

AWe Dis?! : The Contestation of Jamaica's Post-Independence Identity
in the Jamaica Festival Song Competition

by

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Introduction

The year 1962 saw the first unveiling of Jamaica's flag of black, gold and green. In anticipation of the nation's independence a bipartisan committee of the Jamaica House of Representatives designed the flag and imbued the flag's colors with the following meanings: black to represent the strength and creativity of the people; gold, to depict the wealth and beauty of the island's sunlight; and green to symbolize both the hope and agricultural resources of the island (www.jis.gov.jm). This flag was to symbolize the birth of a new nation. Here a nation is defined as "a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members" (Smith 2001:13). But, what exactly would be the character of this new nation? And who would have the privilege of defining the boundaries of this character's expression? Distinct responses to these questions have emerged and formed the basis of the conflicts surrounding, not only Jamaica's path to independence, but also its attempts to form, promote and solidify a new and separate sense of a national identity.

In this paper, I examine the formation and promotion of a Jamaican national identity by examining the Jamaica Festival Song Competition, an event that began in 1966 and has continued under various names up to the present day. By looking at the role of this Festival one can gain insight into how various conceptions of "Jamaicanness" have been contested in post-independence Jamaica. Additionally, the contestation of these identities reveals the ways in which power relations are established, re-negotiated, and maintained within the field of culture.

I first lay the groundwork by summarizing some of the crucial events leading up to Jamaica's independence.

Jamaican Independence and Attempts to Define the Nation

In 1494 Christopher Columbus first stepped foot on the northern coast of Jamaica; in 1509 the Spanish formally established their presence on the island and initiated a short and unremarkable period of rule, which saw the introduction of sugar cane cultivation and African slaves. The British, in 1655, annexed Jamaica from Spain and began what would become a long and penetrating period of colonial rule. Britain saw to the establishment of a plantation economy based on the cultivation of sugar by enslaved Africans as well as the development of a society in which power was held exclusively by the white planter and merchant classes. During the formative years of their rule persons of African descent far out-numbered whites, who comprised the oligarchy. This fact resulted in the planters employing a strategy of societal control that stratified the population. As M.G. Smith suggests in his theory of 'Social Pluralism', "the plantation society produced a stratum of whites associated with ownership, management and protection of property, a middle stratum of browns in professional, technical and white collar occupations and a lower stratum of poor black ex-slaves" (Smith in Stone 1973:8).

The slave trade was abolished in 1807 and twenty-one years later The Emancipation Act of 1834 granted freedom to the slaves. The period after Emancipation was marked by severe difficulties for the newly emancipated population and by the growing instability of the Old Representative System of a

Governor and Council appointed by the Crown and the elected Assembly. The Jamaican Assembly (the organizational body within which the political elite manifested its power), which was in fact the elected legislature of the old system, had become unresponsive to the concerns of the masses of its disenfranchised citizens. Instead the Assembly was preoccupied with re-instating the power dynamics, which had secured their privilege during slavery. The planter class's lack of responsiveness was recognized by the masses who staged several acts of rebellion, most notably the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, which convinced the Crown of the need for its direct rule of Jamaica. As time progressed the British slowly facilitated the increased representativeness of the political process. However, at the turn of the century, executive power was still concentrated in the hands of the Governor, and the Legislative Council only served in an advisory capacity (Panton 1993:19).

Direct Crown Rule lasted until 1944, and it was during this period that the political consciousness of the people began to take on a more overt form of expression, such as Marcus Garvey's formation of the first Black political party in 1928 (the People's Political Party) and the mass following achieved by the black nationalist Alexander Bedward. Despite an increase in the masses' political awareness, the scope of their political action remained severely limited. "In 1930, only eight percent of the population was eligible to vote and in 1935 that number had fallen to six percent" (Panton 1993:20). In 1944, thanks to the efforts of Norman Manley, universal adult suffrage was granted and the masses were given the opportunity to make the ultimate expression of their political consciousness by casting their votes in a national election. That year the politically aroused masses

were divided amongst at least eight political parties: Federation of Citizen's Association, The Jamaica Liberal Party, The Jamaica Radical Workers' Party, The J.A.G. Smith Party, the Rent Payer's Party, The Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party (Panton 1993:23). The latter two would become the two primary contenders in Jamaican politics. The longstanding role of both of these political parties in the political life of Jamaica was solidified by their ability to mobilize the support of the mostly unaligned black urban poor in general elections. Initial distinctions in the politics of the two parties were to be found in their beliefs pertaining to the issue of Jamaica's independence.

The Jamaica Labour Party, led by Sir Alexander Bustamante, was opposed to the idea of self-rule (an idea put forward by the People's National Party) and suggested that if Jamaica were to become independent that it would only result in the continued disenfranchisement of the black masses by the enfranchised classes. According to Bustamante, "self-government=slavery" or "brown man rule," "evoking not only racial cleavages but also class-based antagonisms between the middle-class professionals in leadership positions within the nationalist movement and the Jamaican masses" (Thomas 2004:54). It was Bustamante who found success in the 1944 elections, winning 23 of the 32 seats compared to the 4 won by Manley's PNP. The ambivalence many Jamaicans had towards the idea of self-governance may be explained by their experience under Crown rule. For instance, "traditionally, most acts of welfare reform for the Jamaican people (such as the 1838 emancipation proclamation and the 1938 labour reforms) originated in the English Parliament only to face the resistance and hostility of local authorities" (Panton 1993:23).

By 1955 the two political parties had converged on the issue of the nation's independence and Bustamante struggled to find an issue around which to mobilize the masses. The PNP won the 1955 election and had begun to institute several changes to the ways in which the island had been governed. For example, in 1957 it strengthened local leadership in the economy through the implementation of a cabinet government. In January of 1958, Manley with the support of the colonial office led Jamaica into the West Indies Federation. But soon cooperation between Jamaica and the other islands became difficult. In 1960, recognizing the weakness of the federation, Bustamante saw it advantageous to state his opposition to Jamaica's involvement in the federation and his support for the realization of Jamaica's full independence. A referendum on the matter taken a year later showed that 55% of the population supported self-rule (Panton 1993:27). In 1962, Manley officially announced Jamaica's independence. Premier, Norman Manley, led a delegation that pleaded a case for Jamaica's independence at the constitutional conference held at Lancaster House in 1962 to the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Reginald Maulding. At first, there was some opposition to the terms under which independence would be granted. However, in the end the Colonial Secretary accepted the terms put forward by Norman Manley and independence was granted on August 6 (Sealy 1962). Prior to the 1962 declaration, a committee of middle and upper class Jamaicans was formed to draft the nation's constitution. "The committee recommended that Jamaica adopt the British Westminster parliamentary system relatively unchanged...the Prime Minister received extensive powers and Leader of the Opposition became a constitutionally-recognized position" (Panton 1993:27).

Although the protests and uprisings of the late nineteenth century were led by Jamaica's marginalized population, by the 1930s "and continuing throughout the 1940s and the 1950s, the working-class influence on local politics was taken over by the emerging middle-class strata who, as lawyers, journalists, and civil servants, emphasized law, due process, and established British institutions" (Thomas 2004:51). This is significant because as M.G Smith's theory of cultural pluralism suggests, the rigidity of the stratification pattern introduced by the plantation system resulted in well defined life styles and institutional patterns, which correlated with each stratum. And as Carl Stone adds, "the life style differences between the middle and lower strata...reflected unequal access to material and social resources which were prerequisites for acquiring the subcultural pattern appropriate for the middle stratum" (Stone 1973:8). This means that the dominance of middle-class input in the process of nation-building necessarily created a bias in the myths, shared histories, and cultural elements, which were deemed appropriate to be publicized as constituting the nation. This bias led to a conception of Jamaica as a nation that conflicted with the various myths and shared histories the masses considered more salient.

Nationalism, defined as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'," may serve to connect the more organized sector to more fragmented segments of the population (Smith 2001:9). In the Jamaican case, the organized sector is the political elite and the fragmented segments are the black masses. The political elite were faced with the challenge of promoting a unifying ideology that could mobilize the masses around the elite's

conception of the nation. But what would form the ideological basis for the mobilization of the population around the newly independent nation? What would serve to legitimize the power and subsequent actions of the political elite in the eyes of the masses? Obika Gray in “Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica 1960-1972,” speaks to the existence of an ideological lacuna that was the consequence of

The leaders’ damping of popular militancy and softening of conflicts during critical phases of the anticolonial struggle; the absence of a sensibility within the leadership which might have caused it to invoke civilization differences as a weapon against colonialism; and finally, the transition around demands for native inclusion in the higher levels of the colonial bureaucracy and economy (Gray 1991:47).

The implications of such a lacuna become even direr when one considers the following facts: firstly, that Jamaica’s independence had been granted to her in accordance with British interests, and secondly, that the majority of Jamaicans had failed to benefit from the nation’s strides. The 1960s was a period in which Jamaica’s urban centers, namely Kingston, struggled to hold within its seams the influx of migrants from the rural areas that came in search of steady wages and a more secure life. In short, the migrants travelled in order to capitalize on the promises of independence. However, the advancements which were taking place in the city occurred at a rate much slower than that of the city’s population growth. The result was a drastic increase in the number of poor and unemployed Jamaicans, the majority of whom were Black. Additionally, the rate of incorporation of Blacks into the upper echelons of society was slow, and those who were able to ascend tended to maintain an anglophile orientation that undermined the de-Europeanization of the class structure. “Thus, despite the incipient transformation of the class structure in the early

postcolonial years, the dominant cultural values remained essentially unaltered, and the vast majority of blacks remained outside the intermediate and upper levels of the middle-class” (Gray 1991:53). The new urban poor as well as the Black intellectual class, which had been influenced by the Black Power movement of the United States, began to protest their class deprivation in terms of race (Gray 1991:52). The rise in Black consciousness informed the development of multiple strains of Black Nationalism, such as the Rastafarian movement and the related Rudies, and the academic wing that published the *Abeng*. The *Abeng* was a newsletter published by members of the Abeng movement. The movement’s members called for “the assumption of power by the black Jamaican masses and a cultural reconstruction of society in the image of blacks” (Thomas 2004:76).

The Black Nationalisms being projected by the masses essentially sought to define the nation in terms of a shared racial heritage. The political elite considered this tendency problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, the concept of Jamaica as a nation united through a shared racial heritage would necessarily privilege the black majority, of which the political elite and capitalist classes were not a part. Over the years, the political elite had established a relationship with the capitalist classes so as to more effectively exercise their authority. The political elite were of the “brown class,” whereas the capitalist class was comprised of Jamaica’s ethnic minorities: the Lebanese and Chinese (Nettleford 1970:137). The state of being “brown” or “brownness” is

an intermediary color and class construction that is linked historically with the population of free people of color that emerged during the slavery period. . . . ‘Brown’ is as much a way of life as it is a phenotype, however, as it also

signifies respectability or at least aspirations toward respectability. This is the segment of the national middle class most often associated with the creole multiracial nationalist project and with the values and visions of progress (Thomas 2004:24).

The definition above contains three terms that require explanation: “respectability,” “values,” and “progress.” Respectability refers to a “value complex emphasizing the cultivation of education, thrift, industry, self-sufficiency via land ownership, moderate Christian living, community uplift, the constitution of family through legal marriage and related gendered expectations, and leadership by the educated middle classes” (Thomas 2004:5). Values are “class-coded cultural forms and practices. The parameters of this struggle for power were defined during the colonial period and then reproduced—at least in part—by advocates of creole multiracial nationalism” (Thomas 2004:11). The vision of progress is seen as the reign of respectability and the value complex of the political elite.

The second reason is that a Jamaica defined in terms of Blackness would have made acceptance in the international community difficult. In the early 1960s anti-Black racism was tacitly tolerated in the international community, while suspicion was directed at Black Nationalists efforts. In this climate the political elite deemed it disadvantageous to define the nation in terms of race, largely because they “sought to enter the world of nations not singly and directly, but by the retention of special relationships—economically, through privileged trade arrangements, and politically, as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations” (Thomas 2004:54). Rejecting the idea of a racialized nation, the political elite embraced what Gray terms, “Jamaican Exceptionalism:”

In it [Jamaican Exceptionalism] Jamaica was depicted as possessing an exceptional consensual culture which had earned it an international reputation for political stability and interracial harmony. In this respect, Exceptionalism was a novel ideological invention designed to address the dilemmas of the incipient independent state. This . . . had two concurrent purposes: to dampen mounting racial protest against the emergent class inequalities and to create the political and ideological conditions necessary for foreign investment (Gray 1991:54).

Deborah Thomas defines the nationalist project as a “narrower assertion of a specifically Jamaican identity more closely resembling classical European nationalism. That is, it was founded on a concept of common history and culture rather than race and, as in Europe, obscured the conflation of class with race.” She continues with what she considers to be the consequences of the nationalist project or creole multiracialism,

additionally, the nationalist political and intellectual elite’s emphasis on the equality of all racial groups in the building of the new nation, while striving for universalism and inclusiveness, facilitated the continued hegemony of colonial values, thus legitimizing class domination whereby new ruling groups would function as guardians for the lower classes (Thomas 2004:55).

Carl Stone, writing in 1973 on the official nationalist symbolism and ideology, states that the nationalist project represented “a self-conscious accommodation to the existing conditions of external dependence and white foreign dominance of the local economy” (Stone 1973:98). He continues his analysis by highlighting the ways in which cosmopolitan nationalism facilitated the aforementioned:

Cosmopolitan nationalism . . . reflects multiracialism and racial harmony rather than the distinctive attributes and features of the black or African racial group that makes up the vast majority of the population. . . [it also] attempts to discover and project a folk tradition through institutions such as the National Festival to compensate for the history of non-recognition of national

symbols that derive from the experience of the black majority (Stone 1973:98).

The nationalist project of the political elite may, then, be seen as a way of neutralizing the threat of the various strains of Black Nationalism, and as facilitating the maintenance of beneficial relationships in the international community. The ideology of creole nationalism sought to incorporate the masses (in a non-threatening way) into the unfolding national narrative. But they could not incorporate the masses without first rendering them “good citizens.” The definition of a good citizen worthy of the recognition of the state was wedded to the ability of the masses to assimilate the values identified with the aforementioned definition of “respectability.” The political elite, secure in their identification with the values promoted as integral to progress, assumed the role of guardians for the lower-classes who they saw as culturally crippled. However, the culturally crippled lower-classes were not doomed forever. They would have the chance to prove their worth as citizens by discarding practices seen as a throwback to slavery and accepting the progressive ideals of the political elite. The assimilation process would be made possible with the help of the political elite who relied on cultural institutions to promote their values and reform the perceived backward behaviors of the masses.

Cultural institutions in the post-independence period were vested with the task of facilitating the dissemination and acceptance of the nationalist project. Since the founding of the nation, the political elite articulated a relationship between culture and development that continues to influence the direction of the nation’s cultural policy. While the cultural work of the nation has been divided among many organizations, the majority of the work undertaken on a national level has been the

responsibility of the Festival Commission. It is my aim to show that the Festival Commission, because of its connection to the government of Jamaica, its reliance on private investments, and its subscription to a particular notion of respectability, has aligned itself with interests that are oppositional to those of the masses and that undermine its rehabilitation project (here rehabilitation is used to refer to the process of the elite making respectable citizens out of what they perceived to be the culturally backward masses). Furthermore, because of the government-run status of the Commission there have been and continue to be instances where the logic by which it operates has clashed with the various strains of logic that have originated among the masses since independence. It is my aim to look at examples of such clashes of logic through the lens of the Jamaica Festival Song Competition.

