

Rastafari as a Catalytic Force in Ecotourism Development in Jamaica: Development as Economic and Social Justice

It takes a particular history to accept that the external manifestations of one's culture are valuable chiefly as ornamentation for hotels designed, constructed, and managed in the interests of overseas profit. In time, however, all Caribbean tourism administrators come to accept this about mass tourism, and few can resist giving in. Indeed, they are chosen for their ability to organize the national tourism sector in response to overseas priorities, even if those remain at odds with genuine development, with such objectives as resourcefulness, energy conservation, and import restriction. - Herbert Hiller, cruise ship business figure.

Many of the states in the Caribbean are very dependent on tourism as the chief way of generating foreign currency or as the principal economic driver of their development effort. The Caribbean is the most tourist dependent region in the world (Jayawardena & Ramajeessignh 2003, p.176) and this was evident in 21% of its 1999 Gross Domestic Product and 20% of capital investment being accounted for from this sector (Patullo 2005, p. 21). In 2001, tourism's contribution to the region's GDP came in at 17%, while Oceania, North American and Europe had a combined figure of 12% (McElroy 2004, p. 42). Its contribution to employment is also significant (the World Travel and Tourism Council's 2004 estimate was 2.4 million direct and indirect jobs), especially in the smaller, less economically diverse territories. (Patullo 2005, 65-67). Mass tourism with its undifferentiated appeal to sun, sand and sea (and sex?) is the privileged approach to pulling tourists into the region.

Jamaica has one of the highest profiles in the region as a tourist destination, and it branded as a location where the sun, sand, sea, and sex may be procured. This island nation is one whose economic health (with the poor performance of its agriculture, mining and manufacturing sectors) is now

dependent on attracting visitors from North America, Europe and elsewhere to visit the One Love paradise. From January to November 2006, Jamaica had 1.5 million stopover visitors, while those who came from via cruise ships during this period numbered 1.18 million (Jamaica Observer Editorial, December 2006).

In 2005, stopover visitors to Jamaica contributed expenditure of US\$1.545 million dollars to the economy (Rhiney 2006). Jayawardena and Ramajeasingh highlighted 2002 data, which were rather instructive on tourism's economic importance to this island's GDP (7.7%), employment (19.1%), foreign exchange earnings (36.8%), and capital investment (31.1) (2003, p.177) . The politicians and tourism officials in Jamaica tend to make a fetish of "performance based indicators such as stop-over visitors, the number of cruise ship passengers, room nights sold and hotel room capacity" as evidence of the growth and vibrancy of the industry (Rhiney 2006). Yet for an industry that absorbs over 30% of annual investment capital and brings in over 35% of foreign exchange earnings its anaemic contribution to the GDP is an indication of its linkages with other sectors and the need to seriously interrogate the mass tourism model.

The Problematic of Jamaica's Current Tourism Experience

Jamaica's experience of tourism is very much tied up with its economic history and neocolonial status in the world economy. This island's economy was oriented towards satisfying external economic imperatives from the outset of European colonization. With the English capture of the island from the Spanish in 1655 and its commitment to plantation agriculture under the sovereignty of "King Sugar", Jamaica's commercial and industrial activities was centred on

meeting the need of English mercantile interests. The local processing of sugar into raw sugar was done as a pragmatic way to transport it to the imperial centre where the advanced and lucrative valued-added stages could be executed. Even the food to feed and the clothing to cover the bodies of the enslaved Africans were imported in the island. This pattern of an absence of organic sectoral linkages between economic sectors has continued and grossly manifests itself in the way that the tourist industry operates in Jamaica. In 1993, the West Indian Commission's report critiqued the lack of a symbiotic relationship between tourism, agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the Caribbean states, which were the focus of its study (Pattullo 2005, p. 52).

