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“No Problem, Mon”: Strategies Used to Promote Reggae Music as Jamaica’s Cultural Heritage

Stephen A. King & P. Renee Foster

ABSTRACT. This paper examines efforts by the Jamaican government and its surrogates to control the Rastafarian movement and reggae music. Since the 1970s, the Jamaican establishment has employed an adjustment tactic, co-optation, to transform reggae music and Rastafari into a cultural attraction. In recent years, however, Rastafarian images and reggae have become increasingly important in the promotion of Jamaica’s tourist industry. The Jamaican government and its supporters have marketed the Rastafarian movement and reggae music as part of Jamaica’s “cultural heritage.” As a result, the Rastafarian movement has declined as a political and social force in Jamaica. In sum, reggae and Rastafari have evolved from the category of internal identity marketing to place/tourism marketing.

KEYWORDS. Destination marketing, hospitality marketing, identity/cause marketing, tourism, reggae music, Rastafarian movement, rhetoric, Jamaica

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, foreign travelers and tourists have been drawn to the mysterious, the exotic, and the pleasurable. With raked sandy white beaches and brilliant, crystal blue waters, the Caribbean is a natural setting for tourists to experience “new or different ‘exclusive hideaways’ ” (Conway, 1983, p. 2). With the near depletion of many of the region’s agricultural resources, many Caribbean countries have turned to tourism as a primary foreign-exchange earner (de Albuquerque and McElroy 1992). Beyond its breathtaking beauty, each Caribbean nation highlights distinctive “attractions.” Grand Caymen, for example, sells off-shore discrete banking, while both St. Thomas and St. Croix promote military structures and historic public buildings (Nettleford, 1990). Trinidad and Tobago feature the annual two-week long Carnival festival. In contrast, Jamaica markets reggae, which in its origins was a protest music, and Rastafari, a social movement.

Since the mid-1970s, when reggae superstar Bob Marley and the Wailers spread reggae and the message of Rastafari to the four corners of the globe, Rastafarian symbols and reggae music have become increasingly popular commodities for international tourists. For example, reggae fans attend “Reggae Sunsplash,” an annual week-long musical festival, held in Jamaica’s capital city, Kingston. While in Kingston, tourists often visit the Bob Marley museum and attend dancehall and

reggae concerts. From tourist brochures to television commercials, Jamaica has conspicuously marketed reggae and Rastafari as part of its rich cultural heritage.

This paper examines the efforts by the Jamaican government and its surrogates to control the Rastafarian movement and reggae music from 1978 to the present. Since the 1970s, the Jamaican establishment has employed an adjustment tactic, co-optation, to transform reggae music and Rastafari into a cultural attraction. In recent years, however, Rastafarian images and reggae have become increasingly important in the promotion of Jamaica's tourist industry. The Jamaican government and its supporters have marketed the Rastafarian movement and reggae music as "cultural symbols" of Jamaica. Ironically, the music once banned by the Jamaican government is now the promotional theme song of the Jamaican Tourist Board.

RASTAFARI AND REGGAE IN JAMAICA: 1930-1980

The official coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as the new emperor of Ethiopia in 1930 signaled the emergence of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica. During the coronation, Makonnen took the throne name, Haile Selassie I, along with other royal titles, including "King of Kings," "Lord of Lords," and "Elect of God and Light of the World" (Chevannes, 1994, p. 42). Receiving international media exposure, color pictures of the proceedings were published throughout the world, and newsreels of the ceremonies gave many blacks in the United States and the Caribbean their first glimpse of Ethiopia (Campbell, 1987). When Jamaica's national newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*, published photos of Selassie's coronation, some Jamaicans consulted their Bibles and subsequently believed Selassie was the black messiah (Chevannes, 1994).

Leonard Howell has been identified as the first Rastafarian preacher in Jamaica. Returning to Jamaica from New York in the winter of 1932, Howell encouraged Jamaicans to reject the authority of the King of England, give their loyalties to the new emperor of Ethiopia, and seek immediate repatriation to Africa (Campbell, 1987). To achieve this goal, he sold pictures of Haile Selassie as future "passports" to Ethiopia. As expected, Jamaica's colonial government objected to Howell's anti-colonial rhetoric. In 1934, the police arrested Howell and his deputy, Robert Hinds, for breaking Jamaica's sedition laws. After a speedy trial, Howell was sentenced to two years—and Hinds to one year—of hard labor (Campbell, 1987).

