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إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

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**Polite Violence: The Myth of Independence  
and the Cleavage to Africa**

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## Preface

The great white man has fought for the preservation of Europe, the great yellow and brown races are fighting for the preservation of Asia, and four hundred million Negroes shall shed, if needs be, the last drop of their blood for the redemption of Africa and the emancipation of the race everywhere.

Confidence, conviction, action will cause us to be free men to-day.

“The Philosophies and Opinions of Marcus Garvey”

## Introduction:

This paper is intended as a contribution towards expanding the theorization of Africans experiencing. It provides through a Jamaican centered case a story of the protracted struggle of Africans in the west towards negotiating and representing their presence as well as their right to cleave to a principle of returning to Africa. My argument is developed from an essay by Louis Lindsay (1974/2005) entitled: *The Myth of Independence: Middle Class Politics and Non-Mobilization in Jamaica*, where the author argues that:

“Jamaica can be used as a case study for illustrating how myths and symbols associated with independence have been manipulated to generate *political quietism* [my emphasis] and frustrate possibilities for meaningful change in the Third World countries.” (p.93)

Lindsay is concerned with the myth of mobilization for self-government and independence as having now set in train systemic ills that have “meant the persistence of colonialist attitudes and values into the era of supposed independence” (p94). It could be argued that the absence of anti-colonial mobilization has produced no redemption for African Jamaicans. Lindsay in applying the Fanonian theory<sup>1</sup> about fighting for independence explores

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Lindsay introduces the idea of collective redemption as more than a mere expression of accumulated anger, he uses Fanon’s work on the Algerian revolution to help to define the idea of ‘true independence’ and the mobilization towards achievement of the same in terms of not being merely ‘reforms’ but should engage the grandiose efforts of a people (p.96). Fanon indeed advocated the need for struggle towards the attainment of worthwhile independence being supportive of violence which he argued to be a cleansing force, “freeing the native of his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction...”, cited in Lindsay (2005, p.95 footnote 8). Garvey and Fanon it could be argued shared similar

the absence of real dialogue<sup>2</sup> within the society about the idea of *independence*, largely because middle class Jamaicans were eager to transition British power into their own hands. Lindsay argues that no attempts were made to ‘mobilize’ national (majority/mass) opinion instead – the elite British educated, biracial and of mixed ethnicity Jamaican middle classes competed among themselves for dominance in setting agendas to acquire power from the ‘mother country’ with as little disruption as possible to the ‘good’ governance of the island. Lindsay laments:

It is clear that independence did not carry for Manley<sup>3</sup> the connotation of a new beginning. Throughout his political life, the PNP leader remained deeply convinced that the transfer and receipt of Westminster institutions was identical with independence, self-determination and nationhood. If it was necessary to mobilize the Jamaican people at all, this mobilization could only be for the right to receive the heritage of Westminster government. *For it was altogether inconceivable that the people of Jamaica should (or could) be mobilized in antipathy to the people and government of Great Britain [my emphasis].*

The core issue here is that the intelligencia in colonies such as Jamaica often constituted the most colonized minds, for which the Mother country could do no wrong. In this regard the independence, granted in August 1962, was merely a myth for articulating a physical retreat from the colonies, now linked through neo-colonial bonds of dependence through religious, financial, educational and technological institutions. In essence Lindsay presents the view of ‘Jamaican independence’ as the quintessential myth—a *pseudo-independence* which meant for a former colony an impotent symbolic ritual without the power of self-articulating. This can be starkly contrasted with Haitian independence in 1801 which effectively disrupted the course of that territory’s history because it was achieved through outright war and revolutionary activity. By contrast the Jamaican ‘gifted’ independence transitioned through a middle-class buffer represents to Lindsay a manipulation of yet another myth as it pertained to the achievement of

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ideas about independence and the representation necessary in order to legitimately claim it as founded in conflict if necessary, see the quotation at the preface of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See Paulo Freire (1974) for an understanding of the dialogical approach to revolutionary transition and the inspiration in ‘Love’ that genuine dialogue requires.

<sup>3</sup> This is a reference to Jamaican National Hero Norman Manley who is considered one of the founding fathers of independent Jamaica. His lineage became a dominant force in the subsequent political history of Jamaica, with his son Michael as one of the country’s most successful Prime Ministers.

a British civilizing mission<sup>4</sup>. In actuality the post World War II decolonization process has revealed the delimiting of the idea of independence as being achieved by the former colonies. Independence as a principle has become devalued especially when applied to the Afro-Asian and Caribbean worlds (see Lindsay 2005, p91). This I would suggest is further supported by the illusive idea of “a commonwealth” that further complicates the idea and reality of national and political sovereignty. Lindsay asserts that:

“The myth gains power and credibility through its ratification by constitutional instruments legitimized by metropolitan governments, and accepted by indigenous political leaders as bestowing upon their countries the supposed privileges and prerogative of national political sovereignty.” (p. 91)

The ‘brown middle-class<sup>5</sup>’ thus becomes positioned as representing a type of hybrid of the civilized, an aspiration for the negro post-contact. This brown middle-class Jamaican becomes and a suitable surrogate for the absentee (planter) colonizer – who centuries later ruled through his Creole, mulatto and ethnically mixed offspring.

