“Selassie Souljahz”

The Reggae Revival and Black Millennial Music Protest in Contemporary Jamaica

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for honors to the Department of History.
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Dedication

To Adaijah and Averie, my precious little sisters.
You are beautiful, you are able, and you can do anything you set your mind to.
You are Black Girl Magic!

And to the Ancestors, Jamaica, and Reggae—for inspiring a little empress so many miles from home to remember where her strength comes from.

In the Words of Sizzla Kalonji,
“I’m so solid as a rock, they just can’t stop me now.”


Abstract

Coined by Dutty Bookman in 2011, the Reggae Revival is a contemporary cultural and musical movement of consciousness in Jamaica which has captivated the world. Heeding the legacies of reggae forefathers like Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and Bob Marley, the Revival is a creative community of millennial artists and activists who have used music to disseminate Black Power, anti-colonial thought, and self-determination. Artists like Oje “Protoje” Olliviere and Jamar “Chronixx” McNaughton Jr. have spearheaded this movement with songs like “Wrong Side of the Law” (2011) and “Here Comes Trouble” (2014), respectively.

Using an interdisciplinary framework that incorporates an intersectional lens of race and gender, as well as methodologies of History, Anthropology, Ethnomusicology, Performance Theory, and Black Feminist Theory, this thesis serves to connect two generations of reggae activism. It examines a living history of the Reggae Revival and contemporary Jamaica using music to trace the emancipatory legacy of roots reggae on the island. By critically analyzing music lyrics and videos of this movement, this thesis builds upon Jamaica’s far-reaching history of Black resistance and highlights Jamaican millennial conversations about neocolonialism, government corruption, Afrocentricity, poverty and its effects on the working-class, as well as Black Feminism and women’s empowerment. Then and now, this thesis emphasizes reggae as both cultural and intellectual property for perspectives on Black redemption and revolution across the African diaspora.
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“they chanted for
a re-emergence of we culture
they bawled out for
a recapturing of them nights 'round Maroon fires
that preserved
the stories of African song an’ dance

then out of the fire
of the ancestral ritual
uh voice rose
chanting 'pon top
the heartbeat guitar strumming of Marley

it unfolded the essence of Africa
through visions of Garvey
reflecting through intellect of Walter Rodney
confronting colonialism
and the Babylon system
yes
I and I has come
I and I
Kings of Kings
Lords of Lords
Conquering Lion of The Tribe of Judah
Jah!
Rastafari!”

‘Jah Rastafari’ by Adisa Andwele

I first fell in love with reggae at three years old. I remember sitting in my car seat in my family’s black Honda Accord as my mom sang to along to Maxi Priest. I guess some eighteen years later, it all has come full circle. My love for reggae has never faltered. Reggae got me up in the morning. Reggae kept me going when Duke was too much. And reggae was just what I needed when I was homesick for my favorite place in the world.

I’ve always had a deep appreciation of Jamaica’s greatest cultural creation, but never quite delved into the political before Duke. This has been quite the Duke experience, especially as a Black Jamaican American woman, but reggae gave me the principle and understanding to spiritually and politically guide me to this point. To all of those listed below, you helped give me the strength I needed to get through it, and for that I am eternally grateful.
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SOCA, I joined the board of the Students of the Caribbean Association probably within the first month of being at Duke and since then all of you have become my friends, fostered my intellectual pursuits and given me the Caribbean community I’d never had before. Morghan, Karla, and Davan, I pass the torch to you!

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All of those who let me interview you and took the time out of their busy days to help, especially Protoje, Tuffy McIntosh and Bluehouse Productions.

Reggae. Thank you to all the souls who created any song that has ever moved me. Not just the Reggae Revival crew, but Beres Hammond, Jah Cure, Jr. Gong, Queen Ifrica, Morgan Heritage. There are too many to name!

Last, but certainly not least, Mom, I am nothing without you. You are my first role model, my biggest fan, and my sounding board. This one is for the little girl who came here on a whim at 11-years-old and became the first in our family to earn a college degree. You wrote this too. All my love, your first born!
Preface: “Selassie Souljahz:”¹
Reggae Through Time

“Mi nuh worry,
Weh mi ah worri mi self fah,
Mi safe inna Jah warrior shelta (Ites),
Stand firm like di rock a Gibraltar,
None ah dem nah guh live fi see Jah warrior falter.”
—Chronixx ft. Sizzla, Protoje, & Kabaka Pyramid,
“Selassie Souljahz”²

I first saw roots reggae superstar Jamar Rolando McNaughton Jr., known by his stage
name Chronixx, perform live in the summer of 2015. He stormed the stage with a burst of energy
as the audience sang along to his songs of Black pride and Jamaican unity. My
favorite part of
the show was his performance of “Selassie Souljahz,” a mellow and soulful tune about how his
faith in Rastafari has made him a souljah, or soldier, to carry on the beliefs of His Imperial
Majesty Haile Selassie I. His show was unlike any other I’d ever experienced.³ With only three
band members on stage and his locs covered in an olive tam, Chronixx’s show may have
appeared simple, but was suffused with Rastafari messages and new-age political sentiment. Less
than three years his junior, I was immediately captivated by his wisdom and politics given his
young age. It was then and there I knew not only was roots reggae on the brink of something
new, the music would start an artistic revolution that Jamaica had not experienced in over four
decades.

² Ibid.
³ Commonly referred to as dreadlocks, locs are an important and symbolic hairstyle in the Rastafari Movement, reflective of the biblical Nazarite law and Lion of Judah.
Reggae was born in the musically diverse neighborhood of Trench Town, in Jamaica’s capital city Kingston. Trench Town is also home to a number of recording studios where reggae got its start, as well being home to a myriad of notable reggae artists, including Robert “Bob” Marley. More significant than its geographic origins, reggae music was born out of Jamaica’s long history of Black protest. Deriving from early Caribbean music genres ska and rocksteady in the late 1960s, reggae combined their offbeat acoustic sounds and romantic melodies, respectively, to make a genre of its own. Early reggae was popularized in Jamaica by prominent studio house bands the Aggrovators, the Hippy Boys, and Lynn Tait and the Jets, and the work of noteworthy producers like Clement “Coxsone” Dodd, Lee “Scratch” Perry, and Arthur “Duke” Reid. However, it was not until the mid-1970s when music group Bob Marley and the Wailers propelled particularly roots reggae into the global arena, spreading the messages of justice and African culture across the world.

I am studying the evolution of roots reggae because as a music genre, roots has had an evident emancipatory legacy as a response to Jamaica’s unsteady political and economic climate. In the 1970s, roots reggae was philosophical and spoke of self-determination and rising up against a mostly non-Black or mixed government that persecuted its citizens for their beliefs and socio-economic status. Historically, Afro-Jamaicans struggled to be treated equally, to be self-reliant and free of the empirical authority that relegated them to second-class citizens. Even after Jamaica gained independence, few changes were made to better the lives of the island’s Black population. Those in power were white or mixed-race, from the more affluent class, and

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6 Horn, 658.
therefore out of touch. Despite doing well it its first ten years as a sovereign nation, the island’s wealth was not being distributed evenly and Jamaica’s urban class, which consisted of predominantly Black people, continued to be economically isolated from its upper-class citizens. Roots reggae developed as a call to action for Afro-Jamaicans, to rise up, demand an end to the government and racial oppression, and take pride in their African lineage.

This project is about the influence of Rastafari and roots reggae music and the new generation of artists, like Chronixx, who are part of the new “Reggae Revival,” a young group of musical pioneers singing for contemporary political and economic change through reggae music. Music has long been employed as a method of protest, particularly as a form of Black diasporic resistance. Chronixx’s music and the work of other roots reggae artists echo Afro-Trinidadian scholar C.L.R James’ position on Caribbean arts. In 1959, James gave a lecture at the University of the West Indies campus in Mona, Jamaica entitled “The Artist in the Caribbean.” In it, he asserts, “the analysis of the artist in the Caribbean, properly done, [points] to the general social and political problems there.”

James not only argues that an artist’s natural surroundings have an influence on their art, but in turn the artist can “exercise an influence on the national consciousness,” thus “bringing the past up to date with charting the future.”

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8 James, 183.
9 Ibid, 185.
national art forms and traditions to express themselves and society. He even references Trinidadian calypso singer Slinger “Sparrow” Francisco who uses calypso, a “medium which persisted in Trinidad” as a “vehicle for the most acute observations on the social life and political development around him” and still “has survived to become a world favourite.” James makes these claims even prior to the development of reggae, thus explaining why he does not extensively mention the music in his speech, but his emphasis on the “national artistic tradition” is exactly what Revival artists are doing today. They have taken reggae, a Jamaican national art form, and are using it in the “creation of a national consciousness” during a time of political and economic crisis.

Since its inception, reggae has been a music of the people. Roy Cousins, former Jamaican reggae artist and leader of The Royals, once recalled, “If you listen to reggae music, you don’t need to buy the paper. Reggae music tell you everything wha’ happen in Jamaica.” Moving into the 1970s, roots reggae developed as a subgenre of the music. During that time, “roots” signified the African influence of Jamaican culture. Rastafari is an important principle for particularly working class Afro-Jamaicans who taught people of Babylon’s politricks and the “misphilosophy” and “whitewashing of the African mind.” With the spread of Rastafari and many artists like The Wailers becoming new followers, roots reggae developed to further communicate Rasta teachings. Most would consider The Wailers as the face of the movement, but Burning Spear, the Abyssinians, and Niney The Observer were also at the forefront of this

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10 James, 188.
11 Ibid, 189.
13 Horn, 657.
14 “Politricks” and “misphilosophy” are part of the Rastafari language. Their literal meanings are “politics” and “philosophy,” but their connotation derives from Rastafari’s mistrust in white people. This will be further explained in the first chapter.
15 Horn, 48-49.
inherently political decade. Songs like Niney’s “Blood and Fire” and Burning Spear’s “Marcus Garvey” not only emphasized Jamaican proverbs and biblical and Rastafari imagery in their lyrics, these songs were also staples for the predominantly Black lower class who saw and heard their own struggles on a national scale.16

It is by no coincidence that this music arose during the latter half of the 1970s when Jamaica was under political turmoil. Jamaica’s fourth prime minister and leader of the People’s National Party, Michael Manley had begun trying to institute a system of Democratic Socialism in 1974, but his plans led to an immense economic decline for Jamaica.17 The island’s economic productivity had not been particularly booming prior to 1974 and the attempted socialism only made it worse. Manley’s failures erupted into violence between supporters of the People’s National Party and their major opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party, so much that Manley was forced to call a State of Emergency.18 The state of Jamaica only fueled the fire for roots musicians who used their music to describe “things that [they] feel from the ghetto,” says Norman Grant, the now retired lead singer from roots band the Twinkle Brothers.19

A number of roots reggae artists went on to achieve international stardom, signing to major record companies like Virgin Records and Island Records, based in England. Although their music is now famous throughout the world, the reggae singing groups were not without their issues, internally and with record executives. Even original members of The Wailers, Peter Tosh and Neville “Bunny Wailer” Livingston left the group in 1974. Just as quickly as roots reggae music had risen, it was on the decline, succumbing to the dance-heavy, upbeat sounds of

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17 Katz, 228-229.
19 Katz, 248.
a new Jamaican genre, dancehall, at the turn of the decade. From dancehall’s post-independence beginnings in the late 1970s, the new music was instantly rebuked for its “crude” lyrics, as the polar opposite of then globalized reggae. Dancehall was initially considered another genre of and for Jamaica’s impoverished communities, growing out of fifth Prime Minister Edward Seaga’s pro-capitalist policies and militarization of ghetto communities in the 1980s. His programs “gave rise to increased unemployment, a dramatic rise in costs of living,” and created a number of social consequences that only further distinguished working and middle class citizens. Since then, dancehall culture has taken over not only the island, but also the world, with musicians having immense popularity in the United States, Europe, and east Asia. Fast-forward twenty to thirty years, the popular culture of dancehall has evolved into a politics of its own, similar to mainstream American hip-hop, which has become less politically aware and can be marked for its commercial viability. Even since dancehall began celebrating violence and slackness—hyper-sexualized misogyny—it has gone on to dominate Jamaica’s popular culture and music scene for roughly over thirty years.

Jamaican culture has been consumed by, and in my opinion, significantly disillusioned by the fast-paced, dance-focused culture that evolved out of dancehall bashments—the club and nightlife scene—in the 1990s. Drastically different from the previous decade, these informal dance clubs alongside artists like Beenie Man, Vybz Kartel, and Lady Saw have all championed slackness. Although dancehall’s crudeness has illuminated conditions for Jamaica’s poor and challenged respectability, traditional “patriarchal gender ideology, and the pious morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society,” it has also celebrated hyper-sexuality, drugs, and violence in

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20 Katz, 326.
some of very ways modern-day hip-hop has dominated African American music in the United States. At the present moment, dancehall’s early beginnings have been overshadowed to depict a more vulgar, hostile image of Jamaica’s people. That is exactly what makes this shift towards roots reggae and this new Reggae Revival more significant today. The return of roots music is a call for transformation in popular music and culture in order to positively influenced Jamaica’s youth and hold Jamaica’s government accountable for protecting its people as a sovereign Black nation.

Nevertheless, this research is not a story of twentieth century reggae music. This is a story of present-day Jamaica through music as a new generation of artists call for change in musical form. On its face, my work narrates the new movement, the Reggae Revival, as it is currently happening. The Reggae Revival began around 2010 with Revival artist Protoje as the leader, using his talents to highlight the voices of Jamaica’s younger generation. The Revival is comprised of artists, mostly in their twenties and early thirties, again bringing a social awareness and consciousness to Jamaica, much like the artists did in the golden era of roots music. Musicians like Chronixx, Protoje, Jah9, Kabaka Pyramid, Jesse Royal, and Kelissa are all part of these consciousness-raising efforts, spreading hope and awareness to, again, predominantly Jamaica’s working class Black Jamaicans with a special focus on the government’s accountability.

As a Black Jamaican-American woman, these artists, who are of a generation that feels largely ignored by the government, have tremendously influenced me. This time in Jamaica’s

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history is that much more fascinating given that we, as the second generation born since Jamaica gained independence, are now adults. The Revivalists, as they are being called, are discussing today’s problems in a way only the youth can comprehend. Song in Bob Marley and Peter Tosh’s discographies have influenced Chronixx and Protoje, who similarly point to corruption in the government, the demand for decolonization, and a need for revolution in the wake of high rates of crime and underemployment. Critical evaluation of these lyrics as literary texts illustrate the present state of Jamaica in the twenty-first century and just how little the sovereign, predominantly Black island has progressed in more than five decades since independence. Not only do roots artists employ a verbal creativity filled with “Rastafarian symbolism, proverb, riddle, aphorism, and metaphor,” their words are representative of their consciousness-raising efforts to reform Jamaica.24 This work serves to assert that Revival artists are musical activists and educators, and not the inexperienced young adults as they are sometimes characterized as being. They are challenging the Global Northern definitions of Jamaican music and returning to the core of roots reggae in new and modern ways.

My research creates a space for contemporary roots music that otherwise is not already present in Caribbean and popular culture studies in the academy. In this thesis, I argue that revivalists are not just music artists, but also revolutionary cultural representatives, and show what their music means to the tallawah nation, especially its young adults.25 I address the complexities of the Roots Reggae Revival using an interdisciplinary approach. First, I incorporate major academic works and secondary sources on reggae, like David Katz’ Solid Foundation: An Oral History of Reggae, and Michael E. Veal’s Dub: Soundscapes & Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae. I also make use of this generation’s predilection for technology and

24 Cooper, 118.
25 Tallawah comes from the Jamaican patois saying, “Wi likkle but wi tallawah,” meaning small but mighty.
the digital age. I employ current video blogs and magazine and newspaper articles from national Jamaican publications like *The Gleaner* and the *Jamaica Observer* to renowned reggae music publications like *Large Up* and *Irie Magazine*. I do my best to solely rely on Afro-centered and/or Caribbean-authored sources to best unearth Black Caribbean perceptions of Revival. I have also conducted interviews with Jamaican locals, including Peter Tosh’s living relatives, some local artists who have been inspired by this movement, and Revival powerhouse Protoje, who has offered me his stance on reggae socio-political capital for this generation. And finally, my most significant primary sources are the lyrics of Revival songs themselves. They tell the true story of contemporary Jamaican history, while still holding onto the past. I also have made the conscious decision not to translate song lyrics from Jamaica patois to ‘standard English,’ unless written as so on an artist’s website. Jamaica’s creolized language is a site of resistance itself. The maintained language is cultural resistance to political and cultural imperialism and the music could not be understood without it.

As an American-born Jamaican, I am very much a part of the multinational Jamaican diaspora I am studying. My background not only explains my fascination with this music and time, but also serves to facilitate the methodological approaches I use in my research. This experience makes me to be an observing participant in Jamaican culture, alongside my use of interviews, archival research, and performance analysis. This work serves to not only introduce the importance of figures in the Revival, but it also investigates the depths of their lyrics, given their Rastafari, biblical, and political influences.