In 1940, four years after his release from prison, Howell formed a Rastafarian community called Pinnacle, an old estate in the hills of St. Catherine parish, where more than 1600 Rastafarians grew crops (Campbell, 1987). Since Howell's primary cash crop was marijuana, the Pinnacle community "gave to the Rastafari[an] movement its close association in the mind of the public with ganja [marijuana]" (Chevannes, 1994, p. 112). The cultivation of ganja and the rumors of Rastafarian violence in the area drew police suspicions. In 1941, the police arrested 28 Rastafarians on charges of cultivating a dangerous drug. Once again, the Rastafarian leader was sentenced to serve another two years in prison (Campbell, 1987).

During the 1950s, the Rastafarians were increasingly viewed by Jamaica's ruling classes as bearded drug addicts, a national eyesore, and a "cult of outcasts" (Patterson, 1964, p. 15). Frequent clashes between Rastafarians and police were reported by the *Daily Gleaner*, and the work of early researchers confirmed the stereotype that Rastafarians were black racists who wanted to rule over the white man (Simpson, 1955). The movement in reality posed a minimal threat to Jamaica's ruling classes. Largely lower-class, politically apathetic, and non-violent, most Rastafarians were committed to promoting racial pride, repatriating members to Africa, and worshipping the divinity of Haile Selassie.

At the request of some members of the Rastafarian movement, three University of West Indies (UWI) researchers conducted research on the movement in 1960 and summarized the movement's core beliefs in a brief pamphlet entitled, *The Report of the Ras Tafarian Movement in Kingston, Jamaica*. Their report found that the Rastafarian movement unanimously believed in the divinity of Haile Selassie and favored the repatriation of all its members to Africa. After discussions with Rastafarian members, the authors also summarized the movement's goals as an end to police persecution, improved economic conditions, access to adult education, and human rights, including freedom of movement and speech (Smith, Augier, and Nettleford, 1960).

Despite the movement's prior clashes with Jamaican authorities, most Rastafarians preached love and peace. In the *Star*, a Jamaican afternoon newspaper tabloid, Brother Aubrey Brown, a Rastafarian spokesperson, argued that the Rastafarian movement did not condone preaching "race hatred" against the "pink nor the yellow" ("*Watch Word*," 1961, pp. 6-7). The Report of the UWI research team confirmed this non-violent attitude when it reported that a "great majority of Ras Tafari brethren are peaceful citizens who do not believe in violence." The Report did suggest, however, that the movement was "heterogeneous," and that a small minority of Rastafarians were criminals, revolutionaries, or "mentally deranged" (Smith et al., 1960, p. 25). However, most Rastafarians did not seem to fit the Jamaican government's portrait of their cause as a violent, revolutionary social movement.

By 1965, most Rastafarians still advocated political disengagement, believing that their salvation would come from "entailed meditation, discussion, and reading the Bible" (Gray, 1991, p. 74). Many Rastafarians were waiting for Haile Selassie to send his ships to the shores of Jamaica to take the oppressed away to Ethiopia. At the same time, however, the Rastafarians were "political" in that they claimed African citizenship, openly expressed their racial pride, and argued that independence was a "farce" (de Albuquerque, 1979, p. 24). By the end of 1967, more and more middle-class youths were beginning to find the Rastafarian movement appealing, and the visit of Haile Selassie in 1966 to Jamaica increased the political consciousness of the Rastafarian movement.

Before the mid-1960s, many Rastafarians believed that liberation could be realized only through a physical repatriation to Africa. After meeting with several Rastafarian leaders during his only trip to Jamaica, Selassie proposed a new concept of repatriation: Rastafarians should liberate themselves in Jamaica before returning to Africa. Some writers have claimed that Selassie's apparent change on repatriation inaugurated a new wave of Rastafari, in which the movement's apolitical philosophy gave way to more immediate, more political demands (Jacobs, 1985).

By the late 1960s, the Rastafarian movement increasingly gave reggae its ideological and political content, and musical direction. Rastafarian scholar Horace Campbell (1987) noted that the influence of Rastafari "on the development of the popular culture was evident by the fact that most serious reggae artists adhered to some of the principles of the Rastafarian movement" (p. 134). In fact, scholars have noted that the Twelve Tribes of Israel, a "middle-class" Rastafarian group, embraced reggae as a new voice of Rastafari. In the next ten years, the Rastafarian movement increasingly employed reggae music as its chief form of social protest. Music was being used as a communication tool to promote a cause; thus, reggae was being used for identity marketing.