Based on the points outlined above, I want to focus on the longstanding tension within the governance of the Jamaican society. This tension derives from the cultural orientation of the buffer middle classes that have embraced a European ‘motherland’ which is distinctly at odds with the island’s majority African population. And what can be said of Africa within this space? I wish to extend Lindsay’s argument to look at the notion of Africa within the Jamaican space and to further assert that the ‘non-mobilization’ that is the key foible of the middle class is now a part of a routine non-focus on the African continent, or Diasporic linkages with the continent despite the fact that it is the historical home to more than ninety percent of the Jamaican population. This is where I wish to insert the idea of a theorization of the cleavage of

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<sup>4</sup> Lindsay has two companion pieces: “The Myth of a Civilizing Mission: British Colonialism and the Politics of Symbolic Manipulation” and “Colonialism and the Myth of Resource Insufficiency in Jamaica”, when read in conjunction with “The Myth of Independence”, they become a cogent treatise on the ideas of colonial fallacies and the reign of white supremacy.

<sup>5</sup> Lindsay (2005, p.5), provides an update to the notion of ‘middle class politics’.

Africa<sup>6</sup> because prior to the establishment of middle class dominated political leaders in the mid to late 1930s, the only mobilization of people in Jamaica that occurred was through religious agencies<sup>7</sup> and Marcus Garvey-type association. Indeed after Garvey migrated from Jamaica, one of his Lieutenant's Leonard P. Howell, emerges to gather people in the name of the newly crowned Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I. This commenced a new type of mobilization of African Jamaicans towards Ethiopia that has grown into the now global Rastafari religious worldview.

My central focus here is to highlight how the idea of Africa has been discoursed socio-politically, and how the leadership of the African Jamaicans promulgate an association with the continent that was more than a mere historical fact to mention, but was also an inspiration and an aspiration. This leadership is associated with a population some of whom feel marooned; a community of people who though torn from the land of their forefathers cleave the return to these lands as agents in the future development of the African continent. Marcus Garvey is the best known of such leaders, and this paper explores some of his contributions in this regard. The paper also serves to introduce the Rastafari argument about the independence *myth* through the concept of *Polite Violence* that has been developed by Mortimo Planno a key post-independence Rastafari teacher and leader. In this regard I am seeking to consolidate a theoretical trajectory about the significance of Africa and the African Diaspora in their mutual political independence.

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<sup>6</sup> I am aware that range of theories that look at Marronage, Ethiopianism, Plantation Economy, Pan-Africanism, I am here suggesting that the socio-political aspects of this African mobilization is still outside of these conversations. Put another way Africa is still not engaged in the everyday socio-political planning.

<sup>7</sup> See Elkins (197?) for information on street preaching.

## Background

Marcus Garvey is one of the twentieth century's giants in seeking to engage with the political challenges of his time especially as it concerned the leadership of Africans in the West. He at a very early point in his intellectual development gained an understanding that the issues that afflicted the African peoples were largely similar, and that the condition of the African was linked to the very health and prosperity of humanity in general. Volume II of "The Philosophies and Opinions of Marcus Garvey" is prefaced by the following request in bold writing:

Not to be read with the eye or mind of prejudice, but with a righteous desire to find the truth, and to help in the friendly and peaceful solution of a grave world problem for the betterment of humanity.

Born August 17, 1887, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jamaica's first national hero, global Pan African champion and philosopher, is perhaps still one of the most poignant thinkers on sustainable and progressive transformation for the African Diaspora and African peoples in general<sup>8</sup>. Garvey envisioned a capable and independent continent of Africans among the families of different nations—popularly known for his slogan "African for Africans both at home and abroad", and this is a very key component of Garveyism as a school of thought, articulated generally through a principle of strengthening Africa by involving all Africans in its solutions. But beyond this idea of affirming the elevation of Africans, Garvey also perceives his role as naturally including "the betterment of humanity." This is perhaps a missed component of his message that is his consistent reference to a "brotherhood of mankind" that is yet to be achieved. However his humanitarian message is perhaps under represented because of the enormity of the task of refashioning and making his African people fit for the administration of their own affairs; task of imparting *new thought*<sup>9</sup> to a people who had been through great tribulations, enslaved, transplanted, marooned and released. Garvey cognized the complex web that the African geo-sphere required for his vision of the strong African to emerge: transcending poverty and the parochial limits, to a view of the planet, all the continents and especially Africa, and to perceive all these as components of the 'new negroes' natural sphere