The agricultural sector in Jamaica does not serve as a driver for national development. In 2005, the island purchased imported food to the tune of US\$602 million while sending abroad a mere US\$193 million (Rhiney 2006). The tourism sector is generally imports the bulk of the food that it provides to visitors and one researcher of this phenomenon assert that "ways must be found to increase backward economic linkages, including utilizing local food products in the tourism industry" (Rhiney 2006). However, another researcher on the Jamaican tourist sector presents an opposite reality of the agriculture/tourism linkage. She made reference to the assertion of Lionel Reid, a former head of the Jamaican Hotel Association that "Jamaica's tourism is almost self-sufficient in food and only imports choice cuts of meat" (Pattullo 2005, p. 57). This latter claim runs counterintuitive to the evident proliferation of foreign produce and other food items in the supermarkets and traditional markets in the Jamaica. It

must be conceded that projects are in place to get farmers in Jamaica to grow fruits and vegetables for the tourist market and that Jamaican is found on the table of some hotels. Sandal Resorts makes annual purchase of J\$500 million in fruits and vegetables from local farmers and this done as a collaborative project with the Rural Agricultural and Development Agency (RADA), the hotel chain and local farmers (Pattullo 2005, 58; Rhiney 2006). This example of farmer/hotel collaboration is not as widespread as it needs to be.

Jamaicans have expressed concerns about the high leakage of foreign exchange earnings and the limited benefits that accrue to communities from the tourist sector's earnings. The estimates of the leakage of foreign exchanges range from 37% to 50% (Jayawardena & Ramajeesignh 2003, p.177; Ramajee Singh 2003, p. 6; Pattullo 2005, p. 52). This state of affairs is the result of the high import content of the inputs used in creating the experience that is Jamaican Tourism. While sectors such as beverages and tobacco products, processed fruits and vegetables, manufacturing, bakery products, and grain mill products provide a part of their output to the tourism sector, their high import content contributes to the bleeding of foreign exchange earnings to international claimants (McDavid 2003, 178). Repatriated profits to investors, debt serving to international institutions, salaries to expatriates, and the cost incurred in marketing and selling Jamaica in overseas markets are other ways in which leakages take place (Jayawardena & Ramajeesignh 2003, p.177).

The rate at which tourism earnings passes through the hands of Jamaicans and end up in the pockets of international entities may not be a

surprise to many local residents. They do not see the benefits of this sector casting a wide net throughout society (Pattullo 2005, 93-94). The all-inclusive hotel properties with their virtual cashless experience for tourists are *fiya bun* by local communities, vendors and small hotel properties for “hogging” the returns from the sector (Pattullo 2005, p. 95). While the all-inclusive hotels have been the driver in the growth of Jamaican tourism (Boxill 2004, p. 270), a study found them to be a bigger user of imported products and generated less employment per dollar of revenue than non- all-inclusive properties (Pattullo 2005, p. 97). Local people in the costal zones where Jamaican tourism proliferates, as well as those living in the interior are not strategic stakeholders or active participants in the shaping of tourism policy (Milne & Ewing 2004, p. 211). Their country and culture may be used in branding Jamaica, but it is a small and privileged group of citizens and international firms and individuals who get the lion’s share of the profit from tourism.

Enter Rastafari and Ecotourism as Counter Economic Discourse

The attempt to make a positive link between Rastafarians and ecotourism may seem like an odd couple. Some of us may take the position that Rastas would not have anything to do with catering to the supposedly hedonistic or carefree indulgence of white or other racialized bodies, which would place them in a servile position (providing service to privileged others). Some of us may see Rastafari refusing to participate in Babylon’s economic exchange relations, especially in an industry which is akin to Marley’s pimper’s paradise, where “every need has an ego to feed.” The Rent-a-Dread experience may be cited as

an example of the pimper's paradise outcome of tourism placing African bodies in a subservient role. The on-the-ground reality finds Rastas participating in the Jamaican tourist industry as musicians, crafts vendors, informal guides, operators of ecotourism ventures, and roadside providers of *I-ta!* food. In a less active way, public and private sector actors have marketed and promoted the image and culture of Rastafarians and their musical invention, reggae "as the official culture of the island" (King 1999, p.77). Two researchers on the Rasta/Reggae/Tourism connection identified an irony of history in the use of Bob Marley (and by extension Rastafari and reggae), a symbol of resistance to domination, as the welcoming committee to entice "visitors to come [and] take advantage of Jamaican hospitality (Niaah & Niaah 2007, p. 4). The cover of *Jamaica: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit*, a travel guide, was totally covered with the facial image of a male Rasta (Baker 1996), which represents an unambiguous expression of the Rasta/Tourism/Jamaica connection.