THE RHETORIC OF SOCIAL CONTROL: THE JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT v. RASTAFARI AND REGGAE MUSIC

While literally thousands of social movement studies have explored how social movements challenge and provoke "establishments," few studies have investigated how establishments "control" social movements. The "institutional authority" or "establishment" can employ an assortment of strategies to control a social movement. Responding to the agitation of a social movement, establishments tend to resort first to the strategy of "evasion," which involves, in effect, pretending "that it does not exist or that it is too insignificant to recognize" (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1993, p. 149). Those in power may turn to a more active strategy of "counter-persuasion"—governments and their surrogates attempt to discredit movement leaders or try to prove that their ideas are "ill-advised and lacking merit" (Stewart et al., 1993, p. 150). The next step is "coercion," or non-rhetorical forms of social control, such as firebombing houses or physically attacking demonstrators (Stewart et al., 1993). In contrast, the strategy of "adjustment," "involves making some concessions to a social movement while not accepting the movement's demands or goals" (Stewart et al., 1993, p. 155). Yet, "cooperation" with a dissent group "may lead to outright co-optation of the cause," or a literal take-over of the movement by elements of the mainstream establishment (Stewart et al., 1993, p. 156). The final strategy, "capitulation," occurs when an establishment "surrender[s]" to the demands of a social movement (Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen, 1993, p. 62).

The Jamaican government and the dominant classes employed a variety of strategies to “control” the Rastafarians. In the 1960s, the Jamaican government typically “evaded” the Rastafarians’ demand for repatriation, while the Gleaner portrayed the Rastafarians as dangerous, yet “lazy” revolutionaries. The Jamaican government and its supporters even resorted to the strategy of “coercion,” deporting Rastafarian “leaders” and arresting reggae musicians. The Jamaican government even banned certain songs from the public airwaves. In the year leading up to the 1972 national elections, the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) banned several People’s National Party (PNP) campaign songs, including the Wailers’ militant “Small Axe,” Delroy Wilson’s optimistic “Better Must Come,” and the Abyssinians’ “Declaration of Rights.” Yet the government’s strategies to suppress the movement generally failed. The Rastafarian movement continued to gain popularity and political influence, as did reggae music.

The creation of “international reggae” in the 1970s helped shape Jamaica’s changing perceptions of reggae music and the Rastafarian movement. Previous attempts to market Jamaica’s popular music to an international audience generally failed. In 1972, however, Chris Blackwell, President of Island Records, came up with an extremely successful marketing campaign to sell reggae music to American college students and European youths. With the release in 1972 of the Wailers’ first international record, *Catch A Fire*, and international success in that same year of the movie and the soundtrack, *The Harder They Come*, reggae seemed more than a passing musical novelty (Wailers, 1972; Cliff, 1973). Largely because of Blackwell, reggae became an international musical phenomenon.

Despite its widening popularity, reggae remained a radical political music. Reggae musicians continued to comment on a number of social issues: poverty and hunger in Jamaica (Toots and Maytals’ “Time Tough”; Bob Marley and the Wailers’ “Them Belly Fully [But We Hungry]”), Jamaica’s police force (Max Romeo’s “Police and Thieves”), the corrupt legal system (Bunny Wailer’s “Fighting Against Conviction”), and the legalization of marijuana (Peter Tosh’s “Legalize It”).

As the international community embraced reggae music as an important aesthetic form, many middle-class Jamaicans began to change their opinions about reggae music. Rather than viewing reggae as a threat to national security, the Jamaican government and many of its supporters viewed this cultural form as something positive and distinctively “Jamaican.” In a 1975 article entitled “The World Discovers Reggae,” a Gleaner reporter summed up the expectations of many Jamaicans who now regarded reggae as Jamaica’s new cultural voice: “[R]eggae could be the start of something really big. Something else to confirm what Jamaicans have already known—that this place we call home is one of the biggest little countries in the world” (p. 4).

By the 1980s, the government no longer considered reggae and Rastafari to be a threat to Jamaica’s domestic tranquility or national security. Instead, the government “co-opted” reggae and Rastafari into symbols of Jamaica’s cultural heritage, transforming both into a tourist attraction. Certainly, the government’s

sponsorship of Reggae Sunsplash reflected the belief that reggae music and the Rastafarian movement were economic assets to Jamaica's thriving tourist industry.