My first chapter, “‘Babylon System:’ Jamaica’s Black Protest Beginnings, Rastafari, and the Coming to Consciousness,” outlines Jamaica’s Black activism since the colonial period. Although history did not begin with imperial conquest, the beginnings of slavery, and the
subsequent protests that ensued, are evidence of Jamaica’s emancipatory history. This history inherently connects to and defines the protest-politic that is Rastafari and grounds roots reggae’s importance to the shaping of Jamaica’s political structure. This chapter serves to provide detailed background to the project as a precursor to the examination of the Revival. It defines the style and performance of roots in the golden era and provides in-depth analysis of its two most renowned musicians Bob Marley and Peter Tosh and outlines their political contributions to reggae music as a model for the new generation.

In my second chapter, “‘Here Comes Trouble:’ Jamaica’s Youth Generation, Reggae Revival, and the New Politics,” I examine just how the Reggae Revival came to be during this particular moment in Jamaican history. I synthesize its major contributions and other factors important to the spread of the music like the destruction of the Small Island Developing State (SIDS) given neoliberalism and the persistence of imperial forces as part of the Revival’s formation. I establish the framework for the Revival, from the start of musician Protoje’s popularity and the documentation of Protoje’s musical uplift from his friend, author Dutty Bookman, who also coined the term ‘Reggae Revival.’ In chapter two, I begin exploring the richness of the current roots movement through a close reading of its song lyrics by Protoje and Chronixx and strategically connect this musical history to Jamaica’s crime and corruption, and of course, Rastafari.

The third and final chapter, “‘Revolution Lullaby:’ Sistren of the Revival Chant Down Patriarchy,” again uses song lyrics, this time to describe the role of female artists in the undoing of Jamaica’s patriarchal society. I first give a look at women’s history on the island, both

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26 Small Island Developing States is a term first recognized at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992, which describes coastal countries that experience similar challenges to their sustainable development as a result of environment and economic issues. Jamaica is one of the fifty-seven current SIDS. See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids/list for more information.
generally on the island and specifically within Rastafari. For the work of this chapter, I also summarize Jamaican women’s position in dancehall, as the affected population and as agents for chance. I tackle how women have been underrepresented in the music industry, particularly in reggae and give a detailed analysis of the careers of Jah9 and Kelissa, just two of the Revival’s leading female artists. Their music chronicles a change not only in voice, but also in viewpoint, for a revolution, which is usually composed mostly of male actors. Together, Kelissa and Jah9 highlight Black wombhood and diversity issues in the music industry, and show the evolving position of Rasta women in contemporary Jamaica. This chapter emphasizes the dynamic of gender in reggae and the Revival, and exhibits how the rest of the movement’s predominantly male cohort is both progressive and supportive of women’s position in today’s society.

The story of the Reggae Revival is one that deserves to be told now, before its current impact is forgotten decades from today. In producing this contemporary history, I not only present the significance of the music for Jamaicans, like myself, today, but I also outlay the art form as a historical discourse. The Reggae Revival captures the record and essence of Afro-Jamaicans’ struggle through imperialism, whilst manifesting a sense of African unity and Black power under the guise of Rastafari.
Chapter One “Babylon System:” Jamaica’s Black Protest Beginnings, Rastafari, and the Coming to Consciousness

“We refuse to be
What you wanted us to be;
We are what we are:
That's the way (way) it's going to be. You don't know!

... Mi say: de Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire,
Suckin' the blood of the sufferers, yea-ea-ea-ea-ah!
Building church and university, wo-o-ooh, yeah! -
Deceiving the people continually, yea-ea!
Mi say them graduatin' thieves and murderers;
Look out now: they suckin' the blood of the sufferer...”

-Bob Marley & the Wailers, “Babylon System”

Introduction

On August 6, 1962, Jamaica became the first island of the British West Indies to secure its independence. This was a transformation not only for the newly sovereign island, but for the broader region. Jamaica became a model for all other British colonies in the Caribbean to follow. By that time, reggae was on the verge of taking its place as Jamaica’s first internationally renowned music genre. In the 1960s, reggae was still very new to Jamaica, yet it was still unmistakably political both in terms of its context and what it articulated. Reggae was a way to spread news across the island, and more importantly to the spread of consciousness of Black liberation that the African diaspora was conveying all over the world.

Consciousness is an important aspect of Rastafari and reggae music. Musician Bob Marley focused on consciousness in his musical pursuit of Rastafari. In his 1979 single “Babylon System,” for instance, Marley calls attention to the ways the Babylon system, imperialism and its

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28 Ibid.
neocolonial consequences, continues to destroy the “sufferers.” He calls upon Black people to fight against this order, the first step being to develop a consciousness about one’s own history. In my thesis, I focus on reggae music and the new Reggae Revival’s ability to do this through a firm anchoring in the religious understanding and practices of Rastafarianism. Rastafari is a way of life, a practice, and a social and religious philosophy, founded on the principles of Black liberation in Jamaica in the 1930s. Reggae is Rastafari music, and this shapes what consciousness means in all roots songs. Reggae is more than just the literal awakening of Jamaica. It has been central to the reverence of Jamaica’s Africanness, the understanding of Black history, and the spread of the ideas and philosophy of Rastafari.

To the outside world, Rastafarianism and reggae have become two of the most emblematic symbols of Jamaica today. Even though they have been integral to the understanding of Jamaican culture, outside of the island they have often been romanticized and turned into misleading representations of an indolent Black nation. The omnipresence of longhaired, bearded men singing and smoking marijuana has detracted from the deep Black autonomous understandings of Rastafari. That makes it all the more vital to understand the political discourse of roots reggae in contemporary Jamaica.

In this chapter, I present the historical factors that shaped the creation of Rastafarianism prior to the twentieth century. I show how the philosophy emerged out of a deeper history of resistance and revolution. I use this context to examine the development of Rastafari prior to independence and explain how, as a pro-Black religious-social philosophy shaped during colonization, it created a space for an unwavering celebration of Blackness and Africa. I highlight how reggae music emerges from and expresses Rastafari, as both an essential part of the belief system and also a form historical discourse. Reggae songs often tell the story of
Jamaican history and meditate on its meanings for the present and future of the country.

Additionally, I will examine how major artists of reggae’s golden era in the 1970s, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh used their music and international capital to spread reggae as a novel anti-colonial tradition. Using their songs as primary texts, I explore the impact of music as the intellectual tradition behind Rastafari and examine the origins of Rastafarian ideology in rewriting Black history and shaping the future.

**How Rastafari Came to Be in Jamaica**

Rastafarianism emerged as a product of colonialism and imperial conquest in Jamaica, and the ongoing struggles of Jamaica’s poor Blacks to challenge colonial rule. According to Barbara Hannah, the philosophy envisions and promotes “liberation from racism, poverty, from the constant pain of ever being a stranger in strange lands, of being ever second-class in a predominantly white world.”

The Rastafari practice is rested in the history of slavery and Jamaica’s revolutionary ethic, an ethic of Black resistance and protest since the introduction of colonial rule. It is this very ethic, of “identity, race, and protest” that Jamaican scholar Rex Nettleford explains are the “trinity” of the island’s challenges in the New World and beyond.

While Nettleford’s *trinity* is not different from the motivations behind other Black revolutions across the diaspora, together his three elements, and the beliefs from which they are informed, have shaped the account of Jamaica’s multi-racial, Black majority on their quest for social equality.

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To understand the Jamaican protest struggle, you must start with the beginning of imperial conquest. The Spanish first enslaved Jamaica’s Taino natives after Columbus’ arrival in 1494. By 1600, the natives had been exterminated after war and disease, and enslaved Africans were stolen their homelands and transported to Jamaica. Jamaican colonial history is characterized by one of the highest levels of enslaved rebellions of all the British Caribbean territories. The Maroon uprisings are exemplary of these revolutions. In 1655, a group of enslaved Africans fled Spanish conquest to the Jamaican mountainside and established their own independent communities, despite threat from the Spanish and later the British. The Maroons fought a series of wars to maintain their sovereignty, and their societies have since endured in the twenty-first century. The Maroons, including eighteenth century leader and Jamaica’s only woman national hero, Nanny, were Jamaica’s first freedom fighters. The founders and followers of Rastafari would go on to continue the fight using their persistent attempts for Black independence as inspiration to the Rasta movement.

The British abolished slavery in 1834, but emancipation did not amount to an end to colonialism. The nineteenth century saw a revival of the plantation system, again establishing a focus on agriculturally centered businesses with poor Blacks as the laborers. Land was taken from mainly Black Jamaican squatters and sold to British and American companies, leaving Black people landless and forced to work on sugar and banana farms. Afro-Jamaicans continued to be exploited. Despite being ‘free,’ they were earned little to no wages and had no

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34 King, 5.
political rights. In true tallawah fashion, protests ensued across the island, proving the ever-present revolutionary ethic of the Black lower class.

The Morant Bay Rebellion, the most conspicuous of modern agitations, began on October 11, 1865. Preacher Paul Bogle led hundreds of Jamaicans in a march to challenge impoverished living conditions, poverty, and disenfranchisement in the parish of St. Thomas. This led to the burning of the local courthouse, twenty-five casualties, and eventually the execution of Bogle, Black politician and protest organizer George William Gordon, and more than seven hundred other Jamaicans either by the militia or under martial law. Bogle and Gordon’s legacies for Black protest and equality live on today as two of Jamaica’s seven national heroes, alongside Nanny, through the highest honor that can be given on the island.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw regenerated subjugation of Jamaica’s poor. Despite the fact that the rebellion had been subdued, the fear of Jamaica’s Black majority was instilled in the white population. Following Morant Bay, white Jamaicans gave up their local authority in favor of Britain appointing Jamaica to Crown Colony rule. This new form of government meant that, in addition to Black people’s economic marginalization, the British crown appointed a governor to rule Jamaica. For roughly the next century, the acting governors focused not on the needs of the predominantly African populace, but the wants and desires of Jamaica’s colonial elite. The 1920s and 1930s were especially unstable as the Black working class staged strikes and demonstrations, and the mixed middle class called for suffrage and independence. Nothing was more evident to the disenfranchised Black population than the

37 Ibid., 31-32.
uncertainty of Jamaica to be a place where Black people succeeded. According to Jamaican
economist Richard L. Bernal, the island was economically vulnerable long before the Great
Depression, owing to its dependence on imports and the fact that Jamaica was not fully
industrialized prior to attaining independence. Bernal even points out that Jamaica’s “virtual
absence of locally produced manufactured goods” made them ill equipped to sustain themselves
independently. Afro-Jamaicans suffered from uneven wealth distribution long before the
Depression, an effect of the racist imperial politics arduously leaving them behind economically.
To make matters worse, they could not fully participate in the political structure until 1944,
making their affliction manifold. More and more people embraced Africa as their homeland,
and Ethiopia in particular, believing in the continent’s symbolic Blackness and that true self-
determination would only exist where race was not a factor in their everyday lives. It is no
coincidence that the African motherland stands as one of the core elements of Rastafari today.

The concept of African centrality was not particular to Jamaica; Pan-Africanism was on
the rise and the Back-to-Africa Movement was being revived through the beginning twentieth
century. The key to Jamaica’s involvement can be seen in the island’s most renowned twentieth-
century Jamaican activist to-date, Pan-Africanist leader Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Garvey
was a major influence in what later became Rastafari. He was a writer, activist and political
leader responsible for the founding of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and
African Communities League (UNIA-ACL) in 1914, as well as the Black Star Line, a shipping
line devoted to trade and tourism the African diaspora beginning in 1919. His work as a Pan-
Africanist and Black Nationalist on behalf of the Back-to-Africa Movement made him a threat to

38 Richard L. Bernal, “The Great Depression, Colonial Policy and Industrialization in Jamaica” in Social and
39 Bernal, 37.
40 Nettleford, 23.
his then place of residence, the United States. A descendant of the Maroons, Garvey was an early pioneer of Garveyism, Rastafari, Black Nationalism, and a number of other movements for African redemption with his infamous slogan, ‘Africa for the Africans.’

As founder of the UNIA, Garvey advocated for the end of African and Caribbean colonization, hoping to create a modern network of Black independent nations. Renowned early Rastafarians Leonard Howell and Robert Hinds were early Garveyites. They employed Garvey’s beliefs to form independent communities grounded in Black unity and repatriation of descendants of enslaved Africans. As a result, these communities were seen as major threats by colonial authorities. Rastafarianism was in fact born from Garvey’s words, “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black king; he shall be the redeemer.” His prophecy later came true on November 2, 1930 when Ras Tafari Makonnen became the Emperor of Ethiopia. Newly crowned Haile Selassie I was believed to be the savior of African people and local Jamaican Garveyites established their own faith in his honor, Rastafari.

For Jamaicans and others across the African diaspora in the 1930s, Rastafari’s founding presented an alternative way of life, a doctrine that embraced a Black figurehead and leadership. And although the master’s Christianity has continued to be the most popular religion on Jamaica, it also stressed obedience, docility, and an imposed acceptance of European expansion that a number of poor Blacks didn’t necessarily agree with. Rastafari preaches love as a way of life, something captured in Marley’s legendary song “One Love.” But a distinctive strand of Rastafari is its agency for social action, the goal being to decondition Black people from the effects of

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43 Ibid., 13.
misinformation and colonization. Its purpose has long been to reawaken the consciousness of descendants of Africa, reject European colonial philosophy and education, and create their own social, political, religious, cultural and economic structures.\textsuperscript{45} It calls upon Black power for the Black majority, Zionism, and for Black people to stand together against neoliberalism and capitalism, which benefit from Black labor, yet continue to leave Black people behind.

**What Is Rastafari**

Rastafarianism combats the western world system, *Babylon*, the oppressive state and the political and social institutions that have formed and continued to hinder and repress Black people since white imperialism began. Biblically, Babylon was the world’s first city, ridden with greed, materialism, and immorality.\textsuperscript{46} Followers of the faith believe that the forced captivity of Jews in Babylon parallels the ways African people were forced into bondage. The Babylonian system was created to relegate Black people to the bottom of the social, political, and economic ladder and is symbolically understood today as a reflection of the colonial establishment. It is for precisely this belief that Rastafarianism developed into a practice all uniquely its own. Africa, therefore, was the antithesis of Babylon, providing a symbol of Black self-worth and freedom.

Rastafari is a social and political movement that constitutes some of Garvey’s ideologies, chiefly on Africa’s social and political practice, and incorporates a spiritual element that largely enticed Jamaica’s impoverished population. It emerged as an attitude of the predominantly Afro-Jamaican rural and urban underclass with many practices characteristic of the Jamaican peasantry. Followers embrace Haile Selassie I as Jah, the living God and Christian messiah descended from King Solomon of Jerusalem and the Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia. He is further

\textsuperscript{45} Lewis, 15.
\textsuperscript{46} Edmonds, 43.
regarded as the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, taken from Revelations in the Bible. Rastafari is also not an institutionalized faith. It is practiced without an enforced hierarchy or central leadership with anti-Babylonian beliefs emphasized at all levels. It stems from the traditions of numerous African and Afro-Christian religious traditions that were focused on fighting against the system. In times of slavery, these traditions gave Africans both a sense of identity and an ideological platform to challenge their masters.47 In the formation of Rastafari, this platform has evolved to combat Babylonian conditions in Jamaica, and by extension, the rest of the world. Rastas reject Global Northern beliefs in all aspects, not just through the physical manifestation of Jesus, but also in language, diet, appearance, and much more.

Linguistically, Rastafari dismantles English, viewed as the language of the oppressor, as a way of countering the destruction of native African languages following enslavement. They created a lyaric, their own dialect, to redefine words in support of their anti-Babylonian beliefs. The letter “I” is central to Rastafari culture, representing an individual’s oneness and unity with God, the universe, nature, and man.48 Words like I-and-I, I-ration, and I-ses translate to mean “we,” “creation,” and “praises,” respectively, but overall they signify the unified identity of Rasta followers with Jah and the world. The lyaric also rearranges words in order to better constitute their meaning. Overstanding, for example, replaces “understanding” and downpression replaces “oppression,” logically emphasizing the directional position by which these things are absorbed.

Rastas consume an Ital diet, meaning pure and natural. While overall this means that Rastas do not consume meat, shellfish, and some fish, it more so reflects undefiled preparation of

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47 Edmonds, 32.
48 Andwele, 17.
food introduced by Europe as unhealthy and ungodly. These aspects of the religion, as well as the adherence to *locs* and the healing and illuminating qualities of *herb*, marijuana, are just some of the ways Rastafari challenges mental slavery and *politricks* in today’s society. As a belief system, Rastafari seeks to revert the mental enslavement forced upon Black people. Everything from the education system, economic principles, and the political institutions put in place are all *politricks*, deceptive Babylonian activities used to continually dominate Black people.

Despite the historical practicality of Rastafari, Rastas have been met with intense opposition across all facets of their beliefs. The two main conflicts Rastafari followers face are from their use of *ganja* and their dreadlocked hair. Contrary to popular belief, smoking marijuana is a criminal offense in Jamaica. The rhetoric around the use of marijuana is no different than in the States. Historically, it has been denounced at all levels, including by Rastafari prophet Marcus Garvey who claimed marijuana is dangerous and those who smoke it are menaces to society.49 To Rastafari, the practice could not be farther from the stereotype; instead, it is used as a social and religious sacrament that, according to a Rastafari interpreter of the 1960s, “transports devotees away from the awful reality [of poverty, near starvation and depression].”50 Secondly, dreadlocks have been regarded as a sign of unkemptness and apathy. Instead, Rasta individuals follow the guidelines of Leviticus 21:5 and Numbers 6:5 that outlaw the combing and cutting of hair. Together, these two relatively smaller aspects of Rastafari ideals have been manipulated to pit devotees as insurgents and delinquents in the island and worldwide.