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<sup>8</sup> See Robert Hill ed. (1987) "Marcus Garvey Life and Lesson" who positions Garvey as messianic in the way his message and impact was taken in both the USA and Africa.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid Hill pp. xxviii-xxix

and international responsibility. He looks around him to assess what resources exist for this task of breaking the 'negro's silence' to claim his place in the *arenas of power* and comes to the following conclusion, having surveyed the strategies that history availed:

"I read Up From Slavery" by Booker T. Washington, and then my doom—if I may so call it—of being a race leader dawned upon me... I asked: 'Where is the black man's Government? Where is his King and his kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?' I could not find them, and then I declared 'I will help to make them.'<sup>10</sup>

This assertion by Garvey suggests his subordination to a kind of prophetic commissioning; one that he knew burdened him with the responsibility for the salvation of his race. Garvey here offers himself as 'help to make' the new Black man. Marcus Garvey in accounting for his call to action, specifically in relation to his work in the amelioration of the African race, provides an insight as to how daunting a task this could be, he situates himself in a position of 'doom...of being a race leader', as he spoke at a time when race had become a silenced variable in the colonial world. In 1865 Paul Bogle, Jamaica's first significant post Emancipation leaders recognized that the issue of racial injustice had been nowhere represented and thus the idea of *Emancipation* was also a myth. Thirty years later Alexander Bedward also sought to racialize the consciousness of the public debate by highlighting the injustices that were still being perpetuated upon the African for whom there seems to have been no improvement at all over the decades of 'liberation'. Marcus Garvey's development in the twentieth century occurs within this context where over several years - African Jamaican leaders (mostly religious) had been *conscientizing* the masses about a seemingly incomplete liberation from slavery that was yet to provide any kind of restoration of 'humanity' or 'citizenry' to the newly freed people<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in E. D. Cronon, (1955) "Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association", Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. P. 16

<sup>11</sup> It could be argued that this is what the prescribed period of "Apprenticeship", 1834-1840, should have facilitated. Apprenticeship ended two years early because of conceptual and administrative inadequacies (see Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

Garvey was able to establish an agenda towards advancing the African folk, in building the Black men of big affairs<sup>12</sup>. Garvey was what Clinton Hutton describes as *sovereign learner*, one who had self-educated and belonging to a school of such individuals who were keenly concerned about the acquisition of power over their lives and by extension those around them who were un-franchised. Not having the benefit of the elite institutions of learning these individuals did independent readings and found the 'folk philosophers' that helped to shape their minds for critical thinking. A major part of this critical thinking was making space for discussing African affairs. Garvey writings read like that of an adopted child asking his real parents and brothers to receive him, akin to the story of the Old Testament character Joseph, who was sold into slavery, yearning for his father, Jacob and brothers and sister who live in Africa (see Genesis 45). His monumental burden has been his revelation of the fact that the 'Black' race is without 'men of great affairs', a situation which brings Marcus Garvey into an awakening on leadership and his involvement in that task for Africans everywhere. Garvey saw an International Political Economy as a sphere where the Black race was omitted from within the 'affairs of men', but were however central with regard to concerns about media, trade and industry, political and military activities – he was lead to understand the “New Negro/African” as requiring a strong political voice. Garvey writes:

Don't be deceived; there is no justice but strength. In other words, in our material civilization might is right, and if you must be heard and respected you have to accumulate, nationally, in Africa, those resources that will compel unjust man to think twice before he acts.

Operating before the commencement of the process of decolonization and independence activities, Garvey is still seeking the construction of these ideas as realities. He argues:

“Every student of Political Science, every student of Economics knows, that the race can only be saved through a solid industrial foundation. That the race can only be saved through political independence. Take away industry from a race; take away political freedom from a race, and you have a group of slaves.”

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<sup>12</sup> Garvey's role here was not dissimilar from that of Booker T. Washington, but seeking to make an institution for the Black race in general universally. For more information see B.T. Washington (1901) “Up From Slavery: An Autobiography”.

Further:

“Our success educationally, industrially and politically is based upon the protection of a nation founded by ourselves. And the nation can be nowhere else but in Africa.”

