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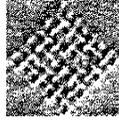
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Global Sufferahs: Rastafari Cosmopolitan Citizenship



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Introduction: Suffering in the Post-Colony

On one of my usual visits to Sister Susan's modest one-room internet *beit* or internet café in the *Jamaica Safar* or Jamaica neighbourhood in urban Shashamane, Ethiopia in 2009 a spontaneous reasoning or philosophically-based conversation erupted among Rastafari customers also waiting to use this lone functioning public computer, an important mode of communicating with Rastafari outside Ethiopia.ⁱ The previous night a few people had seen a documentary produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on the Ethiopian state's co-optation of land currently settled by the Mursi ethnic group, among others, in the Lower Omo valley (further south of our location in Shashamane) for the construction of a hydroelectric dam.ⁱⁱ Now largely sedentary pastoralists popularly known (and exoticised in the Western imagination) for their extended lip plates, historically Mursi were nomadic hunter-gatherers (Turton; Grete; Régi; Getachew Amare).

In light of some Mursis' armed opposition to the planned confiscation of their land, our conversation revolved around the territorialisation of land and corresponding rights, historical claims, ethnic identity, national identity, questions of livelihood, ideals of betterment or advancement, and the future prospects for Mursi children. One Rastaman or Rastafari man made an analogy between the situation of the Mursi with how Rastafari lost the land allocated to them in Shashamane by Emperor Haile Selassie I in the post-World War II period. Another Rastafari customer commented on the continued dispossession of Palestinians while others confidently remarked that despite these historical and ongoing events, Rastafari as "the chosen people" were "safe" and better off in Ethiopia than in *babylon* or the evil, oppressive western world. Babylon or hell extends to the "West" inclusive of the Caribbean where many Rastafari in the *Jamaica Safar* were born and raised. Contrasted to *babylon* is *zion* or heaven, symbolised by Ethiopia. In the words of Sister Susan, "God watches over Ethiopia."

In this essay I will focus on the South-South migration of Rastafari men and women, mainly from the Caribbean, to "return" or "repatriate" to the home and homeland of Ethiopia in their pursuit of spiritual and material betterment and freedom. First generation Rastafari in the *Jamaica Safar* refer to themselves as "repatriates," "returnees" or "settlers." This migration has led to the bottom-up development of an area that is colloquially called *Jamaica Safar* or *Rasta Safar* in the

urban locale of Shashamane. This Jamaica Safar is located on the historic land grant from His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I in the mid-1900s to “black people of the world” (Bonacci, *Exodus!* 270) who wished to settle in Ethiopia in gratitude for their opposition to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (such as black West Indians who fought in the ranks of the British air force or navy).

This discussion will centre on Rastafari collective identity and shared cosmopolitan status as sufferahs. Rastafari self-reinvention and migration to Ethiopia as an imaginative response to structural asymmetries, inclusive of racial-material and cultural subordination, will be examined with the reproduction of status within the Jamaica Safar. Among Rastafari identity as sufferahs (sufferers or super-exploited persons) and everyday expressions of agency and solidarity, there are distinctions which arise among Rastafari and between Rastafari and local Ethiopian neighbours, affinal kin and friends.ⁱⁱⁱ This does not limit the potential for global solidarities among sufferahs but highlights the utility of ethnographic enquiry into diasporic Caribbean and Rastafari identities within Afrocentrism and cosmopolitanism. A global community of sufferahs presents the basis for collective action and activism, especially if as Vered Amit (6) argues, community requires not only imagination or the “act of attributing” but commitment to this ethos. The variable status of repatriates and Ethiopian-born children (whether they self-identify as Rastafari or not) as faranji or foreign in Shashamane shows the malleable boundaries of community and identity conceptually and in the everyday (see also Gomes; Bonacci, “Mapping the Boundaries”).