Who are the Rastafarians that would cause one to present them as potential catalysts for ecotourism economic development within the Jamaican context? Rastafari manifested itself in colonial Jamaica during the early 1930s when the African majority, especially the peasantry and the urban poor, were living under the pressure of economic, social and political alienation and oppression (Campbell 1987, 70-73; Lewis 1994, p. 283). Rastafari came forward with a message of liberation from the racist economic and political domination of whiteness. This posturing entailed the rejection of the sovereignty and legitimacy of the British royalty and official culture, centring Africa/Ethiopia as in the

discourse of African Jamaican freedom, repatriation to Africa, the divinity of Emperor Haile Selassie, embracing a natural hairstyle (locks), privileging of land, self-reliance and self-employment, and an uncompromising acceptance and promotion of African self-love (Smith et al. 1960, p. 17-29; Kitzinger 1969; Barrett 1988, p. 104-119; Nettleford 1998, p. 100-111; King 1999, p. 8; Chevannes 1998, p. 26-31; Chevannes 2000; Homiak 1998; Smith, p. 7-9; Williams 2000, p. 16).

Rastafari has contributed to the discourse of African liberation in Jamaican society through the use of language (enriching and expanding the vocabulary of Jamaican or Patois), the continued struggle for African self-love and the *fiya bunnin* of white supremacist precepts, being more self-reliant and health conscious in the local dietary intake, the consciousness of working for Babylon as unfreedom, and the need for Africans and the oppressed to have control over their *livity*. Barrett, a pioneer researcher of Rastafarians, describes them as “social catalyst of the island”, “modern day “John the Baptist””, and “champions of social change” (1988, p. 174). In the words of the Jamaican Rasta Jabulani Tafari, “From its inception in the 1930, Rastafari has been genuinely anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, ant-racist, as well as anti-downpression and anti-exploitation (2000: p.3).

The congruity of Rastafari and ecotourism is located in the way in which they give a large measure of respect to maintaining the integrity of the natural environment. Mandy Dickerson, a researcher of Rastafari and their ecological/nature ethic made an instructive observation that will be quoted at length:

Rastafarians protest the long-term misuse of land of land by *Babylon* – those who have sought to capitalize on the productivity of the underclass at the expense of both land and people. Abuse of land, first enacted by planters who restricted Africans' natural rights to use land for food, and more currently carried out through the pollution of soil, water and air, is tantamount to abuse of people and popular society. Impoverishment of land results in the impoverishment of the bodies of the people who eat from the land. Rastafarians explain their taste for *I-tal* through discussions of this history and ecology. They criticize the poisoning of land by large, and in part foreign, companies and by local small farmers alike, who together have instituted modern methods of fertilizing and defoliating with chemicals. They advocate the rehabilitation of the connection between people and land, which may be achieved through ecological responsibility and through traditionalism (2004, p. 28-29).

Other writers on Rastafari have confirmed the ecological sensibilities highlighted above (Barrett 1988, p.142; Besson 1998, p. 69-73; Chevannes 1998; p.35; Hagelin, p. 10). A Rasta *bredrin* in Jamaica affirms the movement's ecological philosophy by proclaiming that “

The Ital way lends itself to environmental concerns as well. The desire for clean air, water and protection of our trees are of high importance to Rasta as they are to the rest of the world. The need to protect all endangered animals, and more important, to protect the earth. This is the extent to which we aspire to develop an Ital way of life” (Williams 2000, p. 21).

The Rastafarian ecological ethic reinforces the environmental stewardship impetus in ecotourism discourse. Rastafari green philosophy also champions people benefiting equitably from the fruits and gifts of the Earth.

Ecotourism is generally seen as a form of tourism that privileges the judicious stewardship of the natural environment and leaving it, more or less, intact for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Ecotourism is generally seen as having three fundamental and integrated components: natural attractions as the essence of the tourism experience; learning and education in

the setting; and the product should be managed in an ecologically sustainable way for the flora, fauna and people in the community (Weaver 2004, 172-173; Weaver 2005, p. 440-444; Pattullo 2005, 149). The Caribbean Tourism Organization's initial definition of ecotourism also affirmed the natural attractions and the learning experience. It explicitly put forward the proposition that local people should benefit from ecotourism. However, Miller rightly problematizes the construction of the concept of "providing benefits to the local economy" because it did not speak to equity in the distribution of the outcomes from ecotourism. Far too often these projects are developed, controlled and owned by external actors with "limited support for "forms of ecotourism that are locally initiated and managed and that support community development objectives" (Miller 2006, 37).