49 Lewis, 49.
50 Nettleford, 79.
The Coral Gardens Massacre

On April 11, 1963, during the Holy Week and less than a year after gaining independence, the Jamaican government waged a war against Rastafarians across the country, known as the Coral Gardens Massacre. After a fire was set to a local gas station and eight were killed, including two police officers, the government rounded up, jailed, and tortured hundreds of men and women across the country because Rastas were believed to be at fault. Innocent people were scorned for their Black nationalist beliefs, loc’d hair, and seen as undesirable to Jamaica’s tourism industry. Police and military raided communities, arrested Rastas across western Jamaica, and even cut off their locs, a symbol of Rastafari strength. The Coral Gardens Massacre was by no means the beginning of state-sanctioned targeting of Rastas. As I argued previously, Rastas Howell and Hinds were targeted as early as the 1930s. State-issued paper, the *Daily Gleaner* noted “[the] political threat posed by Rastafari agitation was fully recognised by the colonial regime as early as 1933-34. This was confirmed by its attempt to repress the movement’s leadership by arresting Leonard Howell and his lieutenant, Robert Hinds.”

The 1960s were already a tumultuous time in Jamaica’s history. Prior to Prime Minister Alexander Bustamante calling for all Rasta to be brought in “dead or alive” during the Massacre, poverty was the greatest issue plaguing the Black populace. Many of those who previously regarded race as a redundant factor now began to see a “class/color correlation” that mirrored the plantation society. Although the People’s National Party won on a socialist platform in 1955, their focus shifted the following decade with the attempted establishment of a Caribbean political

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53 Nettleford, 14.
Rastafari were effectively challenging society and gaining the support of impoverished Black people as more and more realized that, even with a sovereign government, forty-two percent of the population was in poverty. The Five Year Independence Plan and Doxey Report were evidence of the failing economy. The more outspoken Rastas became, the easier it was for the state to make them the scapegoats of Jamaica’s perils. The atrocity at Coral Gardens was just the beginning.

Even today, the state’s recollection of the Rastafari genocide is less than sincere—going so far to diminish their brutality to the “Coral Gardens Incident.” Despite national news sources like the Daily Gleaner and Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation breaking the story in 1963, there continues to be a denial of the crimes perpetrated on Jamaica’s rejected Rastas. Had it not been for the work of Deborah Thomas and John Jackson Jr., through their 2011 documentary Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens, the very iteration of the massacre would have gone without any mass documentation. In the film, not only do Thomas and Jackson shed light onto one of the most controversial episodes in modern Jamaican history, they also interview Rasta elders, many of whom were affected in 1963 and long for recognition. Furthering the hopes of their elders, present-day Rastas refuse to let these state-sanctioned attacks be forgotten. With the help of Public Defender Arlene Harrison Henry in 2015, the Rasta community authored a legal petition, calling for the Jamaican government to formally apologize and issue reparations for the attack. Just weeks ago, the community got their wish when Prime Minister Andrew Holness gave a formal apology at a House of Representatives’ meeting, agreed to establish a trust in their

54 Nettleford, 49.
55 Ibid, 51.
56 These two reports highlight Jamaica’s failing industries, despite many maneuvers by the government to redistribute growth.
57 Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens. Directed by Deborah A. Thomas and John L. Jackson, Jr. USA: Third World Newsreel, 2011.
58 “52 Years after Coral Gardens Public Defender Investigates One of Jamaica’s Bloodiest Conflicts,” ibid.
honor, and named that a Rastafari heritage center will be built on the site of the initial dispute. Overall, Rastafari combat Babylonian downpressions in many ways, in their language, diet, and politics, yet their opposition is no better known than through the social and political protest of Rastafari’s reggae music.

**What is Reggae?**

Reggae developed musically from Black folk traditions that were forcibly brought over during the Triangular Trade. Reggae is grounded in the vibrant Kongo-derived drumming, from kumina, to mento, which borrows from the drumming practices of enslaved West Africans, and nyabinghi, the Rastafari drumming practice. Before the more direct influences of ska and rocksteady, early Rasta music also borrowed from Burru. According to Rebecca Mulvaney’s dissertation entitled “Rhythms of Resistance: On Rhetoric and Reggae Music,” Rastas met the Burru people after a string of police raids in the ghettos of Kingston, where they were adopted by and musically trained by the Burru drum family. The adoption of Burru drumming coupled with Rastafari biblical scripture used during reasonings, Rasta spiritual discussions, went on to become nyabingi.

The term ‘reggae’ itself did not manifest until 1968 when popular music group Toots and the Maytals released “Do the Reggay.” While there is speculation on the origins of the word, Toots proclaimed reggae as meaning “comin’ from the people…like from the ghetto, from majority.” Reggae is slower than Jamaica’s previously dominating genres, ska and rocksteady.

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62 Mulvaney, 88.
63 Mulvaney, 88.
The drums and bass are essential to the peculiarity of the reggae sound while the keyboard and/or guitar often supplant the main chords. Reggae ranges from sixty to eighty-five beats per minute and relies on complicated neo-African percussion, polyrhythms, and call-and-response musical patterns.⁶⁴

Even more difficult to describe is the way reggae makes its listeners feel. In Bob Marley and The Wailers’ 1969 release “Trenchtown Rock,” Marley, pictured above,⁶⁵ opens “One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain.”⁶⁶ In the song, he is particularly referencing how reggae music has allowed him to escape the perils of poverty as a Trench Town native. Nevertheless, the power and emotion of reggae music goes beyond the limits of the town itself. Reggae is the rebel’s music. It is the salve of the nation, the voice of the people, and their overstanding as Black people living in opposition every day.

Since the foundations of reggae in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the musical genre has evolved beyond its early beginnings, which borrowed from rocksteady, American blues, and other international Black music forms. The main subgenres of reggae include dub, instrumentals popularized by musicians like Lee “Scratch” Perry in the late 1960s that consist of remixing records; lovers rock, which was sparked by Caribbean populations in South London with a

⁶⁴ David Horn, 650.
lyrical focus on love and romance; and finally, the most popular, roots reggae. The term “roots” not only refers to the traditionally African musical styles, but more so the messages this subgenre conveys through its embrace of the African as a homeland for Black people. Roots reggae is grounded in the Rastafari movement, honing in on the philosophy’s messages of African pride, Rastafari lifestyle, and social justice for the suffering and poverty of Black people across the world.

Roots reggae is simply a music of and for Black people. It is largely devoid of the glitz and glamour of the music industry, as roots artists and their core messages remain true to the humble beliefs and status of the philosophy’s history. Even the aesthetic of a roots reggae musician is modest and unpretentious. Marley and the rest of the Wailers emphasized the image of working class everyday apparel, performing in khaki pants and denim button-downs, with Rasta head-coverings. Every aspect of roots music reflects the Black reality, especially lyrically. Roots is a transformative cultural experience. It stems from the diasporic tradition of the cultural lending itself to and entering the political. Roots is the embodiment of Rasta consciousness with its artists acting to open the vocality of Black struggle and preserve a historical record rewritten with a focus on Black history. It emanates through song and practice as an emergence of cultural continuity to Africa.

These songs are the recorded histories focused of African uplift and are used as a method of reeducating Black people. The intellectual tradition in roots is what makes it especially distinct from other reggae subgenres. Whereas dub focuses on the physical sound and lovers rock on romance, roots centers on African culture and the ghetto experience. It was even through Rasta music and protests alike that followers opposed the Italian war against Ethiopia in 1935.67

67 Lewis, 48.
Like the Maroons and free Blacks from the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, roots reggae established a new form of protest in the 1970s. Roughly a decade into independence, this generation of artists in their twenties and early thirties had grown unhappy with the false promises of Jamaica’s sovereign leadership. Roots is undeniably recognized for its ability to unify not only Jamaica, but also Black nations across the diaspora, in its Pan-African spirit of resistance.

The Reggae Revolutionaries

While there were countless artists part of the influential musicians of reggae's golden era, no artists held the vigor and power of founding members of the Wailers, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, both of whom have been posthumously awarded Jamaica’s Order of Merit honors. In this section, I offer a modest case study of groundbreaking musical activists Marley and Tosh. Their music, particularly after the demise of the Wailers, spanned the globe, touching the souls of people Black and white. In order to understand their revolutions, one must inherently understand where they came from.

According to Timothy White’s leading biography *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley*, Robert Nesta Marley was born to Cedella Marley (M. Booker), a Black woman, and Norval Sinclair Marley, a white man and land-governing superintendent to the Crown, in Nine Mile, a small town in Saint Ann in 1945.68 Marley met Booker when she was just seventeen; he, on the other hand, was roughly four years older than her father. Their relationship was scandalously kept secret before Bob’s birth. Although they were legally wed, a union between a white British Jamaican with money and authority and a poor Black young woman was not only unheard of, it

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also seemingly mimicked patriarchal relations between white plantation owners and enslaved women. When Marley’s family found out not only had she married Booker but had given birth to his mixed-race son, he fled to the capital in shame.69

Bob Marley grew up poor, particularly after his father passed when he was just ten years old. He was teased, according to childhood friend Neville “Bunny Wailer” Livingston in the 2012 documentary Marley, “rejected” for being a “red pickney”—his light complexion made him a half-caste in the eyes of Nine Mile’s predominantly Black population.70 At the age of twelve, Bob and his mother moved to Kingston’s booming musical center, Trench Town. It was there that he formed, with Livingston, Winston “Peter Tosh” McIntosh, Beverley Kelso, and Junior Braithwaite a first singing group. In 1963, they were originally known as The Teenagers. Then, after a series of name changes, settled on the one renowned across the world, The Wailers. The group did not immediately shoot to success, especially with minimal royalties from their early songs to make ends meet. It was in Kingston that Marley first learned about Rastafari. As he got deeper into the Rasta faith, the Rasta social commentary became a fundamental part of the music he and The Wailers created.

Marley, the documentary, outlines a lot about the musician’s later life and musical career. By the 1970s, the world was taking heed of The Wailers, with songs like “Go Tell It on the Mountain” and “Caution.” In 1973, the band took a serious turn for roots music and released their first album Catch a Fire under Britain-based reggae recording label Island Records.71 After series of disagreements with their new label by 1974, founding members Livingston and Tosh left the group, but Marley had already captivated audiences across the globe. He was unwavering

69 White, 53-57.
71 White, 234.
in his Rastafari beliefs and his music was an example of that. Marley’s 1975 release of “No Woman, No Cry” was his international breakthrough hit, however, his political messages were just beginning.

The latter half of the 1970s were coincidentally a very tumultuous time for Jamaica politically. Manley’s Democratic Socialism was failing and causing civil unrest in the ghettos and between the different political parties. The state of Jamaica only fueled the fire for roots musicians who used their music to describe “things that [they] feel from the ghetto,” says the now retired lead singer of the Twinkle Brothers, Norman Grant. In an attempt to bring about peace, and seemingly gain more supporters, Prime Minister Manley organized Smile Jamaica, a free concert to be headlined by Marley. Following the concert’s announcement, Manley declared there would also be a major election. By accepting the concert, it appeared that Marley was in support of Manley’s reelection. Just days before the concert, on December 3, 1976, a string of gunmen stormed Marley’s home on 56 Hope Road, injuring Marley, his wife Rita Marley, and Marley’s manager, Don Taylor. This visible threat to Marley and his family’s lives, however, would not put an end to the show.

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72 Katz, 248.
73 White, 287.
74 Ibid, 286-287.
Marley performed at the concert to a crowd of over eighty thousand, opening the show first by clarifying the intentions of his performance, “When me decided ta do dis yere concert two anna half months ago, me was told dere was no politics.”\textsuperscript{75} He opened the show with the lyrics to “War:”

\begin{quote}
\textit{What life has taught me}  
\textit{I would like to share with}  
\textit{Those who want to learn...}  
\textit{That until the basic human rights}  
\textit{Are equally guaranteed to all...}  
\textit{Everywhere is war.}
\end{quote} \textsuperscript{76}

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\textsuperscript{75} White, 292.  
Marley later put on his “One Love” concert on April 22, 1978 in Jamaica’s National Stadium after taking a brief respite from Jamaica.77 Dressed in true Rasta fashion, a red, green, and gold long sleeve shirt, he performed one of his most recognized songs, for which he named the concert after. It was a spiritual experience as Bob skipped and hopped across stage. Before the end of the concert, Marley called, at random, for the joining of the major party leaders Manley and Seaga on stage and held their hands above his head as a symbol of peace in the nation, pictured on the previous page.78

Marley’s activism didn’t stop there. Despite having already been diagnosed with cancer, Marley travelled to Zimbabwe and on April 18, 1980, with his eldest son Ziggy in tow, he performed for the newly independent African nation.79 Just a year before, Bob Marley and The Wailers wrote and released a song in the country’s honor. Entitled “Zimbabwe” and released on their 1979 album Survival, the Wailer’s song supported Zimbabwean guerrillas in their fight for independence with the words:

“Every man gotta right to decide his own destiny
   And in this judgment there is no partiality
   So arm in arms, with arms
   We'll fight this little struggle
   'Cause that's the only way
   We can overcome our little trouble

Natty dread it in-a (Zimbabwe)
   Set it up in (Zimbabwe)
Mash it up-a in-a Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe)
Africans a-liberate (Zimbabwe).”80

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77 White, 299.
78 Ibid, 301.
79 Ibid, 303.
“Zimbabwe” and Marley’s other songs were a sincere reflection of the time period, a period when Black struggles did not only mark the island nation—Black revolutions rippled in Black majority countries across the world. Marley’s music echoed Jamaica’s emancipatory legacy, which begun with anti-colonial uprisings, but was just on its way.


> “Everyone is crying out for peace, yes, None is crying out for justice, I don’t want no peace I need equal rights and justice.”

> Although Bob Marley has conceivably been praised the king of reggae worldwide, Peter Tosh deserves critical acclaim for his contributions to the music rightly alongside the

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“Zimbabwe” singer. Tosh’s more militant outlook, particularly on the legalization of herb, set
Tosh and Marley’s careers apart, especially after their band divided. Using the English
filmmaker Nicholas Campbell’s 1993 documentary Stepping Razor-Red X, the premier
biography The Life of Peter Tosh: Steppin’ Razor published by John Masouri in 2013, and
interviews I conducted with his living relatives, I illustrate that Tosh’s legacy, while seemingly
obscured by Marley’s commercial appeal, is of undoubted political transformation and embrace
of radical Black unity and progress.

Born Winston Hubert McIntosh in the rural Westmoreland parish, Peter Tosh started
playing music and singing at the tender age of four. He was born to single mother, Alvera Coke,
on October 19, 1944. At the peak of his career, he wrote song “Illegitimate Children,” describing
his experiences after being forced to move in with his strictly religious relatives. Although the
church was the foremost site where Tosh honed his music and singing skills, from singing to
playing the piano and guitar, the imperial Christianity he was forced to partake in presented a
problem early on for Tosh’s budding religious identity. In an interview with Stepping Razor-
Red X, Tosh states:

In my time when I came to the planet . . . black people would be recognised as nobodies .
. . we become like sheep without shepherd . . . When they started to teach me . . . they
Teach me about the Christians. But they make sure they teach me that the image of God
was a white man. And when I ask – why am I black, they say I was born in sin and
shaped in iniquity . . . One of the main songs they used to sing in church that makes me
sick – Lord, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. I go to church and they say God
made man in His own likeness and image. If I made a doll in my image it is quite obvious
that the doll must look like me. Yet still . . . I am faced with the ignorance, lost into
fantasy seeking to find a reality in what they taught me…\footnote{Segment from Peter Tosh: Stepping Razor/Red X, documentary film directed by Nicholas Campbell, Bush Doctor Films Inc., 1992, 24:00-25:00.}

His upbringing instilled a deep-rooted Christian background, yet he could not invest in a
god that reflected the oppressor. After the death of his aunt, a fifteen-year old Peter jumped on a
truck for musical Kingston. This move to the capital spurred his journey into the overstanding of Rastafari, even going to witness the visit of the Black Messiah himself, Haile Selassie I, on his trip to Jamaica in 1966.