Methodology

In order to aid in my discussion of the ways in which core values of Jamaican culture have been and continue to be contested in post-independence attempts to secure Jamaica's identity, I rely on the work of two main scholars: Deborah Thomas and Obika Gray. Thomas's *Modern Blackness* provides the working definitions of respectability, values, and progress in a Jamaican context. Gray's "Global Culture and the Politics of Moral Deregulation in Jamaica" presents his thesis that "in the case of Jamaica, even as its Westernized leaders embraced the political and ideological imperatives of the international system, counter-tendencies among the urban poor challenged the cultural logic of the inter-state system" (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno, 2006:240). I draw on Gray to provide the theoretical framework to investigate the ways in which the accommodative nature of the government has affected the work

of cultural institutions like the Festival Commission and informed debates over national identity as reflected in the Festival Song Competition.

I relied on three kinds of sources for all information on the Festival Song Competition. I piece together a brief history of the Competition from a number of articles published over the life of the Competition (1966 to the present) in the *Jamaica Gleaner*. Access to the archives was granted through an online subscription to “The Newspaper Archives of the Jamaica Gleaner” <http://gleaner.newspaperarchive.com/>. The second source is that of the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission’s archive at 3 Phoenix Avenue, Kingston 10 (Jamaica) and its “Entertainment Arts Archives,” http://www.jcdc.org.jm/entertainment_archives.htm (online access). The third source consists of interviews I conducted with The Honorable Edward Seaga (Minister of Welfare and Development 1962-1967; Minister of Finance in 1967, and Prime Minister of Jamaica 1980-1989), The Honorable P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica 1992-2006, and Sydney Bartley, Director of Culture in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture. All three of these persons fall into the category of political elite or nationalist intellectual. Their responses provided me with some insight into the underlying motivations for the government’s role in the cultural life of Jamaica and the importance of culture to the nation’s future development. Additionally, The Honorable P.J Patterson provided me with a copy of his address to the first consultation on a national cultural policy held on December 3, 1996 in Kingston, Jamaica, which I use to support my conclusions about the role of

government in the cultural life of the nation as well as that of the political elite and nationalist intellectuals towards the cultural predicament of the masses.

I also attended a symposium at the Kingston and St. Andrew Parish Library on “The Impact of Cultural Policies and Cultural Changes on Jamaica’s Development Since 1962” on August 5, 2009. Featured speakers were Professor Barry Chevannes, head of the Centre for Public Safety and Justice, University of the West Indies; Mr. Lloyd Davis, Chairman of the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission Kingston and St. Andrew Parish Committee, and Dr. The Hon Barbara Gloudon OJ, who served as Michael Manley’s cultural advisor. There were two panel discussions. The first was on *The Impact of Jamaica’s Popular Music on the World* and the presenter was Professor Carolyn Cooper, Professor of literary and Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies. The second focused on *Cultural Institutional Development since 1962*, presented by Mr. Sydney Bartley. I used the information I obtained here to inform some of the statements I made about the role of culture in aiding development in post-independent Jamaica.

Presentation of Thesis

In the first chapter, entitled *Cultural Institutions*, I examine the importance of culture to the nationalist project as well as the relationship between culture and development that has influenced the direction of the nation’s cultural policy since the establishment of the nation to the present day. I also present an explanation of the work of the Festival Commission. The work of this body is relevant because of its role in the Jamaica Festival Song Competition, which serves as the lens through

which I analyze the ways in which the core values of Jamaican culture have been and continue to be contested in post-independence attempts to secure Jamaica's national identity.

In the second chapter I provide an introduction to the Jamaica Festival and a brief history of the Jamaica Festival Song Competition. The third chapter presents an analysis of the lyrics of many of the songs entered into the Competition and addresses some of the controversies surrounding the issue of "good" lyrics. The fourth chapter, entitled *The Sounds that have come to Rule the Nation*, examines the privilege afforded to particular Jamaican genres. The fifth chapter continues the exploration of the privilege afforded to particular Jamaican genres, but focuses exclusively on dancehall. The final section is a conclusion that addresses the issue of commercialism.

Chapter 1: Cultural Institutions and their Role in Post-Independence Jamaica

The years following Jamaica's independence were characterized by a fiery energy, an energy believed to have been engendered during the ferment of the 1930s, when it is said, the nation's conscience was awakened. This energy propelled the myriad activities, conducted on both a state and local level, directed at developing the new nation. Chief among them were the reinvestment in old cultural institutions, as well as the creation of new ones. This emphasis on cultural institutions should come as no surprise, as it was long recognized by the nationalist intellectuals that culture was to play a critical role in the development of the nation, a role defined by the challenges that faced Jamaica as an ex-colony with a population largely identified as being of African descent. Writing in 1971, the Jamaican prime minister, Michael Manley, articulated what he and many others perceived to be the value of culture to the development of a society like that of Jamaica:

Post-colonial societies must accomplish two things if they are to re-establish self-confidence and re-embark upon the process of self-discovery. They must rediscover the validity of their own culture at the moment of the colonial intervention and retrace the steps that had led through history to that point. And they must establish within a frame of reality of the culture which colonialism imposed upon them so that this may loom neither larger nor smaller than it deserves and suffer from none of the distortions which can result from the ambivalence of a ruler-subject situation (Manley in Nettleford 2003:146).

Three things are key in this statement. First is the emphasis placed on the re-establishment of self-confidence on the part of post-colonial citizens in the validity of their culture up until the point of the colonial encounter; second, the importance placed on the process of self-discovery in the realization of the former; and finally,

the challenge post-colonial citizens must face of putting into context the reality of the culture which colonialism imposed on them. The rehabilitation of post-colonial citizens defined not in economic and political terms but in cultural ones. And the rehabilitation of post-colonial citizens and of their psychic memory was valued not just for their sake but also for the sake of the nation and its future development. The nationalist intellectuals saw the security of the country as linked to the economic growth of the country; economic growth as being linked to a productive citizenry, and a productive citizenry as identical with a self-assured one.

The preoccupation of the government with redeeming post-colonial citizens should not be understood as its commitment to giving post-colonial citizens free rein in determining the processes and ways in which they would reclaim their dignity. Instead, it would seem that the government had very clear expectations of how post-colonial citizens would be most effectively rehabilitated and, what is more, how the rehabilitated post-colonial citizens would behave or function within society, for the rehabilitation of post-colonial citizens would also be about incorporation into the state. Deborah Thomas (2004:66) *Modern Blackness* succinctly defines what the political elite perceived to be the values of a “good citizen,” which by the time of the nation’s independence had come to be seen as “discipline, temperance, collective work, thrift, industry, Christian living, community uplift, and respect for the leadership of the educated middle classes.” The nationalist intellectuals set about rehabilitating its citizens by establishing a cultural policy that privileged what it deemed to be exemplary instances of blackness. Deborah Thomas (Thomas 2004:66) continues her analysis, “The idea, then, was to officially give symbolic primacy to

historical events and cultural practices deemed relevant to the majority of the population, while at the same time focusing on social modernization defined through ‘middle class values’.”

The nationalist intellectuals had determined that the greatest predicament facing post-colonial citizens was that of acquiring a strong sense of self in light of the distorted memory they had of their origins, and had determined fixed means through which to undo the distortion. Because of the political elite’s power their prescriptions became the official and only legitimate ones. The official nature of the political elite’s prescriptions meant that the agency of Jamaica’s post-colonial citizens was limited. That is, the agency of these post-colonial citizens if enacted in ways which ran counter to the dominant program were almost always seen as oppositional and met with a certain sort of suspicion. What is also interesting to note is that the nationalist intellectuals deemed themselves the most suitable to direct such a rehabilitation project, as if they had been immune to the distortions of colonialism, when the truth of the matter was that they too, had been perverted by its logic.

The selected elements were then promoted by particular cultural institutions, many of which pre-date independence. For example, the Institute of Jamaica, whose purpose was defined as the “encouragement of art, literature, science and history,” was established in 1879 by a colonial governor, Neville Dawes (Governor Neville Dawes in Nettleford 2003:83). The art, literature, science and history promoted by the Institute was that of the ruling British, and this institution, along with other pre-independence institutions, such as the Jamaica Broadcasting Commission and the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission, all operated according to the value systems of a

power in whose interest it was to denigrate post-colonial citizens' culture, while elevating its own to unquestionable universality (culture being used here in the anthropological sense to refer to a people's way of life). This charge was not only leveled against pre-independence institutions, but also against post-independence ones like the School of Music started by Vera Moodie in 1962. The school subscribed so ardently to the prescriptions of a European artistic aesthetic that its work was completely isolated from the vibrant developments on the local music scene. Rex Nettleford (2003: 85) speaks of attempts to rescue the school from obscurity through the establishment of the Jamaica Folk Research Unit and the Jamaica Folk Singers. But even such attempts bore little fruit as the dialogue which had been hoped to exist between the two groups was minimal.

In short, the cultural institutions charged with the work of repairing the psychological and spiritual harm endured by the Jamaican people as a result of years of subordination were themselves crippled by colonialism's legacy, i.e., a perverse logic that elevated all things European and forced underground things African while simultaneously calling into question indigenous products born of the two. Yet, it was these institutions that were responsible for lending legitimacy to many of those who would go on to be recognized as "experts" in the field of culture (where culture refers to art, music, literature and related intellectual activities).

In 1963, Edward Seaga, the Minister of Welfare and Development presented a five year plan on behalf of the Jamaica Labour Party. The plan included an aggressive cultural policy whose agenda it was to "democratize participation in the plastic and performing arts". "The thrust was a conscious and vigorous promotion of the popular

and traditional arts. The recording industry was mobilized in the service of the former while the co-ordination of existing parish and village festivals into a national festival (Jamaica Festival Commission) was designed to serve the latter” (Nettleford 2003).

Chapter 2: The work of the Jamaican Festival Commission and Jamaica Festival

There has never been a Festival in Jamaica like the 1962 event, when, like a child receiving an unfamiliar yet exciting toy, the nation celebrated its transition from Colonial rule to Independence. Flag-raising ceremonies replacing the Union Jack with the new green, black and gold standard were climaxed by the reciting of the National Pledge, the singing of the National Anthem (Kitchin 1978:10)

The nation's celebration of its independence was such a tremendous success that it was decided that an annual celebration should be arranged to commemorate the event. The following year, 1963, Seaga, as the Minister of Welfare and Development (formerly the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission), saw to the establishment of the Festival Office which was, from that moment on, responsible for planning and executing the event. The island was divided into Festival zones, each of which had its own Festival committee charged with encouraging entries in dance, music, speech and the culinary arts (Tortello 2002). In the sixth year of Festival, 1968, Edward Seaga presented a bill in the House of Representatives that sought to institutionalize and formalize the Festival proceedings by creating a statutory body—the Festival Commission—to organize them. The bill was passed unanimously. The Commission would undergo another change in 1980 when it was renamed the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission.

Seaga, in his presentation to the House of Representatives of the bill proposing the establishment of the Jamaica Festival Commission, spoke of what he perceived to be the importance of Festival. According to him, the purpose of Festival was five-fold:

1. To mobilize the spirit of the people by focusing all the festivities and joyous celebrations at Independence time. This he felt was important because “unlike other countries where the sheer achievement of independence was itself an occasion for joyous celebration, marked by a specific day, Jamaica’s independence was achieved gradually and a convenient day near to Emancipation Day was chosen (the first Monday in August) to mark Independence” (Seaga in Tortello 2002: A2).
2. To showcase the creative and performing arts in an attempt to draw attention “not only on Independence but also upon an awareness of ‘our own cultural roots,’” something that became of increasing importance after Independence and during the period of decolonization (Seaga in Statutory Commission to Run Future Festivals, 1967).
3. To widen the opportunity for training and participation throughout the island.
4. To mix racial and cultural heritage in order to embody the motto of “Out of Many, One People.”
5. To create feelings associated with Christmas in mid-year, diverting attention momentarily from the “heavier pursuits of nation-building.”

Olive Lewin (Beale 2010), a woman “who has dedicated herself to the research, promotion and preservation of the rich, traditional folk music of Jamaica...[and who] pioneered the beginnings of the Jamaican folk singers, the Jamaica Orchestra for youth and has served as director of Arts and culture in the office of the Prime Minister,” saw the value of Festival as being connected to its ability to right the wrongs produced by the absence of an easily accessible and

complete record of Jamaican culture and history. In a *Gleaner* article published on October 09, 1978, she writes of the disadvantage of a people who have not had the benefit of the legitimacy enjoyed those who have institutionalized the production of their cultures. She writes, “although lack of devices for institutionalizing, studying and fostering a society’s traditions in fact has little or nothing to do with the intrinsic worth of these traditions, in today’s world of broadcasting systems, in addition to large quantities of recorded and printed material, any such lack undoubtedly puts that society at a disadvantage” (Lewin in *The Daily Gleaner* 1978:6). The Festival Commission, with its commitment to preserving and promoting the traditional arts, has essentially institutionalized the production and reproduction of many elements of Jamaican culture while employing the most readily available technologies to record its cultural work, in effect creating a resource of reference materials accessible to the entire Jamaican public.

Hugh Nash, another key figure in the Festival Movement, who served as the appointed director of Jamaica Festival several times (1964-1967, 1969, 1974-1977 and 1981-1983), mentioned what he considered to be a prime advantage of the Jamaica Festival, that of its ability to stimulate summer travel to the country by expatriates and tourists (Tortello 2002: A2).

The general public also has had many opportunities to articulate the significance Jamaica Festival holds for them, many of them using the newspaper as an outlet. The majority spoke of Festival as essential to providing Jamaicans with a sense of unity, self, and self-reliance.

People's Views

The Jamaican Independence Festival is nothing like Carnival in Trinidad, or an Eisteddfod in Wales. But it is the one thing out of our immediate past five years that has truly tried to make our people, out of many one, and this is attested to by the wide cross-section of people who are willing and eager to join the preparation bandwagon each time Festival comes around.

If I should choose the single outstanding achievement in our five years of Independence I would choose Jamaican Festival, which is to be celebrated for the fifth time tomorrow. It is the one single achievement which can be said to stand outside politics, outside of race (except for the Miss Jamaica Beauty Contest), outside of snobbery (again outside of the Miss Jamaica Beauty Contest) and outside of all the conflicting ideologies which have plagued the political life of Jamaica, since time immemorial.

It stands supreme amongst all the...achievements of these past five years, because for the first time Jamaicans are able to identify themselves individually and nationally with one event. The Jamaica Festival has built more bridges between people than all the political isms and campaigns have yet produced.

(Anonymous a in *Sunday Gleaner* 1967:10-12)

The whole range of festival activity embraces all the nation. Bandwagons of fun and merriment roll through the villages and townships still stuck on the mento or quadrille and where change has idled the rhumba box the sound system will make music. Effigies, costume queens, and colourful floats will parade the streets between the cheers of thousands...Its Ba Ba Boom time of street dancing and stage concerts, the time of the coronation of a queen—a pause for light moments in the heavier pursuits of making a nation for a people.

(Anonymous b in *Sunday Gleaner* 1967:10)

In an article published in the *Sunday Gleaner* on June 14, 2009 entitled “Festival and its relevance in modern Jamaica—Jamaica Celebrates Building Our Nation, Our Family, Our Home,” several representatives of the public locate the importance of Festival as essential to the preservation of Jamaican culture and to the enculturation of a population traveling farther and farther away from its roots. Jenny Small, a popular television and radio personality, is quoted as saying that “If there is

ever a time when festival is relevant, it is now. We are getting so far away from our roots and morals. Festival celebrates the better side of Jamaica. Now, there is so much distress and fear.”