Ecotourism is seen by researchers and some policy-makers of Caribbean tourism as one approach to reducing the region's overdependence on mass tourism and protect the integrity of the fragile natural environment, which is the basis for the survival of the industry (Pattullo 2005, p. 149). The emergence of the idea of ecotourism, globally and in the Caribbean, came as a reaction to the large footprint of conventional mass tourism:

Tourism degrades the environment by increasing the demands placed upon the capacity of the area to assimilate wastes, as well as by dredging harbour and by building hotels, marinas, and resort areas. Hotels are prime sources of water contamination. Development of marinas and harbor facilities generally adds to problems of pollution, such as human waste disposal, destruction of mangroves, coastal siltation, and oil leaks from engines. Tourism and other recreational activities also increase damage to coral reefs and grass bottoms. Physical damage to coral reefs is caused by extensive yacht anchorings and coral harvesting. Recreational uses such as boating add to the accumulation of plastics and other trash in near-shore and coastal areas (Miller 2006, p. 37).

The price of rapid growth in the tourist sector has been a trail of ecological destruction or near destruction (Pattullo 2005, p. 132). The practice of conventional tourism is tantamount to killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Yet ecotourism is still peripheral to the tourism phenomenon in the Caribbean region (Mercedes 2001, p. 2; Weaver 2004, p. 178) and Jamaica in particular.

However, a commitment to ecotourism that aims at benefiting the community will have to look and transforming the nature of the ownership and control of the productive resources. It must be about social and economic justice and would require the emergence of the emergence of the Gramscian *historic bloc* (Rastafarians, progressive intellectuals, community development practitioners, students, subaltern organizations, environmental and reggae musicians and artists). The concept of ecotourism must squarely place its sub-components of heritage/cultural tourism, agro-tourism and community tourism (Pattullo 2005, p. 150) at the centre of its strategic and operational thrust, so as to achieve its potentiality as a driver for economic development. We need to stop thinking of people being outside of what is deemed the ecological or environmental. By seeing ourselves as one set of life forms among others, the total spectrum of the human and non-human environment may be integrated into the range of experiences in which local and international visitors may participate.

Ten years ago the World Tourism Organization estimated the market for global ecotourism at between 10–15%, which it later placed at 20% (Weaver 2004, p. 172). This figure may not be as encouraging as it seems because some of the ecotourism experiences are more of the “soft” variety with tenuous

pandering to environmentalism, shallow learning experience, activities that could end up placing stress on the environment, eco-encounter as part of a multipurpose visit, and not physically passive (Weaver 2005, 446-447). A “hard” ecotourism is a sort of “deep green” tourism that relies on minimal services to the tourists or visitors, physically active, strong emphasis on self-directed and experiential learning, robust ecological commitment, longer visits and in smaller groups, and the engagement with the experience is the primary reason for the trip (Weaver 2005, p. 447). Weaver raised questions about the ecological credibility of the soft ecotourism approach, but acknowledges it is more likely to generate the necessary revenues (because of its mass character) to absorb the cost of a making a site environmentally friendly and pay for “alternate energy transportation and interactive interpretation centers” (2005, p 448). Hard ecotourism tends to attract smaller numbers, comes with longer visitors’ presence, and the cost of facilitating visitors may breed exclusivity/elitism so it may not be economically sustainable. Some of the challenges of the soft/hard ecotourism dichotomy may be overcome when we look at the ecotourism experience as encompassing the built and natural environments.

Democratic Work Relations and Ownership

Rastafarians are longstanding critics of the economic system of capitalism and its exploitation of African people as a race and in their capacity as workers (Lewis 1994, p. 286, 289; Dickerson 2004, p. 10). Their preference for self-employment and reservation towards working for private capital or others have often led to them being labeled by society as lazy and shiftless (Kitzinger 1966,

p. 34; Nettleford 1998, p. 90). However, this is a self-conscious attempt to escape the power of an economic system that abuses and dominates the labour power of the workers, and appropriates the lion's share of the economic surplus for the ruling class and its paid functionaries. The challenge that faces the Rastafarian community in effecting a self-reliant, sectorally-linked ecotourism and to mobilize a historic bloc is that it has yet to advance an organizational economic form to counter the labour-exploiting ways of the capitalist firm. Some Rastafarians in Jamaica have established camps where they have collectively shared economic resources and reduced the hold that Babylon has exercised over alienated labour (Barrett 1988, p. 86-89, 170-171; Lewis 1994, 288; Homiak 2000, 136-140). Yet even in the early days of the movement's emergence, self-employment or opting out of the paid labour force was not an option for a large number of Rastas. It is still not the case today.