The African Diasporan reality was for most, strong immediate connections to slavery and a post slavery rural peasant subsistent lifestyle. Garvey also saw the successful future of the African race as being only achievable in Africa. To this extent Marcus Garvey's Back-to - Africa platform was not one of mere sentiment for returning to Africa but more as an imperative for achieving strategic essentials viz.: real commercial and political ties to Africa; a secure and strong homeland in Africa that could defend and represent Africans everywhere. Elite educated Africans were not so disposed. Most of them were educated in universities in the metropolitan capitals of Europe and America and thus develop away from desiring reconnection with the continent. In Garvey's time urban educated elite 'Blacks' were a small group especially in places such as Jamaica where their ranks were divided between a British educated mixed race lawyer, Norman Manley and a pro-British mulatto businessman Alexander Bustamante. These two individuals divided the populace political between themselves since the 1930s (ie. through the political parties: the People's National Party, PNP, and the Jamaica Labour Party, JLP, respectively) and these structures have remained in place since that time as the major channel through which national elections are determined. This is the same group of individuals and their leadership framework that later receives the brunt of Lindsay's (1974) critique of the "middle class politics" as a usurpers (of the genuine mobilization of the Black masses) who negotiated transfer of power, under a type of neo-colonial mythology disguised by the term 'independence'. Within Garvey's view of Diasporan independence there was a need for a strong Motherland Africa, redeemed from the hands of alien exploiters with its own people as government "strong enough to lend protection to the members of our [African] race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth" (p. 52). This position was by no means shared by the political elite who negotiated independence settlements for the West Indies. These elite middle-class leaders supported the colonial agenda.

Before Garvey it was mostly through religious rituals that Africa was engaged by West Indians. Unlike the case for the European and the Asian populations, there have never been

any significant travel and kinship exchanges between the Africans in the West Indies and their homeland. For Garvey that continent stood like “a bereaved mother”, in need of systematic attention and restitution, likewise her dispersed children. The strategic focus on Africa within the West Indian political sphere was Garvey’s distinct contribution, recognizing as he did that he was up against an integrated Euro-American system, thus needing an integrated and strong Pan-African counter point. It was only among the emerging Rastafari that mobilization seemed to be occurring in respect of seeking to produce a post-colonial reality that transcended the void that now existed between the African continent and the scattered children of the enslaved. After 1935, Rastafari rose up like multiples of Marcus Garvey across the Jamaican landscape.

### **Angels of Peace and Love Appear: From Garvey to Rastafari**

“Some of us think that we live only in the physical; but are we not really conscious of a higher life? It there is, then why die like the dog? Why not die like a Christ, a John the Baptist, St Augustine, a Caesar....”

Garvey was desperate to inspire the people to a higher calling, to entertain more grandeur in their self construction to become great men. He takes on an almost preacher aesthetic below, seeking to inspire his people:

“Negroes, shall we not choose between right and wrong? Shall we not pattern the lives of those men, races and nations that have prospered by justice? Surely we shall, for in so doing we will have removed ourselves from the curse of a heartless, sinful, unjust world to a new temporal sphere, where man will live in peace and die in the consciousness of a new resurrection.

Such will be Africa’s day, when a new light will encircle the earth, and black men lift their hands to their God and Princes come out of our country. For this we will not give up hope, but fight and struggle on, until the Angel of Peace and Love appears”.

“The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey”

Many of the early Rastafari initiates use “peace and love” as a greeting, according to Ted Chamberlain (1999) it is more than a greeting or a hope but “a map”. Garvey is unanimously considered as a prophet within Rastafari, most famous for directing the people to look to Africa for the crowning of a King as a sign for their Redemption. Indeed it seems as though the ‘new light’ was appearing and indeed encircling the earth...This was how some of his followers began to interpret the emergence of the new Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I. Many

Garveyites became the first set of initiates within the Rastafari.

Rastafari at its core foundation represents a Theocratic Order developed around the character of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I. Since the inception of the Movement it has spawned a range of teachers / leaders who have help to stamp various nuances upon the doctrine and philosophy. Most Rastafari hold Africa as an important part of the heritage of all Africans and feel inclined to participate in its development, for many this is ultimately expressed in the desire for repatriation to the continent. Over the years the Movement has emerged to express its identity as a way of life and a worldview, described as *livity*. This Movement has over the years found itself present in both urban and rural space but seems to have had an amazing appeal among the disposed urban youth – with West Kingston emerging as a Rastafari enclave at one point between the mid 1950s, even up to the early 1970s. Interestingly by 1954, Roger Mais has produced a full-length apologetic monograph on the Rastafari where he portrays the protagonist ‘Brother Man’ as a urban Jamaican Christ in service to his often difficult inner-city community members. This quality of Rastafari as a utilitarian and perhaps even necessary servant / leader in the Jamaican is further extended by Chevannes’ (1981) in whose assessment Rastafari helped to stabilize and perhaps even tranquilize communities by providing a redemptive medium for wayward male youths to seek priestly training and learn trades and craft. I would argue that the Rastafari becomes a surrogate father for many of the males, some of who need to be curbed away for criminality and wayward activities. In this regard the Movement holds particular significance to construction of urban Jamaican masculinity.