In spite of the positive evaluation of Jamaica Festival and its potential spoken of here, not all features of Jamaica Festival were received favorably or received steady endorsement from the public or its organizers. For example, the Miss Jamaica Contest and the Festival Song Competition (the latter was introduced to Festival in 1966), both of which were said to render winners that did not accurately reflect the Jamaican public. The selection process for both competitions often sparked debate among Jamaicans about what it meant to be a Jamaican and what that ought to have looked and sounded like. In the history of Jamaica Festival and the Jamaica Festival Commission there have been many instances where it became necessary for motives to be examined. It is my position that the Festival Commission, because of its connection to the government of Jamaica, its reliance on private investments, and its subscription to middle-class values, has aligned itself with interests that run counter to those of the masses and undermine its rehabilitation project. The prime interests of both the government of Jamaica and private investors were and continue to be to construct, promote, and preserve the image of a peaceful Jamaica so as to maintain a level of respectability that would cater to the expectations of an international community and lead to economic investment in the island. Here respectability is defined as the assumption of values of the political elite, i.e. middle-class values. I argue that because of the Commission’s association with the interest groups it has had to operate in a way that runs contrary to the people it tries to serve and incorporate

into its activities. Furthermore, because of such an association there have been and continue to be instances where the logic by which the Commission operates has clashed with the various strains of logic which have originated among the masses since Independence. It is my aim to look at examples of such clashes of logic through the lens of the Jamaica Festival Song Competition.

The Jamaica Festival Song Competition

The Jamaica Festival Song Competition began in 1966 as an initiative of the Minister of Welfare, Culture and Development Edward Seaga to aid in the development of Jamaica's popular music. The official announcement was made on Wednesday, March 23, 1966, when he invited Jamaica's professional artists and composers to write a song for the Jamaica Festival. In an article meant to promote the new Competition the Minister said, "the competition would affect not only the Jamaica Festival but would offer prospects of better promotion to composers and singers as the song chosen would be used on all occasions in connection with the Festival." He continued by expressing the desire that the competition become an annual event. A committee was to be established to select the best eight to ten compositions, all of which would be performed at different venues in different parts of the island (Seaga in JJ.S, April 16 1967:1).

The winning song was to be chosen by audience vote during the latter part of June so as to give the winning song enough time to gain a following among the public. Seaga stressed another important feature of the competition: the Festival Song winner "would be played by all musical units in the street dances and other festival

activities and the same song would be sung by marchers and onlookers. This it [was] hoped would help to further foster the Festival spirit.” A prize of £600 was promised to the winner by the private sponsors, Desnoes and Geddes. The Festival Commission was to assume all responsibilities for the recording and promotion of the songs entered. The thematic content of the songs was not severely restricted; the songs entered could be written about any topic pertinent to Jamaican society (Seaga in JJ.S, April 16 1967:1). There were no specifications either as to genre, although it was mentioned that the rhythms (the factor distinguishing genres in Jamaican popular music) should be suitable for marching, with mento, rhythm and blues, and ska preferred.

Seaga’s wish that the competition might be an annual event came true, with the competition undergoing several changes over the years in response to the exigencies of the times. Chief among such changes were the constant name changes: The Jamaica Festival Song Competition in 1966; Jamaica Song Festival in 1978; Jamaica Popular Song Competition in 1990; and finally back to the Jamaica Festival Song Competition in 2008. Each name change corresponded with the organizer’s attempts to revamp the image of the Competition in order to accrue benefits. For example, attempts were made to erase the negative associations the public and industry members had of the Festival Song Competition by eliminating the word “Festival”. Some of the negative perceptions about the Competition were that the songs it produced were inferior to those of local recording artists; the Competition served as a promoter’s contest instead of a song contest, and the selection process was non-transparent (Fairweather 1973). Other changes resulted in the restructuring of the

Competition through the substitution and addition of particular elements. For example, in 1973 the Composer's Prize, and the categories of Best Singer and Performer, and a new selection system were introduced (Anonymous c in the *Daily Gleaner* 1978:1). In spite of the many changes to the Competition, the constants have been its government and private patronage. From the time of its conception, The Festival Commission has been housed by many different ministries, starting with the Ministry of Welfare, Culture and Development and most recently with the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports. The Competition's association with private interests stems from their role in providing prizes for the winners. Over the years such sponsors have included Desnoes and Geddes, Lannamans, and Guinness JA, LTD.

Another constant has been the Competition's commitment to the development and promotion of Jamaica's popular music, and its history has essentially encompassed all the major phases in the development of Jamaica's popular music: ska in the early 1960s; rocksteady from late 1966 to late 1968; early reggae from 1969 to about 1983; roots reggae from 1975 to 1983; and dancehall from 1983 to present (Chang and Chen, 1998: X). The Competition was introduced shortly after ska had solidified its place as the first indigenous popular music of the nation in the early to mid-1960s and produced what is widely considered the first international music success to be wholly associated with Jamaica: Millie Small's ska rendition of Barbie Gay's R&B hit "My Boy Lollipop." Edward Seaga had been intimately involved with the first attempts to capitalize on the 15 minutes afforded to Millie Small's efforts. "Ken Khouri, Paul Marshall, a New York lawyer, Ahmed Ertegun, president of Atlantic Records, met at Federal Records and decided to send a

promotional group to participate in the 1964 New York World's Fair," the year in which Small achieved her success (Chang and Chen, 1998:36). Seaga's efforts had been unsuccessful but he remained convinced of the potential to market Jamaica's music abroad, and so the Competition's commitment to the development of Jamaica's popular music should be seen as connected to an expressed desire on the part of its organizers to market Jamaica's popular music abroad. One of the justifications for the continuation of the Competition has been that by providing the necessary training ground for Jamaica's popular artists it would be able to produce artists adhering to standards associated with excellence in foreign music markets, i.e. the United States and Europe (Laing 1976:10). The success of these artists, it was hoped, would trickle down to provide benefits to the nation's economy and image.

Another intended purpose of the Competition has to do more with the psychological advantages music was perceived to confer on a people. In his official announcement of the Competition Seaga said, with reference to the winning song, "it was hoped to further Festival Spirit" (Seaga in JJ.S, April 16 1967:1).

It would appear that this is the purpose with which most of the audience, as well as the numerous persons organizing the event associate the Competition. This fact is perhaps made possible because of the struggles the Competition has had maintaining currency and in producing songs the public deems comparable to those produced by the local music industry outside of the state's grasp. In other words, because the Competition did not render songs which were, for the most part, commercially viable, the public did not come to identify the Competition's purpose with producing commercially viable music. When I asked Sydney Bartley, the

Director of Culture in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, how he perceived the role of the Festival Song Competition, his response was that the songs entered (and ultimately the song chosen as the winner) should reflect and carry the spirit of independence. This spirit he had previously described as one of unity, togetherness, and anticipation of great possibilities (Sydney Bartley interview: May 10, 2009).

I suggest that the Competition was and continues to be connected to four of the five goals of Jamaica Festival: mobilization of the people by focusing their attention on the festivities and joyous celebrations occurring at Independence time; showcasing the creative and performing arts in an attempt to draw attention to independence and Jamaica's cultural roots; widening of opportunity for training and participation throughout the island; and creation of feelings associated with Christmas in mid-year, and diverting attention momentarily from what Seaga called (as noted on page 24) the "heavier pursuits of nation-building." Although the official invitation to artists and composers to submit songs to the Competition did not dictate a theme, as the years went by a clear preference on the part of the judges for songs whose thematic content pertained to actual Festival activities and Independence was revealed. Increasingly the song entries functioned to draw attention to Jamaica Festival. For instance, in 1971, the organizers met with the artists and promoters "with a view to structuring the tunes to reflect the nature and spirit of independence" (Contributor in *The Daily Gleaner* 1971:6). As for the mobilization of the people, the Competition facilitated public participation towards a common end, that of creating Christmas in mid-year and positive associations with independence. It showcased the performing arts, and the stipulation that all entries should be in Jamaican popular

rhythms also allowed for ideal representations of Jamaica's culture. The integration of training seminars into the Competition's structure facilitated the widening of opportunity for training and participation.

Government, Private Interests and the Imperatives of the Inter-State System

The dual purposes of the competition—developing and then promoting Jamaica's popular music abroad, and producing a song that would embody the spirit of Festival and Independence—are both connected by the advantage of promoting and preserving an image of a peaceful Jamaica. The Competition's focus on the development of music prior to its promotion reveals that there existed, and continues to exist, some uncertainties and preoccupations about music being independently produced on the local music scene. I believe that the problems the organizers have had with Jamaica's popular music are connected to the Competition's relationship with the government and private interests. I also hold that the critique leveled by the Competition's organizers against the songs entered reveal interests at odds with the concerns of the originators of Jamaica's popular music. The government and the private interests associated with the Competition have sought to promote an image of a peaceful Jamaica; thus external imperatives have played a major role in the management of the Competition. For the government, the imperatives derive from its position in the inter-state system, while private interests benefit from the government's favorable reception in the inter-state system, (the international community of nation-states). Furthermore, because the imperatives are external to the Jamaican context and informed by politics of negation relative to populations like Jamaica's, they are

harmful (here politics of negation refer to the process by which concepts of identity are formed in opposition to the characteristics of the other).

In “Global Culture and the Politics of Moral Deregulation in Jamaica,” Obika Gray presents his thesis that “in the case of Jamaica, even as its Westernized leaders embraced the political and ideological imperatives of the international system, counter-tendencies among the urban poor challenged the cultural logic of the inter-state system” (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno 2006:240). Here Gray draws the line between Jamaica’s political elite and the urban poor, who, he argues, operate according to a different cultural logic than the one subscribed to by the state. The identification of the urban poor as the group among which counter-tendencies towards the state emerge is essential to my thesis that the cultural logic by which the Festival Song Competition operated ran counter to the emergence of an alternative logic among certain segments of the population. These segments of the population would have necessarily been involved in the Competition because of their unquestionable role in Jamaica’s popular music. In spite of all the changes to the Competition over the years, the primary focus remained that of developing Jamaica’s popular music, and this popular music was created by the many Jamaicans who inhabited and continue to inhabit the impoverished “urbanscape” of West Kingston’s ghettos, i.e., the urban poor.

After Jamaica gained independence its political elite busied itself with mobilizing the population in its efforts to have the country recognized as an equal in the inter-state system. It set about adopting the prescriptions of the inter-state system, prescriptions which were deceptively portrayed as universal. According to Gray, the

elite embraced the idea that only civilized nations were granted access to the inter-state community. The definition of a “civilized” nation did not fit the non-white nations that had recently achieved their independence:

For the nationalist big men nation building had to proceed on the basis of contrary principles, namely, deference to world-level cultural scripts of European provenance. These principles valorized European whiteness as the embodiment of a civilized identity. Recognition of this allegiance to world-level racism does much to explain the peculiarity of nationalists’ exaggerated emphasis on black Jamaican’s adherence to proper manners, good behavior and genteel etiquette. Such preoccupations were in sharp contrast to other tropes of nationalist progress that invoked contrary cultural aesthetic linked to a people’s martial struggle against colonial domination (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno 2006:244).

While it has been duly noted by many scholars on post-colonial society, such as Rex Nettleford, and Carl Stone, that the ruling elites have been crippled by their acceptance of standards that consistently defined excellence in terms that required that they negate themselves, it is also true that even where there might have existed a culturally conscious elite, the dilemma was to be found in an inherited structural dependence. “Their real dilemma was in failing to understand how much the colonizer’s “parting gift” of juridical state sovereignty would be wholly subject to structural dependence on the world economy and submission to the institutional compulsions of the inter-state system” (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno, 2006:245). Nationalists rarely challenged the defining principles of the inter-state system, choosing to accommodate themselves to it in order to reap its rewards. Among the scripts to which Jamaica accommodated itself were:

national development and industrialization through economic aid and investment from the central capitalist countries; acceptance of juridical sovereignty in an interstate system of militarily and economically unequal

states; and acceptance (with appropriate gestures to a valorized national culture) of an inferior ethnicized and gendered status within the hierarchy. Inside the Jamaican post-colony, this meant the policing of the black and poor population according to these world-level prescriptions. Such prescriptions were governed by world-level liberalism and its cultural correlative, white supremacy (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno 2006:245).

The desire on the part of “nationalist big men” to be respected and gain acceptance in the inter-state system was tied to practical considerations. Jamaica is a small island-nation and it shares with other small states a peculiar sort of vulnerability because of its limited human resources and multiple factors impacting its already small economy. Among the characteristics of small states that Jamaica shares are its undiversified economic structure and inability to adopt economies of scale; a small domestic market; difficulty in penetrating foreign markets; absence of a favorable industrial environment; lack of an indigenous technological base; the relative openness of its economy; the high per capita cost of installing and maintaining infrastructure; the high cost of public service activities and public administration, whose payment often requires external grants; inability to service commercial loans; and dependence on official flows and concessional resources to fund crucial infrastructure(Commonwealth Consultative Group, 1985: 17-21).

All of these characteristics render states like Jamaica dependent on international bodies. It is easy to imagine how even the most well-intentioned among the political elite may see advantages in conforming to the prescriptions of the dominant institutions and nations of the inter-state system. The decision to be included may be seen to amount to a decision aimed at ensuring survival and a crucial part of ensuring survival was dependent on, among other things, maintaining the

peace. When tourism became import to Jamaica's attempt to diversify its economy and improve its economic condition, maintaining social order came to be seen as a priority. By the seventies, investing in the tourism industry had become Jamaica's number one strategy: a strategy which necessarily forced Jamaica into the image business. Carl Stone expresses the predicament thus:

Societies which have experienced long periods of colonial rule, as is the case with Jamaica, tend to carry forward into the post-independence period historical, institutional and structural features of the colonial experience. This tendency is reinforced because economic dependence continues in the period of political independence (Carl Stone, 1973:49).

In my opinion, after taking into consideration, the government's position in relation to the inter-state system and its related imperatives it becomes more apparent that it would not have been sufficient for the government-run Competition to promote just anything the nation's popular musicians produced. It had to aim at promoting the best representative of itself or the self it aspired to present to a community of other nations: a community within which it was a new member and whose standards and cultural preoccupations had been determined outside of it as well as in opposition to it and other nations of its kind. Music, like a nation's anthem and motto, may serve as a symbol of a nation, either as it is or as it aspires to be and when what a nation aspires to be, is determined to a great extent by external considerations, those considerations will also impact on its symbols. Symbols are always problematic, but further complications arise when the symbol is music or anything whose form is multifaceted. Tensions are bound to arise when the creators are at odds with those who, being outside of the community of creators, seek to impose meaning on it. Such a scenario is further complicated when there is a discrepancy of power and status

between the groups labeled 'creators' and those assigning meaning and when these groups out of necessity begin to operate according to conflicting logics.

The Urban Poor and the Production of an Alternative Cultural Logic

Jamaica's urban poor live in a state of physical and cultural exclusion. The physical segregation suffered by the poor isolates them in an area where there is a lack of basic amenities and infrastructure. The dearth of material resources in these communities determines the kinds of social patterns that evolve. The distinctions between the cultural logic adhered to by the political elite, the business classes and the urban poor may be partly attributed to discrepancies in material resources. Gray argues that the physical isolation experienced by this group and the deprivation they suffered resulted in the assumption of postures which stood in opposition to those seen as respectable by the political elite.

On the one hand, the ecology of these neighbourhoods, with their narrow lanes, exposed dwellings, overcrowded tenement yards and cheek-by-jowl living invited conflicts and hostilities between residents. At the same time, these circumstances generated forms of mutuality and self-help... In the context of Jamaica's highly charged socio-political relations, with its mobilization of the poor by means of racial, class and social-justice ideologies, the physical circumstances of life in the ghetto intensified residents' latent moral sentiments...The development of an alienated moral culture was one consequence of the crowded, close-quarters life the poor were forced to accept. Living in these circumstances in urban Kingston condemned the poor to a peculiar condition of ghetto residency: the subjection of their persons to constant exposure, unyielding spectacle and public display. This intensely public nature of daily life in the ghetto caused slum dwellers to adopt protective poses. These poses allowed the poor to assume militant identities they hoped would ward off shame and protect their dignity (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno, 2006:255).