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IN JAMAICA

Shortly after World War II, the international tourist industry boomed. From 1950 to 1997, the number of tourists traveling worldwide increased from an estimated 25 million to 617 million (Conway, 1983; Shea, 1999). According to urban geographer, Dennis Conway (1983), as "disposable income has grown worldwide, the expenditures on leisure have translated travel motivations into the reality of an important international economic activity" (p. 1-2). These new "jet-setting" tourists increasingly benefitted from non-stop jet service, lower air fares, and the promotion of overseas travel (Conway, 1983).

With temperate climates and beautiful terrain, the Caribbean became the site of a booming tourist industry. Initially, Jamaica was sold to the public as an "island paradise." In order to catch the eye of the wealthy, foreign traveler, the Jamaican government encouraged foreign investors to expand the tourist industry on Jamaica's north coast. The sunny attractions, including Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios, sprouted new resort hotels, airport runways, and private beaches. By selling Jamaica as "paradise," the tourism industry was selling Jamaica as a "touristic culture." As Rex Nettleford (1990) explained, "visitors do not normally come, and are not encouraged to come to the region to 'soak up' its culture. The marketing strategies themselves have been soaked in something called 'Paradise.' "

Since the mid-1960s, many Caribbean nations have promoted "cultural tourism." According to Nettleford (1990), cultural tourism lured "visitors to their monuments, sites and ruins or to anything else that is marketable as a distinctive cultural attribute." In addition, cultural artifacts may include stories, dance, or religious expressions. According to Nettleford (1990), Jamaica "has been lucky in its own efforts. Cultural tourism came only after notions of a cultural policy for the building of a Jamaican nationhood and identity were well established" (p. 8).

The Jamaican government, the Jamaican Tourist Board (JTB), and local entrepreneurs played an important role in promoting reggae and Rastafari as Jamaica's chief cultural attraction. Foreign investors and the Jamaican government recognized that many international travelers associate Jamaica primarily with two things: reggae and, to a lesser extent, Rastafari. Despite a brief decline in tourism during the mid-1970s, the two marketing strategies—"touristic culture" and "cultural tourism"—have been extremely successful in attracting tourists to the island nation. Jamaica's tourist industry has continued to prosper into the 1990s, growing at an annual rate of seven percent, and is now the nation's leading foreign-exchange earner (Luntta, 1993).

TOURISM: REGGAE AND RASTAFARI

Reggae Sunsplash in 1978 epitomized the new “partnership” of the Jamaican government, Jamaica’s tourism industry, the Rastafarian movement, and reggae music. In 1978, the resort town of Montego Bay hosted the first Reggae Sunsplash, a week-long musical festival featuring Jamaica’s best-known reggae stars and celebrating the music’s contribution to Jamaican culture. Now an annual event, Reggae Sunsplash has become a centerpiece of Jamaica’s tourist promotions. Thousands now visit Jamaica to experience not only its warm climate and sandy beaches, but also the alluring sound of reggae and the mysterious “cult” of Rastafari. Nettleford (1990) argued that Reggae Sunsplash showcased Jamaica’s “cultural heritage” (p. 9). As a highly popular and profitable tourist event, Reggae Sunsplash has even been duplicated in the United States and Japan.

After Bob Marley’s death from cancer in 1981, even the memory of the reggae star became something of a tourist attraction. Marley’s house in Kingston became the “Bob Marley Museum,” complete with a gift shop and a restaurant serving traditional “I-tal” Rastafarian foods and juices. Tourists are escorted through Marley’s herb garden, view a room wallpapered with over 200 magazine and newspaper articles covering the career of the Wailers, and watch a 20-minute biographical film on Marley’s life and career. Across the island, the “Bob Marley Mausoleum” (again with a gift shop) has been erected in the singer’s birthplace, Nine Miles, located in the St. Ann parish. Jamaica has even turned Marley’s birthday into a national holiday, commemorated with the “Bob Marley Birthday Bash,” an annual four-day musical festival celebrating the life of the reggae star (Luntta, 1993). Tourists from around the world flock to this and other festivals celebrating Marley and the music he made famous.