In a real sense this is the Garvey empathetic mobilization that Rastafari is rooted within, struck with the purpose of serving his fellow Africans and he see this as requiring the construction of a ‘Royal African’ perhaps not too dissimilar to Garvey’s ‘new negro’. In essence Garvey had rationalized the nature of mobilization necessary for the construction of this new negro as premised on pillars of education as the backbone in creating improvement. Indeed it is the educated elite Jamaicans who emerge as the leaders of the independence movement, but they reflected ‘Afro-Saxon’ sensibilities, and so it is to be concluded that it was not merely education that was necessary but the idea of ‘liberatory education’ in keeping with Freire’s notion of *conscientisation*, or education that would teach the tools to empower and liberate the oppressed. Lindsay’s assessment about the leadership of Jamaica at the time of independence

and their non-mobilization of the people is voiced by Garvey decades before as he recognizes that he had to lead where he observed the void as existing in the society—the ‘negro’ was genuinely without ‘conscious’ leadership interested or capable in solving the issues of oppression and poverty faced by the masses. Who was genuinely interested in or capable of giving people more humane living conditions? How could such improvements best be undertaken? This is the core of the redemption narrative consistently expressed as a hope by the African section of the society that had long suffered because of the denial of their freedoms and the non-mobilization of their interest in the solutions.

Outside of the work done by Marcus Garvey’s UNIA, I would like to argue that mass mobilization in the first half of the twentieth century was chiefly visible in what would be described as cultic religious associations, perhaps with the only exception to this coming from those persons who were inspired to come together due to labour challenges and disputes especially after the 1938 labour riots. In essence Marcus Garvey offered a template towards preparing the population for active and participatory citizenship which brought a different philosophy to the practice of mobilization which included the more Freireian idea of transformative education, to improve the condition of those affected in the most sustainable way. Garvey was not only interested in mobilizing he was invested in action and ultimately the power to transform the African situation.

Though Marcus Garvey was an advocate of ‘new thought’, I would like to introduce at this point the philosophical trajectory that succeeded Garvey by way of Rastafari, which emerges as a social movement just at the time of the waning of Garveyism as the bearers of this contribution. In fact within the narrativization of the history of the Rastafari in Jamaica Garvey is considered as the most venerated Jamaican, likened unto the Biblical Moses as well as John the Baptist, perhaps only outshone by the character of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, who is the central inspiration for the Movement. Garvey awakened the people who had been asleep in their subservience and racial misfortune to think themselves as deserving better as well as being responsible for that which they achieved. This was a compelling message and millions of Africans began to cleave to Garvey’s leadership approach. It was from Garvey’s ranks that sprung the message of a new Ethiopianism through the coronation of Ras Tafari as Ethiopia’s Emperor in November 1930. This Ethiopianism developed from the interpretation of this Emperor Haile Selassie I as the prophetic Christ the Redeemer foretold in the book of

Revelation, who would return to establish the new Heaven and Earth. Leonard P. Howell, considered to be the first Rastafari preacher, returned to Jamaica in 1932 and started preaching this interpretation of the new Emperor of Ethiopia. He was actively circulating himself within the public sphere at gatherings usually convened by itinerant street preachers, where he shared the news of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I as signaling the ultimate redemption for the long-suffering Africans in the west. Howell in addition to preaching this message sold portraits of the newly crowned Emperor and commended it to the people as an image which they needed to hold dearly in their hearts. He told persons that this new Emperor was their true King and ruler and that the British imposter's time had come to an end because the Earth's rightful ruler had emerged. Within a short while Howell came to the attention of the local authorities in Jamaica as a public nuisance, arrested and charged with sedition. Over the next twenty years, Howell is arrested, charged and sentenced to various prison terms as well as psychiatric facilities. Notwithstanding that however his followers grew steadily and by 1940 there are several other prominent leaders who have emerged locally, and Howell himself had established a commune called Pinnacle in the hills overlooking the city of Kingston. By some accounts, Howell governed an enthusiastic and thriving group of people in his hilly encampment under principles of cooperative enterprise, and like a demigod ruled over a community that number several thousand people (see Robert Hill, 1983 and Helen Lee, 2003). Accounts of these Rastafari of this period describe a bearded man cult of the Ethiopian Emperor. It is this Movement that I wish to argue has been the successor to the Garvey praxis and perhaps is the unsung mobilizing force of the Pan African political independence agenda. By this I mean to examine a tradition that has responded to the Garveyite concerns about affirmation of Africa, while seeking to establish *new thought* in translating and reconstructing post-colonial lives.