In spite of the economic homogeneity of the neighborhoods where the urban poor dwell and the lack of basic resources, there are multiple streams of influence that shape the cultural life of these spaces so as to render persons of multiple sensibilities. Among these multiple sensibilities three are of great importance: the back-to-Africa orientation, the legacy of European imperialism, and the new wave of American imperialism that soon replaced it. The first manifested itself mostly among the first generation of urban poor (the rural dwellers who migrated to the city in the late fifties and early sixties in search of better opportunities), it took the form of racialized counter-dominant ideological consciousness exemplified in the Rastafarian movement. Given Jamaica's history as a colony, the existence of the second sensibility among the urban poor is not surprising: centuries of colonial experience remained active in post-independent citizens' consciousness, permeating their thinking on everything from political ideology to food to personal etiquette. This influence can be seen in preoccupations with good manners, proper speech, and comportment (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno, 2006:248-249).

The third influence resulted from the rise of the United States to global dominance in the postwar period. By the 1960s it had replaced Britain as Jamaica's major trading partner and had begun to invest heavily in the island-nation's tourism, mining and banking. An open economic policy facilitated the importation of all manner of American manufactures into the island, e.g. cars, food and luxury items. Along with an increase in American manufactures was an increase in the dominance of its global authority and world view. The increased acceptance of the latter facilitated the increased consumption of the former. Then there was the dissemination

of American culture via print, film, radio and its popular music. “These rival compulsions... divorced them [the urban poor] from official society and isolated them from the compulsions of state politics. Competing allegiances inclined the poor to search for and build social and cultural empowerment zones in which they exercised alternative forms of black mastery” (Obika Gray in Henke and Reno, 2006:254).

Chief among such displays of black mastery were musical and oratorical skills. Standards that determined mastery were set within the community by peers, with little regard for approval from “above,” i.e. the dominant classes (here “standards of mastery” refers to the characteristics and competences required in order that one may attain a level of excellence in any particular field). The autonomy afforded the urban poor through their isolation resulted in a creativity that produced ska, rocksteady, reggae and dancehall—a culture secure in its assumptions and divorced from the preoccupations of the dominant culture. The relative autonomy (moral, creative and otherwise) that characterized the culture of the urban poor explains, in part, the conflict that has occurred during the government-run Jamaica Festival Song Competition. The organizers sought to promote popular music in a way that would ‘brand’ Jamaica for export and acceptance on the international stage. In the following sections I will provide examples of clashes in the distinct cultural logics adhered to by the creators of Jamaica’s popular music and those who sought to impose meaning on them. The clashes fall into three categories: clashes over aesthetics, government involvement, and commercialism.

Chapter 3: Lyrical Analysis of Festival Songs

Over the life of the Festival Song Competition, much controversy has surrounded the songs entered for consideration by the Festival Commission. The basis of such controversy was often the differences in the aesthetic preferences of the Commission and those entering the Competition. The Commission, committed to the ideals upheld by Jamaica's political elite, subscribed to aesthetics at odds with those of the popular musicians. The aesthetic preferences of the organizers of the Festival Song Competition, though never explicitly expressed, may be discerned through an analysis of the songs which have found favor with the Commission over the forty-four years of the Competition's existence and the songs that have been excluded. When I speak of referencing the songs which were excluded I do not mean to look only at the songs that were entered and rejected. I believe that the Competition's stated purpose of serving as a indication of the progress of Jamaican popular music makes it fair for my analysis to take into consideration popular songs produced independently of the Commission as a means of determining/explaining the Commission's definition of "good music". Disagreements over aesthetics most often manifested themselves in debates over lyrics, and genre.

When one takes a look at the controversies that have attended the Competition none loom larger than those over the lyrics of the songs entered. While an analysis of the winning lyrics reveals the preferences of the organizers, an investigation of the debates about the lyrics allows one to deduce a number of things about the segment of the public that supported the Competition, i.e., the obligations they perceived the organizers to have to the Jamaican people and the role they felt music played in the

life of the nation. The segment of the public that supported the Competition was heterogeneous; some supporters obviously adhered to the same logic as the Competition's organizers for whom lyrics came to define a good song, while others, were more in line with the local music scene where lyrics, though important, were not the determining factor of a good song. Complaints lodged by organizers and supporters of the Competition were, that some lyrics didn't relate to festival and were nonsensical; some lyrics don't have any relevance to Jamaican life; some lyrics reflect poorly on the Jamaican people.

Why were and do lyrics continue to be so important? I believe the answer lies in the obvious—their readability. When I say readability, I refer to the ability of a listener to discern, to some extent, the meaning of a particular song and possibly the intention behind the creation of the song. Additionally, language—how one uses it—is sometimes referenced as evidence of the author's thinking and author's thinking as evidence of author's nature. Furthermore language use can help to construct images, in the minds of those with whom one communicates, of the things one thinks, sees, hears and believes. Within a context where it is imagined that the music of a nation may be exported as one of its primary representatives, matters of intent become increasingly important especially when there exists a discrepancy in power, that gives an advantage to the interpreters of cultural products. In such a context the exporter becomes preoccupied with erasing complexities, in order to increase the likelihood that the interpretations of the advantageous receiver may be in concert with the way it hopes to be perceived. In Jamaica and with specific reference to the Competition, the exporter is the Government of Jamaica by way of the Festival Commission and the

Competition's organizers and the receivers are the international community as well as, the national population. Because language is vested with such significance for communication, it seems reasonable that such weight may be placed on the lyrics of a song and that through the analysis of songs' lyrics that we may gauge, the sentiments of a people.

In the earlier years of the Competition, when the selection of the winning Festival Song was completely in the hands of the public, it would have been fair to say that the selections reflected the likes of at least the Competition's supporters. As the Competition grew older, the public's input of the public was limited. The winning song was selected by the organizers, and the people's views were gauged by a poll conducted by the sociologist and pollster Carl Stone. The selections for this later period can thus be said to be more reflective of the tastes of the organizers. A look at the chart-toppers for the life-span of the Competition can be said to be more reflective of the tastes of the Jamaican public at large. The list of winning songs over the Competition's life-span reveals four periods: the first from 1966 to 1977, was marked by light, festive, apolitical songs whose themes were Festival, love, music and merriment; the second from 1977 to 1989, was marked by songs that affirmed Jamaicaness; the third period from 1990 to 2000, was marked by songs that expressed named the nation's problems and offered up prescriptions; the fourth period, 2000 to the present, is characterized by songs promoting progress, with a distinct nostalgia for the "good ole' days."

I determined the four periods highlighted above by listening to the all the Competition's winning songs, and analyzing their lyrics in order to identify any

trends. The recordings I accessed via the JCDC online Entertainment Arts Archive, YouTube videos, and *Tougher than Tough: The Story of Jamaican Music*. The lyrics analyzed in this section are either my own transcriptions or retrieved from the *Gleaner* archive online. The interpretations of the lyrics are informed by my fluency in Jamaica Talk or Patois and in the connotations surrounding Jamaican colloquialisms. All analyses of the lyrics are my own.

Period 1 (1966-1977)

Period one was defined by songs whose themes focused on love, festival, music, and merriment, as may be seen from the gaiety of the song titles. The following table containing the winning songs for the period:

Year	Song Title	Singer	Writer
1966	Bam Bam	Toots Hibbert	The Maytals
1967	Baba Boom Boom	Norris Weir	Jamaicans
1968	Intensified	Desmond Decker	Desmond Decker
1969	Sweet and Dandy	Toots Hibbert	The Maytals
1970	Boom Shaka Laka	Hopeton Lewis	Hopeton Lewis
1971	Cherry Oh Baby	Eric Donaldson	Eric Donaldson
1972	Pomps and Pride	Toots Hibbert	The Maytals
1973	Jump in the Line	Morvin Brooks	Morvin Brooks
1974	Play Di Music	Tinga Stewart	Ernie Smith
1975	Hooray Festival	Roman Stewart	Tinga Stewart
1976	Dance Dis Yah Festival	Freddie McKay	Orville Samuel

Table 1: Song winners for the years 1966 through 1976

<http://www.jcdc.org.jm/PopularSong/winners.htm>

The gaiety of the Competition’s song profile during these ten years was insured by the increasing authority of the organizers to determine the winning song and the censorship of the media channels, on which the organizers relied for the promotion of the winning songs, by the government. Below are two examples that highlight these factors. The first refers to the entry of Joe Higgs’ and Peter Tosh’s “Stepping Razor”

into the 1967 Competition while the second refers to the controversy that erupted over the entry of the Junior Byles tune “Rub Up Festival.”

The year 1967 marked Jamaica’s fifth year of independence, when all the Festival activities were to be bigger and better. The Festival Song that ushered in the Festival Five celebrations was the Jamaicans’ “Baba Boom Time,” a rocksteady tune whose lyrics were celebratory and completely focused on the festival season. Tommy Cowan sings,

Lyrics example 1

Everybody get ready
It’s time to rocksteady
It’s ba ba boom time, yes it is
Don’t lose your beat now
Just dip your head now
It’s festival five listen here
You hear the people sing
(Boom boom, ba ba boom boom /Boom festival, boom boom /Festival boom boom/ba ba boom) x3

If one were to identify the lyrics as the only criterion for gauging the relevance of the song to the Jamaican popular music scene and to the lives of Jamaicans, one might be tempted to say that Festival Five’s winning song was out of touch, even trite. But the character of Jamaican music at home and abroad has never been restricted to the lyrics. The manipulation of rhythms has played an even greater role, and it is in this sense that the song maintained some relevance to the period. Yet, when one juxtaposes the gaiety of the lyrics to the reality of the crisis that threatened the nation’s stability in the late sixties, sharp contradictions appear.

In 1966 the Jamaica Labour Party pressed forward with the industrial development plan it had initiated three years earlier. This development plan called for the addition of another port facility, the creation of an industrial complex for small

manufacturers, and the expansion of the Tivoli Gardens housing project; all these undertakings omitted any provisions for resettling the slum dwellers. “Beginning in mid-February and culminating in summer 1966, the JLP sent bulldozers and a one-hundred man riot squad to remove squatters...As this initial removal effort progressed, clashes between rival gangs and the police escalated. At the same time, party rivalry seeped into the conflict, as the PNP tried...to enter the area to mobilize the residents “(Gray, 1991: 119-120). By June, the resident Rude Boys saw opportunities to gain new power as the political parties employed them to maintain the peace. Rude Boys being a sector of the urban unemployed population in the early 1960s and

attracted to Rastas’ political dissidence and notions of black emancipation but turned off by their discipline, asceticism, and metaphysics, rudies drew haphazardly from Rasta ideology in order to celebrate and affirm the legitimacy of what sociologist Obika Gray has called ‘the moralities of ghetto culture’—political cynicism, aspirations for a better life, the celebration of instinctual needs, and in-group camaraderie, as well as the cultivation of a fearsome, violent personality (Gray 1991:75). As a result, their pride in blackness, their rejection of the status quo, and their claims for social justice competed with an antisocial temper that was also influenced by cowboy movies imported from the United States and shown almost exclusively in working class communities (Thomas 2004: 72-73).

The role of the gangster as enforcer had been legitimized and given a central role in national politics. “What had begun as an attempt by the state to curb crime and communal violence by juvenile gangs now was converted, by the exigencies of party competition, into a domestication of this violence for political purposes” (Gray, 1991:120-121). The authority of the state was being undermined, and the undermining forces happened to be the slum-dwellers of West Kingston. Given the chaos that characterized the Jamaican society of the 1960s, it is easy to see why Edward Seaga felt it necessary to encourage Festival proceedings with the potential to

create "...Christmas in mid-year, focusing attention for the moment on things other than hard work," and, one may add the chaos that was plaguing Jamaican society. Tommy Cowan's festival jingle that captured the attention of the Jamaican public helped to generate (momentarily) the good spirit needed to create a circle of goodness within which the distressed public could attempt to forget its worries. And this circle of goodness was made possible by the stewards of the Government of Jamaica who would have done anything to preserve it, including banning the song entered by the composer Joe Higgs and singer Peter Tosh, "Stepping Razor". Joe Higgs speaking on his disqualification said "I wrote 'Stepping Razor' in 1967 for the Festival Song Competition. But it was considered a very subversive message, so it was disqualified from the top eight" (Chang and Chen 1998: 126).

Lyrics example 2 (my own transcription)

If you want to live, treat me good
 If you want to live, I beg you treat me good
 (x2) **I'm like a razor don't watch my size**
I'm dangerous, I'm dangerous

If you are a bully, bully, I beg you treat me good
 I'm like a razor don't watch my size
 I'm dangerous

If you are chucky, nobodah chuck from me
 If you are a chucky, nobodah chuck it from me
 I'm like a razor don't watch my size
 I'm dangerous, I'm dangerous

If you eat asphalt, you better treat me good
 If you drink lead soup, you better treat me good
 (X2) I'm like a stepping razor, don't watch my size
 I'm dangerous

If you are a bull bucker, nobodah back pon me
 If you a duppy, move away from me
 (x2) I'm like a razor don't watch my size
 I'm dangerous, I'm dangerous
 If you want to live, treat me good
 Warning you!

If you want to live, you better treat me good
I'm like a stepping, walking, cutting,
Chuckling, bucking, I'm dangerous

If your drink malta, treat me good
I'm like a flashing lightning and a rolling thunder
I'm dangerous
I'm like a stepping razor don't watch my size
I'm dangerous

Just cool yuh nuh
Have a man come put him mouth round
Which part him draws deh
And tink she him a go
Chuck through the earth
But it is not suh it go dis day
Just smile and mek yuh face
Stop hurt yuh man
Treat me good

If you want to live, you better treat me good
Because mi know she bluntly
You doan go through
1/5 of di tribulation
Weh I go tru
Cuz only your name would be here to represent you

If you want to live treat me good (treat me good)
You could have drink lead soup (I'm dangerous)
You could have eat asphalt (I'm dangerous)
You could have eat bread crackers (I'm dangerous)

Look how di father cool
Look how the sun cool
But he's dangerous
No boddah play no fool
I'm dangerous

Higgs's song is similar to the 1966 winner, "Bam Bam," in that the lyrics speak of a man who will never instigate a quarrel, yet will also never be afraid to defend himself in the event that someone threatens to do him harm (physical or otherwise), although Higgs takes the description a step further by employing symbolism, imagery, and a wider array of literary devices. Higgs repeatedly poses the rhetorical question, "if you want to live," to which the most likely reply is "yes!" He

then sets pre-conditions to ensure the preservation of the life of the song's target: "If you drink malta, treat me good. If you eat asphalt treat me good." malta being the beverage of choice amongst Jamaicans, while "eat asphalt" refers to the absence of sufficient food to ensure sustenance. The message addresses all Jamaicans, irrespective of class and race. In spite of the speaker's desire to be respected by all, there is an additional emphasis on the "haves" as Tosh sings, "You doan go through 1/5 of di tribulation whe I go tru." The persona goes on to send out a warning to anyone who "tink seh him a go chuck through the earth," that "...it is not suh it go dis day." In short, anyone who thinks that they are invincible and who walks around with a sense of entitlement will soon fall. And she or he will not fall by chance. She or he will fall because of the actions of the person whose dignity has been affronted, who, like "di father" [God], while forgiving and merciful, is capable of inflicting harm. Higgs's song was no Christmas carol or festival jingle. Its message was not one which the government of Alexander Bustamante wanted playing over and over in the minds of Jamaicans, especially at a time when the masses were publicly articulating their grievances. As was revealed in the letters to editor published in the *Sunday Gleaner* on August 6, 1967, many had begun to question the value of independence. Many even suggested that Jamaica would have been better off under colonial rule, while others complained about the high cost of living.

The most noticeable change in Jamaica during the five years of independence has been the steady rise in the cost of living. Granted, we must all make sacrifices to pay for independence but have there been any benefits gained and if any, by whom? Certainly not by the poorer and middle classes.

-- Mrs.Zena Harvey

In the last five years as far as I can see, Jamaica has achieved little or nothing. All that has been achieved is increased brutality and victimization of an oppressed people.

