditional patterns, the process of globalization seems also to have strengthened the foundation of the House of Nyabingi, which represents the most disciplined and orthodox expression of Rastafari.⁵ Homiak has suggested that we are indeed witnessing "something of a revival of Nyabingi traditions in Jamaica" (Homiak, forthcoming "b," p. 19). There has, in fact, been a conscious effort by Nyabingi elders, since the mid-1980s, to travel outside Jamaica to promote this tradition, the result of what many Rastafari regard as the weakening or undermining of Rastafari orthodoxy by the reliance on reggae music as the sole source of Rastafari teachings and "livivity," the Rastafari concept for way of life. There has also been a countervailing movement by Rastafari raised in the diaspora who make, in effect, what could be considered pilgrimages to Jamaica to study with seasoned elders and to experience Nyabingi livivity first hand.⁶

Rastafari communities under siege abroad, where they have to deal with additional forms of oppression, such as institutionalized racism around education issues, immigration practices, the criminal justice system, and so on, may rely increasingly on the more orthodox forms of livivity for religious and cultural protection.⁷ Rastafari in the diasporas of Birmingham, London, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and Toronto cannot afford to be casual about their identity when the dominant society seems intent on criminalizing, racializing, commodifying, romanticizing, or trivializing them. These tend to be the primary mechanisms of social control practised upon Rastafari.

The Rastafari response to its globalization is significant then for a number of reasons. It may help to shed further light on the process of how culture changes and adapts to evolving circumstances. As localized as Rastafari was in Jamaica for a number of decades, it was never isolated from the international arena. In fact, if we adopt the perspective that Jamaica itself was never a marginalized hinterland, but rather that it constituted historically an integral part of a much larger picture, then we can partly understand why one of its major exports is its culture. Reggae and Rastafari, for example, resonate globally because they somehow have a universal pulse.

RASTAFARI AS A TRAVELLING CULTURE

My approach in this paper is informed by James Clifford's discussion of the implications for "postmodern" ethnography, in which the cultural informant moves in a far wider field than the anthropologist typically expects (Clifford, 1992). In his article on "Traveling Cultures," Clifford argues that:

In much traditional ethnography ... the ethnographer has localized what is actually a regional/national/global nexus, relegating to the margins a "culture's" external relations and displacements. This is now increasingly questioned ... Anthropological "culture" is not what it used to be. And once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, then one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones. (Clifford, 1992, pp. 100-101)

Clifford goes to on suggest, after George Marcus and Michael Fisher, that "innovative forms of multi-locale ethnography may be necessary to do justice to transnational political, economic, and cultural forces that traverse and constitute local or regional worlds" (Clifford, 1992, p. 102). As ethnographers, this would imply giving up a rigid sense of polarized notions of Rastafari centre and margins—the notion of a baseline orthodoxy in relation to "versions of"—and recognizing the legitimacy of evolving diasporic expressions. However, we also need to pay attention to how Rastafari themselves define the question of cultural authenticity, particularly in light of globalization. Where I prefer to proceed with this discussion with reference to the local and global dialectic, John Homiak has analyzed the same problem in terms of "yard" and "nation" for the

reason that both concepts are themselves used by Rastafari (Homiak, forthcoming "b," p. 1).

Marlene Warner-Lewis's approach to African continuities in Rastafari may be helpful in resolving this dilemma of "pure" versus altered cultural forms. She suggests that we think in terms of how:

At any one period of time, a description of a culture—even a participant understanding of it—will emphasize its major characteristics. But there are always exceptions to rules, deviations, minor tendencies; these are modes which at that point in time are less popular or even suppressed for some social, aesthetic or political reason. But at another point in time, a sub-dominant or residual tendency may assume greater importance and visibility than it previously had. At any period of its evolution, therefore, the cultural history of the group is characterized by variations in the dominance versus marginality of any one of its multiple facets. This variability carries a spacial dimension as well. (Warner-Lewis, 1993, p. 109)

From this perspective we could regard Rastafari, both throughout its history and in its contemporary form, as a vast reservoir of interrelated themes and ideas, which vary in the way Warner-Lewis supposes.