After Howell's demise as Rastafari primary leader, the Movement developed more of an urban character and militant quasi-political posture. Between 1954 and 1974 the leadership of the Rastafari movement spearheaded a number of revolutionary ideas about how persons regarded Africa. Indeed the discourse on Africa increased substantially in the public sphere with the emergence of the Rastafari movement, resulting in petitions to the colonial government from persons who wanted to volunteer to fight in the Italo-Ethiopian war (1935-41); and ultimately, more concretization of a Back-to-Africa / repatriation discourse as an entitlement to

Africans in the west for an incomplete Emancipation project (see Frank van Dijk, 1993). In 1954 Howell's encampment was destroyed and the Movement became more widely dispersed nationally at that time. By 1958 the first national Rastafari assembly in Jamaica was convened during which the brethren wrote to Queen Elizabeth II outlining their desire for repatriation; a year later persons gathered in the city of Kingston on the orders of yet another Rastafari leader, Claudius Henry, who had prophesied that there would be ships in the harbour waiting to take the Rastafari back to Africa. By 1959, the Rastafari had attracted national and international attention, mostly generated from negative reports that sought to characterize the Movement's members' as common criminals and delusional social misfits (see Van Dijk, 1993). The significant point being by the end of the 1950s it was clear that the island of Jamaica and much of the British West Indies were on a timetable for the imminent delivery of 'independence'. This is where Lindsay argues that the elite educated brown middle-class Jamaicans failed to mobilize the population cum electorate and failed to develop a redemptive agenda for the soon to be new sovereign nation. I would like to insert into the analysis of the immediate pre-independence context the somewhat unacknowledged political force and agency of Rastafari at this time as a third front (ie. PNP, JLP and the Rastafari Movement), or even a force akin to a political party but less ambitious for local office; perhaps even a rebel force that is still yet to be contained, overlook as a mobilizing / dialogical faculty.

It is at this point that the personality of Mortimo Planno raises to the surface as one of the leading Rastafari youth teacher-leaders in West Kingston, who spearheads an initiative to write a letter seeking help for the increasingly victimized members of the Movement from the University College of the West Indies. This letter was to lead to the production of a study: "Report on the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica" (See Smith et al, 1960); two Government of Jamaica missions to explore the idea of repatriation of Afro-Jamaicans interested in returning to Africa; and three subsequent reports outlining the outcome of the Missions to Africa (See Augier, 2010).

### **Polite Violence: Rastafari as Pan African Mobilization**

By 1962 when Jamaican Independence was awarded by the British, the Rastafari had developed an international reputation as being advocates of a Back-to-Africa agenda, for many of the Movement's adherents this Africa was specifically Ethiopia. For most of the society this

positive interest in repatriation was an unimaginable kind of malady that could only be attributed to the ritual use of ganja among the Rastafari brethren, especially because the standards for advancement were not perceived as achievable through the desire to return to and live in Africa. The first leaders of independent Jamaica helped to brand the Rastafari as escapists, unpatriotic rebels (see Van Dijk, 1993). This begs the question: Who are the Rastafari? And: How might the Movement be read as medium through which Afro-Jamaicans mobilized to develop and express redemptive hope and aspiration increasingly especially after the end of World War II? Indeed might the Movement be read as evidence and actualization of the anti-colonial, confrontation and violence that in the Fanonian sense is necessary for the catharsis that true independence should achieve? These assessment or reassessment of Rastafari become particularly important as Jamaica approaches its fiftieth anniversary of Independence and sees its self ambivalent about acknowledging the fact that its brightest son and most globally respected character is its very son that it fought so hard to extirpate<sup>13</sup> at the start of its nationhood and still, how this Movement and its figures such as Bob Marley have come to represent what Barry Chevannes (1998) describes as the apotheosis of the Jamaican Hero.

I would like to offer a representation of Rastafari through the engagement with the idea of myth, to explore a statement by Ted Chamberlain in which he describes Rastafari as one of the genuine myths to have emerged from the context of slavery.[.....]. Rastafari would here represent a resistance myth, surrounding the manifestation of a protracted anti-colonial mobilization and the cleaving of Africa by some Jamaicans. I will use Mortimo Planno's Lecture on "Polite Violence" to analyze the case of the mobilization of the African Jamaicans into a dialogue about Africa and their post-colonial identities.

In the lecture "Polite Violence" Planno develops a critical approach towards his experience as a Rastafari leader through a focus on what might be described as institutionalized violence and alludes to a type of systemic psychic trauma. The very institutions upon which the society is built become the harbingers of polite violence (even outright violence): the

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<sup>13</sup> This is a reference to the Coral Gardens massacre on the Rastafari movement in Montego Bay, St James, Jamaica in April 1963. At the time of the incident the government was concerned about the effects of the Rastafari presence on the fledgling tourist industry, today the 'fascination' and attraction of Rastafari is part and parcel of the Jamaica Tourist Board's campaign to attract visitors to the island. See D. Thomas & J. Jackson (2011) "Bad Friday", film on the incident.

political machinery<sup>14</sup>; the police force; the prison system; the mental asylum; the hospitals; the very language and etiquette of civil / polite society; the housing and living conditions; beauty competitions; television and media productions. The idea of Planno is even more extreme than that of Lindsay who engages the myth of Independence; Planno on the other hand is engaging the myth of 'Emancipation' - asserting that he is still a slave and the slave masters are still present and with us. Planno's narrative of Polite Violence begins in the year 1954, the same year Leonard Howell's commune was destroyed by the Jamaican authorities but he starts with a word of 'love' transmitted to the Rastafari brethren from the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, through an American singer Mary Richardson. The Emperor asked that Ms. Richardson tell 'those boys with the beard[s]': "I love them so much." Planno seeks to establish that the Emperor had a clear knowledge of the existence of the Movement that honoured him in Jamaica, and was offering words of strengthening especially as he was mindful of the fact that :