–George Gillham

Within this context the insecure government, instead of applying itself to solving the problems plaguing Jamaica in the 1960s, assumed a punitive role, policing the activities of dissidents and the physical spaces they occupied, i.e., the university, West Kingston, and the recording studios. West Kingston, with its largely unemployed population, enjoyed a high level of autonomy with respect to the state. This is because work (especially in the civil service or public sector) effectively incorporates persons into the state machinery. Being employed and earning a taxable income renders one legible. West Kingston was hardly legible.

In *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica: 1962-1972*, Obika Gray distinguishes between the ways in which the “two dissimilar publics” (the upper and middle classes, and the poor) disseminate their opinions: the middle and upper classes preferred print, while the poor preferred oral communication. Given the preference of “unsocialized” persons for oral communication it is no wonder that their popular music became of interest to the government. By incorporating the country’s popular music into the state-sponsored festival proceedings, the dominant class found a way to direct the cultural development of the masses. They could gain insight into the thinking of the masses and limit the appeal, of subversive content through censorship. The most prominent popular artists (for example, Toots and the Maytals, Eric Donaldson, The Jamaicans, and Desmond Dekker) were sought after and the songs they entered and the ways in which they comported themselves vetted to comply with the rules of the Festival Commission, which reserved the right to eliminate acts

deemed unsuitable. Regardless of whether the individual artists subscribed to the political elite's program, their participation in the event aligned them with the nationalist program. Any attempts to express dissent within the context of the competition were futile, for although the rules at the start of the competition, 1966, did not explicitly forbid any themes to have a chance at winning one had to meet the expectations and values of the host institution.

While it is not unusual for celebratory songs to gain currency in times of hardship, the homogeneity in the profile of the songs for this period does not accurately represent the music scene at the time which saw, especially in the 1970s, an increase in politically conscious songs. These songs dealt with heavy subjects such as poverty, crime, corruption, repatriation and Rastafarian beliefs. This incongruence would not be striking if the Festival Commission had acknowledged that the Competition was to capture the spirit of independence, and stuck to that notion. In 1973 the Competition had been incorporated into the Popular Music Development Programme that aimed at “encouraging popular music as an art form, and at giving Jamaican popular music composers (lyrical and melodic) arranger, musicians and singers an added opportunity to launch their best works each year and to help expose them at home and abroad” (Contributor to *The Daily Gleaner* 1978:1). The organizers of the Competition had expressed their desire that it serve as a reflection of the progress of Jamaica's popular music so that the absence of defining songs of the period, like Bob Andy's 1967 hit “Got to Go Back Home”; Derrick Morgan's 1967 take on the Rude Boy phenomenon, “Tougher than Tough”; The Ehtiopians' “Everything Crash” (1968); Jimmy Cliff's “The Harder they Come” (1972), Junior

Byles' "Curly Lock" (1974), and Bob Marley's "No Woman no Cry" (1975)—becomes striking.

In the 1971 Competition the entry "Rub Up Festival" by Junior Byles was disqualified by the organizers of the Competition not because they had found problems with it, but because the media channels on which they relied for the promotion of the winning songs deemed it inappropriate. The judges actually believed the song should have been allowed to continue to the final stages; they did not agree with the Broadcasting Commission's objection to the words "feeling iry", "nice and rosey" "love up" and "rub up". Hoping to quiet the controversy, the Festival Commission requested that Mr. Byles make some amendments to the original version of the song so as to "satisfy the 'Public Morality' imperatives of the radio stations." Mr. Byles responded, "I am a writer and I have to be true. I write what I see going on. What I say in my song is a fact of the social environment. Those who see the song from a pornographic point of view probably know what is best. But as a writer I must say what is true" (Junior Byles in *The Daily Gleaner*, 1971: 18).

This case shows how the gaiety of the Competition's song profile was insured by censorship. The organizers relied on the government-regulated media channels for the promotion of the winning songs. In the post-independence period, Norman Manley, from 1952 to 1962, saw the radio as an instrument to further the cause of nationalism. "Claude Robinson, former General Manager of JBCTV (Jamaica Broadcasting Television), observes, Manley wished to harness the potential of the broadcast media to 'contribute to a new national development and offer a mirror to the society to reflect who we are'" (Claude Robinson in Gordon, 2008: 29). JBCTV

was established in 1959 alongside RJR (Radio Jamaica and Re-diffusion Group) “as a public funded, government owned and semi-commercial broadcasting service” and operated on the basis of a public service mandate. It was to function as the visual component in nation-building, while RJR would serve as the aural component. Broadcasting was put under direct control of the Ministry of Welfare, Culture and Development (the same ministry that housed the Festival Commission), and appointment of the members of the Broadcasting Commission became the responsibility of the incumbent government.

The connection between the project of nation-building and the broadcasting media is significant: the content disseminated through these media is tailored in order to facilitate what the political elite consider to be the pressing needs of the society or to repair the harm done to the society. The objections to the lyrics of “Rub Up Festival” reveal the centrality of middle-class values to the process of nation-building; “discipline, temperance, collective work, thrift, industry, Christian living, community uplift, and respect for the leadership of the educated middle classes” (Thomas, 2004: 66).

Period 2 (1977-1989)

Period two, 1977-1989, was characterized by songs whose lyrics focused on affirmations of ‘Jamaicaness.’ These songs, which bore titles like “Sweet Jamaica,” “Land of My Birth,” “Born Jamaican,” and “Proud to be Jamaican,” constructed images of Jamaica as an idyllic space and Jamaicans as faithful to their land. In these songs Jamaica’s idyllic nature is symbolized by frequent references to its

characteristics as an island—and not necessarily an island-nation. The references evoke things that Jamaican’s may claim as their inheritance but not things they may claim to have created. The ideal Jamaican is presented as one who gives allegiance to national symbols recognized by the political elite. In these songs references to negative aspects of Jamaican society are not avoided. Instead, they are included and then employed in efforts to re-define progress in terms of what Jamaica possesses—hills, plains, valleys, rivers, and beautiful women. Below is a table containing all the winning songs for this period, with the songs defining this period in bold face.

Year	Song Title	Singer	Writer
1977	Sweet Jamaica	Eric Donaldson	Winston Wallace
1978	Land of My Birth	Eric Donaldson	Winston Wallace
1979	Born Jamaican	Astronauts	Donald Wright
1980	Come Sing with Me	Alphanso Plummer	Alphanso Plummer
1981	No Wey No Betta Dan Yard	Tinga Stewart	Sangie Davis
1982	Meck Wi Jam	Astronauts	Donald Wright
1983	Jamaica, I’ll Never Leave You Again	Ras Karbi	Ras Karbi
1984	Proud to be Jamaican	Eric Donaldson	Violet McPherson
1985	Love Fever	Roy Rayon	Grub Cooper
1986	Dem A Fi Squirm	Stanley Beckford	Calvin Cameron
1987	Give Thanks and Praises	Roy Rayon	Roy Rayon
1988	Jamaica Land We Love	Singer J	Singer J

Table 2: Festival Song winners for the years 1977 through 1988

<http://www.jcdc.org.jm/PopularSong/winners.htm>

Here I will briefly analyze two of the seven songs which define this period, presenting examples from each to support my conclusions on this period. The two

songs which will be subject to my analysis are “Land of My Birth” and “Born Jamaican” (*The Daily Gleaner*, July 20 2002: A12).

Lyrics Example No. 3

Chorus

This is the land of my birth
(I say) this is the land of my birth
(I say) this is Jamaica, my Jamaica
The land of my birth

I will never leave her shores
I will never run away
I will always believe in the black,
The green, the gold, I say
All nations greater are their trails
We must face the test of time
But our people, they are strong
And we are going to get along
Though some people say we are poor
But the progress you make, my friend
Is not always how rich you are.

Chorus

Let us stop for a minute
And count our blessings one by one
We should never be disloyal
But stand up and be strong
My Jamaica is a beautiful island
It is the crown of the Caribbean Sea
And our people they are free
No oppression here to see
With the prettiest women there be
And the hills and plains
And the rivers and valleys
Always beckon to me

Chorus

In “This is the Land of My Birth,” performed by Eric Donaldson and Winston Wallace, the ideal Jamaican is one who pledges allegiance to the national symbols recognized by the establishment as well as to Jamaica as physical space. Here the symbol is that of the national flag. Donaldson sings, “I will never leave her shores/ I will never run away/ I will always believe in the black/ The green, the gold, I say...” This Jamaican recognizes the hardships being experienced by the nation, but is not discouraged by this recognition. Instead he redefines progress in terms of what Jamaica does possess: a “beautiful island,” free people, “the prettiest women,” hills, plains, rivers, and valleys. Donaldson sings, “count our blessings one by one/my Jamaica is a beautiful island. It is the crown of the Caribbean Sea/ And our people they are free/ No oppression here to see/ With the prettiest women there be, and the hills and plains and the rivers and the valleys.”

Lyrics Example No.4

I am a born Jamaican
I am a son of the soil
I love the sea, I love the sun
Lord I love this land
No matter where I go
Jamaica is my home
I love the girls, coconut water, and white rum

I hear some people say
That they're going away
But if I even leave I
Won't be going away to stay

Repeat chorus
Repeat verse 1
Repeat chorus

(I make a correction of the typo contained in the lyrics featured in the *Gleaner* article cited above, where “girl’s” was substituted for “girls.” My correction was based on my close listening of the song).

In “Born Jamaican,” performed by The Astronauts and written by Donald Wright, the tendency to equate Jamaica’s benefits with facts of nature outside of human control continues. The Astronauts sing of a Jamaican—“a son of the soil”—who declares he will never leave his land and even if he were to wander from it that it would not be for long. This “son of the soil” declares his love for his country and goes on to mention the things which substantiate his love, “...the girls, coconut water and white rum”. The tendency to reduce Jamaica to its natural landscape allows for a negation of reality through oversimplification. All that is labeled ‘beautiful’ is undeniably so. One would be hard pressed to find someone who would disagree that the natural landscape of a tropical island is beautiful. The problem is that when all that is deemed beautiful is attributed to some unseen hand or thousands of years of geological activity, the work of a people (and the people themselves, a work in progress) in the creating a place their own—a complex work—is not considered. The focus on natural beauty avoids the possibility of highlighting complexities which may cause one’s mind to wander into deep considerations of the causes for such complexities—some of which will undoubtedly be negative.

It should be noted that in the two songs previously discussed and from the titles of the other defining songs of this period, like “No Weh No Betta Dan Yard” and “Jamaica I’ll Never Leave You Again,” the declaration of ‘Yard’ as the ultimate destination in response to an increase in the number of Jamaicans emigrating during the late 70s and 80s. They were leaving to escape the negative consequences of a series of restructuring efforts undertaken by both the Manley and Seaga administrations. In 1972 Michael Manley assumed power with support from a wide

cross-section of Jamaican society: the young, unemployed, large sections of the working class and peasantry, and most of the professional and administrative classes. His party won 56.36% of the votes and 70% of the seats in parliament. Manley came to power with a clear vision for the new direction Jamaica was to take. For the domestic sphere his plan offered three basic commitments: to render the economy independent of foreign control and responsive to the needs of the Jamaican people, to create a more egalitarian society, and to increase popular participation (Payne, 1998: 63). In regard to foreign policy,

Manley worked from the perception that Jamaica was a part of the Third World economic strategy designed to increase collective self-reliance, and favoured the creation of an organization of bauxite-exporting countries on the lines of OPEC. More generally, he proposed the adoption of an open foreign policy envisaging relations with a variety of countries beyond the circle of Jamaica's traditional partners, including those whose ideologies and political systems were communist. Notice was also given of Jamaicans readiness to support wars of liberation in Africa. In short, Manley sought to 'establish the fact that the entire world is the stage upon which a country, however small, pursues this perception its perception of self-interest (Payne, 1988: 65).

"The Government gradually instituted a series of popular social programs, such as the National Literacy Programme (JAMAL), free education up to university level, a minimum wage for domestic workers, and the abolition of the Master and Servant Law, which had been the sole legal base regulating employer-employee relations" (Waters, 1985:143). In spite of the strides made in social policy, economic policy lagged significantly behind. The 1974 oil crisis served as a turning point in the Manley administration, as the fact of Jamaica's dependency made the nation especially hard hit. The economy, already under stress, could not withstand the rise in prices, and a general economic recession followed.

Other import prices rose in consequence, especially food and manufactured goods, putting further pressure on the cost of living and the balance of payments. Foreign capital inflows declined, as did income from tourism...In addition, the government's own measures of welfare reform had considerably increased state expenditure, and this, in an economy lacking the resources to sustain such a sudden expansion, meant that the public sector debt also increased dangerously. Between 1972 and 1974 it rose by 56.7% from J\$332.6 million to J\$520.8 million; more significantly, the foreign component of the debt rose even more steeply, from \$117.3 million to J\$206.3 million, an increase of 76.5% (Payne, 1988:68).

In spite of the blows the Manley administration had suffered, it was successful in securing for itself another term on the basis of a more radical program which it labeled the Third Way, i.e., democratic socialism. In 1976 the Manley administration signed a two-year standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund, agreeing to implement a currency devaluation of between 20 and 40% and a reduction in the government's deficit. In the end, the Manley administration abandoned the agreement, "placed controls on trade, stopped foreign debt payment for a period of eighteen months, reduced wage growth and sought aid from sympathetic left-wing governments" (Hope, 2006: 2). Manley's administration failed to improve the standard of living of the majority of Jamaicans, and its alignment with the Third World and commitment to democratic socialism alienated a large segment of the population who had put him in power, and put a strain on US-Jamaican relations. As a result of these hardships Jamaica saw an increase in the number of persons opting to try their luck where the grass was greener, i.e., the United States and the United Kingdom.

After Manley's failed attempt at democratic socialism, Jamaicans were willing to give the Jamaica Labour Party under the leadership of Edward Seaga a try, and in

1980 Seaga assumed office. Concerned about Jamaica's representation in the West, Seaga opted to return to the model of traditional free-enterprise policies in order to save the island-nation from bankruptcy. His plan depended heavily on the American connection. He negotiated financial aid packages with the International Monetary Fund that would open the gates to foreign capital and sought to revitalize the tourism industry. In spite all the administration's efforts, the 1980s experienced as much strife as the 1970s, when the PNP had been in power. "The cost of living in Jamaica rose dramatically between 1983 and 1989. The J\$65.31 needed to feed a family of five in September 1983 (with minimum wage set at J\$30.00) moved to J\$141.73 and by March 1988, with the minimum wage at J\$52.00. By December 1989, two and a half minimum wages were required to meet the minimum food budget cost of J\$207.04 with the minimum wages at J\$40.60." In 1989 32.7% of the population was below the poverty line. Things had not improved and those who could afford to leave continued to do so (Hope, 2006: 5).

Given the role of the government in the Competition, controlling or having considerable influence over the channels through which the winning songs were promoted and in determining the standards of the Competition, it should come as no surprise that in a period when the government was being heavily criticized for worsening Jamaicans' standard of living, (a determining factor in the rate of emigration), that the songs chosen to express the spirit of independence and Festival contained messages promoting Jamaica as the destination not just for tourists, but also for nationals.

During this period one entry, which actually found favor with the judges and was voted the winning song, became the subject of tremendous controversy. Several letters were written to the editor of the *Jamaica Gleaner* in support of and in opposition to the Festival song of 1982, “Mek Wi Jam,” performed by the Astronauts and written by Donald Wright. The controversy was centered on the many possible meanings of the word “Jam” which may be used to refer to Jamaica, partying, or sex. There were two camps: those who felt the word “Jam” was used in a non-suggestive manner, either referring to Jamaica or partying, and those who felt the word was being used suggestively. A look at the controversy surrounding this song reveals much about the perception Jamaicans had of the role of the Competition and by extension the work of the Commission in the life of the nation, as well as the role they perceived music to play in society. Several of the letters written in 1982 to the editor of the *Jamaica Gleaner* on this issue reveal that there were Jamaicans who believed the responsibility of the Commission to be the cultural uplift of the nation, i.e., the promotion of cultural products that exalted positive aspects of Jamaican society such as respect for hard work, Christian morals, and spiritual maturity. This same analysis reveals that Jamaicans believed that the popular music of the nation served as an indication of both the creative talents of their people and of the nature of the people themselves. In other words, music was believed to have the ability to reflect society, and popular music, because of its mass support, was believed to reflect the nature of the masses.