In Trench Town, the “Mystic Man,” as he would later become known, got his first real introduction to the music world. Reggae musician Joe Higgs actually helped get the Wailers their start and served as a mentor to the young band. Tosh was a musical prodigy, teaching himself to play the guitar at just five years old. His career with the Wailers produced noteworthy songs for the reggae group, but it was ultimately their signing with Island Records in 1973 that would tear them apart. Tosh left the group the following year, citing ‘Christopher Whiteworst,’ his moniker for Blackwell, as the chief reason for their demise. As an independent artist, Tosh had the freedom to be the ultra-radical musician and activist he’d always been. He personified the Jamaican rude boy culture that was growing out from the discontent of local youth. While Marley advocated for love and unity, Tosh was critical of the political and social shitstem, often saying that if he was not a musician, he would have been a revolutionary soldier.83 He was performing at one concert in 1978 when he proclaimed, “Black inferiority, brown superiority and white superiority rule dis likkle black country . . . Well I and I come . . . to break down dese barriers of oppression and drive away transgression and rule equality . . . I and I come to flash lightning, earthquake and thunder in these planes of destruction and unrighteousness.”84 He said he would be “the constructive awakener of the black masses of the world so them know themselves and others know what black people supposed to be and where.”85

One of Tosh’s most symbolic songs was his release of “Here Comes the Judge.”86 In it he sings:

83 Masouri, 38.
84 Ibid, 38.
85 Masouri, 38.
“Here Comes the Judge
Hear ye him
God save the African king
Anyone have anything to say before this just judge
Come say it now and say it like you glad not like you mad
For this judge have no mercy

... You're all brought here on count one Robbing and raping Africa
   Count two Stealing black people out of Africa
   Count three Brainwashing black people
   Count four Holding black people in captivity for more than 300 years
   Count five Killing over 50 million black people without a cause
   Count six Teaching black people to hate themselves...”

Tosh is unrelenting is political message, ordering colonial infiltrators like Columbus and ‘Alexander so called the Great’ to his ‘court.’ On the reggae spectrum, Tosh’s music was undoubtedly less commercial than his former band member’s. He was working class, dark-skinned and found himself caught in the perils of the Black population. I interviewed his relatives who have preserved his memory by turning his Westmoreland home into a mausoleum. His cousin, Tuffy, remarks that Tosh was one of the bravest musicians of the time, taking “brave moves” in his career and never being afraid to “step out.” As we sat and reasoned about the imperial social structures of Jamaica’s history, saluting other freedom fighters from Garvey to Malcolm X, Tuffy glorifies his cousin for being one of the “founders” of reggae music, “the revolutionary thing” that professes “love not war, not segregation, not malice” and calls upon the youth to make a change.

87 Ibid.
88 Tuffy McIntosh, interviews by authored, August 15, 2016 in Westmoreland, Jamaica, 17:05-17:23.
89 McIntosh, 60:30-61:45.
The lives and careers of these two extremely influential musicians were short-lived to say the least. Marley died in May 1981, but even when he was ill with cancer, he never shied away from using his music as a method to disseminate and proliferate Rastafari and support and advocate for Black freedom across the globe. One of the most legendary Rastafari legends to-date, Marley was a firm believer in African liberation, as demonstrated in his infamous song lyric and actually original Garvey quote, “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.” Tosh, on the other hand, was murdered six years later in a home invasion. The staunch, yet often misunderstood anti-imperial activist is revered more so today in than in the last decade of his life, for having used his lyrics as his arms to initiate a Black independent subjectivity for Jamaica’s poor.

Chapter Two—“Here Comes Trouble:” Jamaica’s Youth Generation and the New Politics

“Left, right, Jah souljahz a come, left, right,  
An’ dem seh here comes trouble,  
Here comes the danger,  
Sent by the savior welcome di Rasta youths,  
I an’ I a start recruit souljahz fi Selassie army.

Here comes trouble  
Here comes the danger  
Welcome the savior  
Welcome the Rasta youths  
You no haffi ask is who  
A the general issuing a warning.”

—Chronixx, “Here Comes Trouble”

Introduction

The Reggae Revival has sparked a twenty-first century cultural movement of rising consciousness in Jamaica. What first began with the musical efforts of artist Oje “Protoje” Ollivierre, the Revival has since expanded to a creative community of activists who have delved into music as well as film, literature, non-profit work and much more. In fact, the cultural revolution has been described by Reggae Vibe Magazine as “an explosion of artistic expressions with music at the forefront, gradually influencing the mentality of the present generation toward positivity, Afrocentric spirituality and self-determination all over the world.”

For the purpose of this chapter, I primarily focus on two of the leading Revivalist musicians, Protoje and Chronixx, their records, and their collective statement as a unified entity of musical activists. These millennial artists, all in their twenties and early thirties, have escaped the disillusionment of the more violence-prone dancehall culture created and have since returned

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92 Ibid.  
to the traditions produced from the earliest forms of Afro-Jamaican musical protest. In other words, they have restored the cultural practice of roots reggae in Jamaica for the youth demographic, placing a greater emphasis on African roots, repatriation, and the working class Afro-Jamaican experience, all of which are intertwined in Rastafari philosophy. Roots reggae has long encapsulated Jamaica’s spiritual and emancipatory capital in modern musical form. This Revival is the new generation’s way of looking back to Jamaica’s history in order to create a better future. Much like Chronixx’s 2014 song “Here Comes Trouble,” the music coming out of the Revival has beckoned for Jamaica’s youth to rise up against a silencing government and failing economy, and generate an anti-colonial political and cultural collective all their very own.

In this chapter, I begin by describing Jamaica’s contemporary political and economic issues, which are integral to understanding the messages coming out of Revival music today. I ultimately show how the Reggae Revival came to be at the present moment. Using songs and music videos, I interrogate the work and activism of today’s Revival artists and examine how their songs have been central to building not only their community, but also the youth’s consciousness and political beliefs. I illustrate the contemporary music connection to the past and present, as artists document current events in their songs. Using lyrics by Protoje and Chronixx, I outlay that the Revival has created a resurgence in the messages of Rastafari and re-instilled reggae’s importance as a political agent for this booming generation, particularly those of the working class.
Jamaica in the 21st Century

According to a 2015 article by sociologist and development scientist Peter Espeut in the *Jamaica Gleaner*, “The struggle of the 19th century was freedom from slavery…The struggle of the 20th century was not so much between the colonial power and the colonists, but between workers and capitalists…The struggle of 21st century Jamaica is to develop a political system which will energise the nation to new heights of productivity.”  

While this brief guest column does little to reflect on the impact of race in Jamaica, it does address the island’s political and economic struggles over the last three centuries. Today, Jamaica’s economy stands as one of its greatest challenges. In the mid-twentieth century, Jamaican markets stood as one of the primary leaders in the Caribbean.  

However, a 1987 report by the United States Library of Congress, entitled “Caribbean Islands: A Country Study,” indicated that the Jamaican government did little in the 1970s and 1980s to better the nation and the island was in fact experiencing “sporadic and unsustained growth.” A financial crisis in the 1990s led to government bailouts, increased dependency on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Jamaica’s economy being largely surpassed by other islands who fell behind just decades earlier.

Jamaica has made little progress since then, as “one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world,” according to the World Bank. The Jamaican government has been bullied into paying off a US$510 million loan to the World Bank and a US$932 million loan to the IMF. The 2001 documentary *Life + Debt* shows the process by which these international

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97 James, ibid.
99 Ibid.
assistance programs have actually caused more social and economic harm in the country. Structural adjustments have forced Jamaica to give what little it does earn to the IMF and World Bank, instead of investing in the health, education, and general welfare of its citizens. This indebtedness of a small Black nation to an international capitalist body with executive leadership from predominantly white countries echoes to unbalanced colonial model. This is just one example of how neoliberalism is enacted upon the island and only begins to explain the vast economic issues in Jamaica. The national debt has also forced Jamaica’s hand towards foreign privatization, taking money and, more importantly local industries like agriculture and fishing, away from its citizens and placing them in the hands of transnational companies. At one point in the documentary, local Rastas and farmers testify about how the IMF has affected them personally. At a Rasta drumming circle, a local explains, “Farming, which is the backbone of our economy…you find that the very farmers we have farm them produce, yet right now we have tons of cabbage a-waste in Jamaica because goods coming in from America selling cheaper than what we can produce here.”

Through the IMF’s neocolonial efforts, Jamaica can only longer even afford to feed its nation with homegrown food, something that not only seems illogical financially for the government, but also fails citizens who cannot afford to partake in their own innate industry.

As a result, Jamaica’s predominantly Black working class has suffered the most. The “Jamaica 2016 Crime and Safety Report” by the World Bank ranked the island as having one of the five highest national homicide rates in the world. The same year, it was reported that the island had an unemployment rate of 13.7 percent, and it was more than double for Jamaica’s

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102 “Jamaica Overview,” ibid.
youth, at 29.2 percent. Work is limited, especially in one of the island’s only profitable industries, tourism. As such, the island’s economic conditions have been the primary reason for its immense social tensions. Economic issues are always atop Jamaica’s two political parties’ annual platforms, discernibly having the most effect on people, but Jamaican politicians have limited sovereignty due to the power of supranational organizations. This does not even begin to account for racism, classism, sexism, and government corruption on the island, all of which affect power dynamics on the island. The continued downward spiral and inability of Jamaican politicians to enact effective responses have made for an unhappy general population and an even more disgruntled millennial generation.

The Reggae Revival Begins

As corruption, crime, and violence continue to plague a sovereign Jamaica and most gravely affect its majority Black working class, it is no surprise that adherents of Rastafari have increased in the last decade. In the 2001 census, it was reported that some 24,000 Rastas made up the population. However in 2012, Jamaican expert on Rastafari Jalani Niaah reported that followers make up likely eight to ten percent of the roughly 2.7 million persons living on the island. Figures aside, Rastafari has always garnered the support of the working class, whether they were strict followers or just supporters of the movement. Musically, roots reggae has permeated every decade since the 1970s. Black culture-bearers Garnet Silk, Sizzla Kalonji, and Morgan Heritage carried the Wailers’ legacy of Black unity and uplift into the 1990s and the

103 “Jamaica Overview,” ibid.
latter two have done so well into the twenty-first century. It was not until recently, along with the expansion of Rastafari followers, that roots began to dominate Jamaica’s popular music at home and abroad.

Jamaican author, blogger, and self-declared revolutionary Dutty Bookman coined the term “Reggae Revival” on his then blog, *Duttyism*, in 2011. Born Gavin Hutchinson in Jamaica’s capital city, Bookman changed his name to honor the Jamaican-born enslaved leader in the Haitian Revolution, Dutty Boukman. Hutchinson has described on numerous occasions that he identified with Boukman’s adoration for books and revolutionary spirit, thus inspiring him to go by his current moniker.\(^\text{106}\)

In his November 2011 post, which he has since turned into a published work, Bookman writes:

> “Art is an illumination of dark times. At least two separate occasions in history have shown us one undeniable fact: the flourishing of the arts is a critical ingredient in any society’s effort to evolve in a higher consciousness…There is something happening in the Caribbean Sea right now…Bob Marley has come to symbolize it today but it is so much more than one man. The renaissance period is past, yes, but something greater has emerged. It is the Jamaican [Reggae] Revival.”\(^\text{107}\)

Bookman’s inner circle has made him privy to the renewed rise in consciousness of Jamaican’s present generation. Although Bookman initially deemed the movement the “Jamaica Revival,” while on a book tour, he explains that he altered the term to “provide…a buzzword, a marketing term…so we could actually have a discussion about what I saw happening and what many others who were underground in this underground movement saw happening.\(^\text{108}\) He goes on to say, “Let’s name this thing, let’s name it from within because we know how popular our Jamaican

\(^{106}\) Bookman’s adoption of the Jamaican-born activist is also a symbol of protest because the Jamaican government still failed to recognize Boukman’s efforts.


culture is...They [non-Jamaicans/foreigners/white people] will run down here and say ‘oh this thing is happening’ and they will want to take control of this cultural product. But if we name it, then we are already in control from the start.109 True to his dedication for documentation, Bookman has since become a driving force surrounding much of the literature about the Revival today. He has also trademarked Reggae Revival and has made it into a booming website with an additional social media following to document and share Revivalists’ work in the country and abroad.110

In 2011, Bookman’s first published memoir, *Tried & True: Revelations of a Rebellious Youth* recounts his experience as “a male trying to live righteous and pure in the Jamaican society, and ultimately trying to stay positive even though he was yearning to be heard.”111 While finishing college in Central Florida in 2007, he became acquainted with Protoje. After listening to some of Protoje’s music, Bookman writes, “I was impressed; Proto continues to grow himself and his craft…The evolution of the global Jamaican consciousness is at hand.”112

Bookman later returned to Jamaica and began working at Bob Marley’s studio-turned-museum Tuff Gong International. He established a youth talk show, and coordinated the Africa Unite Youth Symposium with Marley’s widow, Rita Marley. Despite the many things he was involved in, Bookman never strayed too far from the music thanks to the community being built around the Revival. To this day, he regularly serves as the documentarian for countless Reggae Revival tours, while also serving as the founder of Manifesto Jamaica, a nonprofit “whose mission is to educate, expose, and empower young people from all economic classes” to “pursue creative

110 Bookman’s website can be found at [http://reggae-revival.com](http://reggae-revival.com).
skills, increase personal confidence and to professionally develop in a manner that promotes economic fulfillment.”

Along the way, Bookman found his journey to Rastafari and has been adamant that the “Reggae Revival is synonymous with Rasta Revival, Reggae needed Rasta and Rasta needed Reggae.” The two movements are inherently one, interwoven by Rastafari’s pro-Black self-sufficiency, human and environmental rights awareness, and the current economic and social status of young adults today.

It is by no means a coincidence that Protoje and Bookman’s relationship helped coin the term Reggae Revival. This movement has been most notable for its crafting of a positive and uplifting community of young Afro-Jamaican musicians who have evoked Rastafari principles, not only for its doctrine in Black elevation, but also the importance of unity amongst one other. In a recent interview just last month with music magazine The Fader, singjay Chronixx was asked if there is competition amongst the Revivalists. He responded, “It’s all a part of one song. I just have to make sure my verse in the song sound good…We all grew up in the same Jamaican shit. The same Jamaican shitstem, which can be very beautiful sometimes.”

Here, not only does Chronixx borrow the term “shitstem,” popularized by 1970s powerhouse Peter Tosh to describe the inadequacies of Jamaican society; he also points to challenges of poverty, corruption, and anti-Blackness as motivating forces for this community building around the Revival.

The oldest of the leading Revivalists, Protoje was born Oje Ken Ollivierre on June 14, 1981 to musical parents from Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. As the first

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113 Sista Irie, “The Dutty Truth” in Island Stage Magazine Issue 1, January 2014, 10.
114 Ibid.
among the Jamaican millennial movement to begin recording reggae music for change, he is often credited as its founder, with an extensive discography that dates back to 2005. What first put Protoje on the reggae map was his 2009 performance at Jamnesia, the beachside home of veteran reggae artist Billy “Mystic” Wilmot from the Mystic Revealers. Wilmot began holding open-mic jam sessions in 2007 and Protoje’s freestyled performance two years later created “an overwhelming sense in the audience that new life was about to be injected into Jamaica’s music industry.”\textsuperscript{117} He soon began using his acclaim to advance other artists in the movement.

Expounding on the principal importance of unity, Bookman wrote, “It is not a crew but actually a crusade and, as time marches, I anticipate it becoming more of a calculated nation-building effort…The Revivalists all share recognition of some greater force that is in control. That force alone propels the music so that they themselves are two things at once: the beneficiaries of its growth and the chosen custodians charged with the task of protecting it.\textsuperscript{118} This “crusade” he speaks of is the Reggae Revival’s community, a convergence of rising male and female artists and musicians who all employ art to shape the consciousness of young people today.

Much like Bookman’s memoir, Protoje’s discography has served as the voice of the youth generation. His first album, \textit{Seven Year Itch}, was released in 2011 and featured one of Ollivierre’s most popular songs, “Wrong Side of the Law.\textsuperscript{119} The song was inspired by real-life events that same year when police stopped Protoje and Bookman, arresting and charging Bookman for possession of a narcotic.\textsuperscript{120} In the 2011 tune, Protoje disgruntledly bellows:

\begin{quote}
“I got caught on the wrong side of the law
Say they charging me for marijuana
Like I don't need to reach home 'til tomorrow's
Sun goes up
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{117} “Reggae Revival: The Resurging Presence of Rastafari in Jamaican Pop Music,” 275.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 276.
\textsuperscript{119} Protoje, \textit{Seven Year Itch}, (Kingston: Don Corleon Records, 2011), MP3.
\textsuperscript{120} Richard Johnson, “Writer launches REVOLUTION,” ibid.
Actually they the wrong side of the law
Can't be charging me for marijuana
Like I don't need to reach home till tomorrow's
Sun goes up…”

Protoje’s experience, both in person and through song, is not new to Jamaican youth and adherents of Rastafari. *Herb*, or marijuana, has long been part of Jamaica’s popular cultural aesthetic, but has been used by the state to target and criminalize Rastas across the country despite *ganja* being a philosophical sacrament. Evoking encounters with law enforcement, particularly for Rasta artists, has become a staple in the reggae tradition. In fact, “Wrong Side of the Law” can be considered a millennial adaptation of Peter Tosh’s 1976 “Legalize It,” which he followed up with a subsequent campaign for the decriminalization of marijuana.