The formative history of Rastafari in fact demonstrates that a number of cultural themes were strategically and creatively woven together in response to both local and global events. The influence of Garveyism, Ethiopianism, Hindu culture, Biblical fundamentalism, African beliefs and practices, and Jamaican peasant culture, including Revival, have been discussed elsewhere at some length (Chevannes, 1978; Homiak, 1985; Mansingh and Mansingh, 1985; Post, 1970; Warner-Lewis, 1993). In addition, Rastafari elders and leaders have always been communicators and travellers. In fact, Caribbean peoples have always travelled, mostly as workers rather than as tourists, but this has contributed nevertheless to the possibility of developing enriched syncretic cultural forms. With reference to Rastafari, a variety of orientations which give priority to one or another combination of these themes has always existed within the movement.⁸

~~We need to address the social as well as the ideological heterogeneity of Rastafari.~~ There have always been various social formations in Rastafari, ranging from loosely knit collectives, to those with official names and a more formal social and ritual calendar, to some that are quite well organized along more hierarchical and bureaucratic lines. Many Rastafari may also be associated with the Ethiopian World Federation or the Ethiopian

Orthodox Church. And individual Rastafari may well involve themselves with more than one group.

While sectarian rivalries may develop between various interests, this diversity could be regarded as a cultural resource. Here I am suggesting that, depending upon the "works" (the Rastafari term for one's cultural/spiritual mission) which Rastafari might take up, the movement can avail itself of the appropriate format from this "pool." I hope to demonstrate the range of activities into which Rastafari have been thrust since the early 1980s as a result of globalization. It can then be argued that both ideological and social diversity can be used as strengths rather than liabilities.

For academic students of Rastafari several methodological considerations also arise as a result of this heterogeneity. Globalization simply brings them more into focus. ~~Methodologically, the prudent course is to~~ ~~be~~ ~~researcher~~ ~~is~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~specific~~ ~~about~~ ~~the~~ ~~sources~~ ~~of~~ ~~data.~~ Ethnographers can have widely varying experiences, which affect their perception of Rastafari and the way in which they portray it sociologically. It was contentious enough to try to grasp the range of Rastafari when it was localized in Jamaica, but as it spread into the Caribbean and beyond, it has simply become impossible for any one researcher to keep in touch with all its versions.

Over the years Rastafari has been described in different ways: millenarian movement, culture of resistance, religion, way of life, youth culture, and so on. Following Warner-Lewis's logic, all these perspectives have probably been relevant at one time or another, or indeed, at any one time. However, in terms of contemporary Rastafari there are many local adaptations. For example, we find militant Maori Rastafari in New Zealand and dreadlocks-inspired Rastafari in Japan (McDonald, 1982; Keita, 1991). Horace Campbell reviews manifestations of Rastafari in the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, Canada, and some states of Africa (Campbell, 1987). Teresa Turner has reported on the popularity of Rastafari in East Africa, particularly in Kenya, with an emphasis on the role of Rastafari women there (Turner, 1992). More recently, in an extensive survey of literature on Rastafari, Frank Jan van Dijk has documented reports on the Rastafari influence in Surinam and The Netherlands, as well as the societies noted above (Van Dijk, 1993). Clearly, given the range of Rastafari expression, and the different contextual circumstances to which Rastafari need to adapt, as researchers we cannot presume any one interpretive framework.

Second, globalization increases the difficulty of defining a researcher's community and orienting oneself to the movement. From the beginning Rastafari have been extremely distrustful of outsiders, particularly researchers, whom they consign to the most disparaging category of "pharisees and scribes." Rastafari have both ritual and political strategies for "testing" and "controlling" researchers. This is easily understandable given their history of oppression by the dominant society, which is intensified in racist and reactionary states outside the Caribbean. Rastafari also follow very closely accounts of themselves written by others, and do not hesitate to give critical feedback.⁹ Negotiating a long-term research role can be stressful. Most written work on Rastafari is not based on extensive field work at all, a pattern also noted by Van Dijk (1993, p. 4). The distancing that results can lead to a very partial take on the Rastafari whole.