Yet the exploitation of reggae music and Rastafarian imagery in promoting Jamaican tourism goes well beyond invoking the memory of Bob Marley. In various types of promotional materials, the enchanting sounds of reggae and the image of the smiling “Rastaman” beckoned tourists from around the world to Jamaica’s major tourist areas. The tourist guide *Caribbean For Lovers*, for example, touted the “sensual beat” of reggae music and the “cult” of Rastafari, while other guides—*Frommer’s Jamaica & Barbados*, *Exploring Caribbean*, and *Jamaica Handbook*—provide brief histories of the movement and discuss the international popularity of reggae music (Luntta, 1993; Hamlyn, 1996; Porter and Prince, 1996; Permenter and Bigley, 1997). In the travel guide *Access Caribbean*, tourists were encouraged to dance to the “rhythms of a reggae band” and “adopt the Jamaicans’ unofficial motto, ‘Don’t Worry, Be Happy’ ” (Dempsey and Karle, 1996, p. 162). Writing for another tourist guide, *The Caribbean*, travel writer Jennifer Quale (1994) observed: “the best reason to go to Jamaica is to be captivated by the seductive rhythms that keep the rest of the world at bay” (p. 36). Similarly, *Fodor’s 92: Jamaica* opened with the image of a “grinning” Rastafarian watching a blonde female MBA student, a New York lawyer, and a honeymooning couple sway “to a joyous reggae beat drifting across a splendid expanse of white, powdery sand.” All “celebrate” the “sweet life” of

Jamaica because “whatever you ask, the answer is the same. . . . [n]o problem, mon” (Diedrichs, 1992, p. 1).

Many brochures which feature a rainbow of Jamaican resorts and hotels (from five star to economy) play up reggae and Bob Marley. The Adventure Tours USA Sun Escapes catalogue mentions in the “Tours Available” section, the “Kingston Bob Marley Tour” (American Tours USA, 1997, p. 1). The Jamaica-Jamaica All Inclusive Resort brochure in the night entertainment section mentions “the rich reggae music which Jamaica has given the world will soak into your very bones. . . .kick off your shoes and inhibitions to dance to a primordial rhythm at our beach party” (Jamaica-Jamaica: All Inclusive, 1997, p. 14). In another example, the Negril Jamaica Vacation Network (1994) brochure describes Negril as “a place with the laid-back atmosphere. . . . Enjoy the local color and crafts, the intoxicating sounds of the famous Reggae beat” (p. 1).

Beyond travel guides and brochures, magazines such as *Modern Bride*, *National Geographic*, and *Road and Track* use reggae as a metaphor for describing “paradise.” In a *Modern Bride* article entitled, “Jamaica- Romance to the Reggae Beat,” the authors blend the “sound” of reggae with images of paradise: “Like the easy-going yet stirring syncopation of the reggae music that was born here, Jamaica’s landscape is at once startling and soothing in its beauty” (Bain, 1993, p. 364). Throughout the article, the musical phrase “rhythm” attempts to capture the emotional experience of visiting Jamaica. Tourists move to “joyous rhythms of this island paradise [and] ... slip into the ‘soon come’ rhythm of island time” (Bain, 1993, p. 440, 434).

In the JTB’s most recent brochure entitled, “Jamaica,” Rastafari and reggae are clearly represented as an important part of Jamaica’s “cultural heritage.” The document intersects brief descriptions of Jamaica’s historical roots and tourist resorts with pictures of romantic dinners, golf courses, waterfalls, and historical buildings. The brochure also includes a picture of an older, smiling Jamaican (presumably a Rastafarian) who sports a hat with Rastafarian colors: red, green, and gold. The brochure also includes a one-page, full-color photo of a reggae band in concert (Jamaica, 1997). A recent JTB advertisement in *Current*, the magazine for Carnival Cruiseline guests, features photos of a large Rastaman wooden carving as well as a street vendor displaying caps featuring the Rastafarian colors (“Jamaica,” 1998). Television commercials sponsored by the JTB and the Jamaican Convention and Visitors Bureau (JCVB) feature reggae music and Rastafarian imagery urging the viewer to call 1-800-4REGGAE for a free information package.

Air Jamaica, Jamaica’s national airline (the Jamaican government retains 25 percent ownership, the rest owned and managed by a consortium of Jamaican investors) in its *Guide for Travel Agents* uses reggae and Bob Marley as a recurring theme. For example, the guide encourages tourists to “come to Jamaica,” and quoting a Bob Marley and the Wailers’ song, “and feel alright” (Air Jamaica, 1997, p. 36). Other airlines have attracted tourists to Jamaica with commercials blending reggae music, Rastafarians, and lush tropical images of an island “paradise.” American Airlines, for

example, used Bob Marley and the Wailers' ode to universal unity, "One Love/People Get Ready," to sell Jamaica as an oasis of peace and serenity. In the ad, the narrator intones "come visit Jamaica" as visual images of swaying palm trees, waterfalls, and sandy beaches flash on the screen. The images of an island paradise, and the song's refrain—"One love/One heart/Let's get together and feel alright"—work in concert to suggest a "safe" Jamaica. The commercial closes with the camera focused on a smiling, dreadlocked Rastafarian girl and the logo: "Jamaica: One Love."