In the song, Protoje describes being arrested for “a hundred-dollar worth” (less than US$1) of marijuana and being forced to spend a night in jail. The song goes beyond the arrest; it is actually a political statement on state-sanctioned targeting of Rastas and youth alike. Contrary to popular belief in the Global North and despite collective lobbying, marijuana is illegal in Jamaica. Within the last decade, Jamaica’s Amendments to the Dangerous Drugs Act have been enacted to begin the decriminalization process. The law has now made carrying less than two ounces of marijuana a ticketed, minor offense to prevent overcrowding in jails and courts. It is for this very reason Protoje scoffs in the song’s chorus, “I got caught on the wrong side of the law,” but later counters his earlier statement with, “Actually they the wrong side of the law. Can't be charging me for marijuana.” He is actually exposing the continued use of marijuana, despite contemporary statutes, to be used for police corruption and state-sanctioned violence. “Wrong

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Side of the law is exemplary of the Revival’s call-to-action and resurgence of existing political issues.

Protoje’s society and political demonstration through music is far from novel, both in Jamaica and in the greater African Diaspora. Music has always been used as a source of rebellion and strength, particularly in the face of Black people’s oppression. Furthermore, musical protest is the very essence of reggae. From its beginnings, roots reggae has been a voice of the people through its focus on social issues and resistance, but different from the early starters of reggae, Protoje has skillfully done the work of making the Revival’s focus on youth education, community-building and social action. Virtually all of the songs in Protoje’s repertoire relay the plight of Jamaican youth and issues they face in society, but one of his most recurring themes is political exploitation. Two years after *The Seven Year Itch*, Protoje released his second album *The 8 Year Affair*, featuring the song “Reggae Revival,” which Bookman credits for inspiring him to change the movement’s name.\(^\text{123}\) That album also features songs including “This is Not a Marijuana Song,” again challenging the place of *ganja* in Jamaican society, and “Kingston Be Wise,” which pays tribute to early Rastafari pioneer Leonard Howell while also scrutinizing the high youth murder rates in the capital. Later in 2011 the Revival originator released “Take Control,” a song about Jamaica’s lower class needing to take control of their lives and not leave the state of the country in the hands of corrupt politicians.\(^\text{124}\) He sings, “Tell the police officers and soldier men, Say wi wa’ trod the street and road again, Hold wi head higher and proud again, Then and only then, ‘Cause independence no mean no…colonial regime.” Here it is evident that Protoje is charging the present-day political structures with being a major player in


neocolonialism and continued destruction of the island. In 2011, Protoje’s political criticisms were just beginning.

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Figure 4: Image from Protoje’s “Blood Money” animated music video released on February 2, 2017, showing a businessman enjoying the luxuries his wealth on the backs of the island. Image sourced from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etdnIFC4erw.

In February of this year, Protoje released the politically fueled tune “Blood Money,”125 in what an article written by The Fader calls an “honest call to action while addressing some of the socio-economic inequalities that exist.”126 In it, Protoje is unapologetically forthcoming about the social injustices and classism affecting the working class. In the article Protoje imparts, “With all that is happening in Jamaica, criticism is often one-sided and directed to the have-nots—the people who have less are made to seem like the problem in society. This is unfair,

hypocritical, and widely inaccurate. This song seeks to bring about certain conversations, to talk about what is really happening in our society.”

Protoje sings,

“[Verse 1]
Mi nah watch no face beg no more pardon
Nuff drug money deh yah Cherry Garden
Nuff individual society applaudin'
You can ask anybody web dem get dem start in
But nuff politician takin' donation
So nuff criminal will never see a station
Never see a cell, not even a courthouse
But every Sunday wi see deh tek him boat out
North Coast resort and car dealership
Di construction company dem jus' don't legit
Usually wash he money turn around and hide it
When di kick back a come in di government delighted

…

[Verse 2]
Was 'bout to buy a X6 enuh
Maybe then I wouldn't have to be a prisoner
Maybe then I coulda not turn in my firearm
Police could nuh come remand,
Coming like me run an army
Was 'bout to be a politician too
Maybe then I coulda make any decision, look
Maybe then I make a 100 million disappear
Then mi act like mi nuh care
Watch you vote mi back in there
Because the sad reality
Inna Jamaica seh you status a you salary
Man deh road a carry one whole heap a felony
But dem have a family
A boost up di economy…”

In this very poignant song, Protoje explicitly charges the government for accepting bribes and kickbacks in exchange for criminals’ freedom. By saying “Blood money run di nation,” he is effectively calling out the powerful figures and businesspeople who have ties to corruption and

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127 Starling, ibid.
are crippling the nation in the name of their own self-interest. By rapping, “Nuff politician takin’
donation so nuff criminal will never see a station…But every Sunday wi see deh tek him boat
out,” Protoje is calling out bribery and subornment between the affluent class and politicians.
This network counters any legal action and allows the wealthy to continue living their lavish
lifestyles. In addition, Protoje also calls out some of the most gruesome criminal proceedings to
plague the island in the last few years. When Protoje sings, “Was ’bout to buy a X6 enuh, Maybe
then I wouldn't have to be a prisoner,” in the second verse, he is alluding to the callous July 2011
murder of a high school student.129 Seventeen-year-old Khajeel Mais was murdered when the
taxi he was riding in collided into a BMW X6 and then the vehicle’s owner got out and fired
several rounds into the taxi, killing Mais. The so-called “X6 Murder Trial” ended just months
before “Blood Money’s” release, with an acquittal for the alleged shooter, a local businessman.
This was a shock for citizens nationwide, particularly with the initial eyewitness testimony. In
any event, Protoje mocks the government, stating how easy it was for the alleged shooter to be
acquitted with his lofty social status and assumed political connections.

Furthermore, “Blood Money’s” complementary music video furthers the artist’s sharp
criticism, this time in imagery. He depicts the leisurely lifestyles of those in power through the
song’s animation, which features a presumed businessman with a briefcase in one hand and a
champagne bottle in another. In my online interview with Protoje, he reflects on the visuals by
saying, “I just told Taj Francis, the artist who did the video, that I wanted something that would
capture the mood for the song. The song is self-explanatory but it’s important to get a feel as
opposed to just understanding. I feel the visuals was just able to capture the island sinking under

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water signifying doom etc. and that what I had hoped to achieve.”

“Blood Money” has surpassed his expectations, striking an intense chord with Jamaicans at all levels, especially young Jamaican men who either see themselves in Mais’s image or are taxi drivers and had been personally and professionally impacted by the incident. In a conversation with a local taxi driver who goes by the nickname Polo Bear, he remarked, “Di tune did bad, fi real,” commenting on Protoje’s candidness and honesty, “It mek wi think bout di state wi in but nah do nothin.” He continued to discuss how Khajeel Mais’s murder made him more vigilant as a taxi driver, above all when transporting children home after school, and how he thought it was full-time Jamaicans were speaking about the injustices and failures of elected officials. “Blood Money” and numerous other songs by the reggae superstar have powerfully inspired this generation to critique the world they live in today.

Protoje is All “For the Culture”

In just the span of a few years, Protoje has developed a reputation for being a new-aged musical artist whose frank lyrics serve as a cultural commons. He continues to use his voice and art to expand upon reggae’s emancipatory legacies of reggae music into millennium. Noting the connection of music and history in our correspondence, he said, “I think history is very important and its one of my favorite things to study. There is so much to learn from what already happened and I try to bridge the gap of my generation from the old and sing about information that they may not have access to. This generation uses music a lot to get information more than any other medium. I want others to get a feel of what’s happening in my time so that 15 years from now

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131 Polo Bear, interviewed by author, January 14, 2017 in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, 0:37-1:02.
132 Jamaican patois for “about time.”
people can take up my music as a time capsule and get insight of what is happening.”

As one of the pioneers in the Reggae Revival, he has maintained his art as a method of historical discourse and shared, accessible storytelling. Protoje’s beliefs and emblematic representation of the everyday Jamaican voice start with his music, but also take shape through performativity, production, and embodiment. Not only is he lyrically gifted, Protoje is also a cultural and community innovator within the Reggae Revival today. While he and many others maintain the traditional aesthetic of a Rasta reggae musician, often seen through _locs_ and military-print shirts, Protoje has adapted the music scene’s Kingston concentration to advocate for countless others.

When it comes to his art, Protoje’s focus includes reestablishing an uplifted generation and rebranding Jamaica’s music scene. Jamaicans have criticized the government’s failure to protect the music industry, despite music being one of the island’s top attractions. Jamaican music industry professional and entertainment attorney Lloyd Stanbury outlines these bureaucratic shortcomings in his 2015 publication, *Reggae Roadblocks: A Music Business Development Perspective*. In the book, Stanbury indicts the Jamaican government for its lack of insight regarding the music industry and how best to protect it. He states that while artists like Harry Belafonte and Bob Marley shed light on the island’s musical capital in the mid-1950s and the 1980s, respectively, since the turn of the century, the state has waived its responsibilities to the music and instead dedicated “significant amounts of financial resources and time to tourism and information and communication technology development.” Stanbury cites a fragmented copyright administration that has tended to prioritize foreign over local artists, poorly budgeted organizations within the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, and the failure to deem cultural

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133 Oje “Protoje” Ollivierre, interviewed by author, ibid.
135 Stanbury, 131.
and creative industries as significant to national development are why reggae hasn’t been as profitable in the last two decades.  

Figure 5: Poster from Protoje’s live 2017 “For The Culture” concert. Image Source: https://876lover.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/ftcflyer.jpg?w=940.

Although the entertainment attorney believes the solution would be a joint ministerial body within the cultural administration, Protoje has solved the industry’s issues on his own.

Through founding his own label, Overstand Entertainment, Protoje has written and produced his own records and the records of younger musicians without interference by grandiose executives. In just five years, Protoje has become “a model upcoming artists would be well-served to emulate,” according to Jamaica’s premier entertainment journalist and host of OnStage TV, Winford Williams. Williams, in addition, describes Protoje as someone “commit[ed] to a

136 Stanbury, 131-134.
137 OnStage TV, “Protoje: JA Reggae is Headed in Right Direction, Tired of Complaining.” Published on February 28, 2016, 0:00-0:20. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MiyM3fys6KA.
cause” who “set[s] clear objectives, and [does] what is necessary to achieve them.” Protoje stages, promotes, and directs his own annual shows like “Live From Kingston” and the cleverly-named “For The Culture,” which is unheard of on Jamaica’s music scene.

At “For The Culture” this past March, Protoje hosted a slew of artists from newcomers, like Sevana, to fellow Revival artists Jesse Royal and Kabaka Pyramid. “For The Culture” was played exclusively by Protoje’s live band In.Digg.Nation, a tradition long forgotten since the 1980s. The Jamaica Observer hailed this year’s concert for having “a string of brilliant in-the-making greats.” Also, local entertainment blog 13th Street Promotions claimed the concert as a “win all around” and saluted Protoje for keeping twenty-first century reggae in “very safe and capable hands.” As a solo artist, he has restored what it means to be a reggae musician in Jamaica and has established a framework by which new artists can gain access to an industry that largely impedes their success. Protoje’s dedication to his art form has manifested not only in his own artistry, but also through his willingness to support and cultivate early artists and the younger generation through reggae.

Protoje also exhibits a philanthropic understanding for the youth’s economic and social predicament. He released his fourth album Royalty Free online with unlimited free downloads to the public on his birthday in July 2016. Protoje also participated in the #CrimeFreeChristmas social media initiative in December 2016, calling for peace during the holiday season while singing his songs along to Christmas instrumentals. Lastly, most significant of all Protoje’s endeavors is his storytelling abilities. Storytelling has long been an important generational

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138 OnStage TV 0:00-0:20.
African diasporic tradition. Through his music, Protoje has regenerated that tradition to replicate youth voice, serve as a cathartic and educational expression, and discuss the abstractions of government corruption, police abuse, and structural adjustments in ways each and every Jamaican can overstand. In his own words, “There are a lot of things in Jamaica that is happening that people know about but don’t speak about it and I wanted to bring these up to start a conversation to show that it’s not only one side of society responsible for a country - its take all parts to bring down or bring up the status of a country.”

**Chronixx Celebrates Blackness**

The winner of the 2015 Jamaica Youth View “Celebrity Role Model” Award, roots reggae singjay Jamar “Chronixx” McNaughton Jr. stormed the reggae scene with his first extended player (EP) album *Hooked on Chronixx* in 2011. The son of 1980s dancehall artist Chronicle, Chronixx has since risen to be one of the top faces of the Reggae Revival movement, illuminating a new generation of Jamaican youth to discover roots and culture. His music largely reflects Black struggle and resiliency and evokes Rastafari spirituality to shape change. One of his most popular song to-date, “Here Comes Trouble,” from which this chapter is named, does just that.

Released on his 2014 EP *Dread & Terrible*, “Here Comes Trouble” soon became a groundbreaking song summoning Jamaican youth to revolt against Babylon and western society. As a Rastafari artist, Chronixx credits the teachings of Haile Selassie I and his faith as having influenced the importance of health and education for the youth, which he has put back into his

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141 Oje “Protoje” Ollivierre, interviewed by author, ibid.
music. In the notorious big tune, the central ideology is radical social change. When he bellows, “Here comes trouble, here comes the danger,” he is in fact metaphorically challenging western ideas of righteousness and morality. Rastafari people have a history of being seen as Jamaica’s unkempt, troublemakers, as seen through the Coral Gardens Massacre of 1963. However, “Here Comes Trouble” serves as an anthem for Jamaicans to resist a system inherently created to benefit the oppressor. As a Rastafari artist, Chronixx infuses intergenerational reggae and Rasta traditions in his music. Jamaican literary scholar Carolyn Cooper has deemed these philosophy-based musicians as “transmitters…committed to a belief structure, Rastafarianism, whose roots are in Africa, in Jah, Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia. The themes of their messages are rooted in their dispossession, their hope is an African or diasporan solution. His music is fundamentally marking of the social change he and the other Revivalists hope to create. Chronixx’s repertoire is wide-ranging, challenging popular topics like government corruption and ganja decriminalization, with a significant push against imperialism in the Caribbean and for Black progress.

144 Cooper, 120-121.
In the first verse Chronixx sings, “Jah people dem a ball, Seh dem tired a mediocre, Evil a go fall when wi trod inna Ethiopia.” He later continues, “Operation occupy the mother land, Calling all soldiers to kindly trod along, From creation it write inna Jah plan, But Chronixx cyaa do it alone.” In just a few lines, Not only does Chronixx depict the “mediocre” lives of the working class at the hands of a corrupt government, but he also situates the importance of Africa, Ethiopia in particular, to the redemption and fight against Babylon. Although he does not explicitly mention Babylon, these references are both literal and figurative as Babylon represents the oppressive state and the political and social institutions that hinder and repress Black people since white imperialism began. His message is a call-to-action, compelling all Black people to stand against the white-washed oppression that has since reinforced slavery. Aside from the lyrics, the music video is laden with militant Afrocentric imagery, like the ankh or Rastafari flag. The most empowering images of all are those of Chronixx and fellow Jah soldiers and Rasta.
yutes. Standing behind him in the previous image are in fact many of the Revival cohort, with artists like Kabaka Pyramid and Keznamdi to his immediate left and right. This not only emphasizes the musical collective of the Reggae Revival, but also the “army [of musicians]…united as youths” who, according to Chronixx in a 2013 interview with Large Up Magazine, though not “signed to the same labels are family.”145 “Here Comes Trouble” helped launch Chronixx’s diasporic popularity after his first live performance on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon in 2014 and it was only the beginning for his pro-Black musical mission.

McNaughton’s Dread and Terrible composition also featured reggae hit, “Capture Land.”146 Chronixx begins by murmuring, “…An’ mi seh ole slave driver/ Time is catchin’ up on you/ Old slave driver/ I know yuh sins dem a haunt you.” Following his charges of modern-day enslavement, he chants, “Carry wi go home/ And bring wi gone a east/ Cause man a Rasta man/ And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land.” As Chronixx eases into his opinions about contemporary imperialism, he simultaneously harks back to the times of enslavement, referring to anyone who has owned or persecuted Black people as the “slave driver.” He calls for the return of Black people to their original birthplace, Africa, and particularly Ethiopia in the “east,” attributing his Rastafari beliefs. In the final line, he rebukes, “Rasta nuh live pon no capture land,” which has dual meanings for the Rasta musician. “Capture land” refers both to a plate promoting slavery, stealing of indigenous lands, and Black oppression, as well as the legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the situational imprisonment of Black people today who, despite their knowledge of Africa as the true home, do not have the economic means to get there. The remainder of Chronixx’s song shows both his historical prowess and ability to entertain and educate the youth through music. “Capture Land” is a seamless history lesson, describing how

the island went from Christopher Columbus “mek[ing] a wrong turn” and “kill[ing] nuff Indian”
to the “teifin’ Queen from England.” McNaughton accuses America and other colonial powers
of being “capture lands,” but most strikingly he also cites his own place of birth, Jamaica, and
other nations like Trinidad and Cuba where he believes Black people continue to be oppressed.
In doing so, he entangles the history of enslavement in the Caribbean with contemporary issues
of neoliberal and neocolonial politics. In other words, though islands like Jamaica and Trinidad
and Tobago are independent nations, they still are held captive by former colonial powers and
also perpetuate postcolonial politics in their treatment of the predominantly Black vulnerable
population.