Underlying these remarks by Rastafari in Sister Sharon’s internet beit were not only shared collective experiences and causes between Rastafari in Shashamane, and other sufferahs around the world, but an ontological commonality. This entails a recognition and critique of global inequality through post-colonial positionalities rooted in asymmetrical systems of modern capitalism and racial hierarchy, and Rastafari conceptual and everyday challenges to this condition. In this instance Rastafari solidarity was expressed with Mursi and Palestinian peoples, but in other conversations in Shashamane I heard mention of black South Africans under apartheid, black and brown Caribbean peoples (indigenous peoples or Amerindians, Africans, Asians) under modern imperial rule and neo-imperialism, as well as poor black Americans in the rich Global North.

As indicated in written and oral works, the figure of the “sufferah” underscores the commonality of experiences among subordinated persons, situating institutionalised discrimination and individual-collective embodiment within imperial-colonial historical conditions (see Dawes; Lewis; Bob Marley’s song ‘Babylon System’; song ‘Sufferer’ by Bounty Killer and Wayne Marshall; song ‘Ghetto Youths Dem A Suffer’; song ‘Nah Suffer’ by Sizzla Kalonji; Popcaan’s song My God (Nah Suffer)). Rastafari discursive demands for recognising the egalitarianism of a world community and an equal belonging within this community, while challenging the Eurocentrism of modernity through collective black and African reimagination of personhood, can be interpreted as an instance of decoloniality. If, as Aníbal Quijano (2000) suggests, the “coloniality of power” operates

within the post-colonial 'global village' then decoloniality can be "read as the refusal of a hegemonic frame of self-referencing, and as a changed relation to such frames that cast humanity and its progress in terms of a particular re-ordering of discriminatory development" (Crichlow 131). Acts and expressions of agency, and therefore not an encompassing victimhood, emerge in both worldview and everyday behaviour in the Jamaica Safar, demonstrating how the boundaries of personhood, and Rastafari personhood in particular, are flexible, and distinguished through status.

Global Belonging and Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Also emerging in this reasoning in Sister Sharon's internet beit was the Rastafari assertion of their privileged position as those "chosen" who were divinely protected, particularly *repatriates* who lived in Ethiopia and on the land grant, regardless of the lack of state recognition of the Rastafari claim to the land grant. With reference to Erving Goffman's discussion of everyday performance and social identity, Charles Price (2009) suggests that the "self-elevation" that Rastafari collectively embody through "their self-created special status as the elect of Emperor Selassie I plays an important part" in managing the stigma of blackness (107). As Price notes, "in the language of the Rastafari, self-elevation includes being the elect of God, a chosen and peculiar people different from normal people" (Price 108).

These expressions of Rastafari solidarity with other subordinated groups, and the declarative high status of Rastafari among global sufferahs and among humankind, can be explored in terms of cosmopolitan citizenship. As Huon Wardle argues, "when we speak of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' we are, by definition, using a heuristic label to index practices and relationships that in many cases cannot be measured in terms of existing institutionalized scales but which it is nonetheless vital to recognize. Hence, the use of 'citizenship' is provocative – aimed precisely at provoking this recognition" (Wardle 271-272). With categorial claims to identity and corresponding assertions of collective-individual belonging to place, nation, society and community as well as everyday experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Ethiopia, "citizenship" in the Jamaica Safar involves legal claims of belonging to Ethiopia and obligations to and concern for Rastafari globally, for fellow sufferahs and individual and familial goals for betterment. This position contributes to a cultural understanding of citizenship beyond the legal parameters of state membership. Aihwa Ong's discussion of flexible citizenship through the case of wealthy transnational Chinese "mobile jet setters" (1999) is emblematic of this in centring "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (Ong 6; see also Kymlicka; Kamugisha).

If cosmopolitanism indexes "an aesthetic and intellectual openness toward divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 2005) and is employed "descriptively to address certain socio-cultural processes or individual behaviours, values or dispositions manifesting a capacity to engage cultural multiplicity" (Vertovec and Cohen 1), for Caribbean Rastafari in Shashamane such attitudes are also grounded in an historical awareness of the making of Caribbean sociality and

the local and global interconnections that have characterised the modern Caribbean and its peoples. As Nigel Rapport and Vered Amit underscore, “a ‘cosmopolitan,’ for Immanuel Kant, was a citizen of two worlds: polis and cosmos. Here is the global figure of the individual human being who exercises universal capacities in the negotiation of local social relations and the construction of particular cultural worlds” (Amit and Rapport xi).