Therefore, Rastafari with their ecological ethic of living in harmony with nature and being a prudent steward of the earth's resources need to embrace the worker co-operative organizational form that privileges labour/people over capital. Worker co-operatives are economic organizations wherein the workers as members own, control and govern their place of work. The workers make the strategic and operational decisions and they share equitably, based on their contribution of labour, in the surplus or net income of the business. In the tourism sector one of the complaints of workers is their belief that the owners of the hotel properties and other tourist facilities pay wages, which barely keep them alive, while the proprietors enjoy lives of opulence (Pattullo 2005, p. 69-70).

However, by introducing the idea and practice of worker ownership and self-management, the workers would be in a position to set themselves livable wages (consistent with the viability of their co-operative), and share in the surplus or net income. When many people talk about ecotourism enabling the local community to share in the ownership, it is rarely spelt out that collective ownership and democratic management is a possibility. A local person could own the assets and treat labour in the same manner as absentee or foreign owners.

One of the challenges that comes to mind when the question of local ownership of tourist properties is raised is how would the people afford to build the facilities and accommodations for the visitors? One of the assumptions of moving to a sustainable form of tourism is that it will not have an adverse impact on the community in which it is located. Jamaica's tourism is concentrated on the coastal strips of Montego Bay, Negril and Ocho Rios, where it virtually overwhelms the capacity of existing infrastructure and the natural carrying capacity of the natural environment. One of the advantages of the ecotourism experience is that it will be dispersed throughout society - in the mountainous areas, urban communities, and other non-beach areas – (Weaver 2005, p. 184). The smaller scale of the facilities and in keeping with the principle of ecological sustainability (broadly defined) will not require the millions of dollars of investment as mass tourism facilities.

The reasonable access to capital by worker co-operators and community-based organizations is something that the state would facilitate through the use of selective, targeted fiscal and monetary policies (Karagiannis 2003, p. 184-

185). Karagiannis believes that the state ought to use its fiscal and monetary powers to help forge linkages between tourism and sectors “such as food processing, beverages, and organic farming), and be “directed towards strengthening the national industrial core and upgrading competitiveness” (2003, p. 185). A series of policies that selectively encourage direct backward linkage between the Hospitality and Tourism sector and other relevant sectors would generate 81 cents in growth in the latter for every of \$1.00 of growth in the former (McDavid 2003, 178). The Jamaica government would have to integrate the capital and capacity-building needs of a people controlled initiative that is using collective worker entrepreneurship to share in the wealth of the tourism sector. One of the frequent complaints in the Jamaica is that public indifference towards and the level of harassment against tourists is likely to kill the economic success that is tourism. However, by having an ownership stake with its empowering work process and surplus sharing that would be the best way to deal with harassment, practice ecological sustainability, and integrate local communities as strategic partners. Our credit unions, as co-operatives organizations, would be expected to play a role in capitalizing these co-operatively owned and managed workplaces. The indigenous savings scheme of *Pardna* could be used to mobilize capital for the worker co-operators. Local and international NGOs could have a matched savings programme which provides prospective worker co-operators with a dollar or more for each dollar saved for their investment contribution to the enterprise.

One effect of targeting certain sectors for growth opportunities through their ties to tourism would be to encourage worker entrepreneurship and ownership in those sectors. The African majority whose labour built and continue to build Jamaica do not figure prominently in the ownership and entrepreneurial experience of the commercial sector and the commanding heights of the economy. This type of economic apartheid can be remedied through the encouragement of a form of entrepreneurship that is collective and privileges the workers having control over the labour process and the product of their labour. Jamaica experienced worker ownership and self-management in the sugar industry during the 1970s and early 80s, which was probably not the best context for worker self-management to have been attempted. However, we have a local documented case to examine the necessary ingredients for a successful worker ownership programme in Jamaica, and some of this work has already been done (Feuer 1983; Frolander-Ulf & Lindenfeld, 1984). The Jamaican state would need to include the teaching of worker and collective entrepreneurship in the primary and secondary school curriculum and well as “encourage” postsecondary institutions that receive public funds to also do the same. Educational institutions ought not to receive public resources but use it to inculcate the oppressed into the norms of capitalist economic truth.