Though the “Capture Land” music video strikingly shows the contrasts between the
picturesque views of metropolitan Kingston with the neglected urban areas of downtown, it is
Chronixx’s potent anti-colonial lyrics that have struck the greatest chord globally. “Capture
Land” was as a major influence behind director and photographer Nabil Elderkin’s 2014 short
film of the same name. In the short film, Elderkin, usually known for directing African
American hip-hop videos, captures the very topics McNaughton and other artists sing about as
reggae artists. Police abuse, poverty, and ganja are all core subjects in his work. The short film
stars Sheldon Shepherd, Revival artist and lead singer from the Jamaican reggae group No-
Maddz, as Tocky, a young Rasta yute who was recently released from jail. Upon his release, he
joins up with a group of other Rastas who begin bartering and, at one point, stealing goods and
supplies all while the group works diligently to build a boat. Just as the police catch on to their
illicit activities, Tocky leaves behind his father and a potential love and sets sail for their

147 ‘Teif’ in Jamaican patois translates to “steal.”
“purpose,” to head east to Africa, seen in Figure 6. As the police look out passed the coastline, the Rastas, donning orange life jackets, bellow Chronixx’s lines, “Carry wi go home, and bring wi gone a east, ‘cause man a Rasta man, and Rasta nuh live pon no capture land.” The film culminates with Tocky and the group embarking on a major Rastafari tenet, by sailing from their capture land birthplace to the land of freedom and the world’s first Black king. In the figure, they have already begun their journey for Ethiopia while singing Chronixx’s song for the return to their ancestral homeland.

Figure 7: Image of Tocky (back center) and a group of Rastamen making their way to Africa in Elderkin’s 2014 short film, Captureland. Image from Elderkin’s Vimeo page via https://vimeo.com/112987664.

The twenty-four-year-old artist has worked tirelessly in the five years since he reached significant airplay to gain the popularity he has amassed today. His contribution to supplanting roots in twenty-first century has not been lost on the world. As early as 2012, Chronixx was already being compared to reggae legend Peter Tosh, not only in physical image, but also with
his “equally rebellious” lyrics and “challenges…to social inequalities.”

Curtis Campbell of *The Weekly Gleaner* praises the young reggae artist for his “social networks and guerrilla marketing [which] are indeed avenues to promote music.”

Beyond music promotion, McNaughton’s social media has also been a site for his political commentary, much of which has come under scrutiny by fans and local politicians alike. The first was on September 23, 2014 when Chronixx took to Instagram to share his distaste with the government’s stringent policies on reggae performances. He wrote, “I’m laughing at this dumb government who have never erected a live music venue in honor of reggae music even though it is the only reason why people is still visiting this beautiful island of bankruptcy…I think it's time we sit and listen what the artistes have learnt from the rest of the world.”

In response to his post, Jamaica Miss World 1993 and Youth and Culture Minister Lisa Hanna replied that Chronixx should “set examples for all…by keeping your virtue and honing your craft.” She later admonishes him saying, “Don’t squander [your craft] just because you know that people find it easiest to blame governments…Let’s reason it out…And just wait you will soon be able to smoke your chalice for religious purposes.”

This smaller rift would only be the first between the reggae musician and politician.

The following year, on April 8, 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama traveled to the island to meet with then Prime Minister Portia Simpson and leaders from the Caribbean Community, otherwise known as CARICOM. His visit was well received by most, except the “Capture Land” singer who again took to Instagram to express his dismay. On April 9, 2015, Chronixx posted a

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149 Curtis Campbell, “Chronixx Sparks Musical Revolution,” *ibid.*
151 “Youth minister tells Chronixx he’ll soon be able to smoke his chalice - News.” *Jamaica Observer.*
picture of Jamaica National Hero Marcus Garvey with the caption, “This man…Still have a criminal record in The United States and we glorifying some waste man! This man was hunted and imprisoned by our Jamaican government…who some years later paved a peaceful and safe path for the U.S. President to address us... a ‘race of good for nothings’!!” Chronixx’s post was met with conflicted responses after he called America’s first Black president a ‘waste man,’ or in other words someone who is worthless and does nothing. Chronixx’s fury stemmed from Garvey’s significant and the fact that President Obama chose not to posthumously pardon Garvey for mail fraud in 1923. Rastas and other fervent supporters of Black empowerment believe the UNIA founder was targeted and persecuted for his Black leadership. Chronixx came under fire for criticizing President Obama. For some, like long-time reggae deejay Tony Rebel, McNaughton’s post was “unfortunate,” but he added, “if the roots artiste believes the United States Government has done little to clear National Hero Marcus Garvey’s criminal record, he should stand firm. When you are a public figure you become a role model.” Chronixx later deleted the initial post, but not before Youth and Culture Minister Hanna told the young artist to “have some temperance in the way [he] displays [his] personal convictions about another person.

McNaughton has remained very political, following artists’ tendencies to be vocal about their beliefs despite politician retaliation. On numerous occasions, Chronixx has charged Minister Hanna for her failure to live up to her promises. In 2016, when Chronixx released

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mixtape *Roots & Chalice*, the final track “Chalice & Roots” was the artist’s final message to the politician. Alongside Kabaka Pyramid, Chronixx challenges Hanna’s effectiveness as a politician. Pyramid closes his verse by rapping, “Di way outta poverty, Di artists a plot it, Suh go tell Lisa Hanna do your job an’ stop watch it.” In orders, Pyramid discloses that it is reggae musicians, not politicians like Hanna who will resolve the country’s problems. Chronixx responds, “Mrs. Beauty Queen, I’m kind of flattered dat you’re lookin’ at mi, It’s true but don’t you got work to do?” Chronixx has continued to use his music and celebrity as a platform to assert Black Power, especially within the working class. His lyrical ability is a weapon against racism, classism, and present-day Black enslavement and his honesty and truth are perhaps why his messages have significantly impacted Jamaican youth.

**Reggae as a Ghetto Gospel**

The self-described “ghetto yute” from Spanish Town has also used roots reggae as a ghetto gospel for those from some of Jamaica’s most impoverished areas. He released “Sell My Gun” on the *Roots and Chalice Mixtape*, addressing youth crime rates and offering a more logical, and legal, alternative to a life of crime. His first verse discusses how, after growing up in Spanish Town, one of Jamaica’s most dangerous cities, he’s known lots of criminals, but the one thing they all have in common is that they are all poor. The most poignant lines of all are, “Yuh nuh fi bad and hungry…If I were you, I woulda sell my gun.” This is an early warning from Chronixx, cautioning young people that guns and gangs are not the solutions to the financial problems. He tells a story with this song. In the first verse he raps:

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159 Ibid.
“If I were you, mi woulda sell my gun,
    And buy a old Corolla,
Taxi mi run an’ buy mi daughta strolla,
Son a balla but him nuh score no goal,
Caah di boots weh him have nuh have no insole,
Mi wah show him seh daddy a di boss,
     Bring him go a di shoes shop,
Pick up any one yuh wa,
New shoes, new shirt, new shorts
Cyaan buss gun an’ mi pickney dem a bawl.”

The general premise of his first verse, and the rest of the song, is that while the illicit life
may seem easier, a hardworking life is not only better for the individual, but also for the future of
Jamaica. This song displays Chronixx’s lyrical dexterity, as he provides money-making
alternatives through using countless double entendres. In conversation with Rasta and member of
St. Elizabeth music company Bluehouse Entertainment, Odane Brown laid out a host of these
double meanings. He begins by discussing how the “hype life and rich life” have given way to
the hardcore conditions in the impoverished parts of Jamaica. Before we played the song,
Brown mentions how historically “politicians have used guns to sell out the yutes,” particularly
referencing the wars that arose between the two political parties in the 1970s. From the first
verse alone, Brown draws upon how Chronixx speaks both against crime and also for the
upliftment of Black people to “push and respect [themselves].”

Taking the verse apart, Brown heeds Chronixx’s messages saying, “You know the value of a gun in Jamaica is equivalent to the value of a car. So what him a try tell you is that you can’t tell yourself that you’re broke and you have a weapon weh value JA $500,000. You nuh broke, you choose to be broke because you wa’

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162 Brown, 36:30.
163 Brown, 37:55.
164 Brown 39:25.
use that weapon fi destroy something when you coulda sell di weapon and start something fi yuh life.\textsuperscript{165} 

Chronixx agrees with Brown’s point, as seen through his “Start a Fire Journal,” posted periodically on his website. In his May 12, 2016 post, he writes, “‘When I check how much a gun is worth - the actual price of a gun - it doesn’t make sense to me economically…It doesn’t make sense that there’s such a high demand for guns but nobody can afford it. We, as ghetto youths, can’t really develop ourselves is all we have is guns.”\textsuperscript{166} In the post, he sheds light on other important things this generation needs, like food security and literacy, and that Jamaicans need to “create another alternative so the breadwinner doesn’t have to win his bread with a sub-machine rifle.”\textsuperscript{167} Chronixx’s art continues to be his channel by which to get through to younger generations and influence politic structures today.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Protoje, Chronixx, and other new-age artists have fervently written and performed about the issues of twenty-first century Jamaica, serving as influencers of Black Consciousness of the decade and transforming how the island grieves and vocalizes its issues while also forming a large collective of young musicians, artists, and activists. Protoje and Chronixx have taken their messages internationally, spreading the politics of roots across the world including the 2016 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California to selected tour dates Japan. Their true consciousness capital lies in their artistic rebellion. Their music goes beyond just influencing youth politically; it is also shaping a political education that directly uplifts the youth generation.

\textsuperscript{165} Brown, interviewed by author, 1:12:00-1:13:21.
\textsuperscript{166} Chronixx, “Start a Fire Journal,” May 12, 2016. \url{http://www.chronixxmusic.com/}.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
Although many of Jamaica’s political structures are outdated, the Revival is a place for this generation to be heard. Much like the reggae movement of the 1970s, the Revival has stirred social commentary in ways most politicians have feared. Reggae is a historical pedagogy and these artists have been very intentional about creating a communal of Black, young adults from urban and rural Jamaica who embrace their African lineage and use music as an intellectual tradition predicated on revealing the truth. Different from before, this movement is intersectional, empowering Jamaicans across race and class lines, but also female artists who have long been overshadowed in Jamaica’s reggae industry.
Chapter Three—“Revolution Lullaby:” 168
Sistren 169 of the Revival Chant Down the Patriarchy

“Freedom time from all dis-ease and broken minds,
The Nation must grow all the food and the herb and the healing
They’ve known all along, they must be reminded with this song
That United we are strong and by the grace of the almighty one there will be.”
-Jah9, “Revolution Lullaby” 170

Introduction

On March 30, 2006, long-serving politician Portia Simpson-Miller became the prime minister of Jamaica, replacing her predecessor P.J. Patterson to complete the People’s National Party’s term in office. 171 Five years later, she was officially elected and held the position until 2016 when she retired after forty years in politics. Simpson-Miller’s tenure made her the nation’s first female head of government and the third of the Anglophone Caribbean. 172 After campaigning for her 2006 appointment, she celebrated, “I am the first female president of the party and will be the first female prime minister, but it is not about me.” 173 Women across the island celebrated her as a symbol of possibility and political success, but nonetheless Simpson-Miller’s efficacy was challenged by the patriarchal demands of Jamaican society.

Despite progress being made in governmental leadership, Jamaican women are still vulnerable under the systems of oppression and patriarchy. The government has enacted laws

169 Sistren is the dialectal plural of “sister.”
170 “Revolution Lullaby,” ibid.
173 Philip Mascoll, “Jamaica’s First Female Prime Minister” The Feminist Zine, February 26, 2006.
since the latter 1900s aimed to protect women’s rights; these laws, however, have not made a
wavering impact for women culturally. For example, while the Women’s Resource and Outreach
Center reports that four times as many of the nation’s women are completing college degrees
than their male counterparts, little has been done to alter national attitudes on the position of
women in society. Gender norms are still heavily imposed across the country and, as a result,
women are often treated socially as second-class citizens. This is precisely the same case for the
status of women in reggae music. Female reggae artists like Marcia Griffiths and Lorna Bennett
have held musical careers as early as the 1960s and 1970s during the rise of reggae, but female
artistry has never dominated the genre, nor have female artists risen to significant acclaim. Even
the female triad The I-Threes, from which Griffiths got her start, are more widely regarded as
Bob Marley’s background vocalists than as an independent singing group. As Jamaican
entertainment attorney Lloyd Stanbury points out, women are more equally represented in the
business side of reggae. Women have had more success in the background as managers and
publicists, but the longevity of female artists’ careers is short-lived. He further states, “The
percentage of women who actively participate and succeed in Reggae…is very low, and may
even be lower than other areas of economic, social, and political activity.”

This chapter serves to illustrate pioneering women in the Reggae Revival and how this
musical social movement has created a space for female musicians to assert their voices, not in
the shadows of background vocals, but as the main attraction. In this third and final chapter, I
dictate how two leading female Revivalists Janine “Jah9” Cunningham and Kelissa McDonald
have employed their music to challenge Jamaica’s patriarchal attitudes and demand social

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174 Mascoll, ibid.
175 Stanbury, 103.
176 Stanbury, 102.
change, in the name of both Black redemption and female empowerment. I will outline how the Revival community has both created a larger, more supportive arena for female frontrunners in reggae and has shaped discussions about contemporary women’s issues. Jah9 and Kelissa’s music is a revolution lullaby, communicating their ideas of women’s rights often through slower, yet equally as powerful songs. Using their body of work, I will show that twenty-first century reggae, and Rastafari for that matter, is not the same patriarchal arrangement as it was in the 1970s. Not only does the Revival make way and support women in the movement, these women are also creating spaces for themselves on their very own platforms.

A Brief Look at Women’s History in Jamaica

Historically, women have played an immense role in Jamaica’s emancipation and social change. Unfortunately, women’s efforts have been trivialized due to the patriarchal shaping of the historical record, much like the rest of the world. For example, of Jamaica’s seven national heroes, the only woman is Nanny of the Maroons, a leader of the Jamaica Maroons in the eighteenth century. Even the impact of Prime Minister Simpson-Miller’s election has been lost to a considerable portion of Jamaicans who, instead of realizing this major feat for the island, questioned Simpson-Miller’s fitness and competence as a leader because she is a woman. Furthermore, many reporters used Simpson-Miller’s working-class upbringing to undercut her political effectiveness. In a New York Times op-ed, historical sociologist Orlando Patterson writes, “Her modest education, undistinguished performance in Parliament, Creole speech, populism…have been grist for the media and opposition mill.”

Her male predecessor’s working-class background, on the other hand, did not come into play when assessing his fitness

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to lead. Patterson also interviewed Simpson-Miller on her engagement with the press. She says, “Because I’m a woman in a field dominated by men, and because of my background…I’ve been beaten, banged and bashed by the media.” Reflecting on Simpson-Miller’s tenure, Patterson says, “I share her belief that Jamaica’s patriarchalism and class biases are stacked against her.”

Much of Jamaica’s patriarchal politics today can be linked to the treatment of enslaved women on the plantation. In the New World, enslaved Black women’s value was inherently linked to their reproduction. Black women’s reproduction and sexuality subsequently became a justification for their exploitation, particularly with the evolution of stereotypes like the “satanic” Black woman, or jezebel, monitoring Black women’s sexuality and condemning them for the existence of the mulatto population. Black women did not fit the mold for the ‘ideal’ woman—because they were not white. Even after slavery was abolished, women’s rights have continued to be circumscribed. Legally, women could not own land, nor did they any right to their husband’s property until 1870, when that statute was only partially repealed.

In the twentieth century, jobs traditionally performed by women were excluded by the government in the national workforce registry. Before 1968, there were few measurements of women’s contribution of the work force. When it was decided that women’s work would finally be counted as part of national workforce measurements, traditionally female work like housekeeping did not qualify as a sufficient economic activity. Women did not have access to

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179 Patterson, ibid.
180 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Shepherd et. al, 215.
185 Ibid, 233.
job training, education, or apprenticeship resources and they could be fired for hoping to take maternity leave until the Maternity Leave Act of 1979.186 Even the two-party political structure prevented women’s collective bargaining as a result of divided ideological beliefs.187

This brief reflection of Jamaican women’s history does not even account for the ways Rastafari has enforced patriarchy within its own philosophy. A 1950s study of Rastafari by George Simpson showed that women were drastically outnumbered and their contributions were solely linked to their contributions as wives and mothers.188 Rasta women were not to be regarded unless in some show of support for their husbands. Men had all the power in early Rastafari traditions, especially because the philosophy believes all spiritual power is derived solely from men.189 In other words, women could not reach their own independent spiritual enlightenment within Rastafari; their husbands were viewed as a vessel to women’s 

overstanding.190 Early Rasta women only wore skirts and dresses and, different from men, were obligated to cover their locs.191 Additionally, when menstruating, women were seen as unclean when menstruating and could not participate in spiritual gatherings or prepare food for men.192 Although Rastafari had been very racially progressive in the early twentieth century, the institution of women’s subordination highlights how the Black-centered philosophy failed to escape embedded gender binaries and patriarchy in its formation.