Within this context, this essay engages with Huon Wardle’s call for “an enlarged view of Caribbean citizenship beyond, within and across the institutions of the nation state. This would amount to an emergent view of a historically inflected cosmopolitan citizenship linking experience on the plantation and the mine, in peasant hinterlands, in the regional cities and in the diasporic sites of transmigration” (Wardle 271). In focussing on the “diasporic sites of transmigration,” for Rastafari in Ethiopia and Ethiopian-born children, citizenship is not encompassed by legal rights. However, the legal status of first and second generation Rastafari as ‘undocumented’ has adverse and detrimental impacts and implications for livelihood opportunities, mobility and overall well-being. Institutional change becomes critical in this Rastafari decolonial project of social and subjective reclamation and ontological reimagining in Ethiopia through the Rastafari demand for citizenship that challenges narrow, legally based state definitions of belonging.

As noted, citizenship incorporates belonging to the nation (of Ethiopia), a global community of sufferers, of Rastafari, and human beings. In Wardle’s designation, “citizenship in [this]... sense, needs to come to terms with the diversity of forms of Creole commitment – including engagement in West Indian national institutions, with family members in other countries and cities, ideological affiliations with Afrocentric identities, but also with Eurocentric ones too alongside a range and diversity of other concepts” (Wardle 277). It encompasses claims of belonging to local places and the expectation of social acceptance while Rastafari also maintain their distinctiveness from other (fellow) sufferers, local Ethiopian neighbours and Rastafari outside Ethiopia.

3. An “ethnographic snapshot” of the Jamaica Safar

Wardle suggests that the “localized ethnographic snapshot should contain within itself the links (economic and political but also aesthetic and ethical) that actors organize across social sectors via personalized networks” (271). In this paper an ethnographic approach will do this by explicating local and global interactions within a context of global commonality and local status distinctions. In 2008-2009 I lived in Shashamane for one year, doing ethnography with the primary method of participation-observation. A few years later, in 2012-2015, I visited yards in Shashamane regularly while I worked at a university in the neighbouring town of Hawassa, capital of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State, 25km south of Shashamane. During fieldwork I also conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews, basic household surveys with Rastafari and Rastafari-local Ethiopians and collected life histories. I lived with repatriated Rastafari parents from Jamaica of the Twelve Tribes Mansion and their adult Ethiopian-born and bred children and young grandchildren.

This essay focuses on repatriation to Shashamane since it is the location of the land grant but repatriates live in other areas of Ethiopia such as the capital Addis Ababa and urban Bahir Dar in northern Ethiopia. Rastafari and non-Rastafari from the Caribbean and African-Americans have also repatriated to West Africa, notably Ghana, according to Rastafari in Shashamane, an examination of which is beyond the scope of this essay. In this Shashamane study, “repatriate” indicates a Rastafari person since all repatriates whom I met and lived with in Shashamane self-identified as Rastafari. Cognisant of my ethical responsibility and out of respect for the confidentiality of our discussions, I have used pseudonyms for each name in this paper.

While the cost of migrating to Ethiopia was covered for most members by their respective Mansions, some Rastafari have self-funded their move to Ethiopia. Rastafari from the four Mansions or Houses (a semi-formal grouping of Rastafari) of the Ethiopian World Federation, Twelve Tribes of Israel, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (or Bobo Ashanti) and the Moral Theocratical Churchical Order of the Nyahbinghi (known informally as Nyahbinghi) with a few Rastafari unaffiliated to any Mansion comprise the repatriate population of the Jamaica Safar. Rastafari from the Caribbean countries of the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominica, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and from the United Kingdom, Europe and the USA have settled in the area. Estimates of the Rastafari population in Shashamane range from 250-800 (see Bonacci, *Exodus!*; MacLeod). These residents, local Ethiopian neighbours of Oromo, Wollaita, Amhara, and Gurage ethnicity (to name a few), multi-cultural Ethiopian-born children, and regular or seasonal Rastafari visitors from the UK, Europe and the Caribbean comprise this global neighbourhood of Jamaica Safar. Many Rastafari repatriates who arrived from the 1970s moved from Jamaica in the Caribbean, which is reflected in the name of the neighbourhood. Since then, Rastafari-local Ethiopian marriage and child-bearing, indicating high degrees of integration and associated with de jure rights to citizenship within the state of Ethiopia have not, however, led to legal citizenship.