In a letter addressed to the Minister of Culture, Sydney Bartlett, a Mr. M.E. Taylor expresses his outrage at the success of the song “Mek Wi Jam,” which, he

argues does “not reflect the mature, responsible thinking of many or most of the citizens of the country.” He continues,

Jamaica is now celebrating its 21st Anniversary as a Nation, hence an adult, and as such must display not only healthy, mental and economic growth but also sound moral and spiritual growth... We are calling upon you to so structure your Festival programming so that the lyrics to enter the Song Competition be thoroughly vetted to reflect the true spirit of true Nationhood and Nation building (Mr. M.E. Taylor in *The Daily Gleaner* March, 1983:8).

Mr. Taylor letter highlights his expectation that the Festival Song reflect the spirit of Nationhood, and although the nature of this spirit is not explicitly stated, it can be surmised from the tone of his letter that the song “Mek Wi Jam,” with its sexually suggestive lyrics, was not appropriate to serve as the Festival Song for 1982. His appeal to the Festival organizers shows that he sees the work of the Festival Commission as linked to the uplift of Jamaican society and the promotion of a particular sense of nationhood. The organizers of the Festival Song Competition are gatekeepers who are to ensure that the songs selected reflect the noble nature of the nationalist project. Furthermore, Mr. Taylor’s commentary is only one example of many such letters, which serve as evidence of the fact that many Jamaicans had come to accept music as a medium through which their best and worst could be reflected.

A letter written by Ms. Gloria Escoffery, entitled “Jamming and All that”, scoffs at the idea that the word “Jam” in the controversial song refers to dancing or Festival spirit or Jamaica. She expresses her disgust with the lyrics of the song, which she calls vulgar. She goes on to explain in what sense she considers the song to be vulgar;

The song fully qualifies as “vulgar” in two senses: it is the popular choice, fairly arrived at by a reputable national poll; it also sums up and projects the mass acceptance of sex as a brutal activity, without the refinement of romantic attachment or responsibility towards the feelings of the female partner... This is the way the masses think, and the voice of the people, if not the voice of God is ipso facto, right. The way we ARE, at the lowest level of our social ladder, is what we choose to be (*The Daily Gleaner* August, 1982: 8).

Here Ms. Escoffery assumes music has the ability to reflect the norms of a society and the nature of a people. She also assumes that the Festival Song is selected on the basis of the results from the Festival Song Poll, the nature of the majority of Jamaicans with an interest in the Competition (whom she equates with the masses) is necessarily revealed in their choice of “Mek Wi Jam”—a song she finds vulgar. It seems that her anger stems not so much from the supposed vulgarity of the masses but from the fact that the Festival Song purports to be synonymous with the nationalist project, the spirit of independence, and Jamaica. In other words, although the Festival Song represents the Jamaican people as a whole, promotes values that she as a ‘true’ Jamaican does not find worthy.

The final letter, written by Floyd George, is entitled “Songs of the Times” (Mr. George in *The Daily Gleaner*, July 1982: 6). Mr. George writes “the outcry of Christians and other moralists is to be applauded. That they should fly in the face of that power which exalted ‘jamming’ to national recognition is an act to be admired.” Mr. George does not express surprise at the song choice. He considers the song reflective of times in which the people (the majority of Jamaicans) crave slackness. Where “slackness” refers to “the performance and dissemination of songs that are perceived and labeled as sexually explicit, lewd and vulgar...includes a high proportion of songs designated ‘not fit for airplay’”(Hope 2006:31). Mr. George

references an interview with Yellowman, a popular deejay evidence of the moral decline being sanctioned in Jamaican society. In that interview, Yellowman “was asked for his reaction to the remark that his songs were full of slackness. His reply is instructive: “Is slackness de people dem wan an a pure slackness me a gi dem” (*The Daily Gleaner*, July 1982:6).

The early eighties saw the rise of the deejay and what is referred to as dancehall culture which Donna Hope defines as “a space for the cultural creation and dissemination of symbols and ideologies that reflect and legitimize the lived realities of its adherents, particularly from the inner cities of Jamaica” (Hope, 2006:27). The medium most suited for the dissemination of these symbols and ideologies, which often existed in opposition to those projected by the political elite and the middle classes, was music. Among the themes expounded upon by deejays were ‘man and woman business and gun talk. The open representation and exploration of such themes in music is what was referred to as “slackness.’ Many of this period’s top tunes were of the “slack” variety. For example, Yellowman’s “Mad Over Me,” Admiral Bailey’s “Punaany,” and Shabba Ranks’s “Wicked Inna Bed” (Barrow, 1993: 56-59).

Periods 3 and 4 (1999-2000 and 2000-present)

Periods three and four in the history of the Festival Song Competition, 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to the present, are similar in that both feature songs that seek to pinpoint what has gone wrong with the nation and then to provide a prescription. The Festival Songs for '92, '94, '97, '01, '02, '04, and '06 all speak of progress and in some ways

link progress to an idealized past. Below is a table of the songs which characterize these two periods:

Year	Song	Singer	Writer
1992	Meck We Put Things Right	Heather Grant	Don Cunningham
1994	Dem a Pollute	Stanley and The Astronauts	Calvin Cameron
1997	Peace and Love	Eric Donaldson	Eric Donaldson
2001	Lift Up Jamaica	Roy Richards	Roy Richards
2004	Progress	Devon Black	Derrick Morgan
2006	Remember the Days	Omar Reid	Omar Reid
2009	Take Back Jamaica	Winston Hussey	Winston Hussey

Table 3: Defining Festival Song Winners for the Third and Fourth Periods

<http://www.jcdc.org.jm/PopularSong/winners.htm>

The preoccupation in this period with returning to a better time and with uplifting the nation may be attributed to the moral panic that gripped the nation now governed by ‘slackness’. Music, especially with reference to lyrics, is seen by the organizers, and certain supporters of the Competition as being able to represent the nature of both its creators and the public that consumes it. The music that floods the more diversified airwaves of 21st century Jamaica is dancehall: the music emanating from the space in which symbols and ideologies distinct from those of the political elite, middle, and upper classes are created. This fact has resulted in a number of efforts to both minimize the impact of dancehall culture and counteract its supposed influence on Jamaican society, particularly the youth. The popularity of dancehall music and the youth’s fervent support of it have been read as a deviation from the values of the political elite and middle classes—values closely associated with the project of nation-building. The re-launch of the Festival Song Competition was promoted as a sort of remedy or means of reconnecting Jamaicans (especially the

youth) with the values central to traditional conceptions of nationhood. In the draft public relations guide to Festival 2009 an unnamed organizer is quoted as saying that, “with the gloom of the world economic crisis and so much of our music obsessed with explicitly sexual and violent content Festival 2k9 represents an excellent opportunity for Jamaica to showcase its creative genius while lifting the spirits of the Jamaican people” (Jamaica Information Service, April 1, 2009). While, in the official re-launch, the Director of Culture, Sydney Bartley announced that “in an effort to recapture and recreate the feelings, passion and patriotism the JCDC has decided to reintroduce the Festival Song Competition.”

When one takes a look at the controversies that have attended the Competition, it would appear that none loom greater than those based on disagreements over the lyrics of the songs entered. While an analysis of the winning lyrics reveals the preferences of the organizers, an investigation of the debates about the lyrics allows one to deduce a number of things about the segment of the public that supported the Competition, i.e., the obligations they perceived the organizers to have to the Jamaican people, and the role they felt music played in the life of the nation. It should be noted that the segment of the public that supported the Competition was heterogeneous, some supporters obviously adhered to the same logic as that of the Competition’s organizers, and some supporters had aesthetic preferences that were more in line with those which enjoyed currency on the local music scene (where lyrics, though important, were not what determined whether or not a song was good). Both organizers and supporters of the Competition were: lyrics

don't relate to festival and are nonsensical; lyrics don't have any relevance to Jamaican life; lyrics reflect poorly on the Jamaican people.

Analyses of the lyrics of the songs that found favor with the judges, as well as of the songs that aroused much controversy over the life of the Competition, reveal many of the preoccupations and tensions that have characterized the politics of identity in Jamaican society. The lyrics of the winning songs chosen without debate serve as the best examples from which to derive a definition of "good" lyrics, which the Commission believed to be synonymous with a "good" song. "Good" lyrics may be defined as those which painted an idyllic picture of Jamaica and its people and served to counteract the negative and anti-status-quo messages proliferating in popular music. In short, "good" lyrics were those that expressed a beneficial response to the exigencies of the times. Over time a greater discrepancy can be detected between the songs selected by the Commission and the songs popular on the local music scene. The fact that a segment of the population continued to vote and that this segment voted for songs very different from those that enjoyed widespread favor on the local scene may indicate the persistence of a stagnant, hardcore support group to whom the standards of the Competition (set in the early years) appealed. While the organizers of the Competition claimed to align it with the development of Jamaica's popular music, the Competition clearly took a position against the 'slackness' and 'immorality' of the local music scene. In other words, the Competition was more of a reform project than a development project, something that Tony Laing, a member of the entertainment advisory board of the ministry of tourism, and chairman of Jamaica Performer's administration society and entertainment, admitted in an article he

authored in 1976. The article, entitled “Popular Development Explained”, he writes “entertainment has to be approached with much more than ‘we cover everything’, The programme is not just intended to spread popular music in its raw form, but rather our talent for composition on a very fierce, sophisticated and professional international market” (*The Sunday Gleaner Magazine*, February 22 1976:10).

Chapter 4: Sounds that have come to Rule the Nation

With 44 years under its belt, the Festival Song Competition, has failed to live up to its expressed goals of reflecting and aiding in the development of Jamaica's popular music. Instead, analyses of the songs that have found favor with the Commission reveal not only a preference for particular themes, but a preference for particular genres. In some ways it is difficult to separate the themes from the genres, as sometimes the themes, rather than the music, become the defining characteristics of a genre. The preference of the Commission for particular themes, as well as its allegiance to the nationalist program, have resulted in a bias against particular genres. The agenda of the Commission has isolated the Festival Song Competition in a capsule of time, creating a huge discrepancy between the winning songs and the songs current on the local music scene. And because the Commission's preferences and outlook did not undergo many changes, the music that may be classified as Festival music has become distinct unto itself. Its themes present an idyllic Jamaica, and its rhythms are a throwback to the "good ole days" of Jamaican popular music when mento, rocksteady, and class reggae rhythms abounded.

After independence the rhythms of mento and ska were equated with the new nation. Mento—frequently thought of as Jamaica's version of Trinidad's calypso—was the nation's first recorded music. Mento is played in 4/4 time, with an accent on the first beat of each measure. The delivery of the melodic line is highly reflective of the speech patterns of rural folk. The lyrics were often humorous and made ample reference to the reality of the everyday lives of rural Jamaicans. A typical mento ensemble employed a banjo, hand drums, a guitar, and a rhumba box.

“This basic line-up, frequently augmented by bamboo saxophone, penny whistle and the occasional steel pan [were] used by artists who played during the interval of ‘orchestra dances’ as well as at weddings and parties” (Chang and Chen, 1998: 7).

This music emanated from the rural society of the late nineteenth century and maintained some currency among the masses until the 1950s, when the rural population started its move into the bustling streets of Kingston. “The people who flocked from the country to the rapidly growing capital after WWII wanted a more assertive music, one that was more in tune with their new lives” (Barrow and Dalton, 1997:11). By the 1940s, the R&B, brought to Jamaican shores by seasonal migrant workers and merchant sailors, had begun to cater to this need. Yet the international fascination with calypso gave hope to a few local entrepreneurs—Ken Khouri, Stanley Motta, and Stanley Chin—of recording and promoting a national music abroad. The efforts of all three resulted in the birth of Jamaica’s recording industry. The first commercial record produced on the island was Lord Fly’s *Whai! Ay!* The international music public may have embraced calypso and its cousin mento, but by this time local interests in the music had declined. Furthermore, the 1950s saw the emigration of many of the country’s musicians to the North Coast—the heart of Jamaica’s tourist industry, where “every hotel sought to employ its own mento band, which was marketed to visitors as a slice of authentic Jamaican culture” (Stolzoff, 2000: 41). In the absence of a truly indigenous popular music, mento had been appropriated by the state to demonstrate the existence of a Jamaican culture: not so much to Jamaicans as to visitors from developed nations. In short, both the production and performance of mento did not have the Jamaican public as its focus.

While mento is a truly Jamaican music, it is a music that reflects a time-space that did not correspond with the time-space that Jamaican society occupied in the 1960s. It is in this way that the production and performance of mento did not have the Jamaican public as its focus.

The year 1960 saw the birth of Jamaica's first indigenous popular music, ska. The liner notes of *Ska Bonanza*, a compact disc featuring the best of the genre, released by heart beat records in 1991, define the new music as "... a fusion of Jamaican mento rhythm with R&B, with the drum coming on the 2nd and 4th beats and the guitar emphasizing the up of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th beats. The drum therefore [was] carrying the blues and swing beats of the American music and the guitar expressing the mento sound" (Chang and Chen, 1998: 30). This music came into being in the ghetto, and at its conception its appeal was limited to the ghetto. It would not be long, however, before Byron Lee and The Dragonaires, and other uptown bands like the Granville Williams Orchestra, Carlos Malcolm and the Afro-Jamaican Rhythms began to attempt to 'refine' the sound. Byron Lee claims that the impetus to make the music 'respectable' came from the Minister of Culture, Development and Welfare, Edward Seaga. Seaga had expressed the need for the newly developed nation to have its own popular music. In August 1962 Byron Lee, in collaboration with Monty Morris, Jimmy Cliff, The Blue Busters, Stranger and Patsy, and The Maytals put on "Ska Goes Uptown," a show staged in the well-off areas of Kingston in order to introduce ska to the middle and upper classes. "Radio picked up on the sound and middle class Jamaicans started buying ska records" (Chang and Chen, 1998: 31). The gradual acceptance of ska by a wider cross-section of the Jamaican public was of

much importance. Byron Lee explains that “before this nobody supported anything local in Jamaica. They only respected something if it was foreign. But once ska became popular all over the island, Jamaicans started to respect other things Jamaican. The music really gave us national pride” (Chang and Chen, 1998: 37).

By the time of the Jamaica Festival Song Competition began in 1966, mento was out-of-date with the public and ska was on its last leg, giving way to the new sound of rocksteady. Yet, as late as 1971, Mr. Phillip Jackson, one of the adjudicators of the Competition was quoted as saying, “I am pleased to see the entry of legitimate mento style in the Festival Songs—which he hoped would find favor with the public when the final selection was made” (*The Daily Gleaner*, Thursday, June 3, 1971). The Festival Commission’s preference for mento and ska rhythms, especially mento, reveals an association of music with the consolidation of a national culture. Nationalist intellectuals who take up the art of nation-building often appropriate symbols dug up from their people’s past to consolidate a national narrative. The benefit of such symbols to artists who participate the creation of a national identity is that it offers them a stable reference—at least in form. “There is no taking of an offensive and no redefining of relationships. There is simply a concentration on a hard core of culture...” (Fanon, 1967: 191). This hard core makes it possible for nation-builders to define the nation without acknowledgement of the instability of the symbols’ meanings over time and the people’s perspective, which also changes with time. Music, like a national motto, tree or bird may serve as such a symbol. The appeal of mento and ska to the nationalist intellectuals lies in what is perceived by to

be their authenticity. Both mento and ska are considered to be uniquely identified with Jamaica in their form, sound, and presentation.

Although, mento is the first recorded popular music of Jamaica for all intensive purposes it has been regarded by nationalist intellectuals as an example of rural folk culture in need of preservation. On the official website of the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission mento is defined as the “original folk music created by Jamaicans.” Folk culture provides a series of advantages to nationalist intellectuals preoccupied with forming one entity—the nation—from disparate parts and seeking to give this nation a unique identity. Folk culture can provide the materials for creating a distinct and authentic national identity.