186 Nettleford, 236-239.
189 Ibid, 76.
190 Ibid.
191 Rastafari dialect for “understanding.” This term is used to escape Western ideology and highlight that neither the party to a passing of knowledge is superior to the other.
192 Dreadlocks.
The Power of the 9

Janine “Jah9” Cunningham has been called as the “first lady of the neo-roots reggae” movement. Her creative moniker stems from a combination of “Jah,” the Rastafari term for “God” and the second half of her first name. Cunningham is also a firm believer that “Nine is the number of change, because after nine it starts all over and a new cycle begins.” A graduate of the University of the West Indies-Mona Campus, her music has since gone on to be used in sociology, economic, and religious lectures at her alma mater. After her studies, she worked in the corporate world, but found it more self-serving to be a poet and yoga teacher in Kingston. As an artist, Cunningham’s compositions focus on social justice and progress for the future of Jamaica. What separates Jah9 from reggae’s politics on social welfare is that her discography emphasizes intersectionality and Black women’s identities and experiences. She describes her own music as being “feminine…not in the sense of clichéd girly topics, but in being dark, chaotic…sometimes not immediately understood and being unapologetically so.” Her artistry tackles contemporary challenges in Jamaican politics and also serves to empower women and generate discourse relating to women’s spirituality and well-being. Highly regarded within the Revival, Jah9’s recognition shows that twenty-first century reggae is not only diversifying its messages, but also in the very agents employing the music of social change. Female reggae musicians are no longer relegated as background singers and their record sales and musical influence are growing rapidly.

197 Hyde and Tsansai, 21.
Jah9’s embrace of the feminine extends from her lyrics as revolutionary texts to the aesthetics in her music videos. Her first album *New Name*, released in 2013, includes songs “Intention” and “Inner Voice.”

“Intention” begins as if Jah9 is questioning a lover’s fidelity, “I’m beginning to wonder about your intentions/ Too many instances of deception/ Too many alibis and excuses.” It becomes clear in her latter verses that Cunningham is personifying the Jamaican government, the “flawed system,” and lack of justice on the island. She later testifies, “I know ‘cause I am woman so I can see/ That life don’t reside where there isn’t no harmony/ And I sing ‘cause I care and wouldn’t want anybody/ That I love to be circumstanced out of existence.”

Similarly, the singer-songwriter beckons in “Inner Voice,” “My only challenge is to better know this feminine divine which I aspire to/ The lessons learnt have brought me to a place of peace/ For what cannot change I know I must release/ So with patience and humility face the world/ God manifested in the flesh but still a little girl/ I will give freely of my time and energy/ Knowing the creator will replenish me.”

Both songs address the struggles of Black people, not just in Jamaica but across the world. Her responses to the issues, nevertheless, stem directly from a woman’s point of view, a rare occurrence in reggae history. Jah9 pays special attention to her position in the world as a woman and exudes her femininity while accounting for possible solutions directly from a woman’s perspective. Different from male artists who often sing about starting the uprising, Jah9’s music is symbolic of the individual revolutionary and how to proceed once the revolution has begun. She is a beacon for self-care, as she calls for her

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200 Ibid.
creator’s replenishment and “stillness” as the “key to creation and happiness from positive
vibration.”

Nevertheless, Jah9’s music remains true to roots reggae’s revolutionary praxis. From the
same album, “Jungle” examines critical issues in Jamaica while likening the island to a cutthroat
world. “Jungle” illustrates a vastly different Jamaica than the typical white-imposed, carefree
images seen in the tourism industry. Art historian Krista Thompson describes this imagery as the
“tropicality” of the Caribbean, or in other words the picturesque aesthetic created for tourist
consumption that inherently erases of Black life and struggle. Instead, Jah9’s paints Jamaica as
a jungle, plagued by societal oppression and the intergenerational effects of “Tribal warfare,
chattel slavery, and now taxes.” She later uplifts women as influencers of change when she
sings “So the lionesses [women] rise to the occasion/And nurture [the future] with conscious
meditation.” Noted Jamaican scholar and author Dutty Bookman, who coined the term
‘Reggae Revival,’ says, “Songs like ‘Jungle’ are important because they help highlight the things
that could be better about our country. Travelers want to have good times, but they also need to
be aware of all the truths of the society they’re visiting, and this song helps illustrate [those
truths.]” Cunningham’s work is iconic in its ability to weave metaphors into Jamaica’s
political climate, while also enabling women to envision themselves as political agents. She
centers women’s activism throughout her discography, not only in response to institutionalized
race, but also to patriarchy.

204 Krista A. Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque.
206 Ibid.
Prior to releasing her second album, Cunningham released *9mm Vol. 2: Pre-Album Groundings* in August 2016, a mix of Rastafari-inspired tracks that includes samples of speeches by Haile Selassie I, whom Rastafari regards as the Second Coming of Christ.**208** Among the recordings is “Feme9,” an interlude with K’adamawe K’nife, lecturer at the University of the West Indies.**209** The short track extols the power of women, asserting:

…An’ di reality is, most decisions in i-ration**210** have been done through the masculine element, which we know is transient and temporary…Dem sistas deh wi see manifest di energy of di Nanny of di Maroon, yuh know, di segment from out of Kemet, di Shiva from out of India, di empress from Nyabinghi. Downpressors manifest demselves in so many form, in so many disguises, that is how we know di lioness is the one who really protect di pride.”**211**

It is clear from this *likkle, but tallawah**212** verse that antiquated understandings of gender, power, and women’s roles are under fire. Not only does K’nife critique patriarchy and the fact that men are typically the ones in fundamental leadership roles in Jamaica, but he also goes through a widespread historical and geographic naming of different women who have changed history. He later states that the “lioness,” a spiritual term within Rastafari for “women,” will be the ones who truly return this world to its rightful order.

Her second album, 9, expands upon her feminist lens, especially with the song “Greatest Threat to the Status Quo.”**213** Jah9 repeats in the chorus, “A spiritual woman is the greatest threat to the status quo.”**214** She continues, “Eve bring sin to the world/So now we punishing everyone born as a girl/…So persecution of the feminine/Is the reason for the estate the world is in.”**215**

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**208** Jah9, *9mm Volume 2*, (Kingston: VP Records, 2016), *MP3*.


**210** I-ration translated to “nation.”

**211** “Feme9,” ibid.

**212** Jamaican proverb used often to describe the island as little, but strong-willed and mighty.

**213** Jah9, “Greatest Threat to the Status Quo,” 9, (Kingston: VP Records, 2016), *MP3*.

**214** Ibid.

**215** Ibid.
Here, Cunningham is sharply critical of religious scapegoating and how it has been used to enable patriarchy. The very essence of Jah9’s work focuses on, according to the artist, “conversations in love and owning of our femininity.”216 She is a firm believer in using music to communicate the spiritual and philosophical beliefs, while also intertwining the importance of a “wombman collective” to be the change the world needs today.217 In a genre of male-domination, Jah9 has acutely carved out space for her own messages and viewpoints on women and society, both through her lyrics and her local activism.

Figure 8: Image from Jah9’s “Avocado” video that highlights Rasta women’s femininity and sensuality. For much of Rastafari history, women her supposed to be seen not heard, let alone community their sensuality. “Avocado” is progress for the ever-changing status of women in both Rastafari and in Jamaica all together. Image source from Jamaica Music blog via, http://jamaicansmusic.com/images/uploads/news/sequence01still009.jpg.

Beyond the social critiques in Jah9’s music, she is also very conscious of the imagery evoked in her videos. In an interview for MAC Cosmetics’ “Global Heroes” campaign, Cunningham discusses the beauty standards of Black women in Jamaica and how, like Black women across the world, she was conditioned to believe that her coarse hair was not beautiful.218 She goes on to discuss that more women are embracing their natural appearances and that she is proud to evoke that Afrocentricity in her work. The 2014 release of her music video “Avocado”

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216 Hyde and Tsansai, ibid, 32.
217 Ibid.
features Cunningham and other Rasta *sistren* embracing nature and wearing traditional African fabrics as she sings one of her more commercial songs. In the same MAC interview, Jah9 says, “I try to make sure that my videos aren’t about my body, to encourage the women who watch them, not to think that value comes at all from your physical appearance.” Yet while Cunningham ensures that she is not over-exposed, an overwhelming aspect of dancehall’s hypersexual culture, she still remains feminine. In another interview with *Large Up Magazine*, she describes her self-imposed meaning of femininity best as “An image of what woman can be—as beautiful, regal, light and free. Sensual without the ‘spread out and dash out.’ That’s something we wanted to capture in the video [for “Avocado”] and my style in it and outside of it represents all of the things that I see as feminine.” Jah9’s overall platform is exemplary of the changing sphere in this contemporary reggae movement. Not only does her music magnify everyday social problems as integral to the roots genre, but she is also increasing women’s artistry and visibility in Jamaican popular culture.

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Spellbound in Femininity

Unlike Jah9 who was born to a Christian preacher, Kelissa McDonald was birthed into the roots and culture of reggae and Rastafari. Her parents are Errol and Kerida Scott-McDonald of the reggae band, Chakula, and her brother Keznamdi is also a leading artist in the Reggae Revival. The singer-songwriter recalls, “Growing up in a Rasta family really set the tone for my lifestyle and moral values…with particular focus on Africa and African liberation. This also

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219 Olah, ibid.
influenced my music and my lyrics.”

Even before McDonald, who goes by her solely her first name musically, was well-known as a musician in the Reggae Revival, she was highly regarded for her work on the docu-film *50 Days in Afrika*, alongside filmmakers Kush Asher and Donisha Prendergast, who is also Bob Marley’s granddaughter. The three creatives journeyed across the continent, hoping to connect young people of the diaspora to the history of their African roots and build a bridge across the diaspora, interviewing artists, performing, and documenting their experiences.

![Image of Kelissa's album cover](https://www.reggaeville.com/fileadmin/processed/b/d/csm_kelissa-spellbound_37a831490c.jpg)

Figure 9: Cover art of Kelissa’s 2017 album, *Spellbound*, created by Nakazzi Hutchinson. Her womanhood is immediately captured, and celebrated, as her new silhouette is surrounded by an owl, to represent wisdom, and core elements which make up the world. Her message is that women are the foundation of earth. Image source via Reggaeville blog at [https://www.reggaeville.com/fileadmin/_processed_/b/d/csm_kelissa-spellbound_37a831490c.jpg](https://www.reggaeville.com/fileadmin/_processed_/b/d/csm_kelissa-spellbound_37a831490c.jpg).

McDonald has been recording and releasing music since 2012, with songs like “Afrika,” featuring images and video clips from her pilgrimage and the documentary. She sings, “We are not African because we are born in Africa/We are African ‘cause Africa is born in us,” as she dawns a white *habesha kemi*—a traditional Ethiopian dress. It was not until McDonald’s

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222 Ibid.

223 Kelissa McDonald. “Afrika.” Published via YouTube on April 20, 2013. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6TyAENtj8Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6TyAENtj8Y).

224 Ibid.
release of her first album, *Spellbound*, on January 20, 2017, that her true creativity was seen. Kelissa told the *Jamaica Gleaner* that *Spellbound* is an album about womanhood, spirituality, sensuality, roots culture and knowledge, and self-awareness. One of the most surprising tracks on Kelissa’s first studio album is the “Best Kept Secret (Interlude).” McDonald enhances the interlude with nyabinghi drumming. Historically, the drumming is a part of Rastafari communal practices which women were often excluded from. The interlude highlights changing views of gender structures and spirituality in Rastafari and overall gender equality on the island.

Also featured on McDonald’s first album is “How Many More,” in which she questions the drastic murder rates of Black people while singing in a botanical garden surrounded by Afro-Caribbean ceramic masks created by Jamaican visual artist Nakazzi Hutchinson. McDonald sings, “How many more will have to fall?/How long will we ignore the ones who call?/Will it take a war for us to stand together?” Here, McDonald draws attention to international xenophobic atrocities and increased murder rates on the island that plague Black and Brown bodies. In the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement, Kelissa sings about the dire need for peace and unity particularly at a time when Black death has been more visible than ever. Paired with McDonald’s lyrics, Hutchinson’s masks and creative direction were integral to McDonald’s overall message. Not only does the female duo highlight unifying forces within the predominantly male industry, but also Hutchinson’s artwork illustrates life’s terminality. Her masks are intentionally made of natural materials that will deteriorate and decompose to

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229 Ibid.
symbolize mortality and loss. The elements in a number of McDonald’s visuals for *Spellbound* represent an ode to Africa, ancestral voices, and spirituality, that some critics have even called “reggae with a shamanic twist.” Through her artistry, McDonald has been able to create her own niche within the Revival that is both sensual and political. In an interview with *Irie Magazine*, McDonald describes the main motivation behind her first album as being “about…us as women owning and coming into the fullness of our power and using that as a medium to express other things.” *Spellbound* is an instrument for women’s self-expression, a space for women to fully embrace their intersectional identities and be themselves while also remaining true to beliefs of Black redemption.

Like the rest of the Revival cohort, McDonald has also been vocal about her opinions on the state of Jamaica, specifically the state of Jamaican women, in the press and on social media. She has been very adamant about the ways the government has failed the reggae industry in terms of investment, but she also believes “the industry…pits female artistes against each other,” especially because “men in the industry are intimidated” by women. Kelissa also echoes that female artists have been more supportive of one another than the industry itself. McDonald expounds upon the power of women in a blog post on her website just weeks after the release of her first album. Entitled “I may be Spellbound, But I’m no pushover” she writes, “I’ve never been the type of person to ignore the downtrodden position of the women. Those subtle nuances embedded in our language, our jokes, our traditions that tell us that the man is superior to the

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233 Ibid, 46.
234 “Kelissa: Spellbound,” ibid.
woman.” McDonald calls out spousal abuse, the existence of systematic sexism, and the duplicity of men who claim to be conscious but don’t empower women in response to patriarchy. She writes, “Empower the woman. Respect the woman. She is wise, and her perspective is very valuable,” and closes her post with the lines, “I am a wombman, a divine creator, I am a goddess in the image of my maker.” Kelissa’s fanbase of both men and women commented in support of her message as one male follower, A#keem wrote, “Enlightened, Enriched, and Empowered, ready to continue this journey of unlearning the unacceptable history and behavioral patterns of my gender.” Women, like Kelissa, are staking their claim in this restored consciousness movement and are using their acclaim as singers and musicians to alter the status quo of Jamaican women in the twenty-first century.

**Women, Support, and Change**

While there has yet to be any research directly correlating gender politics in reggae, the culturally conscious movement has significantly increased the number of women visible in the reggae world. Female artists go beyond just Jah9 and Kelissa as others like Sevana, Hempress Sativa, and Etana have also developed growing careers. Even prior to winning U.S. singing competition, *The Voice*, alternative reggae singer Tessanne Chin had a growing fanbase in Jamaica. The Revival has also brought about a number of male musicians in support of their musical sistren. Sevana has been called Protoje’s protégé, after signing to his independent label and being featured on his album *Ancient Future*. Additionally, Kelissa has accompanied Chronixx on many shows and in fact, both Jah9 and Kelissa are accompanying him on the US-
leg of his international tour, *Chronology*, which began in March 2017. Chronixx and other artists have used their platform to help showcase female talent. Kabaka Pyramid, another Revivalist, has shown his support on Instagram when he donned Jah9’s signature “A spiritual woman is the greatest threat to the status quo” shirt just weeks ago on March 27, 2017.240 Male artists themselves have also done the work of shifting traditional views about women. Songs like Protoje’s “No Lipstick” or Chronixx’s “Majesty” honor the female spirit and experience.241 In fact, According to Bookman, “[Male artists] are shaking off a bit of that rigid patriarchy…There is no exclusion of females in the Reggae Revival community—we revere women, value their opinions, and treat them with respect and equality.”242 The support of household names like Chronixx and Protoje has helped to propel female artists’ careers and messages further as the movement expands outside the Caribbean.

![Image](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INV6QZJkCXQ)

Figure 10: Still image from Protoje’s 2018 lyric video “Camera Show” in which he discusses women’s rights and global issues women face today, like sexism and sexual harassment. Image sources via [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INV6QZJkCXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INV6QZJkCXQ).

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242 Annie Daly, ibid.
No male artist has been more vocal about women’s plights than the former, Protoje, both in his discography and social media presence. In April 2018, Protoje took to his Twitter page to decry catcalling in Jamaica after a Jamaican woman described being threatened to death for ignoring a stranger’s propositions.\(^{243}\) Protoje responded, “This is essentially what being a woman in Jamaica is like. Even for young teens. It’s embarrassing, and disgraceful.”\(^{244}\) Public opinion and access to safe abortions is another controversial issue women face in Jamaica, evening leading activist and local book club founder Jherane Patmore to create the “Abortion Monologues,” a submission-based website and self-described “safe space for Jamaicans to share their abortion stories.”\(^{245}\) In a May 2018 article with the Jamaica Gleaner, Catholic Deacon Peter Espeut vehemently stated that abortion is murder and thus, no woman should have the right to an abortion.\(^{246}\) Presumably influenced by his religious beliefs, Espeut said, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not mention such rights, and the Jamaican Constitution does not confirm that right. I would say no, they do not have a right to abortion, safe or unsafe. Abortion is against the law. It is murder!”\(^{247}\) Espeut’s statements were met with numerous responses, including from the Revival leader who tweeted, “I saw my girl put her body on the line to bring life. I saw first hand what a woman goes through daily to bear a child. Men should


\(^{247}\) Ibid.
Protoje’s post was met with varying opinions. Nonetheless, he has continued to use his status and acclaim to be vocal about women’s issues and, more importantly, uplift women’s voices in issues that directly affect them. A month later, he released “Camera Show” and the accompanying lyrical video from his latest album, *A Matter of Time.*

“Camera Show” is about seeing the world for what it really is, yet again illuminating reggae’s thematic stances on capitalism, oppression, mistreatment of women, and even global warming. Protoje describes the *camera show,* as the media’s provincial work that keeps the masses uninformed and, as a result, hinders them from being free. He devotes the second verse to the plight of women and men’s abuse of power when he sings:

“The whole world pack up with a bag of waste man
Woman everywhere in every occupation
A find demselves inna some situation
Man a abuse them position with insinuation
Intimidation to the most valuable being inna creation
Mek mi say it blatant
Empower the woman, you empower the nation
No longer should we act mistaken
Awaken.”