Therefore, in addition to critically interrogating the location of the researcher, we also need to use a wide range of materials to develop a more comprehensive perspective on Rastafari. In addition to fieldwork and personally connecting, this would include the abundance of papers, reports, newsletters, pamphlets, and books published from the inside by Rastafari themselves in the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Many of these sources unfortunately have a limited and local distribution. However, one of the advantages of the globalization of Rastafari is the opportunities that exist outside the Caribbean for access to resources that make it possible for these publishing ventures to take place.

Finally, from a methodological perspective, globalization has also coincided with the coming of age within Rastafari of a generation of scholars, cultural activists, and critical artists who are Rastafari themselves. As Rastafari experts on Rastafari, they have an international presence as much as Elders do, and play key roles in national and international Rastafari assemblies. They too are a part of Rastafari as a "travelling culture." Moreover, their input also challenges the intellectual hegemony of outsider researchers in a way that raises issues of responsibility and representation. As activist researchers and cultural critics they are in an excellent position to take in the more general sweep of Rastafari.

THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION

While Rastafari have always been international travellers, and can hardly be seen as isolated from international currents in a Jamaican outpost, the 1980s witnessed a new stage in the globalization of Rastafari. In 1980

Rastafari celebrated its "Golden Jubilee," acknowledging the 50 years since its inception. Then, since the early 1980s, Rastafari initiated a series of international missions and assemblies, which heralded another phase in Rastafari history. (The terms "mission" and "assembly" are Rastafari cultural expressions.) With the advent of the 1990s, and the plans to celebrate the centenary of Emperor Haile Selassie's birth in 1992, Rastafari as a "travelling culture" was precipitated from the local into the global field as never before, as the distance between the two collapsed exponentially.

In this section I want to return to my initial question, which is focussed on the issues that globalization raises within the movement. I want to review some of the highlights of this period, which have provided arenas in which to articulate these concerns. However, it should be remembered that while these various missions and conferences both objectively and symbolically represent major events in the life of Rastafari, the international communication and networking that has made them possible are part of a continuous and developing process which cannot be underestimated.

It is also important to have a sense of the local cultural ground which provides the context for these occasions. Since the 1970s Rastafari and reggae musicians have been performing around the world. Substantial Rastafari communities have developed in North America, the United Kingdom, and several African countries. Independently, many Rastafari elders have made tours abroad. For example, Rases Sam Brown, Mortimo Planno, Boanerges, Jah Bones, Doc Bagga, and Ascento Foxe are all well travelled. A subsequent generation of Rastafari cultural activists is equally mobile, especially in various African states. Nor is the communication all one way. For example, in early 1986 two Rastafari brethren from the Universal Rastafari Improvement Association in Tanzania visited Jamaica with the express purpose of building ties that would foster repatriation. In other words, the events described below all occurred in fairly well established and receptive Rastafari communities, which could draw upon a range of resources in order to sponsor them.

In the early 1980s the Rastafari Brethren Organization in Trinidad published an internationally inspired newspaper called *Rastafari Speaks*, against all kinds of odds, which included a persistent pattern of confiscation by the police. It served as both a voice for the Rastafari community and a vehicle for organization. It was especially instrumental in mobilizing Rastafari energies throughout the Eastern Caribbean. And by the account of its editor, Shango Baku, "the international assemblies of

Rastafari in Toronto, Canada (1982), and Kingston, Jamaica (1983), were stimulated and promoted through *Rastafari Speaks*, which by this time had surfaced as the accredited forum for the progress of the movement" (Baku, 1984).

The First International Rastafari Conference, held in Toronto in 1982, issued a report which included several recommendations, among them that a follow-up conference be held in Jamaica the following year (International Rastafarian Conference, no date). A detailed journalistic account of the conference was published in a local cultural magazine, written by Valerie Harris (1982). Harris noted that the role of Rastafari women was the "hot" issue within the Rastafari community, generating much impassioned reasoning, both backstage and onstage (Harris, p.185). One of the main organizers of the Toronto conference was a Rastafari woman who devoted most of the following year to living in Jamaica and helping to organize the second International Assembly there.