In Jamaica the struggle to form a national identity was shaped by a legacy of slavery and colonialism (that I briefly addressed in my introduction). These legacies had resulted in the creation of a value system that ascribed positive values to whiteness (closely identified with British values) and the derogation of things African. Newly arrived non-white minorities (Chinese and Lebanese) and ambitious coloreds sought to be incorporated into the “circle of goodness” by taking on the material and social culture of the former colonists. Jamaica’s independence presented these ambitious groups with a new challenge—that of asserting themselves as both civilized yet separate from their colonial masters. But they could not assert their separate identity by using the master’s tools or the culture to which they had accommodated themselves, so they turned to the folk culture of the black masses for substance with which to assert their difference.

Authenticity and distinction are linked concepts in that only authentic materials are acceptable to establish difference. Folk cultures are considered authentic by nationalist intellectuals because of the fact that they emerge among fairly insulated populations. This insulated state allows folk cultures to resist accommodating themselves in response to external pressures because external pressures. Nationalist intellectuals consider folk traditions to be “‘a remnant of the world gone by,’ preserved in peoples who dwell in cut-off corners of the world where the past still lives. Being cut off in this way, the ...traditions are true to themselves, true to their authentic nationality, expressing the ‘natural, universal, enduring, individual’ characteristics of that nationality...” (Curtis, 2008: 102).

The insulated space from which nationalist intellectuals believe folk cultures to emerge is mythical. In the Jamaican context, this mythical space harks back to Africa. For Jamaica’s nationalist intellectuals, this mythical space in which Africa retained her dignity is of tremendous importance, signifying the survival of a culture and way of being despite, the violence of slavery and colonialism. Its existence suggests that Jamaicans, majority of who claim African ancestry, were something before the British found them and began their civilizing mission. Indeed, this mythical space has provided one of the cornerstones of the rehabilitation project undertaken by the government of Jamaica after independence. This rehabilitation project includes the consistent effort by the government to improve productivity and accelerate the development process through helping the mostly black population reclaim a sense of who they are. The underlying logic was that a self-assured citizenry would make for a productive citizenry, and dignity of Jamaica’s mostly

black population could not be reclaimed without reclaiming Africa. Accordingly, folk traditions like, mento, maypole, quadrille, kumina, and jonkunnu were incorporated into the nationalist framework and their systematic preservation begun.



Figure1. Mento—Blue Graze Mento Band Clarendon (Festival 2001)
http://www.jcdc.org.jm/folk_forms.htm



Figure2. Maypole is a creolized version of a British fertility ritual. It is accompanied by mento music. www.golocaljamaica.com/readarticle.php?Articl...



Figure3. Quadrille is a ballroom dance, which originated in Europe and was danced by the gentry during slavery. There are two forms, the ballroom and the camp style. The latter is the creolized version. http://www.jcdc.org.jm/folk_forms.htm



Figure4. Jonkunnu is a traditional Jamaican dance of African origin performed by the following cast of characters: Pitchy Patchy, Devil, Horsehead, Cowhead, Actor Boy, Belly Woman, Warrior, and Wild Indian. www.jamaica-gleaner.com/.../news/news1.html



Figure5. Kumina is a dance form performed by members of the Kumina cult. The dances are performed at entombments, births, anniversaries, and thanksgivings. “The dancers move in a circular pattern anti-clockwise around the drummers in the center inching their feet along the ground with the back held in an almost erect posture. The hips, rib cage, shoulders and arms become involved as spins, dips and breaks in the body movements occur throughout the dance” (http://www.jcdc.org.jm/folk_forms.htm). In the image are Rex Nettleford and Pansy Hassan (<http://mobile.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20100314/ent/ent4.php>).

Preservation of these traditions was equivalent to the preservation of memories—memories with the power to inspire. By cherishing folk culture Jamaicans were honoring a conception of who they were before they became tainted by slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. The Commission explains the importance of folk forms to Jamaican society in the following way:

Jamaican folk forms, the essence of our nation’s culture, are rooted in the ceremonies and traditions of our forebears. The JCDC plays a critical role in the preservation of these folk forms, which, without support, would simply die. These folk forms are sustained through the Commission’s annual Festival of the Performing Arts and through the National and Regional Mento Yards, which showcase the variety of these forms and accord them dignity and their rightful place in the consciousness of the Jamaican society (http://www.jcdc.org.jm/folk_forms.htm).

It is important to note that construction of a mythical place from which folk culture derives implies reference to some other place. The idealized place simultaneously

pinpoints the oppositional, non-ideal, thus folk culture, with its associations with the rural, old, pure, and static, comes to stand in opposition to contemporary culture with its association with the urban, new, and current. The result is that the latter is met with hostility. The aesthetic and ideological practices exemplify this hostility toward the music of the times.

Although ska is a popular music it also provides the benefits associated with folk culture because of its origin in the insulated ghettos of West Kingston. That is, ska contained elements that were distinct from those which might have been easily associated with Europe, America or any other nation. Furthermore, ska's emergence around the time of Jamaica's independence coincided with the peak in efforts to solidify Jamaica's national identity. It has been my position that the counter-status quo logic of the ghettos reflected in Jamaica's popular music was received with ambivalence by the nationalist intellectuals who felt that, though rich in creative potential required reform. It is only after ska was refined that it was considered as an acceptable national symbol. It may be said that the international recognition ska received in the 1960s contributed to the increased acceptance of the genre at home. That is, because the international community had approved of ska and recognized it as a uniquely Jamaican creation, acceptance on the national level became more likely: a case of external validation affecting internal perceptions of one's own culture. Over the years, the same process would occur with subsequent genres, most notably reggae. However, one genre that has defied being refined has been dancehall.

Chapter 5: The Problem with Equating Dancehall with the Nation

“The artist...who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities,”

(Fanon 1967:181)

If one were to accept Fanon’s definition of an authentic art as one firmly placed in a nation’s realities and were then to go in search of an example of such an art in Jamaica, it would be dancehall. No contemporary Jamaican art form focuses as squarely on the present and Jamaica’s realities as dancehall. It is not my intention here to infer that dancehall innocently reflects the realities of Jamaica, or, more importantly, that the realities that provide the substrate for creative processes within the culture are the realities of all Jamaicans. But these realities do determine the ways in which a significant proportion of the population experiences life in contemporary Jamaica, and dancehall, born of these realities, have come to captivate the attention of those outside of its most identifiable parameters (those who actively participate in the production and dissemination of the culture). In spite of dancehall’s unwavering commitment to the present (and perhaps precisely because of it), far from being heralded as one of Jamaica’s authentic art forms, it has been consistently blamed for the perceived moral decay and degradation of Jamaican society. As such it has never been elevated, except by its patrons, to the level where it might have been equated with the nation. So it is appropriate to ask, “What is wrong with dancehall? Why is considered unfit to use in the branding of Jamaica?” Any attempt to address questions must first answer the following: What is dancehall culture? What are its core values? Who claims it? Where do those who claim it come from, and what is their relationship to the state? It is my position that dancehall has been precluded from

brand Jamaica because dancehall culture undermines the core values of an insecure state desperate to convince an international community of its respectability.

The dancehall is a counter-cultural space where "... actors who are precariously placed economically and socio-politically and who are intent on redefining their ascribed roles ..." engage in activities which result in a re-articulation and narration of their identities through performance (Hope 2006:26). This performance of identity takes place on the surfaces of the body, through movement and the medium of sound, as well as through the presentation of carefully crafted images of the protagonists of dancehall culture. The term dancehall music is used to define the genre of Jamaican popular music that emerged in the 1980s that,

While affected by and encapsulating elements of earlier forms of Jamaican music (for example, mento, ska, dub, roots rock and reggae), ... occupies a late twentieth-century cultural, political, ideological and economic space in Jamaica ...[and] has a definite point of disjuncture with preceding manifestations of popular Jamaican music culture. (Hope, 2006:27).

This sound is disseminated via deejays, sound systems, live performances, and the club scene. It is produced and, often consumed by members of Jamaican society who live "pon di edge" (on the edge) in poverty-stricken inner cities alienated from the resources most would deem necessary for survival and the socializing forces of the state. Because the originators of dancehall music were socialized outside of the state's normalizing institutions, they developed their own codes of conduct and experienced a type of autonomy that "... generated limited norms of community, social obligation, and fraternity. It also permitted the flowering of spontaneous ideologies and linguistic innovations out of the conditions of everyday life in the ghettos" (Gray, 1991: 116). This isolation also resulted in the formation of core

values often in opposition to the core values espoused by the state as necessary to becoming a respectable citizen. Deborah Thomas in her book, *Modern Blackness* identifies the core values that determined respectability; temperance, collective work, thrift, community uplift, respect for the leadership of the educated middle classes and Christian living. Where the state values temperance, dancehall promotes the accumulation of things; where the state values collective work, the subject of the dancehall is an “I” that is sometimes celebrated at the expense of others; where the state values thrift, the protagonists of dancehall culture consolidate their status through conspicuous consumption; while the state requires respect for middle-class stewardship, dancehall publicly denounces the political leadership and frequently affirms alternative leadership figures. While Christian living is seen as the “good” life the dancehall speaks of a life well lived in the absence of religious ideology.

The most worrisome value dancehall artistes negate in their music is that of respecting middle-class stewardship. This challenge implies defiance of all the other middle-class values. Three examples of songs from prominent contemporary dancehall artistes will bear out this point. In the song “Poor People,” released on Bounty Killer’s 2009 album *Poor People’s Governor*, Bounty encourages poor people to do for themselves and not rely on the politicians to improve their lot. He chants,

*Every day you get up politician yuh cursing politician yuh cursing situation
get worsen.*

But a nuh lie, if yuh nuh nuh try, well yuh nah go get nuh bligh...

Nuh stretch out yuh hand like yuh blind

(Every day you get up and you blame the politicians for your problems. But the fact that your lot has not improved is based on your inaction. If you don’t work than you will achieve. Don’t become like a beggar waiting for the government to feed you, because it will not).

He simultaneously empowers the poor while highlighting the failure of politicians to address the needs of those they are elected serve. According to Bounty, the politicians are so unreliable that in spite the complaints of their constituents they remain unresponsive, “everyday dem [the poor] get up and see the same hollow point” (every day they get up and realize that their needs have not been addressed).

In “Gully Sittin” chants lyrics that emphasize his solidarity with the “sufferers” or the poor. In the chorus he sings,

*Well, poor people the system reject whonuu
and nuff of dem whonuu elect and dem neglect whonuu
all who fi serve and protect and dem a disrespect whonuu
but Assassin don't forget whonuu.*

He is what poor people perceive to be the unaccountable nature of a system in which the leaders they appoint work to further not the people’s interests but their own. He then substitutes himself for the faulty politician, as someone who will represent poor people.

Baby Cham’s song “Ghetto Story” puts forth an alternative leadership figure that in Jamaican society would be referred to as a don. Donna Hope in, *Inna di Dancehall* defines don as, “... a title of distinction afforded to men who are considered to be of high social, political and economic status in Jamaica. It is particularly used to denote status among men from the lower socioeconomic levels and in the inner-city context ... its definition draws significantly from the distinctive label given to Mafia overlords” (Hope 2006:92). She further defines the role of the don as providing social welfare and informal justice services for his community. Baby Cham tells the story of his life in the ghetto and describes an incident that led to

one of his friends, Mickey, traveling to the United States and assuming the role of an Al Capone figure. Mickey's gangster posture gives him access to more resources, which he then shares with his community (sitti' pon di edge). By sharing his success with his community, he improves the lives of those in the community and his own status. All three examples have the middle-class leadership being replaced by either "sufferers," the artiste or a don-like figure. The state seems irrelevant to those wishing to improve their lives. It is important to note as well, that although the "I" is prevalent in dancehall music, this "I" often speaks on behalf of many.

Although I have chosen to focus on core values of dancehall culture that function in opposition to those of the state, it is also true that dancehall culture frequently reinforces many of the values articulated by the political elite. When dancehall's cultural logic reinforces dominant values, however, the ways in which these values are articulated are controversial. For example, while the male figure is dominant in dancehall discourse (in keeping with the patriarchal structure perpetuated by the state), he asserts his dominance in terms that run counter to the ideal of Christian living i.e., through sexual conquest, consumerism, and violence. Although I have stated that certain values are essential to respectability in the state's eyes, and that on the other hand, the dancehall culture produced by the black lower classes subverts many of these treasured values, these same values are not necessarily incompatible with those held by members of the lower classes. Neither value system is intrinsic to any particular group. Instead, the values are determined to a large extent by the requirements for survival in each group. In fact, many of the black lower classes subscribe to such values: the segment of the poor Deborah Thomas refers to as

the “respectable poor.”(Thomas 2004:154). While it is true that the core values of the state and the ways in which it recognizes adherence to them are derive from Jamaica’s colonial legacy, I would like to avoid a mono-directional view of culture in which imposition and victimhood are ascribed to the colonized body.

The state and those who ascribe to the value system it promotes often perceive dancehall as a menace to society. For them, dancehall is understood not as a legitimate cultural product but as a debased factor with the power to warp the minds of the young. Consider the cartoon below (Mays 2009):



In this cartoon, published in the *Jamaica Gleaner*, a woman dressed in dancehall attire leaves her son unattended at home to attend passa passa. The bubble above the child’s head shows that he does not intend to stay at home alone while a newspaper lying on the ground close to the child reads “Missing Children Problem Spirals.” The message is that the mother’s participation in dancehall culture has made her an

irresponsible parent whose child will be a ready target for kidnappers. It is important to note that the woman depicted (based on the structure of the house, the tire atop the roof, and the broken windows), is of a lower-class status. The problem of kidnapping, although it affects the entire society, is focused in the space of the ghetto, and the ghetto's residents have been made responsible for the problem.

There is a belief held by cultural purists associated with fundamentalist Christian groups, and those considered cultural activists, that Jamaica is in crisis and this belief is perpetuated in public announcements and addressed through the formulation of policy intended to police what they deem retrogressive activity. Dancehall culture, especially the music, qualifies as such an activity. For example, the government has begun to enforce rigorously the Noise Abatement Act, which permits parties to go only until midnight on weekdays and until 2 a.m. on weekends. Many claim that the enforcement of this law is aimed at dancehall events, as parties playing other types of music are permitted to go on longer. In addition the government has begun to issue warnings to radio stations that play songs with sexually suggestive lyrics or lyrics that speak of violence, the prime content of dancehall music, and the motivation for the ban.

On February 7, 2009, the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica “banned radio and television stations from airing songs with content deemed explicitly sexual and violent, even if concealed by bleeps. All dancehall songs which qualify as ‘dagging’ content—the rapidly emerging culture of quasi-erotic dances and music—will also be outlawed from the airwaves, the commission also said.” The announcement continued, “There shall not be transmitted through radio or television,

any recording, live song or music video which promotes the act of ‘dagging’ or which makes reference to, or is otherwise suggestive of ‘dagging’.” (Andre Wright in *The Daily Gleaner* February, 2009). The government has also held forums with the industry’s leading artistes in an attempt to convince them to be more conscious of their impact on society or to exercise discretion in their artistic purging. According to Sydney Bartley, artistic purging is a cathartic process by which artists mark their creations with the ugliest realities they know (Sydney Bartley interview, May 10, 2009). Other indirect approaches have been enlisted, such as the promotion of live music performances as “good music” and, more importantly, an alternative to the digitized rhythmic pulse of dancehall. Music of the European classical, Jamaican folk, ska, and rootz reggae traditions are usually considered “good music”. Their status as “good music” is due to variety of factors: their association with ideas of high-culture (as in the case of European classical music), their perceived authenticity (Jamaican folk music and ska), and their international acclaim (rootz reggae). The re-launch of the Festival Song Competition in 2008 was intended to provide such an alternative. The Competition was to serve as a vehicle for the production and promotion of “good” music. The promotion of this “good” music would serve simultaneously to inspire and educate the masses. It would inspire them through providing positive representations of Jamaican society, encouraging Jamaican’s to think well of themselves and want to make positive contributions to and counteracting the negative influences of dancehall culture. The Competition would educate the masses by providing positive examples of music that would challenge dancehall music’s far-reaching influence.