In other words, Protoje is effectively calling out patriarchy and the numerous ways men have made women vulnerable and powerless, particularly in the workplace. As seen in Figure 3, he positions photographs and news stories of American film producer Harvey Weinstein’s sexual assault accusations, the 2018 Women’s March in the U.S., and Saudi Arabia’s issuing of the first driver’s licenses to women in June 2018 in an effort to highlight women’s oppression across the globe. In an interview with *Reggae Vibes* discussing “Camera Show” and his latest album,

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250 Ibid.
Protoje advocates for greater legal protections for women, especially in the case of workplace harassment.\textsuperscript{251} He concluded the segment of the interview by saying, “It’s hard for women in the world. Man is an awful beast.”\textsuperscript{252}

Male support notwithstanding, these singing Rasta women have also been fully participatory in the control and regulation of their own music and images. For example, Kelissa has formed her own independent record label, forgoing some of the very challenges Lloyd Stanbury outline in \textit{Reggae Roadblocks}. They host independent shows and have their own bands, which have been largely responsible for the outpour of the iconic, traditional consciousness in the current movement. Together, Jah9 and Kelissa has also helped shape contemporary ideas of gender within the Rasta movement. Their open vocality is atypical for the traditional role women have held in Rastafari. In a panel by Direct Shoot Edit, or DSE Jamaica, that was moderated by activist Donisha Prendergast, Rasta women describe growing up traditionally seeing women standing by their men, but rarely ever having a voice.\textsuperscript{253} The Revival has spurred discussions about diversifying female interests and antiquated standpoints of gender roles, and has allowed women to assume more forward roles in the practice, like Kelissa’s singing over the nyabinghi. Despite its rather patriarchal track record, roots reggae has come quite a way for women artists. The musical movement is one of evident uplift, not just about Blackness and roots, but also the status of women and sexism. Cunningham said it best, “As a woman, you are an outsider…for women to be heard they have to have an extreme voice. I like the challenge. As a woman, I can

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} DSE Shorts Channel, “Stories from a Rasta Woman Pt. 1 of 5,” Published via YouTube on May 30, 2014. \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSuXoyd9na8}. 
hit you with the real truth,” and it is precisely that truth she and other female artists communicate throughout this movement.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{254} Olah, ibid.
Epilogue: “I Need Your Love (Rasta Children)”

“The Reggae Revival has endured its messages of equality and Black redemption, not only in contemporary Jamaica, but also across the world. Through these musicians and countless others, a new generation is growing with a positive political voice. This new generation can look beyond Jamaica’s poverty, neocolonial economy, and demand more. In the Revivalists’ remake of reggae legend Dennis Brown’s “I Need Your Love (Rasta Children),” the artists are leading children out of Babylon and toward a hopeful future of political and economic development and enfranchisement through historical awareness and cultural mobilization. The amazingly creative part of the Revival is that its takes on multiple artistic forms. Music is at the core of the revolutionary output of this generation. When looking at history, music reflects a first-person historical narrative that comes from the understanding of one’s own time, cultural, and history. This revolutionary culture not only crosses into varying art forms; it also highlights the diversity amongst the artists themselves. Those differences have actually made the community more productive, allowing for deeper connections and greater political messages in the twenty-first

century. As a result, artists are internationally skyrocketing, spreading their messages virtually and in-person to every inhabited continent today. Their messages of Black power are global and far-reaching, particularly as some musicians grab the ears and minds of people across the world.

The musical revolution has acted tremendously in their global range of reggae politics. While the musicians did not technically ‘revive’ reggae (and with that some choose not use the term), they certainly have given the music a new breath. They have set a new standard in protest music, cultural activism, and overall demand in the music industry. Artists, like Chronixx, Jah9, Kelissa, and Protoje have gotten the ear of the government, who may very well fear the Revival as Jamaica’s own contemporary cultural demonstration. Given the state of present-day Jamaica, government corruption, a failing economy, high crimes and higher rates of poverty, the island was bound was a revolution.

The artists presented in this thesis only make up a handful of the widely influential community, each with their own focus and goals through music. Kabaka Pyramid, for instance, focuses on anti-capitalist politics, while Keznamdi’s music centers on determination and optimism. Although differential in particular subject matter, Rastafari is what unifies them all in the hopes of a better generation. While Rastafari has given these musical agents guidance, it is also the music that has helped reshape shifting societal norms. For instance, Jah9 and Kelissa have spearheaded female musicianship, all while supporting one another and garnering the support of the male musicians. Countless musicians have also formed their own labels and are leading the change in reggae’s market. They have all learned from 1970s reggae. This generation has captured, modernized, and executed the performance of the political, similar to the golden era artists, all while also learning from their missteps, mastering the cooperation and self-
determination. They have created a cultural model that works together, both as change-seekers and as change-makers.

Given reggae’s long political history, having stemmed from centuries of Black protest, it is particularly special to Jamaican culture, but nonetheless, much of the music’s subject matter is applicable to other parts of the African diaspora. Poverty, corruption, and neocolonialism run rampant in Black states and affect Black people across the world. Jamaica and reggae music do not solely articulate Black redemption; they also serve as a microcosm of Black struggle and redemption for the world. Looking more closely at Jamaica, Black people can better understand the quest for equality across the world and be Selassie’s Soulijahz for a better world.
Appendix

Bob Marley & the Wailers- “Babylon System”256

[Verse 1]
We refuse to be
What you wanted us to be
We are what we are
That's the way (way) it's going to be, if you don't know
You can't educate us
For no equal opportunity
(Talking about my freedom) Talking about my freedom
People freedom (freedom) and liberty

[Chorus]
Yeah, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel
Yes, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel

[Verse 2]
Babylon system is the vampire, yeah (vampire)
Sucking the children day by day, yeah
I say, the Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire
Sucking the blood of the sufferers, yea-ea-ah
Building church and university, wooh, yeah
Deceiving the people continually, yea-ah
I say they are graduating thieves and murderers
Look out now, they are sucking the blood of the sufferers (sufferers)
Yea-ea-eah! (Sufferers)

[Bridge]
Tell the children the truth
Tell the children the truth
Tell the children the truth right now
Come on and tell the children the truth
Tell the children the truth
Tell the children the truth
Tell the children the truth
Come on and tell the children the truth

[Chorus]
Yeah, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel
Yes, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel
Yeah, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel
Yes, we've been trotting on the wine press much too long
Rebel, rebel
Chronixx- “Here Comes Trouble”

[Refrain]
Left, right, Jah soldiers a come
Left, right

[Chorus]
An dem seh here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Sent by the savior welcome the rasta youths
I an I a start recruit soldiers fi Selassie-I army
Here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Welcome the savior
Welcome the rasta youths
You no haffi ask is who
A the general issuing a warning

[Verse 1]
Jah people dem a ball seh dem tired a mediocre
Evil a go fall when wi trod inna Ethiopia
Believing from dawn 'caz' dem life no easy bout yah
Even Banton seh it’s not a easy road
Operation occupy the mother land
Calling all soldiers to kindly trod along
From creation it write inna Jah plan
But Chronixx Cyaa do it alone
So am recruiting soldiers coming from near an far by truth
Executing Selassie high works and build Rastafari troops

[Chorus]
An dem seh here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Sent by the savior welcome the rasta youths
I an I a start recruit soldiers fi Selassie-I army
Here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Welcome the savior
Welcome the rasta youths
You no haffi ask is who
A the general issuing a warning

[Verse 2]

Waving the banner red, green and gold
It is such a honor prophecy’s unfold
Discovered on stones, an trees, an scrolls
And even in the stories that Jesus told
Rasta youth must inherit the earth
Cyaa sit down Jah, Jah, seh mi fi work
Bring the fire inna ground
Jah, Jah, seh mi fi purge
But I cyaa do it alone
Rasta recruiting soldiers coming from near an far i choose
Executing Selassie-I works and the Rastafari truths

[Chorus]
An dem seh here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Sent by the savior welcome the rasta youths
I an I a start recruit soldiers fi Selassie-I army
Here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Welcome the savior
Welcome the rasta youths
You no haffi ask is who
A the general issuing a warning

[Refrain]
Left, right, Jah soldiers a come
Left, right
Left, right, Jah soldiers a come
Left, right

[Chorus]
An dem seh here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Sent by the savior welcome the rasta youths
I an I a start recruit soldiers fi Selassie-I army
Here comes trouble
Here comes the danger
Welcome the savior
Welcome the rasta youths
You no haffi ask is who
A the general issuing a warning
Chronixx- “Selassie Souljahz”\textsuperscript{258}

[Intro: Sizzla, \textit{Chronixx}, Protoje, Kabaka Pyramid]
Sizzla Kalonji alongside Chronixx
\textit{Yes I}
Ah wah Chronixx ah do? [Kabaka Pyramid]
\textit{Warn dem}
Protoje & Kabaka guh calm dem
\textit{(Selassie Souljah)}

[Chorus: Chronixx]
I Ah
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man

I am
Strong and mi happy but nuh
Laugh with nobody
I ah Selassie souljah man
\textit{(Selassie souljah)}
Woyoy, ay

[Verse 1: Chronixx & Kabaka Pyramid]
Stand firm an mi dress up inna mi khaki
Suit you nah guh find mi ah gi laugh fi
Peas soup inna war with mi troops inna war
None ah dem can take rasta fi classy

Mi nuh worry
Weh mi ah worry mi self fah
Mi safe inna Jah warrior shelter
\textit{(Ites!)}
Stand firm likey rock of Gibraltar
None ah dem nah guh live fi see jah
Warrior falter

[Chorus: Chronixx & Kabaka Pyramid]
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man

\url{https://genius.com/Chronixx-selassie-souljahz-lyrics}
(ah wi ah mek dem know)
I am
Strong and mi happy but nuh
Laugh with nobody
(neava)
I ah Selassie souljah man
(Selassie souljah man)

[Verse 2: Kabaka Pyramid]
Yeah, yeah I don’t tell dem
Man a warrior so leave mi be
Mi nuh itch up ah mi yard ah watch TV screens
Mi deh pon di frontline and ah this mi come find seh
I man have fi take responsibility
Fi mi actions mi adjectives and mi nouns too
Make a wrong step and see how quick dem denounce you
But as Selassie I federal mi haffi sight
Several means fi mi hits dem surround you
Hoy Ithiopia mi haffi deh
Move fast like bobo pon a Saturday
Nappy head, khaki suit, haffi patchy leg
This yah apache yah, him born as a natty dread

[Chorus: Chronixx & Protoje]
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man
(dem shoulda know)
I am
Strong and mi happy but nuh
Laugh with nobody
I ah Selassie souljah man
(Selassie souljah man)

[Verse 3: Protoje]
Ah yeah yeah let dem know I am armed in army gear
Four stripes pon mi arm it clear
So hang on and nuh have nuh fear they woulda see mi embalmed
But ah Jah ah mi armor wear
Could you name osama du psalm appear
Dem have wi up inna remand and demand my share
From Jamaica to Ghana every square inch every corner (huh)
Every crevice catch the message
We carry di fyah heat up like di Mojave
Then hand pick di army fi contradict Mugabe
From di land of freedom fighters
Readers, writers Haile the king shall guide us so

[Chorus: Chronixx]
I Ah
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man

I am
Strong and mi happy But nuh
Laugh with nobody
I ah Selassie souljah man
(Selassie souljah man)

[Verse 4: Sizzla]
Fiire
Rastafari trampoozi it's our call of duty
Absolutely stand for what’s right excuse me
Have you thinking faster your right, I'm the master
You must be stupid to think that I'm a lamb
To be slaughter
Hold up push on
Wickedness get ambush on
I know your evil didn't spell the time
To reach a book and
Hear them plot by themselves still
Them a fight but mi laugh Selassie inna mi head
And love inna mi heart

[Chorus: Chronixx]
I Ah
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man

I am
Strong and mi happy but nuh
Laugh with nobody
I ah Selassie souljah man
(Selassie souljah man)
Woyoy
I Ah
Trod Jah gravel
I nuh stumble
Nuh baffle I ah
Selassie souljah man

I am
Strong and mi happy but nuh
Laugh with nobody
I ah Selassie souljah man
(Selassie souljah man)
Jah9- “Revolution Lullaby”\textsuperscript{259}

Showers of blessings falling on I  
Jah is I portion on Jah will supply all I need  
So tell dem to stay far with dem selfish strategy  
Lightning and brimstone pon greed

Waging war, blood sacrifices they will pay  
Onto their money God young lives will be destroyed  
And all those for sale are going to weep and wail  
Economics will determine their worth  
While the meek shall inherit the earth

And there’ll be showers of blessings falling on I  
Jah is I portion on Jah will supply all I need  
So tell dem to stay far with dem selfish strategy  
Lightning and brimstone pon greed

Freedom time from all dis-ease and broken minds  
The Nation must grow all the food and the herb and the healing  
They’ve known all along, they must be reminded with this song  
That United we are strong and by the grace of the almighty one there will be

Showers of blessings falling on I  
Jah is I portion on Jah will supply all I need  
So tell dem to stay far with dem selfish strategy  
Lightning and brimstone pon greed

Poisoning our bodies, poisoning all minds  
Keeping us distracted, wasting what time  
Unless with active consciousness  
We overcome the programming  
And step outside the lines of control  
In this battle for our soul, the only chance for freedom is to take  
It life is what you make it  
You can be complacent and remain  
But there is everything to gain  
For those who are called by Jah name

Yes Showers of blessings falling on I  
Jah is I portion on Jah will supply all I need  
So tell dem to stay far with dem selfish strategy

Lightning and brimstone pon greed

Lightening I load when I'm trodding on Jah road
Lightening I heart if I'm willing to do my part
Lighting I way, guiding I footsteps helping I stay
Humble and wise every day

As these showers of blessings fall on I and I
Kill, cramp and paralyse
All downpressers, aggressors and transgressors

I and I a Rasta children
I and I a Rasta children
I and I come from Zion
I and I come from Zion

Living down here in Babylon
Enduring the strife and tribulation
I and I no check for vanity
I and I a deal with humanity
Enduring the strife and tribulation
With Jah, guidance and protection
To lead the children out of Babylon
To the promised land, Mount Zion
Mount Zion! Mount Zion!

For Zion high is the place for I
For I and I to dwell
Fire, fire, fire a go burn Babylon
For this is a living hell
So gather the babe and suckling
To reach to the promised land, yeah
Far, far away, far, far away. Far, far away, far, far away

For I and I a Rasta children
I and I a Rasta children
We come from Zion
We come from Zion

Living down here in Babylon
Enduring the strifes and tribulation
I and I no check for vanity
I and I a deal with humanity
Enduring the strifes and tribulation
With Jah, guidance and protection
To lead the children out of Babylon
To the promised land, Mount Zion
Mount Zion, yeah, Mount Zion oh-oh.. oh yeah, yeah!

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\(^{260}\) Song originally by reggae singer Dennis Brown (1957-1999) and was covered by Iba Mahr, Jesse Royal, Chronixx, Keznamdi, Exco Levi, Kelissa, Jahmiel, Kabaka Pyramid & Rockaz Elements for the *We Remember Dennis Brown* album.

Zion high, Zion high
Zion high is the place for I, I say

Said I and I a Rasta children
I and I a Rasta children
We come from Zion
We come from Zion

Living down here in Babylon
Enduring the strife and tribulation
I and I no check for vanity
I and I a deal with humanity
Enduring the strife and tribulation
With Jah, guidance and protection
To lead the children out of Babylon
To the promised land, Mount Zion
Mount Zion, yeah. Mount Zion
Figure 11: Author Alexandria Miller and co-board members of the Students of the Caribbean Association Amber Hall and Morghan Phillips with Chronixx after the Chronology Tour at Cat’s Cradle in Carrboro, NC on April 18, 2017.
Figure 12: Miller, Hall, and Phillips with Kelissa after the Chronology Tour at Cat’s Cradle in Carrboro, NC on April 18, 2017.

Figure 13: Miller with Jah9 during the 2018 Welcome to Jamrock Reggae Cruise.
Figure 14: Miller with Kabaka Pyramid during the 2018 Welcome to Jamrock Reggae Cruise.
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