At the Jamaican conference the issue of the role of Rastafari women was raised again, but not in as open and as direct a way as in Toronto. And again, as part of a final report, resolutions were passed which addressed several issues, including the status of women within the movement, repatriation and international Rastafari economic development. Also, suggestions were made that Nyahbinghi elders travel outside the Caribbean on missions to generally educate and inform, since the House of Nyahbinghi was recognized at this conference as the primary spiritual source of Rastafari.¹⁰ In fact, eventually a permanent residential House of Nyahbinghi Centre was established at Scott's Pass near Mandeville, Jamaica.

The following year, therefore, in 1984, the first official elders' mission outside the Caribbean was organized in Toronto. Known as: "Voice of Thunder: Dialogue with Nyahbinghi Elders," it was a 30-day cultural and religious education program, which utilized schools, universities, public libraries, and community centres for its venues, as it was partly sponsored by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, as well as educational institutions.¹¹

In 1986 a major international Rastafari conference was held as part of Caribbean Focus, a year-long cultural celebration in the United Kingdom. For two weeks at the Commonwealth Institute in London, from July 14 to 27, Rastafari Focus was convened, under the coordinating auspices of the Rastafarian Advisory Service (RAS), just one of many well-organized and active Rastafari organizations in the United Kingdom. The prime movers of this event were two Rastafari women.

In the United Kingdom context, which was much less restrictive than in Jamaica, the role of Rastafari women once more generated controversial reasonings. ("Reasoning" is a Rastafari concept which refers to a form of stylized discourse.) But other themes also provided continuity with the earlier international assemblies: repatriation, Rastafari economic development, and ways of dealing with various forms of repression and attacks on the movement. And once again, Nyahbinghi played the central spiritual role. At the end of the conference, a new initiative called The Nyahbinghi Project generated a series of workshops which were held in several communities in the United Kingdom over the next several months to keep the momentum up and to continue to explore some of the issues raised at Rastafari Focus, including the role of women. By 1988 the Rastafarian Advisory Service had published a detailed report on Rastafari Focus (RAS, 1988).

Then in 1988, 1989, and 1990 official Nyahbinghi elders' missions were made to the eastern United States, again with the partial support of educational institutions. These activities have been discussed at length by John Homiak, who was also involved in organizing these events (Homiak, forthcoming "b"). Not only did such missions consolidate Nyahbinghi as the arbiter of Rastafari spiritual integrity, but they also facilitated the consolidation of Rastafari communities in the areas around Washington, Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia.

All these events were building momentum toward the celebration of the 1992 centenary of Emperor Haile Selassie's birth. And the central focus of this event was to be in Shashamane, Ethiopia, where a few dozen Rastafari had settled since the early 1960s into the 1970s, on a land grant given to the "Black Peoples of the West" by Emperor Haile Selassie. During the period of the Dergue, local Ethiopians seized control of much of this land, putting this phase of Shashamane's development somewhat on hold (Campbell, 1987, p.226).

During the period of my first fieldwork in Jamaica in the early 1970s, I was associated with a group of Rastafari brethren from Local 37 of the Ethiopian World Federation, which was intent on repatriation to Africa and pursued this goal in a very practical way. Some of its members frequently wrote in *African Opinion*, a black nationalist paper published in New York trying to mobilize support for their position. In addition, these same brethren promoted the learning of Amharic and Ethiopian cultural traditions and history, as they were constantly in touch with the developments taking place in Shashamane. At that same time, in the early 1970s,

there were other Houses of Rastafari which actively resisted this initiative, symbolized by their insistence on the use of I-ance or Dread Talk.