Groups of Rastafari as well as non-Rastafari members of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) in the Caribbean and the USA, migrated or “repatriated” to Shashamane in 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s following this grant from Emperor Haile Selassie I. The first organised migration of EWF members in the 1950s, who were not Rastafari, had its antecedents in the late nineteenth century migrations of Pan-Africanist individuals and families from the West Indies and the USA to Addis Ababa, to one historic capital of Gondar in the north and other locales in Ethiopia. Worldwide Pan-Africanism, following the 1884 European ‘Scramble for Africa’, the Afrocentric consciousness of individuals, the influence of Garveyism or the thought of Marcus Garvey, especially his ‘Back to Africa’ movement and the emphasis on self-determination and autonomy, Ethiopianist thought, and messianic Christianity all provide a broader historical context for twentieth century Rastafari repatriation to Ethiopia. Rastafari worldview and re-imagination of personhood as Ethiopians is also grounded in the symbolic-historical significance of Ethiopia and Africa and the figure of His Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I.

His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I in Rastafari Worldview

In 1930, the coronation of Ras Tafari Mekonnen in Ethiopia as His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I galvanised a new Rastafari worldview among Caribbean peoples, particularly Afro-Caribbean colonial subjects of the British empire who had been subjected to urbanisation, displacement and poverty in systemic capitalist exploitation in Jamaica. In deifying Haile Selassie I, the West Indian god of the West Indian Rastafari movement was created by ordinary black Jamaicans who named themselves in his honour. Redeeming themselves from the scientific racism of modern imperialism and colonialism, these Rastafari men and women embraced Africanness and blackness, arguing that they embodied the qualities of divinity and antiquity, as in His Majesty Haile Selassie I. This Rastafari conceptual shift from a Eurocentric worldview to one with Ethiopia-Africa as its nucleus, was emblematic of Rastafari “reshaping the conditions for mapping one’s place in the world” (Crichlow 119). Ethiopia, the sacred place, became the new zion and the west, inclusive of British and European colonies in the Caribbean, and later the post-colonial Caribbean, became babylon. As Price notes (referencing Anthony Bogues), Rastafari in Jamaica “joined religious expression with pursuit of their comprehensive ideas of freedom” (28) which entailed the mobilisation of “central ideas about suffering, redemption, catastrophe, and evil” common within religious worldviews (129).

This redemption, whether it entailed actual repatriation to Ethiopia or not, was theoretically open to anyone to “manifest” this *consciousness* and enact *livity* or lifeways premised on equitable relations and harmonious living, thereby achieving a higher status than non-Rastafari. Such ideas of individual-collective inter-relation emerged in the language of Rastafari or “dread talk,” particularly the term “land!” (Pollard 2). At its most basic, “land!” means Rastafari but it highlights the “oneness” between the individual-collective and situates the speaker as intrinsically connected to all Rastafari, who are “Brothers” and “Sisters” (as I referred to Sister Susan), and situationally to fellow human beings and fellow sufferers.

Pioneers, Faranji, and Heartical Rastafari

The central self-identifier of Rastafari as Ethiopian and African, and therefore of belonging imaginatively to Ethiopia and socially and physically to the Jamaica Safar in Shashamane, is internally distinguished according to acquired qualities and attributes. Rastafari are also positioned in Ethiopian society as faranji. From the perspective of local Ethiopians, Rastafari are faranji, usually indicating a white foreigner. While the origin and etymology of the word is uncertain, in imperial Ethiopia from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, “faranj” or “faranji” usually referred to white Europeans and other groups ‘foreign’ to Abyssinia based on characteristics such as skin colour, language, dress and such cultural indices. In contemporary Ethiopia, faranji (the plural of which is *faranjoch*) can extend to all foreigners, as indicated in the use of the word for Rastafari in Shashamane, most of whom are black and brown.