That dancehall culture refuses to be confined to the ghettos makes it especially threatening to the status-quo. Technological advances and the emergence of a more diversified media e.g., the radio stations IRIE FM and Zip 103.7 FM and the television stations RETV (Reggae Entertainment Television) and HYPE TV, have resulted in the rapid diffusion of dancehall music and culture, while its reception has been facilitated by the declining power of the state to socialize its citizens as well as to meet their needs. That is, the state's increased neglect of its citizens likely has led to an increase in the number of those who may be sympathetic to the values of dancehall culture and music. The decline in the state's ability to govern independently and with confidence is due to its "... disadvantageous position vis-à-vis increased global integration. Because the process of this integration has been increasingly managed by transnational corporations and multilateral financial institutions, the state's capacity to formulate social policies that would meet the basic needs of Jamaicans has declined" (Thomas, 2004:91). This decline in governmental power has created a situation in which the population (mainly the youth, ages 14-45) finds itself more open to exploring alternative ways of securing success. The protagonists of dancehall have provided one such alternative, with some saying that "These men and women [dancehall's producers] have succeeded in conspicuously representing themselves and have arguably become newer, shinier role models for Jamaican youths from different socioeconomic backgrounds" (Hope, 2006:23).

The state's recognition of its diminished capacity to govern has led it to police forms that seem to promote alternative models of socialization. The urgency with which the state attempts to curb the influence of these alternative forms is closely

linked to the commitment of the political elite to maintaining the myth of a consensual and exceptional culture that includes the best of Jamaica's different peoples. Maintenance of this myth has required that the elite select certain inventions of the people to include in the national narrative—these elements are labeled “good”—while excluding “bad” elements like dancehall. Additionally, the state has long emphasized the importance of culture to improving the nation. The Honorable P.J Patterson in his address to the “First Consultation on a National Cultural Policy” on December 3, 1996, outlined what he believed to be the correlation between culture, productivity and progress:

We... need to rely on our cultural consciousness to assist us to return to the values and attitudes, the ideals and vision that helped the Jamaican people on the road to a true sense of self worth. It is the base on which real productivity rests (P.J Patterson 1996:13).

In short, in the absence of any real autonomy, the state has increased its reliance on the cultural strength of the nation to propel it forward. The preservation and promotion of certain cultural elements are believed to be essential to improving morale and inspiring productivity. Dancehall music is not considered a positive force, and its failure to be considered as such has to do with its counter- status quo position, the people who produce it, and with the ways in which its core values are translated into sound.

Those who complain about dancehall's apolitical nature are obviously not listening! Dancehall's most obvious divergence from the status quo is evidenced in

the aesthetic preferences of the music's creators. First, the deejays chant in patois, the language that although spoken by the majority of Jamaicans, has been relegated to use in unofficial contexts. One would not address parliament in patois, but one may address one's friends in patois. This distinction has changed somewhat over the years, but there is still the need to defend one's use of patois, or at least convince others that one is able to speak the "Queen's English" as well. Patois is then used in lyrics with, rhyme schemes that work according to an indigenous logic which does not recognize European rules of composition. The lyrics speak of life in the ghettos and the plight of the "sufferers", critique the establishment and unashamedly outline the cultural logic of the ghetto. In addition, the primary emphasis in dancehall music is on the "riddim," not the melody, something that has offended the sensibilities of the ruling classes who associate "good" music with Shakespearean lyrics and intricate melodies. Edward Seaga, in an article entitled "Reggae and Dancehall: a Culture Clash" speaks of an ideal period in Jamaican popular music (before the rise of the deejay in the 1980s) when the music retained all the "elements for successful popular music to keep it going (lyrics, rhythm, melody." In reference to dancehall, he writes "Personally, I wish it would fade away, returning music to the composition of tunes that can be whistled and freely able to be played everywhere" (Seaga in *The Daily Gleaner*, February: 2009).

Dancehall's unwavering commitment to the representation of itself to itself and of the realities of many Jamaicans has not proved sufficient to gain it national recognition. Dancehall's protagonists are not interested in inspiring the masses, although they do at times, they are interested in telling their stories, which, because of

the neglect of the state are tragic, complicated and controversial. I suppose they will chant sweeter songs when life becomes sweeter. Dancehall's oppositional status (amplified by the state's well-documented war with it) has drawn many critics both locally and internationally. Many countries have banned dancehall performers from performing without first promising to adhere to strict contracts, while others have banned the dissemination of the music altogether because of the sexually explicit content, violence, and lyrics hostile homosexuals. For example, In May, 2008, the Guyanese government made the decision to ban two of dancehall's most prominent artists from entering the country (The Gleaner 2008:A2). While the state's response has been motivated by its desire to maintain an artificial semblance of what it means to be Jamaican it would be fair to say that there are other reasons for concern.

Those who rule a nation cannot be simply concerned with internal audiences; it must also consider how it represents itself to the world. Representation to the world becomes increasingly important for countries in the developing world, which must find a way of gaining respect in an international context even when the values and concerns of its people stand in opposition to those privileged by those who have had a head start. In such a context, bold assertions of the type that scream "A we dis!" (This is who we are, unapologetically!) are done at the risk of undermining the security of the state and its citizens.

The preoccupation with representing oneself to the world is not unreasonable. One cannot fault nationalist intellectuals for embracing the idea of a nation that can speak speak to others with a distinct accent that still commands respect. In this sense, nation-building is as much about establishing difference as it is about establishing

community. National intellectuals set about creating a national culture with the expectation that their efforts will be judged “not exclusively on its value to the home nation. Thus their cultural products [have to] have a value even to ‘foreigners,’ since others besides the national citizens [will] be appreciating or consuming” what they have created (Curtis, 2008:193). The products of this national culture are then disseminated as “evidence of the nation’s creative power. However, beyond just the goal of these cultural products achieving a place on the world stage, they are also supposed to communicate to the rest of the world what the values of the nation are” (Curtis, 2008: 200). Acceptance and respect are won when the values communicated are in keeping with an international standard that claims to be universal. But this script becomes complicated when one calls into question claims to universality and considers the effect of distorted power dynamics and facts of history on the communication process essential to acceptance into the international community.

Attempts by the nationalist intellectuals at representing Jamaica abroad have always been plagued by a crippling insecurity about the ways in which the people who constitute the nation have been perceived abroad. This self-consciousness results from the pressure to meet the ‘universal’ standards that govern acceptance into the international community. These standards, especially as they pertain to assessments of national cultures, pretend to be benign or natural. They govern a “cultural system that maps diverse practices, aesthetics, and belief systems onto a hierarchy of value,” within which the cultural products of the peoples of the developing world (poor and often of color) are met with ambivalence and suspicion (Thomas, 2004:131). In other words, position and respect in the international

community is most likely secured through accommodation to the prescriptions of the established inter-state community. And because a nation's cultural products, like music are believed express the nation's nature and aspirations they too should conform to the prescriptions of the established inter-state community. A music identified with Jamaica must represent the best of Jamaica, live up to a certain standard of respectability, and communicate effectively the values of the nation. The burden of accuracy or of rendering a faithful representation comes to rest on the sender it is therefore common for the sender to cater to the expectations of the receiver to the detriment of truth, defined here as faithfulness to the realities of the culture represented.

It is my position that consideration of the expectations and nature of the international community should never divert the national intellectuals from their obligations to the people they seek to represent. Yet in their ambivalence toward the aesthetic preferences and cultural products of the Jamaican population, these intellectuals, fail to recognize the autonomy of the people and distance themselves from their realities. This distance results in a discrepancy between the realities of the nation and its representation to the international community. This discrepancy allows the intellectuals to ignore their responsibility to address the systemic problems that gave birth to dancehall culture in the first place.

Conclusion

The government's adherence to particular imperatives—keeping up appearances and promoting and maintaining a peaceful image of Jamaica—complicated the Competition's ability to serve as a means of developing Jamaica's popular music in ways which undermined the rehabilitation efforts of the political elite. In an effort to keep up appearances, the political elite sought to meet the external expectations of the international community. The political elite, perceiving their place amongst nations to be slightly disadvantageous, have devoted much of their energy to meeting the external expectations of the international community. Their adherence to these expectations—because of their externality to the Jamaican context and the danger of their perceived universality—resulted in the political elite's accommodation to a cultural logic which at times went against the cultural logic of the Jamaican people. The discrepancies between the various strains of cultural logic adhered to by the Jamaican people and the cultural logic the political elite accommodated themselves to was recognized by the latter. The latter, because it had bought into the universality of the cultural logic it accommodated itself to, viewed these discrepancies as evidence of the cultural backwardness of the Jamaican people.

They believed the cultural backwardness to be a testament to the negative impact of slavery and colonialism on the Jamaican people, who cut off from a true sense of their history and selves were suffering from low self-esteem: hence the rehabilitation project. This belief made the political elite self-conscious in their assertions of Jamaicaness and led them to consistently question the cultural expression of the Jamaican people. In other words, though they often saw rich

potential in the cultural expression of the Jamaican people they most often felt that their input or stewardship was necessary in order to elevate the cultural expression of the people to the national level. The Festival Song Competition serves as one example of the institutionalized efforts of the political elite to refine the cultural expression of the Jamaican people so as to make possible its elevation to the national level and projection to the world.

The Competition's machinery functioned as a means of focusing the creative energy of the masses in such a way so as to permit the gatekeepers of culture an opportunity to 'fix' what was in conflict with the ideals of the establishment. Although the limits on the thematic content had been lifted as the Competition progressed, a look at the winning songs reveals that there existed and continues to exist a clear preference for themes that are uncritical of Jamaican society and encourage the uplift of the Jamaican people. Training seminars were added to the structure of the Festival Song Competition in 1974, with the aim of imparting skills in the areas of composition, production, performance and stage craft to the end of rendering, more sophisticated, Jamaica's popular music. Subversive songs as well as, genres that were beyond refinement and had received mixed responses from the international community were excluded. Recall the controversy surrounding Junior Byles's entry "Rub up Festival" which the Jamaica Broadcasting Company (government directed and operating on a public service mandate) refused to air. In the case of Byles, the organizers of the Competition were on his side but, the Competition's government sponsored status compromised the ability of its organizers to follow-through with particular incentives while going against the government's

wishes. In short, the Festival Song Competition became the instrument through which a template for the ideal popular song was set. The ideal popular song was to be the embodiment of the political elite's value system: a system in sync with the international system to which it accommodated itself.

The Festival Song Competition, with its emphasis on nationalist themes, was directed at the promotion and preservation of the image of a peaceful Jamaica. The promotion and preservation of this image was important to the government because of the powerful message that such an image could send to both nationals and the international community. With regards to the nationals, the message was Jamaica is a place where you belong and to which you wanted to belong. This message embodied in the Festival Song was to serve as an anthem for a movement, which apart from its emphasis on the preservation of folk culture, had as a part of its six-fold purpose, the creation of Christmas in mid-year so as to provide a break from the heavier pursuits of nation-building. Festival was to be a circle of goodness within which the very best of Jamaican society would be represented. It was to be a bubble encapsulating a world within which the values of hard work, unity, peace and uplift would be communicated, while excluding the painful realities of Jamaican society. The bubble was created and preserved through the exercising of a strong bias against the expression of dissident points of view and the glaring systematic exclusion of oppositional themes. The message being communicated to the international community was, "This place is safe. Its people are civilized. You can come here." The latter part, "You can come here", became of increasing importance to Jamaica's

development plan in the post-independence period when tourism had become one of Jamaica's largest foreign exchange earners.

However, the goals to which the Festival Song Competition seemed committed: promoting and maintaining a peaceful image of Jamaica, and aiding in the political elite's project of rehabilitating the cultural handicap of the masses often conflicted with its mission to promote and develop Jamaica's popular music. The Competition was also to serve as a means of integrating Jamaica's popular music into the international music scene (one of the goals of the Popular Music Development Programme referenced earlier). Such a commitment obviously necessitates a healthy dose of commercialism. But, the other ends to which the government had directed the Competition made it antagonistic to commercialism. For instance, common complaints of the organizers and the government were: the competitive element of the song festival undermined the emphasis they tried to place on the true meaning of Festival (the meaning of Festival being that of togetherness), placed too much emphasis on the performers and not the quality of the songs, and invited violence into the Competition (Fairweather 1973).

It may be said that the issue of violence was of the greatest importance because it more than any other issue threatened the effectiveness of the Commission's promotion of social harmony that was so integral to the nationalist project. The most well publicized violent incident occurred in 1973 when, after the announcement of Morvin Brooks as the winner of the Competition, the other contestants called foul. They claimed that the promoters had employed mafia tactics in order to secure victory for their artist, Morvin Brooks. The Commission called no foul. But, the other

contestants remained unconvinced and boycotted the final show held at the National Arena. The incident was later probed by the government who concurred with the Commission's earlier finding, that there had been no foul (*The Daily Gleaner* 1973: 1 and 7). After the incidences of violence and the controversies surrounding the 1973 Competition the Commission decided to make some crucial changes to the Competition's structure.

The first change was that the Commission assumed ownership and responsibility for promoting the final songs to eliminate the jostling of the promoters, which led to violence. The task of recording and promoting the finalist would be shared between three companies approved by the Commission: Dynamic Sounds, Federal Records, and Jamaica Recording Companies. The second was the decision to include an arranger's contest in the following year's Competition so as to take the focus away from the artists. The third change was to make the public vote only for the winning song, and establish a separate prize for the winning artist. The final change saw the release of the songs after the voting period –once again an effort to minimize the emphasis on commercialism they felt had overtaken the competition (Fairweather 1973).

What is interesting to note is that the Competition's antagonism towards commercialism was as a result of its dedication to preserving a commercial relationship between Jamaica and tourists the world over. The commercialization of the Competition (with its potential for violence) threatened the integrity of brand Jamaica. It made suspect, the claim that Jamaica was a safe place to be. Interestingly enough, the year in which the Competition was plagued with violence was the same

year in which it partnered with the Jamaica Tourist Board. The tourist board would employ the Commission's work in the preservation and promotion of Jamaica's unique culture as a marketing strategy. In the 1973 Competition, all entrants had to write two songs: one to be considered for the Festival Song Competition and another to be used by the Jamaica Tourist Board in its promotional materials (*The Daily Gleaner* 1973:5). That year the winning song was Morvin Brook's "Sweet Jamaica."

Another possibility is that the commercialization of the Competition would have made it difficult for the Commission to control the quality of the submissions, as the standards would have most likely been set in accordance with those of the consuming public. Such a set-up would have undermined the stewardship role exercised by the government and encouraged the proliferation of what were deemed substandard, and possibly subversive songs. In addition, the constant accommodation to external expectations solidified stereotypes, which were then internalized and performed. Tony Laing in an article explaining the purpose of the Popular Music Development Project provides an example of such accommodation and solidification of stereotype,

there are two audiences that relate to the entertainment industry internationally. The biggest is the white audience, mostly listeners, and then ours, the black audience. We should appeal more to the black audience as performers, but to the whites as composers due to the fact that the type of material we create, protest, revolution etc...are more appealing to them (Tony Laing in *The Sunday Gleaner* 1976:10).

Despite Commission's attempt to control the standards of the competition, it may be said that in the end it acted in a way that undermined its own authority. That is, it was so preoccupied with meeting the expectations of the international

community that it comprised many of its internal goals. No goal was more severely undermined than that of rehabilitating the public whose cultural expressions were always subject to scrutiny. How is it possible to improve the self-esteem of the masses while constantly questioning the merit of their creations? It's not.

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