At the least, worker self-management should get equal treatment in the curriculum (and in state tax expenditure policies and programmes), so that a level playing field may be operationalized. Rastafari’s worldview on working for a slave wage and the command and control ethos of the workplace makes them

today's catalyst to lead the worker self-management charge. However, the state and civil society actors such as universities and universities, non-governmental organizations and existing co-operatives will need to assist in providing and/or financing adult co-operative entrepreneurship classes and technical assistance to Rastas and the Jamaican subaltern and allies (the historic bloc).

Linkages between Ecotourism and the other Sectors

Agriculture would play a strategic role in a Rastafari-inspired approach to ecotourism. Unlike the mass tourism sector where the meals that the visitors consume in Miami, Toronto, New York, Berlin or Tokyo are the same in Jamaica, the meals provided in this sub-sector would be dominated by local food. The involvement of Rastas and other Jamaicans in the meal planning and preparation would banish away the excuse given by some expatriate chefs for not using local fruits and vegetables. Unfamiliarity with local fruits and vegetables is a reason given for not using local produce. Farming, the use of locally grown food, and a vegetarian lifestyle are fundamental parts of the Rastafari worldview (Hagelin 18; Dickerson 2004, p. 36-39). They are in alignment with the orientation of a tourism that can be organically linked with the production of fresh fruits and vegetables, the processing of food that can be transformed in a way to mimic the texture and taste of conventional meat and non-meat dishes, while reducing the high import content of the tourism sector. This course of action is one that Rastas have the capability of doing. There was time when Rastas were ridiculed for calling for the elimination or reduction in the use of salt in the diet and to favour a plant-based diet. Yet there are many mainstream businesses in

Jamaica now selling *I-tal* food. The unfortunate thing about the *I-tal* food business for Rastafarians in the island is that they do not dominate this sector of the formal food industry; more likely to be found in the precarious informal sector. This occurrence is repeating itself today in tourism where they their image and culture are used to sell Jamaica abroad but they are not there as owners and shapers of the product.

One very promising development that was reported in one of the main local newspapers was the fact that “around 90% of fresh produce [that the Sandals Grande Ocho Rios] use on a daily basis” is supplied by Jamaican farmers and this property had over 96,000 visitors in the last two years (Gilchrist 2007). This fact demonstrates the potentiality of Jamaican agriculture, if government and civil stakeholders work together in producing vegetables and fruits that match up in quality (and price) of imported ones. The government of Jamaica needs to put land reform and land redistribution to the peasantry, other agriculturally-inclined and landless citizens and Rastas on the public agenda. Right now “with three percent of the landowners controlling 62 percent of the best agricultural land in plantation estates averaging 900 [hectares], and more than half of the island with slopes greater than 20 degrees” African peasants are forced onto small, steep lands (Weis 2001, p. 89). These small producers with the unfavourable lands are the ones who are responsible for producing local food, but the plantations gets the attention and resources of local policy-makers and development agencies. A sustainable tourism policy cannot continue to ignore the need for land reform, so as to unleash the potential of agriculture to

feed the people and supply the Hospitality and Tourism sector. The rural Rastas who were the subject of Hagelin's and Dickerson's research carried agricultural work on hilly terrain with the ever present threat of soil erosion during the heavy rainfall.

If the experience with fresh produce at Sandals could be repeated with the Jamaican consumers it could help stimulate the requisite level of aggregate demand that is necessary to push the economy to utilize the full capacity of its human and physical resources (Karagiannis 2003, p.184). The agricultural sector, government, and other relevant actors need to get behind an education campaign to encourage an "Eat Local Initiative."