"We [Rastafari people] happen to be under violence, brutality from our society...we the Rastafarian brethren in Jamaica could not walk or move about freely in our society. We were intimidated by our presence. People intimidated just because they see a Rastaman. (Planno, 1998)

Planno indicates the tension and mistrust: Rastafari were intimidated by being present – often the police would target the members for arbitrary interrogation, beatings, even trimming their dreadlocks. At the same time persons were also seemingly 'intimidated just because they see a Rastaman'. From the mid 1950s onward the dreadlock representation of the Rastafari started to take a more dominant place among the brethren and eventually this image grew as the iconic signifier of the members of the faith. The dreadlock mostly youth and younger initiates began to confront the society with the ideas and philosophies of Marcus Garvey, Leonard Howell and more generally of Black Supremacy, but perhaps most articulately on the subject of the insatiable desire to "go back to Africa", now increasingly expressed in terms of the Human Right to repatriation. The cadre of youths to which Planno belonged was a set of politically astute urban street survivors. Some of whom benefitted from a solid elementary

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<sup>14</sup> Rupert Lewis in analyzing the Rastafari experience of this 1960s era speaks of 'political violence' of a new form after 1966, when over 3,000 homes were destroyed in Kingston (many of them Rastafari dwelling places) to establish 'political garrison communities' to endorse the middle class political directorate. In this regard 'mobilization' was substituted by 'clientelism'. See Lewis (1998).

educational foundation and read aggressively, and reasoned widely on various topics. Some of these brethren like Planno read the newspapers daily; wrote letters to the editor to ventilate on various aspects of the Rastafari/ Back-to-Africa doctrine and agenda; some staged street meetings to entertain and educate the people about developments in the world and especially in Africa; some staged anti-colonial protests and demonstration about colonial official and policies. They lived and worked in the public spaces – the market; on the piers; in the public parks. They encountered the political and business leaders, witnessed the legal questions as they unfolded in the courts of the city, dialogued with lawyers, judges, criminals, prostitutes, migrant and peasants, daily in the streets.

Planno emerges as a key figure to confront this feudal / plantation type system. He grows in fame after returning from the first Fact Finding Mission to Africa from Jamaica in 1961. After Planno's return he started to embark on a systematic agenda towards the repatriation of African-Jamaicans particularly to settle the Ethiopian Land Grant (Shashamane) given by the Emperor to Africans in the West. Planno for the next decade would serve as a type of *defacto* Consular Officer for the Ethio-Jamaican relations especially as it related to Rastafari on the Land Grant. Planno and the Rases across Kingston used the 1960s to bring the society into a conversation about itself and its desired orientation. Outside of the public advocacy for repatriation around Planno and his circles emerged a musical culture that resulted in the development of Reggae music which itself took on political ideals of the Rastafari with songs even emerging in Ethiopian Amharic language. Amazingly, none of the political analysts regard the work of this decade as explicitly that of 'mobilization'<sup>15</sup>, perhaps this was as a result of the employment of a type of 'Polite Violence', as Planno remarks that it took the engagement of the University of the West Indies' faculty to help to mediate between the Rastafari and the wider society. In a sense Planno and his kind demographically represented a type of visible non-citizen, a bloc to be herded and steered towards a ballot box, endorsing a member of the brown middle class--someone who had knowledge of what was good for them, because the

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<sup>15</sup> Planno always remarked that Rastafari was a politics without a party, this perhaps was his way of resolving that the issues around which the Movement mobilized were of a political nature but required more than mere politics for their achievement. Rastafari leader Sam Brown contested the Jamaican political elections in 1961 with the Suffering Peoples Party gaining less than 90 votes perhaps serves as a demonstration of that fact.

masses didn't care for or understand complex ideas of the world. Planno thus defines Polite Violence as a type of cause and effect relationship, that is: "How dem treat we and how we react" ...He articulates it as follows:

"the Rastafari Brethren wanted (the world at large, starting in Jamaica) to tell the world that the Rastafari brethren want to go back to Africa, which we call repatriation. The Jamaican society did not want that of the Rastafarian brethren. They did not even want we to want that, but we were able to use our wit and our wisdom to get the *Principality*, which is the University, higher education, to tell the *Powers*, which is the politician that all these brethren want is applicable too, since 1948, United Nation Declaration of independence and Human Rights Declaration..." (Planno, 1998)

Planno unearths a deep contradiction as regards Africa within the Jamaican society, this he describes as the society's hypocrisy, because prior to the emergence of Rastafari, Marcus Garvey the nation's first Hero had been an advocate of Repatriation. The nation praises Garvey but condemn Rastafari. The prevailing attitude however was to suggest that the desire for Africa within Rastafari was an alien invention. Planno suggest that the bigger problematic for the society was the fact that Rastafari evolved an approach which was idiomatically compelling:

"Marcus Garvey learn from [Duse] Mohammed Ali that the people in the Caribbean want to learn more about Africa. And him Marcus Garvey did not have the [vernacular] language to tell it to the people. Him didn't really have that approach. The Rastaman for instance have a better approach than him in that day at telling the people about back to Africa, than tell the people about middle passage and how slavery goes and have to explain to you who can't read what British write..." (Planno, 1998).