However, ~~since the fall of the Dergue and with the impending Centenary of the Emperor's Birth, there was a renewed interest in all aspects of Ethiopian culture.~~ Whereas previously the Ethiopian World Federation and the Twelve Tribes organizations had lead the Shashamane initiative, now the House of Nyabinghi seemed to be taking the initiative. In 1992 there were two international delegations from the United Kingdom which travelled to Ethiopia for this occasion. One of the Rastafari delegates from the House of Nyabinghi in Jamaica, Ras Ivi Tafari, has published a moving account of this experience (Tafari, 1993).

~~These missions lead to renewed contact between the Rastafari settlers in Shashamane and Rastafari in the diaspora.~~ In the intervening time a Tabernacle Building Project program has been established by the Centenary Committee for Rastafari based in London. Its goal is to build a permanent Nyabinghi Tabernacle at Shashamane, on the same piece of land where the first Nyabinghi Tabernacle in Ethiopia was erected temporarily for the centenary celebrations. The Committee hopes to hold opening ceremonies and an international conference there by July 1996. In the same vein, another unique event took place in November 1993, to commemorate the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie, which is another event celebrated annually by Rastafari. In Philadelphia a Rastafari-Ethiopia cultural celebration was held at International House, sponsored by the Folklife Centre and Ambassa, and organized primarily by a Rastafari couple, assisted by some of their children. This was the first time that the Rastafari community and the Ethiopian community had come together in this way. The purpose of the occasion was for both communities to learn more about each other. Delegates came from Canada and the eastern United States, including a substantial representation from Miami.¹²

Most recently, in May 1994, another International Rastafari Assembly was held in Miami, on the occasion of African Liberation Day, sponsored by several Rastafari communities in the eastern United States, and again one of the primary organizers was a Rastafari woman. While several themes were developed which provided continuity with earlier conferences, a major accomplishment of this "work" was the publication of a pamphlet called the *REDD Pages*, a lengthy compendium of Rastafari businesses and organizations. ~~This Rastafari economic development directory is a substantial contribution to Rastafari economic self-sufficiency, and~~

~~can be used as a guide to doing business and providing services within the Rastafari community itself.~~

In addition, the organizers were clearer and more formal in their expectations surrounding the logistics of the conference. An attempt was made to invite and sponsor official delegates to give reports from different regions. Dress codes were expressly stated, and both open and closed sessions were announced beforehand. The closing Nyabinghi celebration was held on a Seminole First Nations Reservation near Miami. It is evident from both the organization and manifestation of this Assembly that ~~the Rastafari community in the United States has further consolidated its energies towards the goals of Rastafari unity and reparitation.~~

CONCLUSIONS

While it is not possible in the present paper to analyze in more detail the social and political dynamics of the above events, several sensitive but important questions can be raised. These issues are even more pressing because of the increasing globalization of Rastafari.

It would seem that the House of Nyabinghi has established itself as a major spiritual and organizational force in the globalization of Rastafari. First, being based in Jamaica, how will it accommodate the many manifestations of Rastafari which have arisen globally? In the past, even between Jamaican and the Eastern Caribbean Rastafari, there has been evidence of strain, let alone having to relate to Rastafari communities outside the region. Second, since Nyabinghi represents the most orthodox of Rastafari traditions, with a male-dominated eldership, how will it come to terms with the increasingly active and high profile role that many Rastafari women are playing internationally? Third, how will the House of Nyabinghi with its Afrocentric orientation respond to the increasing number of Rastafari of non-African descent? And finally, given the closer links between Rastafari and Ethiopia, what kind of role can Rastafari be expected to play politically in both Ethiopia and other African states?¹³

ENDNOTES

1. "Overstanding" is a Rastafari concept which refers to the fact that if a person comprehends something, it must be a progressive movement forward. Therefore, one cannot go "under," one must go "over" or be raised up by such knowing. It is a term coined in accordance with the principles that govern Rastafari word