The word faranji marks Rastafari difference from persons categorised as “local” or “Ethiopian.” Rastafari contest and embrace this status as foreign. While legally categorised as foreign nationals

in Ethiopia, in everyday interaction Rastafari may also distinguish themselves from local Ethiopians based on behavioural characteristics while claiming to belong, as previously noted. The favourable behaviour of “our” (Rastafari) children as compared to that of “their” (local Ethiopian) children was one contrast that I often heard during conversations in Shashamane.

Among Rastafari, one important distinction is between being heartical and a pioneer in Shashamane. While all Rastafari are heartical or moral, not all are pioneers. A heartical Rastaman is a morally superior man who aims to emulate His Majesty’s example of leadership, strength and fairness, and is successful in this endeavour. “To be “heartical” is to be morally upright, respected, and perhaps even racially conscious” according to Price, who notes that popular metaphors of the heart “for discerning a person’s deepest values and commitments” continue to be significant for Rastafari (24). Identified differently for each Rastafari Mansion in Shashamane, a pioneer is someone who exhibits tenacity, strength and commitment particularly in the post-repatriation environment. As a youth member of the Twelve Tribes explained in Shashamane in 2009,

If you ask a Bobo [Ashanti] he will tell you those like Prince Emmanuel [the founder of the House in Jamaica] is a pioneer. If you ask a EWF [member] he will tell you those who settled issues with Melaku Bayen [who started the first EWF branch at Emperor Haile Selassie’s behest] and those elders or those who came to live [in Ethiopia] in that time are pioneers. Even for us those are pioneers. For us, the Twelve Tribes...pioneers are those who came to hold the land and defended it in the Derg time, which no other Bobo or Federation [EWF] or Binghi ever did.^{iv}

For Rastafari from the Twelve Tribes, pioneer refers to the earliest repatriates from this Mansion and from the EWF who remained continuously in Shashamane from their first arrival. Length of residence in Shashamane matters. This status of pioneer is one that all Rastafari globally, irrespective of their location or group membership, attribute to these long-resident Brothers and Sisters in Shashamane. It is a mark of “nuff respect” for their courage to arrive and their resolve and adherence to remain in Shashamane. The decision to repatriate was made after significant praying and contemplation, as Rastafari emphasised, and entailed a commitment to settling in zion, building lives on the land grant and was viewed by other Rastafari as courageous. Pioneers in Shashamane are Rastafari whose actions turned prophecy into reality.

While I never heard elder Rastafari use this word to refer to themselves, more recent repatriates, youths, and Rastafari visitors frequently used it (see also Bonacci, *Exodus!*; Solomon). This label of pioneer and the concomitant high status is contested by early repatriates themselves. For example, Bonacci (*Exodus!*) presents a speech by one of the first repatriates from the EWF (who was not Rastafari) to Shashamane in which he rejects the term “pioneer” in favour of “African” and frames his move to Shashamane as an ancestral legacy. As such Bonacci suggests that settlers occupy a dual status as “heirs” to a history of Pan-Africanism and Ethiopianism and “pioneers” which “reflect the tensions and contradictions of black identity and the diaspora experience” (9). By contrast, Price suggests that being black is not a “heritable” identity. Taking a constructivist

approach, his position is that “blackness is learned, and it is learned through reflection, socialization, and interaction” (Price 105). I suggest that processes of enculturation and socialisation are key to understanding how Rastafari from the Caribbean and second-generation Rastafari in Ethiopia categorically identify as black centred on Africa and Ethiopia through everyday interaction and discursive acts, such as the reasoning in Sister Sharon’s internet beit.