Once in Jamaica, international travelers can purchase a variety of reggae and Rastafarian souvenirs. Street vendors ("higglers") and gift shop clerks display and sell items ranging from ganja T-shirts, to fake Rastafarian deadlocks, to inexpensive posters of reggae stars. Indeed, many gift store souvenirs are decorated with the Rastafarian colors of red, green, and gold. Writing in the *Sunday Gleaner*, Basil Walters (1992), a Rastafarian, remarked: "Take a casual stroll around the tourist areas, and one cannot escape the images reflecting Rastafarian consciousness. T-shirts and clothing with Rastafari motifs are the most common items sold to visitors to [sic.] this country" (p. 12A).

Without a doubt, the international tourist industry, the Jamaican government, and the Jamaican Tourist Board have consciously marketed Rastafarian symbols and reggae music as part of Jamaica's "cultural heritage." In a wide range of promotional materials, images of reggae bands and smiling Rastafarians are interwoven into Jamaica's "touristic culture": sun, sand, sea, and sex. Not surprisingly, Rastafarians are portrayed as smiling, polite servants willing to accommodate foreign visitors. The Rastafarians are not depicted as a "social movement" engaged in the task of reforming Jamaica's neo-colonial society and/or returning to Africa. Similarly, promotional materials have emphasized reggae's "joyous" and "peaceful" themes, while denying the music's call for revolutionary change in society. This seemingly bizarre representation has led, in part, to the decline of the Rastafarian movement during the 1980s and 1990s.

CONCLUSION

The apparent decline of the Rastafarian movement and reggae music in Jamaica after 1980 was, perhaps, a predictable culmination to the evolution of both the movement and the music. As a form of social and political protest in Jamaica, reggae gave expression to the plight of Jamaica's poor and disenfranchised classes, and particularly to the hopelessness of Jamaica's young people. Offering the comforts of a religious community and the "escape" of repatriation, reggae and Rastafari served as an explicit medium of protest against the harsh realities of unemployment, food shortages, and inadequate housing.

With the explosion in popularity of international reggae music, the Rastafarian movement's cultural identity was legitimized in Jamaica. The popularity of reggae was a mixed blessing, however, for it created an even greater rift between

“religious” and “political” Rastafarians. Religious Rastafarians believed the movement should not be a part of Jamaica’s political system, while political Rastafarians believed the movement must be actively involved in Jamaican politics. Even more disconcerting to the Rastafarian traditionalists was the new wave of “secular” Rastafarians, drawn to the movement by its fashion and by reggae music itself. Those new supporters had little in common with the traditional Rastafarians, resulting in new tensions within the movement.

Since the late 1970s, the image of the Rastaman and reggae music have increasingly become an important part of Jamaica’s tourist industry. In a wide range of promotional materials, Rastafarians are portrayed as accommodating and exotic cultural objects. Moreover, travel brochures highlight reggae music’s themes of peace and unification. Not surprisingly, the images of the reggae “guitar-strumming” Rastaman are interwoven into a larger narrative of an island paradise. The two marketing strategies—“touristic culture” (paradise themes) and “cultural tourism” (reggae)—have been extremely successful in attracting tourists to the island nation.

In short, the Rastafarian movement is no longer considered a threat to Jamaica’s domestic tranquility or national security. While the Rastafarians redefined that nation’s cultural identity and became an international phenomenon, the movement and its protest music have been “co-opted” into a symbol of Jamaica’s cultural heritage and transformed into a tourist attraction. Thus, here lies the transformation of a musical genre (filled with social and political messages) from domestic, internal identity marketing mechanism to international tourism marketing tool.

AUTHOR NOTE

This essay was derived, in part, from Stephen A. King’s dissertation entitled, “Redemption Song” in *Babylon: The Evolution of Reggae Music and the Rastafarian Movement*. The dissertation was written under the direction of Dr. J. Michael Hogan at Indiana University in 1997.

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