- formation and syntactical structures, resulting in Rastafari speech known as "lance" or "Dread Talk." For further expositions of these patterns, see Homiak, forthcoming "a"; and Pollard, 1985.
2. Horace Campbell was the first to apply Amilcar Cabral's idea that culture is a major aspect of resistance to foreign domination to an extensive analysis of the political history of Rastafari. (See Campbell, 1987) As fruitful as this framework may be for social scientists, Rastafari generally do not refer to themselves as a "culture of resistance." Their contention with labels is mostly focussed on whether or not Rastafari is a religion in the more narrow sense or a way of life. While part of the Rastafari struggle for legitimacy has been to have their religious rights recognized by the State, such as the right to wear dreadlocks and head coverings in the school system, many resist being categorized as only one more religion in a multi-religious secular state. Rastafari has traditionally been theocratic in orientation, which implies a completely different conception of the relationship between "Church" and "State." Indeed, it would be part of their critique of "Babylon" (their term for the dominant society against which they struggle) that the separation of Church and State has led to a moral decline in the decadent West. While Rastafari might have to argue within Babylon's legal system that they too have constitutionally protected religious rights, this does not mean they approve of the overall secular framework. In a theocratic model, Rastafari can be both a religion and a way of life in the holistic sense that its adherents defend.
 3. A major exception is the Rastafari organization The Twelve Tribes of Israel, which developed in the early 1970s out of Local 15 of the Ethiopian World Federation in Jamaica. Twelve Tribes is organized along institutional lines, with a registered membership, which pays dues, and a hierarchical leadership. It is not as well researched as the rest of Rastafari, although it has been the focus of a paper by Frank Jan van Dijk, 1988.
 4. See my paper "Rasta Mek A Trod" (Yawney, 1993), which discusses the impact of Rastafari globalization on the movement's symbolic expression. I make a point of refraining from using the term "universalization" to refer to this process, because it might be taken to suggest that Rastafari has "universalized" the humanistic content of its cultural system in order to appeal internationally to a greater cross-section of people. While undoubtedly universal values such as peace, love, truth, and justice are a core part of the Rastafari way of knowing, it has made its expansion abroad by focussing primarily on its Afrocentric, Black conscious appeal, which incorporates, but does not concentrate on, such universal values to the exclusion of the other aspects of its message. Frank Jan van Dijk has also addressed the impact of the international Rastafari assemblies, suggesting that while they have not done much to promote unity, they have greatly facilitated communication and emphasized the role of Jamaican elders (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 271).

5. Rastafari themselves will tell you that the term Nyabingi means "death to black and white oppressors." This is an orientation which developed in Jamaica in the late 1940s out of the House of the Youth Black Faith. See Chevannes, 1978; and Homiak, forthcoming "a," for a more detailed discussion of the history of Nyabingi. Nyabingi embodies a way of life or "livity" based mainly on Old Testament practices. Thus orthodox Nyabingi practitioners do not cut their hair or "locks," follow vegan nutritional guidelines, and generally live as natural or as "real" as possible. Men are expected to keep their locks covered by a tam or "Crown" except when attending to religious duties, while women are to keep their heads covered at all times. Moreover, women are expected to follow a modest dress code and to avoid certain responsibilities, such as preparing food, when menstruating.
6. Homiak has also commented on this cultural reversal (Homiak, forthcoming "a," pp. 5-6).
7. When I serve in court as an expert witness on Rastafari, I myself find it most helpful to use the Nyabingi teachings and practices as the basic frame of reference for a more general discussion of Rastafari, and its various manifestations.
8. See Homiak, forthcoming "a," which specifically addresses variability in Rastafari.
9. See the collection of papers edited by Caroline Brettell called "When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography," which deals with the experience of several anthropologists in this regard (Brettell, 1993).
10. See also the account by Dawras United, 1984, and JAHUG, 1992, for transcriptions of the contributions by several elders.
11. See report on this mission by Charmaine Montague and Carole Yawney, 1985.
12. A detailed account of this event by Ras E.S.P. MacPherson, along with a reprint of the address he made at it, can be found in the *Ethiopia Jamaica Society Newsletter*, a publication which he edits (MacPherson, 1994).
13. Campbell has raised this issue by suggesting that "Rastas cannot be against Babylon in the West and support reaction in Africa" (Campbell, 1987, p.229). These are crucial questions if any Rastafari are to be involved in lending support for the establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy in Ethiopia.

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