An economically significant way that ecotourism (with the integration of its various sub-sectors) could help increase aggregate demand and stimulate the economy would be to entice Jamaicans to take local holidays. This course of action would be consistent with Rastafari emphasis on self-reliance and appreciation one's own creation and *livity*. In 1997, 547,056 Jamaican came back to the country from "overseas visits" and some of them would be ideal candidates to targeting spend domestic vacationers (McDavid 2003, p. 177, 179). McDavid found the direct forward linkage of the Hospitality and Tourism sector with other sectors being very weak with an indicator of 0.193697, which is clear evidence of a weak demand for its service by Jamaicans (2003, p. 178). Boxill calls for an alternative tourism in Jamaica and his comment on heritage tourism in Europe, a subset of ecotourism, is worth quoting:

This is no longer an industry with sea and sand as the focal point, where somebody comes and takes something and leaves a few

dollars behind. What should be done is that you provide something for yourself and then you let other people experience it (2004: 271).

Rastas are a significant force in dancehall and roots reggae and they could be recruited to encourage Jamaicans in their songs to take their holidays locally, as well as to eat the food that we grow.

Rastas are Jamaica's culture bearers in the tourists' imagination and the success of the Reggae Sunsplash franchise which was created in 1978 to co-opt the Rastafari movement, while reaping the benefits of the foreign currencies generated by the musical extravaganza (King 1999, p. 86). As part of the attempt at the co-optation of the Rastafarian culture and creative contribution (while downplaying its African liberation thrust) the "reggae aesthetic in the Jamaican tourism product [was and] is demonstrated at its highest level through the legacy of Bob Marley" (Niaah & Niaah 2007, p. 7). Even in death, Marley can still be heard encouraging visitors that visiting Jamaica is all about "One love, one heart" and "Let's get together and feel alright" (Niaah & Niaah 2007, p. 8). Rastafari and the new *historic bloc* could use reggae and other indigenous musical forms and our dance traditions as part of creative arts festivals to attract domestic and domestic vacationers to the ecotourism facilities. We have the potential to attract a significant part of the US\$43 billions that African Americans spend on travel (Pattullo 2005, p. 185). I have met African Americans in the rural South who look forward to the day when they can visit the islands and those in the North are even more enthusiastic, because they many live in close proximity to transplanted Jamaican culture. It is all about marketing and finding ways to integrate their needs into what we have to offer. One may look at the success of

the *Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival* to get an idea of the role that culture can play in generating revenue and provide employment during periods outside of the traditional tourist season.

Concluding Thoughts

At this point in the ideational development and manifestation of Rastafari the writer believes that they are ready to be the catalysts for an egalitarian approach to economic and social development. One of the longstanding taboos of most Rastafarian was to *fiya bun* participation in electoral *politricks* (Kitzinger 1969, p. 247), but many Rastas are now clamouring for involvement in the political system. However, these Rastafarians are doing so through Rasta-informed and controlled political formations. This political development augurs well for their involvement in a comprehensive and integrated initiative of worker ownership and self-management to negate and challenge the dominance of capitalist economic relations in Jamaican society. Any failure to articulate this type of a vision may have to do with them not being aware of the potentiality of using worker co-operatives and social enterprises to bring about the historic bloc necessary to “chant down Babylon”. At the 2003 Rastafari Global Reasoning conference in Jamaica the issue was raised about the movement take a serious look at economic development and entrepreneurship. Since repatriation to Africa is not going to take place immediately, many of the sistrens and bredrins are ready to revisit the existing approach to productive and distributive questions.

The movement will need to take a movement-cum-social justice perspective in engaging economic issues. It is for this reason that that a

comprehensive and integrated orientation ought to be pursued in using ecotourism as the initial sector for articulating a vision and practice of economic development. The firms operating with the movement need to be part of a network that would create the supporting structures and organizations to provide finance, research and development, education, lobbying, and technical assistance. If the historic bloc is going to be a force for change it will need to develop, over time, the capacity to act independently of the dominant social forces. Furthermore, it will have to place itself in the position to facilitate the growth and development the alternative, emerging economic arrangement in civil society. It should be clear that this type of approach to development goes beyond Rastafari because it is seeking to become the counter-hegemony. It is for this reason that the organizing concept of the *historic bloc* is critical to this proposition of worker self-management and economic justice.

There are two related reasons for Rastafarians being singled out as likely catalyst in pulling together a historic bloc in using ecotourism as an economic and social justice developmental tool. Firstly, Rastas have been consistent in their advocacy for the African subalterns and exposing the role of Babylon's economic system in their domination. They have not wavered from *fiya bunnin* (prophetic condemnation) the state of economic and social injustice for African women and men. Yet they have conflated racism and capitalism and do not take them as independent, albeit intersecting, systems. This approach to interrogating African oppression leads them to the position that the end of racism will usher in the just society.