Stories about Rastafari who came to Shashamane “in the early days” and left shortly after because they were unable to deal with “the hardship” were introduced in my conversations and interviews with older Rastafari men and women and with their children. Brother Nelson related that when he first arrived in Shashamane in the 1970s he came with twelve Brothers and one Sister, six of whom were meant to stay and “hold the land.” The remaining Rastafari travellers were tasked with returning to Jamaica to disseminate information about Shashamane and the prospects for living there. These repatriates often describe their purpose as “holding the land” in anticipation of future arrivals. Holding the land by remaining in Shashamane, on the land grant, is a huge accomplishment that is one criterion for the status of pioneer. Pioneers are exemplars for all Rastafari, which underscores the prestige of this position.

Brother Nelson further explained that despite this assignment given by the Twelve Tribes House in Jamaica, and accepted by Rastafari, only three Brothers, including himself, and the Sister managed to stay. On his first morning in Shashamane Brother Nelson woke to find one fellow traveller missing and it became apparent that he secretly left during the night as they later heard of his return to Jamaica. Fleeing in the dark is a quintessential act of cowardice, at odds with the behaviour of a pioneer who ought to demonstrate physical, mental and moral fortitude; qualities that the heartical Rastaman also exhibits. Age, residence, birth, and personal qualities demonstrating strength of character and integrity as heartical Rastafari are bases upon which status operates among Rastafari.

It is often difficult for a Rastaman to achieve heartical status though, without a heartical Rastawoman at his side, as one long-resident repatriate reminded me, with reference to his wife who had repatriated to Ethiopia shortly after him from Jamaica. This is one reason that Brother Lester, a more recent repatriate who planned a fundraising concert in honour of the pioneers in “building up the community,” pointedly mentioned Rastawomen who were pioneers, and not only repatriate men. The gendered implications of the pioneer are yet to be significantly explored. This concert initiative showed repatriates’ awareness of their moral responsibility to each other since Brother Lester is more financially stable than many long-resident Rastafari. Brother Lester creatively devised a way of financially and socially supporting elders, entertaining the community, and promoting his music as one of the performers. The status of elder is another important one and as Ennis Edmonds notes, for Rastafari generally “eldership is...[an] inspirational position” (69). Anyone can be a heartical Rastaman or Rastawoman since it can be achieved cross-generationally, but it is most clearly exemplified in the elders.

Another facet of the pioneer is “defending the faith” while holding the land. Bonacci (*Exodus!* 311) relates the reflections of an early Rastaman on the harassment that repatriates confronted regarding their honouring of Emperor Haile Selassie I as the last Ethiopian monarch. While Rastafari were supportive of the Derg’s Marxist ideals, the anti-imperialist agenda of the Derg following the 1974 revolution opposed Rastafari veneration of His Majesty. Derg soldiers and officials would routinely visit Rastafari yards to confiscate and burn displayed images (photographs and paintings) of His Majesty. Rastafari refused to be intimidated and consistently replaced these images, showing tenacity and courage.

Anecdotes and recollections of innumerable physical and financial hardships that Brothers and Sisters eventually overcame or mitigated, ranging from scarce food, hustling to provide for their families, to maintaining Rastafari faith and ostensible evidence of this in the face of Derg anti-imperialism, are vital to becoming and being a pioneer. Not a single repatriate, amidst their narratives about difficulties with living conditions and building lives for themselves, their families, and the community ever said or hinted that they regretted repatriating to Ethiopia during our conversations. Expressing such a thought may have meant renegeing on their commitment to hold the land and resulted in the denial of their pioneer status. Pioneers serve as vessels of history and the embodiment of individual and collective memory.

The high status of Rastafari pioneers on the land grant provides access to global networks of support (material and moral) from Rastafari in foreign or abroad, thereby underscoring the tenuous economic and financial position of Rastafari in Ethiopia. This support facilitates the socio-cultural reproduction of Rastafari in Ethiopia (see Bourdieu; Connell and Mears). These translocal relations between Rastafari persons, households and Mansions in the Jamaica Safar with Rastafari in many locations outside Ethiopia mitigate the hardships of living in Shashamane. When Rastafari visited from foreign, they often brought money and goods such as clothing, shoes and cellular phones (or purposefully left their phones when departing Ethiopia as they could more easily afford to buy new ones in North America or the UK) for Rastafari in Shashamane.