Early Rastafari leaders such as Mortimo Planno, Everal Brown, Sam Brown, Jah Lloyd and so on all used multimedia techniques to engage the public with their ideas. Art and craft, and the general employment of culture, drums, music and singing were all a part of the approach assumed by the Rastafari—perhaps seemingly more like religious mobilization in strategies rather than political. In essence the Rastafari had found culturally appropriate ways of intervening in the society to transmit anti and post-colonial messages as well as to teach and promote transformative dialogues. Polite Violence as a perspective aims to establish the historical integrity of the African presence in the Caribbean as emphasizing extreme 'violence'

from above on those below, and in so doing dismisses the notion of a British 'civilizing mission'. It recognizes that 'violence' is a constant tool to control and acclimatize Africans who were transported to the West (Indies), thus inscribing itself as a way of being in Babylon's colonial American project. *Polite Violence* is especially a post-Emancipation / post-Independence experience and thus make more compelling a potential for the cleaving of Africa as a type of return to non-violent / non-traumatic experience, as the neo-colonial system of austerity was a type of *polite slavery*.

### **Cleaving to Africa...**

Between 1962 and 1966, the newly Independent Jamaican nation sought to demonstrate to the civilized world that she could follow her chart course of appropriate International Political economy that would offer the least disruption from the pre-independence model as possible. While at the same time the Rastafari having been agitating for repatriation and seeing substantial progress towards the achievement of this became the biggest phenomenon out of Jamaica over these first few years. The 1960s which had begun with the Missions to Africa and the discussion of repatriation strong in the air, had suddenly, at the moment of Independence in 1962 been dropped from the national agenda of concerns for the newly independent state. In fact the official word was that the new Jamaican state was fully in support of the west, and with regards to African repatriation there were no resources for that to be pursued (Planno's papers). Eric Williams the new Prime Minister of the also newly independent Trinidad and Tobago took a slightly different view of the immediate post-independence imperatives and embarked on an African tour that took him to several countries including Ethiopia—where he extended an invitation to the Emperor. This resulted in the Emperor's visit to the West Indian region, an occasion that rendered the idea of a British colony null and void, more so the notion of an independent sovereign state. The Emperor upon his arrival in Kingston found much of the island's population on hand to receive him, some bearing palm leaves. The national local governmental authorities were totally out of control as the African Jamaicans had been mobilizing for days for this visit and when the Emperor's plane landed their enthusiasm burst it seems, all official protocol had to be abandoned as the multitude thronged the airplane. According to one observer the people "imprisoned the Emperor in the plane with their love". The Emperor had to take charge of the situation and request the skills of Mortimo Planno to

calm the gathering and restore public order. The brown middle class society was stunned, for a moment Jamaica had become Ethiopian, so much so that a motion was moved in parliament to have the Emperor declared head of state versus the Queen of England. The Rastafari brethren of Jamaica have always maintained that they were captive Ethiopians desirous of returning home. The visit of the Emperor helped to establish that there are bonds of blood memory that are able to mobilize people rendering the idea of the Negro's past a myth as well as the forsaking of Africa in the present. The newspaper describes the scene at the airport as follows:

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, *Haile Selassie I*, Emperor of Ethiopia, King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah, arrived in Jamaica yesterday afternoon to a welcome of superlatives. And he wept. He cried as he stood on the steps of an aircraft of Ethiopian Airliner which had brought him from Trinidad and Tobago to Jamaica and surveyed the vast and uncontrollable crowd which had gathered at the Palisadoes Airport to greet him, the tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his face."

(The Gleaner, April 22, 1966, p.1)

Rastafari has had to create a space for the engagement of Africa, and as a result of this the Movement has become *defacto* the guardians of things culturally and politically related to Africa. Many of the Movement's membership have repatriated to countries throughout the African continent and are engaged as pioneers, investors and entrepreneurs in various kinds of developmental activities. There is still however a disconnect with respect to the link between the countries of the diaspora and the continent; as well as how Rastafari is viewed in championing the need for Pan African linkages, as many still see the work of the Rastafari as extremist and misguided because it is still a pervasive myth that abounds that nothing good can come from an association with Africa.

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