As a result of the above positioning of race and class they have not examined transitional instruments such worker co-operatives and other forms of collectivistic organizations to organize against capitalist exploitation. Lewis acknowledges Rastafarians “entrepreneurial activities in printing shops, t-shirt businesses and other small scale ventures [which] connect them with the process of allocating and distributing resources” (1994, p. 289). These ventures were marginal to the employment needs within even the Rasta community and were not seen as representing an alternative model to other Africans. African Jamaicans rubbed shoulder-to-shoulder with these entrepreneurial Rastas in the informal sector and could easily judge the economic outcome of their ventures. However, the use of worker co-operatives with the attendant support structures and organizations would make a qualitative intervention in the development discourse for the subalterns, including the Rastafarians, and their allies.

Secondly, Rastafarians worldview has a deep commitment to ecological sustainability and I would even assert that they are the most ecological aware, philosophically, in the island. There are Rastas in Jamaica who are already involved in “hard” ecotourism ventures, which they do with the support of organizations such as Worlds Together Travel Network. These projects may be accessed at the website: <http://worldstogethertravelnetwork.com/jamaica/blue-host.html>. The facilities give a glimpse of the possibilities of the ecotourism phenomenon. It is instructive that this international ecotourism organization gravitated towards Rastafari as the standard bearers for ecological sensibilities in

Jamaica. Dickerson's research, *I-tal Foodways: Nourishing Rastafarian Bodies* gives a great account of Rasta sensitivities to nature and humanities place in it.

This ecological awareness needs to be diffused through the school curriculum because while Rastafarians may be the visible apostle of a local ecological ethic, it is a part of their African Jamaican peasantry land/nature ethics legacy (Chevannes 1998, p. 24-25; Homiak 1998, p 143-151). As neo/postcolonial society, Jamaica is more inclined to give credence to the ecological teachings, which are coming from abroad as opposed to taking instruction from what is produced locally, as well as in the region. As the tourism move away from the sun, sand, sea, and sex tourism to a more sustainable form, it will need to have a strong ecological educational infusion into all subject areas ranging from mathematics, English, commerce, economics, social studies geography to religion. Agro-tourism holds as great potential to increase income to farmers and to get Jamaican and overseas visitors to acquire knowledge and skills in the art of growing plants and taking care of farm animals. The Jamaican peasants and the ecotourism sector could connect schools to farms as a way to give a practical demonstration of the earth and agricultural science and ecology that students are taught largely through reading texts. Schools could make overnight trips and stay in the accommodation of the ecotourism ventures.

This approach to the integration of ecology in our school system would have to examine the access to land by the African peasantry and the way in which the preference given to plantation agriculture in public policy is a threat to the biodiversity of fauna and flora in Jamaica (Weis 2001). Any serious

discourse about ecological sustainability that claims to be inclusive of people needs to be about economic and social justice. If not, it will be a doctrine that is just as unbalanced as the one that is merely is about the needs of people with no concern for the flora and fauna. Activists and progressive academics will need to make sure that the discussion about sustainable tourism does not leave the subalterns as *outsiders-within*.

The role of the state as an enabler for an expanded approach to tourism development, and especially the ecotourism path outlined above is critical. As capitalist state that needs to balance its capital accumulation and legitimation roles, the Jamaican may be pressured into supporting the emergence of a democratic economic sector. Right now the Jamaican state needs to find a way to shift its reliance on mass tourism given “the global trend in tourism is not in the direction of sea and sand tourism, but more attraction, cultural, heritage, and green tourism” (Boxill 2004, p. 271). It is also troubled by the fact that the people, especially those living around the resorts town, do not enthusiastically embrace the tourism sector. The communities do not see any of the benefits coming their way. It is likely to support initiatives that give ownership stake in the industry to the workers and communities, as well as diversify the type of visitors that that Jamaica can attract. In a democratic polity, where the oppressed are organized to advance their class, gender and race interests, they may be able to get some of their preferred policies articulated in the policy-making process. I see a convergence of interest between the Jamaican state’s need to make the environment right for business and build support among the majority for the

current economic arrangement and the Rasta and the new *historic bloc* that need the resources to facilitate the emerging discourse about the possibility of a non-neoliberal economic arrangement.

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