Turning to the status of Ethiopian-born children, while the status of elder and pioneer is an achieved one, children’s status is partly ascribed. This higher status of children born and bred in Shashamane compared to Rastafari youth in foreign as well as to Rastafari who repatriate to Ethiopia as young people is recognised by youths themselves as well as Rastafari globally, and maintained through community rhetoric. To paraphrase one youth who repatriated as a teenager, even if Ethiopian-born youth lie and steal they won’t be punished by the community. While there may be a hint of flippancy and envy to this remark, it underscores the high status that Ethiopian-born children enjoy. These children, born on the land grant of one or both parents, are crucial to the repatriate goal of “holding the land.” Their birth and presence serve as proof that this is underway and provides hope that there will be a permanent Rastafari presence on the land. Children who take on Ethiopian cultural indices such as fluency in the Amharic language are the

living products of this long-term goal, solidifying the Rastafari claim to an Ethiopian identity in a tangible way.

Conclusion

This migration or repatriation of Rastafari from the Caribbean to the land grant in Shashamane in Ethiopia was motivated by the granting of land by His Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I himself and a cosmopolitan Rastafari view of the world, the person, and the divine which centred Africa and Ethiopia within Afrocentric ideology. Rastafari collective identity as sufferahs, rooted in historical inequalities, provides a basis for common humanity among subordinated and dispossessed groups globally. This foundation for recognising an ontological commonality among Rastafari and culturally diverse groups of similar status has been explored with subjective expressions of belonging and local socio-cultural categorisations in the Jamaica Safar. The high status of Rastafari repatriates and Ethiopian-born children on the sacred land grant in Ethiopia are new distinguishing markers among Rastafari.

The fluidity of these subjectivities maintains the distinction between Rastafari and non-Rastafari, sufferahs and agents of babylon, local Ethiopians and Rastafari-as-Ethiopians, and between Rastafari themselves. Repatriates are positioned as faranji and as Ethiopian situationally, and within the Rastafari community there are distinctions between pioneers, faranji, heartical Rastafari and the generation born on the land grant, and especially Shashamane-born children. In conceptualising and enacting global citizenship, Rastafari reproduce and challenge the everyday malleability of the categorical identity marker faranji or foreigner in Ethiopia that marks inclusion and exclusion at various levels. This multi-cultural Jamaica Safar, now the centre of global networks of persons, households, Rastafari Mansions, and community organisations that sustain Rastafari migrants and the Ethiopian-born second generation, presents a case of subaltern subjectivities, the reproduction of community and challenges to hegemonic ideology and material conditions. Rastafari worldview is reproduced in Shashamane through this global fellowship and global solidarity among sufferahs and in everyday interactions in the Jamaica Safar, such as the conversation in Sister Sharon's internet beit, and in relationships between Rastafari on the land grant and those in babylon.

Within this cross-cultural global commonality, I have suggested that the flexibility of personhood emerges through the status distinctions in the Jamaica Safar, thereby extending the ambiguity of personhood among multi-cultural diasporic Caribbean peoples. Conceptually this challenges narrow and exclusionary models of citizenship. "Citizenship" in the Jamaica Safar involves legal claims of belonging to Ethiopia and obligations to and concern for Rastafari globally, for fellow sufferahs and individual and familial goals for betterment. This position contributes to a cultural understanding of citizenship beyond the legal parameters of state membership. This localised ethnographic picture has presented new modalities of citizenship among Rastafari and a potential basis for cross-cultural collective action within imaginative movements that challenge increasingly restrictive institutional and state definitions of belonging in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. A version of this paper under a different title was first presented at a workshop, “Understanding Local Entanglements of Global Inequalities: Socio-Cultural Transformation and Decolonial Thought” organised by The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and Justus Liebig University in 2017.
2. This year is given in the Gregorian calendar. In the Julian calendar used in Ethiopia it was 2002.
3. For more recent stories see Postal and Vidal which demonstrate the worsening conditions around construction of this dam.
4. The spelling “sufferah” is indicative of the pronunciation of “sufferer.”
5. “Derg” refers to the Provisional Military Council that initiated the 1974 revolution.

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